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 AUSTRALIAN  
COMPOSER SERIES

GERARD BROPHY



forbidden colours

 AUSTRALIAN  
COMPOSER SERIES

  
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TASMANIAN  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

**Gerard Brophy** b. 1953

<b>1</b>	<b>The Republic of Dreams</b>	8'32
	Genevieve Lang <i>harp</i> , Philip South <i>darabukka</i>	
	<b>Mantras</b>	[14'36]
<b>2</b>	Mantra I	3'42
<b>3</b>	Mantra II	3'10
<b>4</b>	Mantra III	7'44
<b>5</b>	<b>Maracatú</b>	11'11
<b>6</b>	<b>Forbidden Colours</b>	9'18
<b>7</b>	<b>Le Réveil de l'ange</b>	20'25
	Lisa Moore <i>piano</i>	
	Total Playing Time	64'02

**Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra**  
**Kenneth Young** *conductor*  
**Dobbs Franks** *conductor* **7**

Almost every Australian composer born between the end of the First World War and the end of the baby-boomer generation owes even their most modest reputation to a half-truth: that it was only in the early 1960s that our post-colonial music culture caught up with the world and produced its first distinctive national school of composers. In press columns, and in his 1967 book *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society*, Roger Covell gave culturally literate Australians their first reliable list of composers worth following, most of them contemporary. And what Donald Peart dubbed 'The Australian Avant-garde' owed as much to frustrations of journalists, academics and conductors with the deadening local cult of 'musical cobwebs' as it did to the talents of the new movement's anointed leaders, Peter Sculthorpe, Richard Meale, Nigel Butterley and Larry Sitsky. Yet what started out as a blatant case of cultural engineering took on a natural momentum of its own with the arrival in the 1970s of a second generation, students of the first, including Anne Boyd, Ross Edwards, Martin Wesley-Smith and Barry Conyngham. By the time an exponentially larger third generation burst onto the scene in the 1980s – Gerard Brophy prominent among them – Australian composition had become a confident and steadily growing enterprise, which by now had acquired not only a past, but what promised to be a bright and increasingly diverse future.

Sixties oppositional identities, vernacular or international, inherited from visual arts and

literature, made Sculthorpe (vernacular) and Meale (international) obvious first generation leaders. The upheavals of 1968, and the social revolution that followed in their wake, helped convince their students that their Australian identity should derive from looking both inward and outward. But to Brophy in the next generation, the first to grow up in a multicultural globalising environment, such a self-conscious pursuit of Australianness came to seem not only creatively irrelevant, but a failure of imagination. For Brophy, what would once have been described as a 'cosmopolitan' outlook comes naturally to a contemporary Australian artist.

Born into an 'ordinary Anglo-Irish family' in Sydney's eastern suburbs, Brophy grew up in country Coonamble. Later back in Sydney, he underwent what he described as an 'increasingly musical adolescence'. Only at the relatively ripe age of 22 ('dangerously late', as Andrew Ford put it) did his studies of classical guitar turn serious, though just as important to his musical education were the free tickets he frequently received, as a lowly clerk in the Gore Hill TV studios, to ABC orchestral concerts and recitals, including revelatory performances by Alicia de Larrocha, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Jorge Bolet and Mstislav Rostropovich. After attending a composition course given by Mauricio Kagel in Europe in 1977, Brophy entered the Sydney Conservatorium where he was one of the few Australians lucky enough to study composition with Don Banks. But the most decisive

influence during his student years was Richard Toop, whose profound engagement with European modernism mentored Brophy, and fellow students Michael Smetanin and Riccardo Formosa, through their infatuation with the Italian avant-garde, and formed them into a recognised 'school' at what Gordon Kerry has labelled the 'pointy end' of 1980s new music, variously described (or derided, by their stylistic opposites) as 'Late High Modernists', 'Complexicists' or – the badge perhaps best worth wearing – 'Maximalists'.

Personally, Brophy found his formative influences in Sylvano Bussotti's highly sexualised multi-media works, Salvatore Sciarrino's sensual explorations of extreme instrumental virtuosity, and Franco Donatoni's rigorous crystalline complexity. His 1982 graduation work, tracing its musical lineage from Sciarrino's *Caprices* (and before them, Paganini's), was a single-movement violin concerto of dazzling complexity, bordering at times on sensual overload. That rigour/rationality were destined to become less important in his music than sensuality/irrationality was already implicit in the work's title, *Exú*, named after an Orixá of Brazilian Candomblé: the deity of fate, messenger of death, and lord of chaos. Not surprisingly, perhaps, when Brophy joined Donatoni's composition class in Italy late in 1982, his teacher pilloried *Exú* in front of all his classmates as being 'full of capriciousness and

will'. Brophy looks back on his time with Donatoni as his apprenticeship, and like a good apprentice, he buckled under. Learning to meet his master's strict expectations taught him 'that you can write a piece using any idea; that anything can be your basic material; and that it wasn't the material's fault if it turned out to be a bad piece, it was more likely your fault, because you hadn't invented properly with what you'd been given.'

But performance, as much as the act of writing, has always been a key to Brophy's personal approach to composition, and stylish and accomplished performers tend to inspire him more than do other composers; in the case of two works on this disc, pianist Lisa Moore and harpist Marshall McGuire. Contact with his Brazilian guitar teacher Turibio Santos led to his interest in the Candomblé ritual that inspired *Exú*, and Brazil's traditional music was the inspiration for *Maracatú*. Balinese gamelan musicians, Senegalese drummers and timbila players from Mozambique have since influenced his compositional aesthetic profoundly, his scores by preference keeping as much of the performers' traditional music intact as possible.

Except in his relatively few texted works, like the early *Flesh* (1987), the opera *The Temptation of St Antony* (on a libretto by Martin Buzacott, after Flaubert) or the recent *Verlaine Songs* (2006), Brophy seldom imposes anything

resembling a focused program on his music. His compositions take their form, as he explains it, through 'a process of evolution of their materials, rather than of development'. Likewise, such extra-musical meaning as he intentionally communicates derives from a web of references rather than from a continuous narrative. Titles are usually an important key. That of *Salammô* (1980) for orchestra may directly recall the blood-lust and hedonistic imagery of Flaubert's novel, but listeners might also remember that it is the name of the fictional opera in the novel and film *Citizen Kane*. Similarly, *Orfeo* (1984) for strings, written after a friend was killed in a freak accident, is not the conventional elegy one might expect, but a confronting meditation on the split-second succession of emotions – from furious struggle to calm acceptance – of a person facing sudden death, just as Orpheus might have experienced facing violent death at the hands of the Maenads.

Contemplation of the erotic is the source of an almost Baroque sensual beauty in scores like *Breathless* (1983) – Donatoni's favourite Brophy work – for an ensemble of three flutes and piano that recalls the texture of a Monteverdi madrigal. (Elsewhere Brophy reused the Monteverdi title *Chiome d'oro*.) *Senso: dopo skin d'armourdo* (1982) is named after a blatantly erotic painting by Pierre Molinier, and the exploration (and even celebration) of the much-contested yet ill-defined conjunction of art

and soft-core porn continues to be a theme in *Spiked Heels: A Carmen Fantasy* (1992) and *Sheer Nylon Dances* (2000) for violin, cello and 'fetichised piano'. By the late 1980s, Brophy had developed a marked preference for arresting monosyllabic titles, like *CharM*, *Chrome*, *Flesh*, *Glint*, *Glove* and *Head*. His worklist into the 1990s can read a little like an artificially extended Jeff Koons adolescent fantasy. Yet the music behind such intentionally shocking titles as *Trash*, *Trip*, *Tweak* and *Twist* is typically thoughtful, brilliantly formed and faceted, from its shattering hardest edges, to (as Lyn Williams has written) episodes of 'spiritual transcendence... ethereal textures which operate at the limits of audibility'.

**Le Réveil de l'ange** (1987) for piano and chamber orchestra is the last work of what Brophy now considers to be his early period. A single-movement concerto for Lisa Moore, a well-known advocate of some of the most difficult contemporary Australian piano music, its subject matter is miraculous transformation. The title 'Awakening of the Angel' is borrowed from another Molinier painting, again a paradoxical emanation of the artist's erotic fishnets-and-garters world. Yet the title also intentionally recalls the birds and angels of Messiaen, whose example stands behind the music of the piano's first entries. Then there is a further reference to the awakening of a homeless man sleeping rough in Berlin in Wim Wenders' 1987 film

*Wings of Desire* (subtitled *The Awakening of an Angel*). The opening's high-pitched wind and bell sounds, scurrying strings and glissandos might belong to Brophy's early style, but the tremolo string melody that tentatively emerges, sounding at first deceptively like a wordless chorus (as if the listener must strain to hear a just sub-audible text), turns out to have presaged a radical change in Brophy's compositional style. Immediately after this work, as Andrew Ford observed, 'the brakes were judderingly applied to the teeming activity' that characterised his music to date.

The first fruits of this change took the form of what seemed to be the radical simplification, even a move toward minimalism, of **Forbidden Colours** for chamber orchestra, composed in September and October 1988. That this work was a personal watershed is quite clearly indicated in the title. As Brophy pointed out, his choice of title – the name of the 1968 English translation of Yukio Mishima's novel *Kinjiki* – was also an 'indirect reference to my previous compositional preoccupations'. The sumptuary code of the Japanese imperial court forbade the wearing of certain colours by certain ranks and classes. (Mishima extends the forbidden colours to homosexuality and other sexual taboos.) Brophy implies that, by analogy, as someone to date identified as a hard-edged modernist, certain traditional forms of musical expression had been denied him: 'In effect, until the

present, slow tempi were rarely encountered in my music. Furthermore such a deliberate focus on instrumental colour, as seen in this piece, was forbidden.'

Once emancipated from modernist shackles, it was still some years before Brophy came to a second crucial watershed, partly in finding a new way to compose faster music again by, in his own words, discovering 'the confidence to work creatively with the music of other cultures'. The breakthrough came in **The Republic of Dreams** (1996) for solo harp with flute, clarinet, percussion and strings, what he describes as an 'Eastern-sounding piece', less a homage to the Western harp (and soloist Marshall McGuire, for whom it was written) than indirectly to the *oud*, the Arabic lute. Since this work, concerto-like pieces have proliferated, especially works for percussion ensembles and orchestra, including *Yo yai pakebi, man mai yapobi* (1999) (in Senegalese, 'I am the knife, you are the meat') for the Afro-Dutch ensemble Anumadutchi, and *The Book of Clouds* (2008) for the Australian groups Synergy and TaikOz and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

The rhythmic impetus provided by percussion is also a dominating force in Brophy's growing list of ballet scores, including *Wind Around My Heart* for Regina van Berkel (who has also choreographed *Yo yai pakebi, man mai yapobi* for the Nederlands Dans Theater), and *Semele* for

the Australian Ballet's 2008 season. This is also the case in **Maracatú** (2003), an orchestral piece written especially for the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, in which Brophy returns to the Afro-Brazilian world of *Exú*, and perhaps more especially to its companion percussion piece *Axé* (1982), named after the life-force that *Exú* dispenses. Unusually among Brophy's music, however, *Maracatú* takes its name from a genre, a traditional ceremonial and musical dance form of the Brazilian slave community, 'a type of processional originally performed to pay tribute to tribal royalty, fusing African rhythms with a Portuguese melodic sensibility'. Brophy treats his borrowings from this tradition respectfully, and his own use of them with a playful, Umberto Eco-like irony, not without admitting the possibility that a listener might choose to hear further 'forbidden colours' in slanting references to similar previous appropriations: the piccolo at the opening, to Arthur Benjamin's *Jamaican Rumba*; the first orchestral tutti, to 1940s newsreel soundtracks, as well as to the scores of Brazil's most famous composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos, or to the orchestral scores of other Latin-Americans like Chávez, Revueltas and Ginastera.

Meanwhile, what he describes as the 'mysterious rustlings and murmurings' of the middle section are filtered recollections of his own early style, still related if only distantly to the impetus behind works like *Cries and*

*Whispers* (1984). But in contrast to his exuberant celebration of the gradually accumulating *Boléro*-like energy that brings *Maracatú* to its thrilling conclusion, Brophy also believes that one of music's 'most immediate and redeemable features...in these increasingly distracted times' is its capacity to be a vehicle 'for self-reflection and the contemplation of our existence'. **Mantras** (2003) was composed 'with this in mind, and invites the listener to enter into another, less frantic time-frame.' For once there seems to be no other subtext. He explains the work simply as consisting of three distinct pieces, each a meditation on a 'carefully chosen and focussed sonority... in which the listener may just settle and be still, albeit for only a brief moment.'

Graeme Skinner

## Lisa Moore

Raised in Canberra, London and Sydney, pianist Lisa Moore completed her graduate studies in Paris and the USA. Based in New York City since 1985, she has been commissioning and working with living composers for over 30 years, collaborating with Ornette Coleman, Gunther Schuller, Milton Babbitt, Elena Kats-Chernin, Martin Bresnick, Don Byron, Julia Wolfe, Michael Torke, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Terry Riley, Gerard Brophy, Peter Sculthorpe, Michael Smetanin, Iannis Xenakis and Meredith Monk, among many others.

Lisa Moore was the founding pianist for the Bang on a Can All-Stars, touring worldwide with them for 16 years (1992-2008). She has performed at the Royal Albert Hall, La Scala, Vienna's Musikverein and the Sydney Opera House and made guest appearances at festivals around the world including Huddersfield, Tanglewood, Aspen, Graz, Heidelberg, Scotia, Norfolk, Paris d'Automne, Prague Spring, Sonic Boom in New York, BAM Next Wave and the BBC Proms, as well as the Adelaide and Sydney Festivals and the Brisbane Biennale. In 2008, Lisa Moore curated the Canberra International Music Festival 'Sounds Alive' series, designing ten days of new music concerts at The Street Theatre in the nation's capital.

As a concerto soloist Lisa Moore has played with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the

Sydney, Canberra and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra, the Thai National Symphony Orchestra and in the US with the Albany Symphony and the Philharmonia Virtuosi. She has also appeared as a guest artist with the New York City Ballet, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Orchestra of St Luke's, American Composers Orchestra, Steve Reich Ensemble, So Percussion, Da Capo Chamber Players, Paul Drescher Ensemble, Susan Marshall Dance Company, Sequitur, Newband, Essential Music and the Australia Ensemble.

Lisa Moore was a silver medallist in the International American Music Competition at Carnegie Hall; she has also received the APRA *Sounds Australian* Award for Best Performance and two Australia Council fellowships. Her four solo recordings are on the Cantaloupe Music and Tall Poppies labels; she also appears on thirty recordings of chamber music. Her album *Wild Russians*, with cellist David Pereira, won the ABC award for Best Australian Recording in 1993.

[www.lisamoore.org](http://www.lisamoore.org)

## Kenneth Young

Kenneth Young is one of New Zealand's leading conductors. He has established himself as a passionate and skilled interpreter of Romantic, 20th-century and contemporary repertoire whilst receiving considerable recognition for his performances and recordings of New Zealand and Australian orchestral music.

Kenneth Young took up the position of Principal Tuba with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in 1976; his experience as a conductor with the NZSO dates from 1985, culminating in his appointment as the orchestra's Conductor in Residence in 1993. In 2001 he resigned from the NZSO in order to pursue his conducting and composing career.

He has worked extensively with all the regional orchestras throughout New Zealand and with the New Zealand Chamber Orchestra; he also regularly conducts seasons with the Royal New Zealand Ballet Company. Outside New Zealand, Kenneth Young has worked with The Queensland Orchestra, the West Australian, Adelaide and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, Orchestra Victoria, City of Osaka Sinfonia and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

In addition to his work as a performer and a conductor, Kenneth Young has become one of New Zealand's leading composers. Numerous commissions from Chamber Music New Zealand, the Brass Bands Association of New Zealand, the International Festival of the Arts, Auckland Philharmonia, Vector Wellington Orchestra, Radio New Zealand, the NZSO and Australian orchestras have been performed nationwide and also in the United States, Europe and Australia. Recent premieres include his Symphony No. 2 with the NZSO and his *Saffire Concerto* for four guitars and orchestra with the

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, both to wide critical acclaim.

Since 1988 Kenneth Young has been a member of the music faculty of the New Zealand School of Music at Victoria University of Wellington where he lectures in conducting, orchestration and composition. In 2004 he was awarded the Lilburn Trust Citation in recognition of Outstanding Services to New Zealand Music.

## Dobbs Franks

Dobbs Franks is equally at home conducting opera, ballet, music theatre or a symphony orchestra concert, or playing the piano in chamber music ensembles.

He first came to Australia in 1960 when he was brought here, on the recommendation of Leonard Bernstein, to conduct the Australian premiere season of *West Side Story*. After repeatedly leaving Australia for other parts of the world, he eventually decided to call Australia home in 1979.

Dobbs Franks has always championed new music. He has conducted over 50 first performances of Australian music; he conducted the premiere season of Richard Meale's *Mer de Glace* and the revival of *Voss* for Opera Australia.

He has been Music Director of the Australian Ballet, Principal Conductor of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the West Australian Ballet and Head of Music of the

Australian Opera Studio. He has also been a regular guest conductor with all the Australian symphony orchestras, Opera Australia, the Australian Ballet and the state opera and ballet companies. He continues to appear internationally, most recently as guest conductor of the Scottish Ballet and conducting a production of Verdi's *Falstaff* in Tokyo.

In addition to having conducted in 49 of the 50 states of the USA, he has appeared in New Zealand, Mexico, Scotland, Ireland, Korea, Thailand, Japan, China, Indonesia, Canada, Israel and Greece.

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**Recording Engineer** Veronika Vincze [1]-[6],  
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**Editing** Haig Burnell and Veronika Vincze [1], [5],  
Brooke Green and Veronika Vincze [2]-[4], [6],  
Peter Taplin and Andrew Dixon [7]

**Mastering** Veronika Vincze

**Editorial and Production Manager** Katherine Kemp

**Publications Editor** Natalie Shea

**Booklet Design** Imagecorp Pty Ltd

**Cover Photo** Snow gum trunk, Tasmania  
© Rob Blakers / Photolibrary.com

Recorded 22-27 October 1989 in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Studio 710, Hobart [7], and 13-14 December 2006 [2]-[4], [6] and 28 August 2007 [1], [5] in Federation Concert Hall, Hobart.

*Forbidden Colours* and *Le Réveil de l'ange* are published by Ricordi.

ABC Classics thanks Alexandra Alewood and Melissa Kennedy.

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## Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

Established in 1948, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is acclaimed as one of the world's finest small orchestras. Resident in the purpose-built Federation Concert Hall, Hobart, the TSO presents more than 60 diverse concerts across Tasmania and mainland Australia each year. German-born Sebastian Lang-Lessing has been the orchestra's Chief Conductor and Artistic Director since 2004.

With a full-time complement of 47 musicians, the TSO's core repertoire is the music of the Classical and early Romantic periods. It is, however, a versatile orchestra, equally at home in jazz, popular music and light classics, and recognised internationally as a champion of Australian music.

The TSO presents annual subscription seasons in Hobart and Launceston, and since its inception has regularly toured regional Tasmania and mainland Australia. The orchestra appears at major Australian arts festivals and in 2005 initiated an annual Sydney Season. International touring has seen the TSO in North and South America, Greece, Israel, South Korea, China, Japan and Indonesia.

The TSO regularly records for radio, CD, film and television. Its recordings on international and Australian CD labels have garnered critical praise, and the TSO is the only Australian orchestra to have released a complete set of the Beethoven symphonies, conducted by David Porcellijn, and a complete cycle of Schumann symphonies, conducted by Sebastian Lang-Lessing.



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