

## Julia Usher

read music at Newnham College Cambridge, and while there studied composition with Richard Orton. His involvement with contemporary music encouraged Julia to continue her studies at York University - where she first met Robert Sherlaw - Johnson, and heard his piano works and other performances. She went on to study with him privately in Oxford.

Since then she has written many works for chamber ensemble, orchestra and voices; and developed a great interest in music theatre, including *The Orford Mermaid*, directed by Michael Finnissy. Her list of works includes *A Reed in the Wind*, now a much-performed piece for solo oboe, *Le Isole della Laguna*, one of several pieces written for the recorder player John Turner; and *Mental Maps and Perceived Distance*, commissioned by Sounds Positive. *A Grain of Sand in Lambeth* was a large-scale oratorio on texts of William Blake conducted by Ivor Bolton at St James' Piccadilly. Her year at York left a continuing interest in electroacoustic music, and in *Unfinished Business* she explored live electronics and computer sequences in theatrical combination with the sound sculptures of Derek Shiel. Julia has a fascination for combining visual and aural arts, and went on with Derek to explore live painting and musical improvisation in interactive performance art: *SoundPaint*.

In 2002 Metier Sound and Vision made a CD collection of six major works by Julia Usher, including *Sacred Physic* and *A Reed in the Wind*. The performers were John Turner, Peter Lawson, Lesley Jane Rogers, Janet Simpson, Jonathan Price and Nikki Bloomfield.

As well as her intensive composing work, Julia is also a professional music therapist, working with a wide variety of people. Her interest in the scientific basis of music in therapy led to a research project supervised by Professor Susan Greenfield at Oxford.

She now lives in Colchester with her husband Rod, where she is also engaged in community arts projects in Essex.

***This is a Women in Music Commissioning Fund award winner. Women in Music works nationally to support and celebrate women's music making and its Commissioning fund has been possible through financial support from the Arts Council of England. The Magnificat Project is administered by King Alfred's College, Winchester and has received additional funds from Women in Theology.***

# Magnificat Nunc Dimittis

for Women's, Girls' or Boys' Voices and Organ

*These two settings of the evening canticles were commissioned as part of the 2002 Magnificat Project, by the Women in Music Commissioning Fund, under the guidance of Professor June Boyce-Tillman.*

## *Programme and Performance notes.*

Working on the *Magnificat* coincided with waiting for the birth of my first grandchild; and this seemed to bring a particular poignancy and identification with the meaning of the words of both canticles. I have tried to give careful weight to the emphasis of where stresses fall, in interpreting the meaning of the verses. And I have been drawn to embodying some of the phrases with musical imagery.

The settings are for liturgical use, and are therefore traditional in form and technique. However I have used unexpected harmonic "pivot" chords to pull the vocal lines like magnets, into unexpected resolutions.

To assist in making the settings practical, the counterpoint is not difficult - and individual lines often work in canon; or have a melodic character that should make them easy to learn.

There are brief solo sections towards the end of both the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis*. Where it is impossible to use a soloist, the line may be omitted, or sung by more than one voice.

Where I have written divisi parts, these too can be omitted if necessary; the harmonies are covered by the organ.

The most difficult section technically is "He hath scattered the proud". I hope that the catchy nature of each individual line will create a syncopated texture.

The Organ part is very simple, and I have tried to make the vocal parts of primary importance. The indications of registration on the organ are very approximate, and may be re-interpreted; I worked them out on the small organ of Harwich Parish Church. In general, I prefer a pure and flutey tone except in the louder passages, or where I have indicated "reeds" or mixtures.

# Magnificat for SSA Voices and Organ

**Allegretto**

q = 115

Julia Usher

Sop or Treble

f My\_ soul doth mag ni fy the Lord\_

Sop or Treble

f My\_ soul doth mag fy the

Alto

f My\_ soul doth mag ni fy the

Organ

**FULL**

f

Ped.

f

Preview File Only

5

Lord, f and my spi rit hath re joic'd in

Lord, f and my spi rit hath re joic'd in

Lord, f and my spi rit hath re joic'd in

I, 8'+4' fl/diap mf

II mf

16'

mf

**A** Andante

q = 60

9

pp God , my Sa viour. f For

pp God , my Sa viour. f For

pp God , my Sa viour.

p

mf

8'+4'

p

16'

mp

**B**

14

He hath re gar ded mf the low li ness of His f

He hath re gar ded mf the low li ness of His f

the low li ness of His f

mp

mf

mf

mf

f

**B** II add reeds

**C**

q = 110

19

hand mai den

hand mai den

hand mai den

*p*

*p*

*p*

**I** *Light, delicate*

,4' flutes

*f* *mp* *mf* 4' 8'

*f* 16+8' *mp*

Preview File Only

**D** Animato, Piu Mosso

q = q

rall....

q = 110

23

mf for be hold,

pipe

**I** 8'+4'

**II** 8' with some reed

*mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

rall....

**D** 8'+4+2 diap

27

Con Allegria

from hence forth, all ge ne ra tions  
 from hence forth, f All ge ne  
 from hence forth,  
 f 8'+16' f

Preview File Only

32

Misterioso

shall call me bles sed.  
 p  
 ra tions shall call me bles sed.  
 p  
 shall call me bles sed.  
 p  
 I p 8' mf  
 16'+32' p ped diap