

# programme

**Colin McPhee:** **Balinese Ceremonial Music**  
(1900-1964)  
I *Pemoengkah*  
II *Gambangan*  
III *Taboeh Teloe*

**Maurice Ravel:** **Entre Cloches (1895-97)**  
(1875-1937) (from *Sites Auriculaires*)

**Alexina Louie:** **The Ringing Earth**  
(b.1949) **Homage**  
(from *Afterimages*, 1981)

**Marcel Bergmann:** **Incessant Bells**  
(b.1965) (Canadian premiere)

**Colin McPhee:** **Music for Two Pianos**  
I *Lagoe Tjondong*  
II *Rebong*  
III *Gabor Gong*  
courtesy of Colin McPhee Collection, UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive,  
John Vallier, archivist; edited by Marcel and Elizabeth Bergmann

## Intermission

**Sundanese, anon.:** **Arang Arang**  
arranged by Andrew Timar

**John Wyre:** **Islands of Silence (1994)**  
(1941-2006) for gamelan with steel drum,  
featuring Graham Hargrove

**Lou Harrison:** **Ibu Trish (1992)**  
(1917-2003)

**Henry Kucharzyk:** **Aria**  
(b.1953) for Sundanese Gamelan with Piano 4-hands

**Burhan Sukarma:** **Rengga Renggi (2000),**  
arranged by Bill Parsons and Blair Mackay

## Programme Notes

It was in 1931 that the Montreal-born composer and ethnomusicologist **Colin McPhee** first heard recordings of some of then virtually unknown music of the gamelan of Bali, ensembles of tuned gongs, gong chimes, metallophones, cymbals, and drums. Fascinated by the new possibilities of timbre and percussive colors, musical form and instrumental technique, McPhee went to Indonesia; and what began as an exploratory trip became an extended period of residence in Bali until 1939. McPhee made an extensive survey of the many different types of ensembles throughout the island; his house became a center of musical activity; he encouraged and subsidized children's training in music and dance as well as the maintaining of the older musical traditions. McPhee returned to the U.S. and resided in New York in the 1940s, where he was among the talented, young generation of composers that included Benjamin Britten, Aaron Copland and Henry Cowell.

Colin McPhee's transcriptions of Balinese music are completely different and original contributions to the repertoire for two pianos. Playing and performing this music requires a different kind of mind-set and concentration than needed for the traditional Western works. The constant flow and quasi-minimalist variations of the patterns, as well as the pentatonic tonal scheme, create a meditative and relaxed state that remains very focused. Within these parameters, there is a remarkable variety of different moods and atmospheres. They range from gentle

and lyrical sections evoking a tranquil and serene atmosphere to energetic and powerful sonorities with long, sustained bass notes and clashing, sometimes almost jazzy sounding chords. The piano duo material features two sections of music created by Colin McPhee, acting as a kind of overall thematic "bracket" for the first half. Between these the Bergmanns have programmed three other pieces:

**Maurice Ravel's** *Entre Cloches* (Among Bells) explores the possibility of the pianos producing bell-like sonorities, an exploration many of his fellow composers also undertook (e.g. Liszt, Rachmaninov, Messiaen, Hindemith). The insistent and sustained clangorous sounds which bells are able to produce seem to be a universally unifying characteristic. And so, despite certain stylistic differences of culture and musical language, it seems undeniable that there is a similarity in the clangorous effects and impressions.

*The Ringing Earth* and *Homage* stem from a set of three pieces by **Alexina Louie** titled *Afterimages*. *The Ringing Earth* shows various influences and elements of Indonesian music, like pentatonic scale material and some typical motives and patterns. During the second half of the piece, those patterns gain extra momentum with the help of fast, ascending scales in both instruments - until the scales prevail in a brilliant and lively climax before returning to the initial, more contemplative atmosphere. *Homage* serves as a kind of epilogue to the previous material - serene and melancholic at once, it is a farewell with a quote of one of Chopin's most

famous melodies, emerging from the tranquil atmosphere.

**Marcel Bermann's** *Incessant Bells* reflects various influences as well – each of the three main sections features a different kind of pentatonic scale as a melodic and/or harmonic source material. The opening section features minimalist, complementing patterns in both instruments, until the initial clarity gets more and more diffused through sustained bell-like sounds. The *ostinato*-patterns from the beginning fade away and are replaced by a single note, which in its insistence provides the pulse all the way through the calmer middle section. Slowly and softly, a different kind of pattern emerges and creates more and more interwoven textures in both instruments. Speed and dynamics build gradually towards the end of the piece with various carillon-like bells.

Whereas the gamelan music that inspired McPhee was from Bali, the degung style gamelan played by Evergreen Club originates from the city of Bandung in the Sundanese region of west Java, which has its own language and music. It uses a characteristic "pelog" scale consisting of five notes. The Sunda tradition is somewhat more lyrical and song oriented, performed by ensembles of more intimate size, akin to chamber music in many ways. Arang Arang is traditional **Sundanese** piece, arranged here by Andrew Timar.

**John Wyre** was an inspirational figure for the members of the Evergreen Club, and indeed for percussionists around the world. John

was one of the founding members of NEXUS, which began in 1971 as an improvisational percussion ensemble and over the years has established itself as one of the most innovative chamber ensembles in the world. John resigned from the ensemble in October 2002 after thirty-one years to devote more time to composing. The Evergreen Club honours Wyre's legacy with a performance of his 1994 work *Islands of Silence*, which expands the gamelan beyond its traditional instrumentation through the inclusion of a Steel Pan.

**Lou Harrison** was a pioneer in the use of alternate tunings, world music influences, and new instruments. In 1961, he was invited to a conference in Tokyo, which proved a leaping-off point for extensive studies of Asian music, first in Seoul, then in Taiwan. In 1975, Harrison met Pak Cokro, one of the great masters of the Javanese gamelan orchestra who only instructed him in the performance and theory of gamelan music, and also encouraged him to compose for the ensemble. Over the next ten years, Harrison would produce a remarkable body of nearly 50 pieces for gamelan, often in combinations with Western instruments. *Ibu Trish* for gamelan degung was premiered by Evergreen Club in 1992. (*Ibu* is term of endearment, as in "Dear Patricia").

*Aria* is a work for Sundanese Gamelan with Piano 4-hands, specially commissioned for this concert by CBC from Canadian Composer **Henry Kucharzyk**. It is based on the aria that forms the first movement of the *Goldberg Variations*. Johann Sebastian Bach composed the

*Goldberg Variations* in 1741. Glenn Gould's first milestone recording of the work for Columbia was released in 1955. In that version he played the Aria at a metronome marking of 52 beats per minute (BPM). Twenty-six years later, in 1981 he re-recorded the work. In what proved to be his final recording he played the Aria at a metronome marking of 30 BPM.

"For some reason, being asked to write a short work for the Evergreen Club to play with the Bergmann Piano Duo in Glenn Gould Studio made me think of Bach," explains Kucharzyk. "It also suggested some facts about the two musical traditions, both complimentary and contradictory. The Variations use all 12 notes in every octave. The Pelog scale uses 5 notes, (in Western *sol-fa* syllables, roughly equivalent to *do' ti so fa mi do*) and a possible substitute for the third scale step called the Sorog. There are 8 members of the gamelan. There are 88 keys on a piano. *Aria* is a work that looks for the possibilities of musical exchange between these two traditions and finds them in a hybrid that drapes the rhythmic profile of Bach's work in the shimmering color of the Sundanese scale, while gradually accumulating the complete notes of the Western scale."

Composer Henry Kucharzyk has an international reputation in the fields of concert and electronic music. He has pursued an eclectic career as a composer, conductor, performer, broadcaster and record producer. He has created more than 50 major concert works and has been commissioned by many leading Canadian artists. His international

commissions include works for Studio Grame (Lyon, France) and Piano Circus (U.K.). And he has produced 37 discs of new music for the ARTIFACT MUSIC label which he created. As a conductor he has led orchestral performances of his own works at such notable venues as EXPO 86, the National Arts Centre (Ottawa), Place des Arts (Montreal) and the Wolftrap Festival. He has combined his interest in traditional forms such as the symphony and the string quartet with ground-breaking work in electronic and digital media, including performing on the classic Theremin and creating an electronic opera for the Banff festival that combined dance, video, music and digital audio. Added to this is an interest in world music that has led him to create new works for the Indonesian gamelan and the south Indian veena. Currently his projects include commissions for a new Wind Symphony; a piece for multiple digital keyboards; a collaboration with the choreographer Yvonne Ng; and orchestrations for an upcoming album with the Cowboy Junkies.

The Sunda-born suling virtuoso and master musician **Burhan Sukarma** continues the cross-pollination of Eastern and Western musical cultures. He has established many gamelan ensembles through his work at various universities on the west coast of the U.S. and his guest appearances the world over. He is the featured soloist in Evergreen's Artifact release *Solo* and the composer of this concert's closing work Rengaa Rengi.