

# CONCERT BIOGRAPHY:

## SIRENS BIG BAND

**SIRENS BIG BAND BRINGS A NEW SOUND TO THE BIG BAND SETTING:** 16 INSTRUMENTS WEAVING LILTING AFRICAN, MIDDLE EASTERN AND LATIN RHYTHMS TOGETHER WITH INSTRUMENTAL JAZZ.

**This 16-piece all-female ensemble** is co-led by Sydney musicians and recent recipients of the Jann Rutherford Memorial Award, bassist Jessica Dunn and saxophonist Harriet Harding. Named after the late pianist Jann Rutherford the award was founded in 2005 to assist in the professional development of outstanding young female jazz musicians in Australia.

Sirens Big Band presents a broad repertoire gathered from global inspiration and local roots, exploring originals by Australian female composers Linda Oh, Judy Bailey, Jeremy Rose, Zoe Frater, Laura Kahle and Jenna Cave as well as newly commissioned arrangements of tunes from around the globe previously unplayed by big band. These include pieces by Ethiopian Mulatu Astatqē, Sydney's jazz-reggae outfit 'The Vampires' and afro-funk band 'Nomo.' Sirens' music has a strong focus on improvisation and features outstanding soloists such as Ellen Kirkwood, Monique Lysiak, Loretta Palmeiro and Ruth Wells.

As eclectic as their repertoire, the members of Sirens Big Band come from a wide and varied background of experience: a string of Sydney Conservatorium jazz studies graduates; a couple of members of Sydney's 'The Bakery', and even a shakuhachi player.

Sirens Big Band recognises a need to support young female jazz musicians and to further increase their visibility in the Australian jazz scene. Sirens Big Band are in the process of planning workshops to be run for female high school students to promote interest in jazz studies and confidence in improvisation.

Since their first gig in March this year – a sell-out show at Petersham Bowling Club – the band have been making waves on the local scene, receiving lots of attention in national newspapers like *The Sydney Morning Herald* as well as air play on local radio stations such as 2ser FM.

A busy first year is set for the Sirens, with gigs lined up at QIRKZ in April and SIMA's Sound Lounge in May, as well as recording with ABC Radio National.

## FEATURED SOLOISTS

### LORETTA PALMEIRO – SAXOPHONE

Loretta completed her Bmus at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music while studying with Mark Walton, and has recently returned to the Sydney Conservatorium of Music to study with Craig Scott, Kevin Hunt, Judy Bailey and Dale Barlow while undertaking a diploma in jazz. Loretta has spent a number of years performing, teaching and recording in Portugal and Japan. She is founder of the group Hevian Light which features exceptional drummer/percussionist Fabian Hevia and she also composes for short films.

### RUTH WELLS – SAXOPHONE

Ruth has been playing saxophone for 18 years and piano for 21 years. Having studied music at the University of Sydney she now plays in a variety of bands including The Bakery, Squid and Brass Knuckles. Ruth is particularly interested in experimental improvisation and has performed at the Now Now and Difficult music festivals.

### ELLEN KIRKWOOD – TRUMPET

Ellen is a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with a Bachelor of Music majoring in Jazz Performance. At age 24, Ellen has been playing the trumpet for 14 years, including with big bands since age 13. At the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Ellen was a member of their leading Big Band, and has also worked with well known Sydney bands including Sydney Metro Big Band, the Rhino Factory and Jazz Connection. Ellen now leads the successful EQ Jazz Quartet, featuring many of her original compositions.

### MONIQUE LYSIAK – PIANO

Monique has worked as a professional musician for the past 30 years. She has studied in New York with Barry Harris, Tommy Flanagan and Kenny Barron. Monique has also been involved in music education and jazz improvisation for over 30 years and regularly teaches workshops with SIMA for young women wanting to develop skills in jazz music.