

# Linda KOUVARAS

**INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, CHAMBER WORKS AND SONGS, VOL. 1**  
ART AND LIFE, FOR MEZZO-SOPRANO AND PIANO  
SHOALHAVEN NIGHTPAINTERS FOR SOLO PIANO  
THREE ST KILDA SKETCHES FOR SOLO PIANO  
NIGHT PIECES: REFLECTIONS AFTER COVID-19  
FOR SOPRANO SAXOPHONE AND PIANO

Justin Kenealy, saxophone  
Linda Barcan, mezzo-soprano  
Coady Green, piano

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

by Linda Kouvaras

I'm a composer/musicologist/pianist, Professor of Music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne. I started my musical life as a pianist, catalysed by a visit to extended family at age four, where there was a grand piano in the house. My elder half-sisters got me to play it with everything other than my fingers, while they rolled around on the floor, laughing; I thought, anything that captivates my revered sisters' attention like this must be a Good Thing. So, after two years' hard campaigning, my parents finally allowed me to start piano lessons. With a few years spent post-secondary school playing keyboards and electric violin in post-punk/rock bands, chief among which was Voxpop;<sup>1</sup> playing piano in Melbourne for the Oxford Children's Theatre and the Hawthorn Ballet School; teaching at Allen's School of Music and for the Yamaha Foundation, I returned to an intensive focus on classical piano and went through to a Masters in Piano Performance at the then Faculty of Music of the University of Melbourne (my piano teachers including Max Cooke, Ronald Farren-Price and Stephen McIntyre), with Hons and Masters theses under Malcolm Gillies' and Brenton Broadstock's guidance, respectively), before branching out into a PhD in Musicology, penning the first feminist musicological thesis in Australia (under the supervision of Naomi Cumming).

I also started my compositional practice at this point, at the invitation of musician friends (Andrée Greenwell and Esmé Tintner, in particular) who divined that I'd come to embrace this added musical direction – and right they were! Although I underwent no formal training, I do want to acknowledge the really helpful and generous-spirited feedback I received on my writing, especially in the early days,

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Spencer, Zbig Nowara and Paul McHenry (eds.), 'Voxpop', *Who's Who of Australian Rock!*, Five Mile Press, Melbourne, 2002, p. 428; cf. also Voxpop, *You & Your Ways/Guilty Man*, vinyl, seven-inch single, Cicada Records, Melbourne, 1981.

from Katy Abbott, Brenton Broadstock, Stuart Greenbaum, Matthew Hindson, Richard Ward and Richard Zatorski and, latterly, Maria Grenfell. I am now one of the longest-standing Australian composer-scholars working in contemporary music and gender studies, and one of the country's foremost feminist musicologists.

My musical language centres on postmodernist neo-tonal/neo-modal explorations, often inflected by popular music idioms and minimalism. Extra-musical catalysts incorporate a wide variety of subject-matter – from humour to the tragic, the mundane to the deeply philosophical – all with the human condition as focal point.

I have now had over sixty recordings and publications of my compositions and played as pianist on prestigious international and national labels, and 100+ performances at major festivals and other concerts, frequent radio broadcasts, across Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the USA, Asia and Europe; and I'm also published by Reed Music. I have full artist representation at the Australian Music Centre and with the Australasian Performing Rights Association, with frequent invitations to comment on/review/assess/endorse high-profile and varied events, programmes, publications and recordings, nationally and internationally. I am a piano examiner for the Australian Music Examinations Board and was Senior Resident Tutor in Music and a Research Fellow at Ormond College from 1993 to 2021. I have enjoyed several artist-in-residence positions at Bundanon, NSW, the Arthur and Yvonne Boyd Estate bequeathed to the nation, since 1999, and I am the 2024 Artist-in-Residence at the Lyceum Club, Melbourne. This recording sees the beginning of a multi-album project curated by the concert-pianist Coady Green of all my solo instrumental music, chamber works and songs to date, through Toccata Classics.

*<https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/artist/kouvaras-linda> <https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/profile/13773-linda-kouvaras>*

## REFLECTIONS ON LINDA KOUVARAS

by Coady Green

Linda Kouvaras was a Senior Lecturer in Music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music of the University of Melbourne when I was a young Bachelor of Music piano student in the early 2000s. Her academic music 'elective' of 'Sex, Death and the Ecstatic in Music' was a vividly colourful subject, and one that I remembered for years after finishing my studies and relocating to London. It was for a concert of Australian music at St James's, Piccadilly, that I decided to programme Linda's *Shoalhaven Nightpainters* (2001–2). It's a work I immediately warmed to – capturing the unique colours of Australian wilderness with a resonant, often virtuosic picturesque quality that is typical of Kouvaras' style. The critic (and composer) Robert Matthew-Walker, editor of the journal *Musical Opinion*, commented after the concert that the Australian repertoire on the programme seemed to share a certain spacious quality and a vividness of colour. We wondered if these qualities inherent in the Australian music that afternoon were influenced by the extraordinary, unique outback in Australia – a wilderness that is unlike anywhere else in the world: vast expanses, with places untouched by humans, full of dazzling colours and idiosyncratic sounds. *Shoalhaven Nightpainters* has always been an enormously popular work with audiences. People are drawn to the unique, romantic story – artists (mostly non-visual artists!) painting in the middle of the bush in the darkness of the night – but I believe they are also captivated by the essence of the Australian wilderness that is present in the music.

Selecting other works by Linda to perform in subsequent concerts, I found the early *Three St Kilda Sketches* (1994/1997) and the *Ormond Collection* (1997). These are examples of the many of her works that are inspired by a sense of place, with vibrant and often very moving music evoking local locations and her own personal emotional responses to these areas. The music is always captivating; the piano-writing

is often technically virtuosic and demanding, but never unpianistic – she is herself a highly accomplished pianist.

Upon returning to live in Australia after over a decade in London and taking a position lecturing at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, where Linda is now a Professor of Music, I commissioned *Night Pieces: Reflections after COVID-19* (2021) for my ensemble Duo Eclettico, with the saxophonist Justin Kenealy. The resulting suite is a major addition to Australian saxophone-and-piano repertoire and captures the complex emotional turmoil of the Melbourne lockdowns during the pandemic. It is also a joy to have worked on this album with another Conservatorium colleague, the Australian mezzo-soprano Linda Barcan, and to have recorded with her on this album Linda's first song-cycle, *Art and Life* (1999) – the first recording of the full cycle. The first piece of contemporary classical music in Australia to specifically address the theme of domestic abuse, *Art and Life* is powerful and urgently relevant.

The *Night Pieces* commission began a kind of creative avalanche – the work with Linda Kouvaras blossomed. Further commissions were supported with generous grants and awards from Creative Australia, City of Melbourne, APRA (Australian Performing Rights Association)/AMCOS (Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society); from Faculty of Fine Arts and Music Research Development Grants and from the Discretionary Fund of the Conservatorium Director at the University of Melbourne. I commissioned Linda's *Herring Island Piano Sonata* (2022) for piano, recorded sound and narrator (in collaboration with First Nations artists N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs AM, senior Boon Wurrung elder and founder of the Boon Wurrung Foundation; Tiriki Onus, proud Yorta Yorta man, Head of the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development, along with sound artist Roger Alsop) and the *Buluwirri Bugaja Piano Suite* (2022) for piano, recorded sound and narrator (in collaboration with Onus and Alsop again); the song-cycle *Winter Came Early* (2022) for pianist Georgina Lewis with soprano Jane Magao and mezzo-soprano Karen van Spall; the song-cycle *She Who Should Have Been A Queen* (2024) for soprano Antoinette Halloran; *A Gwen Harwood Cycle* (2024) for soprano saxophone, piano and narrator (in collaboration with iconic Australian actor Helen Morse), the fiendishly difficult little left-hand etude *Assay for*

*a Lone Hand* (2023), composed by Kouvaras after a terrible accident injured my right hand, requiring months of recovery, and a new work for the young chamber choir Divisi Chamber Singers.

I wanted to document all of this music – and recording Linda’s complete solo-piano music seemed to be a good start. As much of her output involves collaboration with other artists, the project quickly evolved to encapsulate her entire solo-piano and chamber music from 1991 to 2024. It has been a pleasure to do, and to work with some of my favourite artists – Roger Alsop, Linda Barcan, Antoinette Halloran, Justin Kenealy, Georgina Lewis, Jane Magao, Helen Morse, Tiriki Onus, Karen van Spall, Marianne Rothschild and Sophie Rowell – and with the recording engineer Haig Burnell. This recording project is also a wonderful opportunity to share exceptional new Australian music with an international audience.

### ***Three St Kilda Sketches (1994/1997)***

St Kilda (the Australian Indigenous name is Euroe Yroke) is a famous inner seaside suburb in Melbourne, Victoria, south-east of the central business district. Now a thriving and densely populated Melbourne suburb, the area has a long Indigenous history: it was first inhabited an estimated 31–40,000 years ago. The famous Ngargee (ceremony) tree, an ancient twenty-metre-tall red gum, is reportedly up to 800 years old, and was the site of corroborees for the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boonwurrung peoples. Nowadays, St Kilda is a bustling suburb that exhibits a noticeable social divide. Top-end restaurants and bars exist alongside premiere beachside establishments, fun parks, theatres and clubs, and there are many tree-lined streets with high-priced houses displaying an array of wealth. In contrast, there are obvious signs of homelessness on the streets of St Kilda, and a subculture that presents a clear drug problem. There is a grittiness to the core of St Kilda, against the beauty of the sea and glitzy sheen of the restaurant and bar scene.

Linda Kouvaras lived in St Kilda from 1987 to 1992, at a time when it was a place of more concentrated extremes than now, both of its inhabitants’ socio-economic standing and states of mind, and of urban atmospheres within the city of Melbourne.

Musico-mood evocations in her *Three St Kilda Sketches* attempt to reflect these extremes. To quote her introduction to the piece:

In the first Sketch [1], a slow, reflective essay, a lonely, yet unsentimental, melody hovers above a sparse, minimalist accompaniment comprised of a single, open-minded-sounding chord (an A9 chord minus the third). This chord is repeated throughout the whole piece, apart from the more turbulent middle section. The second Sketch [2] is more restless, with a middle section which remains situated at both extreme ends of the instrument, playing a monodic quasi-folk melody, accompanied by a muffled, drone-like bass. The final Sketch [3] is a toccata-like etude in arpeggiatic, minimalist process-music structures, acknowledging the ‘rush’ of the seedier side of urban existence.

The *Three St Kilda Sketches* are dedicated to Richard Ward and Deviani Segal, and were commissioned by the Composing Women’s Festival, Malthouse Theatre, June 1994, where Linda premiered the first and the thirds of the *Sketches* (No. 2 was added in 1997). At a performance of the work in 2022, she and I were surprised – and delighted – to realise that we had coincidentally lived at the same apartment block in St Kilda, though over a decade apart!

### ***Night Pieces: Reflections after COVID-19 (2020)***

The COVID lockdowns in Melbourne, the capital city of Victoria, during the first two years of the pandemic totalled some 262 days and made Melbourne the second-most locked-down city in the world. By late 2021, when the city finally moved out of lockdowns, it was one of the most vaccinated places in the world, with some 90% of its citizens vaccinated as of late November 2021. *Night Pieces: Reflections after COVID-19* was commissioned by the Duo Eclettico (Justin Kenealy, saxophone, and myself, piano) during this intense period. We were able to perform the piece in 2021 in two short breaks between lengthy periods of public closure. The first performance, in early 2020, a preview of three movements, occurred at the iconic theatre and gallery fortyfivedownstairs in the heart of Melbourne. The concert sold out, with enthusiastic crowds eager to attend what

was the first recital many had been to for a considerable time. The second performance of the full suite was presented at Melbourne Recital Centre later that year.

The work takes the form of several contrasting musical vignettes, with movement titles relating to some of the states of mind and conditions associated with the pandemic and meditating on the myriad experiences marking the first year of the global pandemic. As Linda states in the introduction to her work:

The COVID virus has graphed new heights and depths for us all collectively and individually. My aunt was prematurely taken from us, succumbing to the disease in her aged care facility. We have all reeled at the widespread – and growing number of – deaths and suffering it has caused. The world has polarised, and come together, over associated issues to do with loss, reaction to government action, societal re-structures in day-to-day life, lockdowns, regaining of freedom, human connection, fear, grief, and hope. In this work, *Night Pieces: Reflections after COVID-19* for soprano saxophone and piano, I wanted to encapsulate in musical rendering some of my own responses – insights and emotive reactions that are made more acute during the quiet of the night – to the roller-coaster of the year 2020.

She further noted, in conversation with me:

The opening movement, ‘Shelter in Place’ [4], centres around three of the simplest, most primary of triads – C major, F major and G major. The shock of the pandemic as it broke seemed to call for the ‘pure’ starkness of these chords – a ‘paring-down’ of compositional language. ‘Isolation’ [5], the second movement, begins with a florid, extended, cadenza-like saxophone solo, registering the moments of terror felt with the growing realisation of the enormity of the situation. The piano enters with a plaintive, song-like out-pouring of grief in the dark, dark key of E flat minor, in Phrygian relation to the opening tonic centre of E, which is then passed on to the saxophone.

In the middle movement, ‘Reach-Out’ [6], the vital importance of human connection – at this time in particular – has both instruments in more homophonic dialogue, starting at a tentative pace, building to a highly charged, rhapsodic, animated middle section, where



glimpses of hope and ‘normality’ on the horizon are felt. The fourth movement, ‘Elegy’ [7], is highly chromatic in nature, set to a lilting 6/8 time-signature, to mirror the intensity of the pain of bereavement. It is an arrangement of a movement, ‘An Elegy’, from ...*to enter the dream that includes all dreams*, composed for SATB choir and piano in 2002 (to words by the Australian poet Christopher Wallace-Crabbe); it is also arranged as a solo song for soprano and piano. Its inclusion in *Night Pieces* forges the connection of grief to past events of loss.

The final movement, ‘Hope’ [8], opens with powerful piano chords, to acknowledge the feelings of anger also felt in the reaction to the pandemic. This sentiment gives way to positivity, denoted in the use of the Lydian mode, culminating in a section inflected strongly with modal Mixture, the minor-key moments suggestive of the underlying sense of tragedy enduring through the brighter horizons as lockdowns lifted, vaccines were issued, and humanity grappled with the notional of renewal, where the future can be imagined and where hope has a place.

### ***Art and Life: song-cycle for mezzo-soprano and piano (1999)***

A friendship between three young academics residing at Ormond College at the University of Melbourne – Linda Kouvaras, pianist/composer/musicologist, tutoring in Music at the College and lecturing at the then Faculty of Music; renowned Australian poet Diane Fahey, then poet-in-residence at the College; and Bronwyn Bartal, a lawyer working with abused women and lecturing in Law at the University – catalysed the composition of this song-cycle. Bartal had been involved in defending severely abused women who had, either in self-defence or as a final act of retribution, killed their abusive partners; many of these women faced lengthy prison sentences. Bartal would unwind at night by writing poetry about the women’s situations. Kouvaras, Fahey and Bartal frequently got together and discussed their work and lives; Bartal and Fahey invited Kouvaras to set their words to her music. At the same time, the soprano Linda Thompson with pianist Deviani Segal commissioned Kouvaras to write for an album of Australian lullabies, *Repose*.<sup>1</sup> Kouvaras realised there was a potential narrative for a song-cycle, and

<sup>1</sup> Move Records, Melbourne, 1999, MCD142.

*Art and Life* was composed, taking inspiration from some of the real-life cases with which Bartal was involved, and from Fahey's highly evocative poetry; two further songs to Kouvaras' own texts completed the story. In a note written for this album, Linda Kouvaras elaborates:

*Art and Life* is a song-cycle which traces the life of a woman in her early adulthood. She meets an artist, sits for him, and they fall in love. The first song, 'Sleeping Girl' [9], describes the sitting, where a post-Impressionist musical language responds to the reverie of the sleeping artist's subject; the piano texture is reminiscent of Ravel's 'Ondine', from *Gaspard de la Nuit*. The artist and his subject have a child; she sings a lullaby – 'Lullaby (for Kyle)' – to the sleeping baby in the second song [10] in a steadfast, hopeful E major tonality, an ostinato right-hand texture set against voice and left hand in counterpoint.

By the third song [11], 'Woman's Predicament,' the woman's relationship with the Artist, the father of her child, has soured; he abuses her. A pulsing, raised-heartbeat-like low E in the left hand and suspense-filled, ominous, minor-modality, rhetorical chords in the right hand underline the terror of the situation. In the following song [12], 'Party Lines and Deaf Ears,' the woman's militancy (the survival instinct mentioned in the first poem) burgeons: her 'resourcefulness,' explored in the third, has found a new level. Snappy, forthright, *forte* piano triads alternate with explosive, anger-tinged arpeggios, the unrelatedness of the chords, in a functional tonal sense, pointing to woman's untethering – not only that of the trapped subject of the song, but also relating to women in general, speaking up against unwanted harassment.

In 'Art and Life,' the fifth song [13], the woman has been imprisoned for her 'commendable bravery,' where she has killed her tormentor after unrelenting abuse. The Dorian and Aeolian modes, along with the use of bitonality, paint her desolation and sense of conflict. Brief musical quotes from the previous movements show her reflecting on her life leading up to this moment.

In the final movement, 'Distant Lullaby' [14], the incarcerated woman sings a lullaby remotely to her child. The musical language is simple, highly tonal, with a yearning underlay where the governing B major tonic gives way to the distant key of C major,

restlessly morphing into the deep sadness of D minor, then regaining the sentiment of soothing reassurance that the mother wishes to impart to her child.

### **9 I. Sleeping Girl**

*Text: Diane Fahey*

*(after the painting by Balthus)*

Lapsed into sleep on a settee.

Day-garments mould her form tightly

Yet the left breast is almost bare –

an offering to the artist-voyeur.

Her body is swathed in earth  
shades, darkening her. As if in death?

But those languorous hands hold will,  
are sculpted into survival.

However young and strong, at this moment  
She is lost to herself. An absent  
light deepens the shadow  
on silken neck and brow.

Inside sleep's cocoon she unravels  
her daylight life. The painter feels  
the pulse of her dream body as it takes  
shape, glimmers. How long before she wakes?

### **10 II. Lullaby**

*Text: Diane Fahey*

*(for Kyle)*

May nothing and noone be a cage to you while  
you sleep or when you wake — not sleep

itself, not dark, not light, not fear, not any of  
us sitting out here hoping you will fall and  
settle like a feather into sleep, not needing  
our eloquence to convince, our cunning to  
outwit you.

May your journey through dreams be that of  
a young hero, uprighting himself after  
each fall, not suspecting yet the dragons  
behind rocks, nor the power he carries in  
that small casket slung across his breast —  
containing sorrow, love, and hope, magically  
concentrated.

May you hear through your sleep the birds at  
dawn, but not be woken. Their songs, like  
their flight connect earth with air, air with  
water. From shaken wings, a bright dew  
falls.

### **11 III. Woman's Predicament**

*Text: Bronwyn Bartal*

Woman brutalized, beaten and bleeding

Woman crying but unable to speak

Woman powerless to act within the confines

Woman protected but subjected to assiduous  
peril

Woman beaten within an inch of life  
All for the crime of being his wife.

Licensed to kill, I hear you say  
Let me show another way  
She is the one who is in Hell  
It is her story I have to tell.

Man has hegemony woman subordinate  
Man is power woman is powerless  
Man provides protection  
Woman needs protection  
Woman is endangered  
Man is the danger  
Woman is abused, man the abuser  
Woman is beaten, beaten by man, by society  
Society is male

Who can woman turn to, on whom can she  
depend?  
Society has let her down,  
It has not stood her friend.

When woman has an inner strength on which  
she can depend  
Resourcefulness gets her through  
Bringing abuse to an end.  
But exit abuser and enter the courts  
Victim, offender, roles reversed,  
Haunted by allegations of petty treason  
Given defenses that attack her reason.

Man defines reality, reality defines woman,  
society is reality, reality is male

Man has rights, woman has duties, man has  
defenses  
Woman has partial excuses.

Justification is man's alone  
Man classifies her actions not as reasoned  
response, but as slow-burning anger  
Not as commendable bravery  
But as sneaky revenge.

Woman is no longer Madonna,  
Transition to whore has occurred.  
Cold and calculating methodology  
Hard and sinister of reproach  
Hers is deranged retaliation  
Hers is not self-defence.

#### **IV. Party Lines and Deaf Ears**

*Text: Bronwyn Bartal*

Yes, it's late at night, but I will stay  
This issue waits not for another day  
'I'm not convinced,' I hear you say  
Let me try putting it another way  
They need your help, and understanding  
Not your recriminations and your branding  
To you, it is murder, not self-defence.  
Open your eyes and see some sense!  
I'll not concede that you have the right, to do  
nothing to assist her plight  
Now listen closely and read these lips: remove  
your hands from about my hips!

### 13 V. Art and Life

*Text: Linda Kouvaras*

The woman sits... stares hollow  
At a wall...missing the pictures  
That told of sitting... in another room,  
At another time,  
For the Artist.

She had to sell the paintings  
(Art had to be good for something)  
Money may not buy happiness  
But it does pay the rent.

At first it was so good  
Both giving themselves  
To Art...

So they shunned all the outside world  
(as 'true' artists should)  
They had followed their instincts, their bodies,  
Their indescribable need  
To be together.

The Artist did not want  
To claim their child as his own  
'Art must not be fettered!'  
He could not bring himself  
To find another means  
Of venting his frustrations  
She was at hand...  
The Artist woke up one day

To find that... the woman had a few frustrations  
of her own  
Which had smouldered and festered  
Over time.

The woman sits  
Staring at another wall... stone.  
Countless women before her have stared at this  
wall...

Only desperate, beaten graffiti,  
Anonymous posters,  
Have ever adorned this wall...  
Art is called on  
To give solace  
Again.

### 14 VI. Distant Lullaby

*Text: Linda Kouvaras*

If you listen carefully  
And keep very still, you can hear a voice,  
through the rain.

It's laughter, caressing you.  
You needn't be afraid of the dark, or of lightning  
and thunderstorms.

One day, you will play in the rain,  
And the terrors of the night will all be banished  
by my love.

Feel me watching over you.

### ***Shoalhaven Nightpainters (2001–2)***

*Shoalhaven Nightpainters* [5] was composed while Linda Kouvaras was undertaking her third artist-in-residence position at Bundanon, the Arthur and Yvonne Boyed estate in New South Wales, bequeathed to the nation. One of the other artists in residence at the time was the visual artist, Jo Bertini, who encouraged Kouvaras to join her and the other resident artists in some bush ‘night-painting’, going out very late in the night with painting and drawing materials, to draw and paint the bush under the night sky. Kouvaras’ response to this night-time wilderness, with the stars above, the rushing Shoalhaven River close by, the vast expanse of space so unique to the Australian outback, and her musings on her life in the city of Melbourne, as opposed to this extraordinary natural scene, are the basis of this work.

In another commentary written for this album, she states:

A rhapsodic work for piano solo, this piece comprises several moods, textures, musical fabrics. Just as in the other works in this recording, there are several virtuosic demands made of the pianist, ranging from scalar passages traversing several octaves, the hands in thirds, to rapid repeated notes to begin a seven-tuplet figure, the hands in unison at the octave, to large chordal spans, and controlling the gamut across the dynamic spectrum, for example.

An initial sense of awkward squeamishness on the part of the non-visual artists there, attempting the ‘foreign’ artform, is encapsulated by the opening close-position E major and D major seventh chords in homophonic rhythm between the hands. An expanded chorale-like section reflects the grandeur of the bush, while next follows, in C Mixolydian over a left-hand ostinato figure, a replication of the memory of our collective quotidian, urban existence in life beyond the residency.

The centrepiece, an ethereal moment cast in C sharp Dorian mode, portrays a transfiguring, late-night ‘space’, capturing the moment where all the artists in the spontaneous painter-group have found their ‘groove’, absorbed into the dynamic of the task at hand, that earlier lack of surety having now dissipated. A triumphant final section, enveloping the range of the keyboard, fades out in the final two bars to a shimmering

internalised vision of the river scene in memory, the night too dark to perceive through our regular, ocular sense, but the 'glow' of the surreal activity carried forward in time as we all return to our 'normal' lives.

One of Australia's leading concert pianists, **Coady Green** is acknowledged as a major talent on the international concert circuit, having been described as 'accurate and exhilarating' and 'a virtuoso pianist with sensitivity, intelligence and charm' (*Musical Opinion*, UK) with 'a strong and versatile technique capable of the most delicate coloring and tonal brilliance, rising to the challenges of extreme virtuoso demands with relish' (*The Advertiser*, South Australia).

In 2005, he relocated from Melbourne to London after winning almost all the most prestigious awards and prizes that his native Australia had to offer, including a Winston Churchill Fellowship and numerous awards from the Australia Council of the Arts. During his eleven years in London, he frequently performed at all the major UK venues and established a prominent teaching career, including teaching posts at Goldsmiths College, The University of London and at the Royal College of Music. He was twice the recipient of a Geoffrey Parsons International Prize (2008 and 2012). He established the successful International Liszt Society Piano Prize in London and is frequently on major competition juries in Australia and abroad. He often performs in major concert venues and at festivals throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and America and is a frequent guest lecturer at numerous leading international tertiary institutions. His ensemble Duo Eclettico with the saxophonist Justin Kenealy is one of the most active saxophone-and-piano duos in Australia and has won numerous awards.

He is currently preparing the first recording of the complete Anton Rubinstein piano etudes and preludes for Toccata Classics, and two recordings of Australian works for saxophone and piano with Kenealy for Tall Poppies. He is recording the complete piano and chamber music of Linda Kouvaras, also for Toccata Classics. He is passionate about new music, and commissions



Photograph: University of Melbourne

several major new works from Australian composers each year. He was the recipient of major grants from the Australian Council for the Arts for new commissions in both 2020 and 2021. He was the recipient of a PPCA (Phonographic Performance Company of Australia)/Australia Council Partnership Award in 2023. He teaches and lectures at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Melbourne. He is on the board of numerous Melbourne institutions: the iconic gallery and theatre fortyfivedownstairs, the Lyric Opera of Melbourne, The Lieder Society of Victoria, Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat and the Victorian Pride Centre LGBTQ+ Business Leadership Programme 'Pride in Action'.

**Justin Kenealy** is a multi-award-winning saxophonist who lectures in Music Performance and Saxophone at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. He has earned fellowships in saxophone performance from Trinity College London (FTCL) and the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (FRSM). He completed a Ph.D. in Music Performance at the University of Melbourne where he also teaches saxophone and pedagogy.

He has performed throughout Australia, France, the United States, Netherlands and China. He performs regularly with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra Victoria and has also received guest invitations to perform with the Australian International Opera Company, the Royal Australian Air Force Concert Band, and the Australian National Academy of Music Orchestra, among others. He has been featured on ABC Classic FM, 3MBS Fine Music FM, the Foxtel Arts Channel and the Chandos recording label. He is a Selmer Saxophones performing artist and plays Selmer (Paris) saxophones exclusively.





**Linda Barcan** has 40 years' experience of solo and ensemble singing in pre-professional and professional contexts, in theatre, music-theatre and opera. She began her professional operatic career with a two-year contract at the Opéra de Lyon. Following this and other solo and ensemble concert engagements in France and Germany, she returned to Australia to perform for many years with Opera Australia. Her affinity for twentieth- and 21st-century opera, oratorio and chamber music has seen her collaborate with contemporary-opera and classical companies, and she has featured in several Australian premieres: Ross Edward's *Christina's World* (Sydney Chamber Opera), Peter Tahourdin's *Abelard and Heloise* (Opera Hunter), Deborah Cheetham's *Pecan Summer*, her *Eumeralla* and her *Woven Song* (all Short Black Opera), Viktor Ullmann's *The Emperor of Atlantis* (Lost and Found Opera) and David Lang's *love fail* (Australian Contemporary Opera Company). A dedicated and passionate art-song recitalist, especially of French *mélodie*, she has concertised in Australia, South-East Asia and Europe, including frequent appearances in French cultural and diplomatic circles. She is known as an advocate for and interpreter of contemporary art-song and opera, especially works by Australian composers.



Photograph: Photodisque Photography





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