

Flow

Beautrais x de Vegt

Oro Records

Release - Saturday 5 March 2022

OCKHAM AWARD WINNER'S POETRY INSPIRED BY THE WHANGANUI RIVER SET TO MUSIC

Whanganui musician and composer Elizabeth de Vegt has worked with local musicians to record 'Flow' an album of songs based on Airini Beautrais' 2017 Ockham longlisted poetry collection of the same name.

The album was recorded live in January 2022 in The Royal Whanganui Opera House by de Vegt and her band which includes Hamish Jellyman, Andrew Wetherall, Brad McMillan and Elise Goodge, a taonga puoro specialist who added percussive and melodic layers appropriate to the stories within the songs.

Months of rehearsals took place before recording began to perfect the arrangements. On the final day of recording an audience joined the musicians on stage to add yet another layer of context to the project, the Whanganui River community.

Prior to beginning the recording process, the musicians consulted with Te Rūnanga o Tūpoho. Renowned Whanganui artist and designer Cecelia Kumeroa, Tūpoho Arts Representative, and Sacha Te Utupoto Keating generously agreed to consult on the project. Their advice resulted in some alterations, and also affirmation that the music appropriately represents the Māori stories and kaupapa referenced within.

The album 'Flow' will be released by Wellington label, Oro Records on Saturday 5 March, with a live performance at St Peter's Church in Whanganui.

For more details contact

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Flow

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Album release – Saturday 5 March 2022

7.30pm. St Peter's Anglican Church, Whanganui

Tickets from The Royal Whanganui Opera House

<https://rwoh.sales.ticketsearch.com/sales/salesevent/20246>

Listen to the album: <https://ororecordsnz.bandcamp.com/yum>

Full album available on Bandcamp via Oro Records from 5 March. Contact us for a media pre-release download code.

Band website www.flowalbum.com

Band instagram https://www.instagram.com/_flowalbum/

EPK Google drive folder https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15ndl9RdAYYm2KLVnCNk_q11EyFZGipuy?usp=sharing

EPK Website <https://flowalbum.com/epk/>

BACKGROUND

In the same year, 2017, the Te Awa Tupua Bill was passed in parliament, granting the Whanganui River legal personhood, Okham Award Winner, Airini Beautrais, released a collection of poetry named *Flow*. Published by Victoria University Press, *Flow* explores the Whanganui River from its geological formations to its people and its history, both Māori and colonial. In her review of the book Elizabeth Morton writes, *“With Beautrais’ collection, every poem feels necessarily placed, perfectly considered, and yet surprising. This is a work that demonstrates the potency of this poet, her range, and her ability to use language to take the reader dancing.”*

It was Beautrais’ breadth of poetic form, use of rhythmic pentameters and rhyme that first inspired Whanganui based composer, Elizabeth de Vegt, to set some of her poems to music. De Vegt completed a Masters of Music, with first class honours and was the Creative Performing Arts Person of the Year in 2009 at The University of Waikato. It was late in 2020, after a difficult year of lockdowns, interrupted work and two small children to care for that de Vegt found compositional inspiration in *Flow* and approached Beautrais for permission to work with her words. *“At first I just planned to work with two or three poems,”* de Vegt says, *“but very quickly I had already completed compositions for seven. I eventually capped it at fifteen and realised I had created an entire body of compositional work.”*

The compositions were premiered to a live audience in March of 2021 in an outdoor setting, overlooking the Whanganui River, the creative life blood of the project. It was after this first public airing that de Vegt, again with Beautrais’ blessing, embarked on the next phase of the project, a recording. De Vegt enlisted more Whanganui musical talent, Hamish Jellyman, Andrew Wetherall, Brad McMillan and Elise Goodge to add further flesh to her compositions. Facilitating percussive and melodic layers and adding Taonga Puoro (traditional Māori musical instruments) to appropriate stories within the songs.

Before recording could begin a period of consultation with Te Runanga o Tupoho was undertaken. Renowned Whanganui artist and designer Cecelia Kumeroa, Tupoho Arts Representative, and Sacha Te Utupoto Keating generously agreed to consult on the project. Their advice resulted in some alterations and affirmations, giving the musicians assurance that the final compositions appropriately and sensitively represent the Maori stories shared.

At the beginning of January 2022 de Vegt and accompanists recorded all fifteen compositions within The Royal Whanganui Opera House. With its proscenium and dome betraying its late Victorian design the musicians and engineers wished to capture the unique auditory qualities of the space in the recordings. To this end it was decided to record every song live. Months of rehearsal were undertaken to make the renditions as perfect as possible. On the final day of recordings an audience of invited locals joined the musicians on stage to add yet another layer of context to the project, the Whanganui River community.

The final recordings will be released as an album appropriately named, *Flow*, on Saturday 5 March, with a live performance at St Peter’s Church in Whanganui.

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