Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Echoes of the Garden Palace
sonic responses to barrangal dyara (skin and bones)

The Royal Botanic Garden
Friday 23 September 2016, 3:00pm
Program

Elizabeth Jigalin  That Sound Afar, for four roaming voices [WP]
Paolo Giorza  The Belles of Australia Waltz No.5, arranged for saxophone quartet
David Reaston  Garden Belles, for saxophone and trombone [WP]
Paolo Giorza  Cantata [Prelude], arranged for saxophone quartet
Mimi Kind  Along the Lines of the Garden Palace, for two singing flutes [WP]
Fenn Idle  In Memory of the Eastern Suburbs Brass Band (Whose Instruments Perished in the Garden Palace Fire of 1882), for three trombones [WP]
Amina Salihbegovic  Construction, for six percussionists [WP]
Paolo Giorza  Cantata [Part 1 Chorus], arranged for saxophone quartet
Damien Ricketson  Stole Like the River of a Dream, for ensemble [WP]

WP: world premiere

Echoes of the Garden Palace is presented as part of barrangal dyara (skin and bones) in collaboration with Kaldor Public Art Projects

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Performers

Erin Hendry, voice
Hannah Alexander, voice
Clare Richards, voice
Rebecca Hart, voice
Elia Bosshard, flute
Mimi Kind, flute/percussion
Nathan Henshaw, tenor saxophone
Alice Morgan, soprano sax [Luxum Quartet]
Alisha Kinkade, alto saxophone [Luxum Quartet]
Sam Weller, tenor saxophone [Luxum Quartet]
Tom Spenser, baritone saxophone [Luxum Quartet]
Jacob Gross, trombone
Dion Marks, trombone
Fenn Idle, trombone/percussion
Adam Cooper-Stanbury, percussion
Jessie Wang, percussion
Angus Davison, percussion
Damien Ricketson, percussion

About the performance

Occupying a repurposed ‘European castle’ nestled at the edge of the beautiful Royal Botanic Garden, staff and students of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music are privileged. Beyond the convict artifacts peppered throughout our building, few of us have had any inkling of the depth of cultural layers that surround us and sit beneath our feet. Jonathan Jones’s barrangal dyara (skin and bones) has, above all, permitted us to see (and hear) our everyday surrounds afresh. Working with Jones and the Kaldor Public Art Projects team has enabled us to develop heightened awareness, understanding and respect for this site and the peoples whose land we now occupy.

The musical reference point for today’s performance is the colossal Garden Palace that once dominated the land on which we stand. Over much of this year, five composition students from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music have grappled with this imposing, yet fleeting, building and the music that took place within its walls. Some students, such as Mimi Kind and Amina Salihbegovic, address the architecture of the building directly. Amina’s percussion work Construction sees the musicians perform unconventional instruments made from old building materials while Mimi Kind’s Along the Lines of the Garden Palace, uses the floor plan of the building like a musical score to inspire melodic shapes and contours performed by two singing flautists.

Fenn Idle’s trombone trio In Memory of the Eastern Suburbs Brass Band (Whose Instruments Perished in the Garden Palace Fire of 1882), is a distorted recollection of a tragic story of a brass band who were never able to realise a performance they had been rehearsing and lost their instruments to the fire that brought an abrupt end to the palace only three years after it had been built.

The other new works in the program all relate in one way or another to an early colonial musician Paolo Giorza (1832–1914). Of Italian origin but quite the internationalist, Giorza was appointed Music Director of the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879–80. In this role he presented daily concerts and organ recitals and composed a Cantata for the grand opening ceremony of the exhibition. No recording of this work exists. However, you will hear a ‘Prelude’ and a ‘Chorus’ extracted from the Cantata that has been arranged for saxophone quartet.

The quartet will also perform an arrangement of a Waltz that appears in a ‘souvenir publication’: Giorza’s Exhibition Album. David Reaston’s Belles of Australia, performed by saxophone and trombone, follows the melodic shapes and gestures of the original, in a quasi-improvised fashion, as though the melodies have been eroded or partially forgotten.

Elizabeth Jigalin’s That Sound Afar and my own Stole Like the River of a Dream bookend the performance. Both reference the Cantata and the text by Henry Kendall on which it is based. Jigalin’s work features four roaming singers that assemble today’s site-specific gathering prior to presenting a series of ‘choral pillars’ and silences that reconstitute the Cantata and invite us to listen to the environmental soundprint of the Royal Botanic Garden in the present. My own Stole Like the River of a Dream, reverses Jigalin’s assembly, dispersing a fragmented strand of Giorza melody as though the music has been blown to the winds.

Although Aboriginal music is not directly referenced in this performance – we did not collectively feel we had the authority to exploit what little we knew of the pre-European music of this site – its silence is nonetheless present and perhaps should still be heard as a poignant counterpoint that underlies and frames the sounds that we bring to this site in this performance.

On behalf of the composers and performers involved in Echoes of the Garden Palace, I would like to extend our thanks to Jonathan Jones and Kaldor Public Art Projects for the guidance and opportunity to create and learn as part of barrangal dyara (skin and bones). I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to elders past and present, on whose land we perform today.

Damien Ricketson
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