

Maria Grenfell

Program Note

Poems of a Bright Moon (2000)

Poems of a Bright Moon for flute/alto flute, clarinet and piano was inspired by the Hsiang-Yang Songs of Li Po, an 8th-century Chinese poet of the T'ang Dynasty (ca.618-906 A.D.). On a visit to New Mexico in the United States, the discovery of the poet William Carlos Williams and the art work of Georgia O'Keeffe led to the poetry of Li Po, which conjures up visions of mountains and rivers, also very much part of the New Mexico landscape. Li Po was something of a mischievous travelling minstrel and liked to indulge in the drink somewhat. A legend says that "while out drunk in a boat, he fell into a river and drowned trying to embrace the moon." The moon appears in over a third of his poems, and the opportunity to combine Li Po's images of moonlight with the rich dark tones of the alto flute was irresistible. The individual titles of the movements of this piece come directly from the poems, and the music attempts to evoke the spirit of the titles: "Hsien mountain rises above emerald Han river," "On a moonlit night, a recluse plays his pale white ch'in" and "A pure ten-thousand-mile wind arrives." *Poems of a Bright Moon* was commissioned by Ethos trio with funding assistance from Creative New Zealand.