

On Loop

 *ensemble offspring*

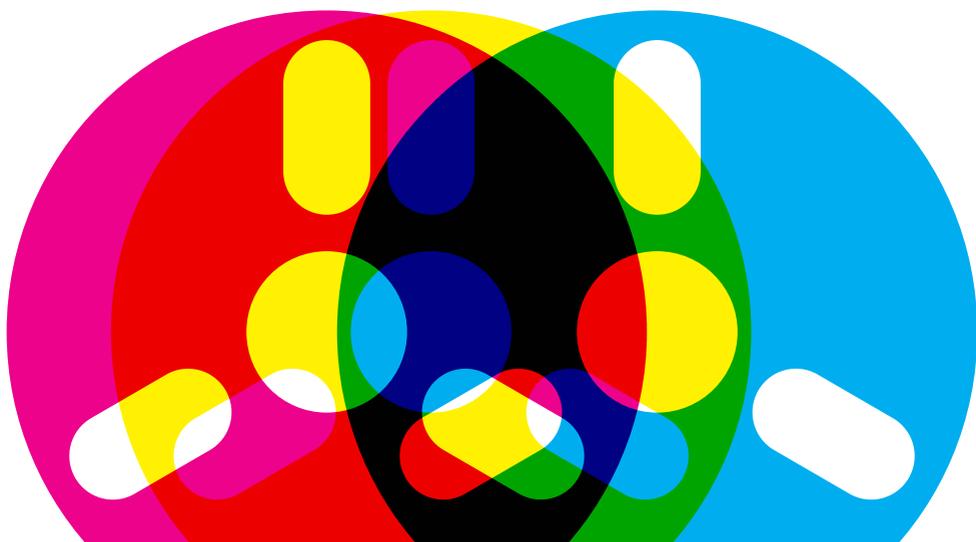
Sydney: Carriageworks (Bay 20)

8pm Saturday Dec 1, 2012

Melbourne Recital Centre (The Salon)

8pm Thursday Dec 6, 2012

December 2012



Loop Ensemble Offspring

Artistic Directors:

Claire Edwardes & Damien Ricketson

Program:

Cornelis Fuhler: *When Snoopy met Boop* (2012 WP)

flute, percussion, accordion, turntable, violin, tarhu and cello

Michel van der Aa: *Memo* (2003 AP)

solo violin and portable cassette player

Gavin Bryars: *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1975)

arranged for tape, flute, percussion, accordion, violin, tarhu and cello

– interval –

Matthew Shlomowitz: *Hi Hat and Me* (2010)

solo hi hat and voice

Bernhard Lang: *DW#3* (2000 AP)

flute, accordion and cello

Matthew Wright: *Totem for Sydney* (2012 WP)

laptop, percussion, turntable, flute, violin and cello

Installation loops by Damien Ricketson on a theme
by Steve Reich [*spoken word: Katia Molino*]



WP - World premiere

AP - Australian premiere

Performers:

James Crabb: *accordion*

Claire Edwardes: *percussion*

Geoffrey Gartner: *cello*

Anna McMichael: *violin*

Martin Ng: *turntables*

Lamorna Nightingale: *flute*

Damien Ricketson: *undachin tarhu*

Matthew Wright: *laptop*

Chris Hancock: *sound [Sydney]*

About the performance:

Repetition. The simplest pattern in music. You recognise a sound. Your mind connects what it is hearing now with what it has heard before and anticipates what it may hear next. Musical order emerges from the stream of noise.

From the spiritual enlightenment of devotional Sufi music to the erotic ecstasy of the nightclub beat, the hypnotic power of repetition in music can be euphoric. Yet much modern classical music in the wake of Schönberg has had an uncomfortable relationship with repetition. The very concept of the 12-tone row – where the reiteration of a note is forbidden until all other notes have been exhausted – encapsulates the aesthetic. Repetition is

synonymous with regression. Don't say things twice.

The explosion of American Minimalist music in the latter part of the twentieth century, not to mention the all-pervasiveness of the popular music industry today, has certainly challenged this notion and put repetition squarely back into the concert hall.

Although it should be noted that critical debate amongst composers today is often hotly divided as to whether such tendencies can be considered primitive or progressive.

What characterises the use of repetition in the early Minimalists as well as works such as Bryars' *Jesus' Blood* in tonight's program is the extremes to which it is employed. Repetition in such instances is not the structural comfort of the recapitulation that follows the development, but rather unrelenting obsessive loops of material that may induce altered states of perception in the listener.

Another facet of repetition found in the music of today is its relationship to recording technologies. Since the advent of the recording industry, music has been able to be precisely replicated *ad infinitum*. Some cultural theorists have even suggested that such machine-led capacity to relive the classics, the standards, the golden oldies in

perpetuity has contributed to a culture of repetition that reinforces the same forms and deadens our collective mind to the possibility of difference.

It is interesting to note that many of the works in tonight's program employ mechanical recording and/or playback technologies together with live instruments. Fuhler and Wright - through their use of turntables and music boxes - subvert devices designed for reproduction to become musical instruments in their own right. The use of magnetic tape to both record and reproduce the past finds its way to the work of Van der Aa. The possibility of splicing magnetic tape and linking it back together to form an infinite loop is the basis of the Bryars and the foundation of the characteristic techniques of Steve Reich. (A playful homage to Reich's origins appears in the installation-piece of two antiquated reel-to-reel recorders before the concert.) As such, much of the repetition found in tonight's program engages in a dialogue with machine-made music but re-appropriates and reinvents its devices and soundworlds back into a unique live form.

Dutch composer and improviser Cornelis Fuhler has a long history of meddling with musical objects. In tonight's premiere *When Snoopy Met Boop*, instruments such as music boxes or even an LP (made from manually

scratched plastic and sand-paper), defy their original design in search of new sounds. While several of the works in tonight's program have the entire ensemble looping together as a unit, the loops found in Fuhler's work are asynchronous. Individual performers have various gestures and melodies that they repeat independently from one another. As such, repeating elements are heard within a complex ever-changing linear structure.

Another Dutch composer Michel van der Aa has made a name for himself through his imaginative use of media, especially in his theatrical works. *Memo*, is scored for violin and portable cassette recorder. During the course of the performance, the violinist records passages of herself live and then plays them back as a backing track over which she performs afresh. In doing so the composer creates a curious dialogue between the lo-fi reproduction of what has past in the subjective moment of the present.

A field recording of a hobo singing a religious song and placed on an infinite loop forms the basis of Gavin Bryars' *Jesus' Blood Never Failed me Yet*. The broken fragility of the tramp's voice combined with the unwavering optimism of his faith creates a poignant effect. Bryars' describes leaving the 30-second loop running while he

fetched a coffee in the Fine Art Department in Leicester, to come back and find a few colleagues sitting alone quietly weeping. Bryars' created a simple harmonisation and offers up more of a road-map than a score by which to orchestrate an accompaniment. As such the work has existed in many forms from chamber to large orchestra and many durations from 20 to 90 minutes. What

is common across all versions is a very gradual understated evolution of the orchestration as different instrumental combinations gently fade into the texture.

The recent music of expat Australian, and original co-founder of Ensemble Offspring, Matthew Shlomowitz seeks to critically

engage with the sounds and culture of the everyday. Composed especially for Co-Artistic Director Claire Edwardes, *Hi Hat and Me* reduces the drum kit – the repetitive backbone of all pop music – to a mere hi hat. With such limited resources on which to stake their virtuoso coordination, the percussionist instead turns to vocalising like an absurd beatboxer. The performer begins by imitating the sounds of the hi hat but gradually turns to other, sometimes amusing, forms of vocal mimicry. The “me” in the title slowly reveals itself as the audience begins to learn about the person behind the performer.

The music of composer Bernhard Lang could be said to cross lineages between American Minimalism and Euro Modernism. The music is clearly repetitive, just rather less diatonic. The Austrian composer draws on the theoretical writings of Deluze's *Difference and Repetition* as a primary source of inspiration. An entire cycle of Lang's works bear the name, *Differenz/Wiederholung*, including tonight's work *DW#3* for flute, accordion and cello. In Lang's writings, he cites an attraction to the semantic shifts that may occur when material is subject to repetition. For example, when hearing a loop of spoken word, listeners tend to begin by hearing the meaning of the words but gradually shift towards hearing only the sonic quality of the words: their movement, rhythm and even melody. As such, Lang views repetition as a tool for deconstruction, often alluding to familiar sounding gestures but then abstracting them through their reiteration. Lang likens many of his compositional techniques to the cut-up found sounds of contemporary DJ and sampling techniques. Although *DW#3* is scored for acoustic instruments, several of his works include parts for turntables.

The music of UK based composer and sound artist Matthew Wright spans concert and club culture. Another world premiere in tonight's program, *Totem for Sydney* is the fourth in a series of works relating to place:

the others being *Totem for Gobi-New York*, *Totem for Den Haag* and *Totem for Brussels*.

The composer writes of the work: *"... the group are amplified and enhanced by electronic samples set at different tempi. This suggests a dense, asymmetric structure that could collapse at any time, and the playing should be energetic and driving, more like a wild, underground band than an ensemble. The result should, I hope, walk a tightrope between a rough, visceral attack and something very disciplined, like a ritual. The word 'totem' is used because I'm interested in music that feels as if it driving forwards, but also upwards, as if layers of sound are placed on top of each other."*

Notes by Damien Ricketson



About the artists

Ensemble Offspring is dedicated to the performance of innovative new music. Driven by open-mindedness and performance excellence, Ensemble Offspring's activities promote diverse and emerging music practices that expose audiences to new ways of experiencing sound. The group embraces a broad and progressive repertoire from seminal chamber music of the past 50 years, to free improvisation and the creation of striking interdisciplinary productions.

Led by Artistic Directors *Claire Edwardes* (percussion) and *Damien Ricketson* (composer), the ensemble comprises a team of virtuoso performers with broad ranging talents: some performing concertos with renowned symphony orchestras and others touring the world with indie pop bands.

Ensemble Offspring was nominated in nine categories at the 2011 Art Music Awards. Recent highlights include the 2010 Sydney Festival, ensemble-in-residence at the 2010 ISCM World New Music Days and an international tour to China (2011). Performing in venues ranging from the Sydney Opera House to local Sydney bowling clubs, Ensemble Offspring has developed a reputation for its uniquely adventurous and engaging programs.

www.ensembleoffspring.com

Dutch composer *Michel van der Aa* has attracted attention for his imaginative music theatre works such as *After Life* recently presented at the Melbourne Festival. Much of Van der Aa's work is of a multidisciplinary character having collaborated with filmmakers such as Peter Greenaway and choreographer Philippe Blanchard. Van der Aa studied composition at The Royal Conservatory of The Hague as well as courses in film (New York Film Academy) and stage direction (Lincoln Centre Theater Director's Lab). He has composed for prominent ensembles and orchestras including Schönberg and Asko ensembles, the Netherlands Radio Chamber Orchestra and received awards including the Paul Hindemith, Seimens, Vermeulen and Gaudeamus Prizes.

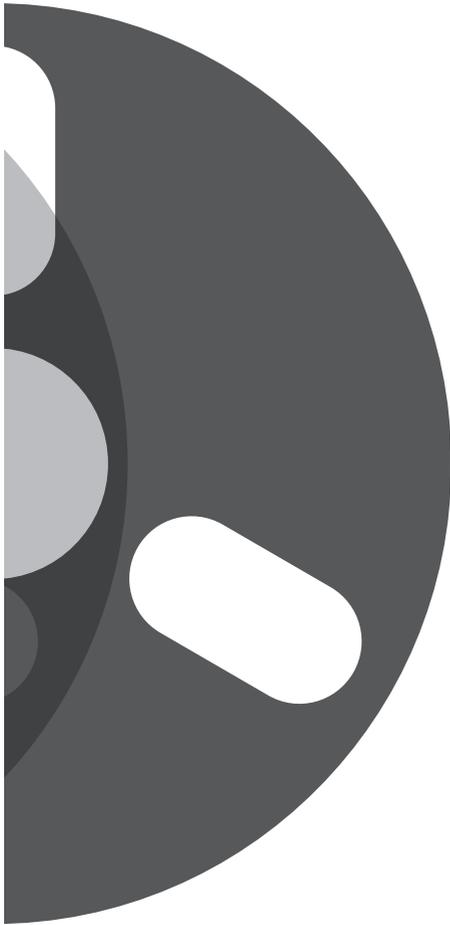
Gavin Bryars presents a versatile body of work that often transcend clear definitions of genre and style. His work is often built around a particular concept and draws upon multiple media. Much of his music was created for his own Gavin Bryars Ensemble. He has composed several major music theatre projects including *Medea* and *Doctor Ox's Experiment* and has an ongoing *Madrigal* project the first of which was created for the Hilliard Ensemble.

James Crabb is widely regarded as one of the world's leading exponents and ambassadors of the classical accordion. He has been soloist with many orchestras including the BBC Scottish, the Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, Sydney, and Melbourne symphony orchestras and ensembles such as the London Sinfonietta. His highly acclaimed recording as soloist and arranger of the works of Astor Piazzolla was released with the Australian Chamber Orchestra (*Song of the Angel*). James' world premiere performances and recordings include works by Harrison Birtwistle, Thomas Adès, Luciano Berio and Sofia Gubaidulina and has an ongoing collaboration with multi-media sound designers Ian Dearsden and David Sheppard alias 'Sound Intermedia'.
www.jamescrabb.com

Claire Edwardes is a leading interpreter of contemporary classical music and Co-Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring. Recent career highlights include concertos with the Vector Wellington Orchestra (New Zealand) & The Queensland Symphony Orchestra as well as solo festival appearances at Huddersfield Festival of Contemporary Music (UK), Port Fairy Spring Music Festival (Victoria) and Mona Foma (Hobart). In 2012 & 2007 she was awarded the AMC/APRA Art Music Award for Excellence in Australian Music, in 2005 she was the recipient of the MCA Freedman Fellowship and in 1999 she was named Australian Young Performer of the Year. www.clairewardes.com

Cornelis Fuhler is a Dutch composer and improviser. He performs piano in addition to many self-built or modified instruments such as the keyolin (a keyed violin of his own invention). Much of Fuhler's creative practice brings together performing groups such as: Corkestra, the Cortet, Fuhler/Bennink/de Joode, 'Wayang Detective' a combination of improvising musicians, gamelan orchestra and shadowpuppets, the eclectic rock/improv group Palinckx, electronics duo the Flirts, Otomo Yoshihide's ONJO and the (in)famous electronic orchestra MIMEO. He has also been commissioned by chamber ensembles such as MAE, the Nieuw Ensemble and Insomnio. Fuhler has performed at many festivals from the North Sea Jazz festival to Australia's What is Music. He is a member of the Doek foundation and co-organises the annual Doek festival.

Geoffrey Gartner is an exponent of the upside-down cello and a passionate advocate of the Fluxus ethos. Conductor, cellist and performance artist, he has brought countless new works to life and collaborated with many composers in Australia and abroad. Geoffrey holds a Doctorate in Contemporary Music Performance from the University of California, San Diego. He is a faculty member in the Department of Academic Studies at the Australian Institute of Music, where he brings his unique performer's perspective to the lecture theatre.



Bernhard Lang is an Austrian composer who has describing himself as a 'repetition-perpetrator'. He studied composition, piano and philosophy at the Bruckner Conservatorium in Linz and is now a professor of composition at Graz University. Lang frequently collaborates with artists from other genres including choreographers, electronic musicians, video artists and DJs. He is particularly known for the provocatively titled opera *I Hate Mozart* composed for the Viennese Mozart year festival in 2006. Other notable works include *Das Theater der Wiederholungen [Theatre of Repetitions]*, based on the writings of the Marquis de Sade and William S. Burroughs. He has written two major series of works, his *Monadology* – using a concept Lang calls 'musical-cellular processing' – and *Differenz/Wiederholung [Difference/Repetition]*.

Anna McMichael returned to live in Australia after 17 years in Europe performing in many of the major ensembles and orchestras. In Australia she has performed as guest assistant leader of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, guest associate concertmaster of Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and guest concertmaster of Orchestra Victoria. Anna has performed at many European music festivals and ensembles including the London Sinfonietta, Amsterdam Sinfonietta Chamber Orchestra, Nieuw Ensemble, ASKO/Schoenberg ensemble, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Martin Ng is a Sydney-based experimental DJ and cardiologist. Ng creates his own work using the turntable as a compositional engine to deconstruct and reassemble finely detailed soundworlds. Current projects include a duo with Oren Ambarchi and Beta Erko (with laptop artist Robin Fox, analogue synth Anthony Pateras and tri-lingual rapper Vulk Makedonski). He has also collaborated with Robbie Aveniam, Chris Abrahams (The Necks), Jim Denley and Paul Miller aka DJ Spooky to name a few.

Lamorna Nightingale joined Ensemble Offspring in 2007 and has been featured in numerous marathon length Feldman performances, regional Australian tours and Sizzles. She regularly performs with the Sydney Symphony, the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra as well as the Australian Chamber Orchestra. As a soloist she recently released a recording of new Australian music for flute, *Eat Chocolate and Cry* and in her role as a flute mentor, she has published a range of flute teaching materials.

Damien Ricketson is a composer and Co-Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring. Damien's music is characterised by exotic sound-worlds and novel forms and has frequently been featured in Ensemble Offspring events. Recent works have included *Fractured Again*, a major multimedia production that toured China and featured in the Sydney Festival and *Some Shade of Blue*, a microtonal work for a newly invented instrument which he

occasionally performs, the undachin tarhu. Damien is lecturer in composition at the Sydney Conservatorium and is currently working on a show-length project exploring music and secrecy. www.curiousnoise.com

Matthew Shlomowitz is an Australian composer who now resides in London. Shlomowitz was the co-founder of Ensemble Offspring and is currently co-director of the new music ensemble Plus Minus with Joanna Bailie. He has two ongoing projects: *Popular Contexts*, a series of pieces that investigate everyday and popular culture, and *Letter Pieces*, which combine physical actions, music and text. He is currently Lecturer in Composition at University of Southampton. www.shlom.com

Matthew Wright is a composer, sound artist and turntablist who specialises in concert/club/gallery/web hybrids. He is the Programme Director of the BA Creative Music Technology degree at Canterbury Christ Church University and he works especially closely with Ensemble Klang in the Netherlands, Bl!ndman in Brussels, with his own ensemble, Splinter Cell in the UK, as well as in performances in the UK, in New York and Paris with saxophonist Evan Parker, with whom he recently co-composed a studio album named 'Trance Map'.



Coming soon

Ligeti Morphed
Sydney Festival

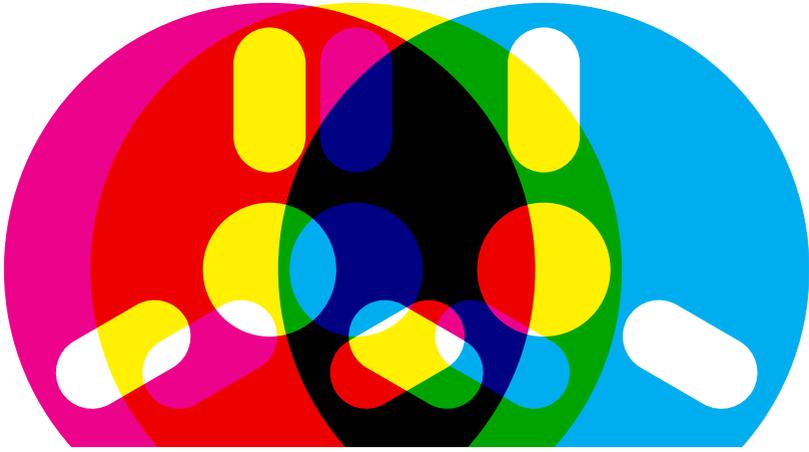
Friday Jan 11, 5:00pm

Saturday Jan 12, 10:00pm

Sunday Jan 13, 11:30am

Carriageworks (Track 8) \$35

Ensemble Offspring is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, Its Arts funding and advisory body and by the NSW Government through Arts NSW.



On Loop

Ensemble Offspring

Artistic Directors

Claire Edwardes & Damien Ricketson



ensembleoffspring.com

youtube.com/ensembleoffspring