

Summer Series 2025

Groove Café



Elena Kats-Chernin *Intermezzo Days*

Gareth Farr (NZ) *Mondo Rondo*

Matthew Hindson *Piano Trio*

Elena Kats-Chernin *Intermezzo Days*

Elena Kats-Chernin was born in Tashkent in present-day Uzbekistan in 1957 and grew up in Yaroslavl in Russia. In her early childhood, Elena Kats-Chernin was able to express herself in music even before she spoke: when her older sister received piano lessons, Elena could immediately play every piece – just by listening, without any study of the music.

“I found myself improvising on the piano for hours without any concern for time or purpose. It became my favourite pastime and a Lullaby was my first written-down piece.

Choosing music over ice figure skating, she travelled aged 14 to Moscow to study at the Gnessin State Musical College and migrated with her family to Australia in 1975. After going through the hard school of modernism, primarily through her studies with musicologist Richard Toop in Sydney and later with Helmut Lachenmann in Germany, a general change in aesthetics allowed Elena Kats-Chernin to find her own voice – this was largely encouraged by the open, undogmatic culture of her second home country Australia, which she returned to in 1994.

Elena Kats-Chernin’s music can be described as a personal amalgam of different influences; these include elements of minimal music, dance-like patterns such as ragtime, charleston, tango or waltz, classical models, for example from Russian music such as Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, or the Baroque, as well as Jewish and other folk music traditions.

Ideas for her work can come from anywhere in Kats-Chernin’s surrounding world: “Inspirations are everywhere and about everything. It can be just a single word that someone uttered, or a story I heard, or it can be a flower I see”. She may draw on existing pieces of music, including her own: “Sometimes I look at one of my orchestral works and focus in upon a random moment or gesture. Then I make up a pattern from that. This is a kind of a game that I like to play without any pressure of writing a piece but, sometimes, something really useful comes up in these exercises. I am always amazed how much material has yet to be written and is still possible!”

Gareth Farr (NZ: b. 1968): *Mondo Rondo* (1997; rev. 2012)

Gareth Farr is one of New Zealand's best known composers. He studied composition and percussion in New Zealand and New York, where he graduated Master of Music. Since 1990 his works have been commissioned and performed by the NZSO, the Auckland Philharmonia, the NZ String Quartet, and a variety of other professional musicians in NZ and overseas. He has been commissioned to write music for many high-profile events including the 50th anniversary of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the opening of Te Papa, and the Olympic Games in Sydney 2000, and Beijing 2008. In 2006 Gareth was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit and was the recipient of an Arts Foundation Laureate award in 2010. He has composed music for over 30 theatre productions in New Zealand, and has been awarded three Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards for Outstanding Composer of Original Music. Recently, Gareth was commissioned to write music for the 2011 Rugby World Cup opening ceremony and games.

"Mondo Rondo was originally written for string quartet and appears on this programme in its new incarnation, re-arranged for NZTrio. Its three movements are quirky and characterful, and take their inspiration from sources as disparate as Bartók and Balinese marching music. The second movement, Mumbo Jumbo, begins as a study in pizzicato, and I employ the technique of hocketting, whereby the tune is built up from a few notes contributed by each instrument in turn - an effect which sounds something like the mbira (African thumb piano) but is in fact more inspired by beleganjur, Balinese funeral marching music - a loud crashy rhythmic mix of cymbals and gongs, intended to frighten the demons away."

Matthew Hindson *Piano Trio*

Matthew Hindson AM (b. 1968, Wollongong) is one of Australia's most dynamic and successful composers. His invigorating soundworld is both immediate and direct, and his innate sense for drama, wit and spontaneous joie de vivre has resulted in many of his scores having a significant and ongoing international presence. As well as being performed by every Australian orchestra, the London Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic among many others, Matthew's distinctively original music has been set by dance companies such as the Birmingham Royal Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Japan, The Australian Ballet and the Queensland Ballet. He has written for soloists and ensembles all over the world.

The structure of this Piano Trio follows that of many classical and romantic works for the same instrumentation: fast, slow, fast. The work opens with a spirited, very fast movement that is scherzo-like in most of its character: light, airy and playfully rhythmic. It is written as a Moto Perpetuo, i.e. it doesn't really stop from start to finish. It does slow down in places... but quickly speeds up again.

In contrast, the second movement, entitled “Repetitions”, is much more lyrical in content. This movement explores melodic ideas placed upon a repeated chord progression from start to finish. The chords themselves are reminiscent of those found in the trance music genre.

The final movement, “Epic Diva”, takes its title from the genre of singing commonly found in anthemic electronic-based dance music. Much of the musical content in this movement is similarly derived from contemporary dance music genres, especially repetitious chord progressions and the piano writing. It is very much an upbeat movement, full of energy and vitality.

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Notes by Matthew Hindson.