

Western Sydney inspires innovative new musical work

World class musicians will gather in Penrith this month to present the preview of a new musical work fusing Western and Eastern artistic traditions. According to the work's composer and musical director Associate Professor Bruce Crossman, premiering *Shy like Blushing Flowers* – which juxtaposes a Chinese opera with work by Shakespeare – in Penrith is a fitting tribute to the region's natural cultural fusion and ability to inspire 'newness of thought.'

"Western Sydney is a crucible for innovative ideas. It's the perfect place to experiment and connect with a variety of cultures," says Associate Professor Crossman from Western Sydney's School of Humanities and Communications Art.

"In this work for example, we have some of the world's best musicians from Hong Kong and China, performing a work that was inspired, in parts, by the sound of the bell birds in Glenmore Park that I hear on my morning run."

The work – an CreateNSW development – consists of two film sequences created by video artist Simon Killalea and sound artist Ian Stevenson, and performances by opera singer (mezzo-soprano) Anna Fraser, percussionist Claire Edwardes and pianist Linda Yim from the renowned Hong Kong New Music Ensemble. The work will also feature real-time digital visual mixing meaning that no two performances will be the same.

Thematically, the work – which was inspired by three culturally diverse works: the text of the Chinese Opera *Peony Pavilion*, the biblical work *Song of Songs* and Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* – will explore ideas relating to love; sensuality, and the concept of improvisation inspired by Asian traditions such as calligraphy.

"I want audiences to get a sense of the vitality that comes from not only this collision of cultures and art forms, but also this exploration of sensuality, and exploration of improvisation as an untouched moment which can reveal the kind of person you are," Associate Professor Crossman says.

Beyond cultural fusion inspiring new creative works, Associate Professor Crossman says it can also be vital in providing soft diplomacy, especially when it comes to Asia.

"There is a cultural sincerity that comes with music. It provides a genuine connection between two cultures, and for countries such as China where a lot of trade is based on trust, music can go a long way in bridging this gap," he says.

A preview of the CreateNSW Development of *Shy like Blushing Flowers* is at the Q Theatre, Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre in Penrith from 3-4pm on 11 October 2017. Entry is by invitation only. To request an invitation email: b.crossman@westernsydney.edu.au.

For more information go to: <https://brucecrossman.com/teaching/events/>