

ENSEMBLE PINQUINS



More and more often Australians living overseas form close musical associations and, indeed percussion ensembles, with like-minded students while pursuing Postgraduate study. It is wonderful when these ensembles have an opportunity to return to Australia to present concerts and workshops. Two ensembles are touring Australia in March: Ensemble Pinquins (Norway) and Ensemble Evolution (Sweden). Both ensembles visit Canberra on their Australian tour.

Pinquins percussion trio was established in 2008 by Sigrun Rogstad Gonnæs, Wendy Greenberg and Ane Marthe Sørlien Holen and is based in Oslo, Norway. All members have a Masters in Music Performance from The Norwegian Academy of Music, with a focus on Contemporary Music.

Pinquins has produced and presented a number of concerts in addition to appearances at The Ultima Oslo Contemporary Festival, The Bergen International Festival, The Øya Festival, The BrassWind Festival and collaborations with Ny Musikk (Norwegian section of the ISCM). Pinquins has performed with Kroumata and Sisu percussion ensembles and in 2010 arranged two concerts in conjunction with The Scandinavian Days of Percussion. In the same year Pinquins was selected to tour as a part of The Norwegian Concert Institute's school program.

Pinquins has collaborated with numerous composers and has commissioned new works by Erik S. Dæhlin, Jan Martin Smørdal and Therese Birkelund Ulvo and the ensemble will continue to work towards the development of new pieces in the future.

Here is an excerpt of a brief interview I conducted with Ensemble Director, Wendy Greenberg:

It is exciting to have Ensemble Pinquins touring Australia. Can you please tell our readers how you formed your ensemble and what precipitated this international tour?

Pinquins was formed during Ane Marthe's last year of study at The Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, (Sigrun and I finished earlier). She wanted to play Xenakis' "Okho" as a part of one of her Masters' concerts and asked us to join her. We really enjoyed working and playing together and we decided to form the group. We then spent some time learning new repertoire and arranging our own concerts. We now try to arrange 2

concerts in Oslo a year with new repertoire in addition to numerous other projects.

We started talking about touring Australia after having played a lot in Oslo (Sigrun's hometown) and having toured in Hedmark (the Norwegian district Ane Marthe comes from). We discussed the idea of bringing a primarily Norwegian program to Australia. The idea started off as something seemingly far-fetched, but we really wanted to do it so we set up a program and applied for funding!

Well, I am very glad that you were successful! Can you tell us about the Percussion/ Contemporary Music Scene in Norway, how does it compare to Australia?

It's difficult me to remember the Australian percussion/contemporary scene well enough to compare the two, but I can certainly tell you a bit about the Norwegian scene ...

There are many professional orchestras in Norway, (three in Oslo, a city of about 600,000). There are also numerous professional wind bands/military bands. All of these offer full time and casual work for percussionists. There are also a number of contemporary ensembles and another percussion trio called Sisu. The contemporary music scene is quite vibrant too, with good support for new commissions and projects. We have commissioned a number of works, one of which, a piece by Erik Dæhlin, we'll perform on this tour.

Pinquins is also employed by an organisation somewhat similar to Musica Viva, (if I remember correctly) and we travel on school tours throughout Norway for several weeks each year. In addition to playing in Pinquins, which takes up about 25% of our work-time, we all work as freelance percussionists and teachers.

What are your future plans for the ensemble?

We will continue to work as we have been over the last few years, with a combination of our own concerts and commissions, school tours and numerous other projects. In May we will perform in Tromsø, in Northern Norway. This is a project organised by the Music Academy there, where Sigrun is a teacher. We will do collaboration with a visual artist and record some works for Norwegian composer Bjørn Skjelbred. We will also collaborate with the German electro-artist Stefan Goldmann later this year in conjunction with 'New Music' in Oslo, and have several new commissions coming up, including one from Australian composer, Anthony Pateras.