

ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING PRESENT

BIRDSONG AT DUSK



BIRDSONG AT DUSK 2020 PROGRAM - 25th Birthday Tour

KATE MOORE	<i>Blackbird Song</i> (flute, clarinet, vibraphone) (2018) 8'
FELICITY WILCOX	<i>People of the Place</i> (bass clarinet solo) (2016) 6'
FIONA LOADER	<i>Lorikeet Corroboree</i> (flute, clarinet, vibraphone) (2015) 5'
TRISTAN COELHO	<i>Daybreak</i> (flute & electronics) (2018) 8'
HOLLIS TAYLOR / JON ROSE	<i>Bitter Springs Creek 2014*</i> (flute, clarinet, vibraphone & field recording) (2019) 8'
CLAIRE EDWARDES	<i>Screechers & Sorrows*</i> (waterphone solo) (2019) 7'
GERARD BROPHY	<i>Beautiful Birds*</i> (flute, clarinet, percussion) (2019) 13'
CLAIRE EDWARDES	Percussion / Artistic Director
LAMORNA NIGHTINGALE	Flute
JASON NOBLE	Clarinet / Bass clarinet
MICHELLE ST ANNE	Creative Direction (Sydney Festival)

**commissioned by Ensemble Offspring through the Noisy Egg Creation Fund for 'Birdsong at Dusk'*

KATE MOORE

Blackbird Song (2018)

Blackbird Song is an expansive melody written in response to the early morning cantillation of a Merel. In the earliest twilight hours of the morning, before the sunrise chorus of birds, a tiny unassuming blackbird clad in shiny jet-black feathers, perches upon a high post and sings with all its might an epic melancholic tale of adventure and fantasy with its yellow beak pointed toward the heavens. Without knowing it, the bird has captivated the imagination of the listener, who, despite being unable to understand the vocabulary and grammar of its language, is taken along on a journey of the blackbird's worldly and otherworldly experiences.

FELICITY WILCOX

People of This Place (2016)

This work for solo bass clarinet is an expression of my sense of shared place. It contains multiple influences that reflect the echoes of nature and the blend of lives lived in this beautiful country of birds, bush, grasses, sandstone and sea. D'harawal man Gawain Bodkin-Andrews (UTS CAIK) was consulted on the creation of work that considers Indigenous spaces and perspectives, and research was conducted with leading Australian clarinetist Jason Noble to develop new approaches to multiphonics and other extended performance techniques for the instrument. The resulting work is a valuable addition to the recent Australian solo bass clarinet repertoire that has enjoyed multiple performances nationally and internationally over the past 3 years. In presenting *People of This Place*, the composer and performer acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation as traditional owners of the land that inspired it, and to whom the work is dedicated. We pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal people.

About Kate Moore

Kate Moore is an award-winning Australian composer based in The Netherlands. She specialises in creating surprising performance scenarios that feature virtuosic instrumentalists and musicians set amidst unusual and alternative performance circumstances. Her work has been described as “a giant tsunami of sound” (New York Times), “a fascinating exercise in micro- and macro- rhythm” (Sydney Morning Herald). Kate has been awarded prizes including Den Haag Toptalent (2012), De Komeet cultural award (2010) and the Carlsbad Festival of Music Composition Prize (2010) among others.

About Felicity Wilcox

Felicity Wilcox teaches music and sound design at the University of Technology Sydney. She is an award-winning composer, with over sixty scores for Australian film and television productions, as well as concert works for leading ensembles and festivals, including The Australia Ensemble, The Australia Piano Quartet, Ensemble Offspring, Ironwood, Decibel and Vivid Sydney. Her scholarly research focuses on screen composers and gender equity in music.

FIONA LOADER

Lorikeet Corroboree (2015)

This work scored for flute, clarinet and vibraphone was written for Ensemble Offspring in 2015 during a residency at the Sydney Conservatorium. It was inspired by the beautiful rainbow lorikeets that visit me every morning and who dance after a feeding frenzy. This led me to many hours of documenting bird call and transcribing melodic fragments derived from not only lorikeets but also other Australian birds including butcher birds, magpies, and even a nightingale (also a musical reference to Lamorna Nightingale, our flautist). There is much melodic dialogue between the parts in *Lorikeet Corroboree* just as birds in the forest do not sing in isolation but in melodic collaboration, by answering each other's musical sentences.

TRISTAN COELHO

Daybreak (2018)

Australia has a rich and diverse birdlife, including a wide variety of songbirds. They commonly have the skill of mimicking the tunes of other birds, while seemingly developing them through looping and subtle variation. This notion of mimicry forms the point of departure for this work. The music consists mainly of a small number of transcribed birdsongs and composed material directly inspired by them, but the flute also creates a sense of place through effects which conjure up a soundscape. The electronics comprise delays and transformations of the flute sound in real-time as well as pre-recorded samples. The work is still in the early stages of creation and is part of an ongoing project called *Other Voices*, supported by the APRA AMCOS Art Music Fund. Through the work, I hope to create an interest in our natural world, encouraging people to listen deeply to the sounds around them and continue developing a respect for our precious wildlife.

About Fiona Loader

Fiona Loader is an accompanist, singer and freelance composer. She completed her Master's degree in Composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2016, studying with Paul Stanhope. She was a music fellow (composer in residence) at Trinity Grammar School in 2016. She has had works performed or commissioned by numerous ensembles such as Halcyon Ensemble, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music's early music ensemble, and Leichhardt Espresso Chorus. Her works have also been recorded for broadcast by ABC FM, Fine Music and performed as part of Musica Viva and the Four Winds Festival.

About Tristan Coelho

Tristan is an award-winning Sydney-based composer who specialises in art music and film and teaches at MLC School. He draws inspiration largely from nature or conversely the digital, data-driven world. He studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music before heading to the Royal College of Music for postgraduate studies. Composition highlights include *read/write error*, a commission for Ensemble Offspring's 20th year celebrations and finalist selection in the 2016 APRA Art Music Awards.

JON ROSE & HOLLIS TAYLOR
Bitter Springs Creek 2014 (2019)

The road from Alice Springs heading out to the East Ranges runs in fits and starts for 80 kilometres before ending at Ross River. The pied butcherbird recording heard in and transcribed for this composition was made at Bitter Springs Creek, 6.6 kilometres before the road terminates. These feathered songsters were recorded nocturnally on 17 August 2014.

Bitter Springs Creek 2014 belongs to the twenty-first century, to be sure, but the music sung by these birds is ancient, extending back millions of years. Although they may share some phrases, each bird has their own unique songs that develop and transform from season to season. A degree of what we may describe as improvisation pertains to each performance, and this quality of flexibility is key to the work

CLAIRE EDWARDES
Screechers & Sorrows (2019)

Screechers & Sorrows is named after two categories of birdsong or birdcall - the screechers who obviously make screeching sounds (distinguished from the song birds) and the sorrows, whose call is more plaintive. I used two great websites to research this piece: birdsinyard.net where the top 40 bird calls are divided into groups; and ornithology.com, as well as inspiration from the amazing Hollis Taylor who travels each year to Alice Springs to record pied butcher-bird song. Then I improvised on my beloved waterphone alongside recordings of these various types of birds to see how close to the original sound I could get. I developed this mimicry into a work which incorporates wind chimes (a nod to the Australian back porch where many sightings of local birds are made), as well as both bowing and striking the waterphone, not only to recall birdsong but to bring out a more percussive sound.

About Hollis Taylor & Jon Rose

Hollis Taylor is a violinist/composer, ornithologist, and author living in Sydney. Her practice takes in sound and radiophonic arts, and performing (re)compositions of Australian pied butcherbird songs on violin with outback field recordings. Her book, *Is Birdsong Music? Outback Encounters with an Australian Songbird*, and her double CD, *Absolute Bird*, were recently released. These works are a collaboration with partner Jon Rose who is an iconic experimental violinist, composer and improviser. Jon has created large environmental multimedia works, engaged with interactive electronic systems, built experimental musical instruments, and created radiophonic works. In 2009 the Kronos Quartet commissioned him to write and build *Music from 4 Fences* for the Sydney Opera House and in 2012 he was awarded the Don Banks Award for lifetime achievement and contribution to Australian music.

About Claire Edwardes

Claire is an internationally acclaimed percussion soloist, chamber musician and Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring. She is the only Australian musician to win the APRA Art Music Award for Excellence by an Individual three times (2016, 2012, 2007), is the recipient of an Australia Council and Freedman Fellowship and the winner of numerous European instrumental and percussion competitions, as well as 1999 Australian Young Performer of the Year. Recent highlights include a 2019 residency at Music on Main (Vancouver), the Australian premiere of James McMillan's 2nd Percussion Concerto with the SSO and appearances hosting Play School.

GERARD BROPHY

Beautiful Birds (2019)

Beautiful birds showcases birds in 3 distinctive movements -

- I. Lyrebirds - skittish, quirky birds with a mischievous temperament and an astounding penchant for mimicry;
- II. Flamingos - elegant, stately yet slightly melancholic creatures;
- III. Hummingbirds - fluttering, quivering souls flitting from one gorgeous blossom to the next.

A true exploration of the trio's virtuosity, *Beautiful Birds* sets these joyous bird calls into dexterous, interwoven lines. While *Lyrebirds* establishes the piece as a highly energy celebration of sonic colours, *Flamingos* explores delicious and still moments of quiet conversation between the three instruments. The piece finishes with *Hummingbirds*, mimicking the fast yet ever changing humming in an impressive display of swift-flying unison lines.

About Gerard Brophy

Gerard Brophy is a composer and educator who teaches at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. After an increasingly musical adolescence, Gerard Brophy began his studies in classical guitar at the age of twenty-two. In the late seventies, he worked closely with Brazilian guitarist Turibio Santos and the Argentine composer Mauricio Kagel before studying composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Over recent years he has developed a keen interest in collaborating with artists from other disciplines and he is particularly active in the areas of ballet, dance and electronica.