Dangerous liaison
a thing of beauty

CONCERT
WAAPA staff and students
Academy music auditorium
Review: Rosalind Appleby

Staff and students from the WA
Academy of Performing Arts,
supported by Tura New Music,
showcased John Cage and his
avant-garde colleagues of the New
York School in this three-hour
extravaganza of rarely heard
music. The graphic scores were
projected on the wall so the
audience could see the squiggly
lines, graphs and dots directing the
performers to play all kinds of
extreme sounds.

Some of this complicated music
hasn't been performed in Australia
since the 1970s. Sounds
dangerous? It was a little; blips
and squeals can be ugly and
boring. But it wasn't either of
these things; instead there was a
surprising amount of stillness and
beauty.

Under the direction of Lindsay
Vickery and Anthony Pateras, the
Resonator student ensemble
improvised their way through
Morton Feldman's soft, sparse
Projection II and Earle Brown's
Event-Synergy II. The graphic
scores gave unusual freedom for
classical performers; some
students responded with creative
conviction while others were more
hesitant.

Cage's Concert for Piano and
Orchestra was a highlight,
featuring pianist Pateras, visiting
lecturer from Melbourne. With
more than 40 musicians on the
stage it had just the sort of chaos
Cage would have loved:
performers swapping parts, a
clarinet blowing bubbles in a bowl
of water, a squeaky toy and a
vocal soloist simultaneously
performing his Solo for Voice 1.

The overall effect was
surprisingly spacious, with delicate
piano chatterings punctuated by
searing white-hot orchestral
chords.

Vickery performed his
electronically transformed version
of Earle Brown's December 1952
featuring bass clarinet and an
archival recording of Brown
talking about the piece. Cat Hope
and Pateras joined Vickery for an
expert and humorous performance
of Christian Wolff's For 1, 2 or 3
People.

The concert ended with a
stunning performance by Pateras
of his internationally acclaimed
prepared piano suite Chasms. His
40-minute display of fearless
artistry was the best example of
how extreme music can not only
pummel the ears but massage the
soul.