

MUSIC @ Waikato

notes & news issue 07 May 2006

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Another year is well underway and a new edition of the University of Waikato Music Department Newsletter is well overdue. It's been a busy past six months and looks like being even more so as 2006 moves ever onwards. We'd like to tell you about some of our achievements and offerings – past, present and, of course, future.

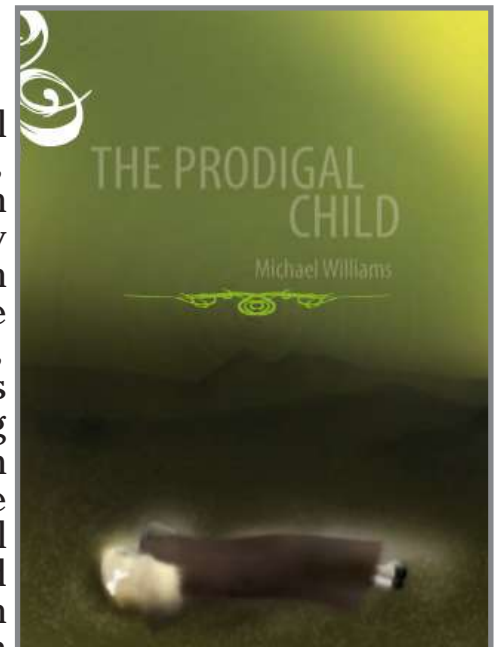
Vaulting Ambitiously

In our last newsletter, lecturer Michael Williams was occupied with commissions from the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Music New Zealand. The NZSO premiered *Piercing the Vault* at Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre in June, with a showcase performance from oboist Robert Orr and then toured the piece throughout the country. *Piercing the Vault* has now been broadcast twice on Concert FM.

Michael's *Behind the Parapet*, written for and premiered by the Ogen Trio was also toured throughout New Zealand with the work's Wellington performance being caught by Concert FM. *Parapet* marked new territory for Michael, as all three instruments in the trio were digitally enhanced.

Looking Ahead

2006 is proving one of Michael Williams's busiest years yet. *Blade*, a new commission for the American duo, The Irrelevants, AKA Timothy Deighton (viola) and Carrie Koffman (saxophone), inspired by the Len Lye kinetic sculpture of the same name, will be on the programme at OKTA's May concert and he is also working on a piece for the Waikato Youth Choir. Due to be performed at the Fuel Festival in July, this work will also feature computer-enhanced sounds. Michael has been collaborating with John Davies from Theatre Studies for this project which focuses on community awareness of the wetlands in the Waikato. The project itself is aptly named *Swamp Treasures* and will premiere in June this year at the Meteor Theatre.



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The Prodigal Comes Home

Michael Williams's opera *The Prodigal Child*, after successful seasons in New Plymouth, Christchurch and Auckland, will finally be performed in Hamilton at the Fuel Festival in a completely production. Expect changes – Michael says that 'this production is a radical shift from the NBR New Zealand Opera's presentations in that it will be much more visually evocative with the incorporation of projected images.'

This production, slated for the Gallagher Concert Chamber in early July, will also coincide with the release of a CD recording of the work. Department members Katherine Austin and James Tennant are involved on the instrumental side of both.

And after the Prodigal

Once The Prodigal Child has introduced itself to Hamilton audiences, Michael will be hard at work on his new opera. This new work will be based around ANZAC themes and, although not based entirely on the war itself, he promises explosive action nonetheless. And, with the silver screen in sight, Michael is also in negotiations to compose the score for a feature film but is reluctant to give too many details at this stage.

The Beethoven Summit

In November last year, the Tennant-Austin Duo presented their most challenging concert ever, the complete cycle of Beethoven Sonatas for cello and piano performed in one concert. An excellent and most

appreciative audience was treated to a 3 hour and 10 minute event that had two intervals, elegant and tasty refreshments and five of the most glorious sonatas written for the cello. This was caught for the *New Zealand Listener* in a glowing review by Ian Dando, who travelled up from the Garden City. "Few if any cellists have all five Beethovens in their repertoire," Dando commented. "That and the Tennant-Austin Duo's high-quality presentation make this ripe for touring nationally"

Ogens on Disc

The Ogen Trio (Dimitri Atanassov, Katherine Austin and James Tennant) will be performing concerts in Auckland and Tauranga in July, as well as releasing their new CD of music written for the group by New Zealand composers Gareth Farr, John Psathas, Martin Lodge, David Griffiths and Michael Williams towards the end of the year.

Cello Students Excel

Siobhan Gerritsen has been asked to take up the Thompson Scholarship with the Auckland Philharmonia for a second year running. This scholarship allows her to play in all of the orchestra's main series concerts, and to continue having lessons in orchestral repertoire. Since graduating from Waikato University with her Masters degree in 2004, she has been in heavy demand on the orchestra front, also taking the role of principal cellist with the Auckland Chamber Orchestra.

The Hall of Fame

Research Associate Lara Hall has just returned from the USA, where she gave numerous performances in and around the Boston area, playing piano trios and baroque ensemble repertoire, with musicians she met during her student years at the University of Michigan. She will be featured in concerts coming up at Waikato University at 6pm on Friday May 5 (in duo with pianist Katherine Austin), at 1pm on Wednesday 17 May (as part of the University's popular lunchtime concert series) and – don't miss this one! – playing Mozart's sublime A major Concerto with the University Orchestra at 2.30pm on Sunday 28 May.

Bach for Passiontide

David Griffiths has recently performed in the two great Passion settings of Johann Sebastian Bach. He sang Pilate, along with the beautifully poignant bass arias in the *St John Passion* with Bach Musica under the baton of Rita Pacsian. For the *St Matthew Passion* he joined Auckland Choral, playing the role of Christ opposite Kenneth Cornish's Evangelist. This performance was conducted by Peter Watts.

An Operatic Piecart

David Griffiths has also embarked on writing a new opera, *The White Lady*. This is a story based around the iconic pie cart off lower Queen Street in Auckland, with a libretto provided by Lynn John. As in previous opera productions at Waikato University, *The White*

Lady will be directed by John Davies from the Theatre Studies Department and lit, with his usual expertise, by Michael Knapp. The predominantly student performers will be under the musical direction of James Tennant. David himself will play a leading role in his opera this year playing the part of Paddy – an eccentric Irishman who works at the pie cart and is confidant to many of the local personalities. Guest artists include Reece Pennington who plays the part of Joshua, the young University student and John Murray who will be The Weasel. John will be remembered for his superb characterisation of Fred in last year's *3 Franks*. The production will open on Thursday 17 August and run through until Saturday 19.

European Connections

Martin Lodge's *Divisions* for wind quintet is being performed in a mini-festival of New Zealand music in the northern German city of Lübeck at the end of June. Ironically, Martin will not be able to be present at the performance as he will be presenting a paper at a major conference hosted by the Dauphine University in central Paris at the time. His paper presents research findings on the French influence on the development of New Zealand music, probably the first time anyone has investigated this subject. Interestingly, a colleague from the University of Paris XIII will follow Martin's presentation with her own perspective on the French effect, specifically on New Zealand's avant-garde music of the mid to late 20th century.

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Martin's paper has already been requested for publication in a special issue of the French bilingual scholarly journal *Les Cahiers du CICLaS*.

A tiger for punishment, a few days before the Paris conference Martin will present another paper, this time on 'Violence in New Zealand Operas' at the University of Bordeaux, as part of a conference on the theme of violence in the cultures of Australia and New Zealand. Amongst other works, he will be referring to operas by Music Department colleagues David Griffiths and Michael Williams.

American Guests

In May the Music Department will host a visit by two outstanding performers from the United States. Timothy Deighton hails from Pennsylvania State University and Carrie Koffman from the Hart School of Music in Connecticut. Together they perform around the world as *The Irrelevants*, a virtuoso viola and saxophone duo. While at the University of Waikato the two will give masterclasses for performance and composition students, and also present two public concerts. The first concert will be on Friday 12 May at 8pm in the Academy of Performing Arts, when they will present a programme of international repertoire. Included in this programme will be works by Waikato University composers Martin Lodge and Michael Williams, both of who have written new pieces for viola, saxophone and computer for this brilliant duo. In two of the items the Americans will be joined by taonga puoro expert Richard

Nunns to produce an extraordinary meeting of musics and cultures. Concert FM will be recording this concert for later broadcast by Radio NZ. The duo's second concert, also in the Academy, will take place on Wednesday 17 May, as part of the regular University Lunch Hour Concert series. For this concert they will be joined by James Tennant, Lara Hall and Katherine Austin for some exciting chamber music-making.

High and Low Tech

MMus composition student and Hillary Scholar Jeremy Mayall will include in his final portfolio a concept album of music videos based on the idea of popular romance novels, as well as orchestral music and a film score. As part of his Masters studies, he will be spending September at the University of Tulsa to further his specialist interest in film music composition. Tulsa is one of the exchange partner universities Waikato has, and Martin Lodge was able to check out the Music School there last year as an invited guest. Taking a different tack, on the other hand, Honours composition student Daniel Peters is continuing his interest in low-tech home-made musical instruments, and has now produced several new flute-like instruments.

On the Musicological Front

Late last year two of musicology students presented papers at the annual Conference of the New Zealand Musicological Society held at the University of Auckland. Honours student Phillippa Ulenberg provided

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a fascinating survey of music-making over the years in the small communities of Whitianga and Thames while Laura Atkins, currently completing her MA, looked at ways in which music can have a negative effect on listeners, whether deliberate or unintended.

Remembering Wolfgang's 250th

Rachael Griffiths-Hughes marked Mozart's big year by opening the Hamilton Civic Choir's 2006 season with an all-Mozart programme consisting of the G major Flute Concerto and the *Requiem*, calling on soloists including Pepe Becker, Helen Medlyn and David Hamilton. The Founders Theatre was well nigh full, and the *Waikato Times* was impressed, commenting, "A combination of the impassioned and the dramatic made both the occasion and performance an unqualified success. . . From the opening *Introit* through to the *Lachrymosa* to the final *Lux Aeterna*, the choir once again was on top form with a performance that was sharply etched throughout, its balance excellent, its singing energetic, dedicated and dramatic."

At the Drawing Board

Head of Department Ian Whalley spent much of the summer writing the Music Department's new five-year plan. This result brings together ideas that staff and community groups have recently shared. Ian notes that "it is an interesting turning point for the Department, given Hamilton City's rapid development and the unique profile of the Department" and

admits that he is very happy with the continuing energy of innovation.

At the Administrative Helm

Sadly, our unflappable administrator Richard Letch recently left us to undertake a Masters degree in Arts Administration at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. Ian notes that we shall all miss his cheerful professionalism. Kim Johnson replaced Richard in March. She has recently returned to New Zealand from Scotland, and brings a fresh perspective to our expanding concert and research activities.

Doctoral Growth

Our newly established PhD programme continues to develop rapidly, and we expect to have six candidates this year. Janet Jennings recently joined us from Auckland, taking the topic of composing music for secondary schools and was recently awarded the prestigious Marion Rayward Memorial Scholarship, a national award. PhD panel chair Ian Whalley expects that programme will continue to expand as international students now pay domestic tuition fees, allowing easier access to the expertise and knowledge of our staff.

Research Associates

This year our research associate Richard Nunns is joined by new associates Marshall Walker, Lara Hall and Peter Walls. Professor Marshall Walker has published and broadcast widely on the music of Sibelius, and violinist Dr. Lara Hall has recently returned from the USA after

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completing her DMA at Michigan State. Peter Walls was formally Professor of Music at Victoria University of Wellington, and is currently the CEO of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

The Opus Connection

Good news on the orchestral front! The Music Department and the Opus Chamber Orchestra have recently agreed to combine initiatives to develop music in our region. The orchestra will tour with the winner of the University Concerto Competition later in the year, with Peter Walls conducting.

Switched on in Barcelona

In 2005 Ian Whalley was on the research committee for the International Computer Music Conference in Barcelona in September 5-9, and also co-ordinated all the sessions on new composition systems. Selected papers requiring three supportive references, were published the annual proceedings that extended to over 800 pages this year. Ian's recent research work was outlined in his paper titled *Software Agents and creating Music/Sound Art: Frames, Directions and Where to From Here?*

It was in Barcelona that Ian's composition *Pukera*, which features an improvisation by Richard Nunns on putorino (a wind instrument), was given its world premiere. The work was recently released in December 2005, by *Organised Sound* (Cambridge University Press Vol 10/3). The word "pukera" means a wind swept headland or isthmus and Ian's work features a number of short fragments of

traditional New Zealand Maori instruments that were extensively processed and developed electronically, and then blended with the original material to make the structure of the work.

More CDs Coming Up

Ian was recently made media Publications Officer for the International Computer Music Association, mainly to oversee CD publications by the Association. Ian is also planning to release a further edition of the internationally acclaimed *New Zealand Sonic Art* CD series. Keep an eye on our site for calls for new works.

Organising Those Sounds

In 2005 Ian Whalley completed a special issue of *Organised Sound* on the integration of new music technology on non-western instruments. Issue 10/1 is the first major survey that the journal has undertaken in this field, and includes perspectives from musician/composers from around the globe. In the introduction, Ian notes that the "the topic is difficult to write about from a western practitioner's perspective. Many western 'art-music' composers have a limited understanding of the cultural context that non-western musical instruments are drawn from, and increasing political correctness and/or cultural sensitivity regarding cultural appropriation has made the territory difficult for the uncommitted or simply curious. From another perspective many fine non-western instrumental practitioners and composers are not attached to 'art-music' or academic circles, or are not

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sympathetic to digital music idioms. Further, writing academic papers in English for them requires sacrificing time that could be spent creating music playing." The journal attempts to bridge this gap.

Music and Science Come Together

In 2005 Ian Whalley headed a small team that successfully bid for one of four Smash Palace Fund grants – a Government initiative designed to encourage the convergence between the arts and science as a building block for innovation and creativity. The core team included musician and Maori instrument specialist Richard Nunns, and computer scientist/machine learning specialist Bernard Pfahringer. HIEMPA or, to spell it out in full, *Hybrid Instruments from Electroacoustic Manipulation and Models of Putorino and Aquascape*, was a pilot project that involved collecting sounds from the Waitomo Caves area, and those of traditional Maori instruments related to water, and from these developing software-based hybrid digital instruments that could be used for composition.

Miles of Music

A major project for William Dart has been preparing a week of Miles Davis music for Concert FM's *Composer of the Week* celebrations, which begin on May 28. As well as devising five hours of pieces which cover most aspects of the trumpeter's 47-year recording career, there was the matter of creating an hour-long documentary to introduce the week. When asked what was

the greatest challenge, William replied, "fitting extracts from 36 CDs into a 59 minute programme. It was a squeeze."

Something for the Birds

It was a historic occasion when AUP held the launch of painter Jacqueline Fahey's new autobiography, *Something for the Birds*. William Dart, who has contributed an essay on Fahey for a forthcoming book on New Zealand painters, gave the opening speech, incorporating revelations from a 1985 television documentary on the artist, "back when television art programmes were about art and artists and not the skill of the film editor". Many also appreciated William's unexpected links between Fahey's back garden birds, and the avian dialogues of the Czech composer Leos Janacek.

Music for the Museum

The latest development in the Music Department's pursuing of town-and-gown connections has found Katherine Austin and James Tennant organising fortnightly concerts by music students at the Waikato Museum. The two programmes held so far have been well-attended, warmly received and featured music ranging from operatic arias, a shimmering performance of John Psathas's *Waiting for The Aeroplane*, a piquant Hindemith oboe sonata and a Castelnuovo-Tedesco guitar duet to a virtuoso Scriabin Etude. The next concert is on Thursday 4 May at 12.10. Definitely one for the diary.

Wednesdays at One

The first week after break marks the start of the University's popular lunchtime concert series. Organiser William Dart is extremely pleased with this year's offerings which range from a visiting Irish flautist to a local jazz group featuring the violin of Tim Williams. Distinguished New Zealanders such as violist Tim Deighton and pianist Reid Gainsford are welcomed back into the country and, on 31 May, the singing students offer a specially arranged presentation of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

First up, on May 3, was one of the country's finest young mezzos Kate Spence, who devised a fascinating programme of songs, from Caldara and Brahms to Kern and Gershwin, with the title *Love Loss and Longing*. William Dart brushed up his arpeggios to play piano for the occasion.

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