

March Events

Australia Ensemble @UNSW
 Free lunch hour concert
Tuesday March 15, 2016
1.10 - 2.00pm
Leighton Hall, Scientia Building
 Ravel: *Introduction and Allegro*
 Poulenc: Clarinet sonata
 Badings: *Cavatina*
 Andriessen: *Intermezzo*
 Debussy: *Sacred and Profane Dances*

Australia Ensemble @UNSW
 Subscription Concert 1, 2016
Saturday March 19, 2016
8.00pm
Sir John Clancy Auditorium
Transfigured Night
 Turina: *Circulo* Op.91
 Banks: *Prologue, Night Piece and Blues for Two*
 Dallapiccola: *Piccola musica notturna*
 Shankar: *L'Aube Enchantée*
 Schubert: *Notturmo* D897 Op.148
 Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht* Op.4 (Transfigured Night)

www.music.unsw.edu.au

A career of collaboration

March's lunch hour and subscription concerts make a feature of the harp's dreamlike timbre. Ahead of her latest appearance as guest artist with the Australia Ensemble, we sat down with world-renowned harpist Alice Giles to discuss her history with the Ensemble and the relationship she shares with her instrument.

Alice Giles is one of the Australia Ensemble's longest-standing collaborators, having been involved with the group for more than 25 of its 35-year history. "It is very special," she says, "to have a friendship and a musical partnership which extend over so many years, and one which feels so comfortable in all respects."

Alice's musical partnership with AE flautist Geoffrey Collins stretches back even further; they had both been students at the Conservatorium High School and were introduced by Alice's then teacher and main mentor June Loney. "Geoff was my first real chamber music partner", Alice recalls. "We did quite a bit of playing together before I left to study in the US when I was 19."

For a musician who has since gone on to forge a stellar international reputation as a soloist, teacher and sought-after chamber music collaborator, it is both comforting and satisfying to know that Alice's earliest partnerships as a harpist have only continued to flourish. At the heart of the AE's upcoming Lunch Hour and Subscription concerts will be that unspoken musical bond which can only come from decades of music-making.



Harpist Alice Giles has been a long-time collaborator with members of the Australia Ensemble

One of Alice's earliest – and most telling – musical memories involves her family's piano. "I preferred to improvise and amuse myself with music. I especially liked to lean into our Broadwood grand piano and strum the strings," she fondly remembers. Alice saw her first harp when she was 8, introduced to the instrument by friend and harpist Lydia Shaxson. "[Lydia] was a wonderful teacher," Alice says. "Incredibly musical and a very open, extroverted character."

As her career blossomed, the lessons of her formative years remained constant sources of inspiration. Alice gave her

first public recital at 13, received an Australia Council grant to study in the United States when she was 19, and at 21 came to international attention by placing first in the 8th Israel International Harp Contest.

One of the many notable strings to Alice's bow is her reputation as the foremost interpreter of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza II* for solo harp, the second of a series of fourteen *Sequenzas* ('Sequences'), famous for their idiomatic approaches to timbre and extended techniques.

Sequenza II, a remarkably colourful melange of liquid harp-sounds, took several months of focussed practice to learn, during which time by her own admission Alice "really had to knuckle down". Her hard work ultimately resulted in the opportunity to perform the work for Berio himself in Israel, a career highlight, where the composer was especially impressed with Alice having committed the *Sequenza* to memory. "He felt this was the only way to perform them," Alice says. "They needed to be fully integrated into the musical and physical understanding of the performer."

One of the cornerstones of the harp repertoire, and perhaps the composition most associated with Alice within the context of the Australia Ensemble is Ravel's sparkling *Introduction and Allegro*, composed during a time in the twentieth century when the harp and its broad tonal spectrum was finally coming into its own, making it an attractive instrument for composers all over the world. The work is to be recorded by Alice and the Australia Ensemble for an upcoming disc, paired with Debussy's lush *Sacred and Profane Dances*.

"We will be able to ensure our interpretation is there for the record", says Alice of the project. "We have been playing the Ravel together over our whole professional lives. It is a treat to be able to take the time to record a work that is so important to the repertoire and has grown and matured together with us."



Harpist Alice Giles in Antarctica as part of her 'Alice in Antarctica' project

Now the Artistic Director of the Seven Harp Ensemble and the founder and director of non-for-profit organisation Harp Centre Australia, Alice continues to find inspiration through her chosen instrument. "I've learned to use the harp as a continual learning process through life, as I continue to uncover new beauty in familiar pieces, discover new ones, and become more and more at one with my instrument".

Luke Iredale

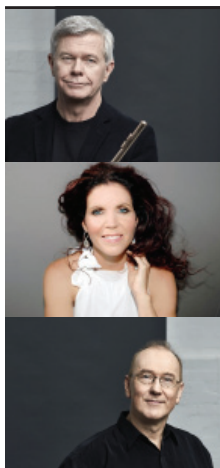
Alice Giles performs with the Australia Ensemble @UNSW:

Free lunchtime concert: Tuesday March 15, 1.10pm, Leighton Hall

Ravel *Introduction and Allegro*, Badings *Cavatina*, Andriessen *Intermezzo*, and Debussy *Sacred and Profane Dances*

Subscription concert: Saturday March 19, 8pm, Clancy Auditorium

Dallpiccola *Piccola musica notturna* and Shankar *L'Aube Enchantée*



2016 free masterclasses with Geoffrey Collins (flute), Sara Macliver (voice) and Ian Munro (piano)

Making the most of creative minds

Over recent years, the Australia Ensemble has moved its weekday events to the Leighton Hall of the John Niland Scientia building, with the spectacular backdrop of the blonde travertine marble wall adding to the brilliance of these free performances. Subscribers will notice some further tweaks to the calendar in 2016, as we explore some different avenues in our campus-based activities.

Three masterclasses in 2016 will provide opportunities for the next generation of performers to work with the elite musicians of the Australia Ensemble, including Geoffrey Collins (flute), Sara Macliver (voice) and Ian Munro (piano). A trial of this program in 2015 with mezzo-soprano Fiona Campbell, violinist Dene Olding and guitarist Karin Schaupp proved very useful for students and popular with a different audience group. For a young performer, this is a priceless opportunity for learning and development. For an audience member, it is an ideal way to learn more about the technical and creative processes of music-making, and to get close to the process of the elite musician. We hope subscribers will be able to join us for these events in 2016.

The creative mind is certainly an instrument of intrigue, and we are aware [Cont. on next page]

Venturing into our Transfigured Night

About 20 years ago, I was a visiting student at the University of York over a particularly stark and cold winter. In order to get access to rooms to compose away from busy and noisy student dorms, I needed to wait for the hubbub to die down and work mainly at night. I would work from about 9.30 or 10 at night through to 3 am before lurching out into the bracing snow-covered ground while traipsing back to student quarters. The world of night became a rarified and special thing to me; it really helped inspire the piece I was writing, entitled 'Night Prelude'. I became aware of tiny scraps of sound, odd angles of light, altered perceptions of time and a deep sense of contemplation.

There is something quintessential about the night that is seductive to musicians and composers and it is not surprising to find a long list of exquisite music replete with the imagery of night. Night is also a time where we put aside our workaday lives in favour of imagination, play and contemplation. Perhaps this is why music and the night are such easy soulmates?

An immediate starting point in drafting our 2016 season was Schoenberg's expressive, late Romantic *Verklärte Nacht* for string sextet, written in 1899. The composition is based on an expressionist poem by Richard Dehmel about two lovers, carrying out a midnight conversation about their elicit love and a child conceived out of wedlock. Our first concert of the year reflects this and other night visions including cycles of day to night, from

the bluesy modernism of Australian Don Banks, through to Dallapiccola's quiet atmospheric *Piccola Musica Notturmo* ('A Little Night Music') and Indian sitar player and composer Ravi Shankar's exquisite and affirming flute and harp duo *L'Aube Enchantée*.

Our second concert, *Dreams and*



Prayers follows through with the night theme and was inspired by a movement from Alessandro Golijov's clarinet quintet *Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind Man*. This movement, entitled *K'vakarat* is based on a chanted prayer, drawn from the Hebraic liturgical music Golijov experienced growing up in a devout Jewish family in Argentina. The piece is a tour de force for clarinettist David Griffiths who is an expert at Klezmer styles of playing replete throughout this work. The music of fellow South American composer, Hector Villa-Lobos (active in Brazil in the early part of the twentieth century) whose tight, neo-classical *Quatuor* for winds

rounds out the first half of the program which begins with the finely crafted String Quartet Opus 50 number 5 by Haydn, nicknamed '*Ein Traum*' (A Dream). Shostakovich's famous Piano Trio no. 2 famously plumbs the depths of human emotion. Like Golijov, he refers to Hebraic melodies in the course of this Trio which is one of the two most famous Piano Trios from the last century (the other, of course, being Ravel's).

Gordon Kerry's new work *while the music lasts* also features in our second concert. The title is taken from T.S. Eliot's *The Dry Salvages*:

music heard so deeply
that it is not heard at all, but you are
the music
while the music lasts.

This new work was commissioned especially by Dr Patricia Brown to celebrate the 85th birthday of long-time Australia Ensemble Artistic Chair, Professor Roger Covell. I'm sure the piece will be a fitting tribute.

And on the topic of new works, I'm very proud to say the Australia Ensemble will be premiering two other new compositions. Young Brisbane-based composer Andrew Ball has written *Three Dreams in Pulse* for clarinet and piano, commissioned by Dr Andrew Kennedy and dedicated to long-serving Ensemble clarinettist, Catherine McCorkill. This lively new work, riffing off our Night theme, is a welcome addition to our third concert *Bright Young Things* which features effervescent works by the youthful Darius Milhaud, Richard Strauss and, of course, Felix Mendelssohn

[Cont. on next page]

of the interest that our audience has in composition and the creative process.

In 2016, two of our commissioned composers are coming on board for a 7pm conversation with Artistic Chair Paul Stanhope – on Saturday May 14, young composer Andrew Ball will introduce his new clarinet sonata *Three Dreams in Pulse*, and on Saturday September 10, Matthew Hindson will talk about his 2010 work commissioned for the Australia Ensemble, *Light is both a particle and wave*. All are welcome to join us for these free pre-concert conversations – more details will be in future issues of the AE News.

We look forward to other performances around the campus in 2016, including a springtime twilight series – keep an eye out for these opportunities: Website www.music.unsw.edu.au

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustraliaEnsembleunsw/>

Composer conversations of Paul Stanhope with Andrew Ball (left) and Matthew Hindson (right) will be free and open to all



who composed the first version of his famous Octet for strings at the mere age of 16!

The third new work for the year is by the ensemble's own Ian Munro who has thoroughly established his reputation as an artist equally accomplished in performing and composing. His new work *Three Birds* is a song cycle commissioned by Norma Hawkins and written for one of Australia's most lauded sopranos, Sara Macliver who features in our August program featuring the Beethoven Septet.

If you were to try and find music as visionary and thought-provoking as the theories of Stephen Hawking or Albert Einstein, you could go no further than Olivier Messiaen's *Quatuor pur la fin du temps* (Quartet for the End of Time). Messiaen's vision may be tied up with a mystic form of Catholicism, but it is equally profound and expansive, especially

considering that it was composed in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. Our September concert delves into the mysteries of time, light and gravity (in both senses of that word) in a diverse and exciting program in music by Matthew Hindson, Samuel Barber and Maurice Ravel.

Our season closes with a unique collaboration with the scintillatingly pure voices of Sydney Children's Choir, guided by their inspiring Director, Lyn Williams. *A Flock of Stars* features a suite of music written for children's voices and ensemble, kickstarted by the techno-inspired sound-world of French composer Guillaume Connesson's *Techno-Parade* and concluding with the G minor String Sextet by Brahms, creating a superb symmetry with Schoenberg's sextet from the first program.

I am proud of the diversity and richness of our 2016 program; it promises

to be an exciting sonic journey. The tradition of the Australia Ensemble's quality performances with the great variety of repertoire and standout guest performers makes individual tickets or subscription packages superb value with generous concessions available. I hope you will join us over six exquisite Saturday nights of outstanding music-making in our 2016 Subscription Series: *Transfigured Night*.



Paul Stanhope

Australia Ensemble Artistic Chair
<http://www.music.unsw.edu.au/australia-ensemble>

Sharing our passion



Development Manager Hannah McCann is working on outreach programs, including the Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Indigenous education and support programs run through Nura Gili, and of course the Australia Ensemble, run through the Music Performance Unit.

Speaking with Hannah about her work here at UNSW, it is clear that she is excited to be working with the MPU, and particularly with the Australia Ensemble. "As a music alumna, I fondly remember scribbling down notes during lunchtime concerts, but mostly being amazed by the standard of performance." Since graduating from music at UNSW, Hannah managed music festivals across the country, and worked with the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and Sydney Dance Company, before taking on the role of Development Manager at UNSW. "The

Many of our subscribers will recall the launch of the Ensemble Fund at the end of 2015, a philanthropy and development program designed to better support the activities of the Australia Ensemble @UNSW. Hannah McCann is the face behind this program, appointed to a new role in 2015 to manage fundraising for UNSW's equity, access and outreach programs. This includes UNSW's ASPIRE program, the

Australia Ensemble has to be one of the best ensembles in the country. Bringing together the finest musicians and having them play such diverse and unique programs, how could anyone not want to support that?"

Hannah works within the UNSW Foundation, and has already established connections with some of our subscribers who are supporting composition and recording projects of the Australia Ensemble. "I am passionate about the impact that exposure to this kind of music can have on people at every stage of life and I am delighted that the ensemble and the Music Performance Unit more broadly are looking to expanding their reach, particularly into NSW schools." Hannah is busy identifying different ways for people to engage with the Australia Ensemble, including creative projects as well as ongoing donations, bequests and new activities. Her enthusiasm for the work is tangible: "There are loads of ways to get involved with the Australia Ensemble and I would love to speak to subscribers with any ideas of ways in which they would like to offer support. I will be at all of the subscription performances so subscribers should tap me on the shoulder and say hi! I love hearing about how people have come to the Australia Ensemble and sharing our passion for this incredible group of musicians."

Sonia Maddock
with
Hannah McCann

