



# LURES FOR FEELING

piano music of  
Richard Elfyn Jones

Christopher Williams  
piano



# LURES FOR FEELING

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS, piano

## RICHARD ELFYN JONES (b. 1944)

<b>1–3. Sonata No. 1</b>	<b>13:25</b>
1. I. Capriccio 1. Tempo comodo	3:16
2. II. Andante grazioso	5:00
3. III. Capriccio 2. Con brio e alla danza	4:59
<b>Threnody for Ukraine</b>	
4. Piangendo ma risoluto	3:30
<b>Dithyramb</b>	
5. Vigoroso	3:07
<b>Dance Mosaic</b>	
6. Risoluto - Allegro comodo	4:36
<b>7–9. Fantasy Evocations</b>	<b>9:34</b>
7. I. Allegro giocoso	3:51
8. II. Allegro amabile	3:09
9. III. Ritmico ma espressivo	2:34
<b>10-12. Sonata No. 2 'Lures for Feeling'</b>	<b>14:37</b>
10. I. Tempo comodo	4:36
11. II. Andante grazioso	5:20
12. III. Allegro energico	4:31

**TOTAL TIME: 47:26**

I once said that I tended to shy away from linking my music to a non-musical programme of any kind, be that as an expression of something in nature or a reflection of some emotion. For me the compositional process is fundamentally an abstract one, with the focus on balancing a musically coherent form with as wide a range of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic variety as seems appropriate within my avowedly neo-classical style. I realise now that my claim to compose abstractly is clearly unfounded for there is no escaping my self-contradiction here in this CD where one sees that the majority of the pieces have programmatic titles. For example, the final work, **Sonata No. 2** has the potentially perplexing subtitle *Lures for Feeling*. This needs some explanation. *Lures for Feeling* derives from an assertion by one of my philosophical heroes, Alfred North Whitehead, who wrote that the actual world is essentially the outcome of 'an aesthetic order derived from the immanence of God.' My book *Music and The Numinous* (Editions Rodopi, 2007) aims to clarify this in the light of my own experience as one who, when exercising his creative freedom as a composer, has always felt that elements outside oneself have a controlling role in one's work. In my case, and certainly in that of many tonal composers, it is the obvious demands of the God-given harmonic series that is the rather obvious pointer towards the numinous character of music in its various aspects, whether or not the composer or his/her audience is aware of that. But enough of philosophical conjecture. **Sonata No. 2** is only really explicable by an attempt to analyse it musically. Despite my academic background, this makes me cautious. I'm reminded of Schumann's answer to a question posed to him as to what was 'the meaning' of a piano piece he had composed. Schumann's response was disarming to say the least - he remained silent and just played the piece again. Schumann and many other hesitant commentators have balked when obliged to describe what is the essence of a piece of music.

The programmatic title to **Sonata No. 2** need not be any more than a means of adding an extra-musical character that might be of interest for the listener and the music per se is, I hope, eminently digestible, as is its partner work **Sonata No. 1** which is the opening work on this CD. What I say about **Sonata No. 2** is surely just as applicable here. To refer only to the music content of this first Sonata one sees that certain aspects in the two Capriccios

mirror each other, notably in the exploitation of quick-changing compound time signatures. There are also thematic connections noticeable between all three movements, but these are usually disguised or transformed, as is always a tendency of mine. The first movement makes use of a hectoring idea, breathless indeed, for the phrases are just half a bar or a bar long. This imbues the piece with some trepidation. The B section of the ABA structure provides respite despite the fact that the short central part also has more than a hint of anxiety. Anxiety also pervades the second movement, *Scena*, so-called because of the dramatic contrast underlying its opposition of darkness and light or, more accurately, between a sense of ominous foreboding and the resigned sadness that characterises the highly romantic central episode. The aim of the second *Capriccio* is to offer some emotional comfort after the psychological discomfort of the previous movements but this is only partly achieved by means of a folksy theme, which is not altogether free of some apprehension. It is not until the final 30 seconds that one can take heart with hope of a resolution, felt clearly in the work's culmination on a sonorous A major chord.

**Threnody for Ukraine** expresses a self-evident and very bleak reaction by me to the ravages of war. But while it is suffused with an unalloyed grief, the listener may identify moments – rare though they may be – which conjure up aspects other than a doom-laden despondency.

Some of the material for **Dithyramb** is derived from a song by the 14th-century French composer Guillaume de Machaut, but there is no stylistic connection with early music in **Dithyramb**. The piece is resolutely neo-classical in style with some jazz inflections. After the song is quoted, a more uninhibited and frenetic development suggests the wild nature of the original Greek dance which was intended as a hymn to Bacchus, god of wine and revelry. The progress is unremittingly wild and vehement until interrupted at the close by the short coda; here the original theme is recalled sweetly and romantically before the tumultuous final cadence figure.

In the **Dance Mosaic**, there is a strong contrast here between the sombre opening and the perky dance theme, the main theme, which follows and is heard as an intrusion on the

solemnity of the opening. This dance theme is nervously charged throughout. Texturally it is characterised by pellucid argumentation. But towards the end a much warmer atmosphere is expressed by a new and coaxing melody. This doesn't last for long as the assertive main theme reinforces its role, somewhat arrogantly, as the prime mover of the piece.

My teaching over the years at Cardiff University has taken me towards quite a range of medieval and renaissance music and the reader will no doubt have already guessed that. As a result I have occasionally used what little creative gift I have to exploring more deeply (some might say, I guess, in a tongue-in-cheek manner and, perforce, an act of trespass) how a modern composer can identify with fascinating figures from very long ago. Very recently this has resulted in my writing three **Fantasy Evocations**. No. 1 is based on Matteo da Perugia's song *Le Grant Desir*, one of my favourite medieval pieces. The musical 'time travelling' here is probably evident from the mischievous mixing of different styles, what I, over 30 years of teaching composition, used to urge my students to guard against! *Mea culpa*. I imagined a social situation experienced by Matteo as a capricious act shielded from his contemporaries, and from us, for we know not what it was.

**Fantasy Evocation** No. 2 is also based on *Le Grant Desir*, and here the beautiful medieval theme is initially heard simply. Matteo's grand desire, whatever might have taken his fancy, is expressed in a sweetly romantic guise without departing from the original harmonies. After about a minute these pure harmonies give way to an abrupt and contradictory gloss on the original music. The music changes and is now distinctly romantic and 'modern', even jazzy at times. This change of style is not my attempt at iconoclasm but it certainly creates a dramatic tension. The underlying stress may be the reason for the piece's ending, divested of its final chord.

No. 3, Machaut's *Fancy*, is based on a motet containing the words *Grant folie est de tant amer*, (what great madness this love is). It set me on a playful and hopefully not too frivolous flight of fancy, for we know that Machaut had amorous inclinations which I assume may be of psychological (because of being somewhat disturbed) as well as musical interest. Once

again the music breaks through stylistic barriers. It tends to follow the procedure of No. 2 but this time much more boldly and with an impetuous violence.

I have already sought to throw some light on **Sonata No. 2 'Lures for Feeling'**.

In relation to the purely musical aspect, the opening movement of this work is calm but with questioning undercurrents (in which my admiration for Michael Tippett's music may be evident to the listener). Unlike Tippett, however, there is a quotation from a medieval song – a source no longer remembered by me – and then a discursive process which is tempered by improvisatory elements. The *Andante grazioso* which follows is essentially a sad piece, at least at first. It has some limpid textures contradicted ominously by agitated call-to-attention chords. The middle section is more serene, a *moto perpetuo* in strict time. But this doesn't really dissipate the tension and the movement ends uncertainly as to what emotional effect is intended.

The Finale trips along and the effect is more generous emotionally than most of what has been heard previously. It is generally light-hearted and, true to fashion, incorporates *en passant* an anonymous medieval song. There are some playful contrapuntal 'collisions' and the movement aims to provide some resolution to the emotional ambiguities of the previous movements. One hopes that the array of 'feelings' in this work - at times complementary at other times contradictory – conveys the idea of various 'lures' that can be sensed by the listener.

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After studying at the University of Wales and King's College, Cambridge, **Richard Elfyn Jones** started his professional career as an organist. After winning the Limpus Prize in the Fellowship Examinations of the Royal College of Organists he was for many years a regular recitalist on BBC Radio 3. He has been a choral/ orchestral conductor, (semi-finalist in the Cantelli International Conducting Competition, Milan, 1980). For many years he was conductor of the Cardiff Polyphonic Choir. During the last thirty years his main activity has been writing music, and until his retirement he was head of composition at the School of Music, Cardiff University.



He has been described as one of the most versatile of Welsh composers with an output that is wide-ranging. He has written prolifically, mainly to commission in all genres except opera. During the early 1990s his television scores for Maryland Public Television's two series 'After the Warming' and 'Timeline' gained him international recognition, and his involvement with television music was reflected in his advisory work for S4C and for the EBU (Classical Music Consultant, 1996-2004). Two large-scale choral/orchestral works by him are *Goroesiad Cenedl* (A Nation Survives), 2000 and *In David's Land*, 2006. Among the artists for whom he has composed are Bryn Terfel, Rebecca Evans, Dame Gillian Weir, Jack Brymer, Bernard Roberts, Thomas Trotter, John Scott, Llyr Williams, Christopher Williams, the Britten Quartet, the Debussy Trio and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He is also the author of 4 books on 20th-century music, including *The Early Operas of Tippett* and papers and books on aspects of metaphysical aesthetics derived from American Process theology (see his *Music and the Numinous*, Rodopi Press, Amsterdam, 2007). More information is available on his website: [richardelfynjones.com](http://richardelfynjones.com).



Both in Wales, **Christopher Williams** is a music graduate of Cardiff University, and now leads a busy and varied professional life as a pianist, composer, conductor, teacher and arranger. He teaches piano at Cardiff University, is currently a staff pianist at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and pianist for both the BBC National Chorus of Wales and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, with whom he has performed at the BBC Proms and recorded for the Chandos and Hyperion labels. Influenced by his first teacher and mentor Walter Ryan, Williams developed a keen interest in the performance and recording of works by undeservedly neglected composers, culminating

in the release of three acclaimed albums of world premiere recordings by the composer Semyon Barmotin on the Grand Piano label.

“This music requires advocacy such as it finds in Christopher Williams, probing its personality as surely as its technical mastery, his Steinway D accorded sound of realism and perspective...these premiere recordings of Barmotin are certainly worth investigating.” - Gramophone

In addition to his work as a soloist, Williams is in great demand as an accompanist and chamber musician, and has partnered many of the prominent instrumentalists of his generation including Philippe Scharz, Tim Thorpe, David Childs, David Pyatt, Tine Thing Helseth and Anneke Scott. Williams’ longest musical partnership is with his wife, oboist Catherine Tanner-Williams, and has resulted in world premiere performances and recordings. He has also appeared on BBC TV and been broadcast on BBC Radio and Radio Luxembourg. His recording of Brahms transcriptions for Grand Piano (GP749) was featured as album of the week on NDR Kultur.

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