

## STEVEN SCHICK RESIDENCY #2: TOUCH

THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 7PM

ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

**Pauline OLIVEROS (1932-2016)** *Tuning Mediation* (1974) 8'

**Zosha DI CASTRI (b. 1985)** *TOUCH:TRACE* (2024) 30'

- i. *Trace*
- ii. *Pendulum*
- iii. *Flowing*
- iv. *Tethered*
- v. *Disperse*
- vi. *Night Terrors*
- vii. *Circle*
- viii. *Floating*
- ix. *Landing*
- x. *Memory Trunk*

**Steven Schick** solo percussion / director

**Alex Tsang** \* (NSW) oboe

**Damien Eckersley** (Deputy Artistic Director, ANAM Faculty) double bass

**Jamie Willson** \* (TAS) auxiliary percussion

**Sarah Chick** \* (TAS) piano

**Nathan Ellul** (AV & Operations Coordinator) electronics

**INTERVAL** 20'

**Sarah HENNIES (b. 1979)** *Settle* (2012) 12'

**Jonathan Parker** \* (WA) vibraphone

**Caleb Goldsmith** \* (NZ) vibraphone

**Iannis XENAKIS (1922-2001)** *Persephassa* (1969) 25'

**Steven Schick** percussion / director

**Jonathan Parker** \* (WA) percussion

**Steven Bryer** \* (QLD) percussion

**Caleb Goldsmith** \* (NZ) percussion

**Jamie Willson** \* (TAS) percussion

**Peter Neville** (ANAM Faculty, Head of Percussion) percussion

*Approximate duration: 1 hour and 45 minutes, with a 20-minute interval.*

\* Denotes ANAM musicians supported by ANAM Syndicate or foundations.

*Peter Neville's Head of Percussion position is supported by Kerry Landman.*

*Steven Schick's Artistic Residency at ANAM is supported by Peter Jopling AM KC & Richard Parker and the Estate of the late Vivienne Ritchie AM.*

*ANAM relies on the generous support of donors to help us develop our young and talented musicians. To provide the very best performers for your concert experience today and in the future, please donate to ANAM now via our website, call (03) 9645 7911 or speak to our Box Office staff at today's concert.*

*ANAM respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands spread across Australia on which we work and live. We uphold and honour their continued relationship to these sites, we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*

# THE THREADS OF LISTENING

In his essay on the curatorial inspiration behind his residency at ANAM, Steven Schick describes three relationships that are fundamental to his music making: with the materials of his art, with the natural world around him, and with the communities around him and the dialogue he cultivates with them. Though the three blur together in the alchemy of music-making, Tuesday's focus was materials; tonight's focus is community.

## The Tuning Meditation (Pauline Oliveros, 1971)

Begin by playing a pitch that you hear in your imagination. After contributing your pitch, listen for another player's pitch and tune in unison to the pitch as exactly as possible. Listen again and play a pitch that no one else is playing. The duration of pitches is determined by the duration of a comfortable breath or bow. The dynamic level is soft throughout the piece.

Continue by alternating between the three options described above: playing a new pitch of your own that no one else is playing; just listening, or; tuning in unison to the pitch of another player.

Introduce new pitches at will and tune to as many different players as are present. Although the dynamic level is soft make your tones available to others. Play warmly with variations in tone quality.

Above is **Pauline Oliveros's** event score for her *Tuning Meditation*, one of a series of sonic meditations which broadens our idea of what performances can be. Rather than the nineteenth century idea of the score as a fixed document to be performed from as faithfully as possible and casting the 'genius' composer in a dictatorial light, Oliveros suggests structures through which a community creates together. The act of listening and performing itself radically critiques power structures and established norms. As we meditate together, let that boundary between you, your fellow audience and the performers melt away, opening your ears and mind for the music to come.

As **Zosha Di Castri's** *TOUCH: TRACE* is set up, the scope of instruments and equipment seems to isolate each musician into their own bubble – percussion stations, keyboards and music stands are erected as walls. But *TOUCH: TRACE* quickly tears down these barriers both metaphorically and physically in a work that explores intimacy and connection and its importance in our increasingly isolated, digitised world. Across the ten vividly titled movements, Di Castri provides the framework for the performers to visit extraordinary emotive landscapes. The inviting safety of *Trace's* "space of refuge" takes us through more joyful, shimmering intimacy, before a growing isolation becomes apparent in *Disperse* as the performers pull Schick's percussion set-up further and further from him until he can no longer reach. Alone in his own space, Di Castri brews a nightmare scene constructed only of cymbals in *Night Terrors*, a musician cowering behind each of the six. Connection then blossoms through *Circle* as Schick brings the musicians back into the fold, before physicalising the equal intoxication and risk of reaching for connection in the literally suspended *Floating*. *Memory Trunk* comes full circle, with Schick unpacking six meaningful objects whilst the musicians recall motifs from earlier in the work, layering memories, history and an open-ended hope.

"Percussion instruments are more *physical* in a more tangible way — they're *touch* instruments, they use the body in a way that playing a wind instrument does not... we're not defined by our instruments... [percussion is] the only discipline where you have the power to define yourself." —Hennies, 2018

Written for two players standing face to face, **Sarah Hennies's** *Settle* questions the relationship between intimacy and connection. Though the lines nestle in between each other, the incessant repetition of both players without change or dialogue represent an impermeable psychological barrier, keeping the percussionists apart no matter how close they physically are. Hennies comments that she wrote *Settle* before she came out as trans, and the lack of movement to her connects with a feeling of being "stuck somewhere" — a quality that dramatically flipped once she was out, giving her newer works an electric directionality.

In our final work, six percussion stations surround the audience and, despite of the distance or perhaps spurred by it, connection becomes everything in **Iannis Xenakis's** *Persephassa*. Over the audience, the six percussionists play a game of trading notes, syncing up and creating alluring atmospheres which evoke the natural world. *Persephassa* refers to the Greek goddess Persephone, who represents spring, life and nature: in Xenakis's words, a world of "an ancestral rhythm not yet destroyed by radio, television or invasions." The circular set up represents Persephone's cosmic cycles: a window into the beauty of Xenakis's complexity, reminding us that the mathematics and number theory so present in his works come from, and *are*, nature.

Words by Alex Owens, Music Librarian, Robert Salzer Foundation Library