ELLIOTT PARK PRELUDIUM DIAPASON

for solo lute

PROGRAMME NOTE

The lute and the theorbo date from a point in history where the boundaries between the arts, science, and what we now regard as superstition or pseudoscience had not yet been firmly established. For those of a particular disposition, the intracacies of music were as much a puzzle to be solved as anything to do with creative expression. From the problems arising from Pythagorian tuning, through establishing the 'natural laws' governing harmony and counterpoint, to claims of discovering the true *musica universalis* by deriving pitches from how heavenly bodies moved across the sky, the idea that music as an artform could be definitively 'solved' now seems to be at best, rather naïve. That said, elements of this thinking still persist; the last century of musical thought has seen any number of new systems of organising pitch and rhythm, many appealing to similar claims of naturalism or mathematical 'purity'.

Rather than an attempt to 'solve' these 'problems', *Preludium Diapason* readily embraces them. Deriving strictly serial tone rows from Pythagorian intervals, the piece shows them being 'worked out' in the manner of a quirky Baroque prelude (the word 'diapason' literally means 'through all notes'). Much as in the art and science of music, nothing quite fits together as it 'should': harmony never quite settles, rhythms never quite achieve a solid sense of regularity, melody is transient if present at all, but perhaps that's something we, as performers and listeners can learn to live with, and maybe even like.

Preludium Diapason was composed as part of the Royal Academy of Music's 200Pieces Project, to celebrate the bicentenary of the institution's founding.

PRELUDIUM DIAPASON

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