

# ALLUVIAL GOLD PROGRAM NOTES

LOUISE DEVENISH, STUART JAMES & ERIN COATES

Presented by Perth Festival in association with Goolugatup Heathcote and Tura New Music

7pm, Wed 10 to Sat 13 Feb 2021

Alluvial Gold brings a visceral drama to the often-forgotten worlds below the surface of the river in a performance-installation by percussionist Louise Devenish, composer Stuart James and visual artist Erin Coates. Bringing together percussion, sculpture, instrumental objects, installation, field recordings, film, video projection and drawing, this modular collection takes the histories, materials and ecology of the river as a point of departure. Developed by a creative team of leading Western Australian contemporary artists, this collaborative work evolved with both visual and musical outcomes in mind. Each component can be experienced in various combinations either as a piece of visual art in exhibition, or as instrumental infrastructure in percussive performance.

During the Swan River Settlement establishment and in the decades that followed, native shellfish reefs within the river were heavily dredged and ground up for mortar, roads and building materials at sites across the city, likely including Heathcote Goolugatup, where this work is situated. The music in Alluvial Gold explores the confluence of multiple narratives connected to the river, from the phenomenological and structural aspects of river systems and water, the devastating impact of industrialisation after European colonisation and industrialisation, the sonic ecology and chemistry of the larger river system, and a musical language derived from transcriptions of sounds of the river system itself. The river forms a temporal narrative through a changing sound world and aesthetic, explored in nine movements:

Material – Source – Object

2. Confluence
3. The Cascades
4. Alluvial Fans and Meanders
5. Spiritual Water in the Mouth of the River  
Improvitational interlude
6. Crystalline Water in the Mouth of the River
7. Death in the Mouth of the River
8. The Place of the Eagle
9. Engulfment – Emancipation

In each movement, different combinations of sculptural percussion instruments modelled on dolphin bones, native oyster shells and estuarine ecology are brought together with vibraphone, percussion and electronics to create a tapestry of sonic material. When struck, the bronze and porcelain bones produce light, sparkling clusters of harmonics, while a specific pitch set of crotales, ceramic and metal bowls extend the otherwise pure sound world of the vibraphone and sine tones. These instruments and others created for this work, are nestled against a large, sonified oystershell curtain fitted with sensors used to trigger audio samples of hydrophone river recordings captured at seven locations along the river upstream. Layers of notated and improvised material are performed before they are captured and processed live to create a mysterious world of floating sounds that spin off one another and through the space.

Alluvial Gold has been devised in and for the Heathcote Goolugatup spaces to maintain a geographical connection with the materials that informed the work. The changing world beneath the surface is glimpsed via underwater video and audio recordings, which are mapped around the space during the performance.

## Artistic Team

Louise Devenish, performance and direction  
Stuart James, composition and sound design  
Erin Coates, video and sculptural instruments  
Mia Holton, projection design  
Peter Young, production manager  
Tristen Parr, producer for Tura New Music  
Gemma Weston, producer for Perth Festival  
Jana Braddock, producer for Goolugatup Heathcote