

Shy like Blushing Flowers Music-Theatre Project



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CHINESE-AUSTRALIAN MUSIC-THEATRE WORK

This music-theatre work—*Shy Like Blushing Flowers*—is a collaboration between Australian artists Bruce Crossman (composer/musical director), Simon Killalea (video artist), Ian Stevenson (sound diffusion) with performers Anna Fraser (mezzo-soprano), Claire Edwardes (percussion) and international collaborator Linda Yim (piano) from the renowned Hong Kong New Music Ensemble (HKNME). The springboard for this work is the text of Tang Xianzu's Chinese opera "Peony Pavillion," with hints of the Judeo-Biblical text "Song of Songs" and Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra". From distinctively diverse cultures, these works appeared at both juxtapositional and similar times (1598 and 1606 respectively) and correlate thematically, exploring love permitted to exist as dream merged with reality, and the subsequent temporal/spatial separation of lovers (human and spiritual) and connection to Daoist "dao" and Christian "spirit." The central protagonists from these classical works, the vivacious unmarried female and high status queen, are reinterpreted as a single persona in an intercultural fusion of gritty tension with poetic lushness, bringing about a deepening mutual understanding of Australian/Chinese cultures towards a contemporary Asian-Pacific artistic identity. Its multicultural nature aims to directly synergize English and Mandarin sounds as both a form of communication and as delicate and vigorous sound patterns within a Confucian living-colour aesthetic in music-theatre.

Event: The ArtsNSW Development of *Shy like Blushing Flowers* is at The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, Q Theatre in Penrith from 3-4pm on 11 October 2017.

Entry: By Invitation. Request invitation by emailing b.crossman@westernsydney.edu.au

Directions: Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre is at 597 High Street, Penrith.

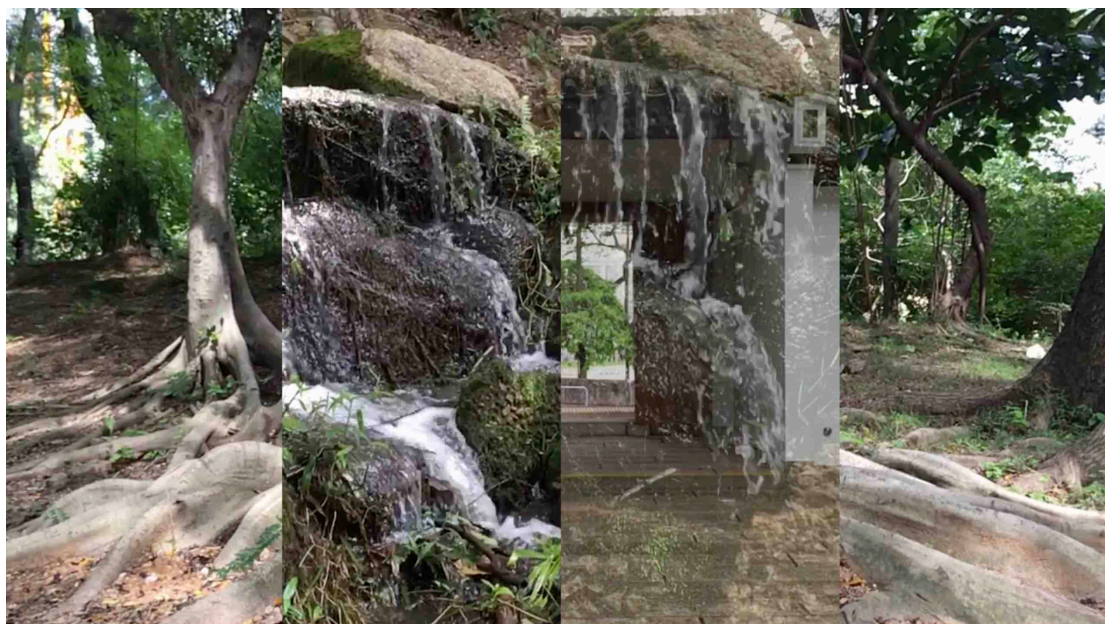
From the M4 motorway take the Mulgoa Road turn-off to Penrith. Fast train services leave regularly for Penrith from the country train platforms at Central Station.



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INTERCULTURAL MUSIC-THEATRE



The *living colour* moment aesthetics of the Asia-Pacific and its calligraphical motion ideas applied to film are present in Crossman's *Shy Like Blushing Flowers* music-theatre project. The development has two framing films as dream sequences—"Fragrant Rain Clouds of Love" and "Strange Invisible Perfume"—amidst which sits the live performance of "Garden of Fire."

In the first interlude, "Fragrant Rain Clouds of Love," Killalea's strong rooted tree images of Hong Kong with Picasso-like Cubist space of modern cityscapes, where emptiness and skyscrapers suggest intimate presence, is a reinterpretation of ancient Chinese playwright Tang Xianzu's 'clouding' intimacy and sensual massive sonic bursts of sound with lingering metal delicacy of my own music. The ancient *Kunqu* tradition, following Daoist principles of the affinity of the artist with nature, suggests the erotic through the natural reverberance of spring energies and is reinterpreted by Simon Killalea as the gently pulsing presence of Hong Kong as a contemporary 'sensual clouding'. The gentle flow of time through water becomes intimate as do the skyscraper slow movements yet they are peppered with the slow cruising humour of the passing car motion and musing.

The Chinese opera tradition of *Kunqu* sparked, in a moment, the delicate transient crotales metal lingering sounds amidst wrestling interval-colour spacious splashes of ensemble amidst wriggling vocal lines in my musical score, titled "Garden of Fire." The trio version will involve soprano Anna Fraser (Song Company), percussionist Claire Edwardes (Ensemble Offspring) and pianist Linda Yim (HKNME) in a live performance with real-time digital visual mixing by Killalea. In this stripped version, the wriggling vocal lines are laid bare, with delicate bowed vibraphone ebbing joining the dark gong-like stopped notes bedding the vocal beneath, with interpretations of the spaces through metaphorical nature and cityscape images of Hong Kong in time-lapse filmmaking.

In the second interlude dream sequence of the music-theatre work's "Strange Invisible Perfume," the music merges the sensuality of Shakespeare's alluring Cleopatra with Tang's "Dou de ri xia yan zhi yu shang xian," amidst the Judeo-Biblical tradition's transcendent sensuality of "I arose to open for my lover" from the *Song of Songs*. Killalea's Sydney and Hong Kong shot Cubist interplays will interpret the music as a dream film sequence within *Shy like Blushing Flowers*. In my score for "Strange Invisible Perfume," the Peking Opera gongs' sudden demarcations and quivering mallets on crotales, linger like fragrant perfume over the wriggling *guzheng* tones and sharply articulated bell-clear harmonics.

ARTISTS

Anna Fraser – soprano

Sydney-based and a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (2000) and New England Conservatory (2002) in Boston, Anna Fraser has gained a reputation as a versatile soprano specialising predominantly in the interpretation of early and contemporary repertoire. In 2002, before returning to Australia, Anna attended the Britten-Pears Young Artist Program under the expert tutelage of the late Anthony Rolfe-Johnson and was a featured soloist in Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and the masque *Acis and Galatea* directed by Richard Egarr at the Aldeburgh Festival. As a member of the Song Company, Anna regularly performs in national tours.

Claire Edwardes – percussion

Claire Edwardes (percussion) is an internationally renowned percussionist and artistic director of Sydney new music group, Ensemble Offspring. Career highlights include solo performances at the *Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival* and prizewinner as part of Duo Vertigo at the 2005 *International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition*. She won the 2016 *Art Music Award* for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual and was the 1999 *Young Performer of the Year*.

Linda Yim – piano

Linda Yim is a core member of the Hong Kong New Music Ensemble, one of the leading government funded arts institutions in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong New Music Ensemble (HKNME) was founded in 2008 to present contemporary music to Hong Kong audiences. It has been widely praised for its innovative programming and interdisciplinary collaborations with artists from different mediums. The HKNME has collaborated with organisations including Zuni Icosahedron and Guangdong Modern Dance Company.

Bruce Crossman – composer

Bruce Crossman's sound world embraces Asian traditional musics, free form improvisation and European influenced interval-colour sonority towards a personal Pacific identity. Peter Sculthorpe, Chou Wen-chung and Chinariy Ung have influenced Crossman's Pacific-based aesthetic. Crossman's aesthetic is influenced by cross-disciplinary ideas from Chinese esthetics, Japanese aesthetics and architecture, Filipino-Australian poetry and abstract art. <https://brucecrossman.com>

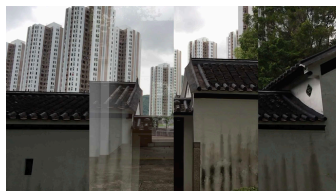
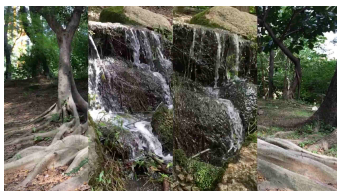
Simon Killalea – filmmaker/projectionist

Simon Killalea is projectionist filmmaker who largely works in the field of rock music visuals, including with Sydney band Decoder Ring at Carriage Works and for the tour of iconic Australian band Cold Chisel, including those with an East Asian focus. He did the visuals for Bruce Crossman's Chinese opera-based project with the Campbelltown Arts Centre, titled *Gentleness-Suddenness*.

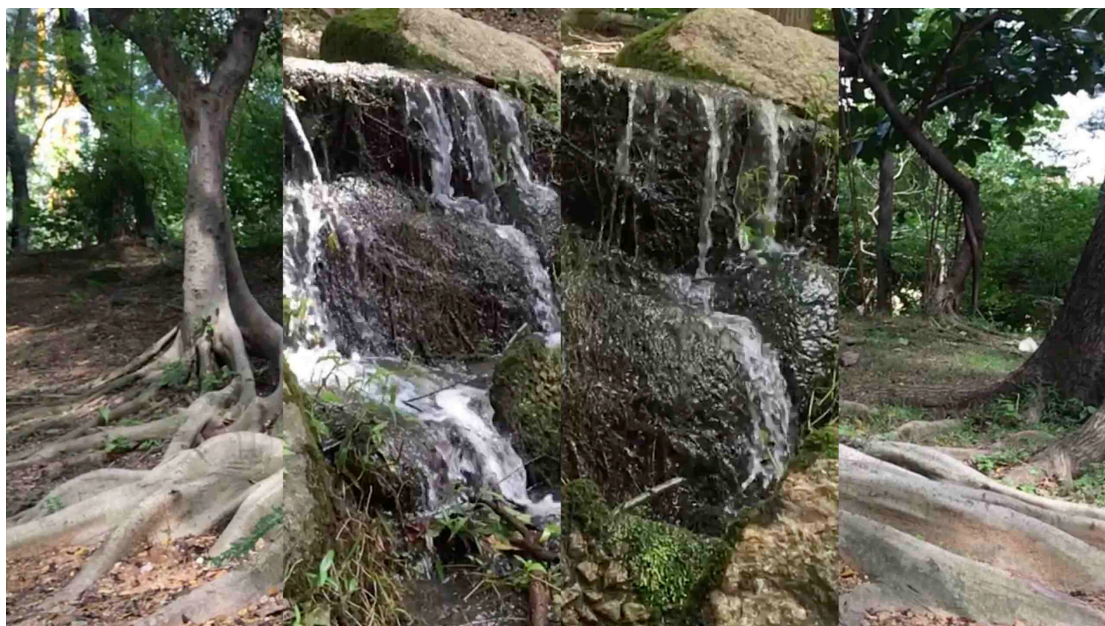
Ian Stevenson – sound design/diffusion

Ian Stevenson is senior lecturer in sound technologies. His research interests are in sound theory, listening, sound recording and sound installation practice. He is a member of the Digital Humanities Research Group at Western Sydney University. In addition to numerous freelance engagements he has held the following positions: Documentation Manager, Fairlight ESP, Sydney; Sound Engineer, Autograph Sound Recording, London.

Event website: <https://brucecrossman.com/teaching/events/> Media samples: <https://brucecrossman.com/media/>



INTERCULTURAL COMPOSITION BACKGROUND



The aesthetics of the Asia-Pacific and its calligraphical motion ideas applied to film are present in Crossman's past music-theatre works, *Gentleness-Suddenness* and *Where are the Sounds of Joy*. These works draw on Hong Kong new-ink master Shou-kwan and his free gestural imagery, which Crossman used within sonic swirls and un-dampened gong resonance within extensive use of Peking Opera gongs. These ideas were developed during a 2010 residency within the Chinese Opera Information Centre in Hong Kong and came to fruition in the 2013 Cambelltown Arts Centre portrait concert of his music. Here he worked with a living colour aesthetic to produce the visually interactive music-theatre work, *Gentleness-Suddenness*, which included digital pixilation by Simon Killalea and photographer David Cubby. This was featured in a 2-hour program on my music on ABC Classic FM (2014) and currently features as a 45-minute ABC New Waves Podcast (2016). These ideas are an extension of its precursor work, *Not Broken-Bruised-Reed* (2010)—especially the calligraphical sonic gestures, which featured in a live ABC Classic FM broadcast at the 2010 World New Music Days in Sydney. Finally, the film visuals for the music-theatre work are developed within its birthplaces—Hong Kong and Western Sydney. This lays the foundation for collaboration with the Hong Kong New Music Ensemble for full staging performances in 2019 in Hong Kong and Sydney.

LINKS

Collaborators

Anna Fraser: <http://www.annafraser.net.au>

Claire Edwardes: <http://www.claireedwardes.com>

Linda Yim: <https://www.hongkongnewmusic.org/ensemble>

Simon Killalea: http://www.simonkillalea.com/cold_chisel.html

Ian Stevenson: https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/staff_profiles/uws_profiles/doctor_ian_stevenson

Bruce Crossman: <https://brucecrossman.com>

Chinese opera: *Gentleness-Suddenness* (2013) & *Shy Like Blushing Flowers* (2017)

See: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/140882039>

See: <https://brucecrossman.com/media/>

Contact:

Associate Professor Bruce Crossman, email: b.crossman@westernsydney.edu.au

ADDITIONAL DETAILS



Structure – *Shy like Blushing Flowers* (ca. 60 minutes)

Part 1: “Garden of Fire” – full ensemble & live film projections/mixing
(mezzo-soprano, flute, viola, erhu, guzheng, percussion, piano)

Interlude 1: “Fragrant Rain Clouds of Love” – live duo & film
(percussion, piano)

Part 2: “Blooms late when spring is gone” – solo erhu, speaker & live film projections/
mixing
(mezzo-soprano, erhu)

Interlude 2: “Strange Invisible Perfume” – live duo & film
(percussion, guzheng)

Part 3 “Loosen Our Sash” – full ensemble & live film projections/mixing
(mezzo-soprano, flute, viola, erhu, guzheng, percussion, piano)

Artists

Hong Kong New Music Ensemble

William Lane (viola/artistic director), Angus Lee (flute), Chiu Tan Ching (guzheng),
Linda Yim (piano), HKNME principal conductor (forthcoming)

Sydney Artists

Anna Fraser (mezzo-soprano), Ying Liu (erhu), Claire Edwardes (percussion), Simon
Killalea (video artist), Bruce Crossman (composer/music director) and Ian Stevenson
(sound diffusion/ recording)

Development and Proposed Performances in Sydney and Hong Kong

2016: September – Interlude 1: “Fragrant Rain Clouds of Love”

Michael Kieran Harvey (piano) and Tim Phillips (percussion), Western Sydney
University

2016: December – Part 1 “Garden of Fire”

William Lane (viola/artistic director), Angus Lee (flute), Chiu Tan Ching (guzheng), Tim
Chan (percussion), Linda Yim (piano), Hong Kong University (workshop)

2017: July

– Interlude 2: “Strange Invisible Perfume”

Chiu Tan Ching (guzheng), Claire Edwardes (percussion), Luping Zeng (painting), Ian
Stevenson (digital projections)

– Part 2: “Blooms late when spring is gone”

Ying Liu (erhu), Shen Wednesday (painter/reciter), Ian Stevenson (digital projections),
Western Sydney University

2017: 11 October – Interlude 1: “Fragrant Rain Clouds of Love” (film); Part 1: “Garden of
Fire” (trio version; live/digital visuals); Interlude 2: “Strange Invisible Perfume” (film)

30-minute showing; Anna Fraser (mezzo-soprano), Claire Edwardes (percussion), Linda
Yim (piano), Ian Stevenson (sound diffusion/recording), Simon Killalea (video artist),
Bruce Crossman (composer/ music director), The Joan Performing Arts Centre
(Q Theatre), Penrith; ArtsNSW funded development

2019: Festival Hong Kong (TBA), full production with HKNME, full production

2019 Intercultural Festival, NSW (TBA), full production with HKNME/ The Joan
Performing Arts Centre, full production

Reviews

Gentleness-Suddenness – music-theatre work

Performance in Sydney 2013:

“Hearing several of Crossman’s pieces in succession provided a clear window into his aesthetic—space, clarity, action and reaction—and language, one that incorporates aspects of Asian music expressed through the idiomatic sounds of Western instruments. Harvey, Edwardes, Cuddeford and Latukefu took painstaking care to bring out the ensemble and individual details that cram Crossman’s scores. The works were recorded during the week prior to the concert and there will be many among the audience, like myself, who will be keen to have a second listen to the performances of these mysterious and subtle pieces. This was an engrossing and satisfying concert of music that displayed the highest artistic ambition and craft on the part of composer and performers.”

(Nightingale, James. “Gentleness-Suddenness, Bruce Crossman,” *Partial Durations, Realtime*, e-dition, Jul 4 2013.

<https://partialdurations.com/2013/07/03/gentlenesssuddenness-bruce-crossman/>

CD release in the USA on Navona 2017:

“Crossman allows the music of the Pacific, specifically of Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Filipino traditions, to influence his more or less high modern attention to sound color and sound space...something spaciouly Asian but with an effectively communicative vocabulary of Western new music...Crossman is a real force for the present-future.”

([GappleGate Classical-Modern Music Review](#), USA, May 18, 2017)

“The wealth of musical activity in Pacific rim countries is clearly a source of inspiration to Crossman, adding a fascinating dimension to music from a European heritage. His discerning blend of East and West creates an intriguing, kaleidoscopic sonic world, one that carries a strong emotional impact...*Gentleness-Suddenness* is described by Crossman as a “meditation on love and creativity”, settings of texts from Chinese opera tradition of Kunqu (*The Peony Pavilion*) and Judeo-Christian Biblical texts from Genesis, Psalms, Song of Songs and Revelation. Given those inspirational sources, it is not surprising that this piece is a tour-de-force.”

([The Music Trust](#), Australia, July 3, 2017)