



CANBERRA  
INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC  
FESTIVAL

## Creating Bold New Music: A Proud History

The Festival is proud of its long history of investment in bold new works and our contribution to art music repertoire.

The breadth of the Festival's commissioned work is illustrated by the history of *Beaver Blaze*.

In 2007 the Festival premiered a small brass quintet by **Elena Kats-Chernin** called 'Beaver Blaze'. 'Beaver' because the inspiration came from **Betty Beaver**, a lifelong supporter of arts and music in Canberra, and 'blaze' because then Artistic Director, **Nicole Canham**, was married to a brass player.

Betty's involvement with the Festival dates back to its origins in 1994. A trained cellist and well-known local gallery owner, her ongoing personal commitment places Betty at the centre of our festival's history. It was Betty's intention to ensure that the opening of each festival would have a fanfare that inspired excitement. The idea took off and ever since 2007 the Festival has started with a little blaze. From 2007-2014 the blazes were a different incarnation of the original by Elena Kats-Chernin. Since **Chris Latham** passed the Artistic Director baton to **Roland Peelman** in 2015, different composers have written new pieces for each Opening Gala under the Beaver Blaze banner. Festival fanfare

Continuing the Festival's commitment to diverse voices, we commissioned **Kate Moore** to write a new Blaze. Kate's piece, 'The Dam,' received the 2017 Matthijs Vermeulen Prize after acclaimed performances in the UK and the Netherlands. Kate, who divides her time between the Netherlands and Australia, was the first female composer to win this coveted Dutch Prize. The 'The Dam' premiered at the 2015 Festival with a baroque ensemble set on the main stage and a modern ensemble with percussion, saxophone, electric guitar, electric keyboard and didgeridoo set up on the opposite side, nearly 40 m away. Directed by Roland Peelman, the audience heard 18<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century sounds resonating from each side of the hall.

In 2019 Mary Finsterer's 'Ignis', premiered and performed at CIMF 2018, by James Wannan (viola d'amore) and Christopher Pidcock (cello) won the Australian Art Music award for Instrumental Work of the Year. Another finalist in the same category, 'Stalin's Piano' by Robert Davidson, which was commissioned by the Festival in 2017, was also a finalist in this category for a subsequent performance. This adds to the growing list of national and international awards for CIMF commissioned works.

The 2020 festival, although it never came to be, brought indigenous composers to the fore with commissions from Brenda Gifford, a collaborative new work by William Barton and Simon Barker, and a unique improvisatory creation from violinist and dancer Eric Avery.

Some of our other commissioning highlights include:

- 2008: A number of commissions were premiered including a work for Clarity Clarinet Quartet by **Elena Kats-Chernin** for performance at the National Film and Sound Archive featuring images from *Felix the Cat*; **David Harris'** new work for the Grainger

Quartet; Kat McGuffie composed a new work for the acclaimed Irish ensemble, Crash; Peter J Casey's composition *Tiger look at this: the Canberra Cantata* supported by the ACT Community Inclusion Fund; local visual artist David Sequeira worked with classical and jazz musicians to create *Invisible Realities* based around sonic sculpture and notions of being immersed in resonance created by live music.

- 2009: **Arvo Pärt's** most extensive instrumental work, his 4th symphony was co-commissioned by Pro Musica for the 2009 Festival and subsequently released by ECM Records. Arvo Part wrote afterwards "I am simply thrilled by this interpretation of my 4th Symphony ... Such stunning quality ... You obviously understand what my notes are trying to tell"
- 2010: The late **Henryk Gorecki's** masterwork "...songs are sung ..." was performed in an arrangement for string orchestra at the 2010 Festival shortly before his death. It was his last major work to premiere.
- 2011: The Australian Polish community banded together to commission **Peter Sculthorpe's** *Shining Island*, to premiere at the festival. It has subsequently been performed at the City of London Festival and by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales;
- 2013: the Festival presented the *Great South Land*, a major reworking of **Peter Sculthorpe's** previous work *Quirós*, an opera written for ABC television in 1982. The work commemorates the explorations of Spanish navigator Pedro Fernández de Quirós, and highlights the historical bonds between Spain, Australia and the Pacific, and the part Spain played in early Australian history. The Commission was generously supported by the Spanish Embassy, the Cervantes Institute, Acciona Australia and individual contributors to our Community Commission fund;
- 2018: **Brenda Gifford** was the **first indigenous composer** to receive a commission from the Festival. Brenda is a proud Yuin woman and her work 'Gambarrarrarraga' is based on her traditional understanding of the seasons. The premiere featured William Barton on didgeridoo, Tim Fain on violin, Ned McGowan on flute and contrabass flute, Susanna Borsch on recorder, the young Canberra singers Turner Trebles and Vocal Fry with local jazz trio Hugh Barrett, piano, Brendan Clark, bass and Mark Sutton, percussion.
- 2019: the first year to feature a collective of composers-in-residence, saw the festival open with *Loure*, written by **Bree van Reyk** (percussion), **Jess Green** (electric guitar) and **Nick Wales** (viola). This featured the composers themselves, along with Veronique Serret (violin), stationed around the audience with pre-recorded electronics, building to Bach Akademie Australia and percussion trio SR9 joining in for the climax from the stage.
- 2020: The best festival we never had. Many of the commissions due to be presented at the 2020 festival were instead presented in a series of digital recordings over digital platforms. This year's festival was to feature work by indigenous composers **Brenda Gifford, William Barton** and **Eric Avery**.

Other creations and re-inventions:

- Numerous neglected or rarely heard scores have been reworked, refashioned or revived for recent Festival programs, including works by Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Eric Korngold, Elena Kats-Chernin, Graeme Koehne, Calvin Bowman, Nigel Westlake, Ross Edwards and Peter Sculthorpe.
- The Festival has also discovered and presented lost works such as the Gallipoli Violin Sonata by Australian Frederick Septimus Kelly, composed in the trenches of Gallipoli. This work was presumed lost for 80 years until previous Festival Artistic Director, Chris Latham, found the manuscript in Florence in 2010.

## 2015 Commissions

In 2015, the Festival commissioned four internationally acclaimed composers to create original music to feature in our Festival program. Three commissions received their world premiere at the Festival and three works had their Australian debut.

The Festival's 2015 program featured the following commissions:

1. Kate Moore\*: a new work for the Opening Gala on 1 May - subtitled *Beaver Blaze* and scored for saxophone, percussion, baroque string, keyboard, electric guitar and voice. **Commissioned by Betty Beaver.**
2. Kate Moore\*: new piano installation for Lisa Moore and performed at Mount Stromlo on 5 May. **Commissioned by Lisa Moore with assistance from the Australia Council.**
3. Rosalind Page: *Being and Time 111* for cello solo performed at the National Gallery of Australia on 8 May. **Commissioned by Margot Woods and Arn Sprogis.**
4. Andrew Ford: *A pitch dark night* for piccolo, trumpet, piano and baritone performed at the National Library of Australia on 8 May.
5. Andrew Ford: *Common Ground* for double quartet performed at the Fitters' Workshop on 9 May. **Commissioned by Barbara Blackman.**
6. Brian Howard: *Full Fathom Five* performed on 9 May at the Fitters' Workshop. **Commissioned by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.**
7. Nigel Butterley: a new work for Carillon. **Commissioned by the National Carillon.**

\*2015 Composer in Residence.

## 2016 Commissions

The Festival's 2016 program featured the following commissions:

1. Gerard Brophy\*: *Canticles*. **Commissioned by Margaret and Peter Janssens**
2. Gerard Brophy: *Dervish*, our 2016 *Beaver Blaze* which is commissioned each year by long term Festival supporter, **Betty Beaver**, and features in our Opening Gala concert.
3. Kon Koukias: *Ancient Voices* for ondes martinet.
4. Tristan Coehlo: *Smell of the Earth*, Percussion quartet for Tambuco Percussion.
5. Sally Whitwell: *Treasure Chest*, a children's song. Commissioned by an anonymous donor.
6. Michael Sollis: *Ear of the Cat*, a work for children.
7. Other new works premiered at the 2016 Festival but not directly commissioned by the Festival: Gerard Brophy - *Rua B Fogo*, J.Wells work for carillon **commissioned by the National Capital Authority.**

\* 2016 Composer in Residence

## 2017 Commissions

The Festival's 2017 program featured the following commissions:

1. Robert Davidson: *White Australia*, our 2016 *Beaver Blaze* which is commissioned each year by long term Festival supporter, **Betty Beaver**, and features in our Opening Gala concert.
2. Benjamin Drury: new work for double based to be performed in the Turrell Skyspace at the National Gallery of Australia.
3. Hing-yan Chan: *Double Happiness*.
4. Nick Ng: *Gold Rush*

5. Other new works premiered at the 2017 Festival but not directly commissioned by the Festival: *10 Carillon Miniatures*, works for carillon **commissioned by the National Capital Commission in collaboration with the ANU School of Music with support from the Australia Council for the Arts**, Robert Davidson - *Stalin's Piano*, Frank Nuyts - *Piano Sonata* and works by Chen Yi\*.

\* 2017 Composer in Residence

## 2018 Commissions

The Festival's 2018 program featured the following commissions:

1. Mary Finsterer\*: *Four Interludes* for Seven Harp Ensemble, ca 15 min **commissioned by the Festival Commissions Fund.**
2. Brenda Gifford: *Gambambarawaraga* (Beaver Blaze) flute/bass flute, keyboard, cello/bass, didgeridoo, recorder or violin, children's voices. Commissioned by Anon.
3. Jodie Blackshaw: New piece for Canberra Wind Symphony, Commissioned by Anon
4. Holly Harrison: *The Mad Hatter's Tea Party*. A new work for children. **Commissioned by Penny Lecouteur and Greg Dickson.**
5. Benjamin Drury: *Stained Glass* for vibraphone and electronics. **Commissioned by Arn Sprogis and Margot Woods.**

\*2018 Composer-in-Residence.

## 2019 Commissions

The 2019 saw the introduction of the donor circle **A Major Lift**, a campaign specifically aimed at raising funds to support new commissions from a diverse range of composers. This year's festival saw an increase in the available funds for commissions and therefore the output of new works presented at the festival, due to this campaign.

The Festival's 2019 program featured the following commissions:

1. Bree van Reyk, Jess Green and Nick Wales\*: *Loure – A Bach Remix* (Beaver Blaze). For solo percussion, solo violin, solo viola, solo electric guitar, baroque orchestra and percussion trio. **Commissioned with funds from A Major Lift.**
2. Bree van Reyk: *To Peg Mantle, with Thanks*. A new work for the Canberra Youth Orchestra. **Co-commissioned with West Australian Orchestra and Sydney Youth Orchestra, funded through APRA Art Music fund.**
3. Jess Green: *Sing the Sky*. For solo countertenor. Commissioned by Anon.
4. Nick Wales: *Harbour Dark (Five Bells)*. For string quartet. **Commissioned with funds from A Major Lift.**
5. Chris Sainsbury: *Bark of the 'Bidgee* for violin, flute, guitar, percussion and didgeridoo. **Commissioned with funds from A Major Lift.**
6. Moya Henderson: *G'Day Africa IV* for string quartet, piano and clarinet. **Commissioned by Dr John Davies.**
7. Ella Macens: *Ripple* for saxophone quartet. **Commissioned by Ann Sprogis and Margot Woods.**
8. Michael Dooley: *The Heavens Declare* for two violins. **Commissioned by Andrew Johnston.**

\*2019 Composers-in-Residence.

## 2020 Commissions

The Festival's 2020 program featured the following commissions:

1. Bree Van Reyk: *Replica Garden* for flute, clarinet and two percussionists.  
**Co-commissioned with the Australian National Botanic Gardens for their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with funds from A Major Lift.**
2. Kate Neal\*: *Title* (Beaver Blaze) for Brass quintet. Commissioned with funds from A Major Lift.
3. Brenda Gifford: *The Elements*. New work for the Australian Art Orchestra.  
**Commissioned with funds from A Major Lift.**
4. Eric Avery: Improvisation within the Turrell Sky Space.  
**Commissioned with the support of the Keir Foundation.**
5. William Barton and Simon Barker: *Hand to Earth* for percussion and didgeridoo.  
**Commissioned with the support of the Keir Foundation.**
6. Olivia Davies: *In Flow* for solo guitar.  
**Commissioned with the support of Arn Sprogis and Margot Woods.**
7. Luke Styles: *Solder* for Brass quintet. Commissioned by...
8. Moya Henderson: *Running Trees, Running Grasses* for carillon.  
**Commissioned with the support of Dr John Carmody for the anniversary of the National Carillon.**

\*2020 Composer-in-Residence.