

New combination, big sound

New Sounds – Ancient Resonances, Dr Andrew Blackburn and Dr Jean Penny, part of Windfire Music Festival Basilica of St Mary of the Angels, Wednesday, 12th October, 2022

A tiny audience experienced an extraordinary performance on this evening of most inclement weather. The program of music for pipe organ, flute and live electronics exploited the lively acoustics of St Marys to the full.

Both performers, as well as being expert instrumentalists – Andrew Blackburn on pipe organ, Jean Penny on flute – are also both musicologists and composers.

The recital began with *Toccata Scherzo* by Ros Bonington. This demonstrated the full range of the St Mary's organ and how it resonates in the Basilica as a solo instrument. Two pieces by Lauren Redhead added a fixed electronic soundtrack to a live organ performance. *leópcwide* was inspired by *The Wanderer*, an ancient Anglo-Saxon poem. The organ part is slow and quiet, using the extremes of organ range enhanced by a pre-recorded soundtrack which included bell-like tones and recorded voices. *pouring* was originally written for performance during a church service. The organ part moves gradually throughout the whole range of the organ from its lowest notes to the very highest. This is set against an electronic soundscape.

Two pieces for flute and live electronics were composed as musical responses to specific sites. *Scoria Cone*, by Kenya Williams and Andrew Blackman is for flute and live electronics. It is a meditation on the atmosphere and history of Mount Buninyong. *Lal Lal Falls* by Jean Penny and Andrew Blackburn, is a semi-improvised response to the geological, historical and present-day connections of this gorge and watercourse. Its five sections reflect the site as one moves from open plains to rock pools and precipice, cascading falls and gorge, finally returning to the open plains.

Unfortunately, technical difficulties meant that videos prepared to be shown with these two pieces could not be screened.

Luckily, with both sites being near Geelong, it's probable that those at the concert have already visited the sites or will do so in the future.

Andrew Blackburn's own *Improvisation* for organ and live electronics concluded the concert.

With both performers performing from the organ loft at the back of the space and only being visible on video feed, the audience were able to fully reflect on the sound and atmosphere created.

It was a most rewarding concert. I hope that, despite the small audience, the *Windfire Festival* committee continue to show a commitment to experimental and unusual music.

– Helen Lyth