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MODART07

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Choosing a career in composition is often daunting. Even for the most established composer, networking and self-promoting are not easy tasks. But for emerging composers, finding performers who are interested in performing new works – let alone *your* works – can be a nightmare. Just how does one find the motivation to write pieces that risk never being played? The journey to becoming a successful composer can leave young artists so overwhelmed that they give up their creative pursuits when they have barely begun.

Batt-Rawden, Brad Gill, Rebecca Harrison, Kate Moore, Alex Pozniak, Johanna Selleck, and New Zealand composer Claire Nash.

While the planned workshops won't take place until mid-September, all seven composers are currently conceptualising ideas for a short a cappella work.

Inspired by the online environment, Andrew Batt-Rawden – for example – is currently working on a piece that explores themes of communication, prejudice and identity: “My composition is about the differences between prejudice in reality and ‘digitality’ – the humorous consequences of deception”, he says. “It

aims to question the validity of the Internet as a place for socialising”.

Batt-Rawden is fascinated by the idea of identity in the online world. He elaborates: “The Internet regards the world with a digital sneer. It is the easiest way to communicate with new people without the risk of being seen or heard and therefore prejudged.

Within Internet chat rooms, the only prejudice is of your avatar, which could be a collection of symbols (with or without a collective meaning) or a picture, pre-fabricated or one that you

have created and uploaded yourself. Creating and using an avatar is certainly easier than choosing appropriate clothes and maintaining a perfectly fit body with exfoliated, cleansed and moisturised skin to give the all-too-necessary impression of youth, health, aesthetic sensibility and success.

If you're afraid of being pre-judged in the real world (and its consequences, such as rejection or violence), by entering the digital universe you can compose a ‘new you’ and use it to give the impression – to other fabricated avatars – that the ‘real you’ is everything you want to be, therefore decreasing your chances of rejection. Just make sure you can pull off any created



Photo: Bridget Elliot

The Song Company in rehearsal.

This is why composer development projects like MODART are so important. Presented by The Song Company and the Australian Music Centre, MODART gives young composers the opportunity to work intimately with a professional ensemble – a chance to not only develop vocal writing skills, but also (perhaps, more importantly) hear their works performed! Of course, the public exposure the composers receive during the project – along with the prospects for networking – are also significant.

This year The Song Company will work closely with seven emerging composers: Andrew

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From the Centre

deceptions if you intend to meet the humans behind the avatars in real life.”

While these themes are serious in nature, Batt-Rawden promises to create a work that is “challenging, light, and entertaining” by using “interesting onomatopoeic sounds, Internet jargon, imagery and a fast-paced sarcastic humour”.

Alternatively, Kate Moore has found inspiration in more ancient forms: history and mythology. She hopes that *A Tribute to The Water of Life* – which plans to use all six voices of The Song Company – will take the audience on a “fascinating journey through history, mythology and speculation via symbolism and story telling, with one goal in mind: to reveal that *Music* is the true *Water of Life*”.

The conceptual basis of Moore’s work is based on the different meanings of the word *music*: “*Uisce Bheatha* is an Irish phrase meaning the ‘Water of Life’ and is the origin of the word whiskey”, she remarks. “Some may argue that the phrase is a fittingly mysterious and life-giving description for this Celtic beverage, but there is another word whose origins are shrouded in the same enigmatic life-giving qualities, the word *music*.”

Common belief would have it that the word *music* refers to the word *Mousikos* and is a reference to the nine muses of Greek mythology. This is also the root of the word museum and memory. The word appears later when al-Farabi – an Islamic scholar – uses it to describe the theory and musical practise of the Arabic world in c. 900AD in his book *Kitab al-musiqa al-kabir* (the Great Book of Music).

However, there is another myth that traces the word and musical development much further back to approximately 2000BCE and sparks many questions about the true identity of the most elusive of the arts.”

Moore and Batt-Rawden – along with the other MODART07 participants – will spend at least one week during the second half of September with The Song Company workshopping their ideas.

A public performance and broadcast of the works is planned for 29 September 2007.

For more information about MODART07 go to www.amcoz.com.au/projects/modart/modart2007.htm

This article was written by AMC’s Publications Coordinator Danielle Carey.



Photo: Bridget Elliot

The Song Company

Trans-Tasman

2006 Trans-Tasman Composer Exchange Resident Colin Bright recently returned from New Zealand where he spent time with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra as part of his exchange residency as well as catching up with local composers and attending concerts. He reports.



First stop Wellington to catch up with Jack Body and other local composers. While in Wellington, I attended a concert by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra featuring a work by John Psarthalas, which was very well received by the audience.

Then on to Auckland to continue my residency with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra who performed *Oceania* (excerpts from my opera *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*). I was particularly pleased to receive an excellent performance, and Brett Dean – who was also on the program, making it something of an Aussie night – was equally pleased with the performance of his *Viola Concerto*.

The previous evening was a free 6.30 p.m. Happy Hour Concert which featured two movements of Brett’s concerto as well as my piece. It also featured two cocktails – a ‘MarDini’ for Brett and an ‘Oceania Spray’ for me (both were pretty vile).

Previous Trans-Tasman exchange composer Gareth Farr hosted the concert and he chatted with us on stage about our compositions and encouraged questions from the audience. I am a bit of a fan of composers (or conductors) introducing pieces, particularly new pieces, as it is a user-friendly way of getting the listener more involved in the music. The unfamiliar can still be a challenge, even for the seasoned ear.

Sometimes one wonders what goes on in a programmer’s mind. In this case the mind of APO Artistic Administrator Antony Ernst, who I think latched on to the letter ‘B’. Conductor – Baldur Brönnimann, Robert Schumann (i.e. Bob), Brett Dean, Colin Bright, and Johannes Brahms! Meanwhile, I am working on *Surf Symphony* – a new piece for the APO for next year.

Colin will visit New Zealand three times over the next 18 months to work with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. They are scheduled to premiere Surf Symphony in April 2007.