THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

ocean music for string orchestra

Peter Sculthorpe Songs of Sea and Sky
Frederick Delius Two Aquarelles
Tōru Takemitsu Toward the Sea II
Vasco Martins Symphony No. 4, *Ocean in the Heart*
Grace Williams Sea Sketches

Christine Draeger, flute
Verna Lee–Brown, harp
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 18 September 2005
St. Stephen's Church, Newtown
2.30 pm, Sunday 25 September 2005
Macquarie Theatre, Macquarie University

We are very glad to welcome audiences both at Newtown and at Macquarie University to the second Bourbaki Ensemble programme for 2005, entitled "ocean music for strings". Composers throughout the ages have been inspired by the ocean; a very short list would range from Monteverdi's music for *The Return of Ulysses*, through Vivaldi's *Tempesta di Mare* concertos and Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* overture to Debussy's *La Mer*. In more recent times one could mention John Woolrich's *Ulysses Awakes*, a reworking of the Monteverdi which was performed by the Bourbaki Ensemble in 2004.

In the present concerts we explore "ocean music" of various kinds from around the globe. We begin with Peter Sculthorpe's *Songs of Sea and Sky*, inspired by the bright and sunny waters of the Torres Strait, and move via Frederick Delius' languid summer night on the water to the dark Debussyan nocturne of Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu. Vasco Martins' symphony depicts the broad swell of the Atlantic which dominates his home in the Cape Verde Islands, while Grace Williams' delightful suite expresses the calm and stormy moods of the seas bordering her native Wales. As always we are keen to present new musical experiences to our audiences: both the Sculthorpe and Martins works were composed as recently as 2003. And we haven't actually checked, but it would seem highly probable that this will be the first Australian performance of music by any Cape Verdean composer!

Our final performance for 2005 will be a programme of chamber music on Sunday 4 December at St. Stephen's – for more details see the back cover of this booklet, or visit our website at `users.tpg.com.au/ddangell`. Don't forget that it is very easy to keep in touch with Bourbaki Ensemble activities by joining our mailing list. Please fill out one of the forms available at the door and return it before you leave.

PROGRAMME

Peter Sculthorpe Songs of Sea and Sky
Prelude – Saibai – Interlude –
Mission Hymn – Dance Song –
Lament – Postlude

Frederick Delius Two Aquarelles

Tōru Takemitsu Toward the Sea II
1 The Night
2 Moby Dick
3 Cape Cod

Christine Draeger, flute
Verna Lee–Brown, harp

INTERVAL
20 minutes

Vasco Martins Symphony No. 4, *Ocean in the Heart*

Grace Williams Sea Sketches, for string orchestra
1. High Wind
2. Sailing Song
3. Channel Sirens
4. Breakers
5. Calm Sea in Summer

Among the composers who have sought to develop a distinctively Australian style of composition, and who have seen their efforts rewarded by performances around the world, **Peter Sculthorpe** occupies a prominent place. Born in Launceston in 1929, Sculthorpe studied first at Melbourne University and subsequently at Oxford. His great interest in Balinese and Japanese music is one facet of a vision of an Australian music which need not rely exclusively on European traditions. Sculthorpe's most recent major composition is his *Requiem*, premiered at last year's Adelaide Festival in connection with the composer's 75th birthday celebrations.

Australian indigenous music has also been of lasting fascination for Sculthorpe. "As a composer," he writes in his autobiography *Sun Music*, "it's always seemed foolish not to take heed of a music that has been shaped by this land over many thousands of years." Melodies both from northern Australia and from the Torres Strait are quoted in his compositions, and it is the latter which underpin the *Songs of Sea and Sky*. The original version of the work, for clarinet and piano, was composed in 1987 to a commission from Yale University; shortly afterwards it was adapted for flute and piano. In recent years further arrangements have appeared for string orchestra with or without solo violin and didjeridu; today we perform the 2003 version for string orchestra alone (though this version still retains important sections for solo violin).

Perhaps the first impression obtained on listening to the *Songs of Sea and Sky* is of an immense spaciousness which evokes the brightness and clarity of the Torres Strait seascape. Over a pulsating bass drone, cellos begin the composition with a lengthy rhythmic and dramatic declamation, after which a flourish in the upper strings (originally a piano arpeggio) announces the second section of the work. Here, a traditional song from the island of Saibai, some ten kilometres from the New Guinea coast, is given to a solo violin over a sparse background. An interlude, mainly for violas, is succeeded by *Mission Hymn*, a variation of the Saibai tune recording the influence of nineteenth century religious music on indigenous culture, and by a vigorous and rhythmic *Dance Song*. The traditional song returns in a *Lament*, and a brief postlude rounds off the work with spacious ocean textures and the cries of seabirds.

One of the most selfless acts in the history of music must be the offer in 1928 by the 22–year–old Eric Fenby of his services as amanuensis to the ailing and blind **Frederick Delius**. With Fenby's collaboration Delius was able not only to complete a number of major works already begun, but also to embark on entirely new compositional ventures. It can only have been Fenby's unwavering belief in the value of Delius' music which sustained him through the difficulties of taking down from dictation such works as the *Songs of Farewell*, a twenty–minute composition for double chorus and large orchestra to words of Walt Whitman.

Fenby also prepared new versions of Delius' earlier works when the composer was unable to do so; among these are the transcription for string orchestra of two wordless choruses, *To be sung of a Summer Night on the Water* (1921), made in 1932 at the request of the violinist Albert Sammons. The first of the two brief pieces, known in their string version as *Two Aquarelles*, is rhapsodic and dreamlike, while the second suggests a dance heard faintly in the distance. Each displays to the full Delius' idiosyncratic brand of chromaticism, the supporting lines frequently falling by semitones in an expression of the langorous sensuality of a warm summer's night.

Born in Yorkshire in 1862, Delius had little formal musical education beyond an 18–month spell at the Leipzig Conservatory, and it took until nearly his fortieth year for his most characteristic compositions to emerge. Although Grieg, whom Delius had met at Leipzig, admired the younger man's music, it made little impression on the public anywhere – and virtually none in his native England – until it was taken up by Sir Thomas Beecham. In 1929 Beecham organised a Delius Festival which the composer, though exceptionally frail by now, was able to attend; he also made many recordings of Delius' music, a number of which have lately been reissued on CD. Delius died in 1934, his final years later recalled by Fenby in his moving memoir *Delius as I knew him*.

Tōru Takemitsu (1930–1996) is without doubt the most distinguished Japanese composer of "Western" art music. His catalogue includes a broad range of orchestral and chamber music; he has also been active in writing for film, among his most notable credits the score for Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*. Takemitsu is, however, far from being a mere imitator of European models; despite occasional echoes of Debussy ("I am self taught," he said, "but I consider Debussy my teacher"), his art suggests in its poise and atmosphere a distinctly Japanese aesthetic.

Takemitsu's chamber music largely avoids conventional ensembles (though he has written both for string quartet and for piano trio), more usually employing a combination of instruments chosen to suit the expressive aims of each particular piece. Examples include *And then I knew 'twas Wind* for flute, viola and harp (its scoring perhaps a conscious tribute to Debussy) and *Sacrifice* for alto flute, lute, vibraphone and antique cymbals. A certain fondness for the combination of flute and plucked instruments, perhaps a result of their close kinship with the Japanese *shakuhachi* and *koto*, is evident from these works, as well as from the three versions – alto flute and guitar, alto flute with harp and string orchestra, alto flute and harp alone – of *Toward the Sea*.

The three movements of *Toward the Sea* bear the somewhat enigmatic titles *The Night*, *Moby Dick* and *Cape Cod*. The first of these was written in 1981 for Greenpeace (in aid of the Save the Whale campaign), the others being added a year later. The piece begins from nothing with a sustained flute note for which the composer requests a "hollow" tone, and pursues a wayward and expressive course made up of short phrases separated by silences, of sustained chords in the orchestra and arpeggio passages in the harp, of accelerating and slackening tempi. Near the end of the movement the gentle rocking of waves is clearly heard in harp and strings. The second movement begins more firmly; the somewhat heavy first three notes in harp, celli and bass perhaps suggest the mythical white whale of the title. Haunting and virtuosic passages for flute herald the gentle harmonies which close the movement. The finale is dominated by two lengthy passages for flute and harp alone, separated by what sounds almost like a folk song for the flute over harmonics in strings and a murmuring harp accompaniment. *Toward the Sea* is an exemplar of what Stephen Arnold has called Takemitsu's "apparently effortless ability to create beautiful sounds (and eloquent silences) and to unfold them at a daringly deliberate and poised pace."

The Cape Verde Islands lie in the Atlantic Ocean, some 600 kilometres off the westernmost point of Africa. The ten major islands of the archipelago have a combined land area of 4000 square kilometres, separated by about 20 times that area of water; so it is entirely comprehensible that the Cape Verdeans should have a deep understanding of the ocean and all its moods. Composer **Vasco Martins** (born 1956) studied in Lisbon and Paris. His works to date include ten symphonies (some for strings alone, others for full orchestra), guitar music and electronic music, and have been performed in Europe, Canada and Brazil.

Martins' fourth symphony, subtitled *Ocean in the Heart*, about nine minutes in duration, begins with a tranquil cello theme suggesting the slow swell of a great ocean. The theme is taken up without haste by violas and then second violins, until with the entry of first violins and bass the full string orchestra is heard. As the music proceeds the waves gather pace, the symphony ending with tremolo and arpeggiated accompaniments to a high, singing violin melody.

Grace Williams (1906–1977) was born in the town of Barry, situated on the coast of South Wales at the point where the Severn flows into the Bristol Channel. Her childhood and her last thirty years, when she returned to live in Barry, were spent within sight of the sea, and she dedicated the score of *Sea Sketches* "to my parents who had the good sense to set up home on the coast of Glamorgan". Her intervening years were spent working at the Royal College of Music as a student of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob, and in Vienna under Egon Wellesz. During her time in London she earned a living as a schoolteacher and was a friend of Benjamin Britten; much of their correspondence survives, and demonstrates an abundance of good humour, mutual encouragement and keen appraisal by each of the other's music.

The single work for which Williams is best known is the *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes*, a delightful collection of traditional children's songs put together with a skilful and sparkling orchestration. Little of her more "serious" music is performed nowadays: a pity, as much of it has a depth of tone and feeling which goes far beyond the high spirits of the *Fantasia*. Notable among her compositions are concertos for oboe and for trumpet, the second of two symphonies, a large number of works for women's chorus and the Milton setting *Fairest of Stars*.

A strongly marked theme in violins, set over a whirling accompaniment, begins the string suite *Sea Sketches*. Williams' portrayal of a windy day is remarkably realistic in its textures and dynamics: tellingly, it is *not* loud all the way through but fades and revives as fragments of the first theme fly continually past the listener. The movement ends in an uneasy quiet. Gentle rocking figures introduce the second movement, *Sailing Song*. The listener will readily imagine yachts gliding across the calm waters, their sails filled by a sudden surge of wind about halfway through. *Channel Sirens* depicts a mysterious, fog–bound scene in music whose static violin harmonies seem to have little to do with the mournful theme first heard in violas and cellos. Towards the middle of the movement the brighter colours of four solo instruments suggest rays of light striving to penetrate the mists. The fourth movement is an evocation of waves surging onto a rocky coast, breaking in showers of foam and retreating. The finale, *Calm Sea in Summer*, floats arching, lyrical melodic lines over a repetitive bass pattern. Its central section is dominated by complex harmonies which recall those of Gustav Mahler, an exceptionally rare influence in British music which doubtless harks back to the composer's period of study in Vienna. The rippling of the waves fades into silence, and with it Grace Williams' vivid seascapes.

Christine Draeger, flute

Christine studied at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music and with Zdenek Bruderhans at the University of Adelaide, graduating with an Honours Degree (Chamber Music) in 1979. In 1981 Christine joined the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as Second Flute. In 1982–3 she was Acting Associate Principal Flute, and in 1985 Acting Principal Piccolo. In 1986 she left the orchestra to embark on a freelance career.

Christine has been a core member of The Seymour Group Ensemble (Australia's leading contemporary music ensemble) since 1982, and in 1992 founded the Tucana Flute Quartet which has performed in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Chicago.

Since 1991 Christine has composed three flute quartets, a septet, two works for storyteller and solo flute, several duets, and solos including *Melusina's Dream* (1999), which won first prize in the Australian Flute Composition Competition 1999.

Verna Lee–Brown, harp

Verna is a leading harpist who has attracted critical acclaim since her solo career started at the age of 15. She has been a soloist with the Australian Youth Orchestra at the Adelaide Arts Festival, and with many Sydney orchestras. She has performed with leading orchestras including the Sydney Symphony, the Australian Philharmonic and the Singapore Symphony, and has toured Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Singapore.

Verna's film and television recordings include a scene for the movie *The Matrix*, and the premiere recording of her own transcription of the guitar concerto by Colin Brumby. She has studied with world–renowned harpists in Sydney, Germany and the United States, her teachers including June Loney and Alice Giles.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble, formed in 2001, is a chamber string orchestra based at St. Stephen's Church, Newtown, and has also performed at the Macquarie Theatre and at the Garrison Church in The Rocks. The Ensemble is keenly devoted to music of the twentieth and twenty first centuries, and takes a particular interest in Australian music. Recent concerts have included works by Australian composers David Stanhope, Colin Brumby, Robert Davidson and Richard Meale.

Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki graduated in 1834 from the *École Spéciale Militaire* and eventually rose to the rank of General. He was also known as an innovative *maître de cuisine*, his greatest achievement being *Tarte d'Amblongue*, whose development occupied him for a large part of the 1860s. The prominent gastronome Edouard Lière published an almost identical recipe in 1870; Bourbaki could never be convinced that this was coincidental, and spent many thousands of francs in fruitless lawsuits against Lière. Today it is customary to give both inventors their due, and the famed dish is known to connoisseurs as Tarte Lière–Bourbaki.

Violins Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Natalie Adby, Alastair Duff–Forbes, Alan Foster, Paul Hoskinson, Esmeralda Tintner, Justin White, Richard Willgoss.

Violas Jill Quin, Martin Lee, Kathryn Ramsay.

Violoncellos Steve Meyer, Stela Solar, Nicholas Thomas.

Bass Nicole Murray–Prior, Jack Clegg.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

chamber music for strings

Beethoven String Quintet in C major
Rimsky–Korsakov *Allegro* and *Variations*
Paul Stanhope *Morning Star*, for string quartet
Mozart Clarinet Quintet

2.30 pm, Sunday 4 December 2005
St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Tickets $18, concessions $10

To finish the year, something a little different with a programme of chamber music. This provides a bit of variation from our usual orchestral format, and also enables us to include composers like Beethoven, who normally doesn't make it into Bourbaki performances since he wrote no music for string orchestra.

Beethoven's string quintet, though generally overshadowed by his unmatched series of sixteen quartets, is a powerful work whose opening has a breadth and grandeur not found in his earlier compositions. Our programme also features string quartets by Rimsky–Korsakov, a composer usually known only for his opulent orchestral scores, and by Sydney composer Paul Stanhope, whose *Morning Star* is inspired by the Aboriginal music of Arnhem Land. In Mozart's clarinet quintet we present perhaps the best loved chamber work of the classical period.

Further information `users.tpg.com.au/ddangell`
Programme details subject to change