

This concert is curated to draw attention to a particular lineage of music-making I believe to be unique to this country, and to introduce some of my music to ANAM's audience. There are many fascinating historical links to be made between the voices featured here, and some curios have been thrown in for good measure.

Jack Ellitt's *Journey # 1* (c.1934) is one of the earliest known examples of electronic music, succeeding Walter Ruttmann's *Weekend* (generally considered the first), by just four years. Immigrating to Australia at the age of 3, Ellitt studied piano, violin and bassoon at Sydney conservatorium as a young adult, meeting the New Zealand filmmaker Len Lye soon after graduating. Ellitt constructed the soundtrack for many of Lye's films throughout his life, soon discovering that the timbres and rhythms of film sound could stand alone as cohesive musical work. *Journey #1* is the earliest surviving example of Ellitt's extensive output, most of which was tragically incinerated after his death.

Keith Humble should be no stranger to Australian audiences, yet remains relatively unknown despite his gigantic output of instrumental, electronic, improvised and theatre music. He also founded the LaTrobe University Music Department, and assisted with the founding of the electronic music studios at Melbourne University in the mid 1970s. Renowned as a conductor, composer, pianist and electronic pioneer, Humble was a key figure in Melbourne's musical life from the 1960s, traversing experimental theatre, concert music, live electronic music and improvisation, until his passing in 1995. His *Bagatelles* (1992) are a late period testament to his compositional focus and instrumental insight - fluid, structurally rigorous, and musically energized.

I studied at LaTrobe from 1997-99, and its cross-pollination of twentieth century repertoire, electronic music, studio production and performance has had a lasting impact on my work. It was at this time that I met my first composition teachers Neil Kelly and Graeme Leak, who both encouraged me to continue composing. On graduation/closure Kelly generously involved me in a Slave Pianos project in New York, which at that time, was focused on the transcription and re-orchestration of sound works by visual artists for either mechanical piano, or at the stage I was involved, for the Flux String Quartet. *Flush* (2005) was originally commissioned by the same quartet, yet has not been performed since its completion 5 years ago.

Kelly studied with Tristram Cary in Adelaide, another seminal figure in the musical history of this country who emigrated here from London in the mid 1970s. Originally a naval radar officer, he became an acclaimed composer (notably winning the Prix Italia in 1962), co-founding the Electronic Music Studios (EMS) in London, and wrote extensively for theatre, film and television, most famously for the very first series of Dr Who (in which he was also responsible for the Dalek sounds). *Trios* (1971) was commissioned by the Cheltenham Festival, featuring the composer on VCS3 synthesizer and his two sons on turntables. The synthesizer part is essentially a template for structured improvisation, whilst the turntable players roll dice to determine which groove to place the needle on at any given point. I am performing the piece on a VCS3 synthesizer that Humble purchased from EMS in the 1970s. A little known work of Cary's (it is not in his official catalogue), we are not entirely sure whether this is the Australian premiere. Many thanks to Jim Knox for suggesting and helping organize the performance of this work, and to both Cary and Humble's technician Jim Sosnin for servicing the synth used in tonight's performance.

Musical maverick and eccentric Percy Grainger is best known for his orchestral works, folk song arrangements and legendary pianism, however many people don't know about his pioneering experiments in electronic music, which he referred to as *Free Music*. Composer and technician Rainer Linz writes: *Grainger first conceived his idea of Free Music as a boy of 11 or 12 (so around 1894). It was suggested to him by the undulating movements of the sea, and by observing the waves on Albert Park Lake in Melbourne. These experiences eventually led him to conclude that the future of music lay in freeing up rhythmic procedures and in the subtle variation of pitch, producing glissando-like movement.*¹ Tonight's performance features a rare public broadcast of some of these experiments from 1951-2, and Grainger's voice can be heard introducing his own early electronic instruments, such as the Kangaroo Pouch and Butterfly Piano (the former sharing similar ground with Xenakis' massed string architectures, the latter sounding eerily like some of Harry Partch's creations). Although the score of some of the *Free Music* is on the walls of the Melbourne Recital Centre's salon, this innovative side of our musical heritage is rarely spoken about, and should be celebrated.

The contemporary electronic works in the program are by two of my closest creative colleagues, Natasha Anderson and Robin Fox, who have encouraged, supported and influenced my musical work over the last decade. The excerpt from the 1st movement of Anderson's *Fathom* (2010) is a deft demonstration of contemporary musique concrète influenced by abstracted narrative, timbral improvisation techniques and compositional formalism garnered from her years of training as a recorder soloist. Disorientating and disconcerting, extremes of the frequency range intermesh with nasty mid-range swarms of manipulated strings, silenced by ominous low frequencies and stifling space. Robin Fox's *Godspeed* (2010) was heavily influenced by Grainger's *Free Music* - its continuous multiple glissandi hitting points of dense stasis, creating a delirious psychoacoustic mind-melt. It was in 2001 that I attended the Arditti Quartet concert with these two friends and I heard Mary Finsterer's music live for the first time, her *Sequi* (2001) written for that group leaving a lasting impression on me, and perhaps a little too much whilst writing *Chromatophore* (2003) for the Melbourne Symphony's Cybec program of that year. *Thirst* (2009) shares similar textural concerns, with a simultaneous nod to the textural techniques of Ligeti's music and the rhythmic fluidity of free improvisation.

The pointillistic Humble piano works are one of the many influences on my PIVIXKI project with drumming virtuoso Max Kohane, alongside pianist Chris Abrahams, free jazz legend Cecil Taylor and the piano concerti of Iannis Xenakis. Max is a musical chameleon, his drumming heavily shaped by the punk/grind tradition (of which Discordance Axis is maybe his favorite), whilst simultaneously informed by an obsession with hip-hop auteurs such as J Dilla and Madlib, and 50/60s garage such as The Equals. Smashing our vastly different backgrounds together has created a special music, which may be loud, but undeniably unique. – A.P. 2010

¹ <http://www.rainerlinz.net/NMA/articles/FreeMusic.html>