

ELISION SACRED CITIES

Tues 10 May 6pm, Salon
Presented by Melbourne Recital Centre
& ELISION

ARTIST

ELISION

Paula Rae bass flute

Genevieve Lacey bass recorder

Aviva Endean bass clarinet

Tristram Williams flugelhorn

Benjamin Marks alto trombone

Peter Neville percussion

Marshall McGuire harp

Daryl Buckley electric lap-steel guitar

Aaron Cassidy conductor

PROGRAM

JOHN RODGERS *Giganti*

RICHARD BARRETT *Adocentyn*

AARON CASSIDY *The wreck of former boundaries* WORLD PREMIERE

RICHARD BARRETT *Aurora*

ALESSANDRO SOLBIATI *Vezelay*

MATTHEW SERGEANT *ymrehanne krestos*

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Giganti: The giant Nimrod's horn is the only possibly musical sound Dante hears in hell - presumably because it doesn't qualify as music at all. Even when first heard in the distance Dante says that "thunder was less loud" and mistakes the distant giants for the towers of a military installation. The giants are the guardians of the innermost circle of hell, where the greatest sinners of all time are embedded in ice formed by the freezing of all the human tears of time. The giants are in chains there for their failed attempt to overthrow the Greek gods, a mythical attempted coup. They are very much bigger than humans and their intelligence and compassion are in inverse proportion to their size. They are the ultimate thugs. This piece is an attempt to evoke the sound of Nimrod's horn. The trumpet, trombone, and bass and contra-bass clarinets are used as the overtones of an imaginary distorted horn much more massive and more powerful than theirs could ever be. And blown by lungs much larger than theirs - the lungs of a being that is the embodiment of thuggish brutality and malevolent military power.

Adocentyn: The description of the City of the Sun in the utopian work by Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) is derived largely from a passage in *Picatrix*, an 11th-century textbook of magic originally written in Arabic: "It was he [Hermes Trismegistus], too, who in the east of Egypt constructed a City twelve miles long within which he constructed a castle which had four gates in each of its four parts. On the eastern gate he placed the form of an Eagle; on the western gate the form of a Bull; on the southern gate the form of a Lion, and on the northern gate he constructed the form of a Dog. Into these images he introduced spirits which spoke with voices, nor could anyone enter the gates of the city except by their permission. There he planted trees in the midst of which was a great tree which bore the fruit of all generation. On the summit of the castle he caused to be raised a tower thirty cubits high at the top of which he ordered to be placed a lighthouse, the colour of which changed every day until the seventh day after which it returned to the first colour, and so the City was illuminated with these colours . . . Around the circumference of the City he placed engraved images and ordered them in such a manner that by their virtue the inhabitants were made virtuous and withdrawn from all wickedness and harm. The name of the City was Adocentyn."

The wreck of former boundaries, for electric lap steel guitar and 5.1-channel electronics, is part of a larger conglomerate of works that includes a range of solo works, small chamber works, works for electronics, and an extended ensemble work for two trumpet soloists, clarinet, saxophone, trombone, electric lap steel guitar, double bass, and multichannel electronics. The electronic material throughout the network of pieces comes from recordings of earlier works by Cassidy written for and/or recorded by the players of ELISION, which are processed and distorted in a variety of ways, including through improvisations with several gestural, touch-sensitive digital interfaces. That processed audio is treated as 'found material'—severed from its previous identities and histories—chopped up, rearranged, repurposed, and superimposed to create new multi-channel, fixed-media audio. The

Continued over page...

work is conceived specifically for Daryl Buckley's unique collection of (predominately analog) effects pedals, imagining those pedals as the instrument, occasionally to the point that they seem to take on a life of their own. It is through those pedals and their interaction with the electronics that the material of the piece emerges ... sometimes balletic and dance-like, sometimes gelatinous and oozing, sometimes grinding and raucous, sometimes metallic and flickering, sometimes brutal and obliterated. The work is commissioned by the RMIT Gallery Sonic Arts Collection, and supported with technical assistance from the SIAL electronic music studio at RMIT University. Significant additional support was provided from the University of Huddersfield.

Aurora traces a trajectory from the natural harmonic spectrum heard at the opening (the first ten odd-numbered partials of a low C, subsequently distorted by multiphonics), towards an eventual unison sculpted into several timbral layers. *Aurora* refers in its title and form to a "utopian" vision, in this case the writings of the German mystic Jakob Böhme and in particular their theme of cosmological evolution from "innocence" through a differentiated and conflicted state into a higher state of unity.

Vezelay is the name of the French village in which stands a wonderful, touching ancient Abbey, that the composer saw for the first time in May 1994, while composing this harp work. Everything there had been built to be (not to represent) a way from darkness to light, and the church itself seems to be drawn by light. Very often, his music tries to represent this motif: it happens predominantly in this harp piece which inspired the name *Vezelay*.

ymrehanne krestos is an ancient rock-hewn (former) monastery in northern Ethiopia. Unlike other such structures in this area, *ymrehanne krestos* is carved into a vertical rock face, whereas the others are carved downwards into the region's rocky plateaus. As such, the monastery has a much more singular viewpoint than its counterparts, only the ornate façade of the building is immediately visible. This work is constructed from four duets, originally composed for the brass, each utilising a single physical parameter of brass performance technique (articulation, valve/slide patterns, the harmonic series and dynamics). Rather than being presented sequentially, the duets are superimposed, creating wild and frenetic material as the conditions imposed by the original materials collide and corrupt one another. This textural canvas is then 'scrubbed' and, at different moments, one or more of the duets removed, revealing (or semi-revealing) the more stable patterns that lie beneath the piece's chaotic surface.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Beginning in 1986 with rehearsals at Footscray Community Arts Centre to first-ever appearances of Australian contemporary opera at the Paris National Opera House and the Fomenko Theatre in Moscow; from concert engagements at the Vienna Concert House and the Berlin Philharmonie to residencies at Harvard University and a concert series at Kings Place, London, ELISION has led the international dissemination of Australian work and ideas within contemporary classical music. ELISION's creative practice is a distillation of virtuosic skills and fearless rigour signifying a dynamic ensemble of Australian musicians at the very top of their game. Highly visible and internationally successful, ELISION represents peak Australian contemporary arts practice, positioning Australian creativity and innovation in arts practice at the centre of international discourse.

ABOUT METROPOLIS 2016

The Metropolis New Music Festival 2016 lives up to its title with two weeks of new and exhilarating works that pulse to the beat of city life. Showcasing the best interpreters of new music in Australia in a dazzling overview of state of the art contemporary music, explore the energy and excitement of the metropolis travelling from the club to the street to the concert hall with music that blurs the lines between 'classical and 'pop'.

A note on environmental friendliness:

In an effort to commit to greener performances, programs are printed to share one between two people. If you would like to download additional copies of these program notes, please visit melbournerecital.com.au/programs



MELBOURNE
RECITAL
CENTRE

31 Sturt Street, Southbank, Victoria 3006
P: 03 9699 3333 F: 03 9207 2662
E: mail@melbournerecital.com.au
W: melbournerecital.com.au

PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT PARTNER

