

move

MILERUM'S BASKET

BECKY LLEWELLYN

Lights Chamber Ensemble

Adelaide Chamber Orchestra
Antony Walker *conductor*
Alison Stewart-Klein *oboe*

Catalina Chamber Orchestra
Enrique Lansky *conductor*
Nancy Davis Booth *soprano*

Ryszard Pusz *bass marimba*

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra
Graham Abbott *conductor*

Adelaide Chamber Choir
Carl Crossin *conductor*
Ryszard Pusz *marimba*

1 Berceuse 5'40" (*with special bonus Quicktime video **)
for violin, clarinet, cello and piano

2 Milerum's Basket 10'39"
for chamber orchestra with oboe obbligato

3-11 O, Wonder! 17'27"
based on 9 antiphons of Hildegard of Bingen for chamber orchestra and soprano

3 Antiphon for God the Father *Moderato* 1'57"

4 Antiphon for the Virgin *Allegro* 7'00"

5 Antiphon for the Holy Spirit *Andante* 1'43"

6 Antiphon for the Redeemer *Adagio* 1'21"

7 Antiphon for the Angels *Allegretto* 1'33"

8 Antiphon for the Virgin *Animato* 0'57"

9 Antiphon for the Virgin *Andantino* 2'06"

10 Antiphon for Divine Love *Andante con moto* 1'41"

11 Antiphon for God the Father *Maestoso* 3'34"

12 Song Web from *Sticks and Stones* (after Andy Goldsworthy) 4'45"
for bass marimba

13 Vladamir Illych on the ladder of history 5'59"
for symphony orchestra

14 Whales Weep Not! 14'42"
for chamber choir with crotales and marimba

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Born in Minnesota, USA in 1950, Becky Llewellyn migrated with her family to Australia in 1969. She settled in South Australia where, in the late 1980s, she trained as a composer with Graeme Koehne at the Elder Conservatorium, University of Adelaide.



Becky Llewellyn

Llewellyn's works have been performed at festivals and concerts across Australia and in the USA. In September 1991, she instigated the inaugural Composing Women's Festival in Adelaide. The highly successful festival brought Australian women composers together for the first time and attracted significant media attention that focused on topical questions about composition and gender.

Llewellyn grew up in a family with music

at its core. The only dinner table rule was 'no singing at the table'. Her early love of acoustic music, combined with respect for musicians, gives authenticity to her music which is conceived to be performed live.

Llewellyn is an enthusiast, thinker and communicator who creates an empathetic blend of ideas and emotions designed to help the listener explore inner landscapes.

She has shared the past thirty years with her husband, Richard, who has a severe disability and uses an electric wheelchair. Llewellyn says this intense relationship, with its experience of challenges, interdependency, and satisfaction, are at the root of her music.

After half a century of recording and technology, the standard classical repertoire is well known, bringing it an increasingly wide public. What isn't known, yet, is the music of living composers creating new works today.

For those under pressure and feeling time poor, listening to Llewellyn's fresh acoustic music played by some of Australia's top musicians will stimulate and refresh the spirit.

1 Berceuse

Berceuse is Llewellyn's adult lullaby. It has been said of *Berceuse*, "It makes me homesick for somewhere I've never been." This lullaby is a yearning meditation on the moon setting over an ever-changing sea. Nature gives us balance and repose.

Berceuse involves four chamber musicians playing acoustic music, another natural wonder. Llewellyn says,

using the intimacy of the players sharing melodies and harmonies, I moved the music through continuous cycles of fifths. Its simplicity allows the musicians scope to play expressively, each voice rising and falling in tune with the ocean reflecting the setting moon.

The Quicktime video to accompany this track, found on the CD-ROM content, was filmed from the beautiful South Australian coastline, capturing an unspoiled horizon of peace and spacious reflection.

2 Milerum's Basket

Llewellyn appreciates the sense of space, the clear dome above the South Australian landscape. *Milerum's Basket* is an orchestral tribute to the Coorong, a unique 100km sand dune bounded by lake and sea. It is the traditional home of the Ngarrindjeri people and countless birds and animals. All of this environmental complexity is at risk as its land source, the Murray River, loses its vitality. This orchestral tribute to indigenous people and their tunes has taken many forms in the past century – from Bartok, Vaughan Williams, Grainger and Copland. *Milerum's Basket* celebrates the relatively

unknown musical traditions of South Australia's Ngarrindjeri people. The abundance of water and food sources gave these people time to develop a rich, varied musical life. Their lively rhythmic and melodic motifs are quite unique, varying markedly from the more stark, falling central Australian song style.

The basket referred to in the title is a long thin mat basket that was woven by Milerum (Clarence Long). In traditional culture these baskets carried bones of deceased loved ones for up to three years. Milerum's actual basket is held in the collection of the South Australian Museum. Its collection of Ngarrindjeri history reveals a society that developed extended grieving symbolism, ceremonies, dances and music which has much to offer Western society.

In 1932, anthropologist Norman Tindale used wax cylinders to record Milerum singing 18 songs. Llewellyn says of the piece,

With the permission of the Museum curators to transpose these melodies for orchestra, I wove four songs into this musical travelogue from my non-indigenous perspective. I wanted to take the listener on a walk through the long narrow landscape, revealing songs the Coorong has heard for thousands of years. These sounds include the rich unique birdsong, a celebration song for Aboriginal gatherings, a storm song, a song of death and finally, a warning song to

a mother and son whale frolicking in Encounter Bay.

3-11 *O, Wonder!*

O, *Wonder!* returns to the taproot of Western music, Gregorian chant and its pre-eminent female exponent, Hildegard of Bingen. *O, Wonder!*, an orchestral song cycle for mezzo soprano, is scored for woodwind, percussion and strings as a tribute to the earliest documented female composer. Following an unusual childhood confined in a cell with an anchoress in a monastery, Hildegard became known as a mystic, herbalist, scientist, counsellor, artist, theologian, the writer of the first known medieval mystery play and a respected religious leader. Llewellyn began writing this piece in 1989 before Hildegard became widely known.

I wanted to investigate her contribution to music and was amazed to find so much research into and recording of her twelfth-century life. The first book I read about Hildegard was written by Adelaide historian, Sabina Flanagan who later introduced me to Barbara Newman's English translations of Hildegard's 77 antiphons, *Symphonia*, the *Harmony of Celestial Revelations* which form the basis of this work.

When reading Hildegard's poetry in

English translation, I was struck by the sense of mysticism in her lyrics which were mirrored in her use of musical symbolism. God is always the highest, the devil always low. She invented a totally new synthesis of words and music to express her strength, vulnerability, deep understanding of humanity and love of God.

Musicologists write of Hildegard's unique originality in the Gregorian plainchant style. Her highly feminine, elaborated melodies demanded a wide vocal range from her soloists. She used pitch and ornamentation to heighten poetic features of the Latin words. In this recording, American soprano Nancy Davis Booth sings Hildegard's original melodies in the fourth and ninth movements. The melodies are heard through various sections of the orchestra throughout the other seven movements.

O, Wonder! had its world premiere in Tucson, Arizona, USA in 1996, with the Catalina Chamber Orchestra, under the baton of Enrique Lasansky, featuring the talents of soprano Nancy Davis Booth.

The English translations below are by Barbara Newman and are reprinted from *SYMPHONIA, the Harmony of Celestial Revelations* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989)

3 Antiphon for God the Father

Father,
Great is our need and we beg,
we beg with a Word that was
fullness within us:
Look again.
It is fitting – let your word
look again that we fail not
that your name be not
darkened within us.
Tell us your name again
lest we forget.

4 Antiphon for the Virgin

Self-portrait of the Maker,
masterpiece of his hand –
how is it, man, that you come
into your world through bestial
coupling, mingling of blood?
You are exiled because Adam fell.
But in you the elements,
excellent Mary, recovered joy.
At daybreak the heavens blaze
and ring with Praise.

5 Antiphon for the Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God
is a life that bestows life,
root of the world-tree
and wind in its boughs.
Scrubbing out sins,
she rubs oil into wounds.
She is glistening life
alluring all praise,
all-awakening, all-resurrecting.

6 Antiphon for the Redeemer

Blood that bled into a cry!
The elements
felt its touch and trembled,
heaven heard their woe.
O life-blood of the maker,
scarlet music, salve our wounds.

7 Antiphon for the Angels

Spirited light! on the edge
of the Presence your yearning
burns in the secret darkness,
O angels, insatiably
into God's gaze.
Perversity
could not touch your beauty;
you are essential joy,
But your lost companion, angel of the
crooked wings –
he sought the summit,
shot down the depths of God
and plummeted past Adam –
that a mud-bound spirit might soar.

8 Antiphon for the Virgin

Morning bursts into light,
the golden bough into green.
Let grief be put to flight –
Exult, virgin queen!
Lend your hand with a shout
of high auroral praise,
and lift us frail ones out
of our old bad ways.

9 Antiphon for the Virgin

O, wonder!
To a submissive woman
the king came bowing.
This is what God did
because meekness
mounts higher than all.
"But malice flowed from woman?"
So from woman felicity overflows.
Do you see? She makes goodness
sweeter than perfume,
brings more grace to heaven
than ever disgrace to earth.

10 Antiphon for Divine Love

Charity rising
from the vast abyss
past the stars above
abounds in all worlds,
unbounded love,
and with a spousal kiss
disarms the sky-king.

11 Antiphon for God the Father

Burn everlasting one in love
as you loved when you first were
father in the burning
dawn before the world's day!
Loving your son you loved
us all into being: let us
all be his limbs.
See the need that befalls us!
Lift it away from us
and for your child's sake lead us
into safety, into bliss.

12 Song Web

from *Sticks and Stones* (after Andy Goldsworthy)

In its simplicity, the sublime art of music can transcend the mundane. *Song Web* uses large mallets on the wooden notes of the marimba to produce a sonic web both real and ethereal at once. Its slow beauty invites you to enter the moment ... and soar.

Song Web is the third in a set of pieces which reflects the primal nature of percussion, both in materials and rhythms. Llewellyn says, "I have written these pieces as sculpted songs to celebrate the numinous quality in the elemental." The music was triggered by works of British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy who spent much time in the Australian bush. His creations discovered new forms in wood and stone allowing the viewer to become aware of the astonishing beauty in natural simplicity.

Song Web was inspired by vine stems woven into the middle of a room, supported only by itself. The entire sculpture is made of natural materials woven as a spider would, across empty space – floor to ceiling, wall to wall, leaving the centre empty, only its shape holding one stem to another. Far from being empty, however the sculpture drew the viewer into the central vortex, full of the potential of the universe.

Song Web uses the wonderful expressive potential of the bass marimba played

by marimba maestro Ryszard Pusz to go beyond the notes to their overtones. The hypnotic music, like the web of stems in space, allows us to become aware of the clicking of each strike – a post-modern listening experience of the transcendence palpable in wood.

13 Vladimir Ilyich on the ladder of history

No one can escape the times they live in. This exploration of leadership and time is a poignant reflection on our human frailties.

Vladimir Ilyich on the ladder of history visits the USSR as the communist experiment unfolded. The orchestra leads the listener through evolving states of repression, tyranny, anarchy and the eventual 'victory' of capitalism.

The idea for *Vladimir Ilyich on the ladder of history* was sparked by seeing a huge statue of Lenin being removed by a crane in Lithuania. After growing up in the US during the Cold War obsessed 1950s, Llewellyn was struck by how something which seemed as permanent as a Communist state and its founder, could be so easily trashed by the next 'in group':

the narrative of this piece tells a story of unfolding Russian history but also invokes an historical clock where ideas are transformed by each succeeding generation. I tried to

integrate Lenin's dialectical theories into the musical structures of the work. Lenin saw history as a steam train and a ladder. In retrospect, he wasn't quite so aware of how far up and down a ladder can actually go.

Structurally the music cycles through a theme and its variations, building to a catharsis and denouement. The theme is loosely based on a 15th century Lithuanian carol and features the alto trombone as "Lenin" with its rare, distinctive instrumental tone. Listeners may find the hidden victory tune of the ideological war in the horn section towards the end of the piece.

14 Whales Weep Not!

Llewellyn has lived on the coastline of the Gulf of St Vincent for 25 years. The sound of the ceaseless sea is a largely unconscious element in her works. In *Whales Weep Not!* she taps into this soundworld to open listeners to their common kinship with these gentle giants. *Whales Weep Not!* is an exploration of our humanness as mammals, based on an astute text by D.H. Lawrence. Llewellyn was moved to explore this theme when Southern Right Whales began returning to shores of Australia to spend their winters in the deep blue waters. She says:

The presence of whales does something very special to us.

Maybe it touches off in us some half-remembered time, either as individuals or as a species, when we shared a watery world. Maybe its awe of their sheer size or envy of their boundless playground.

Whales bring us back to our mammalian roots, the warm-blooded, milky world of our beginnings. In *Whales Weep Not!*, I have tried to evoke a dreamy half-world where the boundaries between human and whale sounds are ambiguous, dissolving in dreams, sighs, fears and love.

It was delicious to musically smudge the line between choir and marimba, bell voices and bells, marimba as soloist with choir as accompanying instrument, music passing, male, female, from him to her, from her to him, with stroked and bowed sounds of wood and metal.

Whales understand the importance of touch, the bond of family and friends, relishing sexuality, caring for young. Do we? I invite listeners into this realm of "amniotic music", into a rainbow full of long-submerged sounds and a half-remembered time when we too shared a watery world.

Whales Weep Not

They say the sea is cold, but the sea contains
the hottest blood of all, and the wildest, the
most urgent.

All the whales in the wider deeps, hot are
they, as they urge,
on and on, and dive beneath the icebergs.
The right whales, the sperm-whales, the
hammer-heads, the killers
there they blow, there they blow, hot wild
white breath out of the sea!

And they rock, and they rock, through the
sensual ageless ages
on the depths of the seven seas
and through the salt they reel with drunk
delight
and in the tropics tremble they with love
and roll with massive, strong desire, like
gods.
Then the great bull lies up against his bride
in the blue deep bed of the sea,
as mountain pressing on mountain, in the
zest of life:
and out of the inward roaring of the inner
red ocean of whale-blood the long tip
reaches strong, intense, like the maelstrom-
tip, and
comes to rest
in the clasp of the soft,
wild clutch of a she-whale's fathomless
body.

And over the bridge of the whale's strong

phallus, linking the wonder of whales
the burning archangels under the sea keep
passing, back and forth,
keep passing, archangels of bliss
from him to her, from her to him,
great heaven of whales in the waters, old
hierarchies.

And enormous mother whales lie dreaming
suckling their whale-tender young
and dreaming with strange whale eyes
wide open in the waters of
the beginning and the end.

And all this happens in the sea, in the salt
where God is also love, but without words:
and Aphrodite is the wife of the whales
most happy, happy she!

and Venus among the fishes skips and is a
she-dolphin
she is the gay, delighted porpoise sporting
with love and the sea
she is the tunny-fish, round and happy
among the males
and dense with happy blood, dark
rainbow bliss in the sea.

D.H. LAWRENCE

CREDITS

CD Production: Move Records
Digital Photography: Mike McKelvey
Digital Mastering:
Wayne Baker, Graham Himmelhoch-Mutton
Mastered at:
ABC Studios, Collinswood, South Australia

Individual Track Credits

1 Berceuse

Chamber Group:
'Lights' – Anna McMichael, violin, Andrew Close, clarinet, Greg Roberts, piano, Janis Laurs, cello
Artistic Director: Grahame Dudley
Recorded:
Festival Finale of Composing Women's Festival, September 22 1991, Elder Hall, University of Adelaide, Australia by Graham Milne
Producer: Roger Parker
Quicktime Video: Victor Ivchenko

2 Mileram's Basket

Orchestra: Adelaide Chamber Orchestra
Commission: Adelaide Chamber Orchestra
Conductor: Antony Walker
Oboe Soloist: Alison Stewart-Klein
Recorded:
Live, Adelaide Chamber Orchestra's 'New Perspectives Series', 15 October 1993, Elder Hall, University of Adelaide, Australia by Wayne Baker
Producer: Chris Casey

3- 11 O, Wonder!

Orchestra: Catalina Chamber Orchestra
Conductor: Enrique Lasansky
Latin Text: Hildegard of Bingen
Translation: Barbara Newman,
SYMPHONIA, the Harmony of Celestial Revelations (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989)
Soprano Soloist: Nancy Davis Booth
Recorded:
Live, 3 March 1996, Berger Performing Arts Centre, Tucson, Arizona by Frank Fergossi
Digital Mastering:
Graham Himmelhoch-Mutton & Wayne Baker

12 Song Web

Bass Marimba: Ryszard Pusz
Recorded:
30 July 1996, ABC Studio 520, Adelaide, Australia by Graham Milne and Wayne Baker
Producer: Chris Casey

13 Vladimir Ilyich on the ladder of history

Orchestra: Adelaide Symphony Orchestra
Conductor: Graham Abbott
Recorded:
7 December 1990, ABC Studio 520, Adelaide, Australia by Graham Milne
Producer: Roger Parker

14 Whales Weep Not!

Winner of 1996 'Sounds Australian' State Award – Best Composition by an Australian Composer – South Australia

Chamber Choir: Adelaide Chamber Choir
Commission: Adelaide Chamber Choir
Conductor: Carl Crossin
Marimba and Crotales:
Ryszard Pusz and choir members
Text: D.H. Lawrence
Recorded:
30 July 1996, ABC Studio 520, Adelaide, Australia by Graham Milne and Wayne Baker
Producer: Chris Casey

Acknowledgement and Sponsors

With thanks to all the musicians, technicians and producers who have participated in these performances. Special thanks to Wayne Baker for his technical skills and great ears. Bravo to Victor Ivchenko for his moving, creative realisation of the *Berceuse* video clip. The Australia Council Music Board has been generous with their support and encouragement and ArtSA for its support to travel to the American premiere of *O, Wonder!* Scores of Becky Llewellyn's compositions

are held at the Australian Music Centre
(info@amcoz.com.au) *Whales Weep Not!*
is also available through Really Good
Music at www.reallygoodmusic.com.
And, if you'd like to communicate with the
composer, she can be contacted at llew@senet.com.au.

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Published music by Becky Llewellyn

Chamber music

Berceuse

Clarinet, Violin/Viola, Cello, Piano

Ding Dong! (trad. arr Llewellyn)

Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Percussion, Piano

Doing the AO Tango

Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Domestic
Percussion

Freefall

Marimba Duet

Kali's Laugh

Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Percussion, Piano

Choral

Dance of Dispossession

SATB a capella

Fanfare for the Muses

9 a cappella Women (SSSMMMMAAA)

Let There Be

SATB and Drum

Soul Architecture:

The Altar, Carol of the Font and The Church-Floor

SATB a capella

The Mallee Sings:

Mallee Farm at Dusk, Mallee Scene, Mallee in October, Mallee Courage

SATB + Bb Clarinet/Sax and Piano

Wanted: A Miscellaneous Madrigal

SATB a capella

Whales Weep Not!

SATB + Marimba and Crotales

Orchestral

Milerum's Basket

String Orchestra & Oboe

O, Wonder!

Chamber Orchestra & Mezzo Soprano

Song of Estrella

Chamber Orchestra or String Sextet

Vladimir Ilyich on the Ladder of History

Full Orchestra

Operetta

Don't Do It Dora! (Libretto: Ruth Goble)

19 SATB Songs – Chorus and Soloists with
Piano

Solo instrumental

Dance Dance Dance

Viola Solo

Early Spring

Vibraphone/Glockenspiel

Fire Tiger

Piano Solo

September Requiem

Carillon

Sticks and Stones:

Song Ball, Song Line, Song Web

Marimba, Clapsticks and Rocks

Vocal

Desert Songs: Unrefined, Aztec Princess, Desert Women

Mezzo-Soprano and Piano

Last Poems: Song of Death, Shadows, All Souls' Day

Countertenor/Contralto and Viola/Bb Clarinet

Vox sybillina

Soprano and Guitar

Woodwind and brass

Policewoman's Polka

Concert Band

The Unquestioned Answer

Brass Ensemble

Yes, I Can Can

Flute Trio

