



ensemble
three
Immel Brennan Murray

Wally Gunn is a composer whose work makes use of patterns and processes, and sometimes utilizes physical gesture and speech to heighten the theatricality of musical performance, creating music that is expressive and emotionally direct. The extramusical themes in his work look outward to explore the natural world, and inward to reflect queer identity and experience. Hailing from rural Australia, Wally first played in rock bands, then attended the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne before moving to New York to study at the Manhattan School of Music, and then pursue a PhD at Princeton University. He currently divides time between New York and Castlemaine, Australia.

Each year, on the first warm weekend of spring, people flock to their favourite city parks to lie on the fresh green grass, soak up the sun, eat good food, play ball, throw frisbees, fly kites. With winter gone, these long spring afternoons seem hopeful, eternal. *Pinwheel* (2016) aims to capture the feeling of these lazy park days. It makes sunny harmonies from melodic and rhythmic patterns, and cycles through their permutations so each moment is almost the same as the last, like the spinning of a pinwheel held up to a spring breeze.

Note by Wally Gunn

Composer and performer **Fay Wang's** work spans and draws on a variety of genres, including avant-garde concert music, theater, film, electronic music, Chinese folk music and indie pop. She is hailed as "rebellious" and "creative" by China Daily. Her music is described as "rambunctious and rocklike" by New York Times, and "mysterious", "unusual", "the great spirit and sense of rhythm" by European media. Honors and awards include "China National Arts Fund" award, "Golden Bell" Award, "Governmental Award", ASCAP Young Composer Award.

Steps to Unconsciousness (2014) was written as an exploration of human behaviour and psychology, and how they relate to the natural world and the evolution of technology. At the time Wang was commissioned to write a piece for Ensemble Three, she had just finished a residency at Dartmouth College's Hopkins Center for the Arts in which she investigated how music could be influenced by microbiology. The music illustrates a transitional state between consciousness and unconsciousness and the title reflects Freud's theories on dream analysis and levels of awareness. Wang states that she "always liked distortion and noisy sounds" finding that "that distorted electric guitar



and the electronics blended well and provided a good counterpart to brass.”

James Ledger is a composer with a breadth of work spanning solo, chamber and orchestral music. He has held residencies with the West Australian, Adelaide and Christchurch (NZ) Symphony Orchestras, the Australian National Academy of Music and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. Ledger has received commissions from Australia's leading ensembles including the Melbourne, Sydney and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Australian String Quartet. His works have led to numerous awards, including multiple APRA Art Music Awards and two ARIA awards.

Voodoo Sonnets (2016) are precursory pieces to *Hollow Kings*, an orchestral piece written to mark the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death. Both pieces feature electric guitar, an instrument the composer

thinks of like a modern day lute – both ubiquitous and significant in Shakespeare's time – much like the electric guitar has been in our own time. The 'voodoo' in the title comes from Jimi Hendrix's song *Voodoo Chile*, which features Hendrix's canny use of the wah-wah pedal and his staggeringly powerful guitar sound. The 'sonnets', refer to the short poetic form that was exemplified by Shakespeare. The strong contrasts in shading and weight in *Voodoo Sonnets* reflects Shakespeare's ability to capture human frailties so wonderfully – the murderous and self-absorbed Richard III, the pathos and journey to redemption found in *King Lear*, Macbeth's loss of morality – to name just a few from a seemingly inexhaustible list. Each movement is a musical sketch that attempts to convey some of these frailties - from tiny specks of sound to monumental power chords – something that Hendrix was also very good at.

Note by James Ledger



As a composer, **Ken Murray** has written a variety of works for guitar in solo and ensemble settings. Commissions include guitar ensemble works for the Santo Tirso international Guitar Festival and the Suzuki Association of Victoria. His works are published by the Australian Music Centre and Reed Music and have been performed in Europe, Asia and throughout Australia. Ken Murray wrote *Three Sketches* (2015) to experiment with some simple electronic effects and looping ideas. 'As such' utilises loops, reverb, and delay to create a sonic backdrop for sustained brass timbres. In 'Waltzing,' the famous Australian melody *Waltzing Matilda* is deconstructed and accompanied by static repeated chords. '798' is named after the vibrant Beijing arts district which Ensemble Three visited in 2014.

Note by Ken Murray

Jacob Donohue is a composer, multi-instrumentalist and electronic music artist based in the Northern Rivers NSW. Born in Sydney, raised in Byron Bay, Jacob began his musical studies on guitar as a teenager. After completing a Diploma in Contemporary Music from the Northern Rivers Conservatorium he went on to complete a Bachelor of Music (with Honours) in composition at the University

of Melbourne under the guidance of Elliott Gyger. Jacob's music is a reflection of his interests in experimental electronic music, his love of nature and his own philosophies regarding existence and sonic story telling.

Unfold One (2017) represents that which is forever expanding and ever evolving, such as a universe, or one's consciousness. At times fragile and delicate, the piece expands to powerful grandeur, with severe tension and intensity. The work seeks to present all of these elements as equally accepted, and equally necessary components of an overall journey that is by nature, forever steadily moving forward.

Note by Jacob Donohue

Dai Fujikura is one of the leading composers of his generation and the recipient of numerous composition prizes. He has received numerous international co-commissions from the Salzburg Festival, Lucerne Festival, BBC Proms, Bamberg Symphony, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra and more. He has been Composer-in-Residence of Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra since 2014 and held the same post at the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France in 2017/18.



Dai says that *Three* (2019) might be “the happiest composition” he has ever written. He goes on to explain: “I spent time in Australia with my family when I was 6 years old. My memory of that trip is extremely happy: Christmas Day on the beach, the gorgeous blue sea, the sandy beach. I remember I could not hold the sand, as each grain of sand was so small and so smooth, it escaped from between my fingers. The heat, going to the zoo, hugging koala bears (at the time we could hug the koalas), feeding kangaroos. I was a small kid, but I remember it vividly. I had not returned to Australia since, until the premiere of this work. While composing this work, I was in my small, cold London apartment with the forever grey sky, spending long hours on the video-chatting with the ensemble in Melbourne, experimenting with the pedal of the electric guitar. This piece is based on the memory of my 6 year old self: my happy time in Australia.”