

# Ian Keith Harris

(1935–2024)

## Puschef

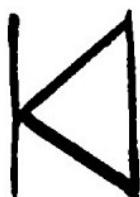
*for*

Voice, Oboe & Piano

Words by Sarah Pope

**Low voice**

**Bass**



Edited by

Christian Mondrup

# Ian Keith Harris

(1935–2024)

Australian composer, arranger, oboist, music educator, critic and eclectic musician, Ian Harris, was born in Melbourne in 1935. He studied at the Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music with Jiří Tancibudek and Arthur Nickson, continuing composition at the University of Wellington in New Zealand with David Farquhar and Douglas Lilburn.

Ian Harris was a founding member of the Glendenian Trio with whom he made regular broadcasts over several years. He played in the Tasmanian Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, and the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation Symphony Orchestra amongst others.

Harris tutored at the universities of Tasmania, Melbourne, and the Victoria University of Wellington and, deeply committed to music education, he also conducted the Tasmanian Junior Youth Orchestra for several years.

He was a dedicated member of policy committees, especially in Education and the Arts. A great listener to music and musicians, Ian Harris served as music critic for *The Mercury*, Hobart's daily newspaper, for an extended period.

His sense of fun was shown in many of his compositions including, 'Paw de trois': A 'Pas de trois' for an Imaginary Canine Ballet for Woodwind Quintet, with movements dedicated to his dogs by name.

Ian Harris' oeuvre consists mainly of chamber music, much of which has been performed and broadcast: *Microsymphony for Cor anglais Quartet* (cor anglais, string trio), *Oboe Quartet* (oboe, string trio), *Essay for Bassoon and Strings*, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, amongst many, many other pieces.

Ian Harris wrote many works for the oboe d'amore, among them fifteen original works composed for Jennifer Paull as well as transcribing and realising others from the Baroque period. Ian Harris' contribution to the double reed repertoire and for the oboe d'amore in particular is very considerable and important. It sets him apart as the composer who wrote most for this neglected instrument in contemporary times.

Ian died peacefully at 13.00h on 3 April (local time) at Gosford Hospital close to Woy Woy, Australia, where he had recently moved to live.

*Jennifer I. Paull*  
Vouvry, Switzerland, 2024

# Sarah Pope

(Born 1950)

Sarah Pope has been a viola player in the *BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra*, and the *New Zealand Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra* where she was a colleague and friend of Ian Keith Harris. Since her stay in New Zealand (1971–75) she has freelanced in London and taught in adult education, especially at *The City Lit*. She has written reviews and features for *The Strad*, *CD Classics* and *Classical Music* magazines and is the author of 'A New Tune A Day' for violin.

*Sarah Pope*  
London, UK, 2024

## **Puschef**

*for*

Voice, Oboe and Piano

A miniature portrait of a cat with nameplay on a Russian politician set within a 12-tone row structure clearly demonstrates Ian Keith Harris' sense of humour. He always had many cats and several dogs simultaneously and his love of these animals spilled over into his compositions. In 2005 he composed a Woodwind Quintet, *Paw de Trois, Three Dances for Canines* (Amoris International), but here we have a dance for a beloved cat that predates the quintet by 33 years. Forgotten, this work is one of several that were discovered in Ian Keith Harris' home after he passed away in early 2024.

The names of his pet animals were always highly inventive and this is no exception. Written in April 1972 less than 6 months after the death of the Russian First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev (September 1971), this is the setting of a nonsense poem by Sarah Pope. Sarah (viola) and Ian (oboe) were members of the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation Symphony Orchestra at the time.

Ian Keith Harris had named one of his cats *Puschef* as a nod to the Russian leader. It is unmistakably a dance and can be performed in several ways. It can be conventionally sung alone, or within a group of other cat songs of which there are many; performed in cat costume with rhythmic movements, or sung whilst a dancer interprets the text with free expression, etc.

There are versions for Low and High voice in two pitches: a serial composition, these cannot be termed 'tonalities'. Although written strictly to 12-tone row principals, this work is consistent with the composer's characteristically dense handling of motives and harmony.

Harris' way of applying serial composition is rather atypical: Schoenberg and Webern, and in part, Berg, designed 'non melodic' rows aiming for an expressionist style. Harris' design and use of his base row rather resembles that of Eisler, a fourth prominent Schoenberg pupil. He builds essentially on motive albeit more dissonantly than did Eisler. The row technique is just another way for Ian Keith Harris to unfold his characteristic compositional style with the difference that many of his pieces involve a kind of tonality which is here absent. Harris is having fun with his 12 tones, as is *Puschef*.

*As clever a cat as crept  
the cryptic velvet of a purr all fur.  
Vet scars needfully eyeful of awfulness.  
Catch as cat can entreats  
as friendliness retreats.  
A window moth retrace.  
Attention – mouse pounced.  
Fat pretender  
said you were asleep.  
Cat of many colours.  
PUSCHEF!*

*Jennifer I. Paull  
Vouvry, Switzerland, 2024*



Low voice

Bass

# Puschef

Ian Keith Harris (1935-2024)

$\text{♩} = 46$  ( $\text{♪} = 138$ )

As cle - ver a cat as crept — the

5  
cryp - tic vel - vet of a purr all fur. vet scarr's need - full - y

8  
eye - ful of aw - ful-ness. — Catch as cat can

12  
en - treats as friend - li-ness re - treats. A win - dow moth re -

16  
trace. At - ten - tion — mouse —

20  
pounced. Fat pre - ten - der -

28  
said you were a - sleep.

33  
Cat of man - y col-ours

*gliss*

*porta*

*p*

*f*

*pp*

*sffz*

**5**

**SPOKEN**

**\* PUS - CHEF!**

\* Rhymes with Khrushchev

Ian Keith Harris, April 1972