# 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 for string orchestra

Camille Merčep, soprano
David Angell, conductor

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

**2.30 pm, Sunday 18 July 2004**
St. Stephen's Church, 189 Church St, Newtown

Welcome to the Bourbaki Ensemble's second concert for 2004. In today's programme we'll attempt to transport you from winter in Sydney to the shores of the Mediterranean! There are Spanish pieces by Rodrigo and Turina, exhibiting both the exciting dances and the dreaming serenity of their homeland; Respighi's nostalgic sunset setting of words by Shelley in *Il Tramonto*; and a witty, lyrical and urbane symphony by Frenchman Jean Rivier. The Eastern end of the Mediterranean is represented by Australian composer Colin Brumby's orchestration of folk songs from Cyprus, Turkey and Crete.

Details of our third and final concert for 2004 are listed on the back of this programme. For an even more convenient way of keeping up to date with Bourbaki performances, fill out a form (available at interval or after the concert) to join our email list. The orchestra's website at `users.tpg.com.au/ddangell` also has full details of programmes, dates and venues.

Some news concerning our previous programme: Thomas Wilson's marvellous *St. Kentigern Suite*, which we performed in March, is to be recorded professionally in Scotland later this year. I hope to hear when the CD is released, and would be happy to pass on details. If you enjoyed the work, go to our website, send an email and we'll keep you informed.

Those who have attended our earlier concerts at Newtown will be aware of the historical significance of the cemetery surrounding St. Stephen's Church. After the July 18 concert Fran Morris will share her extensive knowledge of the area, giving a free guided tour of church and cemetery. All welcome!

We would like to thank everyone at St. Stephen's for accommodating our concerts and making us welcome. Our thanks also to Macquarie University for inviting us once again to perform in their "Music on Winter Sundays" series, and to Kerry Klujin for her impeccable organisation of the details.

# PROGRAMME

**Colin Brumby** Mediterranean Suite, for string orchestra

1. O Dance You Maids (Cyprus)
2. I Do Not Know (West Turkey)
3. The White Sheep (Turkey)
4. Dance Song (Crete)

**Joaquín Rodrigo** Dos Miniaturas Andaluzas

1. Preludio
2. Danza

**Ottorino Respighi** Il Tramonto

Camille Merčep, soprano

## INTERVAL

20 minutes

**Joaquín Turina** La Oracion del Torero

**Jean Rivier** Symphony No. 3, for string orchestra

I. Allegretto quasi pastorella
II. Vivo e leggiero
III. Lento e nostalgico
IV. Allegro molto e fugato

In a (presumably) deliberate piece of provocation, British composer Constant Lambert once remarked that the only thing you could do with a folk song after playing it once was to play it again – louder. His dictum has, however, been substantially disproved through the efforts of many composers who have shown how folk material can be adapted, varied and rescored (and sometimes even played again, softer).

The earliest important collector of folk songs in Britain was Cecil Sharp. Much of his research was carried out with the assistance of Maud Karpeles, who herself became a recognised authority on folk song and dance, her studies encompassing the music not only of Britain but also of Newfoundland and the Appalachian Mountains of North America. In 1956 Karpeles published *Folk Songs of Europe*; four songs from this book form the basis of Colin Brumby's *Mediterranean Suite*. The first, *O Dance You Maids*, is from Cyprus. Its text (as translated into English by Karlpeles) advises young maidens to dance and sing before marriage, as there will be little time for it afterwards! There follow two Turkish songs, *I Do Not Know* and *The White Sheep*. Brumby's striking setting of the latter features a quiet, haunting background over which the melody appears repeatedly in a gradually deepening texture before dissolving into a chord on five solo instruments. The suite ends with a lively *Dance Song* from Crete.

**Colin Brumby** was born in Melbourne in 1933; after graduating from the Melbourne Conservatorium he pursued further studies in Spain and London before returning to take up a post at the University of Queensland. Colin's works include operas, symphonies, concertos, chamber music and a great deal of choral music. *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, for strings and harpsichord, was performed by the Bourbaki Ensemble in 2002.

The late nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the appearance of music from many nations in concert halls hitherto dominated by the cultures of Italy, France and Germany. One of the Spanish composers to come to prominence in this era was **Joaquín Rodrigo**. Born in 1901, Rodrigo shares with Benjamin Britten (born 1913) the very suitable birthday for a composer of 22 November – the feast of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music. Rodrigo is best known for his guitar compositions, particularly the beautiful *Concierto de Aranjuez*; there are also the *Concierto madrigal* for two guitars, the *Concierto Andaluz* for four and the *Concierto pastoral* written for flautist James Galway. His extensive list of compositions is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that he contracted diphtheria as a child and as a result was blind from the age of three.

The *Two Andalusian Miniatures* were composed in 1929 but not performed until 1999, on what would have been the composer's 98th birthday had he not died a few months earlier. The delay suggests that perhaps Rodrigo felt the work was of insufficient merit to take a place among his acknowledged compositions; there are inconsistencies and doubtful points in the score which presumably the composer would have resolved had he edited the piece for publication, and which as things stand the performers must sort out in rehearsal. Nevertheless the two short pieces contain much attractive music. The *Preludio* begins with a mysterious impression of an Andalusian landscape, as if shrouded in the mists of dawn. There follows a cello theme supported by a subdued thrumming as of distant guitars, and the movement ends with expansive solos for cello and violin. The *Danza* is a virtuosic and thrilling exposition of Spanish dance figures notable for the rhythmic opposition of **one**–two–**three**–four–**five**–six and **one**–two–three–**four**–five–six.

**Ottorino Respighi** (1879–1936) studied violin, viola and piano as a child, and later turned to composition. In 1900 he travelled to St. Petersburg, where he occupied the post of principal viola in the Opera orchestra and also took the opportunity to study composition and orchestration with Rimsky–Korsakov. In contrast to the majority of Italian composers, Respighi is best known for his instrumental works, which include the "Roman trilogy" of symphonic poems *The Pines of Rome*, *The Fountains of Rome* and *Roman Festivals* as well as three suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances*. He also, however, wrote nine operas, scarcely performed nowadays, and many vocal works, among them *Il Tramonto*, an extended setting of *The Sunset* by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822).

Shelley's poem tells the tale of a youth gifted with genius but afflicted with illness; of his death; and of his lover's (perhaps morbid) devotion to his memory. Respighi sets the text as a continuously developing narrative over an accompaniment unified by the repetition of a few salient figures: the nostalgic mood is expressed by means of flowing triplets, either alone or in alternation with duplets. The orchestra has few opportunities to shine in its own right; notable, however, are the dramatic opening which immediately conjures up the fading of the day towards sunset, and the elegiac descending figure heard in the first violins at the words "o cara creatura perduta", and then repeatedly until the end of the work.

French composers seem always to have had a fascination with Spain. From Bizet's *Carmen* to Debussy's *Ibéria*, and further, Spanish settings and melodic phrases (or at any rate their careful imitation) have occupied a significant place in French music. A reciprocal influence is also observable, most notably

## IL TRAMONTO

Già v'ebbe un uomo, nel cui tenue spirto
(Qual luce e vento in delicata nube
Che ardente ciel di mezzogiorno stempri)
La morte e il genio contendeano.
Oh! quanta tenera gioia, che gli fè il respiro
Venir meno (così dell'aura estiva l'ansia talvolta)
Quando la sua dama, che allor solo conobbe
L'abbandono pieno e il concorde palpitar di due creature che s'amano,
E gli addusse pei sentieri d'un campo,
Ad oriente da una foresta biancheggiante ombrato
Ed a ponente discoverto al cielo!
Ora è sommerso il sole; ma linee d'oro
Pendon sovra le cineree nubi,
Sul verde piano, sui tremanti fiori...
Sui grigi globi dell'antico smirnio,
E i neri boschi avvolgono,
Del vespro mescolandosi alle ombre.
Lenta sorge ad oriente l'infocata luna
Tra i folti rami delle piante cupe:
Brillan sul capo languide le stelle.
E il giovine sussurra: Non è strano?
Io mai non vidi il sorgere del sole, o Isabella.
Domani a contemplarlo verremo insieme.

Il giovin e la dama giacquer tra il sonno
E il dolce amor congiunti ne la notte:
Al mattin gelido e morto ella trov l'amante.
Oh! nessun creda che, vibrando tal colpo, fu il Signore misericorde.
Non morì la dama, nè folle divento:
Anno per anno visse ancora. Ma io penso
Che la queta sua pazienza, e i trepidi sorrisi,
E il non morir... ma vivere a custodia
Del vecchio padre (se è follia
Dal mondo dissimigliare) fossero follia.
Era, null'altro che a vederla, come leggere
Un canto da ingegnoso bardo... intessuto a piegar
Gelidi cuori in un dolor pensoso.
Neri gli occhi, ma non fulgidi più;
Consunte quasi le ciglia dalle lagrime;
Le labbra e le gote parevan cose morte tanto eran bianche;
Ed esili le mani e per le erranti vene
E le giunture rossa del giorno trasparia
La luce. La nuda tomba, che il tuo fral racchiude,
Cui notte e giorno un'ombra tormentata abita,
È quanto di te resta, o cara creatura perduta!

"Ho tal retaggio, che la terra non dà:
Calma e silenzio, senza peccato e senza passione.
Sia che i morti ritrovino (non mai il sonno!)
Ma il riposo, imperturbati quali appaion.
O vivano, o d'amore nel mar profondo scendano,
Oh! che il mio epitaffio, che il tuo sia 'Pace'."
Questo dalle sue labbra l'unico lamento.

## THE SUNSET

There late was One within whose subtle being,
As light and wind within some delicate cloud
That fades amid the blue noon's burning sky,
Genius and death contended. None may know
The sweetness of the joy which made his breath
Fail, like the trances of the summer air,
When, with the Lady of his love, who then
First knew the unreserve of mingled being,
He walked along the pathway of a field
Which to the east a hoar wood shadowed o'er,
But to the west was open to the sky.
There now the sun had sunk, but lines of gold
Hung on the ashen clouds, and on the points
Of the far level grass and nodding flowers
And the old dandelion's hoary beard,
And, mingled with the shades of twilight, lay
On the brown massy woods—and in the east
The broad and burning moon lingeringly rose
Between the black trunks of the crowded trees,
While the faint stars were gathering overhead.—
"Is it not strange, Isabel," said the youth,
"I never saw the sun? We will walk here
To–morrow; thou shalt look on it with me."

That night the youth and lady mingled lay
In love and sleep—but when the morning came
The lady found her lover dead and cold.
Let none believe that God in mercy gave
That stroke. The lady died not, nor grew wild,
But year by year lived on—in truth I think
Her gentleness and patience and sad smiles,
And that she did not die, but lived to tend
Her aged father, were a kind of madness,
If madness 'tis to be unlike the world.
For but to see her were to read the tale
Woven by some subtlest bard, to make hard hearts
Dissolve away in wisdom–working grief;—
Her eyes were black and lustreless and wan:
Her eyelashes were worn away with tears,
Her lips and cheeks were like things dead—so pale;
Her hands were thin, and through their wandering veins
And weak articulations might be seen
Day's ruddy light. The tomb of thy dead self
Which one vexed ghost inhabits, night and day,
Is all, lost child, that now remains of thee!

"Inheritor of more than earth can give,
Passionless calm and silence unreproved,
Whether the dead find, oh, not sleep! but rest,
And are the uncomplaining things they seem,
Or live, or drop in the deep sea of Love;
Oh, that like thine, mine epitaph were—Peace!"
This was the only moan she ever made.

in the choice of Paris as a venue for study by a whole generation of young Spanish composers, among them **Joaquín Turina** (1882–1949).

Turina's *La Oracion del Torero* (The Bullfighter's Prayer) was originally written for four lutes, but is more frequently performed in later versions for string quartet or string orchestra. Largely rhapsodic in nature, the music is occasionally interrupted by more active episodes as the toreador envisions the forthcoming conflict.

French composer **Jean Rivier** (1896–1987) entered the Paris Conservatoire at the comparatively late age of 26, a result of service in the First World War followed by a lengthy period of recuperation from the effects of mustard gas. From 1948 to 1966 he himself taught composition at the Conservatoire, for much of this time deputising for Darius Milhaud during the latter's biennial residence in America.

As a composer Rivier was very characteristically French in his attraction to woodwind instruments, writing a great number of solos, chamber works and concertos not only for flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon but also for saxophone. Far less stereotypically, however, he showed a considerable interest in the string orchestra, and four of his eight symphonies are scored for strings alone. His music is generally conservative in cast (perhaps a consequence of his late start on compositional studies), and he was a member of the *Groupe du Triton* which set out to reconcile the opposing tendencies of French composition in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, when occasion demanded Rivier was capable of varying traditional harmony in poignant and attractive ways. Listen for example to the third movement of his *Symphony No. 3* from 1938, which also demonstrates the composer's flair for heartfelt and expressive melody.

The symphony begins with an *Allegretto quasi pastorella*, which by means of its supple syncopations immediately establishes a relaxed and harmonious mood. A feature of the movement, and of the symphony as a whole, is the use of parallel harmonies, especially in the violins and violas. A fine melodic passage for second violins, unaccompanied, introduces the final section of the movement, in which the absence of cello and bass, together with initially complex harmonies, creates an ethereal mood which only in the last bar resolves into a clear G major.

Vigorous rhythmic figures and dashing scales mark the beginning of the second movement. They are soon replaced by a lyrical, if somewhat laconic, melody given to the second violins over a quietly bustling viola accompaniment. By alternating these textures and occasionally introducing new material, Rivier constructs a vivacious and attractive *scherzo*–like movement.

An intensely quiet web of contrapuntal accompaniment establishes the mood of the third movement, marked *lento e nostalgico*. The expressive violin melody which appears against this background is subsequently given to violas. The sudden explosion of frantic activity in a central section is rather surprisingly reminiscent of Shostakovich; but before long calm is restored, and the movement ends in deep, reflective harmonies.

The finale is a dazzling display of fugal technique. The theme which initially is given at regular intervals to cellos, violas, second violins and firsts is later subjected to all kinds of transformations. It is heard backwards and upside–down, and at a half or a quarter of the original tempo. In a thrilling section near the end the theme appears in *stretto*, with entries in bass, celli, violas and second violins cascading each on top of the other at closer and closer intervals. The full weight of the whole orchestra in unison brings the symphony to a mighty conclusion.

## **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 has been playing viola for many years with some of the best known non–professional orchestras in Australia, including the Australian Youth Orchestra, Melbourne Youth Orchestra and community orchestras in and around Sydney. Recently he filled the position of principal viola for a performance of Berlioz' *Requiem* given in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House by singers drawn from nine choirs across the USA.

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!

## **Camille Maria Merčep,** soprano

Camille has performed in concert and recital throughout Europe, Australia and in China. She is equally at home on the operatic stage and on the concert platform, having performed with Opera Australia on several occassions, as well as with NZ Opera and smaller, fringe companies such as Opera Mode and Opera Ensemble. In August this year she will sing the role of Judith in two concert performances of Béla Bartók's opera *Bluebeard's Castle* as part of the Candlelight Concert series at the Garrison Church in The Rocks. Her repertoire ranges from Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Il Trovatore* to more intimate chamber repertoire such as Ravel's *Chansons Madécasses*.

## THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble consists of professional musicians, amateurs, teachers and students, and aims to perform both familiar and lesser–known works from the string orchestra repertoire. The Ensemble takes a particular interest in Australian music, and in May 2003 gave the world premiere performance of *Music, like the Dark Husk of Earth, Abiding* by Newcastle composer Colin Spiers. Works by Australian composers David Stanhope, Robert Davidson and Colin Brumby are featured on the Bourbaki Ensemble's 2004 programmes.

Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki was a prominent figure in the French army around the time of the Franco–Prussian War, and was also an enthusiastic musician who keenly followed contemporary trends in composition. Enemies within the military took advantage of his intense interest in German music to cast doubt on his loyalties, and a scandal ensued which was to find echoes in the Dreyfus case some twenty years later.

**Violins** David Saffir, Heloise Pyne, Alastair Duff–Forbes, Margaret Howard, Emlyn Lewis–Jones, John Ma, Kirrillie Moore, Warwick Pulley, Joanne Toouli, Justin White.

**Violas** Natalie Adby, Rebecca Pulley, Philip Silver, Richard Willgoss.

**Violoncellos** Steve Meyer, Guy Curd, Chloe Miller, Tim Slade.

**Bass** Nicole Murray–Prior.

# THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

young composers write for strings

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

David Angell, conductor

**2.30 pm, Sunday 24 October 2004**

**St. Stephen's Church**

**189 Church St, Newtown**

Tickets $15, concessions $8

Each of the works on the Bourbaki Ensemble's next programme appeared before the composer had passed his mid–twenties. Robert Davidson's *Dodecahedron* is a sparkling musical jigsaw. In its alternation of nostalgic lyricism and dance–like vivacity Janáček's *Idyll* shows clear evidence of the composer's Czech/Moravian background. The precocious Felix Mendelssohn wrote his ninth symphony at the age of just thirteen! Its fluency and maturity belie the composer's early years.

St. Stephen's church, designed by Edmund Blackett, is a superb venue for small ensemble concerts on account of its attractive setting and warm acoustics. The surrounding cemetery, which may be inspected before or after the concert, is rich in memories of famous and infamous characters from the history of Sydney.

Further information `users.tpg.com.au/ddangell`

Programme details subject to change