

## 17. 2.50 — 3.55 MICHAEL FOWLER CENTRE AUDITORIUM NEW ZEALAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

(Conductor Francisco Feliciano)

### *A Birthday Offering* Douglas Lilburn

"To the members of the N.Z.S.O., their leader Vincent Aspey, and their conductor, James Robertson, on the occasion of the orchestra's 10th birthday, October 24th 1956."

The shape of the work is roughly that of an overture with a lengthy introduction to present various sections of the orchestra. But there's no evidence of sonata form and the music is rather in concertante style, that is, each player or section is treated as a soloist and the work aims to present a large range of colour and mood. To give cohesion I have used a technique which is current today as it was in the 16th century.

At the opening a solo horn summons the orchestra with a theme of four notes and everything that follows melodically and harmonically derives from these. The four notes are borrowed from a well-known composer, and the central section of the work owes something to one of Denis Glover's *Sings Harry* lyrics.

(Note by the composer)

### *Diffractions for Piano and Orchestra* Nigel Keay

In *Diffractions* the piano, which plays a central and prominent role, seeks to exploit that aspect of its technique to which it is ideally suited — rapid changes of direction and/ or wide intervallic leaps. This often occurs over an intergrated texture of harmonic/thematic progressions. *Diffractions*, which is essentially an abstract work in one continuous movement, utilises differences in gesture and texture between the piano and the orchestra to form its characterisation.

*Diffractions* was commissioned by the Dunedin Sinfonia with assistance from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand in December 1986, and was given its premiere performance by that orchestra with Terence Dennis (piano) on September 13th 1987.

(Note by the composer)

Piano David Guerin

### P *Les Episodes (Part I)* Kit Powell

*Les Episodes, Conversation with Questions*, is a collaboration between Kit Powell and Christchurch poet Michael Harlow. It was commissioned especially for Sonic Circus with funds from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of NZ. This premiere performance of *Les Episodes* is a music-theatre piece in which three 'players' — two singers and the orchestra — act out the tensions and confrontations, light and dark, between the *anima* and *animus*, the female and male aspects of the possible Self. A common enough phenomenon in the life of anyone, and everyone: the *essential identity of opposites*, as old as the bio-logos or biology itself, and as contemporary as this very moment. It seemed only natural to do this within the framework of the *question*, without which there can be no possibility of an *answer*. "The riddle does exist." Or does it?

(Note by the poet)

Mezzo-soprano Jan Harrington

Bass-baritone Derrick Miller

### P *Marram* Noel Sanders

Marram — "Shore grass that binds sand with its tough rhizome (from old Norse *maralmr* (*marr*, sea, *halmr*, stalk) ..." (OED)  
Palindromic word.

The work was written in December 1980, and revised especially for the Sonic Circus in 1987.

(Note by the composer)

## 18. 4.40 — 5.35 MICHAEL FOWLER CENTRE AUDITORIUM NEW ZEALAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

(Conductor Francisco Feliciano)

### P *A Modern Ecstasy* (Movements VI & VII) Lyell Cresswell

*A Modern Ecstasy* was commissioned anonymously for performance by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. The first complete performance will take place in Glasgow in 1988.

There are seven movements: I The Creation, II Shove's Law, III Declaration of War, IV Prayer to Amar, V The Lunacy, VI The War, and VII Amar's Lament.

Movements I, III, V, and VII are set for Mezzo Soprano, Baritone and Orchestra; Movement II is set for Baritone and Orchestra; Movement IV is set for Mezzo Soprano and Orchestra, and Movement VI is for Orchestra only.

This is the first performance of Movements VI and VII.

The text is by the poet Patrick Maguire.

(Note by the composer)

A note on the text:

MACDUFF:

Stands Scotland where it did?

Ross:

Alas, poor country,  
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot  
Be called our mother but our grave, where nothing  
But who knows nothing is once seen to smile;  
Where sighs and groans, and shrieks that rent the air,  
Are made, not marked; where violent sorrow seems  
A modern ecstasy. The dead man's knell  
Is there scarce asked for who, and good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
Dying or ere they sicken.

MACBETH IV iii 163-173

