

Ensemble Offspring

# STILL LIFE WITH AVALANCHE

Aug 26 | 2pm & 5pm  
Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House



# WELCOME

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to this program of musical extremes, where chaos and beauty will become one. Through the unique perspectives of five great contemporary composers, *Still Life with Avalanche* embraces the beautiful messiness of life on earth, from mundane routines to life changing tragedies.

Steve Reich's *New York Counterpoint* plucks rhythmic patterns from everyday life, with a transfixing impression of New York's restless heartbeat. Missy Mazzoli's *Still Life with Avalanche* expresses the heartbreak of unexpectedly losing a loved one. Fittingly, we remember the recently passed and sorely missed Finnish compositional giant Kaija Saariaho, with a rendition of her ethereal duet *Oi Kuu*.

We're also thrilled to present two world premieres by Australian composers. Created as Ensemble Offspring's 2022 Noisy Women Commission with the support of Modest Expectations Foundation, Samantha Wolf's tongue-in-cheek new work *A rose is a rose is a ruse: A Bachelor's Tale* reflects on our strange obsession with reality TV.

Finally, Paul Dean's *the weight we carry* takes inspiration from an Allen Ginsberg poem and expresses the importance, burden and desperation of love. Generously commissioned by Mark Wakely as the 2023 Steven Alward Memorial Music Commission, we are honoured to unveil this poignant tribute to close our program.

**Claire Edwardes OAM, Artistic Director**



## ABOUT ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING

Ensemble Offspring is Australia's leading new music group. Uniting the country's most fearless instrumentalists under the leadership of internationally acclaimed percussionist Claire Edwardes, they subvert classical music traditions and deliver concerts that "*burst with imagination, energy and inspiration*" (Seesaw Magazine).

As the foremost champions of contemporary music in Australia, Ensemble Offspring have commissioned and premiered over 350 works and have toured new Australian music around the world. Their dedication to excellence and amplifying underrepresented voices has earned multiple APRA Art Music Awards and an ARIA Award nomination.

Through their pioneering spirit and relentless commitment to equality, Ensemble Offspring continue to shape a vibrant and diverse artistic future for Australian music.

# PROGRAM

Missy Mazzoli – *Still Life with Avalanche* (2009)  
flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion

Kaija Saariaho – *Oi Kuu* (1990)  
bass flute, cello

Steve Reich – *New York Counterpoint* (1985)  
clarinet, tape

Samantha Wolf – *A rose is a rose is a ruse: A Bachelor's Tale* (2023) \*  
piccolo/flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion  
**WORLD PREMIERE**

Paul Dean – *the weight we carry* (2023) \*  
piccolo/flute/alto flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion  
**WORLD PREMIERE**

\* Commissioned by Ensemble Offspring

**PROGRAM DURATION: 70 MINUTES**



# PERFORMERS

Claire Edwardes  
Lamorna Nightingale  
Jason Noble  
Véronique Serret  
Freya Schack-Arnott  
Benjamin Kopp

Artistic Director, percussion  
flutes  
clarinet, bass clarinet  
violin  
cello  
piano

## Missy Mazzoli

### *Still Life with Avalanche*

2009

flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion

"*Still Life With Avalanche* was commissioned by eighth blackbird. The piece is essentially a pile of melodies collapsing in a chaotic free fall. The players layer bursts of sound over the static drones of harmonicas, sketching out a strange and evocative sonic landscape. I wrote this piece while in residence at Blue Mountain Center, a beautiful artist colony in upstate New York. Halfway through my stay there I received a phone call telling me my cousin had passed away very suddenly. There's a moment in this piece when you can hear that phone call, when the piece changes direction, when the shock of real life works its way into the music's joyful and exuberant exterior. This is a piece about finding beauty in chaos, and vice versa. It is dedicated to the memory (the joyful, the exuberant and the shocking) of Andrew Rose." – Missy Mazzoli

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Recently deemed "one of the more consistently inventive, surprising composers working in New York" (NY Times), Missy Mazzoli's music has been performed by the New York Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the BBC Symphony, the Cincinnati Orchestra, the National Symphony, LA Opera, Scottish Opera, eighth blackbird, Kronos Quartet and many others. She is one of the first two women to receive a main stage commission from the Metropolitan Opera, and was nominated for a Grammy award for Best Classical Composition. From 2018-2021 she was Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and from 2012-2015 was Composer-in-Residence with Opera Philadelphia.

## Kaija Saariaho

### *Oi Kuu*

1990

bass flute, cello

Kaija Saariaho is a Finnish composer who has lived in Paris for much of her life. Influenced to some degree by the French spectral school, her music is characterised by a lush exploration of texture and timbre with a distinctively melodic trait. *Oi Kuu*, loosely translating to mean "for a moon", is typical of her approach to chamber writing. The relationship between the two instruments meanders in and away from one another: at times seeking commonalities of pitch and timbre and at other times indulging in their own unique qualities. *Oi Kuu* was written for clarinetist Kari Kriikku and cellist Anssi Karkttunen. The work also exists in a version for bass flute and cello heard in this performance.

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Kaija Saariaho was a prominent member of a group of Finnish composers and performers who made a worldwide impact. She studied composition in Helsinki, Freiburg and Paris, where she lived from 1982. Her studies and research at IRCAM had a major influence on her music, and her characteristically luxuriant and mysterious textures are often created by combining live music and electronics. Although much of her catalogue comprises chamber works, from the mid-nineties, she turned increasingly to larger forces and broader structures, such as the operas *L'Amour de loin* and *Adriana Mater* and the oratorio *La Passion de Simone*. Saariaho passed away in June 2023.

## Steve Reich

### *New York Counterpoint*

1985, arr. 2022

clarinet, tape

"*New York Counterpoint* is a continuation of the ideas found in *Vermont Counterpoint* (1982), where as soloist plays against a pre-recorded tape of him or her self. In *New York Counterpoint* the soloist pre-records ten clarinet and bass clarinet parts and then plays a final 11th part live against the tape. The compositional procedures include several that occur in my earlier music. The opening pulses ultimately come from the opening of *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976). The use of interlocking repeated melodic patterns played by multiples of the same instrument can be found in my earliest works, *Piano Phase* (for 2 pianos or 2 marimbas) and *Violin Phase* (for 4 violins) both from 1967. In the nature of the patterns, their combination harmonically, and in the faster rate of change, the piece reflects my recent works, particularly *Sextet* (1985)."

– Steve Reich

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Steve Reich has been called "the most original musical thinker of our time" (The New Yorker) and "among the great composers of the century" (The New York Times). Starting in the 1960s, his pieces *It's Gonna Rain*, *Drumming*, *Music for 18 Musicians*, *Tehillim*, *Different Trains*, and many others helped shift the aesthetic center of musical composition worldwide away from extreme complexity and towards rethinking pulsation and tonal attraction in new ways. He continues to influence younger generations of composers and mainstream musicians and artists all over the world.

## Samantha Wolf

### *A rose is a rose is a ruse: A Bachelor's Tale*

2023

clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion

#### **WORLD PREMIERE**

*Generously supported by the Modest Expectations Foundation as Ensemble Offspring's 2022 Noisy Women Commission.*

"*A rose is a rose is a ruse: A Bachelor's Tale* attempts to blend my musical and theatrical curiosities with my ultimate guilty pleasure: reality television. The text and music take the audience through the highs and lows of a typical season of a reality dating show, complete with romance, intrigue, large personalities, and of course, dramatic fights. Music, text, narrative, and characterisation are interwoven to bring theatrical sensibilities to a small ensemble context, creating an immersive, cheerfully irreverent, joyfully weird experience for both the ensemble and the audience." – Samantha Wolf

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Melbourne-based composer Samantha Wolf is quickly gaining recognition as one of Australia's distinctive young voices. Described as "haunting" (XS Entertainment), "enigmatic" (Blue Curtains) and "inspired" (Brisbane Music Festival), her music inhabits the space between the classical, contemporary, acoustic and electroacoustic worlds, while being grounded in the notated tradition. Her diverse practice encompasses solo, chamber, choral, band and orchestral works, interdisciplinary collaborations, and electroacoustic works that incorporate noise, speech, and found sounds.

## Paul Dean

### *the weight we carry*

2023

flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion

#### **WORLD PREMIERE**

*Generously supported by Mark Wakely as the 2023 Steven Alward Memorial Music Commission.*

*"the weight we carry* was commissioned by Mark Wakely as the 2023 Steven Alward Memorial Commission and written for Ensemble Offspring. The work takes its name and inspiration from the Allen Ginsberg poem *Song* and is dedicated with heartfelt wishes to Mark in memory of Steven. The breathtaking simplicity and yet unrelenting emotional pull of the poem creates an abundance of sound in my head - all driven by the gravitational pull of the words 'the weight we carry.'" – Paul Dean

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Brisbane born and bred clarinetist Paul Dean is regarded as one of Australia's foremost musicians in his multiple capacities as soloist, chamber musician, composer and artistic director. He currently holds positions as Head of Winds at Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, Co-Artistic Director of Ensemble Q and conductor of both the Queensland Youth Orchestra 2 and the Brisbane Symphony Orchestra. He is in high demand as a composer, most recently commissioned by the Australian World Orchestra, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and the prestigious Aspen Festival in Colorado.

## Song by Allen Ginsberg

The weight of the world  
is love.  
Under the burden  
of solitude,  
under the burden  
of dissatisfaction

the weight,  
the weight we carry  
is love.

Who can deny?  
In dreams  
it touches  
the body,  
in thought  
constructs  
a miracle,  
in imagination  
anguishes  
till born  
in human--  
looks out of the heart  
burning with purity--  
for the burden of life  
is love,

but we carry the weight  
wearily,  
and so must rest  
in the arms of love  
at last,  
must rest in the arms  
of love.

No rest  
without love,  
no sleep  
without dreams  
of love--

be mad or chill  
obsessed with angels  
or machines,  
the final wish  
is love  
--cannot be bitter,  
cannot deny,  
cannot withhold  
if denied:

the weight is too heavy

--must give  
for no return  
as thought  
is given  
in solitude  
in all the excellence  
of its excess.

The warm bodies  
shine together  
in the darkness,  
the hand moves  
to the center  
of the flesh,  
the skin trembles  
in happiness  
and the soul comes  
joyful to the eye--

yes, yes,  
that's what  
I wanted,  
I always wanted,  
I always wanted,  
to return  
to the body  
where I was born.



Pictured: Steven Alward

# SUPPORTERS

Ensemble Offspring would like to thank our community of trailblazing supporters. Our 2023 season would not be possible without your support.

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## **BECOME A SUPPORTER**

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Make a tax-deductible donation at any time at [ensembleoffspring.com/support-us](https://ensembleoffspring.com/support-us)



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Ensemble Offspring is assisted by the NSW Government through Create NSW and the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



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# UPCOMING SHOWS

Oct 8

The Surge

Riverside Theatres, Parramatta

Nov 11

Hatched Composer Showcase

The Neilson, Pier 2/3, The Rocks

Dec 9

Lone Hemispheres

Casula Powerhouse, Casula

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