THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

shores of the Baltic: music for strings

Einojuhani Rautavaara Fiddlers

Erkki–Sven Tüür Insula Deserta

Greg van der Struik Piangi

Valentin Silvestrov Zwei Dialoge mit Nachwort

Sir Andrzej Panufnik Divertimento for Strings

Lars–Erik Larsson Concertino for Trombone

Erik Sköld Adagio

Greg van der Struik, trombone

David Angell, conductor

2.30 p.m., Sunday 29 November, 2009

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to the final Bourbaki Ensemble concert for 2009. We hope that you will enjoy the wide range of expressive aims essayed by today's composers. Trying to sum them up in one word each is probably a rather bad idea, but here goes: satirical in the Larsson *Concertino*; commemorative in Greg van der Struik's *Piangi*; witty in the Rautavaara; poignant in the Sköld; elegant in the Panufnik; pictorial in the Tüür; nostalgic in the Silvestrov. If after hearing the music you don't agree, you may care to come up with your own list!

St. Stephen's church is, as it always has been, a wonderful place in which to make music. The Bourbaki Ensemble would like to express its sincere thanks to Peter Rodgers for permission to give our concerts here, and to Megan Lavender, Parish Administrator, for organising dates and other details. As a small token of our appreciation we are delighted to be able to provide music for the St. Stephen's Christmas Eve service at 10:45 pm on 24 December – more information in the church foyer.

In June members of the Bourbaki Ensemble spent a few evenings in St. Stephen's recording *Mermaids*, a piece for eleven strings by Wollongong composer Wayne Dixon, for release on CD. Latest news is that the CD will be available soon from Publications by Wirripang at `www.australiancomposers.com.au`. More information about Bourbaki recordings and concerts, both past and future, can be found at `www.bourbakiensemble.org`.

Planning is well under way for the Bourbaki Ensemble's tenth season in 2010. Dates for our Newtown concerts are settled (we hope to repeat the second concert at Macquarie University), as is some of the repertoire. For information as it stands at present please see the back cover of this programme; for full details when available, please join our mailing list! Simply send your email address to `ddangell@hotmail.com`, or sms it to 0433074322.

PROGRAMME

Sir Andrzej Panufnik Divertimento for Strings
I Allegro moderato
II Andante III Allegro

Valentin Silvestrov Zwei Dialoge mit Nachwort
I Hochzeitswalzer
II Postludium III Morgenserenade

Lars–Erik Larsson Concertino for Trombone, Op. 45 No. 7
I Preludium: Allegro pomposo
II Aria: Andante sostenuto
III Finale: Allegro giocoso

Greg van der Struik, trombone

INTERVAL — 20 minutes

Erik Sköld Adagio for Strings

Greg van der Struik Piangi

Greg van der Struik, trombone

Erkki–Sven Tüür Insula Deserta

Einojuhani Rautavaara Pelimannit (Fiddlers), Op. 1
I Närböläisten braa speli
II Kopsin Jonas
III Klockar Samuel Dikström
IV Pirun polska
V Hypyt

The life of **Andrzej Panufnik** (1914–1991) was shaped by some of the most tumultuous events of the twentieth century. After graduating from the Warsaw Conservatory in 1936 he studied for a short while in Vienna, Paris and London. With the rise of Nazism in Europe, however, he felt duty bound to return to his native Poland. In the early years of World War II he performed in cafes, large public gatherings such as concerts being forbidden under the Nazi occupation, as part of a piano duo with fellow composer Witold Lutosławski. After the war Panufnik's increasing sense of frustration at bureaucratic interference with his creative work led to his dramatic defection to Britain, where he was granted political asylum, in 1954. As a result his music was immediately banned in Poland (though it appears that the occasional "unofficial" performance still took place); but in the west he became greatly sought after both as a composer, receiving commissions from such major figures as Yehudi Menuhin and Mstislav Rostropovich, and as a conductor. In 1990 he was at last able to return for a visit to Poland, and the following year he received a knighthood in the New Year honours list.

One of the ways in which Polish composers attempted to write music of personal significance under the socialist regime without incurring official censure was to base their music upon pre-existing material: sometimes Polish folk music, or in the case of Panufnik's *Divertimento*, classical Polish chamber music by **Felix Janiewicz** (1762–1848). Panufnik's scoring of three movements from a set of trios for two violins and bass is extremely faithful to Janiewicz's classical style, with perhaps a touch of early romanticism in the central movement: so much so, in fact, that there is some uncertainty in the literature as to whether the work is more properly ascribed to Janiewicz (as arranged by Panufnik) or to Panufnik (based on material by

Janiewicz). In any case, Panufnik's selection of two lively movements framing a somewhat melancholy *andante* constitutes a delightfully attractive work for string orchestra.

Valentin Silvestrov was born in 1937 in Kiev, capital of the Ukraine. *Two Dialogues and an Afterword*, for string orchestra with piano, was written in 2001–2002 and is dedicated to the great Estonian composer Arvo Pärt; like much of Pärt's own music it occupies a world of intense quietness. The dialogues are imaginary encounters between Silvestrov and composers of earlier centuries. The first is an adaptation of a waltz performed by Franz Schubert at a wedding in the Kupelweiser family. It appears that Schubert improvised the waltz at the keyboard and never wrote it down; it was passed down orally in the family until 1943, when at last it was committed to paper and included in his catalogue of works. In Silvestrov's "recomposition" of Schubert's waltz, the strings envelop the piano part in a hazy texture which has been characterised by Tatjana Frumkis in a sleeve note for ECM Records as "[not] a sharply etched image [but] a slightly unfocused daguerreotype".

The second dialogue is with a fragmentary *Theme in A flat major* by Wagner. Although he never used the theme in a completed composition, Wagner wrote it down on two surviving manuscripts, one from 1858 when he was working on *Tristan und Isolde* and the other from 1882 during the composition of *Parsifal*. The afterword, entitled *Morning Serenade*, is Silvestrov's own composition. A delicately poised violin melody, described as "light, transparent, *dolce*, distant", is supported by a gently arpeggiated accompaniment. Luminous bell–like sounds in a remote key herald the work's concluding retreat into silence.

Occupying an important place among the works of Swedish composer **Lars-Erik Larsson** (1908–1986) is a set of twelve concertinos for various solo instruments with string accompaniment. All are three–movement works in a neoclassical idiom; in the seventh the solo role is given to the trombone. The opening combines orchestral passages, ranging from the pompous to the lyrical and back again, with extended trombone cadenzas. The second movement is an aria in which both the soloist and the first violin section have melodic opportunities. The finale frequently features trombone and strings in unison or close canon; there are also brief references to themes from the first two movements. The scampering semiquaver passages for the trombone are perhaps intended as a test not only of the performer's technique but also of his sense of humour!

Despite still being in his final year of secondary schooling, young Swedish composer **Erik Sköld** (1991–) has already an impressive list of compositions to his credit. Erik was born in Finspång in the province of Östergötland, some 150km southwest of Stockholm. He comes from a musically active family, his father and a great–uncle having written symphonies and other orchestral works, with a cousin working mostly in the fields of choral and electronic music. Erik himself has composed small pieces for violin or piano since the age of seven but says that he "began writing music properly" when he was about 14 or 15. He has already completed three symphonies, the first two of which are soon to be performed in Brazil. Erik's *Adagio* for string orchestra was written about a year ago and was subsequently dedicated to the victims of heatwaves and bushfires in Australia the following summer.

In 2005 **Greg van der Struik** (1965–) was invited to perform at Anzac Day celebration concerts in Pont–Rémy, Villers–Bretonneux and in the Abbatiale de Saint–Leu–D'Esserent near Paris. Feelings engendered by this trip, and by other visits to military cemeteries in Holland and France, led to the composition of *Piangi* for trombone and strings in 2006.

Piangi opens with a lament for the solo trombone, accompanied by a heavy tread in the lower instruments and martial rhythms in the violins and violas. A more explicit march soon appears in cello and bass; this gradually leads to more active figurations before a *largo* passage, initiated by the soloist alone, combines the lament and march motives. Eventually the music reaches a recapitulation of the opening episodes, and the work concludes with a hymnlike section in D♭ major.

The nation of Estonia occupies a position on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland, the 500km long eastern arm of the Baltic Sea. To the west of the mainland, lying in the Baltic proper, are the islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa, also part of Estonian territory; the latter is the birthplace of acclaimed contemporary composer **Erkki–Sven Tüür** (1959–).

Tüür first achieved public recognition in 1979 as the founder of the avant garde rock band *In Spe*. The group quickly made a name for itself with its complex repertoire of "chamber rock", culminating in its 1983 recording *Sumfoonia seitsmele esitajale*, a "symphony for seven performers". In 1984 Tüür, perhaps feeling that he had achieved all he could in this sphere, left the band in order to concentrate on composition.

One of Tüür's principal compositional concerns is the structure ("architectonics") of his works: as a general rule he conceives the overall design of his music before even beginning to think of such things as rhythms and melodies. Tüür also strives to accommodate a balance between complexity and simplicity in his music: he has expressed surprise at the apparent disinclination of many compositional schools to attempt such a synthesis, citing central European modernism on the one hand and American minimalism on the other as disappointing in this respect. *Insula Deserta*, for twenty solo strings, was composed in 1989 and was the piece which first established Tüür's reputation as a composer: it is therefore not surprising that it is an exemplar of these aspects of his style. It begins with the successive introduction of contrasting strands of music: a quiet unison pitch in the first violins which expands into a sharp quarter–tone cluster; a gentle background of five separate lines in harmonics for the seconds; a dissonant but brief crescendo for the violas. Before long the first violin line has developed into an enchantingly pure and serene melody of the type which one perhaps (most unfairly) does not expect to hear in modern music. By the time the full orchestra is deployed, the texture is one of rapid trill–like oscillations, which gradually slow down to expose a sustained low note for the two basses. The second main section of the work is a complete contrast, the lyricism of the opening being replaced by a precise, almost mechanical texture in varying metres. Once again the violins begin, to be succeeded by violas and then the lower instruments. Note values become ever shorter in a marvellously intricate display of compositional technique, leading to a climactic passage for the whole ensemble in rhythmic unison. This abruptly cuts out to leave only a soft whispering of bowing behind the bridge. In the final section of the work, the mechanical texture twice attempts to restart itself; but it is the textures of the opening which provide a quiet conclusion.

Besides its satisfying abstract structure, *Insula Deserta* offers a variety of imaginative tone–pictures. Though it may not have been in the composer's mind, one is tempted to hear the opening as an evocation of Shakespeare's desert island in *The Tempest*. "Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises, sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not."

Finland's record in supporting music is – or should be – a matter of envy for many prosperous nations. In a country with a population of five million (a quarter of Australia's), state and local authorities provide funding for no fewer than thirty professional orchestras. Extensive training is available for performers, conductors and composers. Audiences for orchestral music are increasing despite(!) the frequent appearance on programmes of contemporary music both Finnish and foreign.

Einojuhani Rautavaara (born 1928), perhaps Finland's leading composer today, is often spoken of as Sibelius' greatest successor. Of his extensive list of works, Opus 1 is the suite *Pelimannit* (Fiddlers): five pieces described by the composer as "free fantasies based on dances written by a Finnish 18th century fiddler, Samuel Rinda–Nickola". A grand opening decribes the somewhat pompous arrival of the famous Närbö fiddle band. The alarming dissonances are *of course* intentional in the Bourbaki Ensemble's performance, though perhaps accidental on the part of the villagers! In the second movement the fiddler Kopsin Jonas practises obsessively, surrounded by the dark northern forest. The title of the third refers to the bell–ringer Samuel Dikstrom, though he is actually depicted improvising at the organ: it is clear from the start that his instrument has two sharply differentiated keyboards. There follows "a melancholy devil [sitting] on a rock", his attention momentarily caught by an angular village dance. In the finale the villagers' furious whirling hurtles along to a breathtaking finish.

Gregory van der Struik, trombone

Gregory van der Struik currently enjoys a busy career as an orchestral and solo trombonist. He has held the position of Principal Trombone with the AOBO since 1987 and has been active as a soloist and composer in Australia, China and Europe. He studied trombone with Geoffrey Bailey and Arthur Hubbard at the Sydney Conservatorium High School and graduated as an Associate of the State Conservatorium of Music. Prior to his appointment as Principal Trombone, he undertook extensive engagements with professional orchestras as well as holding principal positions in the ABC Sinfonia (which he conducted in the Opera House) and the Australian Youth Orchestra.

As a soloist, Greg has released and been featured on a number of CDs which emanate from the Trombonis Australis Project, initiated in 1990 to develop and present an Australian contribution to international brass repertoire. He has performed in Australia, Europe and Asia as a recitalist and with ensembles such as the Orchestre de Picardie, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, RAAF Air Command Band, Orchestre de Cuivres d'Amiens and the University of Newcastle Wind Orchestra. He has been described by international trombonist and composer John Kenny as "one of the most interesting trombonists pushing for increased recognition of the trombone anywhere."

Greg was a member of the brass faculty at the Sydney Conservatorium from 1993 to 2004 and has given masterclasses in Australia and overseas. He has also been enterprising as a chamber musician, being a founding member of the Early Brass Consort of Sydney, and has been active in promoting Opera Australia Brass which made a highly successful concert tour of China in May 2000. Future projects include recordings of repertoire for trombone and organ, recitals for national and local radio and premieres of a number of his compositions.

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The Bourbaki Ensemble has been giving concerts in Newtown since 2001. Members of the Ensemble love exploring the masterpieces of the string orchestra repertoire, both the familiar and the unjustly neglected, and keenly support Australian composers, performing in 2009 music by Andrew Schultz, Mark Oliveiro, Phillip Wilcher and Greg van der Struik.

General Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was well known in Parisian society as a devotee of orchestral and chamber music. It is odd that no contemporary sources allude to his equally profound interest in the music of the provincial and agricultural classes, an avocation which led him at different times to make an extensive study of the connections between Ruritanian and Finnish folk music. Modern scholars in the field of ethnomusicology have even conjectured that without Bourbaki's efforts, traditional Finnish music would have been entirely lost, its riches unavailable to modern composers.

Violins Alastair Duff–Forbes, Greta Lee, Katie Dixon, Steven Harvey, Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Tamara Lyell–Kum, Deborah McGowan, Andrew McGrath, Tracy Wan, Justin White, Richard Willgoss.

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Deirdre Boyle, Mark Chambers, Kate Hughes.

Violoncellos Nicholas Comino, Imogen Granwal, Clare Kahn.

Basses Caitie Cahill, Mark Szeto.

Piano Prue Gibbs.

BOURBAKI 2010

In 2010 The Bourbaki Ensemble celebrates its tenth year of existence! As always we hope to present innovative programmes of music you may not have heard before.

The first concert will be on **21 February** and will feature the Tucana flute quartet. Four of Sydney's leading flautists will appear as soloists in the *Concerto for Four Flutes and String Orchestra* by Irish composer James Wilson, and will join the orchestral complement in Charles Ives' celebrated sketch *The Unanswered Question*. The programme will also include the *Divertimento* (2008) for string orchestra by Melbourne composer Christopher Willcock. Subtitled "Nolan's Backyard", the work is inspired by three paintings of Sidney Nolan.

Our second programme will take place on **25 July**. It will most likely include *Oma Kodu* for clarinet and string orchestra by Andrew Ford, and a concert performance of Wayne Dixon's *Mermaids* which we recently recorded.

Finally, on **5 December** a grand concert to wind up our tenth year! More Charles Ives (*The Rainbow* from our 2008 CD *Mozart in Love*); Thomas Wilson's dazzling *St. Kentigern Suite* which we first performed in 2005; and to finish the year, Terry Riley's seminal 1960s minimalist piece *In C*.

Full details will be posted soon to our email list. If you're not yet on the list, please send your email address to David Angell (`ddangell@hotmail.com`, or sms 0433074322). It's going to be an exciting year and we hope you will be able to join us!

Further information 0433074322 or `www.bourbakiensemble.org`

Programme details subject to change