

**CITY
RECITAL
HALL**



**ENSEMBLE
OFFSPRING**



**CREATIVE
MUSIC
FUND**



**CITY RECITAL HALL,
ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING
& CREATIVE MUSIC FUND**

SEVEN STORIES

SATURDAY 3 JUNE 7.30PM



The City of Sydney
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WELCOME TO SEVEN STORIES

In 2017 Ensemble Offspring champions the work of female composers. For this world premiere, we are exceptionally proud to be presenting to you the seven genre-defying composers who make up Seven Stories. Working with our experienced and virtuosic Ensemble Offspring musicians, each one has created their own musical take on one of seven universal stories, which, according to many theories, make up the narrative of our human existence. Using the music as the starting point, new text by Hilary Bell and visuals by Sarah-Jane Woulahan weave these seven stories together. The entire show has been a collaborative process from start to finish. With a creative team of over ten people and numerous partners it has been an inspiring process.

Visceral, thought-provoking, funny and otherworldly - thank you for joining us on at the world premiere of the Seven Stories journey.

Claire Edwardes Ensemble Offspring Artistic Director

Seven Stories which, collectively, paint a varied picture of our existence on earth. Which one will you connect with?

If I asked that question of myself, the answer would undoubtedly be “all of them, but hopefully not simultaneously!”

Seven Stories fits so well in this, our first curated season. As we, City Recital Hall, undergo our own reimagination, physically through the transformation of our spaces, and artistically through the presentation of an enterprising, diverse and inclusive program, we journey through collaboration and exploration, seeking the fresh, the multi-dimensional, and yes, at times even the comedy (of errors).

We are thrilled to co-present this world premiere with our partners Ensemble Offspring, Creative Music Fund and the NSW Government through Vivid Sydney.

Elaine Chia City Recital Hall CEO

PROGRAM

Caitlin Yeo *The Quest*

Jodi Phillis *Overcoming the Darkness*

Amanda Brown *Rags to Riches*

Sally Whitwell *Fatal Flaw*

Bree van Reyk *Comedy of Errors*

Kyls Burtland *Journey*

Jane Sheldon *Transformation*

Caitlin Yeo *The Quest (reprise)*

PERFORMERS AND ARTISTS

Claire Edwardes percussion

Jason Noble clarinet

Freya Schack-Arnott cello

Veronique Serret violin

Jane Sheldon soprano

Bree van Reyk percussion

Sally Whitwell piano

Visuals by **Sarah-Jane Woulahan**

Text by **Hilary Bell**

ABOUT THE STORIES

QUEST BY CAITLIN YEO

Quest explores the idea of searching for an immeasurably valuable and precious idea. It is a long, involved, unstable and surprising journey, which is realised in three connected sections: Floating, Grappling and Finding. Quest begins, and ends, with the sound of a golden egg shaker being thrown and caught, a literal interpretation of trying to capture this precious idea. In 2016 as I sat at the piano writing this piece, my 10-year-old son was throwing and catching egg shakers in another room. At this moment I was struck by the sound quality of the shaker mid-air. In particular I was fascinated with the unstable and unpredictable nature of this sound, and so began a quest to capture it!

OVERCOMING THE DARKNESS BY JODI PHILLIS

I wrote this piece with Neil Gaiman dark children's novella, *Coraline*, as the inspiration - it is one of my favourite stories. I have watched the movie many times with my daughters. Having grown up watching Disney movies, the beldam or witch theme is familiar terrain for me but I am also very glad though that we have moved on from needing Prince Charming to save us in the end! In my work, rather, our protagonist is being preyed upon by a seductive witch. When this dark force is looked at with clarity and courage, it becomes clear that the witch is in fact weak, empty and needy, looking for prey. This knowledge gives our protagonist compassion and power, enabling her to rise above the dark force and re-emerge into the world as a transformed being.

RAGS TO RICHES BY AMANDA BROWN

The rags to riches parable is an analogy for life itself – we come into this world with nothing, we strive to live productive, loving, worthy lives – and in the end we depart alone, with nothing. It is this cyclical approach that I have taken with my trilogy of pieces. The first movement is about humble beginnings - a downtrodden heroine living in serf-like conditions. The second symbolises hard won gains, the grind of urban industry and factory work culminating in deserved wealth and success. But when something is gained, something is inevitably lost. The final aria entitled 'Into the Sea' for soprano and piano is a return to the simplicity of a lullaby, mirroring life.

FATAL FLAW BY SALLY WHITWELL

When I begin to compose a piece, I choose one thought upon which to base everything that comes after it. Faced with the challenge of writing about tragedy, one word came to mind: inexorable. Before the flaws are discovered there is a fragile joy, but once those horrible truths are exposed everything that follows is an unstoppable fall. So the story begins in happiness. But soon someone becomes a little too confident, a little too cocky, and the world turns in upon them - beginning with a screaming clarinet and continuing with a wailing blues-inspired song-without-words cast adrift and fading into nothing – the fatal flaw.

COMEDY OF ERRORS BY BREE VAN REYK

The obvious starting point when presented with the task of writing to the brief of a 'Comedy of Errors' was to undertake a Google search for 'what makes a good comedy?'. From this I garnered a shortlist of comedic devices - repetition, overstatement, interruption, imitation, slapstick, unlikely combinations - and set about writing a series of one-liners based on these concepts. What results is a work in three parts featuring an overstated repetition of an interrupted cadence, a slapstick chorus of musical imitations, and perhaps the most unlikely combination of all - a 'Miniature Double Concerto for Woodblocks, Woodblock Understudy/Soprano and Small Ensemble'.





ABOUT THE STORIES

JOURNEY BY KYLS BURLAND

Prompted by an unexpected 'call to adventure', our protagonists leave their mundane everyday world to enter the strange, exotic and even dreamlike realms of the 'road'. They soon encounter challenges to their understanding of themselves and the world; temptations that rock their social and moral foundations; and experiences that trigger moments of revelation and insight. With an inner journey surely as fierce and transformative as the external one, our road trippers may return home, but they will never again be as they once were.

TRANSFORMATION BY JANE SHELDON

A woman is driven to plunge herself into the ocean, where she slowly transforms into a marine creature, with scales and fins and a new facility for moving through the water. I was less interested in the narrative function of this transformation and more in trying to imagine what it might feel like to have your body changing form. This is reflected musically through a sense of ecstatic suspension - the work is harmonically static yet the players are mostly tasked with changes to the timbre of their simple pitch material. They explore the internal life of each tone colour in the hope of bringing to life the ocean's midwater: an expansive, seemingly uniform space quivering with quiet activity and possibility.

ABOUT THE STORIES BY HILARY BELL

My task as writer was to create a means by which the seven compositions would be held together, while ensuring that the text played a supporting role to the featuring music. The text also had to communicate the idea that these seven narratives span time and place, that all human beings experience them in some form and that these experiences unite us. I lit on the idea of fairytales. These are common to every culture, and are archetypal enough for an Everywoman to stride through. Pinching bits of Greek mythology, Dreamtime stories, Grimm's tales, legends from Japan, the Scots, Shakespeare, I concocted a modular story that looped back on and echoed itself. The only fixed points were the Quest: it felt important to begin and end there.

ABOUT THE VIDEO

SARAH-JANE WOULAHAN: It has been an immense pleasure to create a video work that's stripped of literal narrative and dialogue and instead tells a story through impressionistic, emotional landscapes created with dance performance and video imagery. The visuals reference analogue film technique, experimental and silent cinema, where the worlds are created through layering and juxtaposition rather than computer generated imagery. It draws from universal themes of human life beyond era and location, symbolic imagery, beauty and power in the forces of nature, transformation and liminal states of being, rollercoasters of emotion.

COMPOSERS

AMANDA BROWN was a multi-instrumentalist member of iconic band The Go-Betweens and has performed with artists including R.E.M, The Apartments and David Bridie. She has won several industry awards including the IF Award for Best Music, an APRA Award for Best Documentary Music and WOW Best Australian Composer. Seven Stories is her first work for the concert hall.



KYLS BURLAND graduated from AFTRS in 2003 with 'Best Score' and a nomination for 'Emerging Talent of the Year' by the Film Critics Circle. In 2013, Kyls wrote music for VIVID Festival's magnificent projections on the Opera House, and an IMAX score for The Shanghai Pavilion, World Expo. Kyls is still the only person to twice-win Australian Songwriter of the Year, and has toured with The Beastie Boys, Primus and Bob Dylan.



JODI PHILLIS is a multi-Aria nominated singer, songwriter and composer best known as co-front woman of Australian band, The Clouds. Jodi has also released albums with The Dearhunters, Roger Loves Betty, plus 4 highly acclaimed solo albums. With a highly melodic style evident in all her work, whether it be pop songs, folk songs or orchestral compositions, Jodi's approach to making music is to explore the very depths of creativity, bringing to the surface work that is original and moving.



BREE VAN REYK is an Australian percussionist, drummer, composer and sound artist. She has toured and recorded extensively throughout Australia and around the globe with the likes of Paul Kelly, Holly Throsby, Sarah Blasko, and the ACO. As a composer Bree has been commissioned by Ensemble Offspring, Shaun Parker Company, Bell Shakespeare, Sydney Dance Company, fashion designer Bianca Spender, and in 2016 she created the soundtrack for the Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.



JANE SHELDON is a soprano specialising in the performance of new and innovative chamber music and is now also writing it herself. She is Associate Artist at Sydney Chamber Opera and has performed at international arts festivals such as the Sydney Festival, Jerusalem Sacred Music Festival, the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, and Lincoln Center Festival. Jane is also co-director of the Resonant Bodies Festival's activities in Australia.



COMPOSERS

SALLY WHITWELL is an award winning musician who maintains a busy freelance career as pianist performer, conductor, composer and educator. Recent solo concert appearances include the world premiere of the Philip Glass Complete Piano Etudes for PIAF and Ten Tiny Dancers, part of the Famous Spiegel tent (Melbourne). Sally is also very active as a conductor, composer and accompanist in choral music, currently composing new works for Acacia Quartet and Gondwana Voices.



CAITLIN YEO is a highly regarded, multi-award winning Australian Screen and TV composer. Caitlin's musical style comes from a fascination with music from different cultures, 20th century composition and a deep love of telling stories with music. Since graduating from Screen Composition at AFTRS in 2003, Caitlin has received a swathe of accolades including the 2013 APRA screen music award Feature Score of the Year for The Rocket. Caitlin has scored several feature films, 40 documentaries, and seven TV series, many short films and TV themes.



PERFORMERS

ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING are champions of adventurous new music. 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 has toured to locations such as Hong Kong, London and Warsaw, been featured at MONA FOMA, Sydney and Melbourne Festivals and has 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.



PERFORMERS AND ARTISTS

CLAIRE EDWARDES (percussionist) is an internationally acclaimed percussion soloist, chamber musician and artistic director of Ensemble Offspring. Claire is the only Australian musician to win the APRA Art Music Award for Excellence by an Individual three times, is the recent recipient of an Australia Council Fellowship, winner of numerous European instrumental and percussion competitions as well as the 1999 Australian Young Performer of the Year. Recently appearing as soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at the Myer Music Bowl and on Play School, Claire is passionate about the dissemination of percussion and new sounds at the highest level.

JASON NOBLE (clarinetist) is an in-demand Bondi clarinetist, specialising in all members of the clarinet family including the bass clarinet, saxillo, clarinis and glove bagpipe. Jason has twice travelled to the Afghanistan National Institute of Music in Kabul as an educator and clarinet teacher. He has collaborated variously with popular musicians Sally Seltmann and Holly Throsby and the indigenous women's choir of the Tiwi Islands.

VERONIQUE SERRET (violinist) is an extremely versatile violinist whose repertoire ranges from baroque to contemporary classical, folk, rock and improvisation. Recently Veronique joined the Sydney Dance Company as soloist on stage, performing Bach and performs regularly with Megan Washington, Sarah Blasko and Giorgio Moroder. Veronique is a founding member of CODA and currently plays with singer Inga Liljeström and improvising string quartet 'the Noise'.

FREYA SCHACK-ARNOTT (cellist) is an Australian/Danish cellist dedicated to pursuing a unique language of cello playing, encompassing improvisation and original composition, combined with informed and creative interpretation of classical and contemporary works within solo, chamber and cross-disciplinary art forms. Freya has performed with various ensembles, ranging from performances with 'Bang on a Can' (USA), 'Quiver New Music Ensemble', Tasmanian Discovery Orchestra, AYO and Ensemble Midtvest (Denmark).

HILARY BELL'S plays have been produced nationally and internationally along with libretti for opera, musicals and song cycles, for composers Phillip Johnston, Elena Kats-Chernin, Andrée Greenwell, Stephen Rae and Victoria Bond. Awards include the Philip Parsons, Jill Blewitt, Bug'n'Bub (USA), Arealis Fiction, the Eric Kocher (USA), Inscription, a Helpmann and two AWGIEs. Hilary is a graduate of the Juilliard Playwrights' Studio, NIDA and AFTRS. She was the Tennessee Williams Fellow in Creative Writing at the University of the South, Tennessee, and the Patrick White Playwriting Fellow at the Sydney Theatre Company, and has written several picture books, including best-seller 'Alphabetical Sydney'.



SARAH-JANE WOULAHAN is an award-winning Melbourne based director of drama, comedy, music video, documentary and transmedia, known for her visual flair and original ideas across all genres in moving image. Sarah-Jane's short films have screened at national and international film festivals including South By Southwest and Melbourne International Film Festival. She has directed ARIA and MTV nominated music videos for Australia's most recognized musicians including Silverchair and Missy Higgins. She is currently developing her first feature film projects including feminist black comedy, She Loves Like Blood and the sci-fi, love story, Touching by Underground Wires.



SUPPORTERS

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VIVID MUSIC presents a cutting-edge contemporary music program featuring collaborations and performances from local and international acts at venues across Sydney. Vivid Music is presented as part of Vivid Sydney, the world's largest festival of light, music and ideas. Vivid Sydney is owned, managed and produced by Destination NSW, the NSW Government's tourism and major events agency and runs from 26 May to 17 June 2017. For more information visit www.vividsydney.com/music

CITY RECITAL HALL

City Recital Hall produces and presents a rich and diverse program of concerts and events at our world class performance space in the heart of Sydney. Our program embraces all genres and art forms from chamber orchestras to opera, contemporary ensembles to bands, talks and debates, to festival events. We welcome you to City Recital Hall to discover, connect and socialise, and hope you leave stimulated and energised.

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