

## Cantare et trepidare for singing viola by Sadie Harrison

### *Programme Notes*

The Llibre Vermell de Montserrat (Red Book of Montserrat) is a devotional collection of Catalan, Occitan and Latin texts including several late medieval songs. The 14th century manuscript is located at the monastery of Montserrat outside Barcelona in Catalonia. The monastery also holds the shrine of the Virgin of Montserrat, which was a major site of pilgrimage during the time the manuscript was prepared. The purpose of the Llibre Vermell is expressed by its anonymous compiler:

‘Because the pilgrims wish to sing and dance while they keep their watch at night in the Church of the Blessed Mary of Montserrat, and also in the light of day; and in the church no songs should be sung unless they are chaste and pious, for that reason these songs that appear here have been written. And these should be used modestly, and take care that no one who keeps watch in prayer and contemplation is disturbed.’

My reworking of four of the texts maintains much of the original vocal music with the viola taking the part of another canonic voice, a hurdy-gurdy or a medieval fiddle. I reworked four of the songs especially for Katherine after hearing her wonderful performance of my solo viola piece Three Dances for Diana Nemorensis.

### *Recording*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDnrhj2NxwU&list=PL2UohAghEFDSBqKZuii\\_JzxFY4F3setct](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDnrhj2NxwU&list=PL2UohAghEFDSBqKZuii_JzxFY4F3setct)

### *Biography*

Sadie Harrison’s music is performed and broadcast internationally with works released to critical acclaim on Naxos, NMC, Cadenza, Sargasso, Toccata Classics, BML, Divine Art/Metier, and Clarinet Classics. For several years, Sadie also pursued a secondary career as an archaeologist - reflecting this interest in the past, many of Sadie’s compositions have been inspired by the traditional musics of old and extant cultures with cycles of pieces based on the folk music of Afghanistan, Lithuania, the Isle of Skye, the Northern Caucasus and the UK.

Her focus during 2015-16 was on a substantial collaborative project (Gulistan-e Nur: The Rosegarden of Light), working with US Ensemble Cuatro Puntos (with whom she is currently Composer-in-Residence) and students from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (where she is currently Composer-in-Association). The project resulted in tours in Europe and the USA and a CD with Toccata Classics released in June 2016. BBC3 Record Review described the disc as ‘moving and intriguing’, and MusicWeb International as ‘engaging, mysterious, delightfully pointed dances.’ The 25-minute title work was broadcast complete on BBC Radio 3 in March 2017 as part of the PRSF Women Make Music 2016 celebrations.

The project was supported by two Arts Council England Grants for the Arts, a PRSF Women Make Music Award, and grants from RVW, Hinrichsen, New Music USA and the Ambache

Charitable Trust in acknowledgement of the unique nature of the project which brought together music and musicians from Europe, America and Asia.

2015 saw the release of a portrait CD by Toccata Classics, (Observer: 'disc of glittering intensity'; BBC Music Magazine: 'beautiful and intriguing'; Fanfare: 'a special, fragile space') and a Guest Directorship of the Irish Composition Summer School. She was also appointed as Visiting Fellow to Goldsmiths College in recognition of her research work on Afghanistan. Recent performances have taken place at the International Mozart Festival in Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg and Stellenbosch (Renée Reznik), Late Music York (Chimera, Kate Harrison-Ledger, Goldfield Ensemble, Albany Trio), Bergen, Nicosia and Tennessee (Peter Sheppard Skaerved), Club Inégales (Dr. K Sextet), Bristol (SCAW), Seaton (Trittico), Isle of Razaay (Sarah Watts), Huddersfield (Nancy Ruffer), National Portrait Gallery, British Museum and Wiltons Music Hall (Peter Sheppard, Eve Daniel, Roderick Chadwick), Holbourne Museum (Elizabeth Walker/ Richard Shaw), Bristol, City University (Madeleine Mitchell/Geoff Poole/Ian Pace), The Forge (CHROMA), Almenucar, Granada (Frano Kakarigi), Sydney, Australia (Jenny Duck-Chong), the USA Hartford Women Composers Festival, Brighton Fringe Festival, Institute of Cultural Diplomacy, Berlin (Cuatro Puntos).

Sadie's symphonic work Sapida-Dam-Nau, commissioned with funds from a Finzi Trust Scholarship, was premiered by the Afghanistan Women's Orchestra at the Closing Concert of the World Economic Forum, Davos in January 2017 with subsequent performances in Geneva, Weimar and Berlin. 2016-17 saw new works for violinist Peter Sheppard Skaerved (..an amaranth from the shade..), double bass virtuosos Frano Kakarigi (A Book of Poems) and Dan Styffe (Hällristningsområdet), the latter released on Prima Facie Records in Summer 2017. SQUISH! King Kong's Love Song (a celebration of the deaf community in Hartford, Connecticut) was premiered by Cuatro Puntos (USA) and The Murder (written in response to the artwork of Heather Nevey) was commissioned by New Music South West/Royal West of England Academy. Aurea Luce (Madeleine Mitchell/Nigel Clayton) was released on Divine Art in August 2017 (Pizzicato: 'very lyrical'; The Whole Note: 'Harrison's lovely Aurea Luce'; The Strad: 'The slow creep of plainsong in Aurea Luce builds to blistering richness'.)

Sadie was appointed as the first Composer-in-Residence at the Bei Wu Sculpture Park, Berlin in 2017 supported by an Arts Council England/British Council International Development Grant and a PRSF Composer's Fund Grant, with works for Concerto Brandenburg premiered at the inauguration of the Park's Indigenous Australian Sculpture Gallery in June (as part of the Australia Now! Festival 2017). A new disc of piano music performed by Ian Pace, Philippa Harrison, Renée Reznik and Duncan Honeybourne was released in November 2017 (Prima Facie) and her carol As-salāmu 'alaykum Bethlehem (Prima Facie December 2017) has been described as 'daringly wild, so ebullient and confident in its expression of joy and optimism that the carol's culmination sounds positively feral. Utterly amazing.' (5:4) and 'a riot of sound that bows least to the saccharine tendencies of the season. Even whilst pushing the harmonic envelope the result feels like a great shout of joy.' (Composition Today)

Sadie's music is published by UYMP, ABRSM and Recital Music with works on examination board repertoire lists. She is a member of the British Music Collection's Steering Group, the UK's primary body for the curation and publicising of contemporary British composers and

repertoire. She is also a composition mentor with the South West Music School and tutor with New Music South West.

<http://www.sadieharrisoncomposer.co.uk/index.html>