

MEMENTO MORI COMPOSITIONS

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ARTIST INFORMATION

James Bradbury

James Bradbury is an Australian composer currently studying under Chris Tonkin and James Ledger at the University of Western Australia. His music demonstrates a variety of influences, drawing on experiences from composing and performing with live bands, in various orchestras and from solo electro-acoustic projects. His most recent piece, *Entropy on a Clock* was performed by the West Australian Symphony Orchestra's Chamber Orchestra at ABC Studios 620 earlier in 2014. His future interests are in working with performers, visual artists and other composers from a wide range of backgrounds to collaborate and create engaging and exciting art.

Commission

Memento Mori is an idea that deals with every human's mortality and how we personally come to terms with it. Anamorphosis reflects on this concept, emulating the still, delicate and intimate nature of the topic and drawing on the cyclical process of life from birth to death. These ideas are echoed and fused into the material that passes between Clarinet and Flute. The motif's and gestures build from each other and slowly gain momentum, leaving behind imitations and trails that link the present to the past form. As the lines of music travel towards their peaks they disperse through air tones and breathe sounds, resulting in a texture that shifts and alters focus between multiple layers of sound.

Michael Grebla

Michael is in the final year of a bachelor of Music Composition(Hons.) and bachelor of Mechanical Engineering (with interests in acoustics and vibrations). He studies composition under Christopher Tonkin and James Ledger and was the WA Wagner Society's Bayreuth Scholar (2011), the St George's College's JM Wolff Music Scholar (2011-2013), the Knight family music scholar and Victorian Georgian Travel Bursary recipient (2014). Michael has received commissions from the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research, St George's College, WA Wagner Society and others. In 2014 he was appointed 'Director of Music' at St George's College overseeing the music program which he, with the College's support, established in 2013. Michael's achievements were recognised by Convocation with the University's prestigious 2014 Bryant-Stokes Matilda Award for Cultural Excellence.

Commission

Cheyne-Stokes is a very literal representation of Cheyne-Stokes respiration, a type of breathing exhibited by humans and animals close to death. The Cheyne-Stokes respiration cycle is characterised by progressively deeper and faster breathing, followed by a gradual decrease that results in a stop in breathing for an extended period of time. This work is a representation of an encounter with an injured duck on the UWA campus. On route to the vet, the duck would remain still and breathless for increasingly extended periods of time, and it was never clear if the duck was dead or alive until finally it passed away, stirring a chilling realisation in the composer that this was not the first time he'd witnessed Cheyne-Stokes respiration.



Mark Holdsworth

Mark Holdsworth is an Australian composer, currently completing his music degree at the University of Western Australia. He has received extensive tutelage under both James Ledger and Dr. Christopher Tonkin. Holdsworth's works have been premiered by some of Australia's most prestigious artists and ensembles. In 2010, he was selected for the National Composers Forum (Adelaide) where he received tutelage under composer Carl Vine. The event culminated in the premiere of his Frida Kahlo Portraits by the Australian String Quartet. Earlier this year (2014), he was selected for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra's Young and Emerging Artists: Composition Project, culminating in the premiere of his Chamber Symphony: A Broken Vow. Most recently, Holdsworth has been selected as one of the 2014 Ransom Prize finalists for his symphonic poem Odyssey.

Commission

Primrose for string trio explores the notion of mortality through the allegory of a flower. The primrose is colloquially referred to as the 'common primrose', thus it represents for me, a common earthly being. I have attempted to isolate and frame this relatively ordinary image, in order to express its individual beauty, which is somewhat lost when viewed in abundance. The flower is an iconic symbol of superficiality. Its sole purpose is to be beautiful for its brief existence. Primrose also draws influence from Hans Memling's Triptych of Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation. There are loosely three characters within the piece that represent Humanity, Death and the Devil as depicted in Memling's Triptych. The work investigates the decomposition of beauty, represented here by the disintegration of tonality and lyricism through the interaction of the aforementioned "characters".

Drew Woolley

Drew Woolley is a composer from the Perth hills, currently undergoing his third and final year of Music Composition at UWA, and preparing for his graduation recital. Drew's latest works typically demonstrate his recent fascinations with text-sound relationships and the limitless formulae for their entwining, with this commonly resulting in blatantly 'absurd' and futile works. This attraction to untraceable, highly abstract process is also heard in his committedly firm approach to exploring vastly mundane concepts, with currently progressing works incorporating often uncomfortably awkward and distasteful elements. Drew is also a devoted composer of solo vocal music and progressive post-punk music.

Commission

Joe Christmas is a direct, artistic response to the central character of William Faulkner's novel, 'Light in August'. The bleak and ultimately tragic story of such a questionable and dismal figure aligns itself superbly with the conceptual undertone of 'Momento Mori'. Within the piece are sparse, fragile reflections on the characters sporadic life, represented quite meticulously in timbral decisions such as the use of a harmonica which, despite its placement with bass clarinet and piano, has strong contextual ties with America's Deep South. The intensely sedate structure of the piece allows for the widely spaced, yet opaquely dissonant chromaticism to sustain itself with an almost imperceivable repetition. This makes for a markedly spacious and foreboding work, expressing the futile fragility within the particularly absurd model that is Joe Christmas.





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In the midst of life we are in death. Memento Mori artworks prompt us to ponder on the emptiness and transience of earthly pleasures and reassess our moral progress as we move toward the certainty of death. As part of the exhibition Memento Mori at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery at the University of Western Australia, we commissioned Western Australian artists, composers and poets to create works for the exhibition that exhort the audience to contemplate their own mortality.

This CD contains the work of the four University of Western Australia students from the School of Music who undertook this challenge under the guidance of Assistant Professor Ashley Smith. The works were performed by students at UWA and recorded in the Callaway Auditorium by Sound Recordist Michael Grebla on 7 October 2014

TRACK LIST

1. James Bradbury, *Anamorphosis*, 2014, bass clarinet and flute, Ashley Smith: Bass Clarinet, Jonty Coy: flute, 3 mins
2. Michael Grebla, *Cheyne-Stokes*, 2014, solo bass clarinet, Ashley Smith: bass clarinet, 4 mins
3. Mark Holdsworth, *Primrose*, 2014, string trio, Jasmin Parkinson-Stewart: violin, Eunise Cheng: viola, Elizabeth Moss: cello, 5 mins
4. Drew Woolley, *Joe Christmas*, 2014, piano/harmonica and bass clarinet, Drew Woolley: piano, harmonica, Ashley Smith: bass clarinet, 4 mins

Cover image: Kate McMillan, *Paradise Falls #2*, 2011-12, HD digital film, 3:28 mins.
University of Western Australia Art Collection, University Senate Grant, 2012


Inside image: Andrew Nicholls, *Quod fuimus, estis; quod sumus, vos eritis*, 2014, ink and pencil on paper, 75 x 1300 cm.
Courtesy of the Artist



CULTURAL PRECINCT

DR HAROLD SCHENBERG ART CENTRE
LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY
OPEN TUES - SAT 11AM - 5PM

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA, Australia 6009
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The CD cover art features a circular frame containing a photograph of a small white boat with two people on a dark, choppy sea. The sky is a deep, dark blue with some lighter, wispy clouds, suggesting a twilight or dusk setting. In the background, there are dark, rocky islands or headlands. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

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2. Michael Grebla, *Cheyne-Stokes*, 4 mins
3. Mark Holdsworth, *Primrose*, 5 mins
4. Drew Woolley, *Joe Christmas*, 4 mins