



# Sydney Festival

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# The Sydney Morning Herald

Sydney Festival

## New handle on water music

**E**UREKA," I think, displacing my body weight as I slip into North Sydney Pool, the problem of wet Sydney summers is solved: all Festival events should henceforth be under water. Opera Australia can perform *The Pearl Fishers* in the oyster farms of the Georges River; the SSO can do *La Mer* and arrangements of *Octopus's Garden* off Bondi Beach; the Australia Ensemble may like to do the *Trout Quintet* in the Parramatta River, with the Gregorian Chant Choir performing a *De Profundis*; ATYP may like to do the *Water Babies* in the lake at Centennial Park and Sydney Dance can devise something for the Archibald Fountain.

### MUSIC

BY GORDON KERRY

**Virtual Lagoon, North Sydney Pool, January 15**

But I digress (it must be the nitrogen bubbles). *Virtual Lagoon* is terrific fun, offering an opportunity to hear sound in a way I haven't experienced before. Armed with goggles, snorkel and earplugs (that's right, you hear through the bones of your head rather than the ear drum), we all take the plunge to experience a mixture of music and recorded natural sounds (from the Barrier Reef) which, as composer Michel Redolfi explains beforehand, travels four times faster in water than in air. And indeed, the clarity of

the sound is quite marvellous. Explanations of the sounds are also broadcast through the water, which is just as well, as my program goes soggy and my pen won't work.

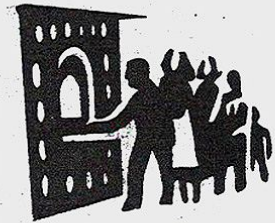
Redolfi has pooled his talents with those of Luc Martinez, who has devised a system whereby the colour and movement of the audience activates and changes some of the sounds. Sculptor Lyonel Kouro has created a set of large resin pebbles, striking looking in themselves but also linked into the music system. Part of the fun is swimming close to these objects and activating some of the music.

There is also much enchantment in entering the pool at sunset

and observing the gradual taking over of the underwater lighting, itself linked into the overall interactive design. The sight of so many different bodies moving silently and gracefully is strangely beautiful. What's Esther Williams got that we haven't got?

Redolfi has spent some years in California and his original music is in that new-agey, rippling synth sounds and high arrhythmic female vocal lines school - a sort of liturgy of crystals. It's kind of float-tank music, but very compatible with the sounds of dolphins, fish and tides. I had a whale of a time, au fond du North Sydney Pool.

*Virtual Lagoon finishes tomorrow.*



## BOX OFFICE

AT THE FESTIVAL

KELLY BURKE

**C**RITICS' CHOICE: It's the only concert in town where the audience is recommended to wear earplugs. If you can handle the odd flipper in the face and don't mind looking like a Grand Marnier prune, Michel Redolfi's *Virtual Lagoon* at (and in) North Sydney Olympic Pool is terrific fun, according to our music critic, Gordon Kerry. Tonight and tomorrow at 6 pm and 8.15 pm.

*Water Stories* is charming family entertainment, according to Stephen Dunne. Two performances, at 5 pm and 8 pm, today and tomorrow, at Darling Harbour.