

The Man from Olympus

Auckland Chamber Orchestra
Peter Scholes Musical Director
John Psathas composer
Read Gainsford piano

Sunday September 28 2008
Concert Chamber
Auckland Town Hall

Tonight we present a concert of the music of John Psathas. His talent, skill and creativity have earned him remarkable international success with soloists and orchestras performing his work to critical acclaim. This concert continues the composer portrait series which champions new music with a special emphasis on New Zealand music.

For an insight into the rich and varied world of NZ music please visit the Centre for New Zealand Music

<http://sounz.org.nz/>



Peter Scholes
Musical Director
Auckland Chamber Orchestra

Tonight's programme at a glance

All music by John Psathas

Fragment

Ancient Greek Songs

Island Songs

Interval

Abhisheka

Three Psalms

Future concerts with the Auckland Chamber Orchestra

Beethoven Chamber Music

Sunday 19 October 5pm

Peter Scholes clarinet, Martin Lee oboe, Carl Wells horn, Ben Hoadley bassoon, Dianna Cochrane violin, Owen Gordon viola, David Garner cello, Daniel Stabler bass, Sarah Watkins piano

Ludwig van Beethoven	Sextet for winds
Ludwig van Beethoven	Quintet for piano and winds
Ludwig van Beethoven	Septet



Beethoven 2

Sunday 23 November 5pm

Michael Houstoun piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Overture to the Marriage of Figaro
Ludwig van Beethoven	Piano Concerto no. 2
Arvo Pärt	Fratres for Wind Octet and percussion
Franz Joseph Haydn	Symphony no. 104, (London)





Peter Scholes

Musical Director

Peter Scholes pursues the dual career of performing (both as a conductor and a clarinetist), and composing. He was Founder and is currently Musical Director of the Auckland Chamber Orchestra. He studied conducting with Juan Matteucci and has conducted all the professional New Zealand Orchestras as well as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Prague Symphony Orchestra.

He was composer and conductor for the NZ feature films "Desperate Remedies" by Peter Wells and Stuart Main and the short film "Hinekaro goes on a Picnic and Blows Up Another Obelisk" by Christine Parker based on the story by Keri Hulme. He also conducted the soundtrack to "Heavenly Creatures". He composed the score to "Memory and Desire" by Niki Caro based on the story by Peter Wells and recorded by the NZSO. His recent film scores include "50 Ways of Saying Fabulous" directed by Stewart Main and "The Tattooist" by Peter Berger.

He has had works commissioned by the New

Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Saint Matthew's Chamber Orchestra, CadeNZa, Chamber Music New Zealand, the Auckland Wind Quintet, Patrick Power, Gareth Farr, Amanda Hollins and Richard Mapp and for Radio New Zealand drama productions. His composition "Islands II" represented New Zealand in the 1993 UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers.

His composition "Requiem Concerto", premiered by the ACO in 2007, was a finalist in the 2008 SOUNZ Contemporary Award. He was also a finalist in the 2008 Qantas Film and Television Awards for his original music in the film "The Tattooist"

His specialist instrument is the clarinet which he studied with George Hopkins, Ken Wilson at Auckland University and with Alan Hacker and Thea King in the UK. His interpretations received international acclaim when he was prize winner in the 1987 International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition held in Rotterdam.

www.peterscholes.com



John Psathas

Composer

Ioannis (John) Psathas was born in Wellington New Zealand July 3rd 1966. His father (Emmanuel Psathas, from Nea Michaniona) and mother (Anastasia Psathas, from Thessaloniki) emigrated to New Zealand in 1960 (both sides of John's ancestors descend from Anatoliki Thrace).

The Psathas family entered the restaurant business and John grew up in a small New Zealand town, Taumaranui. He then went to college in the city of Napier – where he developed a strong interest in music. He left college early to study piano and composition at Victoria University of Wellington. In 1988 John's parents and sister (Tania) returned to Greece permanently. His parents live in Nea Michaniona. After completing his Master's degree, John studied and worked for 2 years in the USA and in Belgium. Before returning to New Zealand in 1994 where he has lectured at Victoria University's School of Music (now the New Zealand School of Music) ever since. He recently achieved the status of Associated Professor.

John Psathas, is now one of New Zealand's most internationally acclaimed composers.

With performances in venues from Windsor Castle to Kalamazoo, Jakarta to Bermuda, Japan to Alaska, and Hong Kong to Tel Aviv, he has established and maintains an international reputation. His music is heard worldwide and is regularly performed throughout Europe, America, Australasia, and Asia.

John Psathas' music has been performed by percussion superstar Evelyn Glennie, 11 time Grammy winner Michael Brecker, Joshua Redman, Pedro Carneiro, Michael Houstoun, Federico Mondelci, Orchestre Sinfonia Dell'Emilia-Romagna 'Toscanini', the Halle Orchestra, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Netherlands Blazers Ensemble, the New Juilliard Ensemble and many other performers, ensembles and orchestras.

Psathas has written extensively for Evelyn Glennie, who, in her debut in the prestigious New York Great Performer's Series devoted nearly half her program to his work. Early success came with *Matre's Dance* in 1991, a maximum-energy duet for percussion and piano that has since made Psathas' name internationally through having been taken up and championed by Glennie. This work and *Drum Dances* have become standard repertoire for percussionists throughout the

world. John's relationship with Evelyn Glennie has been a particularly fruitful one for them both. Her repertoire includes *Matre's Dance*, *Drum Dances*, *Spike*, *Happy Tachyons* and the double concerto for piano and percussion, *View from Olympus*. She has recorded *Matre's Dance* on her CDs *Drumming* and *Greatest Hits* (BMG).

Michael Brecker and the Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Emilia-Romagna 'Toscanini' premiered his saxophone concerto *Omnifenix*, in 2000 in Bologna at a large outdoor concert and broadcast throughout Europe. It was this performance which first drew Psathas' name to international attention. Critics described this piece as a true hybrid of jazz and western art music. In its successful combination of these two disparate elements, the concerto wowed the 6000-strong audience and paved the way for further international performances of Psathas' larger concert works.

Notable amongst these was the programming of the Percussion Concerto (for four soloists and orchestra) at the 2001 'Klangspuren' Festival in Schwaz, Austria. In 2002, *View from Olympus* was given its premiere during the Manchester Commonwealth Games by Evelyn Glennie and Philip Smith with the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder at the Royal Gala finale concert of the 'Pulse' International Festival of Rhythm.

A sold-out retrospective concert of Psathas' chamber music was given in the 2000 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. The 2002 International Festival also featured a major new commission, *Psyzygysm*, a concerto for mallet percussion and chamber ensemble which featured the young Portuguese virtuoso percussionist Pedro Carneiro as star soloist – this work received its European premiere in Lisbon in 2006.

Notable performances of 2004 included the premiere season of *Zeibekiko*, a major commission from the Nederlands Blazers Ensemble (NBE), which invited him to create an entire programme based around the theme of 2500 years of Greek Music. This collaborative work was performed by the NBE throughout Holland and at the Bath Festival (UK). The Piano Concerto (for solo piano, percussion, harp and

strings), commissioned by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra was premiered at concerts throughout New Zealand in April 2004 by US pianist Stephen Gosling with the NZSO under James Judd.

To date, his most notable accomplishment in the field of music has been to write much of the ceremonial music for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Athens 2004 Olympics Games.

2006 saw the release of a cd/dvd project : *View From Olympus*. This is NZ's most ambitious orchestral recording project ever and has been released to wide critical acclaim. *View From Olympus* went straight to the top of the Classical Music Charts in New Zealand and remained there for five months.

Closer to home, his music opened the doors of Te Papa in 1998, and in 1997 his percussion concerto was premiered by Glennie and the NZSO. He has written for the NZSO and the Auckland Philharmonia, pianists Michael Houstoun, Deidre Irons, David Guerin, Dan Poynton, as well as the NZ Trio, the NZ String Quartet, the Kandinsky Ensemble and Saxcess.

But it is the sheer power of his music that, despite its complexity, engages a wide range of listeners - both in and out of the concert hall. This is marking him out as a potent artistic force. Mentor and now colleague, Jack Body has said: "Many of his compositions have an energy and drive more extreme than any other music I know - it sweeps one up on a frantic roller-coaster ride and carries one to that height of exhilaration." His music is energetic and vibrant, with a passionate exuberance that is a product of his Greek heritage. In his music one can hear both the Western classical tradition as well as the kinetic enthusiasm found in jazz and Greek folk music. His compositional style is difficult to define as each piece is unique and creates its own musical language, but regardless of the medium, whether it's jazz quintet or string quartet, there is a constant intensity and immediacy in his music.

www.johnpsathas.com



Read Gainsford

piano

Read Gainsford is currently Associate Professor of piano at Florida State University. He began full-time music study with top piano teachers, Janetta MacStay and Bryan Sayer, before receiving a grant from the Woolf Fisher Trust and the top prize in the Television New Zealand Young Musician of the Year. Gainsford then relocated to London, where he studied privately with Brigitte Wild, a protégée of Claudio Arrau, before winning a place in the Advanced Solo Studies course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he studied with Joan Havill, graduating with the prestigious Concert Recital Diploma (premier prix).

Read Gainsford has performed widely in the USA, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa as solo recitalist, concerto soloist and chamber musician. He has made successful solo debuts at the Wigmore Hall and Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, and has performed in many other venues, including the John F. Kennedy Center, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Barbican Centre, Fairfield Halls, Birmingham Town Hall and St-Martin-in-the-Fields. He has recorded for the Amoris label, BBC Radio Three, Radio

New Zealand's Concert Programme, and has broadcast on national television in New Zealand, the UK and Yugoslavia.

Gainsford moved to the United States in 1992 to enter the doctoral program at Indiana University, where he worked with Karen Shaw and Leonard Hokanson. Since that time he has been guest artist for the American Music Teachers Association and has also given numerous recitals, concerto performances and master-classes. He has appeared at the Gilmore Keyboard Festival and the Music Festival of the Hamptons, spent several summers at the Heifetz International Music Institute, is a member of the contemporary music group Ensemble X, and the Garth Newel Chamber Players. Gainsford has also enjoyed working with such musicians as Jacques Zoon, William Vermuelen, Roberto Diaz, Eddie vanOosthuysen and Luis Rossi. Formerly on the faculty of Ithaca College, where he received the college-wide Excellence in Teaching Award in 2004, Gainsford began as Associate Professor of Piano at Florida State University in 2005.

John Psathas

Fragment

3 min

Read Gainsford piano
Tim Borton vibraphone

This short work is an adaptation of a piano duet originally composed to commemorate the occasion of the retirement of the composer's first piano teacher, Peter Williams.

At the time of its composition, Psathas was engaged in writing his double concerto for percussion, piano and orchestra, *View from Olympus*, and in mood and musical material, *Fragment* is related to the second movement of that work (in fact, it forms an optional encore to the concerto).

John Psathas

Four Ancient Greek Songs

8 min

Iain Tetley and Yvette Audain voices
Adrianna Lis flute, Alison Jepson cor anglais, Andrew Uren clarinet
Matthew Verrill and Jim Watkinson trumpets
Shane Currey & Tim Borton percussion

Tecmessa's Lament

Song of Seikilos

First Pythian Ode

Hymn to the Muse (P.T.O for text and translation)

Four Ancient Greek Songs were originally part of *Zeibekiko*, conceived as a programme celebrating the heritage of Greek music from antiquity and the present day. *Zeibekiko* includes music composed by Manos Achalinotopoulos, Christos Hatzis, Vagelis Karypis and John Psathas.

Four Ancient Greek Songs

Tecmessa's Lament

Anon., realised by the Atrium Musicae de Madrid
transcribed and arranged by John Psathas

Aphtophonoi cheri kai phasganon.
Telamoniada to son A-i-ian
di' Odyssea ton alitron, ho
helkesin ho pothoumenos
Haima kata chthonos apo

With suicidal hand and ... your sword,
Ajax, son of Telamon...
because of Odysseus, the villain...
wounds, he whom we miss...
Blood on the ground...

Song of Seikilos

Anon., realised by the Atrium Musicae de Madrid
transcribed and arranged by John Psathas

Hoson zês, phainou;
meden holos sy lypoû.
Pros oligon esti tozzen:
to telos ho cronos apaiteî.

While you're alive, shine, man,
Don't be the least bit blue.
Life's for a little span;
Time demands its due.

First Pythian Ode

Pindar (text)/ A.Kircher (music), realised by Petros Tobouris
transcribed and arranged by John Psathas

Hrisea formix, Appollonos kaiioplokamon sindikon Moisan kteanon.
Tas akouei men vaseis, aglaias arha,
Pethontai d'aoidoi samasin.
Agisihoron opotan prooimion
Amvolas teuhes exelizomena.
Kai ton aihmatan keraunon svenies.

Lyre of gold, Apollo's and the violet-wreathed Muse's,
who hear you when the festival begins;
the singers and the dancers always follow you
when on your trembling strings you sound
the prelude to mark the beginning of the chorus;
you even quench the wounding thunderbolt's flame.

Hymn to the Muse

Mesomedes of Crete, realised by Petros Tabouris
transcribed and arranged by John Psathas

Aeide Moûsa moi phile,
molpês d'emes katarchou;
aure desôn ap'alseon
emas phrenas doneiton.

Sing for me, dear muse,
begin my tuneful strain;
a breeze blow from your groves
to stir my listless brain.

Kalliopeia sopha,
Mou-sôn prokathageti terpnôn,
kai sophe mystodota,
Latoûs gone, Delie Paian,
eumeneîs pareste moi.

Skilful Calliope,
leader of the delightful Muses
and skilful instructor,
son of Leto, Delian Paian,
favour and be with me.

John Psathas

Island Songs

13 min

Peter Scholes clarinet, James Tennant cello, Katherine Austin piano

I

II

III

The music of *Island Songs* is inspired by the composer's Greek origins, and he states that the three movements are 'reactions' to Greek dances rather than simulations of originals. The first movement draws on the styles of a number of different dances and responds to the energy latent within them, the second captures the intensely focused emotional strength of the slow *zeibekiko*, and the third is in the style of the *syrtos*, a lively dance whose energy is unfailingly infectious.

Interval

John Psathas

Abhisheka (for string orchestra)

8:45 mins

The composer writes: "Drafted immediately after reading a book by the Buddhist guru Chögyam Trungpa, *Abhisheka* was my first-ever attempt at writing music with space in it. Until this piece, practically everything I had written was ultra-caffeinated, fast, full of notes, and murder on performers. But having been (albeit temporarily) inspired by the great truths and peace in Trungpa's writing, I found myself navigating slower passages of musical time, as well as exploring the microcosm of inner space between the even intervals of our chromatic tuning system."

From *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* by Chögyam Trungpa:

The word in Sanskrit equivalent to 'initiation' is *abhisheka*, which means 'anointment' or 'to sprinkle or pour'. And if there is pouring, there must be a vessel into which the pouring can fall. So at last we might really give up all these complications and just allow some space, just give in. This is the moment when *abhisheka*—sprinkling and pouring—really takes place, because we are open and are really giving up the whole attempt to do anything, giving up all the busyness and overcrowding. Finally we have been forced to really stop properly, which is quite a rare occurrence for us.

From a review of the work:

"This is a mostly slow and reflective piece, beautiful as well as profound. Extensive use of quarter-tones gives it an unusual sound.... Against a background of hushed chords, the violins and cello each have an extended solo passage. After a more energetic and unexpectedly intense climax, the viola has its turn. Psathas shows a sure hand in the marriage of material to form and the careful pacing of the work."

Oliver Hancock, *Music in New Zealand, Summer 1998-1999*

John Psathas

Three Psalms (2003)

Solo Piano, Percussion, Harp and String Orchestra

23 mins

The composer writes: "This work was commissioned by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra at the instigation of Michael Houston (to whom it is dedicated). Michael's playing inspired me throughout its composition, and his enthusiasm for the work as it grew boosted the confidence that can be sensed in the music."

I Chords of Power - The opening of this movement introduces a simple kind of melodic motion which evolves throughout the concerto. It is this simple idea which 'tells the story' of the concerto. In the first movement there is a tendency for the melody to fall by step; in the second movement it vacillates, is often uncertain and sometimes even becomes lost. By the third movement, all of the motion is upward by step—eventually ecstatically so.

II Inferno - The second movement was inspired by the haunting and deeply disturbing images in James Nachtwey's photographic elegy, Inferno. Nachtwey travels to the world's most troubled places, looks at the grimmest sights to be seen there and photographs them in such a way as to thrust them into the view of the world. It seems impossible to go through Nachtwey's book in one sitting—to do so gives the feeling that one's own soul is irretrievably dissipating.

Musically, energy is constantly atrophying in this movement, yielding to despair. It requires the positive energy of the entire final movement to pull one out of the pit.

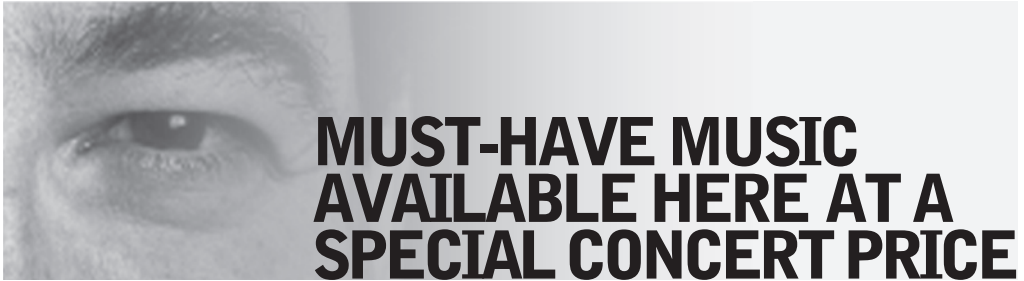
III Sergei: Book 3, Chapter 1 - As the finale to the work evolves it becomes a celebration of one of the most ebullient passages in piano concerto literature; the initial allegro passage in the first movement of Prokofiev's third concerto. This material has inspired me for the entire course of my musical life to date, and I have always wished that it lasted longer and went further. As I composed the final movement of my concerto, there developed an irresistible gravity which drew together the energy in Prokofiev's concerto and that in my own.

The VIEW FROM OLYMPUS album suggests that John Psathas is one of the most exciting composers working anywhere today. This is vital, wholly original, instantly appealing, obviously important music.

It really is a stunningly fine album -- unarguably great music, thrillingly played, recorded and packaged.

Jim Svejda KUSC FM (USA)

JOHN PSATHAS



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