

Un Petit Psaultier

(A Little Psalter)

Soprano, clarinet (doubling as bass clarinet)

Words by Esther Inglis (1571 - 1624), Clément Marot (1496 – 1544) and Pierre Olivétan (c. 1506 – 1538)

Music by Sheena Phillips, incorporating three psalm tunes by Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510 – 1559)

- i **Au Lecteur** (To the Reader)
- ii **Parmi les Pseaumes** (Amidst the Psalms)
- iii **Prière à Dieu** (Prayer to God)

Duration: c. 10 mins

Commissioned by Jamie Reid Baxter for Sally Carr (soprano) and Calum Robertson (clarinet), with additional funding from the RVW Trust.

About the piece

Un Petit Psaultier (A Little Psalter) is inspired by the work of Esther Inglis (1571 - 1624), an expert calligrapher and embroiderer of beautiful miniature books in French, Anglo-Scots and English, mostly of devotional texts, including several psalters. Esther was a child of the Reformation. Her parents were Huguenots (French Protestants) and fled persecution, first to London and later to Edinburgh, around the time of Esther's birth. Esther's mother was also a calligrapher.

The two outer movements, 'Au Lecteur' (To the Reader) and 'Prière à Dieu' (Prayer to God), are based on epigrams by Esther herself, both of which appear in several of her manuscripts, framed by decorative borders and, in the case of 'Au Lecteur', incorporating a sinuous thread that twines between the letters. Aspects of these and other calligraphic features are echoed in the music, in short repeated patterns, trills and other decorations, and staccato textures. The rather formal melodies are derived from the letters of Esther's name and from the words 'Prière à Dieu'.

The middle movement 'Parmi les Pseaumes' (Amidst the Psalms) uses two psalms to represent them all. It's based mostly on Psalm 104, which is about the wonders of creation. The text that Esther is copying is the translation (by Olivétan) found in the Geneva Bible and at first the words are sung very plainly – rather like the unadorned script that Esther often used for writing out psalms. But as she writes, the Geneva Psalter tune for this Psalm (played quietly by the bass clarinet) comes into her head – and, with that, fragments of the poetic text (by Marot) to which the Psalm was sung. As Esther herself surely became absorbed in and delighted by her work, the players gradually become transported by text and tune and depart from diligent reproduction to something freer and more heartfelt. The tune for Psalm 84 which, like Psalm 104, celebrates the earth as a bountiful dwelling place, appears at the end, as the singer declares that she will sing psalms for ever.

In composing this piece, I wanted partly to suggest the act of writing. Whereas Esther put pen to paper, the performers place sound in the air. The opening direction is 'calme, précis, facile': calm, precise, easy. In the middle movement, the act of reading is more central: the meaning rather than the appearance of the text becomes dominant. The last movement returns to the depiction of the page but the essential tunefulness of the psalms lingers. We hear Esther humming to herself while the clarinet 'dots' the page, as Esther did, each drawing on the Geneva Psalter tune to Psalm 23.

Sheena Phillips

The following images will give you an idea of Esther's work and can be considered visual accompaniments to the three movements. It would be ideal if fragments of them could be reprinted in any programme accompanying performance of the piece.

(i) Au Lecteur: page from *Les Proverbes du Roy Salomon. De la main d'Esther Anglois, françoise* (The Proverbs of King Solomon, in the hand of Esther Inglis, Frenchwoman), 1601, dedicated to Henri, Duc de Rohan.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10723155x/f15.image>

(ii) Parmi les Pseaumes: page from *Les Pseaumes de David* (The Psalms of David), created in London in 1615 and dedicated to King James, showing part of Psalm 104.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YGuQh0BCCiJ7n2Xm233jsqKpKQkuokzo/view?usp=sharing>

(iii) Prière à Dieu: endpiece of *Le Livre des Pseaumes: Escrites en Diverses Sortes de Lettres* (The Book of Psalms, written in various scripts), created in Edinburgh in 1599 for presentation to Queen Elizabeth I of England.

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/Discover/Search/#/?p=c+0,t+,rsrs+0,rsps+10,fa+,so+ox%3Aort%5Easc,scids+,pid+9c90861e-1944-46b4-bc20-e9f5affd6f3c,vi+82952b50-bb89-48bd-bc43-cd858491a777>

You can find other examples of her work, including absolutely beautiful embroidered book covers, on the internet. Start with her wikipedia page and work outwards from there!

Shorter programme note

Un Petit Psautier (A Little Psalter) is inspired by the work of Esther Inglis (1571 - 1624), an expert calligrapher and embroiderer of beautiful miniature books, including psalters (collections of the 150 Biblical psalms).

The first movement, 'Au Lecteur' (To the Reader), echoes aspects of Esther's calligraphy: there's a decorative 'border' of short repeating patterns, a section in which voice and clarinet twine around each other like a thread and, at the centre, the text is 'struck through' by the trilling clarinet.

The middle movement 'Parmi les Pseaumes' (Amidst the Psalms) is based mostly on Psalm 104, which is about the wonders of creation. At first the words are sung very plainly – rather like the unadorned script that Esther often used for copying out psalms – while the bass clarinet quietly plays the Geneva Psalter tune for this Psalm. But both players gradually depart from diligent reproduction to something freer and more heartfelt. The lovely tune for Psalm 84 also appears at the end, as the singer declares that she will sing psalms for ever.

In the last movement 'Prière à Dieu' (Prayer to God), we hear Esther humming to herself while the clarinet 'dots' the page, each drawing on the Geneva Psalter tune to Psalm 23.

Sheena Phillips

Performance notes

Tremolos are unmeasured. In bars 62 – 64, delay the onset of the tremolo very slightly in order to bring out the accented notes.

The descriptions ‘petit bouton’ (small button), ‘cercle’ (circle) and ‘ovale’ (oval) in the first movement connect those musical motifs to patterns in the border of the manuscript of *Au Lecteur*. These patterns (which are used repeatedly by Esther in borders) are recapitulated in *Prière à Dieu*.

X – cancels time signature (*senza misura*)

Dotted lines – indicate points of alignment between the two parts in a *senza misura* section. The singer should enter with the clarinet at the start of bar 19 of *Prière à Dieu* but other alignments need not be strict.

Subdivision of unusual metres: in most cases, beaming of the quavers indicates how to feel a 5/8 or 7/8 bar. In some ambiguous cases the subdivision is given in brackets e.g. (2+3+2)

Glossary of French expressions used in the piece

accentuez les premières notes – accent the first notes

au mouvement – *a tempo*

brillant – bright

calme, précis, facile – calm, precise, easy

cédez – yield, slow down a little

clair, délibéré – clearly, deliberately

de plus en plus engagée par la texte – more and more engaged by the text

délicat – delicately

doux – sweet, soft

doucement – gently

écho du premier mouvement – echo of the first movement

égale – even

en animant – become more animated (but not faster)

en pressant – pressing ahead

en retenant – a little slower

excitée – excited

heureux – happy

indépendamment – independently

joyusement – joyous

la texte barrée – text ‘struck through’ (by the twisting yarn motif)

léger – lightly

librement – freely

modéré – *Moderato*

passionnée – passionate

ralentir – slowing down

sinueux – sinuous, winding

souple – supple

un peu loin – a little distantly

urgent – urgent

vif – lively

Au Lecteur

L'écriture, Chrétien,
De ce Livre* n'est rien
Mais ce qu'il tient regarde
Regardant prens y garde
Et de tout en tout lieu
Donne la gloire à Dieu.

Esther Inglis

* in some sources 'Livret' (little book)

Translation

To the Reader

*The handwriting, O Christian,
In this book is nothing.
But what it contains, regard;
And regarding, take heed to it.
And for all, in all places,
Give glory to God.*

Jamie Reid Baxter

Pronunciation

Roughly as in modern French except:

gloire ~ glwaire (IPA: glwɛrə)
r ~ trilled not guttural

French spelling has been modernised throughout.

Parmi les Pseaumes

Mon âme bénis l' Éternel, ô Éternel mon Dieu tu es merveilllusement grand, tu es revêtu de majesté et de magnificence.

Il s'enveloppe de lumière comme d'un vêtement.

Il fait des vents ses Anges, et du feu brûlant ses serviteurs.

Les montagnes se dressèrent, et les vallées s'abaissèrent.

C'est lui qui conduit les fontaines par les vallées.

Dessus et près de ces ruisseaux courants,
Les oiselets du ciel sont demourants,
Qui du milieu des feuilles et des branches,
Font résonner leurs voix nettes et franches.

Les hauts arbres en sont rassasiés, les cèdres du Liban qu'il a plantés: afin que les oiseaux y sissent leurs nids.

Il a fait la lune, et le soleil.

O Éternel.

O Seigneur Dieu, que tes oeuvres divers
Sont merveilleux par le monde univers!
Ô que tu as tout fait par grand sagesse.
Bref, la terre est pleine de ta largesse.

Je chanterai à l' Éternel durant ma vie; je psalmodierai à mon Dieu tant que je serai en être.

Ma méditation lui sera plaisante, moi même je m'élourirai en l'Eternel.

Mon âme bénis l'Éternel, louez l'Éternel.

*Serif text: extracts from the translation of Psalm 104 by Pierre Olivétan, 1535, as used in *La Bible qui est toute la Sainte Esriture* (Geneva, 1563)*

*Sans serif text: extracts from the paraphrase of Psalm 104 by Clément Marot published in *Les Pseaumes mis en rime francoise par Clément Marot et Théodore de Béze* (1562).*

French spelling has been modernised throughout.

Translation

Bless the Lord, my soul; o everlasting God thou art very great; thou art clothed in majesty and magnificence.

He wraps Himself in light as with a garment.

He makes His Angels from the winds, and His servants from burning fire.

The mountains rose up and the valleys stooped down.

It's He who leads the watersprings through the valleys.

Over and near these running rivers
Dwell the birds of the air,
Who from among the leaves and branches
Sound their clear, fresh voices.

The great trees fill with sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted as a place for the birds to build their nests.

He made the moon, and the sun.

O Immortal God.

O Lord God, how marvellous are
Thy many works throughout the world.
O, how you have made everything with great wisdom.
In sum, the earth is full of thy bounty.

I shall sing to the everlasting God throughout my life; I'll sing psalms to my God as long as I exist.

My thoughts shall please Him; I myself shall rejoice in the everlasting God.

Bless the Lord, my soul; praise the everlasting Lord.

Sheena Phillips

Prière à Dieu

Seigneur à ton honneur et par ta grace aussi
J'ai parfait ce Livre ainsi Seigneur ainsi
Pour ne faire oncques* rien au monde qui ne duise
Ton Saint Esprit toujours en ce sentier humain
Assure, ouvre, redresse, illumine, conduise,
Mon coeur, mon oeil, mon pied, mon esprit et ma main.

Esther Inglis

* oncques: archaic (with 'ne') for 'never'

Translation

Prayer to God

*O Lord to thine honour and by thy gift of grace
I've made this book, like this, O Lord, like this
So as not to do henceforth aught on earth that is not led[^]
By thy Holy Spirit on this human path,
Assure, open, lift up, enlighten, lead
My heart, my eye, my foot, my spirit and my hand.*

Jamie Reid Baxter

[^] Or, *So that I do henceforth nothing on earth that is not led*

The sense in lines 5 and 6 reads vertically (an instance of *vers rapporté*):

*Assure mon coeur, ouvre mon oeil, redresse mon pied, illumine mon esprit, conduise ma main.
Assure my heart, open my eye, lift up my foot, enlighten my spirit, guide my hand.*

Pronunciation

Roughly as in modern French except:

r ~ trilled not guttural

French spelling has been modernised throughout.

Un Petit Psaultier

1. Au Lecteur

Esther Inglis

Sheena Phillips

Modéré ♩ = 120 calme, précis, facile

Soprano

Clarinet in B \flat

mf

(ovale) *tr* (petit bouton)

7

S

mf (ovale)

l'é-cri-tu-re

B \flat Cl.

(cercle) (petit bouton)

3

13

S

(petit bouton) (cercle) (petit bouton)

de ce liv-re n'est ri-en o n'est ri-en

B \flat Cl.

tr 3

18

S

l'é - cri - tu - re de ce liv - re n'est ri - en o n'est ri - en

B \flat Cl.

22

S

l'é - cri - tu - re de ce liv - re n'est ri - en o n'est ri - en

B \flat Cl.

A brillant, sinueux

27

S

a, o,

B \flat Cl.

mf

32

S

a, o,

B \flat Cl.

B la texte barrée

mf clair, délibéré

36

S *p*

L'é - cri - tu - re Chré - tien

B \flat Cl. *p* *p* doucement

42

S *p* doucement

De ce Liv - re n'est rien a,

B \flat Cl.

48

S *mf* clair, délibéré

Mais ce qu'il tient re - garde Re - gard - ant prens y garde

B \flat Cl. *mp* *mf*

54

S *mp* doucement *mf* clair, délibéré

a, Et de tout en tout lieu

B \flat Cl. *mp* *mf*

60

S *f*

Don-ne la gloire, Don-ne la gloire a Dieu

B \flat Cl. *urgent* *accentuez les premières notes*

f

C *calme, sinueux*

S *p cantabile*

a, o, a,

B \flat Cl. *p* *tr* *3*

72

S *mf* *tr*

o, a,

B \flat Cl. *mf*

D calme, précis, facile

77

S *mp*

l'é-cri-tu - re de ce liv - re

B \flat Cl. *mp* *tr*

83

S

n'est ri - en o n'est ri - en l'é - cri - tu - re de ce liv - re

B \flat Cl. 3 *tr*

88

S

n'est ri - en o n'est ri - en l'é - cri - tu - re de ce liv - re

B \flat Cl. *tr*

92

S

n'est ri - en o n'est ri - en

B \flat Cl. to Bass Clarinet

Un Petit Psautier

2. Parmi les Pseaumes

based on Psalm 104 and incorporating Louis Bourgeois' tunes for psalms 104 and 84

Pierre Olivétan, Clément Marot

Sheena Phillips

Modéré ♩ = c. 80 calme, égale

mp un peu loin

Soprano

Mon â - me be - nis l'É - ter - nel,

Bass Clarinet

très doux
pp

6

S

ô É - ter - nel mon Dieu tu es mer - veil - leuse - ment grand,

B. Cl.

10

S

tu es re - vê - tu de ma - jes - té et de mag - ni - fi - cence,

B. Cl.

14

S

mm,

B. Cl.

p *pp*

20

S

Il s'en-vel-lop - e de lu-mi-è - re com - me d'un vê - te - ment.

B. Cl.

24

S

mf a, *p* Il fait des vents ses

B. Cl.

tr *mp* *p*

30

S

An - ges, et du feu brû-lant ses ser-vi-teurs.

B. Cl.

mp *mf* *mp* *p*

36

S

mp mm, *mf* a, *tr*

B. Cl.

tr *mp*

A en animant

41

S

mp excitée Les mon-tag-nes se dress-èrent, et les val-lées s'a-bais-sèr - ent,

B. Cl.

tr *tr* *tr*

45 *mf* *3* *3* *3*

S C'est lui qui con - duit les fon-tain - es par les val - lées.

B. Cl. *mf* *p* *3*

49 *mf* *de plus en plus engagée par la texte*

S Des - sus et près de ces ruis-seaux cour-ants, Les oi-se-lets du ciel sont de-mour-

B. Cl. *mp* *tr* *3*

53

S ants, *3* Qui du mi - lieu des feuil - les et des bran - ches,

B. Cl. *mf*

57 *vif* **B**

S Font ré-son-ner leurs voix net-tes et fran - ches.

B. Cl. *p* *tr* *mp* *doucement*

61 *mp* *mm*

S Les hauts ar - bres

B. Cl. *3*

en pressant

65 *mf*

S en sont ras-sa-siés, les céd-res du Li-ban qu'il a plan-tés: a -

B. Cl. *mf* *p*

68 *mf* *ralentir* *f*

S fin que les oi-seaux y sis-sent leur nids. Il a fait la lu - ne,

B. Cl. *mf* *tr* *mp*

au mouvement

71 *mf* *f ravie*

S et le so-leil. O É - ter - nel, O Sei - gneur Dieu,

B. Cl. *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* start on upper note

74 *mf* *f*

S Que tes oeuv-res di-vers Sont mer-veil-leux par le monde u - ni-vers!

B. Cl. *mf* *mp délicat*

77 *f* *cédez*

S Ô que tu as tout fait par grand sa-gess - e. Bref, la terre est

B. Cl. *f* *mf doux*

C au mouvement

80

S
plein - e de ta lar - gess - e.

B. Cl.
mp souple

84

S

B. Cl.
mf joyeusement

88

S
Je chant - e - rai à l'É - ter - nel du - rant ma vie;

B. Cl.

92

S
Je psalm - o - die - rai à mon Dieu tant que je se - rai en

B. Cl.

96

S
êt - re. Ma mé - di - ta - tion lui se - ra plai - sant - e,

B. Cl.
p

100

S
moi mê-me je m'é - jou - i-rai à l'É - ter - nel. a,

B. Cl.
mp

en retenant

104

S
mf librement
Mon â - me bé - nis l'É - ter - nel,

B. Cl.
p simplement

109

S
lou - ez l'É - ter - nel. Mon â - me

B. Cl.
pp

114

S
bé - nis l'É - ter - nel, lou - ez l'É - ter - nel.

B. Cl.
ppp

ralentir

119

S
p
Mon â - me bé - nis l'É - ter - nel, lou - ez l'É - ter - nel.

B. Cl.
ppp
to Clarinet

Un Petit Psaultier

3. Prière à Dieu

Esther Inglis

Sheena Phillips

Allegretto c. ♩ = 90 **libre, heureux**

Soprano

Clarinet in B \flat

mp

7

S

B \flat Cl.

mf mp p

13

S

B \flat Cl.

mf p

singer tempo c. ♩ = 90 ou un peu moins vite

mp indépendamment, librement

19

S

B \flat Cl.

mm

vif

mf mp

24

S

B \flat Cl.

mm

p

mp

31

S

B \flat Cl.

mm

35

S

B \flat Cl.

hold until the Cl. entry

mf

p

mf

A

S

B \flat Cl.

mp

léger, précis

Sei -

p

mp

3

43

S

gneur à ton hon - neur et par ta grace aus - si

B \flat Cl.

p *mp* *p*

48

S

J'ai par-fait ce Li - vre ain - si Sei-gneur ain - si

B \flat Cl.

(3+2+2) (2+3+2)

mp

53

S

mp *mf* *mf*

Pour ne faire onc-ques rien au mon-de qui ne duise Ton

B \flat Cl.

p *mp*

57

S

Saint Es-prit tou-jours en ce sen-tier hu - main

B \flat Cl.

mp

62 *mf* passionnée *f* *mp*

S As - sure, ou - vre, re - dresse, il - lu - mi - ne, con - duise, Mon

B \flat Cl.

67

S coeur, mon oeil mon pied, mon es - prit

B \flat Cl. *p* *mp*

72

S et ma main.

B \flat Cl. *mf*

B calme, précis, facile

S

B \flat Cl. (écho du premier mouvement) *mp*

81 *mf*

S

As - su - re mon coeur,

B \flat Cl. *mf* *p*

85 *mp* *mf*

S

ou-vre mon oeil, re-dress-e mon pied,

B \flat Cl. *mp*

91 *mf*

S

il - lu - mi - ne mon es - prit,

B \flat Cl. *mf*

95

S *p*
con - dui - se ma main,

B \flat Cl. *doux*
p

101

S *mp* *mf*
con - dui - se ma main. con -

B \flat Cl. *mp*
3

105

S
dui - se ma main. a.

B \flat Cl. *mp* *mf*
(3+2+3)
5