

# Together' concert brings two world premieres to the Museum



*Elena Kats-Chernin, William Barton and Delmae Barton perform 'The Gathering'*

Photo: Jennifer Nagy

The Canberra International Music Festival billed this memorable event as 'a reconciliation concert to express regret and bring us together'. It also tested the Museum's facilities to their limit by combining a fully staged orchestral concert with a spectacular light show in the Hall. Celebrity performers and attendees on the night included composers Elena Kats-Chernin and Peter Sculthorpe, didgeridoo player William Barton and Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett.

An above-capacity crowd was in place to experience an evening of sombre beauty, culminating in the world premiere of the Museum's own commissioned work 'Garden of Dreams' by Elena Kats-Chernin. A shorter work by William Barton, 'The Gathering' (commissioned by philanthropist Prue Neidorf) also premiered during the concert.

The reconciliation theme of the evening was reflected in the combination of European and Indigenous musical styles, a crossover which William Barton has very much made his own, as well as the quietly reflective mood of the works by Purcell and Handel. Delmae Barton (the mother of William Barton) also set the mood with her 'Keening the space', a wordless vocal lament which began the evening.

However it was the major Kats-Chernin commission that the audience was really waiting for — the new work that would express the composer's complex response to the National Museum's themes and collections. And they were not disappointed; it was various, beautiful, exciting, tuneful and rich.

'Garden of Dreams', named for the Garden of Australian Dreams at the centre of the Museum, has six movements in all. Two are purely musical but four have specific connections with the Museum. 'Love Token' is based on one of the convict message coins that delighted the composer, and the music suggests the brisk metallic tapping of a coin being engraved. 'Kimberley Points' has a smooth and flowing style expressive of the glass of which the spear points are made, and also the water in which they were used to spear fish. 'Industrial Blues' is a homage to the Museum's quirky and eccentric architectural style. The final movement, 'Evolving', which featured

William Barton playing the didgeridoo and also singing, reflects the composer's view 'that we are in the middle of history unfolding, with all the ups and downs, and with much hope for a tolerant peaceful future'.

Canberra International Music Festival technicians recorded the concert and the Museum hopes soon to receive the digital master, which it will be able to adapt for non-commercial purposes such as playing at Museum events or on the website.

Why did the Museum commission the work? In the words of the Director, Craddock Morton, 'Music has always been an integral part of the experience of living in Australia, and the National Museum reflects that in our collection featuring music and musicians'.

It is also probable that 'Garden of Dreams' will now be taken up and performed by orchestras in Australia and internationally, wherever the works of Elena Kats-Chernin have a following, thus taking the National Museum's name and reputation into new and various places.

**Susan Tonkin**, Assistant Manager,  
Audience Development and Public Programs



*After the concert: William Barton, Gabrielle Hyslop, Peter Garrett, Elena Kats-Chernin, Roland Peelman, Prue Neidorf, Craddock Morton, Delmae Barton, Peter Sculthorpe.*

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