



# NEW ZEALAND IN L.A.

APRIL 18, 2012 8:30 PM

presented by

REDCAT

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California Institute of the Arts

**CaLARTS**

# NEW ZEALAND IN L.A.

Wednesday, April 18, 2012, 8:30pm

## PROGRAM

### *Abhisheka (1996)*

Formalist Quartet: Andrew Tholl, violin; Andrew McIntosh, violin and viola;  
Mark Menzies, violin and viola; Ashley Walters, cello

John Psathas

### *Impossible Songs (2006)*

1. everything in this piece is derived 2. the idea is in retrograde  
3. the second movement is finished 4. the new song impossible  
5. this is how it stands  
Stephanie Aston, soprano; Formalist Quartet

Samuel Holloway

### *Charge (1997) world premiere*

Jonathan Stehney, bassoon

James Gardner

### *Sono (2000)*

Georgi Dimitrov, violin; Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, cello; Mark Menzies, piano

Victoria Kelly

## Intermission

### *spring elegy 'aus 2011' (2011)*

Mark Menzies, violin; Chaz Underriner, electric guitar; Vinny Golia, bass clarinet

Mark Menzies

### *Duo for Violin and Cello (1992)*

Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick; Mark Menzies

Christopher Cree Brown

### *Get [A Catalogue of Imperatives] (2007)*

Stephanie Aston, soprano; Mark Menzies, viola

Glenda Keam

### *He Poroporoaki (2008)*

Richard Nunns, Maori instruments; Formalist Quartet

Gareth Farr and Richard Nunns

## Improvisation

Chris O'Connor, percussion; Richard Nunns, Maori instruments;  
Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, cello; Vinny Golia, winds

With the support of Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa



I am excited to welcome you to these two evenings of offerings from New Zealand, at REDCAT. At the outset, I want to stress that, as a kiwi residing in Southern California for the last eighteen years, I have the privilege of *welcoming* the participants to this gathering, but I am *not* the head honcho that has made this all happen.

Some years ago, I had the hono(u)r of being invited to perform as part of a festival in Auckland, NZ, called (09)03; though Glenda Keam was a treasured friend of mine, given the scope and ambition of the festival, it was not an occasion to indulge friends: it was an idea to give a stylized snapshot of things in and through Australasia that were pertinent and alive *now*. I have never yet attended a festival that so successfully presented that very ambition. Dr. Keam was the organizer of that festival, as she is the co-convener of "New Zealand in L.A.".

As a result of that festival, eventually Glenda and I began the discussions about creating something along those lines in Los Angeles. Like (09)03, "New Zealand in L.A." would not happen were it not for the generous support of Creative New Zealand, a government agency that supports the arts in New Zealand and their potential beyond its shores. It couldn't happen without the generous participation of the artists either, in particular the guests who have made their way to Los Angeles for this occasion. Part of constructing this presentation has been to program material from an array of cultural and artistic points of view; "New Zealand in L.A." does not attempt to present a catalogue or retrospectives of "important" or "historically canonized" New Zealand music, but rather what Glenda and I formed as a particular idea of a snapshot of things—inviting things which we hope come across with a particular uniqueness and charisma.

A thread through both concerts is the presence of New Zealand's living national treasure: Richard Nunns, performer on Maori instruments; he will be playing compositions by Gillian Whitehead and Gareth Farr that were written for with him—and in improvised contexts, including with the renowned L.A.-based Vinny Golia, and joined by Chris O'Connor, one of New Zealand's foremost drummers and improvisors. Another thread through the concerts is led by clarinetist Gretchen La Roche, who is one of New Zealand's new music virtuosos, with countless works for various clarinets being written for her. Bachelorette (Annabel Alpers) is a special guest for this festival, and appears on the April 19<sup>th</sup> concert; a singer-songwriter who uses technology extensively in her sets of original vocal and video material, she has a career in the U.S., in Europe and in Australasia.

The first evening on April 18th, focuses on intimate chamber music and small group performances. In contrast, the concert on April 19th includes the very LA-relevant *Heavy Traffic*—a concerto for contrabassoon—and some other larger-scale works, though always reflecting the particular New Zealand characteristic of being ambitious, rambunctious even (you will hear what Samuel Holloway, James Gardner and Michael Norris have done with the most urbane of chamber combinations, the piano trio), but within the confines of avoiding exaggeration ... almost always polite, even if accessing the "inner bellow".

—Mark Menzies

## PROGRAM NOTES

### ***Abhisheka* (1996)**

**John Psathas**

"The Sanskrit equivalent for initiation is *abhisheka*, meaning 'sprinkle', 'pour', 'anointment'. And if there is pouring, there must be a vessel into which the pouring can fall. So at last we might really give up all these complications and just allow some space, just give in. This is the moment when *abhisheka*—sprinkling and pouring—really takes place, because we are open and are really giving up the whole attempt to do anything, giving up all the busyness and overcrowding. Finally we have been forced to really stop properly, which is quite a rare occurrence for us." (Taken from Chögyam Trungpa's *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*)

Drafted immediately after reading a book by the Buddhist guru Chögyam Trungpa, *Abhisheka* was my first-ever attempt at writing music with space in it. Until this piece, practically everything I had written was ultra-caffeinated, fast, full of notes, and murder on performers. But having been (albeit temporarily) inspired by the great truths and peace in Trungpa's writing, I found myself navigating slower passages of musical time, as well as exploring the microcosm of inner space between the even intervals of our chromatic tuning system."

—John Psathas

### ***Impossible Songs* (2006)**

**Samuel Holloway**

Each movement derives its title from Alan Loney's "Dear Webern", a poem composed of selected phrases from the letters of Anton Webern: 1. everything in this piece is derived; 2. the idea is in retrograde; 3. the second movement is finished; 4. the new song impossible; 5. this is how it stands

### **Charge (1997) world premiere**

**Christopher Cree Brown**

This short piece was written in 1997 as a 21st birthday present for the clarinetist Esther Smaill. The melodic fragment heard at the outset soon skitters over its own unstable surface, mutates into fanfare-like repetitions, is spliced with momentary cantabile inserts, interrupted by slow motion signposts, and blows itself out in a final burst of energy. The version for bassoon was written in 2001 for my friend, the conductor and bassoonist Hamish McKeich.

—JG

### **Sono (2000)**

**Victoria Kelly**

The idea for this piece began with the Portuguese word “sono” which describes the feeling of wanting to go to sleep—but in a mental rather than a physical way. In the case of this piece, the desire for sleep is inspired by wanting to rejoin a dream—and in my experience, it is always impossible to do this once having woken up.

The trio begins with an impassioned event which soon disappears, leaving the piano alone to dream about it—and you will hear a repeating note emerge which sits throughout the music, representing the real world lingering in the background. Around this note, the dream wanders, in chords and gestures on the piano, and in deep breaths and ascending melodies on the strings, which never quite seem to arrive at their destination.

### **spring elegy ‘aus 2011’ (2011)**

**Mark Menzies**

In centuries gone by, a prevalent method of composing music in the West was termed “parody technique”; in my own compositions, I frequently draw on this tradition for what these days could be called creative transcription. Sometimes what excites one about another work of art is its internal mechanics, and it happens that “creative transcriptions” that explore those perceptions may sound not at all like the original.

Other times, it is precisely the potency of the outward gesture(s) and/or sensual beauty of their progression to which one may wish to respond. So it is with *Abhisheka*, a string quartet by John Psathas, a very well-known New Zealand composer, and friend of mine since we were both teenagers; that quartet serves as the model for my trio *spring elegy ‘aus 2011’*. Much as Rembrandt, in his religious paintings in particular, took the content of his (Italian) model-paintings and rearranged the furniture—added shadow here and there, and reworked the air of the dramatic arrangement—so I’ve “parodied” *Abhisheka* in a way that I hope is perceived as a tribute to the powerful originality of Psathas’ composition while still leaving room to say something uniquely my own.

—Mark Menzies

### **Get [A Catalogue of Imperatives] (2007)**

**Glenda Keam**

The singer is gently musing, but soon her head is filled with a torrent of thoughts and concerns, all demanding immediate attention. The violist (or is he the maître d’?) observes and accompanies her lurching mood swings, but does not participate in them. Both instructor and instructed, the singer is by turns demanding, generous, and tormented, overwhelmed by the speed of her thoughts. The violist, occasionally impatient, is mostly indifferent.

—Glenda Keam

### **He Poroporoaki (2008)**

**Gareth Farr and Richard Nunns**

*He Poroporoaki* (Saying goodbye) was co-composed by Gareth Farr and Richard Nunns for the 2008 Dawn Service Commemoration at Gallipoli, Turkey. Since 2006, a Turkish, Australian, or New Zealand composer has been invited to contribute a work leading up to the 100th anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli in 2015. *He Poroporoaki* is the third work in this “Spirit of Place” series of commissions, which seeks to create an ambiance before the period of silence at the Dawn Services at the commemoration site.