

GAMBA WATCH

The Newsletter of The Marais Project & Sounds Baroque



Director: Jennifer Eriksson
C/O The Leading Partnership
Suite 105, 25-29 Berry St
North Sydney NSW 2060

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Phone/Fax: 02 9809 5185

Mob: 0412 459 155

Email: jennyeriksson@optusnet.com.au
www.maraisproject.com.au

Edited by Philip Pogson

Bass Viol Finishes the HSC!

The June 2011 edition of "Gamba Watch" introduced readers to young composer and gambist, Alice Chance. Alice completed the HSC in 2011 and achieved a "Band 6", the highest possible, in all her subjects including music. Alice's HSC examination piece for two viola da gambas "O Pastor Animarum" was featured in our October concert ably performed by Jenny Eriksson and Danny Yeadon.

Late last year Alice was notified that "O Pastor Animarum" had been selected for the Annual HSC "Encore" concert at the Sydney Opera House in March. "Encore" performers represent those students that the HSC examiners judged as the best in New South Wales. As far as we know this will be the first time the viola da gamba has featured at this event. Alice and Jenny will thus take to the Opera House stage at Encore for an encore performance of this lovely piece. Commencing 2012 Alice has been accepted into a dual degree at Sydney University studying composition at the Sydney Conservatorium combined with an initial focus on linguistics in the Faculty of Arts.



Jenny with Alice Chance

Mara! meets Marais CD launches our 2012 series

Back in 2008 three members of the acclaimed world music group "Mara!" – vocalist Mara Kiek, bassist Steve Elphick and plucked instrument virtuoso Llew Kiek – really did meet the music of Marais at a concert held at The Independent, North Sydney. At the same time, The Marais Project had the opportunity to perform some of Mara!'s core repertoire. ABCFM subsequently produced a studio version of the concert which was broadcast nationally several times with very positive feedback.

Mara Music and the Marais Project recently licensed this studio recording from the ABC and released it late in 2011.

The centrepiece of the CD is a remarkable re-working of a 13th century troubadour song cycle, "Cantigas de Amigo" which is attributed to Martin Codax. Mara Kiek is one of the world experts on this stunning piece of music and first recorded it back in 1987 in the UK. In some ways we think this is our best CD yet. Feedback we have received includes terms such as: "haunting", "stunningly beautiful", "expressive" and "great sound quality". The cover design by "Art2Design" is highly distinctive.

"Mara! meets Marais" will be launched on 29th April at the Sydney Conservatorium in a performance which will include a rare, complete rendition of the Cantigas by members of Mara! and The Marais Project.

2011 – Our Busiest Year

Last year proved to be the busiest on record for The Marais Project as well as one of significant achievement for Sounds Baroque.

The Marais Project's statistics for 2011 include:

- 13 concerts across the eastern seaboard
- 10 different concert programs
- The release of our third CD "Mara! meets Marais"
- Completion of a new studio recording for ABCFM
- Appearances at two Festivals
- The world premiere of new works for viola da gamba by Paul Stanhope, Dan Walker and Alice Chance
- The premiere of three new arrangements by Chris Keane (1) and Dan Walker (2)
- The commencement of a fourth CD
- Jenny Eriksson also taught at the National Viol School in Sydney over Easter

Sounds Baroque's year included:

- The official launch of "Hercules", a new baroque opera for children based on an opera by Lully but with additional music by Dan Walker, Chris Berensen and Jenny Eriksson
- A residency at "Bundanon", Arthur Boyd's gift to the nation, to workshop "Hercules"
- The presentation of some 80 concerts to infants and primary schools across New South Wales

All in all, The Marais Project and Sounds Baroque, ably powered by our talented and hard working musicians, gave almost 90 concerts in 2011. Many performances were for audiences who have heard little of either the instruments we perform on or the kind of music we play.



Members of Mara! and The Marais Project



Sydney Eisteddfod

Marais Project and Sounds Baroque Director Jenny Eriksson had a relatively rare engagement with more conventional classical chamber music when she was asked to join the adjudication panel for the "Sydney Eisteddfod Musica Viva Chamber Music Award" in August 2011.

One of the Eisteddfod's most lucrative events, the Sydney Eisteddfod Musica Viva Chamber Music Award, supported by The John Lamble Foundation, includes a prize of several thousand dollars for the winning ensemble. The 2011 award took place on the weekend of the 6th-7th August at Shore School, North Sydney. More than 20 groups contested the Heats on the Saturday, six of whom were selected for the Final on the Sunday by adjudicators Katherine Kemp and Jennifer Eriksson.

The Streeton Trio was a worthy winner of First Prize and the Enigma String Quartet was awarded Second Prize. Musica Viva, the John Lamble Foundation and the Sydney Eisteddfod are all to be congratulated for sponsoring such an important and encouraging prize for young musicians.

National arts curriculum launch at NIDA



On August 26, 2011, then Schools Minister Peter Garrett launched the latest version of the national school curriculum for the arts at NIDA, Sydney. Titled "Shape of the Australian curriculum: The Arts", Minister Garrett was preceded by speakers representing dance, drama and music. Jennifer Eriksson was honoured to be asked to represent

musicians and to relate something of her own music education experience at primary and high school.

Jennifer originally trained as a high school music teacher before completing post graduate studies in baroque music in Holland. She has maintained an active interest in music education.

Where is the Festival's fine music?

Sydney Festival is a great event which highlights our wonderful city and its many fine outdoor and conventional venues. The expansion of the Festival to Parramatta is to be applauded. But from a jazz and classical music perspective the Festival has thinned to the point of anaemia.

The Sydney Morning Herald's highly respected jazz critic John Shand went into print in early January this year to highlight the paucity of Festival opportunities for local improvised music artists. In response the Jazzgroove Association has launched its own mini jazz festival now in its third year. We attended one of the Festival's key

events at Venue 505 and can attest to the incredible strength and creativity of the local improvised music scene.

Classical music has even less representation in the 2012 Festival than in the past which is very worrying. Thirteen years of promoting concerts for The Marais Project has convinced us that Australian audiences enjoy and attend classical music in its many and varied forms. They will embrace rarely heard composers such as Marais alongside new Australian music. This fact seems unfortunately to escape some arts bureaucrats, festival leaders and policy makers.

Sounds Baroque rides again in 2012

Sounds Baroque once again takes to the road in 2012 bringing specially arranged and age-appropriate baroque music to infants and primary school students as part of the wonderful Musica Viva in Schools program. Jennifer Eriksson has participated in the Musica Viva in Schools initiative for more than 20 years and sees the program as a "jewel in the crown" of Australian music education, a world leader in its field. The wonderful thing about Musica Viva in Schools is that it brings great music and fantastic professional musicians to each school rather than the other way around. Over some 23 years Sounds Baroque has appeared in school halls, rural Schools of Arts and under shade shelters around the country. Visit the Sounds Baroque Facebook site for photographic proof!



Michael Warby & Narelle Evans in "Hercules" watched by an attentive audience of junior opera lovers!

The Ossenbrunner Twins

For gambists Daniel Yeadon and Jennifer Eriksson the opportunity to celebrate the Cologne-based maker of their instruments, Reinhard Ossenbrunner, at our October 2011 concert, was a labour of love. As Jennifer said on the day, it is mostly DEAD instrument makers that receive the plaudits. As readers may be aware, this was the first time that Jenny and Danny had played their "twin" instruments together in public and the result was very special. A review in Early Music News summed it up as follows:

"Twins usually look alike and sometimes behave alike, but they can also be as different as cat and dog. In this concert's union of the two violas da gamba made by Reinhard Ossenbrunner, we saw and heard an amazing pairing and co-operation. Daniel's instrument spoke with lovely resonance in its lower range, and Jennifer's revelled in the mid region, but the blend and clarity of tone could well have suggested a single instrument. I really wasn't expecting it to be quite this remarkable - a tribute to



Danny, Jenny and "The Twins"

Ossenbrunner's craft and also, the performers."

Reinhard now has a copy of the video and live recording of the event and has passed on his thanks to all concerned. The Marais Project greatly appreciated the support we received from the media and most importantly, the audience who attended.



Join us on Facebook

Sounds Baroque and The Marais Project both operate active Facebook sites with members from around Australia and the world. Log in to keep up with concerts, events and photos.

Artistic Director Sounds Baroque
and The Marais Project – Jennifer Eriksson
Joint Managing Directors
– Philip Pogson and Jennifer Eriksson