

First offering gives colour, diversity

By **W. L. Hoffmann**

National Festival of Women's Music — Opening Concert. ANU Arts Centre, Aug 31.

THE GALA opening concert of the 4th National Festival of Women's Music, which was held in Canberra for the first time over last weekend, made a propitious start to this event.

It offered a widely varied program which opened and closed with two colourful musical presentations, while between them were four diverse works by Australian women composers, one of which was a festival commission having its world premiere.

The Gerib Sik Dance Group started proceedings with an attractive group of traditional women's dances from the Torres Strait Islands. In distinct contrast of mood these were then followed by Anne Boyd's Asian-influenced ensemble work *My Name is Tian*. Written in 1979, it is based on a

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novel by Korean writer Don'o Kim. Its musical textures are delicate, and it received a very fine and expressive performance from an ensemble conducted by Olle Palmqvist and consisting of Stephanie Acraman (soprano), Virginia Taylor (flute), Tor Fromhyr (viola), Alice Giles (harp) and Garry France (percussion).

With another change of mood there was an ebulliently dynamic performance of the *Sonata for piano and percussion* by the late Peggy Glanville Hicks. Composed

while she was living in the United States, it is bold in its outlines, though with contrasting episodes of introspection, and it received another excellent realisation, brilliantly played by pianist Suzanne Powell with Lisa Lai (xylophone) and the School of Music Percussion Ensemble directed by Gary France.

The commissioned work, *Sand Waltz* by Elena Katz-Chernin, is a bright and entertaining, somewhat quirky, but highly demanding piece of writing for wind quintet. It received a suitably joyous performance of sparkling assurance from the Canberra Wind Soloists.

A short work for solo saxophone, *But none I loved as much as you* by Sarah de Jong, was played by Sandy Evans, who then led the group Waratah in three final items. A trio of saxophone, the Japanese koto which was brilliantly played by Satsuki Odamura, and hand-percussionist Tony Lewis, it provides an unusual cross-over of musical cultures.