

SCHOOL OF MUSIC



# PERCUSSION CONCERT



*This is a special fund raising concert for the Friends of the ANU School of Music.*

Friday 31 August 2007, 7.30pm  
Band Room  
School of Music  
The Australian National University

ANU COLLEGE OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



## *Marimba Madness* - Program

### *October Mountain* (Hovhaness)

The DRUMatiX Percussion Group, Jacinta Dunlop - Marimba Soloist

Alan Chakmajian (Hovhaness) received a scholarship to study with Bohuslav Martinu in 1942. *October Mountain* is the name of a country road in the heart of the Berkshire Mountains near Tanglewood, Massachusetts. It was on this road in 1942 where Hovhaness "parked his car one afternoon and composed the score for his percussion piece of the same name". *October Mountain* is scored for six players. The work is divided into five sections and is roughly architectonic. That is, the first and fourth sections resemble each other and the second and fifth sections are related. The third section stands alone. The overall effect of *October Mountain* is one of a spiritual chant. The marimba, although a solo voice, is merely a bright thread in the inter-woven tapestry of oriental and eastern influences. The percussion writing of Alan Hovhaness greatly expanded and improved the language and literature of the percussion ensemble.

Henry Cowell has written in the *Musical Quarterly* "Hovhaness' music sounds modern (But not ultra modern) in a natural and uninhibited fashion, because he has found new ways to use the archaic materials with which he starts, by following their natural trend towards modal sequence and poly modalism. His innovations do not break with early traditions. His is a moving, long-breathed music, splendidly written and unique in style. It is contemporary development...which sounds like the music of nobody else at all."

Gary France

### *Marimba Dances Mvt 1* (Ross Edwards)

Christina Hopgood - Marimba

*Marimba Dances* (1982) was first performed by Michael Askill in 1983. This light hearted (though highly virtuosic) piece consists of two radiant dances framing an introspective recitative-like interlude. ...

Johnathan Mills

### *Dream of the Cherry Blossoms* (Keiko Abe)

Jacinta Dunlop - Marimba

Japanese composer and marimba virtuoso, Keiko Abe was born into a family of doctors and businessmen. She studied piano and xylophone as a child and although pressured by her family to study medicine, Abe gained qualifications in music performance, composition and education. In 1963, the Yamaha Corporation chose Abe to be the marimba consultant to aid in the development of the marimba design which would allow for its expansion and use as a solo instrument. Abe says of the instrument, "The marimba is very special for me. I listen carefully to understand its many possibilities. I have great respect for the marimba. When I play, I have a great desire to find its expressive possibilities - knowing that at one time this most beautiful wood came from a living tree with its own history and experience. It is as if the marimba bar breathes like a living tree, and when I make music I want to breathe with it." Abe has transformed the marimba into a solo concert instrument. Abe's music is unique in style and she continues to explore new territory for the marimba. Improvisation is central to her compositional technique. *Dream of the Cherry Blossoms* is based on an improvisation on the traditional Japanese folksong "Sakura, Sakura", which is heard during the Cherry Blossom Festival in Japan. The theme of the folksong is treated more or less in fragments and it represents the "dream" or "fantasy" world. The tone E is central to the piece and the repetitiveness of it is representative of continuously falling cherry blossoms. This piece uses the full range of the five-octave marimba and requires strong dynamic contrasts. It encompasses a range of techniques on the marimba and the performer and listener alike are taken on an expressive musical journey.

Jacinta Dunlop

## *Electric Counterpoint* (Steve Reich)

Charles Martin - soloist

*Electric Counterpoint* is one of a series of three 'Counterpoint' pieces, each written for one instrument accompanied by pre-recorded tape of the same or very similar instruments. Reich creates structures of repetitions of patterns; one phrase enters and establishes itself, then another enters, but offset by 2 beats, and another, this time offset by 3 and a half beats from the original. In this way, Reich explores the relationships of the notes within the one pattern, not only rhythmically but also harmonically by adding patterns in the same rhythm but transposed in pitch.

This piece was originally written for guitar (with electric bass) and first recorded by Pat Metheny in 1987 with consultation from Reich, most performances use Metheny's tape part or are by an ensemble. My version required no transcription since the guitar and bass parts fit within the concert marimba's range. I recorded the tape part in sections over a period of about 5 weeks and was assisted in post-production and the live sound by Niven Stines.

The impression I want to convey with this piece is of an all encompassing beautiful sound, contrasted with incessant, confusing rhythm that assaults conventional musical sensibilities. The use of marimba is perfect in this context. The deep bass affects not just the ears but the whole body and the high register brings out the clean precise melodies.

This juxtaposition conveys the theme of the piece – counterpoint – but it is also expressed in other ways. The grandest is the relationship between the three sections, labelled fast, slow, and fast, one of the smallest is the ambiguity of the time signature towards the end of the work.

I feel that *Electric Counterpoint* like many other minimalistic pieces is about creating a visceral experience from an almost scientific structure. When listening to it, I find the repeating phrases hypnotic and calming. I recede into thought only to be woken with surprise to find that the structure has changed or that the piece is actually over! I hope that you can have an equally rewarding experience.

Steve Reich (born 1936) is an acclaimed American composer, famous as a pioneer of minimalism. One of his early experimental techniques was the manipulation of tape loops and the phasing effect by playing two copies of a loop at slightly different speeds. This concept developed into the idea of repeating phrases that are displaced by a certain duration, as can be heard in *Electric Counterpoint*.

Charles Martin

## *Etude No. 3* (Paul Smadbeck)

Richard Spong - soloist

*Etude No. 3* is one of the works written by Paul Smadbeck in the early 1980's. Smadbeck's career as a composer at that time was short-lived. Only having created five works during this time, he is still regarded highly by percussionists; as his music has become standard repertoire. A short time after these five pieces were composed, Smadbeck gave up playing as well as composing (late 1980's) to become a Commercial Real-Estate Agent. In Paul Smadbeck's own words, "this etude was written particularly to aid in the development of the independent (one-handed) roll." In the opening section of the piece (a chorale) the first moment where an independent roll is absolutely necessary is the fermata on D and G# (left hand). Next Smadbeck challenges the player with an independent roll on one note (or one bar – note is in bar 6 on F# in the right hand). This requirement forces the player to contort his/her hand to an awkward playing position and awkward interval (of the mallets) to play the independent roll. In the next section, an Ostinato (continuous musical pattern) is played in the left hand while breaking down octave independent rolls to independent strokes giving the illusion of an independent roll. This is technically challenging in that the roll becomes measured and forces the player to control their roll-speed. Overall, Smadbeck's *Etude No. 3* is an engaging piece of musical literature which correctly enables and guides a player to learn (with musical application) the technique of the 'Independent Roll'. This is achieved by the means of allowing for a 'free' roll-speed and then demanding a metrically controlled roll-speed.

Richard Spong

## *Spanish Waltz* (George Hamilton Green)

Christina Hopgood - Xylophone soloist

George Hamilton Green (1893 - 1970) was born into a musical family. He was a piano prodigy by age four, and by the time he was eleven he was already being called "the greatest xylophone player in the world"!

He recorded hundreds of solos, and played with many bands. In 1928, George and his brothers Joseph and Lew were the original sound crew for Walt Disney animations, and played on the soundtrack for the first ever Disney cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*. In the 1920s, George Hamilton Green wrote a series of 50 lessons for xylophone and sold them for one dollar each. Each lesson was crafted to develop and refine a particular xylophone skill or technique, while teaching the player all of the twelve keys. This book is still universally used by percussionists at all stages in their development, and is generally thought of as an essential instruction course for xylophone.

*Spanish Waltz* is a ragtime piece that was composed by Green, and in today's performance was arranged in 1986 by William Cahn (Nexus Percussion) for solo xylophone and marimba band.

Ragtime is an American style of music that preceded jazz from the late 1800s until about 1920. It is characterized by accents on unusual parts of the beat, which gives a syncopated style. Xylophone rags are characterized by fast, virtuosic solo parts, as can be heard in this piece.

*Christina Hopgood*

## *Overture for Percussion* (John Beck, 1997)

The ANU DRUMatiX Percussion Group with the ANU Pre Tertiary Percussion Ensemble

Gary France (Director), Richard Spong, Christina Hopgood, Hannah Vermeesch, Josh Andrew, Dimitri Diamand, Jeremy Gallant, Katrina Leske, Ella Sayers

Want to know more about percussion? Go to [garyfrance.com](http://garyfrance.com)

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## Upcoming events at the ANU School of Music

### ANU SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPERA

#### *THE MAGIC FLUTE (DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE) BY MOZART*

Come into a world where nothing is as it seems. A world where Girl Power defeats monsters, where Princes fall in love with portraits, a world of magic doors, mystical quests and unfulfilled desire. Cheer Prince Tamino on his adventure, laugh with Papageno and Papagena, boo the conniving Monostatos, cry with the desperate Pamina, be awestruck by the mysterious Sarastro and his followers and be very afraid of the Queen of the Night.

Performance Dates:

**Friday 21 September, 7.30pm**

**Saturday 22 September, 7.30pm**

**Monday 24 September, 7.30pm**

**Wednesday 26 September, 7.30pm**

ANU Arts Centre

Tickets available from Canberra Ticketing

from Monday 3 September

T: 02 6275 2700

W: [www.canberraticketing.com.au](http://www.canberraticketing.com.au)



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