

Chanson en fa (1989)
Chanson en sol (1999)
Chanson en la (2009)
Chanson en mi bémol (1979)

This is a new compilation of character pieces written with extraordinary regularity over the past thirty years. The interplay of lightness and darkness seems to be a common thread running through all of these pieces – and through Elgar’s wonderful *Chanson de nuit* and *Chanson de matin* which to some extent inspired them all.

Chanson en fa was written in January 1989 for Ruth. It was first performed by her at Wells Cathedral School during that year. Ten years later, the Institute of Socio-Cultural Development, Japan, commissioned *Chanson en sol* for Haru and Maki Sekiya, who gave the first performance in Leicester Cathedral in August 1999.

Chanson en la was completed another ten years on, in January this year specifically for tonight’s concert. In Debussyesque vein, its subtitle - “Breezes and Shadows of a Summer’s Day” - appears at the end of the score. The earliest piece but the last of the set, *Chanson en mi bémol*, began life as a Christmas carol, setting John Donne’s Divine Poem *Annunciation*. Its theme and a set of variations forms the slow movement of a violin concerto currently being completed for Ruth.

Exploration of resonance and purity of melodic line dominate Geoff Palmer’s musical thought. Original approaches to composition and a distinctive soundworld became manifest particularly in the mid-1990s with works such as *La Maestà*, his second string quartet, which was played by the Sorrel Quartet at the 1997 and 1999 Cheltenham Festivals, broadcast twice on BBC Radio 3, and extracted on to **spnm**’s CD “Short Cuts”. A stream of other works has followed since, including *Paradis moins cinq* (a set of songs commissioned for The Purcell Contemporary Ensemble with funds provided by The Holst Foundation), the *Third String Quartet*, also for the Sorrel Quartet, and *Crystallisations* for Endymion. Palmer’s Bassoon Concerto, premièred in Finland last year, is the first of a planned series of concertos which includes a Flute Concerto to be premièred by Robert Aitken in Canada next year, and concertos for cello and for violin.

Palmer studied at Huddersfield with Stephen Oliver and Richard Steinitz, and at Bristol with Raymond Warren and Robert Saxton. He won the 1997 Classic CD Composition Competition, the 1998 Music Haven Prize, and second prize in the 1999 English Poetry and Song Society Composition Competition. He lives in the Grampian foothills, working as a composer and cellist, and teaching at the Music Department of the University of Aberdeen.