

Ensemble Offspring:

Ensemble Offspring is a dynamic Sydney-based organisation 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.

In 2011 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. Upcoming projects fuse turntables and acoustic instruments in "On Loop" (Syd Dec 1 & Melb Dec 6) and a reinvention of the Ligeti canon in a collaboration with electronic duo Martin Ng and Oren Ambarchi as part of the 2013 Sydney Festival (Jan 11-13)

www.ensembleoffspring.com

Ensemble Offspring Program 22nd November 2012

Karlheinz Stockhausen - Tierkreis [Scorpio/Capricorn/Aquarius/Aries/Taurus/Gemini]
Matthew Shlomowitz - Hi Hat & Me
Thierry de Mey - Musique de Tables
Melody Eötvös - Leafcutter
James Humberstone - Cycles & Circles
Andrew Ford - Composition in Yellow Square
Larry Polansky - Ensembles of Note

Program notes:

Karlheinz Stockhausen: *Tierkreis* [Scorpio/Capricorn/Aquarius/Aries/Taurus/Gemini] (1975)
Open instrumentation [arranged by Ensemble Offspring]

Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Tierkreis* is a collection of twelve melodies representing the signs of the zodiac. Originally written for specially-designed music boxes in the children's theatre piece *Musik im Bauch (Music in the Belly)*. The child-like simplicity of *Tierkreis* belies elaborately crafted musical formulae that capture the different character-types of the Zodiac. *Tierkreis* is not written for specific instruments but rather can be 'assembled' for every new performance. Each melody is like a piece of DNA - a magical set of relationships between pitches and rhythms - that can grow into innumerable forms. First completed in 1975, Stockhausen created many realizations of *Tierkreis* including one on the eve of his death in 2007. Ensemble Offspring's arrangement features a colourful assortment of instruments including one of the original music boxes from whence the whole work began.

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

Hi hat and voice

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 ubiquitous symbol of pop music’s beat – 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 beat boxer. 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.

Thierry de Mey: *Musique de Tables* (1987)

Amplified tables: Claire Edwardes, Bree van Reyk & Jason Noble

Belgian composer Thierry de Mey’s experience as a filmmaker and composer for dance informs his musical works revealing a strong visual sensibility for the creation of sound. One of his most popular works, *Musique de tables* is characterised by an intricate choreography of six hands ‘dancing’ on an amplified table-top. The work is a peculiar examination of the relationship between sound and physical action. The composer explores all manner of sounds possible from a set of bare hands and a hard surface: flicking, striking, thumping, rubbing, scrapping. The consequent visual gestures then give rise to particular sequencing and structuring of the sound elements. Despite the unconventional sound-source, the work still draws upon many conventional musical gestures that see the musicians work in unison and in dialogue as well as including a ‘fugue’ in the middle of the work.

Melody Eötvös: *Leafcutter* (2012)

Clarinet and Vibraphone

Leafcutter is a brand new work written for Ensemble Offspring, by the young Australian composer **Melody Eötvös**. Currently studying in Bloomington, USA, in this duo for clarinet and vibraphone she finds her inspiration in the complex social structures of ants. She writes: “Winged female and male Leafcutter Ants leave their respective nests en masse and engage in a nuptial flight known as the revoada. Once on the ground, the female loses her wings and searches for a suitable underground lair in which to found her colony. One of the most interesting things I find about this species of ant is that if their newborn Queens are not able to take this flight, they are still incorporated into the colony and adapt to some sort of function within the group... rather than being eaten or driven out. So, this composition is my salute to these resilient little princesses and the metaphor of survival, versatility, and resilience they have. Next to humans, Leafcutter Ants form the largest and most complex animal societies on Earth.”

James Humberstone: *Cycles and Circles* (2012)

Any two percussion and melodic bass instrument(s)

Cycles and Circles by Australian composer James Humberstone was commissioned by Ensemble Offspring and represents a growing body of new repertoire that explores facets of openness. The work can be performed on two unspecified pitched percussion instruments, an unspecified bass instrument(s) and programmable music boxes (that respond to a pre-punched scroll similar to a pianola). In this version, the delicate twinkle of the music boxes is mirrored in the rather unusual sound world of pitched ceramic bowls (the cheap Chinese variety that can be found in most two-dollar shops), bass clarinet and bass flute. Another facet of openness relates to the harmonic colour of the work. The melodic material is conceived as simple contours (a sequence of scale degrees) rather than specific pitches. As such, the melodies may be rendered into a variety of possible modes at the discretion of the performers. Further, each musician plays their repeated melodic cells in a pattern of their own choosing free to meander away from (and even deliberately out of time with) their fellow ensemble members. The correspondence of pitches

and rhythms gently shift in an out of focus like a delicate machine holding onto a fragile sense of synchronicity. An education resource on this work can be downloaded from Ensemble Offspring's website.

Andrew Ford: *Composition in Yellow Square*

Larry Polansky: *Ensembles of Note* (1998)

Open instrumentation

Written for any group of musicians, Larry Polansky's *Ensembles of Note* is a simple accumulation of a melody over an ostinato. The melody is not prescribed, nor is the process by which it accumulates. Rather, after the ostinato is established, each performer introduces a note (or sound) of their choice one at a time to gradually reveal a melody that develops in real-time during the act of performance. The work takes on a game-like challenge in that the performers not only need to think of what they will add next, but also need to remember and repeat their previous additions. The inherent challenge is acknowledged in the instructions to the work with the musicians invited to "sit-out" if they have difficulty remembering their melody.

Musician biographies:

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.claireedwardes.com

Joining Ensemble Offspring in 2007, **Lamorna Nightingale** 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.

Jason Noble is a freelance clarinetist specialising in contemporary classical repertoire. He has performed at many prestigious festivals such as the Warsaw Autumn, Aldeburgh Festival, Musica Viva Festival and Sydney Festival. Jason has been an integral member of Ensemble Offspring for many years whilst also performing with Halcyon, Sydney Children's Choir, the indigenous women's group from the Tiwi Islands, Ngarukuruwala and singer Holly Throsby. He teaches in the Musicology faculty at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and maintains a strong interest in teaching his craft to the next generation.

Bree van Reyk is a successful cross-over percussionist maintaining a career in both classical and popular music. As well as performing percussion (and occasional accordion) with Ensemble Offspring, Bree performs with Australia's leading percussion ensemble Synergy Percussion as well as the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. Bree also plays drum-kit with singer-songwriters Holly Throsby and Darren Hanlon and appears with many popular music acts including Rand & Holland, Charge Group, Coda and The Initials. www.breevanreyk.com