

## **Program Note**

### ***Sound Fields***

American artist Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) is widely credited for playing a pivotal role in the transition from Abstract Expressionism to Color Field painting. The depth of colour and texture in her works with their foregrounded lines and shapes suggested musical gestures to me. In 2016 I met with Dr Elizabeth Smith, Executive Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation in New York City, who was fascinated by my concept of a musical response to Frankenthaler's art. I was later thrilled when Rubiks responded to my pitch for the Pythia Prize by commissioning a work from me that allowed me to finally explore this theme.

In responding to Frankenthaler's art, *Sound Fields* is of course also about colour, but in this case, instrumental colour. It explores the possibilities of timbre, both on individual instruments and as collective colour. While fully notated, it references graphic score compositional practice through attempting to translate visual shapes as musical gestures, but also tries to evoke the 'sounds' of Frankenthaler's colours. Each miniature reflects its corresponding artwork's visual proportions; sometimes heard in the composition's overall structure; the timing of each gesture or silence; the ebb and flow of texture. And, as epitomised in *Geisha* or *Kiss*, the music also seeks to articulate the feeling within the image. Regardless, allowing the art to suggest different ways to explore composition was, for me, a huge part of the pleasure in making this piece; a process enriched by conversations with artists Els Zoon and Rob Annema while on residency in France in their home.

#### Acknowledgements:

I am grateful to the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation for supporting this project from the start, to Rubiks Collective for selecting me to compose *Sound Fields* as their Pythia Prize work and for providing such wonderful input to the score during development, to Air le Parc Artist Residency, and to UTS for the sabbatical that gave me the space to create it.

Felicity Wilcox  
October 2022

#### Bio:

Felicity Wilcox is an award-winning Australian composer and researcher, whose output encompasses concert music, film music, songwriting and improvisation, music live events, and radio. She has received many commissions for many leading Australian ensembles, and her work has featured in Sydney Festival, Vivid Sydney, Canberra International Music Festival, as well as internationally. She was composer and Assistant Music Director for the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, and has composed the soundtracks for over 60 screen productions (as Felicity Fox). Felicity is a Senior Lecturer in Music and Sound Design at the University of Technology Sydney, and lives on unceded Darug Country in the Blue Mountains, NSW, Australia.