

Four Winds and a palladium

When the next Four Winds Festival opens at dusk on the Autumn Equinox in Bermagui in 2008, audiences will be holding their breath.

by JENNIFER HUNT



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On a warm Saturday night in Bega in 20 October, 300 people sat quietly in a beautiful darkened old church as the Islamic Call To Prayer filled the air. Singer Timothy Constable of Synergy was opening the concert program, *State of Grace*. A haunting didjeridu solo by William Barton followed; then the Allejuyahs and Mantras of Ross Edwards; JS Bach's Chorale Prelude; the traditional Arab Easter song, *Wa Habibi*; and works by Elena Kats-Chernin, Arvo Part, Timothy Constable, Phillip Glass and Josquin Deprez. The audience barely moved.

They were transfixed not only by the music but also by the series of circular images projected above the six performers: domes of cathedrals and synagogues, Buddhist mandalas and stupas, Islamic sacred geometry and Isnik ceramics as well as maps of the earth and stars, cymatic photos, drawings of plankton and natural forms. As the images progressed through the colour spectrum from red to white, so the music matched the journey, concluding with a final image of a golden white palladium as Timothy sang once more, this time a version of *Amazing Grace* accompanied by didjeridu and string quartet.

When the lights came up, the 300 were on their feet.

The concert was part of the 2007 'Barnstorming Tour', a community outreach initiative of the biennial Four Winds Festival in Bermagui, presented in partnership with South East Arts Region (SEAR). Over eleven days, the Sculthorpe String Quartet, with guest artists William Barton and Timothy Constable, performed five public concerts and twelve school performances to a combined audience of over 2,800 in a program featuring nearly 21 Australian premieres. It was a way

of giving back to the regional community that has supported the Four Winds Festival for the past fifteen years.

State of Grace intended to demonstrate, through music and images, the capacity for sacred cultures to peacefully co-exist, and to offer the listener a symbolic journey from the earth to the heavens. The program is the work of musician Christopher Latham, Artistic Director of the Four Winds Festival, and provides a taste of what next year's festival will offer.

In devising *State of Grace*, Chris has been grappling with the question of how an artist responds to the age of terrorism. The concept of a palladium is one that Chris believes can offer an elegant and empowering answer to the apparent and insidious increase of fear and intolerance.

The oldest definition of palladium is that of a sacred work of art which through its purity and perfection protects the city or state that possesses it. Renaissance architect, Andrea di Petro della Gondalo, was re-named Palladio by his patron due to his ability to reveal the inner perfection of buildings by his mastery of proportions. Palladio exhorts us to "build in such a way and with such proportions, that all the parts together bring a soft harmony to the eyes of those who are looking at them." His masterpiece, the Villa Rotunda, combines a perfection of proportions with the geometrical archetypes of a cross, a square and a circle.

With the 2008 Four Winds Festival program, Chris is aspiring to create a symbolic palladium through the presentation of sacred and secular, classical and contemporary music in an Australian context.

December

9 December

 Harmony Choir in Concert
Celebrating Christmas this concert will feature many favourite carols and hymns. Holy Trinity Church, **DUBBO** Tel 02 6883 5127.

12 December — 12 February

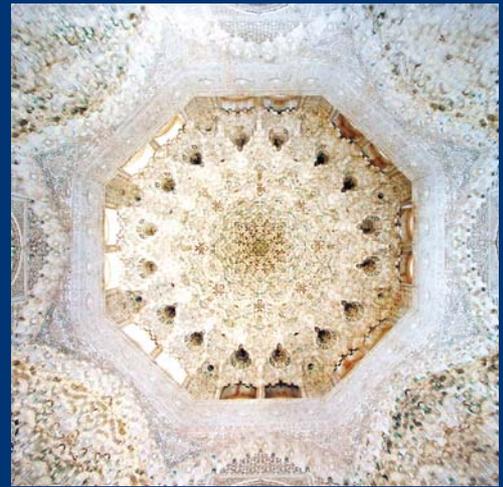
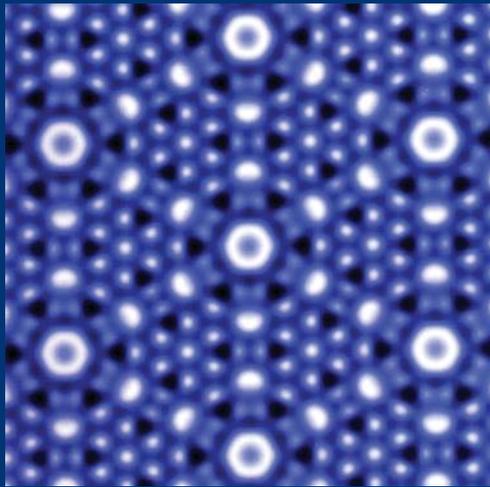
 Ron McBurnie - *In Search of the Miraculous: 300 years of British Printmaking*
WAGGA WAGGA Art Gallery
Tel 02 69269660

13 — 20 December

 Albury-Wodonga Artists Society
Annual Art Exhibition & Sale — over 80 members works on exhibition in various Media. **WODONGA** Tel 02 6023 1651

13 December — 3 February

 Les Blakebrough Ceramics
A touring exhibition as part of the Living Treasures: Master of Australian Craft series. Blakebrough is one of Australia's most celebrated ceramic artists. Tweed River Art Gallery,
MURWILLUMBAH Tel 02 6670 2790



It appears more than opportune that this undertaking is to be held when there is a unique alignment of the world's sacred calendars. In 2008, the Autumn Equinox encompasses Good Friday (Christian), Mawlid an Nabi (Muslim), Purim (Jewish), Norouz (Sufis, Zoroastrians & Bahai) Holi (Hindu), the more recent Australian multicultural celebration of Harmony Day, all of the traditional pagan harvest and thanksgiving connotations as well as the birthday of JS Bach, whose music has become strongly associated with Easter.

It is anticipated that more than 50 artists will be involved in the program, including some pre-eminent Australian musicians and ensembles such as Synergy, Halycon, William Barton, Diana Doherty, Paul Wright, Graeme Jennings, Riley Lee and Genevieve Lacey as well as international performers Omar Faruk Tekbilek, master Indian flautist Dr Natesan Ramani and the French soprano, Valerie Gabail.

With the support of Festivals Australia, Four Winds will open with a free concert and percussion spectacular at dusk on Bermagui Oval on 21 March. Community drummers will join with Taikoz and a South Coast children's choir, to be directed by Roland Peelman, culminating in the Festival line up performing Gerard Brophy's Mumbulla Dancing, a Four Winds commission. First introduced to the Festival in 2006, there will be also be a Composer's Forum featuring Peter Sculthorpe and hosted by Margaret Throsby.

Since its inception in 1992, the Four Winds Festival has never been constrained by its regional location in offering a program of the highest calibre — indeed the setting for the event, a natural

amphitheatre nine kilometres south of Bermagui, has been paramount to its success. The real mark of Four Winds, though, is that it has far more than just a biennial regional music festival — it is a commissioning body for new Australian work, a cultural service provider, an employer, a producer, and a tourism stakeholder with capital infrastructure plans.

The 2008 program of Four Winds will be the most ambitious to date and with Chris Latham's vision, the commitment of a formidable Board, the connection with the community, the support of the funding bodies and the generosity of the artists, I have no doubt that all the parts together will bring a soft harmony in an event that we will not forget for a long time. ■

The 2008 Four Winds Festival will be held on 21 – 23 March 2008 with the support of the Australia Council, Festivals Australia and applications pending to Arts NSW and the Myer Foundation. Website www.fourwinds.com.au

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Modest funding for The Barnstorming Tour was received from the Mumbulla Foundation and the Regional Arts NSW Country Arts Support Program.

Photographs from State of Grace, L-R: Georgia State Capital (USA) by Eric Oxendorf; silicon crystal; Mary of Victory, Vienna (Austria) by David Stephenson; Sala De Las Dos Hermanas in the Alhambra, Grenada (Spain) by David Stephenson.

December

13 December – 3 February

👁 *Imagining Papua New Guinea:* prints from the national collection by senior Papuan artists, each informed by their cultural traditions, made in response to the contemporary world. Tweed River Art Gallery, **MURWILLUMBAH** Tel 02 6670 2790

14 December

🎵 Festival of Lessons and Carols Tamworth Conservatorium of Music. **TAMWORTH** Tel 02 6766 6911.

14 – 15 December

👁 *Festival of the Sun* with great acts such as Clare Bowditch, Ash Grudwald, Cog, Gotye and Butterfingers to name a few. Sundowner Breakwall Tourist Park, **PORT MACQUARIE** Tel 02 6681 3844 Website www.fotsun.com

14 December – mid-January

👁 *'Walala Wasala' – The Fabric of African Politics.* A national travelling exhibition, presented by Annerley and District Community Centre, Queensland **COFFS HARBOUR** Regional Gallery Tel 02 6648 4861