THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

string music from Britain and beyond

Elgar Introduction and Allegro for Strings
John Woolrich Ulysses Awakes
David Stanhope Three pieces from *String Songs*
Hindemith Trauermusik
Thomas Wilson St. Kentigern Suite

Angela Lindsay, viola
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 28 March 2004
St. Stephen's Church, 189 Church St, Newtown

Welcome to the Bourbaki Ensemble's first concert for 2004, and the tenth overall! We thank you for your interest and hope you will enjoy our programme of music which is either written by British composers, or associated with Britain in other ways.

We are also very glad to welcome viola soloist Angela Lindsay to perform with us today. It cannot be without significance that many of the great composers have been violists. Bach, it is said, loved to play viola so that he could sit in the midst of the orchestra and hear all the harmonies around him. Mozart is believed to have written the viola part in his great *Sinfonia Concertante* for himself; Dvořák, Britten and Vaughan Williams also performed on the viola. The contemporary Georgian composer Giya Kancheli, whose *Styx* for viola, chorus and orchestra will be performed in June by Yuri Bashmet with the Sydney Symphony, said that "the wealth of its tone colours and its profound expressivity mean that the viola is very much predestined to bring reconciliation, peace and harmony to our souls."

We are sure that you will join with us in thanking Peter Rodgers and all at St. Stephen's for the use of their church, which is both visually and acoustically a marvellous performance venue. After the concert you can spend a fascinating afternoon exploring the surrounds of the church. We have not been able today to provide a guided tour, but a free pamphlet is available which will introduce you to the history associated with the church and cemetery.

If you would like to hear of future Bourbaki Ensemble performances, please join our email list by filling out a form (available at the door during interval and after the concert). You might also care to visit our recently launched website at `users.tpg.com.au/ddangell` – the site has little in the way of flashy design, but does have details of future Bourbaki activities, as well as an informative archive of programme notes.

PROGRAMME

Sir Edward Elgar Introduction and Allegro for String Quartet and String Orchestra, Op. 47

John Woolrich Ulysses Awakes, for viola and ten solo strings

Angela Lindsay, viola

David Stanhope Three pieces from *String Songs*

1. O Shepherd, O Shepherd, Won't You Come Home?
3. Lovely Joan
2. Good Morning, Good Morning, My Pretty Little Miss

INTERVAL — 20 minutes

Paul Hindemith Trauermusik

I Langsam
II Ruhig bewegt
III Lebhaft
IV Choral "Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit"

Angela Lindsay, viola

Thomas Wilson St. Kentigern Suite

I Bird
II Fish
III Ring
IV Bell
V Tree

The *Introduction and Allegro* for strings was written at a time when **Sir Edward Elgar** (1857–1934) had at last succeeded in achieving a measure of public acclaim. A long period of struggle, ending only in 1899 with the performance of the *Enigma Variations*, had left him with a personality compounded of wildly contradictory elements. In February 1905, with characteristic offhandedness, Elgar wrote to his friend and champion August Jaeger, "I have finished the string thing and it's all right". After the work's premiere in March had attracted only a lukewarm reception, however, he wrote to Dora Penny with an equally characteristic mixture of pride and despair: "Nothing better for strings has ever been done and they don't like it".

In late 1904 Jaeger had suggested to Elgar that he compose "a *brilliant* quick String Scherzo... a real bring down the house *torrent* of a thing such as Bach could write". Hardly an assessment of Bach's music which modern ages would find sympathetic; be that as it may, Elgar took up the idea and within four months had completed the *Introduction and Allegro*. The only hints of any Baroque influence on the piece are the opposition, very loosely in the manner of a *concerto grosso*, of solo quartet and string orchestra, and the "devil of a fugue" (Elgar's words) which comprises the central part of the work. Far from being a Baroque pastiche, the work is most notable for its overt Romanticism, and for the depth of feeling which Elgar, so wary of revealing in real life, was never afraid to display in his music.

The beginning of the *Introduction and Allegro* features frequent and often abrupt changes of mood and tempo. The majestic chords and triplets of the opening almost immediately give way to an aspiring passage for the solo quartet (annotated as "smiling with a sigh" in Elgar's manuscript score), which in turn is succeeded by an important dotted motif in violas, cellos and bass. This itself lasts only two bars before we hear a more relaxed version of the triplets, two more bars of the quartet theme and two of the dotted theme – six short sections within the first minute of the piece. In the first extended episode a solo viola announces a theme inspired by a Welsh folk song which Elgar had heard while on a ramble in the country. A return to the triplets of the opening is crowned by four mighty pauses, and a melancholy quartet version of the "Welsh" theme concludes the *Introduction*.

The *Allegro* begins with the "smiling with a sigh" theme and introduces a new idea in which vibrant semiquavers alternate between quartet and orchestra. Eventually the second violins lead off the fugue, which reaches a powerful climax before easing into a recapitulation of the *Allegro*. Brilliant scales in semiquavers usher in a final section in which the "Welsh" theme, *molto sostenuto*, appears at last in the full ensemble.

Monteverdi's opera *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* opens with the Greek hero asleep on the beach of his native Ithaca. After taking part in the siege of Troy, Ulysses incurred the enmity of Poseidon and has been forced to spend ten years wandering; when shipwrecked he does not at first recognise his homeland.

This moment is the basis of *Ulysses Awakes* by John Woolrich. Ulysses' aria is given to solo viola; the accompanying ensemble of six violins, viola, two cellos and bass not only provides a harmonic foundation for the piece but also reflects and echoes the solo part. The brooding, meditative texture portrays both the desolation of the beach and the confusion in Ulysses' mind. With the exit of the protagonist, two final gestures in the orchestra bring the work to an intensely quite close.

John Woolrich was born in 1954 and pursued tertiary study in English and music. He has held a number of lectureships and residencies, notably with the Orchestra of St. John's, Smith Square in London. Woolrich's compositions include several based on music by Monteverdi, Mozart and Purcell.

David Stanhope (born 1952) is one of Australia's most versatile musicians. He joined The Australian Opera as a conductor in 1986, and has worked with all of the major Australian symphony orchestras. David is also a virtuoso pianist and has released CDs on Tall Poppies and ABC Classics; he has played both horn and trombone professionally. On top of all this David is a composer and arranger, best known for his wind band music but active in many other genres too. *String Songs* is a setting of four English folk songs; today we perform the first three.

O Shepherd, O Shepherd, Won't You Come Home? begins with quiet phrases for two solo violins amid a haze of harmonies which suggest a foggy morning, before blooming (no other word will do!) into a richly scored statement of the theme. As the movement develops the accompaniment becomes sometimes a little disturbing; but the song remains serenely unruffled. Listeners may well recognise the theme of *Lovely Joan* as one used by Vaughan Williams in his *Fantasia on Greensleeves*. After an initial closely harmonised appearance in the lower instruments, the song is given in canon to violas, second violins and first violins. Our performance concludes with a lively setting of *Good Morning, Good Morning, My Pretty Little Miss*, featuring an attractive alternation of solo and *tutti* textures.

A selection of David Stanhope's works, including *String Songs*, has recently been recorded by the TSO with the composer conducting, and is scheduled for release in the near future.

Another immensely talented all–round musician was **Paul Hindemith** (1895–1963). He wrote a series of sonatas for every instrument of the orchestra and (so it is said) could play them all himself. His principal instrument, however, was the viola: he was a member of various prominent string chamber groups and a soloist of considerable repute. His compositions include seven sonatas and three concertos for the viola. It is probably only fair to record that some listeners find Hindemith's music dull and unemotional; others, however, find in it a stately dignity and an unostentatious depth of feeling. Hindemith's early radicalism and later refusal to cut ties with Jewish writers and artists put him out of favour with the Nazis and he was forced to flee Germany in the 1930s. He was in England in January 1936 to give a solo performance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra when the death of King George V was announced. Within 24 hours Hindemith wrote *Trauermusik* (Mourning Music) for viola and strings, and premiered it the next evening at a memorial concert with the BBCSO.

Trauermusik comprises four short movements. The first immediately establishes the mood of mourning: a solemn opening leads into a *tutti* reminiscent of a funeral march and then a freely flowing viola solo. The second movement, *Ruhig bewegt* (with calm movement), is very brief; the third is notable for its alternations of solo and orchestral passages. It slows down at the end and leads after a short pause into the finale, based on the German chorale *Für deinen Thron tret ich heirmit* ("Here I stand before Thy throne"); the attentive listener will recognise the tune to be that known in English–speaking countries as "Praise God from whom all blessings flow". The four phrases of the chorale are separated by reflective cadenzas for the soloist, and the work ends in tranquil resignation.

Thomas Wilson (1927–2001) was born in the USA of British parents, but spent nearly all his life in Scotland, and for most of his composing career was associated with the City of Glasgow. He received commissions from the BBC, the Edinburgh Festival, the Henry Wood Proms and many others, and in 1990 was awarded the CBE. His works include four symphonies, two operas and a wide variety of orchestral, choral, chamber and vocal compositions. Wilson's *St. Kentigern Suite* has been widely performed and critically acclaimed in such terms as "dazzling" and "wonderfully subtle and elegant".

St. Kentigern, also known as St. Mungo, is the patron saint of Glasgow. Wilson's suite was premiered in 1986 as part of the 850th anniversary celebrations of Glasgow Cathedral; its background is described by the composer in a preface to the score.

> St. Kentigern is a shadowy yet vivid figure. He comes down to us by way of a few rather random facts and many legends and stories. But the scanty evidence matters little. His real achievement is that he gripped the imagination, and continues to do so in the familiar symbols of The Bird, The Fish, The Ring, The Bell and The Tree which feature on Glasgow's Coat of Arms to this day.
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> My music takes these five symbols as its starting point... the first movement of my suite uses *The Bird* not only as a reminder of a miraculous event, but also as a symbol of Kentigern's aspiration to higher things – the conversion of the world, and the achievement of sanctity.
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> In the second movement *The Fish* is the activist, the messenger (as in the legend of the restoration of the missing ring). But the fish also has another dimension in that it was one of the most universally known Christian symbols of early times.
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> *The Ring* centres on the inner world of Kentigern the contemplative, the thinker. The circle is the perfect shape; it has no beginning and no end and as such, presents a potent meditative symbol of perfection and eternity.
>
> The fourth movement, *The Bell*, is a straightforward evocation of Kentigern proclaiming his message. It is a solemn

> yet urgently joyous, even raucous carillon. As the clamour recedes, the gentle fifth movement, *The Tree*, follows on without a break... An ancient plainsong melody – *Ubi caritas et amor Deus ibi est* – sets the tone for this serene meditation on the work of a man whose influence has been immeasurable.
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It may be worth while to add a few comments on the means by which the composer realises his aims. Wilson's harmony is frequently complex and dissonant; but with the exception of the deliberately "raucous" peals of bells in the fourth movement, the dissonance is for the most part presented quietly, so that the effect is mysterious rather than harsh. Unusually for a contemporary composition, the *St. Kentigern Suite* is planned around three lengthy melodies: original themes in the first and third movements, and the plainsong of the last. These create points of repose and help listeners to keep their bearings in a work of considerable activity.

The first movement begins with an evocation of the bird's dipping, diving flight; the initial soaring figure in the violas will later be transformed to provide the openings of the second and third movements, and will reappear in its original form "like an echo" at the end of the entire work. The first movement continues with a quiet foretaste of the tolling bell which will underlie the fourth movement; this is succeeded by a wayward and expressive violin melody. *The Fish* is full of triplets and *glissandi*, creating a "slippery" effect as of the fish gliding through its watery habitat, and ends (perhaps) with a chain of bubbles. The third movement is centred upon a concentrated, intense and ecstatic melody for solo violin. The clamour of the fourth movement and serenity of the last complete a magnificent demonstration of how a distinctly modern musical technique can be employed in the composition of profoundly expressive music.

David Angell, conductor

David has conducted the Bourbaki Ensemble since its inception. In 2002 he co–wrote and conducted the soundtrack for the film *Compost Monster* which has been screened in Sydney and in London, and he is the editor of a revised score of the *Concerto for Strings* by Margaret Sutherland. David has contributed translations of Russian and Italian poetry to the *Lied and Art Song Texts* website at `www.recmusic.org/lieder`.

David is also the conductor of Orchestra 143, a chamber orchestra based in Turramurra. A recent concert of early Romantic works for strings was well reviewed by Fred Blanks, who described David as "trustworthy" – whatever that means!

Angela Lindsay, viola

Beginning the viola at the age of eleven, Angela spent all her Conservatorium High School years with a scholarship, gaining valuable experience in the fields of chamber music, chamber and symphony orchestra. She completed her Bachelor of Music in Adelaide in order to study with Keith Crellin, work intensively at chamber music, and perform solo with the South Australian College Chamber Orchestra. Angela also had the opportunity to play with the Australian String Quartet for expanded works such as the Mendelssohn Octet and Mozart Quintets.

Angela has toured with shows such as *Les Misérables* and with stars such as Sinatra, Minelli and Sammy Davis Jnr., and loves playing the orchestral and opera repertoire. She has played with the Sydney, Adelaide, Tasmanian and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Huntington and Adelaide Chamber Orchestras, the Australian Dance Theatre, Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, the Welsh National Opera and City of Oxford Orchestra (UK); in many of these she has held the post of principal viola.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble aims to perform both familiar and lesser–known works from the string orchestra repertoire, and takes a particular interest in Australian music. Last May the Ensemble gave the world premiere performance of *Music, like the Dark Husk of Earth, Abiding* by Newcastle composer Colin Spiers, and in 2004 will present three programmes, each featuring an Australian composition.

General Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was a leading figure in the French army at the time of the Franco–Prussian war. An enthusiastic amateur musician, he never set out on campaign without his beloved violin, an instrument of fabulous provenance said to be from the workshop of Patrizio Amati. He also invariably ensured that at least one of his adjutants was a skilled cellist, a situation not without parallel in the other services. Some authorities believe that Ravel's masterly sonata for violin and cello was inspired by Bourbaki's autobiography *Maître et Commandant*.

Violins Warwick Pulley, Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Paul Hoskinson, Quyen Le, Kirrillie Moore, Julia Pokorny, Rebecca Pulley, Kathryn Topp, Dale Wilson.

Violas Natalie Adby, Janice Buttle, Gareth Young.

Violoncellos Rosalind Graham, Guy Curd, Steve Meyer.

Bass Joal Taylor.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

a Mediterranean odyssey for string orchestra

Colin Brumby Mediterranean Suite
Rodrigo Two Andalusian Miniatures
Respighi Il Tramonto
Turina La Oracion del Torero
Jean Rivier Symphony No. 3

2.30 pm, Sunday 11 July 2004
Macquarie Theatre, Macquarie University

2.30 pm, Sunday 18 July 2004
St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Music from around the Mediterranean: two short Spanish works, a stylish and elegant French symphony, and a setting (in Italian!) of Shelley, for soprano and strings. Australian composer Colin Brumby contributes arrangements of Mediterranean folk music.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

young composers write for strings

Robert Davidson Dodecahedron
Mendelssohn String Symphony No. 9 in C major
Janáček *Idyll* for string orchestra

2.30 pm, Sunday 24 October 2004
St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Each of the works in this programme appeared before the composer had passed his mid–twenties. Robert Davidson's *Dodecahedron* is a sparkling musical jigsaw, Janáček's *Idyll* spirited and lyrical. Mendelssohn wrote his ninth symphony at the age of just thirteen!

Programme details subject to change