Mesmerism

_Mesmerism_ for piano and chamber orchestra is one in a series of works inspired by Ada Lovelace, pioneering mathematician and daughter of Byron [these include a dramatic vocal work _Ada sketches_ and _Calculus of the Nervous System_ for symphony orchestra]. Ada dabbled with mesmerism, a forerunner of hypnosis developed by physician Franz Mesmer.

Often I find inspiration in nature and science, and especially in the history and myths associated with scientific phenomena. In my earlier orchestral works _Magnetite_ and _Solar_, musical material behaves as if shaped by magnetic fields attracting one another and moving in opposite directions. And so although (or perhaps because it is) scientifically suspect, mesmerism appeals to me because of its relationship with magnetism as well as the fact that it links several interests: science, Ada and Mozart (Mesmer was a patron of Mozart’s).

_Mesmerism_ is in one continuous movement and lasts approximately 17 minutes. Throughout, I have imagined that the relationship of soloist to orchestra is mesmeric: the work is concerned with the piano ‘mesmerising’ the orchestra.

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