
Welcome to the First Sydney Spring

Twenty-five years into Europe I still remember Sydney in Spring, as fresh energy replaces old and the mantle of winter is discarded. The dream of performing new music once again in the city of my birth led to the founding of this Festival. It is a dream that, I hope, will be realised every September as the wattles return and our finest young composers, musicians and artists will reassemble to present their newest inspirations to the Australian public. The Art Gallery of NSW has established a superb tradition of absorbing the 'Shock of the New' (as well as the old, which was also once 'new'), so it offers us an ideal meeting place in which to articulate new thoughts and feelings.

The First Sydney Spring Festival of New Music and Visual Arts features (myself apart) members of the young Alpha Centauri Ensemble, formed for the Sydney Dance Company's brilliant and audacious staging of Xenakis' **Kraanerg** at the Sydney opera House in November 1988, which led to an internationally acclaimed debut recording of Xenakis' classic score on the prestigious Dutch Etcetera label. Three further CDs will be recorded from this series. In addition, we welcome back the German/American composer Rolf Gehlhaar, whose work as Sound Designer was vital to the success of **Kraanerg**, as well as three innovative young Chinese artists whose impact and importance is discussed later.

Within the short space of time allotted for our inaugural concerts, we are proud to present ten Australian works. Next year we aim to present 21 Australian works over three weeks, and to commission three new works with a part of the precious funds provided by our Sponsors. Let's not underplay the importance of such sponsors: we are living through turbulent times for the arts, in which public confidence has to be restored by the business community. What better way could there be than having the financial establishment express its faith in our endeavours as we look to the turn of the century to provide us with fresh insights and inspirations?

In this context, my colleagues and I are profoundly grateful for the vision and generosity displayed by the Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Edmund Capon, who has had the courage to support bold endeavours in difficult times. Similarly, this festival would not have been possible without the unflagging energy of our Festival Manager, Louise Haynes, who has shown total commitment to ensuring the safe passage of this mini-series of concerts through the many hazards it has faced along the way. This series also marks a further collaboration with my friend and colleague Richard Toop, who has provided valuable assistance ever since the London Music Digests of the early seventies. Finally, we are most grateful to ABC Broadcast Music for the interest it has displayed by recording this inaugural festival (forums included) in its entirety; we are confident that the results will be published and circulated worldwide.

Some of the repertoire presented here is very new, but its location at the end of a century irresistibly beckoned us to pay due homage to a handful of great composers from the previous fin-de-siècle: Satie, Debussy, Skryabin and, with a certain historical extension, Prokofiev. At the other end of the chronological scale, we are confident that new traditions will be established by the magnificent Festival exhibition mounted jointly by our Chinese friends Ah Xian, Liu Xiaoxian and Wang Youshen, all from Beijing. At the same time as we reach out to draw upon China's ten thousand year old history, these young artists are providing a bridge to the future.