



**Wendy Hiscocks: Scenes from an Australian Childhood (1987-2013)**

Wirripang

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Here is a rare and wonderful phenomenon: memorable contemporary piano music that is original while maintaining a broad debt to traditional tonality. The cycle's title is clearly Schumannesque, and Hiscocks' work shares with *Kinderszenen* an adult's motivation to enter a child's world. The collection of seven attractive, varied, colourful and accessible (for listener and performer) pieces lasts around 35 minutes and deserves wide currency.

Hiscocks delights in filigree and fleetingly crystalline writing in 'Tarantella', composed for the young British pianist Cordelia Williams in 2001. This is bravura music, but with a reserve that makes it all the more individual – think Prokofiev with an Italianate, nostalgic twist. 'Trees and Lightning' makes a delightfully naïve programmatic impression, complete with crashing booms in the bass, evoking distant thunder. Reminiscences of Poulenc, Prokofiev, the French Impressionists and others never appear contrived or manufactured: for the most part Hiscocks has something worth communicating.

Perhaps 'Rainforest Toccata' is rather ordinary when set against the first three pieces here, though there is no doubting the compositional skill involved. Meanwhile, 'Lanterns on Lake Illawarra' is seductively evocative. The cycle ends with excitement and drama in *tarantella* form with 'Fire Haze at Gerringong', inspired by the dangers of a bushfire.

With clear, poised, blemish-free renderings of all seven numbers on an accompanying disc from the accomplished pianist Scott McCarrey, this is a persuasive and elegantly produced release. MM