

BRAVE NEW WORLDS: ACTIVISM

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER 3PM

GOOD SHEPHERD CHAPEL, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

Pauline OLIVEROS (1932-2016) 'Teach Yourself to Fly' from *Sonic Meditations*
(1970-1974)

*Begin by simply observing your own breathing. Always be an observer.
Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice.
Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally.
Allow the intensity to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible naturally, and
until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath cycle.*

Giacchino ROSSINI (1792-1868) arr. **SEYMOUR (1949-2016)** Overture from *William Tell* (1824-29) 5'

Ariel Volovelsky * (NSW) cello
Joshua Jones * (QLD) cello
Cindy Masterman * (QLD) cello
Max Wung * (WA) cello
Heesoo Kim * (QLD) cello
Jack Overall * (SA) cello

Lior NAVOK (b. 1971) *Gitz and Spitz Suite* (2020) 14'

Tom Allen (VIC) horn
Isabella Thomas * (NZ) trumpet
Lewis Grey * (NZ) trumpet
Harrison Steele-Holmes (VIC) trombone
Angus Pace * (VIC) bass trombone

OLIVEROS 'Teach Yourself to Fly' from *Sonic Meditations*

Valentin SILVESTROV (b. 1937) *Kitsch-Musik* (1977) 10'

i. Allegro vivace
ii. Moderato
v. Allegretto

Reuben Johnson * (QLD) piano

JacobTV (b. 1951) *Body of Your Dreams* (2002) 9'

Po Goh * (VIC) piano

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

The Brave New Worlds Series is generously supported by Arnis & Robin Dzedins.

This concert will feature ANAM's Mason and Hamlin Model CC Concert Grand Piano generously donated by Sieglind D'Arcy.

Joshua plays a Peter Goodfellow 2022 cello, generously on loan to ANAM from Jannie Brown.

** Denotes musician supported by ANAM Syndicate*

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PROGRAM NOTES

THE WHOLE WORLD IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND ACTIVISM AND 'PASSIVITY' IN THE DIGITAL AGE

extract from **I. Teach Yourself to Fly**
Always be an observer.

My therapist and I have frequently discussed the perverse compulsivity that reading the news has become – an echo of that Beatles lyric in 'A Day in the Life': "I read the news today, *oh boy*." Coming of age in the twenty-first century, as our musicians are, there is an overwhelming obligation to be socially conscious and engaged in the face of omnipresent information – to grapple with a world going madder by the day, seemingly burning itself up out of spite and greed.

So, the act of *making* music, seen by some as simply leisure and entertainment, is a question in search of justification that musicians of today grapple with. How *do* you make music...

- a) On stolen land?
- b) When you're barely making rent this month?
- c) When children are dying of famine?
- d) When ecosystems are collapsing?
- e) When your neighbours can't afford food?
- f) When bombs are falling from the sky

And yet, through history, the question has been: "How can you not make music in the face of such horror?" Like the musicians in Leningrad, defiantly playing Shostakovich's seventh symphony as the Nazis held it under siege, like Midnight Oil's rage-fuelled 'Beds are Burning' outside Exxon's New York headquarters in 1990, like *Woman, Life, Freedom* ringing out from balconies in Tehran in 2022 – music has been defiant, revolutionary, consoling, inspiring, uniting: a vehicle for the emotional processing of the world around us, observing it, reflecting on it and holding it accountable.

But before one can act, one must listen. Listening, as described by **Pauline Oliveros**, is an entirely different process from hearing, an active process that is cognitive, a choice and at times, a radical act. Oliveros was one of the US's leading avant-garde musicians, emphasising improvisation, electronics, and participatory event scores. This concert opens with the first of her *Sonic Meditations*, a series of event scores developed with her ♀ Ensemble around her meditative concepts of Deep Listening. Whilst not making overtly political statements, Oliveros's Deep Listening becomes radical through its insistence on observation, and its humble egalitarianism. On her *Sonic Meditations*, Oliveros says that they "challenge certain premises in the musical establishment, that... open the way for people to participate who aren't musicians." In the *Meditations*, those involved are often encouraged to sit in a circle, and though actions must be taken by the individual, their culmination and responsivity to each other make each *Meditation* a collaborative act. Several shorter *Meditations* are included through this program note: reflect on them at your leisure, but consciously undertake each as a choice.

extract from **XVII. Ear Ly**
Become performers by not performing.

Guillaume Tell was the last of **Gioachino Rossini's** 39 operas, penned before a remarkable 40 years where, in the composer's own words: "I decided I had something better to do, which was to remain silent." Over these 40 years, Europe would see a spring of revolutionary fervour, from the July Revolution the year after *Tell's* première to the spring of ultimately unsuccessful but remarkable series of revolutions in France, Italy, Austria, and the German monarchies. *Tell* is based on the Swiss legend of Wilhelm Tell, a Swiss archer and folk hero who catalysed the liberation of Swiss lands from Austrian rule to form what would become today's Switzerland. Though the royalist French censors of the time accepted the work (the revolutionary spirit was directed at foreign occupation rather than the state's own monarch), the zeitgeist of French revolutionary spirit could not help but be entwined with the work.

Lior Navok and **Valentin Silvestrov** have had the choice of listening taken away from them. Faced with horrors, the *choice* they make is to tell – for their testimony to be made, heard and pass through the subjective barrier of understanding. And from antipodean perspective, is it not a civic responsibility to choose to listen, especially in this age where the presentation of current events is increasingly distorted by the necessity of its entertainment value? Where everyone holds a camera, to *bear witness* to burning buildings, hostages being taken and bloodied bodies?

Navok is an Israeli musician who has consistently used his works to comment on conflict in the Middle East, poignantly singling out the perpetuation of conflict for political and nationalistic gain, the tragedies of indiscriminate force, and an insistence on sitting with the difficult complexities rather than reducing issues to black and white, and to denounce terror and its tactics no matter who wields it. Navok describes his music as "a call to action – a plea for understanding, empathy, and ultimately, peace." The *Gitz and Spitz Suite* is derived from a 50-minute work for actor and chamber ensemble lambasting the cynical fruitlessness of war for all except those who financially profit from it.

Silvestrov is a Ukrainian composer taking refuge in Berlin after the Russian invasion, and has become a musical bastion, with works current and past increasingly played for benefit concerts and awareness. In particular, his *Prayer for Ukraine*, written after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and marking a turning point towards more overtly political subjects in his output. Over more than 60 years of compositions, Silvestrov has become known for his 'metaphorical style' – a self-described 'universal' style driven by melody, and particularly a vocal sensibility. *Kitsch-Musik* is a mature example where the idioms of Romantic composers are gently reflected through these pieces, painstakingly given intricate directions that should feel completely natural to the listener. On kitsch, Silvestrov uses it "in an elegiac, rather than ironic, sense" – a nostalgic reminiscence, and a conscious exercise of listening and remembering.

V. Native

Take a walk at night. Walk so silently that your feet become ears.

Jacob ter Veldhuis stylises his name as **JacobTV** – at first a concession to those who may struggle with the pronunciation of the Dutchman's full name, quickly becoming a 'brand' in itself all-too fitting of his accessible, art-pop style. *Body of Your Dreams* is a work in his Boombbox series, which apply tape manipulation techniques to commercial and everyday sound sources. *Body of Your Dreams* could be the love child of Andy Warhol and Steve Reich, with the insistently tonal minimalism forcing an examination of commercial marketing and the artifice of today's beauty standards being near-incessantly forced upon us. When the oversaturation of jingles and marketing becomes noise, how can you make the choice to listen, to think?

XVIII. Re Cognition

Listen to a sound until you no longer recognise it

You might feel overwhelmed by the incessance of *Body of Your Dreams* or comforted by the sweet nostalgia of *Kitsch-Musik*. But through these works you can also feel the euphoria of the complete freedom of expression, or a melancholia of reflection. The choice is yours, and the interpretation becomes yours. What matters is that you have made the choice to listen, and each of the composers presented to you today asks you to continue that listening into the broader world, to choose to tune in rather than turn away, to choose to humanise rather than demonise. To be active in noticing, and make the *choice* to listen.

XXI. —

What constitutes your musical universe?

Words by Alex Owens. Extracts of Pauline Oliveros's *Sonic Mediations* © Smith Publications, 1974. 'A Day in the Life' lyric © EMI Records, 1967.



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