

Composers Association of New Zealand Country Report for ACL Festival March 2009, KOREA (Tongyeong and Seoul)

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This report focuses on the activities of the Composers Association of New Zealand (CANZ), but it also presents a wider picture of some of the New Zealand composition-related activities that have taken place since the last ACL Festival was held at the end of 2007.

In March last year, the Composers Association of New Zealand (CANZ) held its Annual General Meeting in Wellington. We met at the Lilburn Residence (this is the house which was owned and lived in by the significant New Zealand composer Douglas Lilburn from 1959 until his death in 2001, and which has since become a Residence for composers). The meeting included a celebration and awards presentation, at which the KBB/CANZ Citation for Services to New Zealand Music was presented to Jenny McLeod, and the CANZ Trust Fund Award was presented to Gareth Farr.

We make the Citation presentation each year to a person or an organization that has done much over the years to support New Zealand music. They are sometimes a performer, or a performing organization such as an orchestra or choir, or a composer who has set a fine example to other composers, or a person or organization that has done much to serve the nation's music. The Citation is supported financially by KBB Music, a music store with branches nationwide that specialises in the hire of musical instruments to schools and students. Our other award, the CANZ Trust Fund Award, is given each year to a composer whose work shows potential and/or achievement. This means that it is sometimes a young composer and sometimes an established composer.

CANZ's Annual General Meeting for 2009 was held earlier this month, in Auckland, where we had the pleasure of making presentations to Andrew Uren (KBB/CANZ Citation) and to Robin Toan (CANZ Trust Fund). Andrew is a clarinettist who specialises in bass clarinet performance. He has commissioned many new works, performed them around New Zealand and overseas, and made recordings of the works. He also does a great deal of teaching in Auckland, so there are some very fine up-and-

coming clarinetists who are happy to tackle some quite challenging music, because their teacher sets a fine example.

Here is a sample of Andrew's playing – this is an extract from a solo bass clarinet work called *Mandible*, written in 2005 by the New Zealand composer Chris Watson. Andrew commissioned the work, and premiered it in Amsterdam – he has since performed it numerous times in New Zealand, and there are at least two other bass clarinetists who have played the work, including in the US:

Play track 7

This year's CANZ Trust Fund recipient, Robin Toan is a composer in her mid-20s, so quite young and yet her work has already been performed in a number of countries and received some significant awards. Here is a short extract from one of Robin's most recent works, titled *Aquarium*, which depicts aquarium fish at feeding time – this is a workshop performance by the NZ Symphony Orchestra:

Play track 5

Looking back on the past year of New Zealand composer activities, and looking forward to what appears to lie on the horizon, I would begin by reflecting on one of CANZ's main annual events, the Nelson Composing Workshop. This is an annual event that brings young and emerging composers from across New Zealand together in Nelson (in the South Island) for four days each July. The Nelson workshop was organized last year by Samuel Holloway and Mary Binney, both of whom are attending this festival. It curates performances of new works by committed players, and provides a professional development forum for composers where valuable discussions and exchanges take place, with young and emerging composers sitting together with established composers and discussing each work. Samuel and Mary will also be convening this year's Nelson Composing Workshop, again in July.

CANZ also continues to produce the annual publication *Canzona*, edited and produced by Michael Norris, and the bi-monthly magazine *Canzonetta*, currently edited and produced by Samuel Holloway, as well as maintain a useful and current website.

In September of last year, the New Zealand School of Music in Wellington hosted a CANZ Composers' Conference. This was a thoroughly rewarding weekend event at which many New Zealand composers and commentators came together to share thoughts, present their ideas, compare their approaches and hear some fine music.

Looking around the country: the Auckland-based contemporary ensemble *175 East* performed in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland last year, their October programme including world premieres of works by Patrick Shepherd, Tim Bowman and John Croft, and the NZ premiere of Alexandra Hay's clarinet *Part/s*. Here is 175 East's performance of the work by Hay:

Play track 4

The Wellington-based contemporary ensemble *Stroma* (which is now in its 10th year) last year presented a number of concerts, for example in September they presented world premieres of works by Samuel Holloway, Dylan Lardelli and David Downes. Here is an extract from their performance of Holloway's *Strange Loops*:

Play track 8

The Christchurch-based ensemble *Silencio* presented a number of concerts of new music over the past year, including a combined concert with 175East. They also presented a concert titled *Art and Socialism* that featured premières by Patrick Shepherd, Chris Cree Brown, Alex van der Broek and others.

The Southern Sinfonia in Dunedin performed two major new New Zealand works in 2008: Trevor Coleman's *Equator* (a piece for film and orchestra), and *Portrait of F.H.*, a

work by Anthony Ritchie ‘about’ the life of Frances Hodgkins. There was also a concert put on in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery to celebrate the opening of the Chinese Gardens in Dunedin, which included a number of New Zealand works.

As you will know, New Zealand is far from its neighbouring countries, which has given rise to a fairly widespread national desire to travel – for example, there are eight New Zealanders attending this festival here in Korea. Other examples of kiwis (especially kiwi musicians) travelling include five Kiwi composers attending the Composing Women’s Festival in Beijing last year. The Christchurch-based pianist and composer Gao Ping has continued to have works performed and recorded overseas and worked extensively in China during 2008.

APRA (the Australasian Performing Right Association) offers Professional Development awards each year in Australia and New Zealand, and this year’s announcements include three awards to New Zealanders, including one to Samuel Holloway, who will be taking the opportunity to travel to a number of countries to hear music and work with other composers and musicians.

Each year in New Zealand there is an APRA Silver Scroll Awards ceremony, which is primarily an awards night for the more popular music genres, but it also includes an award for a Contemporary Classical work. Last September the winner of the SOUNZ Contemporary Award was Chris Gendall for his octet *Wax Lyrical*.

The next ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) festival, at which we will have New Zealand representation due to CANZ’ membership of the ISCM, will be held in three different Swedish cities in September this year. Unusually, and to our delight, the works of two New Zealand composers have been selected for performance there, works by Carol Shortis and by Pepe Becker. At last year’s ISCM Festival in Vilnius, Lithuania, New Zealand was not represented musically, however our voice was heard on the General Assembly, where we were represented by Eve de Castro-Robinson.

Planning and discussions are already well underway regarding next year's ISCM Festival, which will be held in Sydney in April/May 2010. This will be the first time in 87 years that the Festival has taken place in the Southern Hemisphere, and given Sydney's proximity to New Zealand we are hoping that a significant number of New Zealand composers and lovers of contemporary music will make the journey and take advantage of such a range of high quality music and performances relatively close to home.

In CANZ's last report to the ACL, we reported that SOUNZ, the Centre for New Zealand music, was about to launch its very significant Online project. The project has been a major undertaking for the Centre, as it involves the gathering of key information about all New Zealand works represented, often with digital imprints of the music available, some with short sound files attached, and a complex system of information within a searchable and comprehensive website. The gathering and tagging of all the information has been—and continues to be—a massive task, and CANZ is a significant partner in the project as its membership includes many of the composers whose offering of relevant materials has been crucial for the content of the site. The SOUNZ Online project continues to grow, as more and more composers submit material, and it has become an invaluable resource for finding out about much of the music made in New Zealand and by New Zealand composers.

CANZ is in the process of developing a 5-year plan. The principal reason for this is that we feel it is time to ask ourselves questions about whether we are relevant, and whether we are meeting the needs of our members. We believe it is not sufficient to adopt a "business as usual" approach, as the composition 'landscape' has changed dramatically in the last 10-15 years, and also SOUNZ (which was established in 1991) and a few other significant bodies are now meeting some of the needs that CANZ initially met when it was first established in 1974.

We are currently analysing what we do as an organization, and whose needs we currently serve. Then we are going to take our analysis, our questions and ideas to the wider membership, holding meetings in various regions of the country, and seek feedback. By

doing this, we hope to strengthen our understanding of whether there are activities that are duplicated elsewhere, and whether there are needs we should but do not yet address, so that we can develop our understanding of how best CANZ can fulfil its role.

There are also plans taking shape for a number of festivals of New Zealand music over the next 2 – 3 years, not organized by CANZ, but with some degree of CANZ involvement. There are possibilities currently lining up in London, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Shanghai. So – there is a great deal to work towards.
