

ANAM RECITAL: STEVEN BRYER (PERCUSSION)

Vessels of Sound

THURSDAY 31 JULY 11AM

ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

Georg DRUSCHETZKY (1745-1819) Concerto for six timpani and orchestra (1801) 19'

- i. Allegro*
- ii. Andante con variazione*
- iii. Rondo. Allegro*

Carolyn SCHOFIELD *Vessels of oil and air** 10'

John PSATHAS (b. 1966) *View from Olympus* (2001) 25'

- i. The Furies*
- ii. To Yelasto Paidi*
- iii. Maedads*
- iv. Fragments*

Steven Bryer (QLD) percussion #

Po Goh (VIC) piano #

Aidan Boase (ANAM Associate Faculty) piano

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

ABOUT STEVEN BRYER

Born in Brisbane/Meanjin, Steven Bryer has wanted to play percussion ever since he heard the hammer played in Mahler's Sixth Symphony. In 2025 Steven is in his third year at ANAM studying under Peter Neville and John Arcaro and looks forward to the opportunity to work with professional orchestras throughout Australia and New Zealand. Steven is looking forward to improving his own music making and is passionate about expanding the performance of percussion within Brisbane.

Steven is supported by ANAM Syndicate donor Graeme Hairsine.

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PROGRAM NOTES

There is very little information on **Georg Druschetzky's** concerto for six timpani, so we can only speculate whether he was inspired from his past military work, or maybe an instant friend, which led him to write multiple solos for this 'non solo' instrument. At the time of writing these pieces, the timpani were known only as a supportive instrument, used to emphasise brass lines or reinforce harmonies in joyous and exciting moments. The piece would definitely have been a spectacle at the time: six timpani surrounding a player who would have to do some very spectacular physical movement purely to make the melodies work.

Playing on six drums surrounding you can be quite difficult, although some of the music might be relatively 'simple'. The highest and lowest drums are completely outside your peripheral vision, and aiming for the perfect playing spot has proved to be quite the task, especially when having to reach and move incredibly quickly from the higher pitches to the lower ones. The first and third movements are definitely the hardest and most physically demanding, with the second becoming almost like a small rest stop by handing off to the orchestra a little more (although it still has its moments). My favourite movement is the third as it introduces and expands on a main theme which progressively gets more difficult and exciting to play, until it relaxes only to finish triumphantly.

Carolyn Scholfield's *Vessels of oil and air* is an interesting exploration of resonance, time and space. The use of electronics takes several forms for the piece: amplifying some of the quieter harmonics within the steelpan, some of which create chords with more prominent notes depending on where the steelpan is played; or creating deep low notes which are almost inaudible. There is also a digital delay which is timed to create an overlapping chordal tone, emulating some of the sounds heard in the synth backing earlier in the piece. There is also a sense of improvisation: though everything is notated very specifically, Scholfield asks for the player to approach the piece without trying too hard to make it sound natural. She mentions that this is akin to nature, where although there are cycles, patterns and expected outcomes, there is always a slight sense of natural randomness.

John Psathas's *View from Olympus* was commissioned by Dame Evelyn Glennie and explores themes of Greek mythology using elements of traditional folk music. Psathas's double concerto is mammoth for both the percussionist and the pianist, with the interplay between the two instruments tying the piece together into something extremely exciting, brutal but beautiful, at times even very introspective.

The first movement is representative of the Furies, goddesses of vengeance and retribution, who punish those who commit crimes outside of what human justice could reach.

The second movement (which translates to 'The Smiling Child') is extremely nostalgic, with Psathas exploring the feelings he has for his children and the feeling of summer in his parents' home, which has a view of Mount Olympus and the Aegean Sea. The wind chimes paired with solo piano at the start of the movement reflects this the most — you can hear the ocean wind flowing past, while almost being able to see some curious children exploring. As the movement develops, a strange sense of unknown creeps in, and you can feel the mysterious energy emanating from the myths surrounding Mount Olympus.

The Maenads, who the third movement is named after, are female followers of Dionysos who roam the mountains and woods, celebrating their God with music, dance and song. They are not always peaceful beings, though. When possessed with the power of Dionysos, they become savage and brutal, dancing in a frenzy with unknown power. This is certainly heard within the third movement of the piece, with sections of flowing melody interrupted with intense, ritualistic drum moments, which morph into more complicated but seemingly melodic drum lines.

Written by Steven Bryer