

Ross Bolleter tells the story of Tasmania's *Ruined* pianos

Ross Bolleter is Australia's expert in playing Ruined Pianos. His taxonomy of *Ruined* includes instruments that have been neglected, abandoned, weathered, decayed, devastated, decomposed or annihilated. Bolleter says "A piano is said to be Ruined (rather than Neglected or Devastated) when it has been abandoned to all weathers with the result that few or none of its notes sound like those of an even-tempered upright piano. However, a Ruined Piano has its frame and bodywork more or less intact (even though the sound board may be cracked wide open), so that it can be played in the ordinary way". Ross will be telling the story of Tasmania's **Ruined** Pianos at the **Tasmanian Museum and Gallery** during the **Ten Days on the Island** festival taking place across Tasmania this month.

In conjunction with Tasmanian Regional Arts, Ten Days on the Island have conducted a state wide search for Tasmania's Ruined Pianos and after considering "pianos in any state of disrepair" have found a collection of 15 Ruined Pianos for Ross to explore during the ten day festival. The pianos range from the once popular Parisian wooden frame Bord pianos through to full iron frame German models and date as far back as the 1840's. All pianos are of high quality "the better the pedigree (piano) the better the ruin" says Bolleter.

In a series of events leading up to the opening of the festival, Bolleter recently travelled to regional Tasmania to play concerts in Ross, Stanley and Derby. As a sign of things to come, the concerts were well attended with Bolleter playing to enthusiastic audiences. Ten Days on the Island festival Director Elizabeth Walsh said "I was at all three events and the audiences response I can only liken it to a child's face on Christmas Day. Oops and ahs and broad smiles of delight, it was a series of treats for us all. There was one in Stanley which was completely ruined a classic and with the most wonderful tones coming out of the strings. Lot's of laughing and much enthusiastic and animated discussion following on from the performances".

The Ruined Pianos have now been transported to Bond Store, in the Tasmanian Museum and Gallery in Hobart, to be part of an installation in the Bond Store opening March 27. The installation will include a series of free performances and workshops by Ross Bolleter and will feature the stories of each of the pianos, presenting a unique take on the social history of music in Tasmania. "Every piano has a remarkable story. For example, there is one from the Cadbury factory that still smelled of chocolate and following the performance in Ross one of the audience members identified the piano as the one her grandmother sang to at the Cadbury Social Club dances" said Walsh "it had also been home to a Wallaby for some time".

The *Ruined* exhibition will run March 27th until May 5th in the Bond Store, Tasmanian Museum and Gallery, 10AM – 5PM DAILY (closed Good Friday). Admission is FREE.

When the installation is complete the pianos will be recycled and used for various purposes including the making of instruments, arts and furniture. Piano screens from previous exhibitions been put to good use as echo cello's which is an effective tool used for teaching children to play cello. The keys have previously been used to create scrimshaw, an ancient sailor's art form involving elaborate carvings on to ivory and the recycled wood has made beautiful harp frames and tables.

Ten Days on the Island began in 2001 as a unique celebration of island culture that firmly placed Tasmania on the world stage. Now celebrated as Australia's only state wide arts event, Ten Days offers an extraordinary program featuring international artists and events from island locations alongside Australia's finest artists. Attracting an audience of over 160,000 people, the multi art form program features five world premieres and 17 Australian premieres. Over 730 artists from 20 countries - Australia, Nova Scotia Canada, Taiwan, Cuba, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Hong Kong, Torres Strait, Jamaica, Japan, Mauritius, Newfoundland, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Samoa, Scotland, Singapore, Taiwan, Manhattan USA and Wales, will be seen in 62 Festival projects in 99 venues in 52 locations across the state, all in ten days (March 27 – April 5 2009). For more information on Ten Days on the Island festival or program, please visit www.tendaysontheisland.com.au

PERFORMANCE DATES:

27 March.....7pm

28, 29 March & 4 April.....3pm

5 April.....Midday

Duration:.....45 minutes (no interval)

Cost:.....FREE

Bond Store, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, 40 Macquarie St HOBART

Ross Bolleter Biography

Born in Subiaco, Western Australian 1946, Ross Bolleter currently lives in Perth. To pay the bills he plays the piano part-time in restaurants and teaches piano to private students. Bolleter receives strong support from a group of Perth-based improvisers, including Tos Mahoney, Diarmuid Piggott and Mark Cain. In fact working with Western Australian flautist Tos Mahoney encouraged Bolleter to return to the University of Western Australia where he had studied music between 1964 and 1967. Ross has participated in events such as the Relative Band Festival in Sydney in 1984, and the Perth Relative Festival and its successor in 1986. These events gave Bolleter the opportunity to use the inside of the piano percussively and employ the accordion in a variety of contexts. His love of ruined pianos, however, started in 1987 with a discovery at Nallan Station. Many international Ruined Piano records and performances later, Ross has honed down a series of captivating programs with Ruined Pianos and the stories of their and their owners' lives. Although he has composed some pieces formally, Bolleter is primarily interested in improvising live to tape, both as a solo player and in group work. Vital expression, he believes, is gained from the advantages of surprise and risk. Through improvisation he is able to live most intensely in the present, without anxiety about what is to occur or has been.

Sound Travellers is supported by the Australia Council's Music Board, assisting individual artists and organisations with the promotion and national touring of Sound Art and Electronic music. For a full programme, visit www.soundtravellers.com.au



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