

Practising scales for Joe

Over and over, up and down
the length of a street
adding a sharp or a flat
looking at the personality of keys
as if they were houses, bare
or with ornate small gardens
sombre or joyous doors.

The examiner, when the day arrives,
will look for fluency, rhythm
like the rhythm of walking steps
up and down the mysterious street
sometimes open and hospitable
sometimes secret, behind dark hedges
the half-moon pane over the door.

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Elizabeth Smither received The Prime Minister's Award for Literary Excellence in Poetry for 2008. Her most recent collections are *The Year of Adverbs* (Auckland University Press, 2007) and *Horse playing the accordion* (Ahadada Press, 2007).