

CHAPTER SIX

FRAMED BY CECILIA MCDOWALL

Year of Composition: 2009

Duration: ~20 minutes

Movements: 7 (“ball at the moulin de la galette,” “nocturne in blue and gold,” “walking man,” “winter landscape with skaters,” “marilyn diptych,” “a choir of angels,” “overcoming red”)

Range: G3 - Bb5

Instrumentation: Trumpet in Bb (Optional Trumpet in Eb for Movement VI), Piano

Composer Biographical Background:

Cecilia McDowall is a London-based award winning composer best known for her choral works. She has written numerous large-scale choral works and her compositions have been performed by groups such as the BBC Singers, the Kansas City Chorale, and the Oxford and Cambridge Choirs. In 2014, McDowall won the Choral category of the British Composer Awards for her work, *Night Flight*, about aviator Harriet Quimby.⁷⁰ In 2020, she won the prestigious Ivor Novello Award for Outstanding Works Collection, in recognition of her many exceptional classical compositions.⁷¹ McDowall has been awarded an honorary doctorate from both Portsmouth University and West London University, as well as an Honorary Fellow award from the Royal School of Church Music. In addition to her many vocal works, McDowall has also composed solo instrumental, chamber, and orchestral works. Her works with trumpet include a concerto, *Seraphim* for trumpet, strings, and percussion, *The Night Trumpeter* for trumpet and

⁷⁰“Cecilia McDowall,” Concerto Arts, 2018, <https://ceciliamcdowall.co.uk/>

⁷¹“Cecilia McDowall,” Oxford University Press, 2022, <https://global.oup.com/academic/category/arts-and-humanities/sheet-music/composers/mcdowall/>

piano or mixed chamber sextet, *Framed* for trumpet and piano, and a brass dectet, *Salon Argentina*.⁷²

McDowall was drawn to improvising at a young age, describing the natural progression to composition that followed. Music was a significant part of her life growing up, as her father was the principal flutist at the Royal Opera House in London and was well-known for soloing frequently with major orchestras throughout the United Kingdom. He also performed in and was the organizer of two chamber ensembles which would frequently rehearse at the McDowall residence. While McDowall was inclined to improvise and compose at a young age, she did not begin writing seriously as a composer until the age of forty-nine. It was then that she also earned her master's degree in Composition from the Trinity College of Music in London. Up until that point, McDowall had been teaching at a music conservatory and a specialist music school while bringing up a family. Regarding her composing career, she says, "Taking a master's in my late forties was really the beginning."⁷³

McDowall was inspired and encouraged by several of her mentors during her time at university and conservatory and by those who gave her the first opportunities to have her music performed. She draws inspiration from contemporary music and listens to it as much as she can, while also dedicating time to exploring past music techniques, claiming the past informs the present in her compositions along with modern influences. Her piece, *The Night Trumpeter*, draws inspiration from the use of the trumpet in the 16th century to convey messages. McDowall's program notes on *The Night Trumpeter* include details regarding the Duchess of Mecklenburg who hired a trumpeter to stand guard by her sleeping grandson and play when the child woke up or when he was dreaming to "chase away the night terrors." Such detailed

⁷²"Cecilia McDowall," Concerto Arts, 2018, <https://ceciliamcdowall.co.uk/>

⁷³Cecilia McDowall, email message to author, September 3, 2022.

historical associations with her music are not uncommon for McDowall, who bases many of her works off of historical or current events, with each movement having a strong image or narrative associated with it.

McDowall has experienced great success as a composer and when asked to describe a high point of her career, she wrote, “There have been many high points so far but perhaps the one I cherish most is the commission from King’s College, Cambridge to write the annual carol for the renowned Christmas Eve Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. To sit and listen to my new carol sung so sublimely in that wonderful Chapel was heaven.”⁷⁴

Overview of Work and Pedagogical Notes:

Cecilia McDowall’s *Framed* is a work for trumpet and piano in seven movements, each inspired by a work of art. Movements are prefaced with a brief explanation of what the music depicts. *Framed* is useful for developing musicianship and playing in a variety of styles, with each movement having a unique inspiration and sound. Encouraging a student to research the works of art being depicted gives this piece a deeper meaning and unites visual and performing art. Students can also be encouraged to research the visual art further and perform each movement with an accompanying projection of the art.

The first movement, “ball at the moulin de la galette,” is a musical representation of a painting by Pierre-Auguste Renoir depicting “elegantly dressed men and women who meet to chatter, drink, and dance in the warm glow of the well-loved Parisian dance hall, the Moulin de la Galette.”⁷⁵ With this description in mind, the performer is able to develop a sense of the style of the movement and play in a relaxed, dance-like manner. The 3/4 time signature creates a waltz-like feel, with a natural emphasis on beat one. There are few challenges regarding

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Cecilia McDowall, *Framed* (Brass Wind Publications, 2009), 1.

technique or range, and no complicated rhythms. Most of the movement lies in the middle register of the trumpet and the melody is tonal with few challenging intervals. Students can focus on beauty of sound and conveying musical character in “ball at the moulin de la galette” without range or technical challenges. The movement is light-hearted and remains in the key of Bb Major throughout.

Movement two, titled “nocturne in blue and gold,” is more somber in tone and is based on a painting entitled *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge* by James Abbott McNeill Whistler. It contrasts in style to the opening movement, with a significantly slower tempo and more moments of atonality. Though this movement contains sixteenth note runs, the slower tempo of quarter note equals 72 allows the performer to benefit from the technical practice required to execute these runs with precision without the pressure of taking them at a fast tempo. The quicker runs are mostly slurred, removing the consideration of coordinating articulation with fingers. The range of this movement is truly approachable, with the highest note being just F5. The directive for this movement is “Flowing and Expressive,” with the description including a depiction of gold sparks cascading into “the dark waters below.”⁷⁶ Plenty of mouthpiece buzzing for smoothness, ear training, and a consistent airstream will allow the performer to master this movement with ease. Imagery of night, darkness, and flowing expression allows the performer to play in a somber, tranquil style and work to create great contrast with the first movement’s light, dance-like style.

The third movement, titled “walking man,” is based on a sculpture by Alberto Giacometti. Featuring many hairpin dynamics and shifting meters, the melody frequently switches between 5/4, 4/4, 3/4, and 2/4 meter. Flexibility demands are more present in this movement than those preceding it, as there are increased instances of quickly ascending and

⁷⁶Ibid, 2.

descending passages and leaps of larger intervals. While rhythmic challenges are present, there are few technical considerations, making this an ideal movement for practicing rhythmic precision and working towards switching between meters with ease. The performer will benefit from considering which beats of each measure should be emphasized to guide phrasing choices. The piano and trumpet parts occasionally pass material back and forth, making knowledge of the score particularly important. Overall, this movement portrays a more playful style than those preceding it and calls for note precision and a light approach.

The tempo of “winter landscape with skaters” is marked at quarter note equals 112, with several sixteenth note passages containing frequent accidentals, making this movement a slight challenge regarding finger dexterity. Like “walking man,” “winter landscape with skaters” features several meter changes, this time incorporating both simple and compound meters. This movement requires the performer to count particularly carefully while maintaining a clear musical vision, so as not to become robotic. McDowall’s brief description of “winter landscape with skaters” suggests that the movement depicts people chatting and enjoying a day of ice skating with “perhaps, the sound of the hurdy-gurdy in the background.”⁷⁷ This directive may inspire the performer to do further research on the hurdy-gurdy and allow them to connect extra-musical elements to their interpretation of the piece.

The fifth movement, “marilyn diptych,” is based on Andy Warhol’s screen painting of Marilyn Monroe. It features allusions to *I Wanna Be Loved By You*, which is sung by Monroe in the film, *Some Like it Hot*.⁷⁸ This movement combines the flexibility, technical, and metrical challenges of the previous movements, with a more jazz-inspired style. The opening stylistic directives include dotted eighth sixteenth rhythms equalling quarter eighth triplets, at times

⁷⁷Ibid, 3.

⁷⁸Ibid, 5.

giving a more swung sound. The range of “marilyn diptych” is also wider, with a low point of G3 and a high point of A5 and frequent ascending and descending lines. This movement is particularly expressive and there are frequent dynamic changes and stylistic directives in the music. Not only does it prompt the performer to listen to *I Wanna Be Loved By You* to consider how to incorporate the style of this song into their performance, but it also requires them to switch between the more classical style of the preceding and following movements and the jazz-inspired style required to perform “marilyn diptych” with immediacy and ease. For students who may be more accustomed to studying classical trumpet exclusively, practice from Jack Gale’s *12 Jazz Duets for 2 Trumpets* can provide an introduction to switching styles. These duets can be played with a friend, or on one’s own with the accompanying play-along CD.

Additionally, Alan Raph’s *Dance Band Reading and Interpretation: The Basic Concepts of Dance and Jazz Rhythms* is an informative text that can be used to introduce swing style to less experienced jazz performers.

Movement six, “a choir of angels,” can be performed on Bb or Eb Trumpet, creating an opportunity for students to perform on a smaller trumpet and adding the challenge of switching between instruments with ease. Due to the light style and upper register requirements of this movement, the delicate sound of the Eb Trumpet may be preferred over the Bb Trumpet. While the range of this movement goes higher than the others, much of the movement remains in the middle register, making endurance less of a consideration than many Eb parts may demand. With frequent instances of quickly repeated notes and light articulation, this movement demands that the performer be able to tongue clearly and consistently. Daily practice of light, repeated articulation in the fundamental routine, such as the practice of scales played in groupings of four sixteenth notes per pitch, will assist the performer in developing the delicate and consistent

articulation necessary for this movement. The piano and trumpet parts imitate and echo each other frequently, requiring a collaborative effort to match styles and great familiarity with the score, as well as taking care when tuning to be able to match intonation on the echoed lines.

For success with the sixth movement, the performer should incorporate Eb Trumpet practice into their daily fundamental routine. Both articulation and flexibility exercises on the Eb Trumpet will assist with ease of sound throughout the range required in the sixth movement and allow the performer to capture the light articulation required to make this movement sound effortless. Practicing any of the exercises from Edwin Franko Goldman's *Practical Studies for the Cornet* on Eb Trumpet is an effective means to perfecting light articulation and ease of sound, while also gaining familiarity with the tendencies of the Eb Trumpet. In order for Goldman's studies to sit in a comfortable range on the Eb Trumpet, the performer may transpose them down, resulting in practice benefits beyond the correlation to success with McDowall's work.

The final movement, "overcoming red," features several extended techniques, creating an added level of pedagogical benefit and making this piece truly dynamic when performed in its entirety. It is the least tonal of all the movements, featuring dissonance in the piano part and independence between the piano and trumpet part. The trumpet part features muted sections, doodle tonguing, tremolos, lip glisses, and several instances of bending the pitch using alternate fingerings and the third valve slide. Isolation and regular practice of each extended technique or muted section outside of McDowall's piece will be required for the performer to play this movement with confidence. There are frequent quick dynamic shifts and interjections, creating challenges with flexibility and requiring the performer to navigate larger interval leaps with ease. Isolating these larger intervals and singing them will allow the performer to increase their

accuracy and truly hear each pitch before they play it. This movement presents several opportunities to develop effective rubato and is ideal for practice playing with exaggerated expression and confidence to present the extended techniques and unexpected melodies with conviction.

The function of *Framed* can be reminiscent of the often-performed *Seven Popular Spanish Songs* by Manuel de Falla, an approachable work featuring seven short movements. Depending on whether the performer presents *Framed* in its entirety or selects individual movements, this work can be made more or less technically demanding. The opening few movements are accessible, both in terms of range and technical challenges, and can be paired together to present a less demanding work. *Framed* is an ideal recital program addition, with freedom to program all movements for a substantial 20 minute work, or the ability to select individual movements based on ability level, endurance considerations, or alignment with the rest of the program.