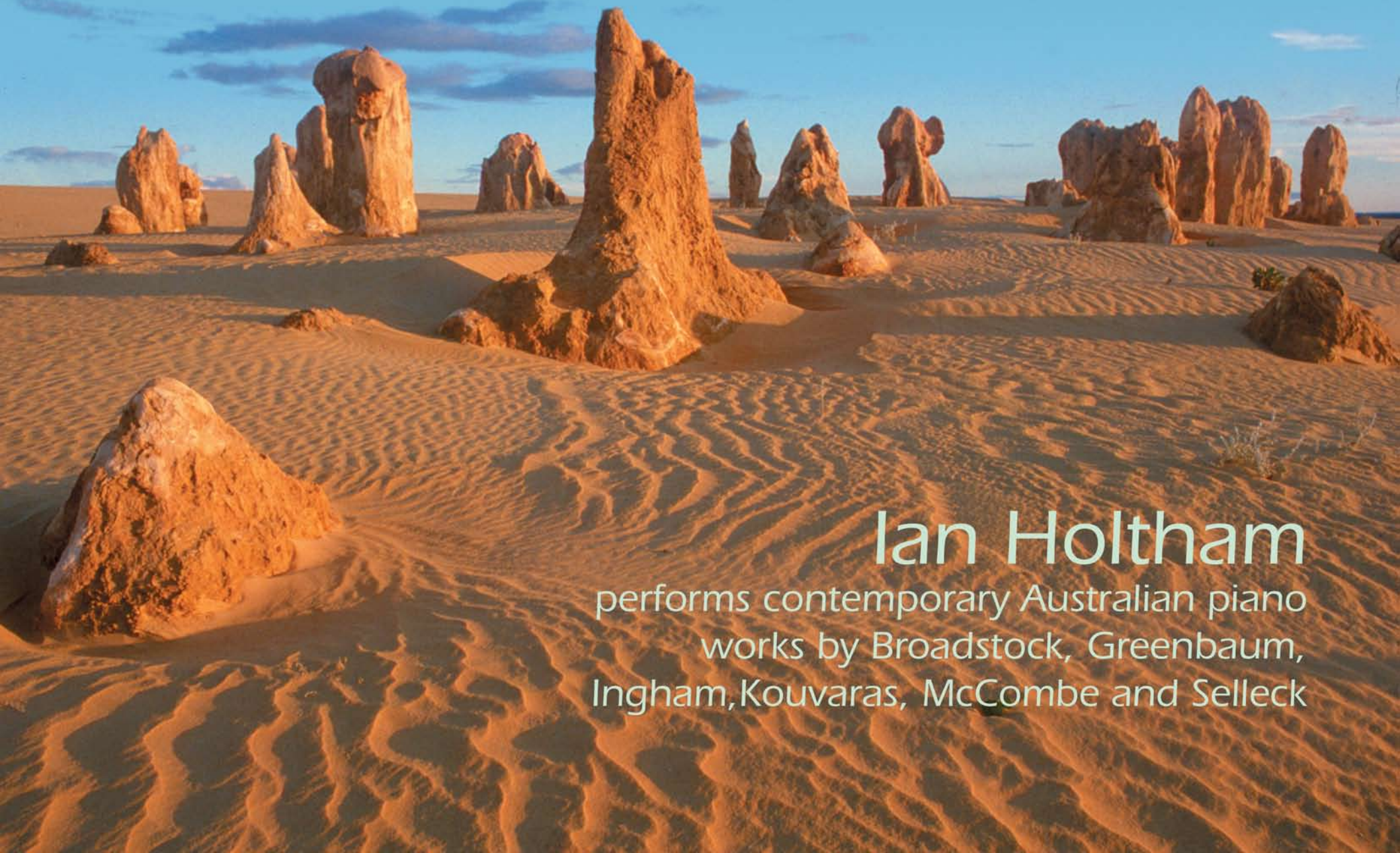


Giants in the land



Ian Holtham

performs contemporary Australian piano
works by Broadstock, Greenbaum,
Ingham, Kouvaras, McCombe and Selleck

1 | **Giants in the Land** | Brenton Broadstock

Giants in the Land was commissioned (as an organ work) by David Kinsela with the generous assistance of the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council.

The title for this piece comes from a quotation by the Labor Party leader and Prime Minister of Australia John Curtin, referring to the heady days of the Victorian Socialist Party of the early 1900s:

Here was sung the first songs,
here was breathed the message of the sun ...
in those days there were giants in the land.
There was also magic in the air.

The work draws its inspiration structurally and musically from the quotation. Overall the mood is optimistic and peaceful with occasional 'giant footsteps' interpolated into the texture.

The work is dedicated to the memory of Peter Dennison.

2 | **Recantations** | Johanna Selleck

Recantations is built up around successive statements of recurring ideas which are presented from different perspectives. The piece can be understood as representative of a process of inner dialogue, where an idea is put forward, but recanted and new answers sought. The final answer is never arrived at, but the question is stubbornly repeated or rephrased. In the process of refuting the original thought, different alternatives arise,

and are briefly meditated upon. The title also takes its meaning from the word 'cantare' – a reference to the main motive which is intended to have a vocal, chant-like quality, leading into a repeated note figure that functions as a kind of 'reciting tone'. This acts as a recurring focal point from which the phrase unfolds.

Recantations was composed in 1998 for Ian Holtham.

3 | **Secrets of the Amphitheatre** | Linda Kouvaras

Secrets of the Amphitheatre is the first piece in Linda Kouvaras' *Bundanon Suite for Piano* (1999), written while Kouvaras was Artist in Residence at Bundanon, the Arthur and Yvonne Boyd Estate bequeathed to the nation, on the Shoalhaven River in NSW. In accordance with the stipulations of the Bundanon Artist in Residence programme, the Suite is a response to her experience of the site. Bundanon could be described as a sanctuary for artists. Its magnitude, variety and isolation stimulate creativity. The Suite comprises 6 pieces, all dealing with the idea of the haven of nature for urban dwellers.

The 'Amphitheatre' is actually an impressive geological formation which suggests a theatrical setting, where plays and other events are staged in the bush. The musical response to it is in the form of quasi-ancient modal melodic lines played simultaneously as triads, broken up with scalar passages and culminating in a triumphant, rapid final section.

4-11 | **Songs of Truth and Loneliness** | Christine McCombe

Songs of Truth and Loneliness was commissioned by the British Music Society for the 1994 ANA Prize for Composition and was premiered in 1995. The work is a set of eight short pieces, all independent but also inter-related, forming a series of contrasting movements with symmetrical relationships existing between non adjacent 'songs'. The work is essentially an evocation of various emotional states and the placement of the movements is intended to set each of these states in relief with one another.

Although the eight shorter pieces are self-contained, the order in which they are played is central to the logic and intention of the overall work.

Together the songs form a kind of expressive mosaic which, as the title suggests, attempts to give voice to a personal yet universal reality.

12 | **New Roads, Old Destinations** | Stuart Greenbaum

Composed in 1996, this is a minimalist piece inspired by MC Escher's famous 1960 lithograph, *Ascending and Descending*. The picture shows descending steps impossibly winding back to the 'upper' starting point. This illusion can also be found in music. One of the most interesting examples is Monteverdi's *Non Morir Seneca* chorus from *The Coronation of Poppea* where chromatically rising lines are dovetailed

to give the impression that the music is constantly getting higher and higher, when in fact it is merely treading a metaphoric waterwheel.

Ambiguity is at the heart of this piece. Each time phrases descend further (new roads) and yet still arrive at the same cadential motive (old destinations).

13 | Long Flat Blues | Stephen Ingham

Long Flat Blues was composed in 1996 at the request of Ian Holtham, and first performed by him in Melbourne that year. Despite the title, the work isn't very long and isn't a blues in the conventional sense, being more a study in rhythmic asymmetry.

14 | But I want the harmonica | Stuart Greenbaum

When I was about 6 or 7 years old, the school librarian came into our class and spoke to us. She asked us which item we would choose if stranded in a boat by ourselves: a fishing rod, a cake, a harmonica or a book? Now it seems that most of the kids thought cake would be excellent (it was getting close to morning recess) but she rightly pointed out that a cake can only be eaten once, whereas a book can be read over and over. But I wanted the harmonica and was not astute enough at the time to point out to her that not only could the harmonica be played over and over but you could make the tunes up yourself. I can't

remember the librarian's name but if you're out there, this piece is dedicated to you.
STUART GREENBAUM

15 | Dying of the Light | Brenton Broadstock

The media hype, hysteria and bigotry surrounding the AIDS virus has 'waned', while the suffering of those who have contracted the disease continues. The title **Dying of the Light...** comes from a poem by Dylan Thomas and is a tribute and reminder that many HIV sufferers are still raging against the dying of their light, still fighting to maintain their health, their dignity and their humanity. The extra-music-structural trajectory is clear in this work, particularly at the end where despite the bursts of life and the angry and at times confused attempts of will to overcome the decaying process of the disease, death overtakes. And yet beyond the sense of tragedy and outrage at untimely suffering and death, there is a feeling of transcendent positivity.

LINDA KOUVARAS

Linda Kouvaras

Linda Kouvaras is a composer, pianist, and musicologist, and is a lecturer at Melbourne University's Faculty of Music. After studying piano in the UK and at Melbourne University, she was awarded a Masters degree in piano in 1991 and a PhD in musicology in 1996. Her recordings appear on the Move, Cicada, Au Go-Go and ABC labels. The most recent is Kouvaras: **PianoWorks** (Move MD 3233). She has been granted numerous scholarships and prizes for piano performance and musicological research and has published



widely on Australian music. In 1999, 2000 and 2001, she was granted artist-in-residencies at Bundanon, the Arthur & Yvonne Boyd estate in NSW, where **Secrets of the Amphitheatre** was composed.

Johanna Selleck

Johanna Selleck completed a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Degree (in Philosophy and Criminology) in 1983, followed by A.Mus.A., T.Mus.A. and L.Mus.A. Diplomas and a Bachelor of Music Degree at Melbourne University (1992), majoring in both Composition and Performance. In 1997 she completed a Masters Degree in Performance and Composition at the Victorian College of the Arts. She is currently completing a PhD in Composition at Melbourne University, for which she is also writing a thesis on "Music Criticism in Australia, 1880-1914: A Cultural Context".

Johanna currently teaches at Melbourne



University and the Victorian College of the Arts. She also works as a music critic for the Herald Sun as well as numerous local and national magazines and journals.

Stephen Ingham

Stephen Ingham has had a broad and varied career as a composer, music critic and academic. Born in London, Stephen obtained Honours degrees in both Chemistry and Music, and specialised in composition at the Universities of York and Indiana. He subsequently spent several years in Germany, where he furthered his studies at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg.

He was awarded a doctorate by the University of York in 1981, where his research involved the application of computers to musical composition. Since 1993, he has lived and worked in Australia, where he was first employed in the Faculty of Music at the University of Melbourne.

In 1998, he joined the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong.



Christine McCombe

Christine McCombe initially studied composition in Australia before moving to the UK in 1997 to complete an MMus at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama where she studied with James MacMillan. She is currently completing a PhD in composition at the University of Edinburgh, studying with Nigel Osborne and Peter Nelson. Many of Christine's compositions have been performed by leading ensembles and soloists in both Australia and Europe.

Christine is currently working on several composition projects in Scotland which include a new work for the Australia Ensemble.



Brenton Broadstock

Brenton Broadstock studied History, Politics and Music at Monash University, and later composition and theory with Donald Freund at Memphis State University and with Peter Sculthorpe at the University of Sydney. He has won numerous international prizes for composition and his music has been performed at many international festivals.



There have also been performances of his music in England, Germany, New Zealand, Canada, Russia, Sweden, Spain and China.

In 1988-89 he was the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's

Inaugural Composer in Residence and in 1991 he was the first Australian composer to sign a publishing contract with G. Schirmer (Australia). In 1997 he received the Jean Bogan prize for his solo piano work **Dying of the Light** and in 1998 the Michelle Morrow Memorial Award for Composition and an Explorations Opera Project grant. In 1998 he also spent three months in Italy on scholarships awarded by the Civitella Ranieri and the Rockefeller Foundations. In 1999 he

received the prestigious Don Burrows Award from the Australia Council.

Brenton Broadstock's five symphonies were released on the Etcetera label in 2000. A double CD entitled **bright tracks**, on Move MD 3204, featuring his chamber music, won the ABC Classic FM Listeners' Choice Award. Since 1982 he has taught at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne, where he is currently Associate Professor and Head of Composition.

Stuart Greenbaum

Stuart Greenbaum was born in 1966 in Melbourne and studied with Brenton Broadstock and Barry Conyngham. He was the first candidate to graduate with a PhD in composition from the University of Melbourne, where he has also worked as Lecturer in

Composition. He grew up with popular music (rock, blues and jazz) as well as the Western classical tradition, and is interested in the 'cross-over' and points of commonality between these apparently



different musical worlds.

He is published by Promethean Editions (NZ), Red House, Keys Press, Allans and Reed Music. His music has been recorded on CD labels including Vox Australis, Tall Poppies, Move, Niche Records, Red House and The Classical Recording Company (UK).

Ian Holtham

Ian Holtham is Head of Keyboard at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne where he also heads the area of Practical Music. A pupil of Peter Feuchtwanger, Geza Anda, Geoffrey Parsons and Enrique Barenboim, he also studied Composition and Conducting at the Guildhall School of Music. He has performed and given masterclasses throughout Europe, Asia and Australia and has regularly broadcast with the ABC since the late seventies. Ian Holtham is a Steinway Artist.

He has a prodigious mastery of the piano repertoire and has released at least one solo piano CD each year over the last seven years. His first CD, **études**, contains the complete Etudes of Chopin and in 2001 he performed the complete Chopin Etudes, Preludes, Ballads and Scherzi in two recitals within the



space of five days.

Known these days principally as a performer of the great Classical and Romantic repertoire, Ian Holtham's first major performances in London were under the auspices of the Park Lane Group, one of the major promoters of contemporary music, and his first Wigmore Hall recital featured works by Prokofiev and Ann Boyd. A number of the works featured on this CD were written at Ian Holtham's instigation.

"one of Australia's most exciting pianists."
(New Classics UK)

"Holtham's interpretations are solidly drawn and refreshingly free of affectation." (The Age)

"Holtham shows the mastery and control of the keyboard which makes him such an exciting performer ... Melbourne is indeed lucky to have such a resident talent." (3MBS-FM Libretto)

"Holtham's crispness of detail and clarity of texture are unfailingly enjoyable"
(Bob Crimeen, Sunday Herald Sun)

"outstanding technical skills"
(Lesley Sly, Australian Hi-Fi)

"leaves listeners breathless and in awe of his majestic talent."
(The Daily Examiner NSW)

Pianist Ian Holtham demonstrates the artistic innovation and diversity of six Australian composers in a wide-ranging program of new and fascinating repertoire.

- 1** | **Giants in the Land** | Brenton Broadstock 10'31"
- 2** | **Recantations** | Johanna Selleck 5'33"
- 3** | **Secrets of the Amphitheatre** (from Bundanon Suite) | Linda Kouvaras 5'28"
Songs of Truth and Loneliness | Christine McCombe
- 4** | first song 3'24"
- 5** | fragmentation #1 1'59"
- 6** | lullaby 1'55"
- 7** | ... 1'49"
- 8** | two voices alone 1'39"
- 9** | lux aeterna 1'53"
- 10** | fragmentation #2 3'24"
- 11** | truth 2'05"
- 12** | **New Roads, Old Destinations** | Stuart Greenbaum 10'03"
- 13** | **Long Flat Blues** | Stephen Ingham 6'34"
- 14** | **But I want the harmonica** | Stuart Greenbaum 7'51"
- 15** | **Dying of the Light** | Brenton Broadstock 12'41"

Giants in the Land
IAN HOLTHAM

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