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6.30pm Thursday 12 March
Gordon Darling Hall,
National Portrait Gallery

5.30pm pre-concert
conversation with Cyrus
Meurant and Ella Macens,
moderated by Genevieve
Jacobs, Region Media

In collaboration with the
National Portrait Gallery

Kirsten Williams *Director*
CSO Chamber Orchestra

Kirsten Williams
Concertmaster
Dan Russell
Principal Second Violin
Pip Thompson *Violin*
Tim Wickham *Violin*
Claire Phillips *Violin*
Lucy Macourt *Violin*,
Kingsland Resident
Lucy Carrigy-Ryan
Principal Viola
Alina Zamfir *Viola*
Patrick Suthers *Principal Cello*
Samuel Payne *Cello*
David Flynn
Principal Double Bass

Rachel BRUERVILLE
Dancing on Tiptoes (2017)

Stuart GREENBAUM
The Rotation of the Earth (2017)

Natalie NICOLAS
We Won't Let You Down (2017)

Cyrus MEURANT
When I stand before thee at
the day's end (2020) *World*
premiere, Ars Musica
Australis commission

Peter SCULTHORPE AO OBE
Third Sonata for Strings
Jabiru Dreaming (2011)
Movement Two

Ella MACENS
Superimposition (2015) *World*
premiere

Paul STANHOPE
Nephesh (2015) for string nonet

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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this concert takes place, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We also acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people who may be in attendance.

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Love, Kindness, Decency

Music can be very much a force of positivity. This program is about the sound world that music can create, which is beautiful – it’s unashamedly beautiful.

The first three works were written for the Hush Foundation, for *Hush Vol. 18: Collective Wisdom*. The composers were working with young people dealing with mental health challenges, and they wrote music in response to that. All three works are about being uplifted, about redemption and overcoming obstacles. That’s what’s found in music.

Tonight sees the premiere of two Australian works: *When I stand before thee at the day’s end*, by Cyrus Meurant, and *Superimposition*, by Ella Macens. Together, these works speak to the significance of both the individual and shared wrestling with joy and pain. Commissioned by Ars Musica

Australis, Meurant’s work was written for Kirsten Williams in her role as director. One of the closest instruments to the human voice, the featured violin evokes a very personal exploration of music and healing. By contrast, Macens’ *Superimposition* represents, for me, more of a collective response to trauma, explored through slowly emerging, overlapping emotional ideas. This program explores the ways in which music can speak to people – it’s my hope that what we hear tonight does just that.

—

Prof Matthew Hindson AM
Australian Series Curator

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Director
Kirsten Williams

Director
Kirsten WILLIAMS

Kirsten Williams studied violin with Alice Waten at the Sydney Conservatorium and Igor Ozim at the Bern Konservatorium. She has been a member of the Opera House Orchestra at Covent Garden and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields; Associate Leader of the Australian Chamber Orchestra; and Associate Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony. Williams has also performed widely as a soloist, chamber musician and guest orchestra leader. Williams has also been a mentor and tutor of Sydney Youth Orchestra and Australian Youth Orchestra (AYO).

Williams has a passion for music and healing. She has recorded two CDs for the Australian Bush Flower Essences and, in 2014, was named Volunteer of the Year for playing music in the Westmead Children's Hospital Intensive Care Unit. In 2014, she became patron of the Goulburn Strings Project, a music education initiative for students in low socio-economic, regional areas.

Williams is Concertmaster of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and Head of Strings at the Hume Conservatorium. In 2020, she will be a distinguished artist in residence at the Australian National University.

Composer
Rachel BRUERVILLE

Rachel Bruerville is a composer, arranger, cellist, singer, and writer. She composes for the concert hall, the theatre, and other collaborative work. Her work has been performed by The Australian Chamber Orchestra Collective, St Peter's Cathedral Choir (North Adelaide), The Endeavour Trio, Gondwana Voices, the National Youth Choir of Australia, Sydney Children's Choir, and the Adelaide Wind Orchestra.

Career highlights include being commissioned by The Hush Foundation for the album *Collective Wisdom*; an APRA AMCOS / Australian Music Centre nomination for *In Due Season*, commissioned by the Adelaide Chamber Singers; and a Sydney Opera House premiere as part of the Gondwana World Choral Festival. Bruerville is currently Composer in Residence with the Young Adelaide Voices, supported by a 2019 Carclew Fellowship.

As a performer, Bruerville is a core member of the acclaimed Adelaide Chamber Singers. She has also appeared as a solo vocalist with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and Paul Rissman, presenting new work for children in the Festival of Learning. Bruerville is also active as a freelance cellist around Adelaide.



Composer
Rachel Bruerville

Composer
Stuart GREENBAUM



Composer
Stuart Greenbaum

Stuart Greenbaum studied composition with Broadstock and Conyngham at the University of Melbourne, where he is now Head of Composition. He has composed over 200 works including sonatas, string quartets, piano trios, and operas with libretto by Ross Baglin. Greenbaum has been commissioned for major choral works, including for the sesquicentenary of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, and has received numerous composition prizes.

Greenbaum has written for the Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, the Australian Youth Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, The Australia Ensemble, Southern Cross Soloists, Ensemble Liaison and the Grigoryan Brothers.

Greenbaum has been a featured composer for the Aurora Festival and with the Flinders Quartet, and a resident composer at the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival and with the Melbourne Youth Orchestra. In 2009, he represented Australia for the Trans-Tasman Composer Exchange, composing *The Year Without a Summer* with NZTrio, which toured internationally.

Composer
Natalie NICOLAS

Composer, PhD candidate and music educator Natalie Nicolas studied composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. She has written for the Australian String Quartet, percussionist Claire Edwardes, the Goldner String Quartet, the Muses Trio, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra (TSO), TSO Principal Viola Stefanie Farrands, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Canberra Symphony Orchestra (CSO) flautist Virginia Taylor, CSO harpist Alice Giles, cellist Georg Pedersen, Geist String Quartet, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and others.

Nicolas has won numerous composition prizes including the National Composers Forum and the Flinders Quartet Composition Competition. She was selected for the inaugural National Women Composer's Development Program, and has completed a residency with the Flinders String Quartet.

Nicolas tutors and lectures in composition at the Sydney Conservatorium and for the New South Wales Higher Education Certificate. She also operates a piano studio and performs in various ensembles around Sydney.



Composer
Natalie Nicolas

THE HUSH FOUNDATION

The Hush Foundation was established in 2000 by renowned physician Dr Catherine Crock AM, in response to her work with children undergoing painful medical procedures at The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.

Dr Crock engages some of Australia's foremost composers and musicians to compose music with the intent of reducing the stress and anxiety felt by patients, families and staff in hospital environments. The music evokes a sense of calm and optimism in hospitals, aged care, palliative care and for the general public around the world.

The Hush Foundation vision also extends to transforming healthcare culture through theatrical health plays and Gathering of Kindness events focusing on a kind health system for everyone. With three theatrical plays, 18 music albums and a children's Treasure book, the ways in which Hush engages their audience to improve healthcare culture continues to grow.

More information at
hush.org.au

DANCING ON TIPTOES

Dancing on Tiptoes was commissioned by the Hush Foundation for *Hush Vol. 18, Collective Wisdom*, recorded by the Australian Chamber Orchestra Collective and released on the ABC Classics label.

The piece was inspired by the experiences of teenagers in mental health wards around Australia, particularly a remark from an insightful young person at Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital: 'It's like dancing on tiptoes, but knowing you're never going to fall...'

The piece is a simple, moderate dance in changing, irregular time signatures. Writing for Loudmouth, Gwen Bennett described the melody as happy and sunny, 'a mellifluous theme that fluctuates up and down...'

I hope this work helps bring a sense of calm and optimism to anyone who is struggling. Challenging the stigma surrounding mental illness is so important for creating a kinder, more understanding world. Music can certainly help create that world, and I applaud the great work of the Hush Foundation to that end.

© Rachel Bruerville, 2020

THE ROTATION OF THE EARTH

While we don't directly feel the constant physical rotation of the Earth, we observe the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. We synchronise our clocks to this daily cycle and organise our lives accordingly.

Each new day brings something new; this piece is written in the spirit of finding anything good, beautiful, joyous and worthy along the way.

The Rotation of the Earth was commissioned by the Hush Foundation in support of adolescent mental health. It was written for the Australian Chamber Orchestra's touring and education ensemble, ACO Collective, for *Hush Vol. 18: Collective Wisdom*.

© Stuart Greenbaum, 2020

WE WON'T LET YOU DOWN

We Won't Let You Down was commissioned by the Hush Foundation for *Hush Vol. 18, Collective Wisdom*, in a wonderful effort to enlighten the lives of children living in hospitals around Australia and the world.

As part of this project, I visited the Westmead Children's Hospital; with the help of some very wonderful, selfless staff, I was able to spend a couple of days understanding what life is like for a child growing up in such a space.

I bonded with these children—we spoke about life, hardship, art music, pop music, and joy. We sang together and we talked about what would lift us on our darkest days. Here was founded the inspiration for *We Won't Let You Down*.

Written for the Australian Chamber Orchestra Collective, this piece embodies what the children taught me — the key to catharsis is drive. I interpreted this literally in my use of rhythm and tempo, whilst appropriating some pop stylistic elements into my world of art music, as homage to my inspiration. I thank Paul Stanhope for trusting me with this project and instilling endless knowledge in me during the process of writing this work.

© Natalie Nicolas, 2020

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Composer
Cyrus Meurant



Composer
Peter Sculthorpe AO OBE

Composer
Cyrus MEURANT

Cyrus Meurant studied composition and violin at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with Anne Boyd, Ross Edwards, Matthew Hindson, and Richard Meale. He also studied at the Conservatoire de Paris with Frédéric Durieux, and the Royal Academy of Music, London. Meurant has won the Frank Albert Prize for Music and the Sarah Teresa Makinson Prize for Composition.

Meurant has composed for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Signal (USA), NIDA, Orchestra Victoria, Inventi Ensemble, Omega Ensemble and others. His music for theatre and dance has been performed by The Australian Ballet, Divadlo F. X. Šaldy (Czech Republic), Alleyne Dance (UK) and Dance Makers Collective.

Recent works include his opera *Herakleitos*, premiered at the Laeiszhalle Hamburg (Germany), and the acclaimed score for the ballet *Le Petit Prince*. Meurant's album *Monday to Friday*, commissioned by Beaumont Care, was recognised internationally for its contribution towards research of music in dementia treatment.

Composer
Peter SCULTHORPE AO OBE

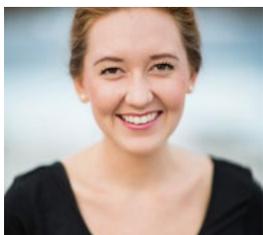
Peter Sculthorpe studied at the University of Melbourne and Wadham College, Oxford. Sculthorpe composed over 350 works, almost all influenced by the social climate and physical characteristics of Australia; he had a deep love for his country and for its landscape.

A recurring theme in Sculthorpe's output was the protection of the environment, particularly in Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island music and the gamelan music of Indonesia were significant influences.

Recent works include the *String Quartet No. 18* (2010), *Shining Island* (2011) for strings, and *Pastorale* (1949/2013) for orchestra. Recent premieres include the 2013 performance of the cantata *The Great South Land*, reworked from Sculthorpe's 1982 television opera *Quiros*.

Sculthorpe was Emeritus Professor at the University of Sydney and held honorary doctorates from Tasmania, Melbourne, Sussex, Griffith and Sydney. He was appointed OBE in 1977 and AO in 1990.

Adapted from the Australian Music Centre composer profile, including image by Bridget Elliot.



Composer
Ella Macens

Composer
Ella MACENS

Ella Macens is a fast-emerging composer with a passion for choral, orchestral and chamber music. Capturing qualities from both popular and classical music styles as well as her Latvian heritage, Macens has received the Frank Hutchens Scholarship for Composition and the Fine Music FM Young Composer Award. Her work has also been included in ENCORE.

Ensembles that have commissioned, premiered or performed her work include the Sydney, Tasmanian and Willoughby symphony orchestras; Sydney Youth Orchestra; the Flinders Quartet; the Goldner String Quartet; The Song Company; the Sydney Philharmonia, Sydney Chamber, Gondwana National and Sydney Children's choirs; State Choir Latvija; Claire Edwardes; Canberra International Music Festival; Sydney Festival 2018; and the XV Latvian Canadian Song and Dance Festival.

Macens teaches composition and music theory at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. She is also a resident composer at PLC Croydon and the emerging composer-in-residence with Melbourne's Flinders Quartet.

Composer
Paul STANHOPE

Composer, conductor and educator Paul Stanhope studied with Andrew Ford, Andrew Schultz and Peter Sculthorpe, and at the Guildhall School of Music (London). His music has featured at the Vale of Glamorgan Festival (Wales), the City of London Festival, the Australian Festival of Chamber Music and the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition.

In 2014, Stanhope's *Jandamarra: Sing for the Country* was premiered by large forces including performers from the Bunuba Community in Western Australia, Gondwana Choirs and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Based on the life of the Western Australian Indigenous resistance hero, the work has been recognised as milestone in Australian composition.

Stanhope is Associate Professor of Composition and Artistic Director of Choral Programs at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and Artistic Chair of the Australia Ensemble at UNSW. He has received three APRA / Australian Music Centre Awards and won the prestigious Toru Takemitsu Composition Prize.



Composer
Paul Stanhope

WHEN I STAND BEFORE THEE AT THE DAY'S END

In composing a new work for the program – Love, Kindness, Decency – Australian Series curator, Professor Matthew Hindson invited me to take inspiration from the theme of ‘healing’ and compose a work for Kirsten Williams as soloist. I initially envisaged the new work as a kind of *Paeon*, an ancient Greek song of praise and triumph. As well as being a musical genre (chanted to Apollo), Paeon was the physician of the gods, who healed wounds received in battle.

In searching for further creative impetus, I widened my field of reference and focused on classic texts relating to ‘healing’ such as Psalm 103 and its musical setting *Praise, My Soul, The King of Heaven (Lauda Anima)* by John Goss). Ultimately, I would go on to find significant inspiration in Rabindranath Tagore’s *Stray Birds*, a series of 326 short poems, published in Bengali and English in 1916.

Verse 290 resonated with me most profoundly and served as the basis upon which I felt a musical form could be derived:

When I stand before thee at the
day’s end thou shalt see my scars
and know that I had my wounds and
also my healing.

The plain and stoic beauty
of this image of healing – “at

the day’s end” – struck me as both archetypal and profound. Tagore encapsulates the notion that whilst through perseverance, we can be healed and reconciled, we remain indelibly marked.

In endeavouring to explore contrasting ideas of hope and suffering – as a kind of musical metaphor – my new work states two distinct themes, twice in succession. The violin and string ensemble take on clearly delineated roles of soloist and accompaniment throughout in an $A_1B_1A_2B_2$ form. The subsequent coda gradually combines the entire ensemble in a musical ascension, symbolising a higher state of being.

My special thanks to
Ars Musica Australis for
commissioning *When I stand
before thee at the day’s end*.

© Cyrus Meurant, 2020

Ars Musica Australis
Ars Musica Australis is a not-for-profit community-based arts organisation dedicated to the encouragement and financial support of talented young Australians involved in artistic and cultural disciplines.

arismusica.org.au

THIRD SONATA FOR STRINGS (JABIRU DREAMING)

Second movement:
Liberamente – Estatico

It was in the first half of 1989, only after completing his orchestral score *Kakadu* (1988), that Peter Sculthorpe made his first actual visit to Kakadu National Park (named after the area's Gagudju people) in the far north of the Northern Territory. As he recalled afterwards:

“Looking out across the great floodplains there, I could see abandoned sites of early white settlement, the Arafura Sea, Torres Strait, and, in my imagination, the islands of Indonesia. The musics of these places, and of Kakadu itself, fused in my mind.”

Into the 1990s, Sculthorpe continued to be inspired by some of Kakadu's key Indigenous cultural and environmental sites—Nourlangie, Ubirr and Jabiru—in a series of compositions characterised by their buoyant tempos and ritual-like rhythmic structures. Among them, his *String Quartet No.11* (subtitled *Jabiru Dreaming*) was completed in Sydney in February 1990 for an Australian tour by the Kronos Quartet of San Francisco. Sculthorpe later rearranged the quartet for conductor Martin Jarvis and the strings of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra to perform at an outdoor concert in Kakadu National Park in July 1993, and, back in Sydney in February 1994, he finally reworked the Darwin score as this *Third Sonata for Strings*.

The music of the second movement was Sculthorpe's

earliest creative response to his 1989 Kakadu visit. He originally composed it to be a single-movement piece for the Australian percussion quartet Synergy to perform in Paris in July 1989, commissioned by the Australian Government as a musical gift to France on the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution. Six months later, Sculthorpe reworked it as the second movement of the *Eleventh Quartet*, and so ultimately also of this *Third Sonata*. Befitting the 1989 Paris premiere, the main theme, introduced by the cellos (*Liberamente*), is based on an Indigenous Australian *chant* as transcribed by members of a French naval expedition to Australia in 1802. In the sumptuously illustrated expedition *Atlas*, published in Paris in 1824, the chant appears there with two other transcriptions—a rhythmic pattern headed *Air de danse*, and a *Cri de ralliement* “*Couhé*”: none other than the bush call Cooee!

After a brief interlude of insect-sounds, the main part of the movement (*Estatico*) begins with a rhythmicised variation, the chant now transferred to the second violins, and set against an accompaniment figure common in Sculthorpe's music since the late 1960s, derived from Balinese gamelan gong patterns. A central contrasting episode then takes up the rhythms of the French atlas's *Air de danse*, the tribal women's

music represented by the melody of the first violins, the men's in the percussive tapping of the middle-register strings *pizzicato* then *col legno*.

The *Estatico* resumes with the chant again in the second violins, combined with the melody of the episode in the first violins. The texture consolidates in the final variation (*Meno mosso*), for which the violins swap melodies, leading into a brilliant homophonic coda, and, again, a fading chorus of bird sounds to close.

© Graeme Skinner, 2017

SUPERIMPOSITION

I will never forget how I felt the first time I heard Arvo Pärt's '*Cantus in Memoriam of Benjamin Britten*' and *Spiegel im Spiegel*, and Henryk Górecki's '*Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*'. I was in my second year at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music studying composition; Paul Stanhope suggested I get to know these works to explore musical dissonance as a compositional device and extend my harmonic palate further.

This music pushed and pulled my mind and heart in a multitude of different directions – from elation to deep sadness, to angst and total serenity. I was completely spellbound by the emotional

intensity of the music and time really seemed to stand still. How was it possible that I was instantly being affected so deeply by this music? How was it possible that within minutes I had tears streaming down my cheeks and yet a soft smile upon my face? Hearing this music was a significant moment in my journey as a developing composer. Here began my appreciation for and love of dissonance, suspensions and harmonic clusters to create powerful moments of tension and release – to allow music to move us so deeply. These techniques have since become a primary feature throughout my entire body of work.

Superimposition was my response to Pärt and Górecki's works. As the title suggests, *Superimposition* is centred around the layering of ideas, in this case simple melodic and rhythmic motifs in the generation of larger musical structures. What begins as a simple statement develops into a complex web of gestures, morphing between states of obscurity and clarity, or tension and release. The result is a wash of sound in which clarity is blurred and the finer details become untraceable.

Composing this work was a very moving experience for me. Eight years on, I look forward to finally hearing it come to life.

© Ella Macens (2020)

NEPHESH

Nepheesh – written for eight or nine string instruments – explores notions of duality, seen most obviously in the splitting of the ensemble into two traditional string quartets in mirror form with the bass acting as a lynchpin. The piece is also split into two movements, outlining a classic Cartesian dualism suggesting soul and body, entitled here “*Prayer*” and “*Dance*”.

I imagined this *Prayer* as a physical act, full of sobbing laments, pleas and cries of exaltation. The material for the opening utterances of the piece is derived from Sephardic Chant: that is, Jewish liturgical music from a Babylonian tradition. This ancient, beautiful song is heard first in a cello solo with echoes from violas. A series of rhapsodic interludes are constructed between utterances of the chant. At times soft and sombre, the music builds into an expressive, song-like peak before dissolving once more into more gentle chanting phrases.

The second movement – *Dance* – is built around jaunty leaps and ping-pong like exchanges of material from one quartet to another. The material first heard as pizzicatos at the beginning is drawn from a selection of pitches from the chant in the first movement, riffing off the major / minor third dichotomy found in the chant heard at the very beginning of the piece. The material is transformed into blues-inflected riffs, ostinatos and numerically-based rhythmic patterns, tossed between the two quartets in a more overt way than in the first movement. After a series of episodes, including a section based around the percussive sounds of the strings, a darker reverie slowly builds toward a feverishly exuberant climax, returning the material back to the original tonal centre of E.

The title “*Nepheesh*” is an ancient Hebrew liturgical word used to denote not only the soul, but also the whole of the self, including the body. Much older than the duality expressed by Rene Descartes, this concept unifies ideas of body and soul as a single entity.

© Paul Stanhope, 2015

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