

PROGRAM

DAMIEN RICKETSON (b. 1973)

NO MORE THAN LIQUID (2007) WORLD PREMIERE

Roland Peelman, Shefali Pryor, Jason Noble, Casey Rippon, Veronique Serret, Nicole Forsyth, Geoffrey Gartner, Claire Edwardes, Timothy Constable, Bree van Reyk

GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923-2006)

SIPPÁL, DOBBÁL, NÁDIHEGEDŰVEL (2000) AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

1. Fabula 2. Táncdal 3. Kínai Templom 4. Kuli 5. Alma álma 6. Keserédes 7. Szajkó
Jenny Duck-Chong, Michael Askill, Timothy Constable, Claire Edwardes, Bree van Reyk, Shefali Pryor, Jason Noble, Sally Walker, Rob Llewellyn

CLAUDE VIVIER (1948-1983)

BOUCHARA (1981)

Roland Peelman, Alison Morgan, Sally Walker, Ngaire de Korte, Diana Springford, Rob Llewellyn, Casey Rippon, Veronique Serret, Sophie Cole, Nicole Forsyth, Geoffrey Gartner, Lauren Brandon, Adam Jeffrey

INTERVAL

STEVE REICH (b. 1936)

TEHILLIM (1981)

Roland Peelman, Alison Morgan, Belinda Montgomery, Jenny Duck-Chong, Jo Burton, Lamorna Nightingale, Sally Walker, Ngaire de Korte, Shefali Pryor, Jason Noble, Diana Springford, Rob Llewellyn, Zubin Kanga, Sally Whitwell, Veronique Serret, Sophie Cole, Nicole Forsyth, Geoffrey Gartner, Lauren Brandon, Michael Askill, Timothy Constable, Claire Edwardes, Bree van Reyk, Jess Ciampa, Adam Jeffrey

ARTISTS

CONDUCTOR: Roland Peelman

HALCYON:

Alison Morgan soprano *Artistic Director*
Belinda Montgomery, soprano
Jenny Duck-Chong mezzo soprano *Artistic Director*
Jo Burton mezzo soprano

ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING:

Damien Ricketson Artistic Director
Lamorna Nightingale piccolo; Sally Walker flute, recorder, ocarina, chromonica; Ngaire de Korte oboe, Shefali Pryor oboe, cor anglais, recorder, ocarina, chromonica; Jason Noble clarinet, ocarina, chromonica; Diana Springford clarinet; Rob Llewellyn bassoon, recorder; Casey Rippon horn
Zubin Kanga organ; Sally Whitwell organ
Veronique Serret violin; Sophie Cole violin; Nicole Forsyth viola; Geoffrey Gartner cello;
Lauren Brandon double bass
Claire Edwardes percussion; Bree van Reyk percussion

SYNERGY PERCUSSION:

Michael Askill *Artistic Director*
Timothy Constable *Assistant Artistic Director*
Jess Ciampa guest musician; Adam Jeffrey guest musician

Tonight's performance is being recorded for future broadcast by ABC Classic FM. Please ensure your mobile phone is switched off, and please muffle any coughs.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

DAMIEN RICKETSON *NO MORE THAN LIQUID* (2007)

No More Than Liquid is water music on many levels: water-derived metaphors permeate the substance of the piece as well as how it's structured and even, in one case, how one of the instruments produces its sound.

On the most obvious level, several musical quotations underlie the work, all of which originate in pieces that depict or engage with the idea of water (Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, Telemann's *Water Music*, Takemitsu's *Waterways*, Sibelius' *The Oceanides*, the Chinese folksong "Flowing Waters" and Tan Dun's *Water Percussion Concerto*). These quotations are from temporally and culturally diverse sources, and their juxtaposition poses a question: what can there be in common in these varied musics depicting the same thing? The work, perhaps, doesn't seek to answer this in any straightforward way, rather, it subjects the musical "objects" to the water-like process of erosion. Their harmonies are quickly muddied and their themes are shortened and transformed, as if creating a wash or trail after each of the originals. The music mostly skips back and forth between these eroded quotations in a manner the composer credits to another water metaphor: the structural model of fluidity. Eventually the "trails" intertwine, around the middle of the work.

Erosion and decay have been common artistic preoccupations in the last few decades, as have quotation and an interest in multiple, rather than singular perspectives. Ricketson's take on these themes seeks to find beautiful, haunting qualities in the eroded objects of the past: his style of decay is not one of despair or annihilation. Similarly the presence of quotation doesn't signal the view that the world of sound is exhausted and invention is impossible, it's simply an acknowledgement of the multitude of voices in the 21st century world.

As for the water instrument, the waterphone, it appears toward the piece's end, bowed by one of the percussionists. Although it appears to consist of spikes, its interior is actually filled with water and the sound resonates through and is transformed by the liquid.

GYÖRGY LIGETI *SIPPAL, DOBBAL, NÁDIHEGEDÜVEL* (WITH PIPES, DRUMS AND FIDDLES) (2003)

In *Sippal, dobbal, nádihegedüvel* Ligeti exercises the gifts for colour and atmosphere that has made him one of the most popular composers of the 20th century avant-garde (anyone who has seen *2001: A Space Odyssey* has heard some of Ligeti's music). The work fits, however, into the stream of more folk-like compositions he produced throughout his career, in which he often set poetry from his native Hungary. The texts of *Sippal, dobbal* are no exception. They originate in the work of one of Ligeti's favourite poets, Sándor Weöres.

The nature of Ligeti's attraction to Weöres's texts is evident in his characterisation of them as "equally profound and playful." Weöres, perhaps like Ligeti, is able to unite folkloric, direct expression with an experimental attitude to language: writing, for instance, a string of single-syllable Hungarian words which evoke the sounds of Chinese language in movement 3, "Chinese Temple" (which Ligeti sets, he said, "like a mystical ceremony"). Other movements use nonsense syllables (2 and 7), prioritising sound over meaning and exploiting, in Ligeti's view, "the rhythmic-metric and semantic possibilities and impossibility of the Hungarian language." Ligeti's inclusion of non-traditional vocal sounds such as whispering and screaming adds a further layer of dramatic expression.

The work is a series of miniatures, consisting of 7 very short movements. The combination of mezzo-soprano and a rich range of percussion instruments allow the composer to create a distinct set of sonic colours and a new character in each movement. "Chinese Temple" (3) uses only metallic sounds, whereas "Dream" (5) introduces eerie-sounding chromatic harmonicas as the sole accompaniment. "Bittersweet" (6) prioritises melody: it was written after Ligeti repeatedly listened to a traditional Transylvanian country folk song.

1. FABLE

One mountain moves.
Face to face comes another mountain.
They scream out, many scream:
“Don’t crush us!”
“I a mountain.
You also a mountain.
Pffft! Ever must we move.”

2. DANCING SONG

An untranslatable text of rhythmic nonsense with the vocal indication: “the voice is virtuoso, dangerous, capricious”.

3. CHINESE TEMPLE

Sacred gardens plentiful boughs extended green wing
Above beneath broad night exists, blue shadow
Four steel bells ring out: beautiful good tidings ringing
Then deep silence floats like cool sound.

4. COOLIE

Koolie hacks with a stick. He marches, just rolls on....
Rickshaw! Car! Dragon chariot!
He draws the rickshaw, He draws the car, He draws the dragon chariot:
Just rolls on...
Koolie is on foot. He has white whiskers. He is sleepy. He is hungry.
He is an old man.
He is a grain of rice, he is a tiny bean, he is a poppyseed, a small child:
Small Koolie beats big bad people.
Just rolls on and on...
Rickshaw? Car? Dragon chariot?
Pulls the rickshaw? Pulls the car? Pulls the dragon chariot?
Has he died? He will never know death!
He is eternal: just rolls on and on...

5. APPLE DREAM

apple on a branch
apple rocks on a branch
apple rocks
apple rocks on a leafy branch
rocks and rocks on the brown branch
a-rocking a-rocking like a pendulum a seesaw
apple dream mind dream apple
dream! dream! it sleeps...
motionless but a-rocking in the wind in a dream
dreaming on a branch dreaming a-swaying a-wobbling
Here in place it sets sail to India, Africa, into the moonlight... dream!
apple dreams?.. it sleeps?...

6. BITTERSWEET

I plowed with seven fiery dragons.
Oh all along I planted nothing but lily of the valley.
I plowed with a beautiful diamond plough.
Oh all along I planted with falling tears.
I dreamt about a hundred opening roses in the forest.
I did not sleep but I was half awake.
In the dawn I awoke, I counted the songs of the cuckoo.
Oh, they carry me to the wedding with my dear dove.

7. PARROT

This nonsense song explores the sounds of language and contains only disjunct words and syllables used for percussive effect.

CLAUDE VIVIER *BOUCHARA* (1981)

Claude Vivier was a Canadian composer who had a particular interest in writing for the human voice. Whilst his works explore vocal techniques and are vocally difficult, he wasn't interested in mere agility: his writing was always at the service of a broader interest in mysticism and the themes of death, childhood, love and immortality. The voice always seemed to stand for an archetypal human figure.

Vivier's music might broadly be categorised as one example of the New Spirituality movement that has arisen in recent years (particularly in Eastern European music), and is perhaps best listened to with this in mind. But its background influences and their results are distinctive. From Vivier's early years in a Catholic seminary came an interest in Gregorian chant and a corresponding emphasis on melody. Later studies with Stockhausen took place just after that composer wrote *Mantra* (1970), a work which also placed melody in an important role but which involved highly conscious calculations of the proportions of the work and its interrelationships. Vivier took up such techniques, and then travelled to Asia, particularly Bali, where eastern mysticism became an influence. The mystical notion of "being" was evident when he wrote: "My music is a paradox. Usually in music, you have some development, some direction, or some aim. . . which in my music happens less and less. I just have statements, musical statements, which somehow lead nowhere. Also on the other hand, they lead somewhere but it's on a much more subtle basis."

Vivier wrote that *Bouchara* "is meant to be a long love song... The entire text is sung in an invented language, a language of love, a story which repeats itself continually." *Bouchara* is the name of an ancient city in Uzbekistan which was referred to in Marco Polo's account of his travels, and the piece was intended to become part of an opera on that subject (incomplete at the composer's death). Vivier was fascinated by Polo, a figure whose travels and explorations became for him a metaphor for an individual's exploration of his or her "inner spaces."

STEVE REICH *TEHILLIM* (1981)

Steve Reich is a pivotal figure in the music of the last 40 years, as one of the originators of musical minimalism (a term he, incidentally, rejects, but which is otherwise applied almost universally to his music). His early work was exemplary of the style, consisting of short, simple musical patterns, repeated numerous times, creating a static but highly rhythmic effect.

The early 1980s saw Reich's approach shift: in *Tehillim* the melodies are longer and the harmonies more lush. It's also the first time since his youth that he set a text to music, that of the psalms in their original Hebrew (*tehillim* means psalms, lit. "praises"). The composition of the work followed a period when Reich studied Hebrew, the Torah and heard Sephardi singers in Israel, and his rediscovery of this heritage finds its way into his work through the use of instruments, including a tambourine without its metal jingles (to imitate the drum described in the last psalm here), hand clapping and crotals (standing in for antique cymbals). As for melody, Reich protests, "[p]eople have listened to *Tehillim* and said 'It's a Jewish-sounding melody.' And I say horseshit, it's a Steve Reich-sounding melody, and if I'm *Jewish then it is*. But it doesn't have anything to do with Hasidic melodies or Jewish folk tunes." He does acknowledge that his study of cantillation (Hebrew chanting practice) may have influenced the lengthening of melody in his work during this period.

Rhythmically, the work is mostly in 3 layers: fast percussion, slow chords, and medium singing. It is in 4 movements (but with the only break between 2 and 3). All movements are fast except the 3rd, at which point Reich savours colourful harmony. The 3rd is, he noted, "the first slow movement I have composed since my student days."

PSALM 19:2-5

The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky tells of His handiwork
Day by day pours forth speech, night after night reveals knowledge
Without speech and without words, nevertheless their voice is heard.
Their sound goes out through all the earth
And their words reach to the ends of the world.

PSALM 34:13-15

Who is the man that desires life, and loves days to see good?
Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.
Turn from evil and do good ,
Seek peace and pursue it.

PSALM 18:26-27

With the merciful You are merciful
With the upright You are upright
With the pure You are pure
And with the perverse You are subtle.

PSALM 150:4-6

Praise Him with the drum and dance, praise Him with organs and winds
Praise Him with the clanging cymbals, praise Him with the resounding cymbals
Let all that breathes praise the Eternal One.
Hallelujah.

Program notes © Rachel Campbell

SYNERGY PERCUSSION

Australia's premier percussion ensemble since 1974, Synergy is dedicated to the performance of contemporary music by composers from Australia and around the world. Acclaimed as Australia's most vibrant and energetic contemporary music group, Synergy's outstanding musicians have earned a substantial reputation in the international arena through their high-level performances, recordings and collaborations. Their flexible configuration allows them to perform as a quartet, sextet, or to augment to larger ensembles for specific projects.

Synergy collaborates both within the core group and with many leading artists and companies - Fritz Hauser, Hossam Ramzy, Omar Faruk Tekbilek, Dave Samuels, Evelyn Glennie, Riley Lee, Michael Kieran Harvey, Meryl Tankard, Sydney Dance Company, Matthew Doyle, Roger Woodard and Simon Tedeschi, to name but a few. Synergy has performed in venues around Australia and the world including China, Japan, Germany, France, Poland, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and Singapore.

In 2008, Synergy Percussion will give its US premiere performances at the Tucson International Chamber Music Festival. Other performances in 2008 include its regular series in Sydney as well as engagements with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Four Winds Festival and the Brisbane Festival.

Synergy Percussion is resident at Newington College, Stanmore.

SYNERGY PERCUSSION MANAGEMENT

Artistic Director	Michael Askill
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HALCYON

"the admired and admirable Halcyon... peerless standards of performance... superbly secure singing." John Carmody Opera-Opera June 2006

A winner in the 2007 ABC Limelight Awards, Halcyon is the only Australian ensemble dedicated to the performance of new and recent music for voice and instruments. Since its inception in 1998 this remarkable ensemble has established a critically acclaimed concert series, commissioned and performed numerous works by young and established composers, directed workshops for young composers and emerged as an internationally recognised driving force in the promotion of new chamber music for voice. Artistic directors and performers Jenny Duck-Chong (mezzo soprano) and Alison Morgan (soprano) weave together rich programs of vocal chamber music from across the globe, assembling some of Australia's most esteemed chamber soloists, conductors and singers. Halcyon's contribution to the promotion of new music was highlighted recently at the 2006 Paul Lowin Awards, where the ensemble performed live, and had commissioned and premiered the first prize for a song cycle, *Sonetos del amor oscuro* by Rosalind Page, as well as premiering three of the four short-listed works. In October this year, Halcyon and the New Music Network present *Lily on a Black Wave*, a performance of music inspired by Shakespearean texts. Future projects include *Cool Black*, a CD of song cycles by Rosalind Page and participation in the 2008 *Aurora Music Festival* in Western Sydney. Halcyon will perform at the APRA/AMC Classical Music Awards to be held next month in Sydney.

Halcyon is ensemble in residence at St Andrews Cathedral School, Sydney.

Artistic Directors: Alison Morgan and Jenny Duck-Chong

Artistic Administrator: Erin Vencken

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ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING

"Trust Ensemble Offspring to go their own way ... another intelligent and intriguing show from a group committed to asking 'what if?'" Sydney Morning Herald

Ensemble Offspring is dedicated to the performance of challenging new music. With over sixty projects to its name, the Sydney-based ensemble has established itself as one of Australia's leading voices for innovative forms of classical music. Ensemble Offspring is committed to a living classical-music tradition combining the music of today with iconic works of the 20th and 21st centuries. The ensemble embraces a wide variety of progressive repertoire from wild improvisation to meticulous complexity and has a particular focus on experimental and interdisciplinary presentations.

Ensemble Offspring is emerging as one of the most successful contemporary music groups in Australia. The ensemble has developed a reputation for its original programming, quality of performance and successful audience engagement.

Recent projects have included; a European tour as guests of the prestigious Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music; 'Partch's Bastards', a microtonal instrument-building project; two concerts 'Spectral Guises' and 'Whirlwind of Time' that focused on the growing spectral movement in classical composition; and numerous programs, 'Flexible Eclectic' and 'Plastic Noise', that feature open-form music. Ensemble Offspring is also noted for its development of interdisciplinary projects. The ensemble has been featured twice as part of the Sydney Film Festival where they have presented new music to accompany classic experimental films, while in programs such as 'The Imaginary Opera Project' and 'Light is Calling' the ensemble produced new works in collaboration with digital artists. Upcoming project include 'Crippled Symmetry', a portrait of the iconic New York composer Morton Feldman (25th Aug) and 'Cage Uncaged', a collaboration with The Song Company centred on the words, ideas and music of John Cage (15th Sep).

www.ensembleoffspring.org.au

UPCOMING CONCERTS

REPEAT PERFORMANCE OF TONIGHT'S CONCERT

Synergy Percussion, Halcyon and Ensemble Offspring,
in association with Riverside Theatres, Parramatta, present

TEHILLIM

7.30PM, SATURDAY 11 AUGUST
RIVERSIDE THEATRES, PARRAMATTA
TICKETS: \$27-\$35
BOOKINGS: (02) 8839 3399
www.riversideparramatta.com.au

ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING

CRIPPLED SYMMETRY

PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH EASTSIDE ARTS

8PM, SATURDAY 25TH AUGUST 2007
STONE GALLERY ON OXFORD
TICKETS: \$20/\$15
BOOKINGS: (02) 1300 438 849
www.moshtix.com.au

The iconic New York composer Morton Feldman is renowned for soft delicate works cast over large time-frames. Often inspired by visual media, *Crippled Symmetry* refers to the patterns of ancient Middle-Eastern rugs, repetitious but imperfect and distorted. Feldman creates a gentle music floating mysteriously between chance and order.

THE SONG COMPANY & ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING PRESENT

CAGE UNCAGED

IN ASSOCIATION WITH NEW MUSIC NETWORK & CARRIAGEWORKS.

This mini festival is a unique collaboration between the singers of The Song Company and the musicians of Ensemble Offspring. Three interconnected programs will be performed in one day with no less than ten works by Cage and several new creations inspired by a particular aspect of Cage's output.

3 CONCERTS – 3PM, 5PM & 7.30PM SATURDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2007.
CARRIAGEWORKS, 245 WILSON STREET, EVELEIGH.
BOOKINGS: (02) 9202 4614
www.moshtix.com.au

UPCOMING CONCERTS

HALCYON

HALCYON AND THE NEW MUSIC NETWORK PRESENT
LILY ON A BLACK WAVE

Modern composers interpret Shakespeare

7:30PM SATURDAY 6 OCTOBER 2007

MUSIC WORKSHOP, SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

The character of Ophelia from Shakespeare's ominous play Hamlet has floated her way into the modern world, inspiring creative artists as diverse as Rimbaud, T.S. Eliot, Berlioz, Nick Cave and The Grateful Dead. Award-winning ensemble Halcyon premieres a new work, *Ophelie*, by Melbourne composer Kevin March, together with modern musical settings from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets by Stravinsky, Saariaho and Adès. A performance delivering all the drama and passion inherent in the words of this famous bard, distilled into their musical essence.

TICKET PRICES: \$30 FULL / \$20 CONCESSION & UNDER 30

BOOKINGS: (02) 8256 2222

www.cityrecitalhall.com

SYNERGY PERCUSSION

THE FIVE ELEMENTS

In a rare collaboration, Synergy and TaikOz will explore the themes of the Five Elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Consciousness - featuring Riley Lee, shakuhachi and James Coates, spoken word. The Five Elements promises to be a magical evening of sounds that thunder and hover between heaven and earth. Presented in association with the New Music Network.

8PM, FRIDAY 23 NOVEMBER

CITY RECITAL HALL ANGEL PLACE

TICKETS: \$55/\$45

BOOKINGS: (02) 8256 2222

www.cityrecitalhall.com