

LUX AETERNA

2:00 PM
SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER 2025
ST JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH



Aaron WYATT (b. 1982)
The Connections We Make

Under the Canopy

Lux Aeterna

Cirrus

The Coming Dawn

Zoë Black, *Violin*
Jenny Khafagi, *Violin*
Aaron Wyatt, *Viola*
Molly Kadarauch, *Cello*
Rohan Dasika, *Double Bass*
Amos Roach, *Didgeridoo*
Emmanuel Cassimatis, *Oboe*
Francesco Celata, *Clarinet*
Charles MacInnes, *Trombone*
Louise Devenish, *Percussion*

Aaron Wyatt is a violist, violinist, conductor, composer, programmer and academic. Originally from Perth, he spent many years performing casually with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, before moving to Melbourne to take up an assistant lecturer position at Monash University. In 2021, he became the first Indigenous Australian to conduct a state symphony orchestra in concert, and has since gone on to further engagements with the Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. As a composer, Aaron has written for Ensemble Offspring, GreyWing Ensemble and Ensemble Dutala. He is a long-time member of new music ensemble Decibel, and is also currently artist in residence with Speak Percussion.

The Connections We Make

Much like my Indigenous heritage, my sexuality and gender identity are a key part of who I am, but they are also far from being everything about me. And, for the longest time, I've felt neither the need to advertise them constantly to people, nor the need to keep them particularly hidden from those close to me. Having said that though, there are times when it's important to stand up and be counted a little more publicly. To show that classical music can be an inclusive space for everyone. (Plus it's a little hard for me to complain about bi erasure when I don't actively speak out about it.) So I was honoured to be asked by Miranda Hill to write what feels almost like a musical coming-out for her long-running concert series, *Homophonic!* In defiance of some of the negative social media comments that found themselves attached to the promotional material for the concert, I wanted *The Connections We Make* to be a joyful and heartfelt celebration of community. Of those who are important to us. And for me, there's no group that typifies that more than a ragtag bunch of students from my uni days who lived two doors down from me on Winthrop Ave, in a share house affectionately known as "The Big Gay Dorm".

They offered a fun, welcoming space where I could explore what it meant to be me. Where I could burst in announced at any moment, like the Kramer of the house. Where I could find myself sitting on the roof, sitting in the spa, or draped around a stripper pole, glass of port in hand, dressed as Frank N. Furter. (To be fair, that was for a costume party, and not just my regular attire. At least back then.) And where I would discover that masculinity could be whatever I wanted it to be. (Only to ultimately find that it didn't even matter whether I felt a particularly strong connection to it or not.) The housemates have all long since moved on from there, and they're now scattered around the country. But it is an era that I will always remember fondly. Speaking of special people, I want to say a big thank you as well to Wendy Clancy, whose generosity made the commissioning of this work possible, and who unfortunately passed away just a few days before I finished writing the piece. To community.

Under the Canopy

So often when people think of the Australian landscape, they think of a sparse and unforgiving terrain: red dirt and spinifex baking under a harsh, midday sun. *Under the Canopy* instead reflects on the forests near where I have lived in the more southern reaches of the country. Both the temperate rainforests in the areas around Melbourne, and the mighty Jarrah and Karri forests back in the south-west. The work opens with a sense of light filtering through the trees, creating a soft glow around us as we bask in awe of the ancient giants that tower overhead. We hear the babbling of a creek in the flowing septuplets that are passed around the quartet, and then the bustle of life supported and protected by the undergrowth in the driving and boisterous middle section. Ultimately though, we are reminded of the fragility of this world and its impermanence, particularly in the face of human impact. An uncertain ending for an uncertain future.

Lux Aeterna

Lux Aeterna is at its core an exploration of timbre and the interplay that occurs between the notes of a slightly imperfect harmonic series. The solo trombone starts with a simple, low drone before slowly creeping upwards through its range. As it does so, the sound of the instrument is sampled, and a series of loops are built up to form a choir of brass. Slowly, one by one, the sound of these ghost trombones is filtered down, leaving only pure sine tones. This slow timbral shift creates a shimmering soundscape where instrument and electronics sometimes blend and sometimes collide.

Cirrus

Cirrus was inspired by the Melbourne sky on a bright but cold day. It reflects and meditates on the view from the Djerring Trail, a path that winds its way beneath the sky rail near my home. Thin wisps of white dot a deep azure canvas that stretches off into the distance between a frame of concrete. The suburban trains that periodically roll overhead bring their own rhythm, punctuating the stillness above. Written between lockdowns, during a time of great uncertainty, it seeks to explore these small glimpses of awe and beauty that exist in the ordinary, and in the interplay between the natural world and our modern existence.

The Coming Dawn

The Coming Dawn began life as an exploration of the interplay between didgeridoo/yidaki and string quartet (with the added colour of the vibraphone). It was only during the writing process that the title and theme of the work started to slowly emerge from the music. To me, the introduction suggests the stillness of night in the early hours before sunrise, the vibraphone the sparkling of the stars above, the drones in the strings the earth below. With the entry of the didgeridoo, the driving rhythms in the ensemble speak to the ruggedness of the landscape, and to the memory of all who have ventured across it. As minor turns to major (well, technically Lydian) the didgeridoo has a chance to solo beneath a slow drawn-out melody in the vibraphone, while clear string harmonics begin to sound. The didgeridoo fades, and these harmonics shine out as the very first light of dawn, casting gold, orange, and red hues across the landscape. As the music builds, interjections in the first violin become vaguely reminiscent of bird calls, until a dramatic key change brings about sunrise itself. Throughout the piece the harmonies have been built firmly around the drone of the didgeridoo, but here they abandon it. The didgeridoo becomes a dissonance, no longer at home in the new key of the string quartet, in a move vaguely reminiscent of the final moments of Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Just as in the Strauss, it is this semitone dissonance that gets the final word, the tension between the strings and didgeridoo left unresolved.