

**YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM / TEXT ONLY VERSION**

# Ensemble Offspring: Night Songs

**Dates:** 12 – 13 Mar 2024

**Venue:** Space Theatre

**Duration:** 1hr 10mins, no interval

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**THIS DIGITAL PROGRAM INCLUDES**

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# Credits

**Claire Edwardes** Artistic Director, percussion

**Lamorna Nightingale** Flutes

**Jason Noble** Clarinet, bass clarinet

**Celia Craig** Oboe

**Ben Hoadley** Bassoon

**Benjamin Ward** Double bass

**Tristram Williams** Trumpet

**Benjamin Marks** Trombone

**Jon Rose & Hollis Taylor** AV/Audio (composers)

# Program

## Night Songs (2022) by Jon Rose & Hollis Taylor in 14 movements

1. Jessie Gap

2. Cape Range National Park

3. Green Lake

4. The Gap

5. Temple Bar Caravan Park

6. Lamppost Duo

7. Burke and Wills Roadhouse

8. Wintersun

9. Burke Street Mimicry

10. Trepina Ridges Music Camp

11. Sandstone Point

12. Arltunga Morning Chorus

13. N'Dhala Gorge @ Ross River

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# Program Notes

## Night Songs: A Jon Rose and Hollis Taylor Project

*Night Songs* is an interspecies engagement between the ancient music of a uniquely Australian songbird, *Cracticus nigrogularis* (the Pied Butcherbird), and contemporary human musicians.

*Night Songs* is a compression of geography and time; the recordings and transcriptions of the birds by Dr Hollis Taylor come from Centralia, Western Australia, and Far North Queensland. Pied Butcherbirds sing their long form songs at night in spring, and this performance shrinks a twelve-hour period into a one-hour, concentrated audio-visual encounter. Jon Rose has arranged this music for eight human musicians featuring Ensemble Offspring under the direction of Claire Edwardes.

Although there is video (recording a black-hooded bird at night is extremely problematic!), the performance of *Night Songs* exists to privilege the aural over the visual.

*Night Songs* can be divided up into a time line with 13 linked sections:

1. **Jessie Gap** places the bird's song in a cosmic yet very human musical context with a nod to the history of western counterpoint.

2. The video recording from **Cape Range National Park** features butcherbird group singing in the

early evening. In human terms, we can relate to it as a hocket - a musical line shared and augmented between the participants. Our musicians play a direct but simplified transcription of the birds' ensemble singing.

3. **Green Lake** is an older recording gifted to us by Jenny Beasley. When a Butcherbird song is transposed three octaves down and performed on a Bassoon, the results are quite chatty, not to say humorous.

4. **The Gap** features the songs of three birds that are within hearing distance of each other. The material has been used vertically in full ensemble chords and horizontally in counterpoint, accompanied by the calls of two frogs with in shifting polyrhythms.

5. The bird from **Temple Bar** is heard first in the original and then usurped by a flute solo utilising the same material. This bird is virtuosic, and so becomes the flute part.

6. This short video interlude sees two Pied Butcherbirds on a lamppost at **Stott Terrace**.

7. On nighttime excursions to record the birds, Hollis Taylor inadvertently documents all nighttime activity, including trucks, drunks, police impersonators, wandering cows and dingos. Here, a cicada sits on top of the remote recording box, creating an extraordinary bass frequency. The Oboe takes the

part of the bird at **The Burke and Wills Roadhouse** in FNQ. Insect boosterism arrives with a hefty interjection from other band members.

8. In video of the **Araluen 2021** bird from last year, I wanted the projected image large. Far from a cute tweet tweet new age background to make us feel good, this is a song demanding the attention of other birds and our attention, too. This was recorded between 3 and 4 am and is taken from a three-hour performance. It is partly accompanied by a harmonisation of a bird nearby at Wintersun.

9. It rarely rains in Alice Springs. The second freak rainfall within three months prompts the **Burke Street bird** to launch into a kaleidoscope of vocal mimicry: a budgie, a clucking hen, a honeyeater, a ring-necked parrot, a cat, a peregrine falcon, a grey shrike-thrush, and maybe a dog. Most of these calls are truncated - seemingly random editing in a DJ cut-and-paste session. No one really knows yet why some birds mimic - is it an avian Wikipedia, is it a diary, is it a test of aural memory, or are they dreaming or simply being 'other'?

10. The precise recordings of four birds at **Trephina Ridge** are realised by our virtuosic humans and

mapped onto a rhythmic ground bass. Hollis calls the location of these recordings her 'music camp'. In the wild, these birds are just on the cusp of hearing range; in our performance they are heard side by side in counterpoint.

11. Short video interlude. The early morning quotidian rites of Pied Butcherbirds at **Sandstone Point** as they get ready for the day.

12. Human musicians serve as sonic punctuation in a full-on morning chorus at **Arltunga**. Each member of the chorus (avian and human) finds or competes for vertical acoustic space in which to operate - a butcherbird in their midst. This broadband cacophony may seem for many human ears as too complex to compute. But for birds whose aural fidelity and resolution is perhaps ten times sharper and more focused than ours - it all makes perfect sense.

13. In a postlude, we return to the night as the bird at **Ross River** sings (a lament?), floating above chord changes in another cosmology but connecting with our sense of musicality. As species collapse continues unabated, we offer you a reminder to support BirdLife Australia.

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## About Ensemble Offspring

Ensemble Offspring are Australia's leading new music group, standing at the forefront of musical innovation. Led by internationally acclaimed percussionist Claire Edwardes OAM, the ensemble unites the country's most fearless and virtuosic instrumentalists. Together, they create "visceral, joyous music" (*Sydney Morning Herald*) through kaleidoscopically varied performances that blaze a trail for Australian music.

At the heart of Ensemble Offspring's mission is an unwavering commitment to the creation and dissemination of living new music. Since forming in 1995, they have commissioned and premiered over 350 new works, solidifying their position as the foremost champions of contemporary music in Australia. In particular, they actively promote underrepresented voices including female-identifying, First Nations, and emerging artists. This dedication has earned the ensemble the 2022 Classical:NEXT Innovation Award, the 2019 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Group Award, multiple APRA Art Music Awards and a 2019 ARIA Award nomination.

Ensemble Offspring's annual development programs are an essential pillar of Australia's musical

ecosystem. Hatched Academy is an incubator for emerging Australian artists which nurtures the next generation of cultural leaders through a composer intensive, individual mentorships, and an associate artist position; the Noisy Women Commission amplifies the voice of an exceptional female-identifying or non-binary composer; and the First Nations Composer in Residence and Ngarra-Burria: First Peoples Composers programs elevate the music of Indigenous artists, foregrounding their rich cultural perspectives.

By boldly subverting classical traditions, Ensemble Offspring deliver concerts that "burst with imagination, energy and inspiration" (*Seesaw Magazine*). Through their pioneering spirit, pursuit of excellence and relentless commitment to equality, the ensemble continue to shape a vibrant and diverse future for Australian music.

*"In a music industry that can often feel impenetrable - most of all for marginalised voices - its mission is not just honourable, but essential. In other words, it is not just doing the right thing, it is doing what's necessary for the survival of new music in Australia."*  
- Cut Common

# Biographies

## **Claire Edwardes OAM**

Artistic Director, percussion

From the set of Play School to the mainstage of the Sydney Opera House, Claire Edwardes OAM is the only Australian to have won the APRA Art Music Luminary Award four times. Claire leaps between her role as Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring and concerto performances with all of the Australian orchestras. She has been the sole Artistic Director of Ensemble Offspring for seven years and previously was co-director with composer Damien Ricketson for almost 10 years. She has over 25 years experience as a professional percussionist and is acknowledged as a long-term leader in Australia's musical landscape. Having built her career on the development of innovative projects and programs, Claire has presented and produced music at many levels of the Australian and international music scenes. She is a committed advocate of gender equity in music.

## **Lamorna Nightingale**

Flutes

Lamorna Nightingale is a freelance flautist, concert presenter, educator and publisher who is passionate about the future of art music in Australia. She is a core member of the new music group - Ensemble Offspring and has been performing with them since 2007. Lamorna has many years experience working in the orchestral sector performing regularly with many of Australia's finest ensembles. Lamorna has created several recordings of new Australian flute music with repertoire selected to suit flute players with less experience with new music. She created *Other Voices*, an album of new Australian music for flute and electronics with an associated education kit designed to introduce school students to electroacoustic music. Lamorna has also created several pedagogical volumes of repertoire for young flute players through her publishing company, Fluteworthy.

## **Jason Noble**

Clarinet, bass clarinet

Jason Noble is one of Australia's most versatile clarinetists – experimental to classical – a soloist and core member of Ensemble Offspring. Jason has performed at festivals locally and internationally. His album releases include *THRUM* (2020) and *Chi's Cakewalk* (2017). He has also made guest appearances on albums for Gurrumul, Sally Seltmann, ABC Classics, Gondwana Voices, Paul

Mac, Halcyon, SICKO improvising orchestra, and the Tiwi women's choir Ngarukuruwala. He performed at the Adelaide Festival in *Incredible Floridas*, curated by Kim Williams, appearing as soloist with the Australian String Quartet. Jason collaborates with living and emerging composers, and is an in-demand music educator and examiner. Presently Jason is a teaching fellow at ANU School of Music.

## **Celia Craig**

Oboe

An Associate of the Royal Academy of Music since 1997, Celia Craig was awarded Exhibitions, Craxton Chamber Music Prize, Advanced and Licentiate Diploma by the UK's oldest music conservatoire. Trained by renowned Hungarian educator, Bela de Csillery (pupil of Kodaly and Hindemith), Scholar at The Purcell School and winner of Music for Youth national Oboe Prize, she was personally invited by the London Symphony Orchestra to the 1990 Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo for tuition with Leonard Bernstein. Resident Artist for National Trust of South Australia, Celia now produces chamber concerts in exquisite venues and bespoke concerts to order for private commissioners using a network of elite local musicians. She is a Business SA Encore Entrepreneur.

## **Ben Hoadley**

Bassoon

Ben Hoadley holds degrees in bassoon performance from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and the New England Conservatory in Boston. He received a Master of Music in composition with First Class Honours from the University of Waikato where he was awarded the Lilburn Composition Prize, and has held fellowships to the Australian National Academy of Music, Tanglewood Music Centre and the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall. Since returning from the USA, Ben has divided his time between Australia and New Zealand working as a bassoonist, composer and teacher. Ben is also a composer. He was the winner of the 2020 NSW Flute Society Composition Grant for his work involute for flute and piano, and was awarded the 2020 SOUNZ Brass Composition Prize with Haratua for trombone and piano.

## **Benjamin Ward**

Double bass

Benjamin Ward is a musician and composer based in Sydney, Australia. Since 2009, he has been a member of the Sydney Symphony double bass

section. A career highlight was his collaboration with Jasmin Sheppard; a piece after the poems of celebrated Yankunytjatjara/Kokatha writer/poet Ali Cobby Eckermann. Recently, Benjamin has performed a solo recital, including his own compositions, at the Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery; played a solo set of double bass works at the Alice Springs Beanie Festival; and volunteered at the Garma Festival in north-east Arnhem Land for the Yothu Yindi Foundation.

### **Tristram Williams**

Trumpet

Tristram Williams maintains a busy international career as a leading young soloist, ensemble musician, improviser and educator. He is a laureate of major international trumpet competitions in Brussels and Eindhoven, and was awarded a prize from Karlheinz Stockhausen at the 2006 Stockhausen Interpreters Course. He was the winner of a 2007 Symphony Australia Young Performer Award and a 2008 Churchill Fellowship. He was Associate Principal Trumpet of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at age 21, before resigning in 2006 after 7 years to concentrate on his solo career. Tristram is particularly interested in new music, and has worked with many international and Australian composers, including Karlheinz Stockhausen, James Dillon, Richard Barrett, Liza Lim, James McMillan, Matthias Pinscher, Chris Dench, and John Rogers. He has had solo works composed for him by Liza Lim, James Dillon, Aaron Cassidy, David Chisholm, Evan Johnson and others.

### **Benjamin Marks**

Trombone

Dr Benjamin Marks is a freelance trombonist, composer and researcher based in Brisbane, Australia. He is a member of the ELISION Ensemble and specialises in the performance of contemporary music. With ELISION, he has performed internationally as a soloist and chamber musician in major international new music festivals and has been in residence at major universities (Harvard, Stanford, Buffalo, London). Ben also performs with ensembles including Camerata, Ensemble Q, the Queensland, New Zealand and Singapore Symphony Orchestras. His compositions have been premiered by the Libra Ensemble, Mark Knoop, Ensemble Offspring, ELISION and the QCGU Brass Ensemble with various pieces being broadcast on ABC Classic FM. He is currently teaching trombone at private schools throughout Brisbane and at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, where he directs the Trombone Ensemble and Young Conservatorium

Brass Ensemble. He is also a prizewinning astrophotographer.

### **Jon Rose**

Composer, AV/Audio

Jon Rose is an Australian violinist and composer. A polymath, for over 35 years, he has been at the sharp end of new, improvised, and experimental music and media. A polymath, he is as much at home creating large environmental multi-media works as he is playing the violin on a concert stage. Projects include *The Relative Violin* and *Great Fences of Australia*. He has appeared on over 60 albums, and worked with artists such as Kronos Quartet, Derek Bailey, Fred Frith, Shelley Hirsh, Chris Cutler, Otomo Yoshihide, KK Null, Alvin Curran, Evan Parker, Phil Minton, John Cage, Tony Oxley, Steve Beresford, Eugene Chadbourne, Bob Ostertag, Jim Denley, Elliott Sharp, George Lewis, Christian Marclay, Toshinori Kondo, Joelle Leandre, Frances-Marie Uitti, Barre Phillips, and John Zorn.

### **Hollis Taylor**

Composer, AV/Audio

Dr Hollis Taylor is a musicologist, ornithologist, violinist, composer and author. Her violin playing features in films including *My Own Private Idaho*, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, *Paydirt* and *The Soldier's Tale*. She is the author of six volumes of American fiddle transcriptions and arrangements and numerous magazine articles. As a composer, Hollis blurs the lines between classical, jazz and folk. She was the 2000 First Prize winner in the National League of American PEN Women and she has produced three radiophonic works for ABC Radio National. Her sound/video installation *Great Fences of Australia*, in collaboration with Jon Rose, has seen numerous international performances. Her portfolio of compositions based on pied butcherbird vocalisations won the APRA award at the University of Western Sydney in 2008.