



Canberra Symphony Orchestra

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 4th September 2023

Yuwaalaraay composer Nardi Simpson's new Canberra Symphony Orchestra commission to be premiered at twilight concert

The [Canberra Symphony Orchestra's](#) (CSO) *Play of Light* concert, will bring Yuwaalaraay composer Nardi Simpson's new composition, *Winangaylaylaya*, to the stage for the first time. The twilight concert will be held on Thursday 21 September, 6:30pm at the Gandel Atrium, National Museum of Australia, in the final instalment of the 2023 Australian Series.

Ms Simpson is a composer and author hailing from Yuwaalaraay (north-west NSW freshwater plains), and for the past 22 years has travelled nationally and internationally as part of Indigenous duo Stiff Gins. As a founding member of Freshwater, an all-female ensemble, she is integral in reviving the language and singing traditions of NSW river communities.

"When it comes to art and music, there are no boundaries. You can create anything you want, you just need to know the language and story you can make with music. There's something special that happens when a love of music and a love of people are brought together," said Ms Simpson.

"The language of the Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay/Gamilaraay people places a deep significance on the importance of listening. The more you listen, the more you know. *Winangaylaylaya* is a word that demonstrates this. It means the continuous listening, knowing, thinking, remembering, understanding, and acknowledgment shared between two people. It's a perfect foundation on the concept of love.

"*Winangaylaylaya*'s two main motifs were developed as vocal lines, singing counterpointing winangaylaylayas to the other. The piece allows me to share my connection with my language, community, and family. Thank you to all those musicians on the night of the performance, who will play, feel and share this form of love, from their ears to the ears and hearts of others," Ms Simpson concluded.

CSO Chief Executive Officer, Rachel Thomas, affirmed the importance of commissioning new works by First Nations composers. "As the orchestra of the nation's capital, we are proud to champion First Nations voices, supporting artists to develop and share Australian music and stories which enrich the Australian cultural landscape." Nationally unique and award-winning, the CSO's Australian Series presents thought-provoking chamber music experiences dedicated to Australian classical and art music in one of Australia's iconic cultural spaces.

Other notable pieces within *Play of Light* include Lisa Illean's *Lightsense No. 1*, which explores a different iteration each time it is performed, and Kate Moore's *Fern*, which reflects her fascination with what lies beneath the surface, mirroring the rich fertility of the forest floor. Both works integrate electronics and acoustic chamber music. The concert will also feature compositions by active Australian composers Connor D'Netto, Paul Stanhope and Andrew Ford OAM.

For more information including ticket information and pricing, visit cso.org.au/concerts/play-of-light-2

BACKGROUND

Nardi Simpson

- As part of the acoustic harmonies duo, Stiff Gins, Ms Simpson has recorded three albums and won two Deadly Awards.
- Nardi's debut novel 'Song of the Crocodile', winner of the 2017 Black&Write! Fellowship was winner of the ALS Gold Medal and was longlisted for the 2021 Stella Prize and Miles Franklin Awards, before winning Australia's oldest literary award – the ALS Gold Medal.
- Nardi is a graduate of Ngarra Burria First People's Composers and is currently undertaking a PhD through ANU School of Music in Composition. She was the Sydney Conservatorium of Music's and Ensemble Offspring's First Nations artist in residence for 2021. Nardi is the current musical director of Barayagal, a cross cultural choir based at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.
- Nardi currently lives in Sydney and continues to be heavily involved in the teaching and sharing of culture in both her Sydney and Yuwaalaraay communities.

Photo credit: Lucy Simpson

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