

Music to build bridges

A chamber music ensemble made up of VCA music graduates is building inter-cultural awareness.

PREVIEW

A chamber ensemble made up of University of Melbourne music graduates is promoting cross-cultural dialogue between Australia and the Asia-Pacific region through classical music.

Malaysian-born, University of Melbourne-trained pianist and Artistic Director of the Bridges Collective ensemble, Brenna Wee, describes the ensemble as one that provides a new mode of engagement with other cultures through music, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and awareness.

"Bridges Collective presents a variety of composers, instruments and techniques from around the world, allowing us to reflect on our own musical heritage and how it intersects with others," she says.

Inspired by her own experiences of growing up Malaysian in Singapore, followed by coming to Australia to study and now live, Ms Wee looks to composers whose music conveys their shared experience of changing environments and feeling 'in between' places.

"I want to give audiences the opportunity to hear how composers have expressed their multi-cultural experiences and journeys through their music," she says.

"It is no surprise that migration, cultural exchange and our globalised world influence contemporary composers. Their music naturally resonated with my personal experience of having lived in between cultures and geographical places," she says.

Lecturer in flute at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music Margaret Crawford says she loved the principle behind Bridges Collective's 2011 launch event.

"Most of all I enjoyed the complete unexpectedness of it all," she says, "the different influences and backgrounds, the mix of new and old, of less well-known



Bridges Collective: Blair Harris, Andrew Gordon Boyle, Sally-Anne Russell and Brenna Wee.

composers and more established ones. What a great thing for new composers to have a group like this so willing to play their music!"

Bridges Collective's first concert for 2012, Encounters: Malaysian Liaisons, will feature the world premieres of two pieces commissioned by the ensemble from Malaysian composers Johan Othman and Tazul Tajuddin.

The concert will be performed by Brenna Wee, soprano Sally-Anne Russell, cellist Blair Harris and clarinetist Andrew Gordon Boyle, with the program made up of quartets as well as smaller arrangements and solo works.

The concert will also tour Malaysia,

with support from the Australia-Malaysian Institute. Along with performances at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) (Shah Alam), the Classical Music Society (KL), and the Perak Society of Performing Arts (Ipoh), each member of Bridges Collective will also conduct master-classes at UiTM.

Bridges Ensemble will be performing 'Encounters: Malaysian Liaisons' (including the world premiere of Johan Othman's 'The dancing mouse' on Saturday 24 March, 6pm-7.45pm in the Gryphon Gallery, University of Melbourne.

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