



Moogahlin Performing Arts  
and the ANU School of Music present

# Indigenous Composer Initiative

Concert of works by

Rhyan Clapham  
Brenda Gifford  
Tim Gray  
Troy Russell  
Elizabeth Sheppard

Performed by  
Ensemble Offspring  
with Rhyan Clapham

Eora College Auditorium  
333 Abercrombie Street,  
Chippendale, Sydney

6pm, Thursday 3 August 2017

**AMPLIFY**  
INDIGENOUS COMPOSER INITIATIVE

AMPLIFY

# WELCOME

Aboriginal composers have been around for decades, and there have been quite a few. Much of what they've been doing has been within community, and is less known outside, apart from a few works. Following is a bit of a snapshot.

There is Deborah Cheetham, who wrote and staged an Aboriginal-themed opera, a monumental task without full-time salaried workers. It is significant as an expression of Aboriginal culture, and is jam-packed with TCEs (traditional cultural expressions) that Aboriginal audiences totally understand: from the various stories in song to the Lullaby, and to the actual rehearsing in Aboriginal communities far and wide in at least two states, effectively birthing the work from within community, bringing significant meaning to the rehearsal process.

There is also Will Barton – a fine composer and a consummate musician. Then there is Darryl Griffen – he and I staged a large vocal piece at the Sydney Conservatorium in 1999, with Jimmy Little opening, members of the Australian Opera chorus, and various others. As an Aboriginal composer I've been working in community and in regional settings for most of my life, with some national and international highlights here and there, but community and regional work always holds more meaning for me – and working in those circles is, in part, a cultural obligation.

Twenty-five years ago at Eora College there was the Contemporary Aboriginal Performers (singers and musicians) who staged various avant-garde style works around Aboriginal stories. Our elder theatre director Noel Tovey choreographed those works for stage.

There is Matt Doyle – Aboriginal songman and performer; Richard Green – contemporary music singer and great improviser; Will Jarrett – more than a rapper; Gavi Duncan – Central Coast elder and musician/songman/vocal music composer; Clarence Slockee who has collaborated much with Kevin Hunt in composition and performance; Marlene Cummins and Johnny Nicol – blues and jazz musicians; Clint Bracknell – composer and academic; and many more.

Many of these people are composing music in categories that we acknowledge as contemporary new music, or jazz. At times some of them are scoring it, or collaborating with those that assist with scoring, where needed. There are many young ones emerging, some heard at the Our Music Day which Kevin Hunt organises at the Sydney Con. And I'm sure I've missed some.

We've seen a few of our composers pass on. Eg. Roy Read - a prolific romantic light music composer and pianist. He's gone, unheard except in the Redfern community. And also David Page is now gone. Ultimately a platform such as this program – the Indigenous Composer Initiative – was necessary to make this aspect of contemporary music-making known more broadly, and to connect Aboriginal composers with further opportunities

Chris Sainsbury  
Facilitator, AMPLify Indigenous Composer Initiative



AMPLify Indigenous Composer Initiative is a partnership between Moogahlin Performing Arts, ANU School of Music, the Australian Music Centre through the AMPLify artist development framework, and Eora College, with financial support from an APRA AMCOS Music Grant.

## PROGRAM

Brenda Gifford	'Gambambara' from <i>A South Coast Songline</i> (2017)
Elizabeth Sheppard	<i>Kooranginy</i> (2017) 1. Walken Rainbow 2. Yoorra Tattoo 3. Koordaboodjar Heartland
Troy Russell	<i>Nucoorillma / River Life</i> (2017)
Tim Gray	4 scenes from <i>LUPE!</i> (2017) 'War' 'Reflection' 'Hunting' 'Serial Killer's Mind', parts 1 & 2
Troy Russell	<i>River Life</i>
Brenda Gifford	'Bardju' from <i>A South Coast Songline</i> (2017)
Rhyan Clapham	<i>Pitara Yaan Muruwariki</i> (2017)

### Ensemble Offspring

Claire Edwardes - percussion/artistic director  
Jason Noble - clarinet  
Lamorna Nightingale - flute  
Freya Schack-Arnott - cello

Ryan Clapham - percussion

## ORDER OF EVENTS

MC Lily Shearer, Co-director Moogahlin Performing Arts

1. Welcome to the first performance of the Indigenous Composer Initiative – Lily Shearer
2. Welcome to Country – Uncle Greg Simms
3. Overview of the program – Lily Shearer
4. Word from Fred Copperwaite, Co-director Moogahlin Performing Arts
5. Word from Danny Allende, Director Eora College
6. Background to program – Christopher Sainsbury
7. Interviews with composers (Tim Gray, Troy Russell, Elizabeth Sheppard and Brenda Gifford), followed by a performance of their works
8. Word from John Davis, CEO Australian Music Centre
9. Further interviews with composers (Rhyan Clapham and Brenda Gifford) and performance of their works
10. Word of thanks – Lily Shearer and Brenda Gifford

Refreshments in the foyer

*This program - the first performance of the Indigenous Composer Initiative - unfolds on Gadigal land, and is seated within a community context.*

## ABOUT THE INDIGENOUS COMPOSER INITIATIVE

In 2016, the Australian Music Centre, together with Moogahlin Performing Arts, APRA AMCOS, the Australian National University School of Music and Ensemble Offspring launched a new initiative aimed at supporting emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander composers in new music and jazz. The Initiative aims at helping artists in establishing contacts, networks and relationships with role models, and engaging in knowledge exchange and learning.

The focus of the Initiative is to identify Indigenous composers not yet properly represented or heard across new art music and jazz, and support them in creating works of new Indigenous music in score format. This in turn will help to create new opportunities, in new contexts, for Indigenous people: eg. performance in new music events, schools repertoire, examination syllabi etc.

Five invited participants – Rhyan Clapham, Brenda Gifford, Tim Gray, Troy Russell and Elizabeth Sheppard – have been taking part in the Initiative in 2017, each producing works for voice and/or small ensemble, of up to 10 minutes. Facilitators and performers for the pilot project include composer and Dharug/Eora man Christopher Sainsbury - also the driving force behind this Initiative - with jazz pianist and educator Kevin Hunt, as well as performers from the Moogahlin Performing Arts, and Ensemble Offspring. Participating artists received individual

guidance from the facilitators in developing their composition, notation and orchestration skills, as well as taking part in masterclasses and working closely with performers.

Chris and Kevin challenged the composers. At times they were equally challenged back, so the traffic went two ways. There was some support available for score production. The final performance comes after a recent recording at the new School of Music studio at the Australian National University. Exploring further performance possibilities and publishing arrangements is also a part of the scope of the project.

The project is seen as a significant pilot, and has the capacity to develop into a national project, while at the same time maintaining important local connections and making use of funding opportunities provided by States and local communities. We are very grateful to APRA AMCOS for its funding support for this initiative.

Project partners for the Indigenous Composer Initiative are Moogahlin Performing Arts, Australian National University School of Music, APRA AMCOS, and the Australian Music Centre. The Indigenous Composer Initiative is part of the Australian Music Centre's AMPLify framework of artist development programs.

Info: [australianmusiccentre.com.au/about/AMPLify\\_ICI](http://australianmusiccentre.com.au/about/AMPLify_ICI)

## ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING

Presenting concerts of seminal chamber music to free improvisation, alongside the creation of striking interdisciplinary productions, the group embraces open-minded music making in all its forms. Ensemble Offspring is led by acclaimed percussionist Claire Edwardes, and features some of Australia's most innovative performers. The group have toured to locations such as Hong Kong, London and Warsaw, are regularly featured

at MONA FOMA, Sydney and Melbourne Festivals, and have a cult following at their Sizzle series at Petersham Bowling Club.

Passionate about nurturing the work of emerging, as well as established composers, Ensemble Offspring has premiered over 200 works in its 22 year history.

Info: [ensembleoffspring.com](http://ensembleoffspring.com)

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Rhyan Clapham:** *Pitara Yaan Muruwariki* (2017)

for cello, clarinet, vibraphone and flute

In the Aboriginal language of the Murrawarri people of Brewarrina NSW, Pitara Yaan Muruwariki means "Muruwari is good, sweet talk." This is the goal for my composition.

This work represents both the strength of Indigenous languages and the journey to acquiring this knowledge. The distinct melodies shared between the cello, clarinet, vibes and flute are centred around four words in the Murrawarri language. Those words, spoken at the beginning, are *Thirra* (Song), *Milkakari* (Someone with no ears), *Pintanj* (Tongue), and *Paliputharran* (Lungs).

You can see the act of conversation evolving out of the ways in which Offspring Ensemble engage in these words and how they interact with each other.

Rhyan Clapham

**Rhyan Clapham's** family is from Murrawarri and Ngemba country in Brewarrina NSW. Rhyan has completed a Bachelor of Music at the University of NSW, and an Indigenous Studies Honours (focusing on Aboriginal hip hop music) in 2015. A rapper and drummer, he has performed for various events such as Kevin Hunt's 'Our Music' concert at the Sydney Conservatorium, at Yabun NCIE, UNSW corporate and academic events, Koori Radio events and at NAIDOC.

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### **Brenda Gifford:** *A South Coast Songline* (2017)

for vibraphone, clarinet, alto flute and cello

2. Gambambara
3. Bardju

This song cycle is about the interplay between the seasons and the elements. The music represents my journey and memories of country - what I have seen and heard. Everything from the sea and wind to the birds.

It is beautiful country and this is my way of showing respect to place.

I have worked with my cousin Wendy from Wreck Bay on the Dhurgha language. This has been a great opportunity to develop my composer skills with Chris Sainsbury and other Indigenous composers.

Brenda Gifford

**Brenda Gifford** is a Yuin Woman, originally from Wreck Bay, South Coast NSW. She composes music about her lived experiences as an Aboriginal woman. She is a classically trained saxophonist. She has twenty years extensive experience as a musician and music teacher. She is a member of the current Indigenous Composers Initiative working on her original composition *A South Coast Songline*.

Brenda was a member of the band Mixed Relations with Bart Willoughby. She has played music in urban, regional, remote, traditional Aboriginal communities, and toured to London, Hong Kong, Pacific Islands and America. Mixed Relations honoured its Indigenous roots, performing in Indigenous communities, doing support gigs for Koori Radio, and playing in prisons as part of NAIDOC Week. They also achieved mainstream success, reaching #89 on Triple J's Hottest 100 in 1993 with their single *Aboriginal Woman*. She also worked with Kev Carmody on his album *Eulogy (for a black person)*, playing saxophone on a couple of tracks. Her writing has been used as the album notes for Vic Simms's *The Loner*. She has toured extensively nationally to Aboriginal communities and Internationally to Native American communities and the Pacific Islands.

Brenda Gifford has done many interviews with Aboriginal musicians and curated notes for the National Film & Sound Archive's Sounds of Australia online. Examples of her music can be found on her Facebook Page: Brenda G.

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### **Tim Gray:** 4 scenes from *Lupe!* (2017)

for flute, bass clarinet, cello and vibraphone

1. War
2. Reflection
3. Serial killer's mind, part 1
4. Serial killer's mind, part 2
5. Hunting

I have always had a love for film music, so when I was given this wonderful opportunity to write music and do part of a film score I relished it. I have written five movements for a film script I'm writing called *Lupe* : 1. War 2. Reflection 3. Serial killer's mind part 1 4. Serial killer's mind part 2 5. Hunting.

Film in which the music is for is a script I'm writing called *Lupe* - a female werewolf who kills serial killers. *Lupe* is about the similarities between Romanian and Aboriginal cultures, and similarities between all cultures. The first movement 'War' is about Lupe's parents and the other supernaturals fighting the Templar knights. 'Reflection' is about Lupe thinking of her parents' memories. 'Serial killer's mind parts 1 and 2 are about the killer preparing for his next victim, and 'Hunting' is about Lupe preparing to hunt the serial killer.

Tim Gray

**Tim Gray** is a Gumbaynggirr/Wiradjuri man who studied at Eora College in 2010-11, 2013 and 2016. He was trained in classical piano up to grade 5 and has always loved film music - his inspirations are John Williams, Ennio Morricone, John Carpenter, and Hans Zimmer, to name a few. Tim has a reggae/ska band called Green Hand Band, in which he plays the keyboard. He came out of the emerging artists program at Gadigal/Koori Radio and was also volunteer broadcaster at Koori Radio. He sings in a group called Voices Carry, lead by Sydney choral director Tania Bowra.

## **Troy J Russell:**

*Nucoorillma* (2017)

for flute, clarinet, vibraphone and cello

*River Life* (2017)

for flute, vibraphone and cello

*Nucoorillma* is a journey. A long walk that my great grandmother took. It was a long and hard journey of the heart in which she chose to move away from her Aboriginal ways and culture to follow a more Christian lifestyle. Years later she became an activist in Aboriginal Rights and was quite well known and wore the Aboriginal colours with pride. *Nucoorillma* is a tribute to this woman. My Grannie.

For *River life*, I came up with the scenario of living as a miniature being by a river. The sounds are of the life that one may find if one were to find themselves a bug on a plant and watching the world pass you by. The instrumentation is made up of vibraphone, flute and cello.

Troy Russell

**Troy John Russell** is of the Biripai people of the Greater Manning area near Taree, and the Gamillaroi people of the North West Slopes and Plains. Troy's journey with music began when he was 11 years old. A lady, a neighbour, wanted to teach him the fundamentals of music and Troy flourished. But music was already in Troy's veins. He found an old photograph, from the '50s, of his father playing a banjo. His family from Taree was a musical family, a great revelation. One that Troy has been inspired by for the last 40 years. After an injury whilst working for Telecom, Troy found himself attending a TAFE college called Eora. Eora taught Troy everything that he knows about music and he also made a good friend in Christopher Sainsbury who taught Troy more about music than anyone and the one person who brought him to this initiative. Troy has written some good pieces which have impressed a few people and hopes to write more. Troy hopes that this initiative will open doors not only for himself but for the others as well, he would also like to thank all involved and to the other composers - good luck.

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## **Elizabeth Sheppard**

*Kooranginy* (2017)

a three-movement suite for flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet, vibraphone/whip, clapsticks/snare drum, cello and sampled sounds

1. Walken Rainbow
2. Yoorra Tattoo
3. Koordaboodjar Heartland

*Kooranginy* interweaves Indigenous themes with musical symbols of creation, invasion, conflict, assimilation, and the demand for a Treaty with Australia's First Nations.

'Walken Rainbow', the first movement, is a setting of the Noongar Prayer text from Western Australia, expressed in parallel with the Creation story of Noongar country. In Noongar culture, Maadjit Walken (Rainbow) is the feminine Creator Spirit.

The second movement, 'Yoorra Tattoo', states the origin of Australia's racial conflict: in 1788 a British military Fife Tattoo, musket shots and whiplash cracks sounded out over the bushland of Kamay (Sydney). Aboriginal resistance, symbolised by the Wara Wara (Go Away) rhythm, Clapstick (Yoorra) beats, Karla (Campfire) melody, and corroboree ceremonies, answered the invaders. This conflict remains unresolved.

The third movement, 'Koordaboodjar Heartland', is a setting of 'Treaty Heart', a poem by the composer. This through-composed set of variations mourns Indigenous losses, names offences, and points out that these unaddressed injustices are harming and shaming Australia. The final bars of *Kooranginy* echo the Uluru Statement call for Australia to move beyond Sorry, to a Treaty.

Elizabeth Sheppard

**Elizabeth Sheppard**, a Noongar Yamatji woman, is an Arts/Music graduate of Adelaide University and a 2004 Music Performance and Composition graduate of Eora Aboriginal Centre. She is also a professional Cathedral Cantor, and a BTh/BPhil (Sydney University) and ACertCM (Cantor UK) graduate. She composes expressive, maximalist, melodic music on Indigenous themes, by juxtaposing and interweaving symbolic motifs. Her Indigenous compositions are performed in Australian churches and schools, and published on ScoreExchange.com.

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