



**Gareth Farr (1968) is a New Zealand composer and percussionist.**

Gareth Farr was born in Wellington, New Zealand. He began his studies in composition and percussion at the University of Auckland in 1986. The experience of hearing a visiting gamelan orchestra in 1988 prompted his return to Wellington to attend Victoria University, where the characteristic rhythms and textures of the Indonesian gamelan rapidly became the hallmarks of his own composition.

Farr continued with postgraduate study in composition and percussion at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where his teachers included Samuel Adler and Christopher Rouse.

In 1993, at the age of 25, Farr was appointed composer-in-residence by Chamber Music New Zealand, the youngest ever composer to hold that position. At the conclusion of the residence, Farr returned to the Eastman School to begin a doctorate in composition.

As well as composing *Kembang Suling* (for flute and marimba, his most popular work to date) and three works for orchestra during this time, Farr also introduced audiences to his on-stage alter-ego, the percussion-playing drag queen Lilith LaCroix.

The inclusion of his works in four events at the 1996 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts kick-started his career as a dedicated freelance composer. Since then, his music has been heard at (or especially commissioned for) high-profile events including:

- The 50th anniversary of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (*From the Depths Sound the Great Sea Gongs*)
- The opening of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (*Te Papa*, a work hailed as 'music with a powerful and moving impact that transcends idiom and individual taste')
- The 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney (*Hiko*, a concerto for percussionist Evelyn Glennie and the NZSO).

His music was performed by the NZSO in Beijing as part of the 2008 Olympics, and in the opening ceremony of Rugby World Cup 2011.

“Gareth is the most amazingly prolific and talented composer. He makes music very accessible to young and old alike”

*Helen Clark  
Former Prime Minister  
of New Zealand*

“Farr undoubtedly has what is needed to advance New Zealand’s distinctive musical identity”

*David Sell  
The Press*

“Gareth is a complete showman... he has this balance between being theatrical and having musical substance”

*Evelyn Glennie  
OBE*

In 2006 Gareth was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for his services to music and entertainment, in 2010 he was a recipient of the prestigious NZ Arts Laureate Award, and in 2014 he was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award from The University of Auckland.

Farr's music is particularly influenced by his extensive study of percussion, both Western and non-Western. Rhythmic elements of his compositions can be linked to the complex and exciting rhythms of Rarotongan log drum ensembles, Balinese gamelan and other percussion music of the Pacific Rim.

In addition to his music for the concert chamber, Farr has written music for dance, theatre, television and film. He has won four Chapman Tripp theatre awards including his soundtrack to *Vula*, a NZ/Pacific Island theatre piece that went on to perform extensively overseas including Australia, the Netherlands and London.

In 2006, the Royal New Zealand Ballet toured the country with their brand new work *The Wedding*, featuring a score by Gareth Farr. At 90 minutes, it was among the ballet company's most ambitious projects, and brought Farr together with prominent New Zealand novelist and librettist Witi Ihimaera.

Farr's music was integral to *Maui – One Man Against the Gods*, a stage show four years in the making. First premiered in 2003, in incomplete form, it featured aerial theatre, Maori kapa haka, contemporary dance and song, with Farr's stirring music touring a number of centres in New Zealand.

From 2006-2013, Farr developed a fruitful collaboration with director and librettist Paul Jenden, producing five comedy musicals: *Troy*, *Monarchy*, *Rome*, *The Nero Show*, and *C a Musical*.

In 2007 Farr was appointed as Composer-In-Residence for the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra culminating in 2008 with the premiere of *Ex Stasis* a symphonic song cycle for four soloists. In 2008 Farr also celebrated the world premiere of his work *Terra Incognita*, for bass baritone solo, choir and orchestra, performed by Paul Whelan and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

More recently his string quartet *Te Tai O Rehua* was commissioned and performed in 2013 by Australia's Goldner Quartet; his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra was performed in 2014 by the NZSO with soloist Tony Lee; and *Relict Furies* was commissioned by and performed at the 2014 Edinburgh International Festival, with soloist mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly and the Scottish Ensemble to critical acclaim.

For more information, visit:  
[www.garethfarr.com](http://www.garethfarr.com)

“Gareth Farr is a young percussionist and composer of formidable talent”

*Tim Bridgewater*  
*The Dominion*

“One of our great composers”

*Michael Vinten*  
*Capital Times*

“Like the Gods entering some sort of Pacific Valhalla”

*John Button*  
*The Dominion*

“Exhilarating and prodigiously inventive”

*Tim Bridgewater*  
*The Dominion*



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