

ANAM RECITAL: ADITYA BHAT (PERCUSSION)

Disconcerts of large structures

FRIDAY 21 JUNE 1.30PM

ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

	Duration
Younghi PACH-PAAN 지신 <i>TSI-SHIN</i> / <i>Ta-Ryong III</i> (1991) [†]	12'
Leilei TIAN <i>Melting</i> (1998) [†]	9'
Victor ARUL <i>Disconcerts of large structures</i> (2024) ^{*^}	8'
Luke PAULDING <i>clothed like birds with wings as garments</i> (2013) [†]	7'

Aditya Ryan Bhat (VIC) percussion

Peter Neville (ANAM Faculty, Head of Percussion) percussion

Oscar Gillespie (VIC) oboe

Emma John (WA) horn

Sophie Marcheff (guest) guitar

Bella Thomas (NZ) trumpet

Approximate duration: 45 minutes

[^] world premiere

[†] Australian premiere

Peter Neville's Faculty position is generously supported by Kerry Landman.

Aditya Bhat's training at ANAM is supported by [ANAM Syndicate](#) donors Christina and Terry Hart, Igor Zambelli, John and Sue North, Annie Chapman, Kerry Landman, Sylvia Urbach, Sara Barratt-Boyes, and the Estelle Redlich Circle.

Oscar Gillespie's training at ANAM is supported by [ANAM Syndicate](#) donors Diane Lightfoot, Lee Palmer and Igor Zambelli.

Emma John's training at ANAM is fully supported by [ANAM Syndicate](#) donors Bill Burdett AM and Sandra Burdett.

Bella Thomas' training at ANAM is supported by [ANAM Syndicate](#) donors Robert Gibbs and Tony Wildman, Rowan Streiff, Ann Grant, Lee Palmer, Ken Schroder, Sarah and Marylou Orloff, Celia Dann, Peter and Annie Duncan, Joanna Flynn AM and Joan Bruton, Cynthia and David O'Keefe.

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PROGRAM NOTES

During her residency at ANAM earlier this year, Brenda Gifford often referred to the idea of a 'grounding' element in music. For her, it's the immutable resonance of the clapping sticks that serve as a reminder that music—and sound, generally—flows from, and ultimately returns to, Country. In this recital, **Younghi Pagh-Paan's** percussion duet *TSI/SHIN / TA-RYONG III*, constitutes the grounding element. *Tsi shin* (地神) means 'earth spirit'. For centuries, rural communities in Korea have performed an annual ritual to appease the earth spirit, so that life may thrive. Towards the end of the piece, Pagh-Paan asks the musicians to evoke quite literally the scenes of itinerant shamans dancing on the ground: one player walks around the space stamping occasionally and beating the *kkwaenggwari*, while the other strikes a gong to keep time.

For countless millennia the earth has, in this way, been acknowledged as a living entity with power and intention. Only in the last five-hundred or so years, under the auspices of European colonial modernity, has the prevalent worldview changed. Through the new lens, the earth is inert: a 'constellation of raw materials', there to be exploited for the material gain of a few. Myths about 'progress' and 'civilisation' have helped sustain these perspectives for centuries, remaining embedded in contemporary social structures.

But now, in a time of accelerating ecological disaster, their illusory nature is clearer than ever. In a place like Victoria where colonisation has altered the natural environment so radically, vulnerabilities emerge in the form of routine, increasingly destructive floods and bushfires. In his composition, *Disconcerts of large structures* – after which this recital has been titled – **Victor Arul** places these vulnerabilities under the microscope. The piece explores the paradox of a system that, 'despite appearing to function effectively for a majority of its existence, is intrinsically flawed and predisposed to failure'. Silences like abysses abut the relentless thundering of drums and glasses, each somehow as ear-splitting as the other.

The late **Luke Paulding's** quartet, *clothed like birds with wings as garments*, transports us back into the realm of spirits and vital forces. Born in Bahrain, Paulding often drew on the ancient myths of that area in his music. The quartet's title comes from Babylonian verses narrating the descent of the goddess Ishtar into the underworld:

*To the house whose entrants are bereft of light,
where dust is their sustenance and clay their food.
They see no light but dwell in darkness.
They are clothed like birds with wings as garments,
And dust has gathered on the door and bolt.*

Without Ishtar, all sexual activity on Earth ceases: a terrifying reversal of Pagh-Paan's life-sustaining earth spirit ritual. Paulding tears apart the fabric of sound itself with a stunning array of volatile wind and brass effects. Multiphonics, split tones, screeches, and other distorted, unstable sounds, erode all sense of security – recalling the themes of Arul's *Disconcerts*. The vulnerabilities of the performers become a metaphor for those exposed in the myth. At the end, Paulding asks the percussionist to throw rice *on top* of the bongos, their chaotic dispersal encapsulating visually the loss of stability. Although Ishtar literally goes under the ground, it has the opposite effect of the 'grounding' of *TSI-SHIN / TA-RYONG III*.

Similarly, **Leilei Tian's** composition *Melting* calls for a dense set of preparations and extended techniques on the guitar. Tian makes this familiar instrument sound quite bizarre by asking the player to detune the strings significantly and fold paper between them, causing a muffled buzzing effect. The guitarist must also scrape, flick, and hit the strings with their fingers and with a spoon! *Melting* is on one level about changing states of water: sometimes crystalline, sometimes fluid, sometimes nebulous. But it's hard not to read these mercurial moods as a representation of the disconcerting changes occurring around us: *Melting* glaciers induced by continued fossil fuel extraction; 'illusions of security, seamless operation, and collective prosperity' *melting* away as the economic inequalities of capitalism widen, fascistic ideologies gain further currency, and colonial practices continue displacing countless Indigenous peoples.

If all this sounds bleak, please remember that I'm primarily playing this music because I love it, not out of any proclivity towards sensationalism. The reason for these themes is that I've been thinking a lot about how we can continue to do artistic things *in spite of* the innumerable sad and infuriating things occurring in the world. As always, I'm deeply indebted to my teachers, Peter Neville and John Arcaro, for their guidance and support that has equipped me with the skills to take on this kind of music. I'm so grateful to the colleagues I'm playing with for their and efforts; to the other ANAM percussionists; and to the ANAM staff who have made this recital possible. Many thanks to Victor for his piece and the hours he's spent fine-tuning it with me (and building some instruments!). And lastly, where would I be without my family?

Written by Aditya Ryan Bhat