

Adrift

Ensemble Offspring

Seymour Nights | June 19

Set 1 – Kirsty McCahon (double bass), Virginia Comerford (viola)

William White/Orlando Lassus/JS Bach – *Vocal duets arranged for bass and viola* 10'

Hollis Taylor – *Banana Paper* 5'

Kate Moore – *Icarus Song* 4'

Improvisation on the theme from *Ch'Amor sia nudo (That love be bare)* by *Francesca Caccini (1616)* 4'

Elena Kats-Chernin – *Adrift WP* 6'

Set 2 – Véronique Serret (6-string electric violin)

Véronique Serret – *Bush Mujik, Watercolour, Runs Deep* 12'

Cathy Milliken – *Crie* 8'

Chris Perren – *A Stolen Satellite* 10'



Seymour Nights is proudly funded by the NSW Government in association with City of Sydney. Ensemble Offspring are assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and the NSW Government through Create NSW. We work and play on Gadigal land.

ensembleoffspring.com

Program

Set 1 – Kirsty McCahon (double bass)

Celebrating the progression and diversity of bass playing styles, drenched in masses of disparate, complex tonal colours and achingly beautiful harmonies, this program showcases the lyric beauty of the Renaissance/ Baroque basso continuo and its influence on Australian female composers. Opening with interweaving lines of songs without words, dancing and playing together, joyous yet melancholic, uplifting yet touched by darkness, these duets sing stories.

And so, consciously or otherwise, we hear within each following work the patterns and colours of the Baroque articulated and embraced within a completely new landscape: we fly up to the sun before falling into the sea with the long line of extended harmonies in Kate's *Icarus Song*; Hollis's *Banana Paper* transports us into the Queensland hinterlands with its Butcher Bird song with a repetitive structure so reminiscent of the baroque. All layered with paradox and internal contradictions, each piece tells a story with energy and wit.

An instrument renowned for its calm, soulful baroque beauty, the violone, when encouraged into the contemporary, is truly otherworldly. Inspired by and accompanied by the chatter and song of birds on my family's farm, acutely aware of the absurdity of practicing 'old' European music in our ancient fragile environment devastated by climate change, my little piece acknowledges both past the present.

And so to Elena's *Adrift*. A lilting, swirling, dynamic work so generously written especially for this evening's concert, it hides complexities within seeming ease. Virginia and I rang Elena as we were rehearsing, asking for advice, unsure how to end the work. Her answer that floored us both: "Ah yes, it's redemption!"... a truly (coincidentally?) quintessential concept of the Baroque.

Kirsty McCahon

Set 2 – Véronique Serret (6-string electric violin)

Tonight's set opens with a medley of short works *Bush Mujik*, *Watercolour*, *Runs Deep* and *Sea Shanty* by yours truly - drawing upon 6-string violin, electronics and voice to create free musical responses to our environment. During the lockdown, and as travel to and around big cities ceased, nature became more and more a part of my daily soundworld. Listening to the birds, the trees, our waters, being enveloped by the night sky and learning to surrender to the timeless wisdom of our universe.

Crie (meaning to cry out) by Cathy Milliken for violin and voice was commissioned by Ensemble Offspring for me in 2018 as part of the Noisy Egg Creation Fund. "As I proceeded to write it turns out that my subconscious instinct lay not only with the pure task of a piece for violin and voice, but also arose out of the urgency of our present historic moment. Increasingly we are hearing of women being courageous enough to speak out about untruths or abuses. We have as an extreme example the Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who was murdered for publishing her research on governmental corruption in Malta. This work is dedicated to all the brave women who have been silenced for speaking out. Let us find our voice."

The final piece in tonight's program, Chris Perren's *A Stolen Satellite*, was written for me in 2015 as part of a residency at Campbelltown Arts Centre. "A *Stolen Satellite* uses Véronique's unique performance setup as an environment for the exploration of rhythm. In two sections - a free, arrhythmic introduction and strictly timed main section - looping and reverbs are used to weave a thick texture, relying on the generous range of the six-string violin. In the main section, looped rhythmic figures are stolen and repurposed by emerging and evolving rhythmic structures. Loops may initially sit comfortably within their rhythmic framework, but become complex cross-rhythms when added loops force us into new ways of feeling the pulse." A languid melodic theme weaves in and out of these complex structures with a contrasting freedom, providing a humanistic counterpoint to the relentlessly mechanical rhythms.

Véronique Serret

Performers

Kirsty McCahon (double bass)

Bass player, curator, presenter, ambassador, educator and avid tree planter, Kirsty's heart and musical journey lies deep within the complexities and contradictions of our shared extraordinary continent. Awarded a Churchill Fellow and a 2013 University of Melbourne Honorary Fellow for her Contribution to Orchestral Music, Kirsty champions Australian storytelling through music. Collaborating with ensembles as diverse as the Brodsky Quartet, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Musica Viva, ELISION, Les Talents Lyrique, L'Arpeggiata, L'Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique, Ukaria, AFCM, MDCH or Ensemble Offspring, Van Diemen's Band or Pinchgut Opera, Kirsty relishes her relationships with extraordinary musicians.

Virginia Comerford (viola)

As Principal Viola of the Opera Australia Orchestra, Virginia primarily inhabits the world of Opera and Ballet, with occasional interesting side trips to other musical destinations. In addition to performing with world class orchestras, ensembles and chamber groups around the globe, Virginia can also be heard on numerous film and video game soundtracks, and has performed with the likes of Midnight Oil and INXS. Virginia is a multi-instrumentalist and singer, whose love of the viola centres around it's soulful timbre. She is excited to collaborate again with her longtime friend Kirsty, combining their shared passion for celebrating the voices of the true heroes of the string section.

Véronique Serret (6-string electric violin)

Véronique has established herself as a versatile musician whose repertoire ranges from baroque to contemporary art music, folk, rock and improvisation. She is committed to new works and regularly collaborates with Australia's composers. Véronique has a strong classical background and has worked extensively with Sydney Dance Company, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. Since 2010 Véronique has been a member of US folk harpist Joanna Newsom's band as both violinist and backing vocalist touring with her internationally.