

New Zealand Chamber Soloists
2012
Press Materials & Biographical Info

James Tennant - Cello

American born cellist, James Tennant, is head of solo cello, chamber music and orchestral studies at the *University of Waikato, department of music* in New Zealand. A prominent concert soloist, chamber musician and teacher, Tennant is also a recognized arts innovator and one of the founders of *New Zealand's* most prestigious chamber music events, the *Adam Festival of Chamber Music*.

Tennant has enjoyed a long and lively performance career. He completed his cello studies at the *Interlochen Arts Academy* at the *University of Michigan* and counts as his main teachers cello masters, *William Pleeth, Gregor Piatigorsky* and *Jerome Jelinek*. A member of the *Detroit Symphony Orchestra* during his studies, Tennant performed under *Antal Dorati, Klaus Tennsted, Frubeck de Burgos* and *Leonard Bernstein*. His versatility as a musician made him a sort after commodity transcending genres as he recorded for *Motown* with some of the biggest names in American Pop and Rock.

By the age of 30, having lived in the USA, London and various parts of South America, where he was the cellist of the *Trio Mozart*, Tennant had performed as a soloist and chamber musician in 16 countries. As a teacher he was also on the staff of *Albion University (USA) Universidad del Cauca* and *the Conservatorio Nacional de Colombia* (Colombia), and had performed as principal cellist with the *Flint (U.S.), Orquesta de Camera de Bogota* and *Sinfonica Nacional de Colombia* (Colombia) Orchestras.

In 1982, Tennant settled in New Zealand and building on his international career soon established himself as a highly successful and respected performer and teacher. A sort after concerto soloist, he has performed most notably with the *Auckland Philharmonia* on numerous occasions (including a performance of the *Brahms Double Concerto* with Viennese violinist *Karin Adam*), the *Christchurch Symphony Orchestra* and the *Dunedin Sinfonia Orchestra*. Solo, collaborative and chamber music concerts have seen him perform throughout New Zealand with notable international musicians *Dene Olding, Diedre Irons, Patrica Wright, Piers Lane, Alexa Still, Michael Houston, Katherine Austin* and the *New Zealand String Quartet*.

Having participated in numerous master classes in his youth with such notables as *Janos Starker, Leonard Rose* and *Stephan Kates*, Tennant is himself now recognized as a leading cello educator, attracting international students to the *University of Waikato* cello performance programme. He previously taught at both the Universities of Auckland and Canterbury and over the years his students have achieved noteworthy successes. Most recently, *Santiago Canon-Valencia*, was the joint top prize-winner at the 2010 *Beijing International Cello Competition* securing Tennant's standing among the best teachers in the world.

Tennant's contribution has extended beyond performance and teaching and he remains a fundamental force in the innovation and establishment of New Zealand arts infrastructure. A founder of the *Nelson International Chamber Music Festival* and *Summer School*, he has also been instrumental in the formation of *CadeNZa, the Belli Celli, the Rotorua International Chamber Music Festival* and *Cellophonics*. He was a member of the *Ogen Trio* and currently performs with the NZCS trio and the Tennant-Austin Duo.

Katherine Austin - Piano

Leading New Zealand concert pianist, Katherine Austin, is head of piano studies and coordinator of performance studies at the *University of Waikato, department of music*. She performs regularly around New Zealand as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, and solo recitalist. She tours frequently for *Chamber Music New Zealand*, and is a national recording artist, broadcasting regularly for *Radio New Zealand Concert*. Performances in many of the country's main festivals include the *International Festival of Arts in Wellington*, the *Nelson International Chamber Music Festival*, and the yearly *Rotorua Millennium Chamber Music Festival*, of which she was a co-founder. Austin is a founding member of the *Ogen Trio* and the *Tennant-Austin Duo* who perform regularly throughout New Zealand as well as appearing in *Europe* and the *USA*. Her work as the pianist of the *New Zealand Chamber Soloists (NZCS)* now occupies a large portion of her performing and concert life.

Katherine graduated *First Class Honours in Piano Performance* from *Auckland University*, where her teachers were *Janetta McStay* and *Bryan Sayer*. She was winner of the *1982 New Zealand Young Musician of the Year* and the *NZ National Piano Award* in the same year. Seven years of study and performance in London and Europe included a full scholarship at the *Royal College of Music London* studying with top Russian pianist and teacher *Irina Zaritskaya*, as well as postgraduate studies at the *Guildhall School of Music and Drama*. Katherine won *Top Duo Prize* in the *1987 Stresa International Chamber Music Competition* in Italy, performing with cellist *Vincenzo Giuliani*. She returned to New Zealand in 1991.

Katherine Austin continues to tour. She tours frequently throughout New Zealand for *Chamber Music New Zealand* and in 2004 with the *Tennant-Austin Duo* to the UK and USA, receiving accolades and standing ovations in every centre in which they performed, including in London and Michigan. This response was repeated in the *NZCS Trio* tour of 2009 to the *USA, UK, Europe* and *South America*.

Austin has performed the romantic piano concerto repertoire with the *New Zealand Symphony Orchestra*, the *Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra*, the *National Youth Orchestra*, and performs regularly as concerto soloist with the *Auckland Chamber Orchestra* and the *Opus Chamber Orchestra*, specialising in the concertos of *Mozart* and *Beethoven*. She is also the coordinator behind the *WEL Academy of Arts* successful ongoing concert series and is the producer for the *department of music* concerts in *Central North Island, New Zealand*.

Lara Hall - Violin

Dr Lara Hall is the current concert master of the *Opus Chamber Orchestra*. A well established concerto soloist, she has performed with numerous orchestras in New Zealand and the United States of America as well as chamber music and baroque ensembles in both countries. In 2006, she was appointed to oversee violin and viola studies at the University of Waikato, a position she still holds along with the directorship of the *Accelerando*, the junior music academy programme in the department of music.

A child prodigy, Dr Hall began the violin at age three and gave her first concert at age five, television appearance at age seven and orchestra concerto recital at the age of nine. In her early years she performed as a soloist with the *Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra*, *Christchurch Symphony Orchestra* and *St Matthews Chamber Orchestra*. She also appeared in the prestigious *Adam New Zealand Festival of Chamber Music* and the *Auckland International Chamber Music Festival* as well as a solo recitalist across New Zealand. During her undergraduate studies, Dr Hall attended summer school at the prestigious *Dorothy Delay Studio* in Aspen and later completed her master's and doctoral studies on scholarship at the *University of Michigan* studying with master violinists, *Paul Kantor* and *Yehonatan Berick*. A faculty member at the *University of Michigan*, she worked with the pre-University programme, *Young Strings* and performed for such notables as *Ruggiero Ricci* from whom she received high praise.

Dr Hall later toured the *United States of America* as a member of the *Phoenix Trio* and with the chamber music ensemble, *Camerata Nordica*. She has led such notable orchestras as the *Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra*, *Michigan Baroque Orchestra* and *Auckland Chamber Orchestra* and is concert master of the *Opus Chamber Orchestra*, based in the *Waikato Region of New Zealand*. She returns periodically to the USA to perform and continues to perform across *New Zealand* with the *NZCS* and as a concerto soloist. Most recent solo performances include the *AK Barok* on baroque violin, the *Auckland Chamber Orchestra*, *Tauranga Performing Arts Trust Orchestra* and the *Waitakere Symphony Orchestra*. She has recently completed her first solo CD for Atoll Records which will be released internationally in 2012.

The New Zealand Chamber Soloists – Ensemble Biography

The formation of the New Zealand Chamber Soloists in 2006, was the fulfilment of a vision to bring together some of the New Zealand's leading soloists and contemporary composers. The team collaborates to perform a full range of classical repertoire as well as represent much of the "new" music of New Zealand at a local and international level. At the heart of the ensemble is the NZCS trio of Katherine Austin, Lara Hall and James Tennant who perform core repertoire, liaise with composers and initiate the collaborative work of the ensemble. Attached to the music programme at the University of Waikato, the trio are ideally placed to work with many of the country's leading musicians (composers and performers) many of whom have affiliations with the department.

In the five years since its formation, the NZCS trio have undertaken a diverse spectrum of work across the fields of performance and recording. The ensemble maintains an active performance schedule around New Zealand including localised concert series, concerts for *Chamber Music New Zealand* and engagements with the *New Zealand Symphony Orchestra* and the *Opus Chamber Orchestra*. In 2009 & 2010 they solidified their reputation as an international face of New Zealand music with highly successful tours, performing in the USA, the UK, France and Colombia. Performances were met with delight and respect from academics, critics and audiences alike, with universal praise and standing ovations.

Dr David Dolan (head of the Centre for Creative Performance & Classical Improvisation at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama) was the first to express the thoughts since echoed by several reviewers after the trio's 2009 Clarehall Concert in Cambridge, England: "*Your trio has a one-off cocktail of virtues - huge expressive power and a range of colours, a rare artistic courage to go all the way and never using this arsenal in a way which is not totally sincere*".

In July 2010, *Elegy*, a debut CD featuring the NZCS trio as a stand-alone ensemble, was released by NZ music label, Atoll. After spending six weeks at the number 1 slot on national classical music station, *RNZ Concert*, an unprecedented first for a chamber ensemble, the CD remained on the charts for a further five weeks including a return to the number one slot for yet another week. The CD featured fresh and insightful interpretations of works by Russian composers, Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich and the Armenian composer, Babajanian. It was the recording of the Babajanian piano trio that gained international attention leading to an article in US review magazine, *Fanfare* in 2011 and has led to international distribution of the work, to begin in 2012.

Elegy, although the debut recording by the trio, was not the first CD by the NZCS as various projects have been undertaken across the spectrum of New Zealand music. In 2008, the NZCS collaborated on a collection of works written for several of the soloists by leading New Zealand composers. The result was the award nominated CD, "*Ahi*" featuring works by John Psathas, Michael Williams, David Griffiths, Martin Lodge and Gareth Farr. Collaborators included the Ogen Trio (James Tennant, Katherine Austin with violinist Dimitri Attanassov), distinguished baritone, David Griffiths and clarinettist, Peter Scholes. The triple concerto, *Convergence*, written for them by Michael F Williams has been described as a landmark in New Zealand music. Originally performed with the Opus Orchestra and Later the New Zealand Symphony, in 2014, the NZCS will perform it at Konzerthaus in Vienna, in a celebration of New Zealand music. Other instrumental collaborations have included Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, Schumann and Dvorak *Piano Quintets*, Bartok's *Contrasts* (violin, clarinet, piano), Baroque concerts (baroque violin, recorder, harpsichord, cello) and concerts of works for flute, piano and violin.

The NZCS continue to engage with audiences and fellow musicians and in 2011 and 2012 will be representing New Zealand in China, at the Shanghai Conservatory, Singapore at the Singapore Chamber

Music Festival and across Europe at festivals, Casa Dei Mezzo, Pontino and Aegean. The world premiere of new compositions by John Psathas is scheduled for Greece and Beethoven's Triple Concerto is to be performed with the Pan European Orchestra in two performances in Europe after a performance in Waikato on the 20th of June 2012. They would like to acknowledge and are grateful for the generous funding and support that enables such extensive participation in this art-form.