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## THE EDGE

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CHAMBER  
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and **NEW MUSIC NETWORK**

present

Dwelling Structure:  
An Opera in 8 Time Use Episodes

created by Madelcine Flynn  
and Tim Humphrey  
libretto by Cynthia Troup  
with visual assemblage by Neil Thomas  
and neighbourly interruptions  
by The Suitcase Royale

8pm Thu 26 to Sat 28 May 2011  
in a living room in Northcote  
all tickets \$45  
bookings: [www.trybooking.com/9007](http://www.trybooking.com/9007)



# Dwelling Structure An Opera in 8 Time Use Episodes

created by *Madeleine Flynn* and *Tim Humphrey*, libretto by *Cynthia Troup*,  
with visual assemblage by *Neil Thomas*, and neighbourly interruptions by *The Suitcase Royale*.



## Program note by *Cynthia Troup*

In the public domain, 'dwelling structure' is a phrase used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other government agencies in connection with population and housing. It refers to 'the physical structure of the individual dwelling ... as represented by a code'. The code is numerical, and identifies 8 broad categories, from '1. Separate house', to '6. Improvised home, tent, campers out', and '8. Boarding/rooming house unit'. In this way the list begins with the most conventional 'ideal' for urban living quarters, and proceeds to name more structurally fragile, and impermanent forms of shelter; forms of abode linked with transience of address, culminating with '9. Other'—that is, the unspecified, which must also signify, in every sense, the most irregular forms.

As a technical term, 'dwelling structure' is above all concerned with space. In the same orderly, analytical realm of metadata and statistics, the phrase 'time-use episode' refers to segments of time—these are amongst the 'defined variables' for calculating monetary value. For economic modelling of Australian households, the description of 'time use episodes' relies on the 'dwelling structure' categories and codes.

*Dwelling Structure: An Opera in 8 Time Use Episodes* draws this involuted, impersonal language into co-incident with fragments from the history of 157 Westbourne Grove in Northcote, Victoria. Composers Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey live and work at this address, behind the compact, white-

painted façade of the Rechabite Hall, which was built in 1901. Together with artist Neil Thomas and writer Cynthia Troup, they have created a chamber

history of the temperance movement in Melbourne, and one of few remaining Rechabite halls in Victoria. Now perhaps best known for the charm of its tiny

870 was described as 'the largest of any Tent anywhere in the world', and at one time members numbered 1,000. Tent meetings and rituals always opened with the formal singing of an 'ode'; records of the social activities and celebrations organised by the Northcote Tent indicate that these included much singing and musical entertainment. *Dwelling Structure: An Opera in 8 Time Use Episodes* is illuminated by oddments from this communal past, which are woven into the spell of its enveloping counterpoint.

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opera in which the building itself—their family home—hauntingly takes the roles of lead vocalist, chorus, and orchestra. Abstractions of statistical reasoning are transformed into an aural architecture for the play of sensory attention and imagination. Perceptive listening yields intuitions about the building as a cosmos of worlds both human and natural: the worlds of its builders, past tenants, neighbours and present inhabitants; people and events who come to memory within its walls. Located diagonally opposite the Northcote Town Hall on Ruckers Hill, and on the west corner of Eastment Street, the Northcote Rechabite Hall is a building of some historical repute, part of the long

stage and proscenium arch, it was for many years a vibrant community meeting place, leased at times as a classroom, a gymnasium, and for church services.

Within the International Order of Rechabites, a separate 'branch' is often called a 'tent', since in the Hebrew bible, the clan descended from Rechab is associated with a nomadic lifestyle as well as abstinence from wine. In the early years of the twentieth century, the 'Star of Northcote Tent 217' organised weekly temperance meetings in the Westbourne Grove hall, on Saturday nights. However, these premises must have been steadily outgrown. At the tent's centenary celebrations in 1976, its membership of

## BIOGRAPHIES

*Madeleine Flynn* and *Tim Humphrey* are award-winning Australian sound-music artists working across performative art-forms. Current projects include their new sound installation, *Music for Imagined Dances*, which premiered at Dance Massive, and live sound for *The Weight of the Thing left its Mark*, and a new distributed sound project commissioned by Four Winds Festival, Bermagui 2012. They have recently completed the music/sound score for *Kapryong*, a documentary for FOXTEL, launched by Julia Gillard in April 2011. Recent works include *epi-thet*, a mixed media sound installation using genetic data, activated by the audience for MIAF 2010; *constellation* an exhibition with performance interruptions, a work they created with 12 contemporary Australian composers, as part of Liquid Architecture, 2010 and invited inclusion in the Prague Quadrennial, 2011, and *the megaphone project*, a mobile soundwork which toured nationally from 2008 to 2011 and will tour to the United States and Canada in 2011.

They created *john cage's musicircus* for Melbourne International Arts Festival in 2007, and for MIAF 2008 an installation with Californian sound artist Alex Stahl (Pixar productions), *Echolocation*, and a new duet for theatre, *This Map is Not to Scale*. They have a long term collaborative practice with dancer, Tony Yap, and Japanese visual artist Naomi Ota: their most recent work *Rasa Seyang* will tour nationally with a new sound and musical score in 2012, and will begin a new work *Kekkai* in 2011.

Their awards include a Green Room Award for Outstanding Composition/Soundscape, Melbourne International Arts Festival Award, ANAT Synapse Award, two Asialink Residencies and finalists in the APRA – AMCOS Awards for Excellence in Experimental Music for 2010. Tim has a PhD in music from Monash University and is currently a lecturer in creativity and culture at Griffith University. This is the year Madeleine is

determined to finish her PhD in choreomusical analysis at the University of Melbourne. They are the secretaries of New Music Network, Madeleine is a board member of Melbourne Fringe, peer assessor for the InterArts Office, and current chair of the Community Partnership panel of Arts Victoria.

[madeleineandtim.net](http://madeleineandtim.net)

*Cynthia Troup's* writing for performance includes *Care Instructions: Script for Single or Multiple Voice* (published as a limited edition by Aphids in 2009), and *And When They Were Good*, part of the Aphids production *A Quarrelling Pair: A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays* which tours to Rome in June 2011.

*Neil Thomas* has been making 'stuff' since 2007 and currently sells it at Fitzroy's Rose Street market every week-end. Neil

says, "Tim and Maddie invited me to make something for this piece. I was thrilled and honoured to be working with artists of such integrity and experience who make such beautiful work. The piece I created was a departure from the mostly small works I currently make. I relished the opportunity it gave me."

A Rag 'n' Bone band of three from Melbourne, *The Suitcase Royale* have been creating and performing together since mid-2004. Their premier work *Felix Listens to the World* was presented as part of the 2005 Melbourne International Arts Festival and toured in North America and Australia to great critical acclaim. 2011 sees the commencement of their new work, *The Last Town meeting of Liffey River* and the programming of *Backbone, Joe* at the Soho Theatre in London's West End.

# Libretto

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... a useful fact, like a good sovereign, is never out of date, is always passable, and no one objects to receive it because others have used it before.  
*Richard Coad, Facts and Fragments, Original and Select (1882)*



1 *agitato*

Taps turned on hard. Passing traffic, including horses hooves on cobblestones. Wind: through trees and under eaves.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, pp. 70–71: 'Breakers Ahead!']  
*And it sank to rise no more. In the countless homes that fill our land are the young, the loved the brave. Upon ruin's brink how many stand! Are there none to warn and ...*

Mechanical sounds and carpentry, such drilling and the hammering of nails—as though a stage set is being built. The switching on and humming of fluorescent tubes. A rattle of windows. Inside, from all directions, urgent clatter and movement of 'looking for something'.

The measurement task involves estimating the number of days of accommodation for each accommodation variety and finding the market equivalent rental price for each variety.



2 *deciso*

A match lit. A knife sharpened. The 'thud' of the refrigerator door swinging closed. Cutlery scraping on plates. A kettle coming to the boil; a pouring of hot water.

[From a recipe book] *the following mixtures may be used ... from three-quarters of an hour to one and a half hours, depending ... cool slowly, and allow to become nearly cold before turning out ... sugar to taste. Sugar to taste.*

The dragging of wooden chairs on a wooden floor. Sweeping. The folding of an open newspaper. A hard scrubbing, for example with steel wool.

The accuracy of this procedure depends crucially on whether the market research average market price reflects the same mix of meals and snacks as the mix of types of meals provided by households.



3 *ostinato come possibile*

Sweeping. The whirl and splashing of an electric washing machine in full cycle. The whine of a vacuum cleaner. From outside a 'snap' of scateurs; the rhythmic squeak of a rope swing.

[One side of a telephone call] *At any rate ... never in all my days ... made no secret of the fact ... his time will come ... any rate ...*

The washing machine grinds and its operation lurches to a halt, suggesting that the washing load is unbalanced, or some mechanical malfunction has occurred.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, p. 80: 'In God We Trust!']  
*In God we trust! In God we trust! For help and strength In God we trust!*

The tick of a clock. An aeroplane.

... (1996) time use survey data as it is currently collected provides 'no clue' on either loads of laundry or number of clean clothes produced in households.



4 *staccato, poi dolce*

A heartbeat. A hobby horse. A school bell ringing in the distance. A ball bouncing. Children. Skateboard races. A toy hammer banging. Television. A child crying. Scuffing of small feet. Clattering of cupboard doors and toys, including small wheels turning.

[From a story book] *When at last there was silence ...*

A child's erratic clapping. A screech of birds. Sweeping. Quiet whistling.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, pp. 70–71: 'Breakers Ahead!']  
*... and save. ... Are the young, the loved, the brave ...*

A mechanical music box tune. The creak of a rocking chair.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, pp. 108–109: 'The Footsteps on the Stairs'] *For when I read, or sing, or play, or join in pleasures sweet ...*

The output of child care is measure in child hours of care, not the input hours of parents or other unpaid carers.



5 *Songs outside Reckabite Hall*

*Outside the Reckabite Hall Northcote on the evening of September 14 Constable McGuinness saw five youths drinking from a bottle, and shouting and singing loudly. At the Northcote Court on Tuesday before Mr. D. Baldy, P.M., five youths—Lawrence Vincent Rooney, Charles Hollowood, Samuel Jones, Henry Gifford, and Francis Hart, all of Northcote—were charged with having behaved in an offensive manner in a public place. They pleaded guilty in defence they said that they were on their way to a dance in the Northcote Town Hall when, bearing an orchestra in the Reckabite Hall, they stopped outside and sang in tune.*

*Each youth was fined £1, in default imprisonment for seven days.*

INTERRUPTION



6 *poco a poco più piacevole*

Jangling coins. The scrape of a laneway roller door. The clink of a heavy bunch of keys. Broadcasting signals and bass rhythms of music. A child crying. A bicycle bell. Brakes screeching. A dog barking. The clang of passing trams.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, pp. 44–45: 'Laughing Chorus']  
*Ha, ba, ba! But very, very careful be, and laugh with caution now. For wise men laugh but rarely ... ba, ba, ba, ba! ... Ob!*

Vehicle doors slamming. A sound of trees and only distant traffic. A stopwatch. Cartage, for instance of sporting gear, baskets and glass bottles from a car boot. A cricket game: the 'crack' of the wooden bat hitting the ball; the ball in the air; polite applause. A packet of biscuits opened. The same dog barking. Rain beginning to fall. A single frog croaks.

The purpose of a trip does not affect the market price, so there is no need to differentiate between trip.



7 *con aria marziale*

An electric urn on the boil. The dragging of wooden chairs on a wooden floor.

[From conversations] *... from three-quarters of an hour to one and a half hours, depending ...*

*He got a buffet on a shoulder that would have sent a lesser man reeling across the stage ...*

Knocks on the front door; the door opened and shut again. A shaking of coats and shuffling of belongings; whispering; a clearing of throats.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, pp. 46–47: 'The Temperance Banner'—in rehearsal by a small, mixed choir] *Let us swell the glad sound, send the chorus around. Ob! Shout, for the pledge of our safety is found. 'Tis the Temperance banner, ob, long may it wave ...*

The faint drone of a lawnmower. Church bells. Trumpet practice. Electric light switches flicked to 'off'.

Thus we are forced back on measuring the input time and valuing that at an appropriate market rate. The rate is \$24.09 per hour ...



8 *liberamente*

Feet on carpet. Cushions plumped and patted. Wind: through trees and under eaves. A rattle of windows. A match lit.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, pp. 70–71: 'Breakers Ahead!']  
*And it sank to rise no more. In the countless homes that fill our land are the young, the loved, the brave.*

From upstairs, movement of 'looking for something'; drawers opened, and rifled through. Sighing. The metallic clicks of typing at a computer keyboard. A piling up and opening of books; a closing of books, including the 'thwack' of hasty closing. A pencil is sharpened. Pages are turned.

[*The Reckabite Harmonist*, pp. 108–109: 'The Footsteps on the Stairs'] *Yet still I ... pause to bear the footsteps on the stairs ... The footsteps on the stairs, the footsteps on the stairs, I listen ...*

A brisk scratching of handwriting.

Hence it is a productive activity although it does not fit within Margaret Reid's third person criterion for production.

(AND FINALE)

Abruptly: a train horn, and a garbage truck in the street. Alarm clocks ringing. Carpentry, and the switching on and humming of fluorescent tubes. The 'thud' of the refrigerator door swinging closed. A pouring of hot water. Rattling china. A fanfare.

[As a radio news announcement] *Star of Northcote Centenary Celebrations May 23 to June 5 ... On Saturday evening May 29 the Centenary Dinner was held ... entertainment by ... singer, comedian and impressionist interspersed the toasts in the latter half of the evening ... The evening closed with the singing of Auld Lang Syne.*

From a great distance, and unsteadily, as though at the dawn close of a great celebration, a party group singing 'Auld Lang Syne'.

# Madeleine, Tim, Cynthia & the Plumber

CYNTHIA TROUP: Today's the 28th of April 2011, and this is Cynthia Troup in the home of Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey, composers and sound artists, who are giving their own home and studio over to a living room opera ... "Dwelling Structure: An Opera in 8 Time Use Episodes."

PLUMBER: I just have to get past ...

TIM HUMPHREY: No worries.

CT: So, Tim and Maddy, what are you most excited about in regard to this project?

TH: ... it's the opportunity to create something where sound, composed sound, is at the forefront and ... and to do it in a large-scale form, which is very exciting. Also I think to lay the studio bare, which is ... our own space, and ... that's both frightening and exciting.

MADELEINE FLYNN: ... Following on from what Tim said about frightening... we're right at this point in the process where ... we're making this thing, we're terrified by this thing ... we're extremely hopeful about this thing, and extremely despondent about this thing, so all those feelings are there at the same time; and ... I must say that after years of making things, it's always

like this, it doesn't get any better, it doesn't even get any easier, but it does help me to remind myself actually that that tension ... is necessary and is part of what happens.

CT: In regard to creative process?

MF: Yes, yeah.

CT: Creating something entirely original?

MF: Yes, that's right.

TH: The precipice.

CT: ... Can you tell us, or speak about some of the technology you're using because... as artists you're so expert and adept at ... using technology to ... immerse the audience in a very particular world of your own creating.

MF: Well, Cynthia, we've got this idea that ... we need four of the audience to be 'page turners' in the opera and [so we will provide] these little tablets [and] we've made a collection of QR codes that then connect to our network within the house ... within the sound system that's for this opera and then ... and then [the audience, reading the QR codes with the tablets then] affect different aspects of that sound ...

CT: So that's a kind of audience involvement through interacting with

these small technological tablets.

MF: It's a very gentle interaction.

TH: Very, very, very, very gentle.

MF: And ... and absolutely not compulsory.

*we're right at this point in the process where... we're making this thing, we're terrified by this thing... we're extremely hopeful about this thing, and extremely despondent about this thing*

CT: ... is it true that there will be parts of the house that are activated ... through speakers and so on that will be in a sense "performing" ... their local sound waves during the opera?

MF: Yes, that's true. The... the great thing about doing a show in your own house and also having a kilometre of speaker lead is that we can put our speakers anywhere in the house and ... how we're ... imagining we're working now is that we're operating from the kitchen ... there's quite a lot of live sound operation. There's also some sort of foley actually, because a lot of these things are about the sound of the house ... so ... amplified foley in a way ... so ... with our kilometre of speaker lead it means we can—we are putting speaker leads upstairs, putting some in the living room with the people, some in

the kitchen ... one in the hallway ...

TH: And of course ...

MF: ... some outside ...

TH: ... the most sympathetic reverb is found in ... in the bathroom ... so we'll have something in there ...

CT: So the house is live-wired into an opera, mixed by you both together in the audience's real time, to evoke layered human time through history ... through the history of the house and the suburb and the family.

TH: And [to examine] the way we divide our time ...

CT: Did you want to add any final thoughts?

TH: Ah ... not really ... can you hear the plumber outside?

CT: [laughs] Ah yes! We've had our own little interruption ...

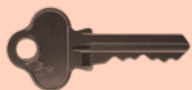
TH: That's right, yeah.

MF: Doing a very good job ... making sure the heating's working for you all ...

CT: [Laughs] The vibrancy of life, life local to the Rechabite Hall in Northcote... Thank you so much ... Tim and Maddy ...

TH: Thanks, thanks to you Cynthia.

MF: Thanks Cynthia, thank you.



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