

Anna Maria McElwain (Clavichord/Finland)

"McElwain's imaginative, disciplined, and expressive playing make for undeniably engaging listening." Clavichord International, May 2014. Finnish-born Anna Maria McElwain studied at Turku Conservatory under the guidance of the Polish pianist, Elzbieta Guzek, after which she continued her studies in the United States at State University of New York at Buffalo with Dr Stephen Manes. At the age of 21, she had already completed a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance as well as a Master of Arts degree in Music Theory, become a winner of Baird Concerto Competition in 1993 and played as a soloist of Buffalo Civic Symphony Orchestra. Anna Maria is not known only as a pianist but as a player of harpsichord and fortepiano as well. She has specialized in playing the clavichord, which she studied with Dr Pekka Vapaavuori. She is the only person so far to have completed a Master's Degree in clavichord performance from Sibelius Academy. Anna Maria taught at the Sibelius Academy Kuopio department until 2010 and currently focuses on performing, mainly as a clavichordist. She has performed in Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Denmark, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy and the U.S., also giving master classes in many of those countries. Anna Maria's repertoire consists of music from the Renaissance to the early Romantic period and has also premiered several pieces composed and dedicated to her. She has explored the limits of the clavichord with the Beethoven Sonatas. She has played Chopin on the clavichord mainly as a curiosity, which resulted in a study on the topic, "The Clavichordist's View on the Chopin Preludes". Anna Maria's solo recording on an 1808 Lindholm clavichord at Nydahl Collection in Stockholm came out in November 2013 (Robert Holmin Ljud&Bild). "Hours Well Spent" takes the listener through a magical trip through centuries of music starting from Andrea Gabrieli and concluding with György Ligeti, and is the first-ever recording of Beethoven on the clavichord. Another recording was released in May 2015 including the music of Fux, Johnsen, Lithander and Beethoven. In 2019 her article "Nordic and Baltic Harpsichord Composers" was published in "The Cambridge Companion to the Harpsichord" by Cambridge University Press. Anna Maria has received grants for artistic work from the Finnish National Council of Arts, the Northern Savonia Council of Arts, the Northern Savonia Culture Fund, as well as a Kuopio Stipend in November 2013 from the City of Kuopio for her artistic achievements. In 2018 she was chosen as Savonian Woman of the Year by Zonta II of Kuopio. Anna Maria is the co-founder and artistic director of Nordic Historical Keyboard Festival, which celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2021. It has taken place eight times offering each time 20 concerts given by artists from three continents, several world

premieres, and courses in historical keyboards. Anna Maria is also the founder of the First International Clavichord Competition (2014), the first known competition in the 700-year history of the instrument, and International Clavichord Composition Competition (2018).