

YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM / TEXT ONLY VERSION

So Much Myself: Piano Portraits

Sonya Lifschitz and Robert Davidson

Fri 17 Mar, 7:30pm / Adelaide Town Hall

Duration: 1hr 25mins, no interval

Note: Performed in English, French and Spanish with English surtitles.

THIS DIGITAL PROGRAM INCLUDES

Credits & Program

Program Note

Biographies

Credits & Program

Composition and video by **Robert Davidson**

Concept and script by **Sonya Lifschitz & Robert Davidson**

Performed by **Sonya Lifschitz**

PART 1

Patti Smith: Unfettered

Frida Kahlo: Portrait of Diego

Marie Curie: We also need dreamers

Nina Simone: As honest as I can be

Malouma: The musical message

Nellie Melba: Farewell

PART 2

Maria Anna Mozart & Clara Schumann

Adelina de Lara: Lessons with Clara

Ilona Eibenschütz: Healing the breach

Ethel Smyth: The plaything theory

PART 3

Manya: Still I wanted to play piano

Asya & Manya: Evacuating Kyiv (*warning: disturbing war images*)

Asya & Manya's pretend band

PART 4

Hrotsvit's 10th century comedy Dulcitius

Julia Gillard: Not now, not ever (extended version)

PART 5

Aunty Delmae Barton & Jackie Marshall: Gift of creation

Rachel Carson: The balance of nature

Greta Thunberg: Crystal clear (additional lyrics by Megan Washington)

Program Note

By **Robert Davidson**

A five-part musical portrait gallery of creators spanning a millennium, *So Much Myself: Piano Portraits* weaves together archival audio and footage, narrative and music in a complex interconnecting tapestry of stories celebrating discovery. Nina Simone gives the title of the work, as we hear her voice explaining "what I hope to do all the time is to be so completely myself... that they're confronted with what I am, inside and out, as honest as I can be. And this way they have to see things about themselves, immediately."

I love archival recordings, films and documents as the closest thing we have to time travel. We can connect with Europe's first playwright since antiquity, Hrotsvit, through the thousand-year-old markings

of her pen on vellum. We can recreate Clara Schumann's musical imagination through playing the notes from her inked quill. Needle grooves in plastic and wax, and magnetic flux traces on bits of tape allow us to hear her students playing and speaking, and to hear the voices of Marie Curie and Frida Kahlo (the only extant recordings).

These remnants of extraordinary lives are placed, as precious objects, into frames - musical frames provided by Sonya's piano, which foster hearing the inherent melody and rhythm in the voices. For me, this is a way of listening behind the direct meaning of the words and connecting to the unspoken emotion communicated in intonation.

Sonya blends her own voice with these recordings, bringing to life stories from 1,000 years ago through to her own Ukrainian grandmother and great aunt recounting their escape from Kyiv during Nazi bombings and massacres. These are stories of people bringing their fullest selves to the challenges of convention, danger, inertia and prejudice. Composed out of intensive conversations between Sonya and myself, this collection celebrates the creative spirit.

Biographies

SONYA LIFSCHITZ

"A recital for the modern day...Lifschitz is a theatre actor, an orchestra and a soloist all at the same time." - The Age

Sonya Lifschitz is a pianist working across many contexts, with repertoire spanning from 15th century Faenza Codex to works written for her today. She is known for her fiercely imaginative, daring collaborations across theatre, dance, screen-based and visual arts, spoken word, and performance art. Described as "a life force of extraordinary density and capacity", Sonya's artistry combines bold adventurousness with "miraculous keyboard technique and musicianship" (Woodstock Times) to create work that positions classical and contemporary art music at the cutting edge of interdisciplinary performance practices. She is active as a soloist, creative collaborator, artistic director, educator, radio personality and arts advocate.

Sonya has performed on major international stages to critical acclaim including the Barbican Centre (London), De Doelen (Rotterdam), Bargemusic (New York), Detroit Institute of Art (USA), Venice Biennale (Italy), and in many of Australia's major international arts festival, including Adelaide (AF), Sydney (SF), Melbourne (MIAF), Brisbane (BF), Canberra (CIMF) and Darwin (DF) Festivals; and other prestigious festivals including Extended Play, Metropolis, MONAFOMA, Four Winds and Ten Days on the Island.

A Fulbright Scholar, Sonya heads Music Performance and Creative Practice at the University of NSW and is a regular ABC Classic presenter.

ROBERT DAVIDSON

Robert Davidson is a prolific composer, bassist, lecturer and founder and artistic director of Topology. Davidson studied composition with Terry Riley in California before completing a composition PhD at the University of Queensland. He previously studied South Indian vocal music in Kerala, India. Davidson's compositions are regularly performed, recorded and broadcast around the world, in venues including New York's Lincoln Center, Sydney's Opera House and London's Barbican. All of Australia's professional orchestras and many leading soloists and ensembles have commissioned and performed his works.

With Topology he has released 14 albums, and has directed numerous artistic collaborations with creators of many varied cultural and stylistic backgrounds, including The Saints, Geoffrey Rush, Terry Riley, The Brodsky Quartet, Katie Noonan, Kate Miller-Heidke, Christine Anu, TaikOz, William Barton and many more. He has scored three documentary films: *Memory Tree* (Juniper/ABC), *Joyride* (Fifty Fifty/ABC, 2018), and *Strong female lead* (Northern Pictures/SBS, 2021), and dance scores for the Queensland Ballet and Expressions Dance Company.