

# Crumb is a music feast

THE music of American composer George Crumb is only rarely heard in Perth, so a performance of his *Ancient Voices of Children* at the Conservatorium of Music is a more than ordinary event.

The setting of texts by the poet Lorca who was murdered by Franco's forces during the Spanish Civil War, *Voices* is a poetic and fascinating excursion into the composer's idiosyncratic sound world.

## MUSIC NEVILLE COHN

One can respond to Crumb's work on a number of levels.

Not the least of these is its extraordinary range of sonorities, such as that produced by the soprano (Janice Taylor-Warne) singing, initially wordlessly, into the opened interior of an amplified grand piano.

The use of mandolin and musical saw,

the amplification of finger-plucked piano strings and the striking together of Tibetan prayer stones together with the use of a range of other exotic percussion instruments, combine to provide a strikingly atmospheric sound background for the utterance of Lorca's words.

Vocally, Ms Taylor-Warne, whose stunning performance in Brian Howard's opera *Metamorphosis* some time ago left one in no doubt as to her skill in the contemporary idiom, was here (some occasionally eccentric pronunciation notwithstanding) enormously convincing.

A further dimension of vocal sound (grunts and shouts from the accompanying musicians), a snatch of Bach's *Bist du bei mir* and washes of reverberating tone, were other factors contributing to a range of moods — mysterious, ecstatic and anguished — that make up this remarkable piece.

A performance of this calibre by the WA Conservatorium of Music Percussion Ensemble should be heard by as large an audience as possible.

MUSIC making of a considerably less profound kind, but consistently melodious and engaging, was provided by the Conservatorium Marimba Band.

Some minor fluffs apart, three young soloists — Neil Craig, Simon Treadwell and Alison Eddington — acquitted themselves well in little works by G.H. Green/Becker.

I was particularly impressed by Ms Eddington's nimble and rhythmical handling of the mallets in *Chromatic Foxtrot*.