

d'aujourd'hui

Zoë Black | *violin*

Daniel McKay | *guitar*

Houghton Ourkouzounov Kats-Chernin Hansen Piazzolla

An exciting listening experience of ragtime, tango, modern classical, and folk music of various cultures, this collection of recent works provides a whirlwind tour through Europe, Argentina and Australia.

bulgarian guitarist and composer Atanas Ourkouzounov (b. 1970) studied with Dimitar Doychinov in Sofia and continued in France with teachers Arnaud Dumond, Alexandre Lagoya and Olivier Chassain. Ourkouzounov studied chamber music, analysis, ethnomusicology and generative improvisation at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris, graduating in 1997 with a unanimous Premier Prix in guitar. His works have been performed by some of the world's most respected guitarists, including Shin-Ichi Fukuda, Scott Tennant, Antigoni Goni and Fabio Zanon. Ourkouzounov's compositions are generally filled with a fresh rhythmic vitality, influenced by Bulgarian folk music and quite challenging for performers. In his chamber works one very often finds a real equality in the individual instruments-that is, the works feature a lot of complex interplay between the featured instruments without distinct melody and accompaniment roles. The *Sonatina Bulgarica* (1995) is no exception, featuring a dark and introverted middle movement framed by two strong dance-like pieces.

Phillip Houghton (b. 1954) is Australia's best-known guitarist-composer. Extremely prolific from 1989 to 1995, almost all of his works from that period see regular performances worldwide. Houghton has composed for many of Australia's leading musicians including John Williams, Timothy Kain, Z.O.O. Duo and Guitar Trek. His works demonstrate his extraordinary ear for colour and intimate knowledge of the guitar. His pieces reflect his fascination with Australian landscapes and his training and experiences as a visual artist.

Houghton writes: 'In composing *Two Night Movements* it was my intention to try to express feelings and emotions that night brings. During one magical, hot, windy summer evening at Christmas Hills, a sleepy hollow amongst rolling hills near Melbourne, in the middle of the bush and under stars clear and brilliant, themes of *Full Moon* surfaced. In the night I heard the faint stirrings of nocturnal creatures and trees rustling, while the opal glow of the full moon shone, reigning over all. As the piece evolved, I imagined magical specters and apparitions dancing and flying through clouds-friendly, yet a little unsettling and strange-and their dance was of yearning, love, hope and wonderment. On the other hand the second movement, *Banshee*, depicts a wild spirit of the night. A gypsy, its dance is boisterous and swift, almost demented. Its cheekily threatening nature gives way, towards the end, to a passionate, plaintive song before returning once again to its reckless flight and screeching end.'

Two Night Movements was composed in 1990 and revised in 1995. The work is dedicated to Margaret and Miles Jackson of New Zealand, who premiered the work in 1990.

Elena Kats-Chernin is one of Australia's best-known and most prolific composers. Born in 1957 in the Uzbekistan capital of Tashkent, she and her family emigrated from the Soviet Union to Australia in 1975. Elena has composed for numerous leading instrumentalists and ensembles including Ensemble Modern, Lisa Moore and Guitar Trek. Kats-Chernin composed for the opening ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the 2003 Rugby World Cup. Character Interludes was commissioned by Timothy Kain and Virginia Taylor for flute and guitar.

The composer writes, 'I decided to write a collection of pieces that would give them choices, i.e. they would not have to do each one. I tried to write as varied pieces as possible and each would last about a minute and a half long. Some movements are quite minimal and based on just a few notes and some are more like ragtime. Occasionally I used a motive from my previously composed pieces. The suite was written over a few weeks, and I was sending them to the players in bits. They were very patient with me. I am not a guitar player, I was grateful that Tim generously helped me with the guitar figurations and he re-configured the textures of some sections to make the writing more idiomatic. The 9 pieces can be played in any order, but the way they are numbered is the order in which they were written.'



Astor Piazzolla's (1921-1992) music has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity since his death and can be heard in limitless forms, from interpretations for solo guitar or piano to transcriptions for saxophone quartet. Whilst the guitar features heavily in his quintet works, Piazzolla composed relatively few works for the classical guitar, the *Histoire du Tango* being among them. This four-movement work composed in 1986 follows the evolution of the tango, from its origins in the bordellos of South America to the emergence of the 'concert hall' style. Piazzolla, a great bandoneon player, bandleader and exponent of the 'Tango Nuevo', composed many pieces for his various groups, performing and recording often over a fifty-year period. Piazzolla stated, 'For me, Tango is made for the ear rather than the feet'.

Piazzolla polarised the tango audience. It is oft repeated that half of Buenos Aires loved the new tango but the other half were perhaps prone to mutter 'la muerte a Piazzolla'.

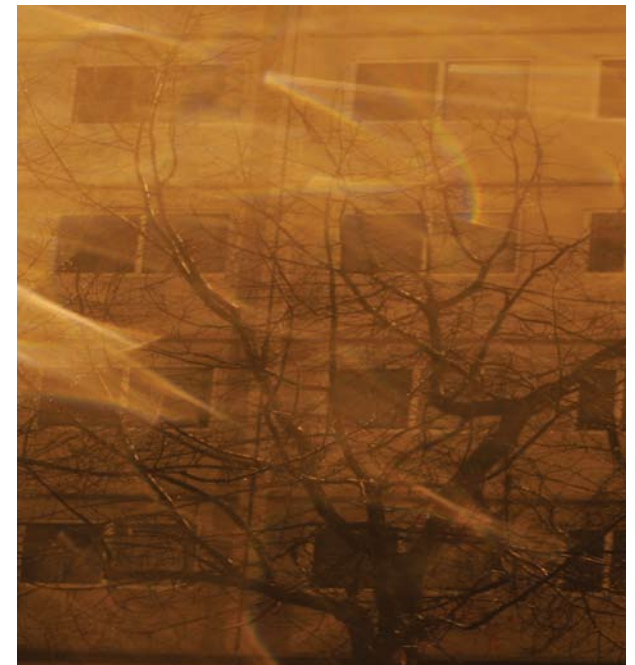
Tim Hansen was born in 1978 in Orange, New South Wales. Drawn to both music and theatre from a young age, Tim spent most of his formative years either on stage or behind a piano. Today, he spends his time between the two disciplines, working as a composer, pianist, actor and director. His music and theatre work are closely entwined. Resultingly, his compositions tend to be dramatic and evocative, with the visual component to a live performance often being just as important as the aural. His pieces regularly feature a combination of standard and extended instrumental technique, and can integrate other media such as video, stage lighting or the voice.

Regarding his piece *Earwig*, Hansen offers 'In 2005, when I was still an impoverished uni student, I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Darwin International Guitar Festival. Until then, I had never even considered writing for guitar, but after two weeks in the company of hundreds of these wonderful instruments and their owners, I was hooked. Since then I have moved on to become an impoverished composer, and have written a number of very different works for guitar. I must confess however, being a non-guitarist (not for lack of trying), they still baffle me in the most marvelous way. They are fussy little six-stringed demons that require endless reserves of patience and care to write for, but are capable of astounding and profound emotional versatility in the hands of the amateurs and veterans alike. Since Darwin, they have become one of my favourite instruments to write for.

Earwig was written in early 2006 not too long after my return from the Festival, however it started out life as a piece for guitar and

percussion. In my experience, a piece isn't truly 'finished' until the performers get their hands on it, and as such, *Earwig* has gone through several different incarnations over the years. Here, for the first time, a violin replaces the percussion. It was a great challenge to find a way to keep the quirky flavour of the piece intact while still making use of the new timbres afforded by the violin. As such, the piece is now much more earthy than previous incarnations- woodblocks and triangles are replaced by tongue clicks and knuckle-taps, bright, brittle marimba passages with darker gypsy-inspired melodies, and overall the piece has a much more melancholy lyricism in the hands of Daniel and Zoë.'

*notes by Daniel McKay
with Zack Kushner*



Zoë Black has won numerous awards including the National Youth Concerto Competition in 1989 and the String section of the ABC Young Performers Award in 1991. Graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1992, Zoë was awarded grants from the Australia Council and the Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Trust and the major performance award of the Australian Musical Foundation in London where she studied at the Guildhall School of Music under David Takeno and subsequently at the Vienna Hochschule with Michael Schnitzler. During her time in Europe she studied chamber music with the Takacs Quartet, played with the London Symphony Orchestra and in Vienna with the Wiener Kammerorchester. She returned to Australia in 1996 to become Assistant Leader of the Australian Chamber Orchestra with whom she toured extensively both within Australia and overseas. Touring regularly throughout Australia, Zoë has been a featured soloist and performed in chamber settings at the annual Huntington Festival in Mudgee, NSW, has performed in the MSO Chamber Music series, appeared as soloist with the Tasmanian and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and is a regular performer for the ABC Sunday Live series. In 2006 Zoë was a founding member of the Freshwater Trio, which has quickly become one of Melbourne's leading chamber ensembles, with sell-out performances at numerous festivals including Port Fairy and Castlemaine and with its own innovative



subscription series at Melba Hall. Future engagements include taking part in Musica Viva's Coffee Concert series and regional touring as well as a tour to St. Petersburg. In 2007 Zoë recorded the Roger Smalley Violin Concerto with the Victorian College

of the Arts Orchestra for the ABC. In addition to her performing career, Zoë is a valued member of staff at Melbourne University and the Victorian College of the Arts.

www.freshwatertrio.com



Daniel McKay began his musical studies at an early age under the guidance of his parents, both of whom are practicing music teachers. Living in the Blue Mountains region of NSW, Daniel was active as a multi-instrumentalist, performing within a myriad of popular styles. During this period, Daniel made many recordings for both commercial and independent release. Daniel has studied extensively with Australia's most highly respected guitar teachers, Timothy Kain and Gregory Pikler, in addition to

master classes with John Williams, Remi Boucher, Maximo Diego-Pujol and Pavel Steidl. Daniel holds a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music from the Australian National University. A major prizewinner in many competitions, Daniel has been heard in numerous live and pre-recorded broadcasts for ABC radio in solo, duo and quartet performances. In recent years Daniel has given numerous recitals throughout Australia, and in 2006 Daniel undertook his first solo tours of New Zealand and Europe, the latter made

possible through funding from the Australia Council. Daniel's debut solo CD featuring works of Dusan Bogdanovic, Leo Brouwer, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Alexandre Tansman and Astor Piazzolla has been warmly received by music lovers and critics alike; UK publication 'Classical Guitar' wrote 'Daniel McKay here performs an invigorating and very listenable program of 20th century music, which, of all the "private release" CDs I have reviewed is one of the best, if not the best: McKay is certainly a most technically-capable guitarist, and not only that, he is musical with it. His playing has a beautiful clarity and crispness and he has a superb innate sense of phrasing allowing him to get to the heart and soul of everything he performs'. A disc of works by Australian composers is in preparation. Considered one of Australia's finest guitarists of his generation, Daniel's interest in contemporary Australian music and considerable ensemble playing skills led to an invitation to join Guitar Trek, widely recognised as among the very best of Australia's chamber ensembles. With Guitar Trek Daniel has toured widely throughout Australia and internationally. In demand as a teacher, Daniel has been guest tutor at many of Australia's leading music institutions. Daniel taught for many years in the pre-tertiary area of Australia's leading guitar department at the Australian National University, School of Music. He now resides in Melbourne, and is on staff at the Victorian College of the Arts.

www.danmckay.net

www.guitartrek.net

Sonatina Bulgarica
Atanas Ourkouzounov

- 1 Allegro Ritmico 3'08"
- 2 Largo 3'26"
- 3 Vivo con Fuoco 2'38"

Two Night Movements
Phillip Houghton +

- 4 Full Moon 5'42"
- 5 Banshee 3'15"

6 *Character Interludes* ★
Elena Kats-Chernin +

- Character Interlude 1 1'14"
- Character Interlude 2 1'40"
- Character Interlude 3 1'09"
- Character Interlude 4 1'56"
- Character Interlude 5 1'19"
- Character Interlude 6 1'41"
- Character Interlude 7 1'39"
- Character Interlude 8 1'29"
- Character Interlude 9 1'20"

Histoire du Tango
Astor Piazzolla

- 7 Bordel 1900 3'48"
- 8 Café 1930 7'09"
- 9 Nightclub 1960 5'56"
- 10 Concert d'aujourd'hui 2'55"

11 *Earwig* ★# 7'05"
Tim Hansen +



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Melbourne, by Blake
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McAlley and Martin
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★ premiere
recording
+ Australian
composer
composed for
the duo