

 ensemble offspring



Sydney
The Vanguard,
8pm 11th September 2013

Bendigo
International Festival of Exploratory Music,
Old Fire Station,
4pm 14th September 2013



Ensemble Offspring

Artistic Directors

Damien Ricketson & Claire Edwardes

Program

Damien Ricketson

Some Shade of Blue [2011]

solo violin (plus electronic resonance)

*premiere version for violin

Electronics realised by Marcus Whale

Matthew Shlomowitz

Slow Flipping Harmony [2006]

four melodic instruments and auxiliary player

Iannis Xenakis

Rebonds A/B [1987-89]

solo percussion

- interval -

Matthew Shlomowitz

Letter Piece No.8: Sit Up Stand Down [2012]

three performers

Iannis Xenakis

Mikka [1971] - Mikka S [1975]

solo violin

Damien Ricketson

Fractured Again (Movement 4) [2010]

clarinet, violin & vibraphone

Musicians

- James Cuddeford | *Violin*
- Claire Edwardes | *Percussion*
- Jason Noble | *Clarinet*
- Bree van Reyk | *Percussion*
- Damien Ricketson | *Auxiliary instruments*



About the performance

Notes by Damien Ricketson

Welcome to Slow Flipping Harmonies!

Almost exactly eighteen years ago to the day, a concert in the now defunct Sydney Spring Festival featured a bunch of young eager performers from the Sydney Conservatorium. The program comprised multiple works from two student composers, Matthew Shlomowitz and myself, as well as the great avant-gardist Iannis Xenakis. Although we didn't know it at the time, the concert marked the birth of what was to become Ensemble Offspring. Almost two decades and several hundred concerts later, we present the same trio of composers together in the one program. While all the associated musicians have matured and evolved into a well-honed group of successful professionals we still like to think of ourselves as the same starry-eyed idealists with the same insatiable desire to hear the world in new and unexpected ways.

Over the years Ensemble Offspring has traversed all sorts of Sydney venues from the concert hall of the Opera House to the Petersham Bowlo. It's been a long time coming, but this is our first performance in Newtown's iconic establishment, The Vanguard. So top up your drinks and make yourself comfortable for an evening of primordial rhythms, wild glissandos, dictaphones and "arty farty charades".

Damien Ricketson, Some Shade of Blue

Some Shade of Blue is a slow song-like solo set over a resonant aura provided via electronic means. The work was originally written for the undachin tarhu, a newly designed string-instrument by Peter Biffin, and a detuned vibraphone. Tonight is the first performance of an adapted version of the work for violin combined with electronics realised together with the young composer Marcus Whale.

Some Shade of Blue is a microtonal work based on a 19-notes-per-octave just intonation scale proposed by Kraig Grady and Terumi Narushima. The metaphor of colour is associated with the evolving palette of pitch intervals that grows as the work unfolds. The slow intense ascent of the melodic line shadows the violin solo in the final movement of the *Quartet for the End of Time* by Messiaen: a composer whose use of pitch is intrinsically tied up with colour ('synesthetically' so). The colour blue is often used to symbolise eternity, the end-point for Messiaen's quartet. The colour is also used to describe the subtle flattening of notes in Jazz and Blues music. Although I do not seek to directly evoke such musical traditions, the idea of the "blue note" – a note of heightened expressive potential lying between the cracks of the piano – is of relevance. The title is also a loose play on David Hume's "Missing Shade of Blue": a philosophical proposition concerning the



capacity of the mind to project an idea without being exposed to the relevant sensory experience. Is it possible to imagine a shade of blue that you have never seen? Similarly, the question can be applied to musical situations such as our perception of pitch and has been a point of contemplation for me reconciling my theoretical understanding of microtonal tuning theories with my perceptual experience of previously unheard notes and intervals. *Some Shade of Blue* was premiered by Anna McMichael and Bree van Reyk as part of Ensemble Offspring's Partch's Bastards project in 2011.(DR)

**Matthew Shlomowitz,
Slow Flipping Harmony**

The basis of *Slow Flipping Harmony* is a chord that becomes muddled and then disintegrates. Each performer has a series of related melodies; each melody elaborates a note from the chord. The players proceed through their parts independently of one another, repeating each melody a number of times before moving on to the next one. The result is an overlapping tapestry of asynchronous loops and the blurring of a simple harmony. The process towards disintegration is initiated by the auxiliary player who makes live recordings on two "poor quality recording devices" (in this case dictaphones), which are played back during the unfolding performance. Consequently, this is mirrored by the instrumentalists who are instructed, in a manner of their choosing,

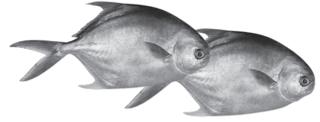
to play their melodies with a 'damaged' and 'dirty' timbre. *Slow Flipping Harmony* was premiered by Ensemble Offspring in 2006.

**Iannis Xenakis,
Rebonds A/B**

The Greek composer Iannis Xenakis wrote *Rebonds* during his late years in France (1987-89). Composed for the relatively simple setting of bongos, tom toms and bass drum, the agile and vigorous *Rebonds* has become one of the seminal solo works of the percussion repertoire. The work is structured in two seamless movements, from which the performer can choose to play either order: 'A/B' or 'B/A'. Claire Edwards will perform A/B. The two movements have distinct characters; *Rebonds A* delves into complex polymetric rhythms while *Rebonds B* explores texture and is characterised by a driving pulse. The two movements, however, can be seen as different perspectives on a similar dramatic process where contesting musical materials are pitted against one another and, through their friction, a new homogeneous sound forged.

**Matthew Shlomowitz,
Letter Piece No.8: Sit Up Stand Down**

Matthew Shlomowitz's Letter Pieces are an ongoing series of short performance works combining physical action, text and sound. Each Letter Piece has a score that defines a



limited palette of physical actions and sound objects in a fixed order. The score, which is expressed as sequence of letters – hence the title – is effectively a form into which the performers invent their own content. As such, any two performances may sound and look entirely different. *Letter Piece No.8* was written for the Italian group Alter Ego and first performed by them at the Piteå School of Music in Sweden in 2012.

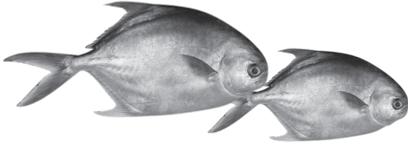
**Iannis Xenakis,
Mikka - Mikka S**

Iannis Xenakis's solo violin works, *Mikka* and *Mikka S*, draw on Brownian motion – a mathematical model used to describe the random movements of particles suspended in a medium such as water or air – as a means of generating pitch and duration. The result is a striking continuous glissando where traditional notions of melody, as being defined by a limited set of fixed frequencies (such as a scale or mode), are discarded in favour of a fluctuating contour in time. The primordial gestural shapes of *Mikka* (composed in 1971) take a wild polyphonic turn when paired with its sister piece *Mikka S* (composed later in 1975) as the violinist begins simultaneously tracing multiple 'particles' in seeming independence from one another.



**Damien Ricketson,
Fractured Again (Movement 4)**

Fractured Again, in its full form, is a show-length multimedia work exploring music and glass that combines live performance together with electronic music and a glass installation. The full version of the work includes a series of large glass panels that are simultaneously gong-like instruments and video projection surfaces as well as the incredibly rare glass harmonica: an angelic-sounding instrument that became virtually extinct, in part because it was thought to trigger insanity. Although these 'instruments' do not feature in this performance, the metaphor of glass in *Fractured Again*, runs more deeply than the use of glass as a sound source. Almost all of the music scored for the more conventional instruments of clarinet, violin and vibraphone has been derived from repertoire written for glass harmonica including references to the 'mad scene' in Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* and the 'God Music' movement of George Crumb's *Black Angels*. The opening clarinet solo that characterises this performance is a faint reflection of Mozart's *Adagio for Glass Harmonica*, however, it has been highly misshapen as though viewed through a strange and distorted lens. *Fractured Again* was premiered by Ensemble Offspring as part of the 2010 Sydney Festival and subsequently toured China with performances in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macau.



Artists

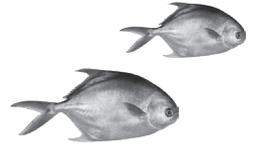
James Cuddeford is a violinist, composer and Concertmaster of the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. James has performed extensively throughout Europe, Asia and Australia as both soloist and chamber musician. He has performed concertos with orchestras including the Camerata Lysy Switzerland, BBC Scottish, Jena Philharmonic (Germany), Queensland, Adelaide, and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras. As a chamber musician he performed with the Grainger Quartet, the Sydney Soloists and the Australian String Quartet. Recent composition commissions have included a work for Japanese Shakuhachi Grandmaster Akikazu Nakamura and *Koan* for Ensemble Offspring.

Claire Edwardes graduated as Student of the Year from the Sydney Conservatorium before winning the coveted ABC Young Performers Award in 1999. Resident in Europe for seven years, she was awarded many international prizes including first place at the Tromp Percussion Competition (2000) and Llangollen International Instrumentalist (2001). Claire has performed concertos with all of the Australian orchestras as well as numerous European orchestras. In her role as Co-Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring and a percussion soloist, Claire is passionately committed to the advancement of innovative new music in Australia.

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, and Ngarukuruwala, the indigenous women's group from the Tiwi Islands. He teaches in the Musicology faculty at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Jason recently returned from a project in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Bree van Reyk is a Sydney based percussionist, drum-set player, casio keyboard enthusiast and occasional composer. She has been a member of new music groups Synergy Percussion and Ensemble Offspring for many years, and tours and records regularly with Holly Throsby. Bree has worked with choreographer Shaun Parker as co-composer (with Nick Wales) for *Love Installment* (SDC 2008) and *Happy As Larry* (2010), and was Composer/Performer for Bell Shakespeare's *King Lear* in 2010. She has just returned from a tour with Paul Kelly.

Damien Ricketson is the Co-Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring and a Lecturer in Composition and Contemporary Music Studies at the Sydney Conservatorium.



Damien's music is characterised by exotic sound-worlds and novel forms. Damien received the NSW State Award for 'Best Composition by an Australian Composer' for his string quartet *So We Begin Afresh* and the international Lady Panufnik Award for *Chinese Whisper*. Recent projects have included *Fractured Again*, a multimedia production that toured China. Damien is currently working on *The Secret Noise*, a show-length hybrid work exploring music and secrecy.

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. 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. Recent projects have included 'Ligeti Morphed' in the Sydney Festival with electronic duo Oren Ambarchi and Martin Ng, 'Between the Keys' featuring new musical instruments and tuning systems and 'The Listening Museum' and installation-come-concert with Brisbane's Clocked Out. (www.ensembleoffspring.com)

Upcoming

Roar

Ensemble Offspring is about to embark on a European tour. Lucky for Sydneysiders, we're performing the same program in Campbelltown on our return. 8pm, Saturday 16th November
Campbelltown Arts Centre

Acknowledgements

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ensembleoffspring.com

[youtube.com/ensembleoffspring](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)