

The Red Room Company
and Musica Viva Australia
present

COUNTER POINT

poetry

meets

music



**poetry
meets music.**

Counterpoint

noun

- 1 Music, the art or technique of setting, writing, or playing a melody or melodies in conjunction with another, according to fixed rules.
 - ~ a melody played in conjunction with another.
- 2 an argument, idea, or theme used to create a contrast with the main element: I have used my interviews with parents as a counterpoint to a professional judgment.

verb [with obj.]

- 1 Music, add counterpoint to (a melody): the orchestra counterpoints the vocal part.
- 2 emphasize by contrast: the cream walls and maple floors are counterpointed by black accents.
 - ~ compensate for: the story's fanciful excesses are counterpointed with some sharp and unsentimental dialogue.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *contrepoin*t, from medieval Latin *contrapunctum* '(song) pricked or marked over against (the original melody),' from *contra-* 'against' + *punctum*, from *pungere* 'to prick.'

For the first time,
The Red Room
Company
and Musica Viva
have come together
to create music
and poetry.

About the Project

The project idea was simple - an emerging Australian composer, a leading solo instrumentalist and three renowned poets at different stages of their careers - would come together and create something, anything; words, music, sounds, pictures and the result would create a small showcase performance and a series of commissioned poems.

Writing, composing and rehearsing are by their nature quite solitary activities and we wanted to explore how the outcome might differ if the approach was a more collaborative one. The first step was a workshop hosted by Johanna Featherstone and Carl Vine at which the collaborators met, performed, wrote and got to know one another a little. Then they dispersed to their various parts of the globe but kept in touch via mail, email and occasional conversations.

Poets Luka Lesson, Margaret West, and Jessica L. Wilkinson are working with composer Melody Eötvös, and percussionist Claire Edwardes, in a series of experimental workshops aimed at producing a suite of works blending poetry and chamber music.

The artists have been hand-picked to bring a range of qualities to the project. The poets represent many styles, practices, backgrounds and career experience, with experience in cross-form collaboration, and experimentation with other media. On the music side, both Melody and Claire bring a wealth of experience and talent, as well as an openness of approach and willingness to collaborate.

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About the Presenters

The Red Room Company

The Red Room Company creates unusual and useful poetry projects that transform expectations of, and experiences with, poems. We aspire to make poetry accessible to all, especially those who face the greatest barriers to creative opportunities. Our public arts projects focus on developing imaginative contexts in which poetry can be creatively and critically explored.

We support the work of young and emerging writers and are the preeminent commissioner of contemporary Australian poetry. Through Red Room Poetry Education, Australia's only national poetry education program, we inspire students and teachers to create, perform and publish poetry. Taking Australian poets into Correctional Centres, our Unlocked project allows us to reach one of the most marginalised sectors of society, many of whom lack basic literacy skills, but nevertheless respond enthusiastically to the freedoms offered by the poetic form.

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Johanna Featherstone

Johanna established The Red Room Company in 2003. Her poetry has featured in journals such as Quadrant, and the Best Australian Poems. In 2006 she created a series of literary TV shows, The Wordshed, in partnership with The University of Western Sydney where she is a Research Associate. Johanna is an honorary associate of The University of Sydney's School of Letters Arts and Media. Johanna received a fellowship from the St James Ethics Center in 2008. Her chapbook Felt was released in 2010 by Vagabond Press.

About the Presenters

Musica Viva Australia

Musica Viva Australia seeks to inspire through ensemble music of quality, diversity, challenge and joy. Musica Viva began in 1945 as a chamber music organisation focused on one ensemble. Over the years, the organisation has evolved to embrace hundreds of different musicians and ensembles each year, bringing the finest groups from overseas to perform and teach across Australia, and promoting Australian ensembles to audiences nationally and internationally.

To enhance these performances and deepen audience engagement, Musica Viva has developed world-leading programs that contextualize concerts and an innovative Education program that enables better music learning in classrooms. Today Musica Viva is the largest presenter of chamber music in the world, with offices in every Australian state and territory, reaching 344,857 people directly every year.

Carl Vine AO

Carl first came to prominence in Australia as a composer of music for dance, with 25 dance scores to his credit. His catalogue now includes seven symphonies, nine concertos, music for film, television and theatre, electronic music and numerous chamber works. Although primarily a composer of modern 'classical' music he has undertaken tasks as diverse as arranging the Australian National Anthem and writing music for the Closing Ceremony of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics (the 'Sydney 2000' presentation). Since 2000 Carl has been the Artistic Director of Musica Viva Australia.

Artistic Statement

Counterpoint is a true experiment in collaboration. Many of the usual project prescriptions were left open to discussion. What would come first, the chicken or the egg; the music or the poems?

What kind of instruments would be used? Would it be acoustic or electronic? Would the poems be composed or improvised? We left it to the poets to decide how to speak the music, and to the musicians to interpret the poets' language.

We started off by placing everybody in one room for a group workshop, like shaking together chemicals in a beaker. The rest of the process occurred mostly by correspondence – Skype, postcards, emails – old and new technologies forming the medium in which the project grew.

We chose three poets with very different timbres, hoping that each would bring something different to the project. Luka Lesson is a natural performer, a slam poet who performs around the world. Jessica L. Wilkinson works with elements of visual and concrete poetry in her work, while Margaret West works across a range of media and art forms in addition to her poetry, as well as having a background in music. These diverse influences came together via composer Melody Eötvös and percussionist Claire Edwardes.

There were intense discussions about the concept and process of collaboration; how can all these voices come together without drowning out their individual qualities, or is that necessarily part of the process? Eventually, it fell to Melody to bring the different voices into harmony, to form a counterpoint through her compositions.

Johanna Featherstone

Artistic Statement

This exploration of the space between poetry and music, marshalled by The Red Room Company and Musica Viva, has been kept as free and open-ended as possible, with just one boundary: it must result in a public showing and a printed publication.

We have taken a fresh look at ways in which music can reflect upon, respond to and benefit from, poetic collaboration. In chamber music, musicians take responsibility for their own contribution while responding intimately and immediately to those around them. Here the paradigm is transformed into a tableau of live and recorded music, and live and recorded words.

Composers are architects of sound, so it was Melody Eötvös' task to draw together the work of the individual poets and create a synthesis through the performance of master percussionist, Claire Edwardes.

Although composers are popularly considered to work alone in ivory towers, composition is more commonly a collaborative process. Performers and composers take ideas and inspiration from each other, as well as the occasional very practical pieces of advice. Claire Edwardes' impressive performance flair, combined with her remarkable preparedness to step into the unknown, was a vital part of this exercise.

Counterpoint was a leap of faith for all the artists, and I thank them for their courage and willingness to look beyond the natural fences of their own artform to see what strange invention might lie on the other side, waiting to be discovered.

Carl Vine AO

FRAGMENTS

For Mariposa

scrape surface with RH fingers

L.H. - with Bass Drum beater

Mickey Mouse

scrape alternating between fingers and thumb (f, 4), like guitar solo

slap with whole hand!

slap with whole hand!

Melody Eötvös

Chaplet

fragments towards a lament
(*non troppo affectuoso*)

a shroud of dew
a feather chaplet
a cleansing pall of ants
a stone and two true sticks
(absolution in an empty pocket)

garments hang empty and the sky glows
(it is not possible to know this)

wings move in unison
blood thickens in the empty night

when did the birds go?

(fanned by wings of waking fright
courage dismounts the staircase)

here is a wreath of fresh moult
warmer than a pocket
moist with tender inclination

a feather crown
a lizard awaiting plentitude
a piece of rope
eyes not green
not blue not blind

a rope to bind
silver and cotton

(when breath is slow life beats
a deep and muffled drum
hearts are cupped
with care for the moment
of syncopation)

within the prism time inverts
snake turns into night

all that remains

a silver rope
a feather lizard
time to bind . . .

Chaplet

Margaret West

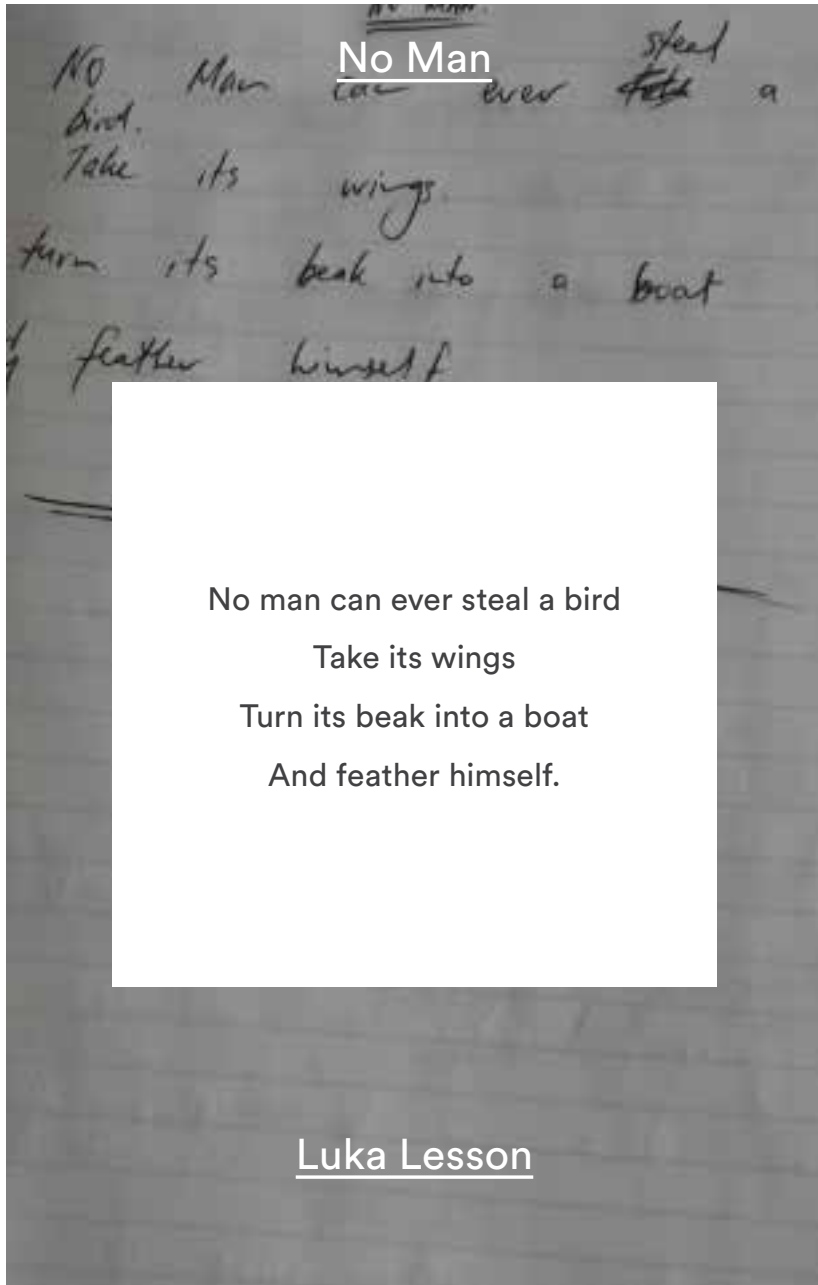


No Man

The musical score is presented on a page with a light gray background. It features a title "No Man" in a bold, black, sans-serif font at the top left. Below the title, the score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes a vocal quartet (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are written on staves with lyrics in Hungarian. The piano part is on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The second system continues the vocal and piano parts. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The overall layout is clean and professional, typical of a published musical score.

Melody Eötvös

No Man



No Man
No Man can ever steal a
bird.
Take its wings.
Turn its beak into a boat
And feather himself.

No man can ever steal a bird
Take its wings
Turn its beak into a boat
And feather himself.

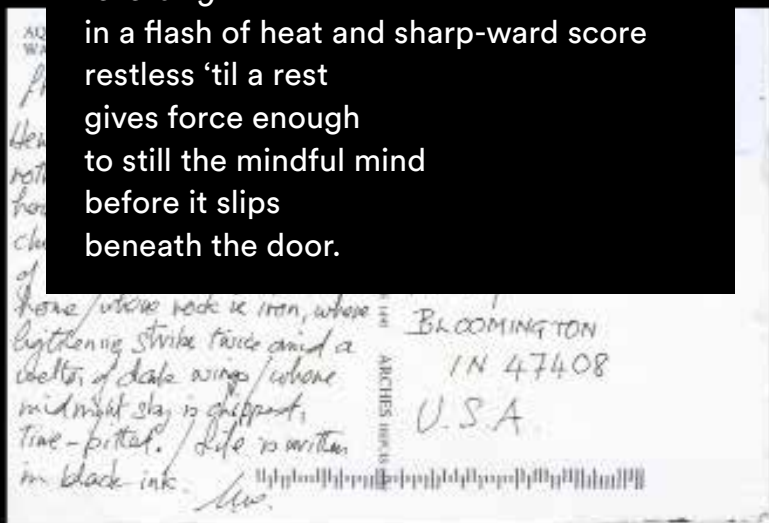
Luka Lesson

Tuesday Night, 10:36PM,
And I Was Tired



Here they come
along the parquet floor
little skitterings of light
caught in the fast glass
of the fall - each one
a cross-cut of raw nerve
reverbing

in a flash of heat and sharp-ward score
restless 'til a rest
gives force enough
to still the mindful mind
before it slips
beneath the door.



Jessica L. Wilkinson

Claire Edwardes

Claire Edwardes is an internationally renowned award-winning percussionist. She graduated as Student of the Year from the Sydney Conservatorium (where she now teaches) and then went on to win the coveted Symphony Australia Young Performers Award in 1999.

Claire subsequently relocated to the Netherlands to undertake a Master's Degree at the Rotterdam and Amsterdam Conservatories. Resident there for seven years, she was the recipient of many international awards and prizes including first place at the Tromp Percussion Competition (2000) and Llangollen International Instrumentalist (2001). Claire was the 2005 MCA/Freedman Fellow and she is a two-time winner (2007/2012) of the AMC/APRA Art Music Award for Excellence for her contribution to Australian Music.

Claire is currently undertaking an Australia Council Music Fellowship, an opportunity that has allowed her to develop various solo projects and collaborations with guitarist Karin Schaupp as well as composers Alex Pozniak, Marcus Whale and Drew Crawford.

Claire has performed concertos with all of the Australian orchestras and numerous European orchestras in venues such as the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam) and Queen Elizabeth Hall (London). In her role as co-artistic director of Ensemble Offspring and as one of Australia's top percussion soloists, Claire is passionately committed to the advancement of innovative new music in Australia.

Luka Lesson

Luka is a Greek-Australian writer cut from a different cloth. With an original yet classic style Luka's work touches people from all walks of life.

A winner of Slams, including the Australian Poetry Slam final & Melbourne Poetry Festival final, and a song writer from way back, Luka spent 2012 touring writers' festivals and independent venues throughout Australia, Asia, Oceania and North America.

Luka Lesson is both a Hip-hop artist and performance poet and is one of those rare talents that can successfully traverse the complex landscape of both traditions.

His latest album 'Please Resist Me' is a powerful combination of the two: 17 tracks of love, social change, ancestral pathways and internal ruminations. His experience in working as a workshop facilitator with both hip-hop and poetry is almost unparalleled and includes university appearances in China, teaching students in The Bronx (USA), Indigenous programs in Australia and a residency at Melbourne's premier private secondary institution, Xavier College, in Melbourne.

Margaret West

Margaret is an artist, a writer and a poet. Melbourne born, she studied sculpture, print making, ceramics and gold and silver-smithing at RMIT.

She has also studied philosophy and music (piano, oboe, viola). In 1979 Margaret West moved to Sydney to take up a position at Sydney University College of the Arts where she taught until 1999. She has travelled and exhibited extensively in Australia and overseas and is represented in major national and international art collections. She has published several artist's books which develop a dialogue between text and image.

Her work is broadly informed by interests, which range through art, literature, music, philosophy, science and technology. The metaphoric potential of the everyday world and concern about political issues provide grist to her mill. Her art practice is polymorphic and idiosyncratic, moving between installation, object making, jewellery, drawing, and photography. Since 2000 she has lived at Blackheath in the Upper Blue Mountains of New South Wales, where she delights in the clear air and the solitude.

Jessica L. Wilkinson

Jessica L. Wilkinson's first book of poetry marionette: *A Biography of Miss Marion Davies* was published by Vagabond Press in 2012 and shortlisted for the 2014 Kenneth Slessor Prize.

Jessica's second book, *Suite for Percy Grainger: a biography*, is forthcoming in November 2014. She is the founding editor of RABBIT: a journal for nonfiction poetry. In 2014, Jessica won the Peter Porter Poetry Prize and was also the recipient of a Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship, which she will use to research her third poetic biography, *Music Made Visible*, on the life and choreography of George Balanchine.

Jessica has collaborated on two performance installations with musician/composer Simon Charles to bring both marionette and *Suite for Percy Grainger* to the stage. These works were variously performed at ANAM-quartetthaus, Montsalvat and the Grainger Museum in Melbourne. Jessica holds a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Melbourne, Australia, and is Senior Lecturer in Creative and Professional Writing at RMIT University, Melbourne.

Melody Eötvös

Melody Eötvös (1984) is an Australian composer resident in Bloomington, Indiana, whose work draws on both multi-media and traditional instrumental contexts, as well substantial extra-musical references to a broad range of philosophical topics and late 19th-century literature.

She has studied with a variety of composers across the globe, including Gerardo Diríé (Australia), Simon Bainbridge (UK), and Claude Baker (USA). She has also studied electronic music with Jeffrey Hass, John Gibson, and Alicyn Warren. Melody has been the recipient of various awards including the 3MBS National Composers Award (Australia 2009), an APRA PDA (Australia 2009), and the Soundstream National Composer Award (2012). She has had her music performed by ensembles such as the London Sinfonietta, BBC Singers, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, and the Australian String Quartet, and has participated in several electronic music festivals including SEAMUS 2011 (US), APMC 2012 (Australia), and ICMC 2011 (New Zealand).

Current projects include an Australia Council Grant to compose a new piano sonata for Bernadette Harvey (Sydney). This year Melody was selected for the American Composers Orchestra Underwood New Music Readings 2014; as a composer fellow for the Intimacy of Creativity 2014, Hong Kong; and was awarded a Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation Orchestral Commission administered by the League of American Orchestras and the EarShot Foundation.

Melody holds a Doctor of Music (2014) from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music USA, and a Master of Music (2008) from the Royal Academy of Music, London UK.



Counterpoint is a collaboration between Musica Viva Australia and The Red Room Company. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.