THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

meditations for strings

Peter Sculthorpe Cello Dreaming

Sibelius Rakastava

Suk Meditation on the St. Wenceslas Chorale

Andrew Schultz Endling

Purcell works for strings

Derek Davies India

John Napier, cello
Derek Davies, viola
David Angell, conductor

7.30 pm, Friday 24 April 2015

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to an extremely special Bourbaki Ensemble concert. Derek Davies, a much valued member of the Bourbaki Ensemble for many years, is facing serious health difficulties. In order to help with ongoing medical and living expenses, we will be donating to Derek half the proceeds from this concert. We are also taking the opportunity to celebrate Derek's achievements as a performer, composer and arranger by presenting three of his works, in one of which he will also play a solo role. Regular Bourbaki audiences may already have heard Derek's prelude *India* for viola and strings; two other arrangements will have their premiere performances tonight.

The Australian musical community was much grieved last August by the death at age 85 of Peter Sculthorpe. As a tribute to Peter, every Bourbaki Ensemble concert this year will feature one of his compositions. *Cello Dreaming* (to be performed in the present concert) and *Shining Island* (December concert) are celebrations of the Australian landscape and people: the former inspired by the indigenous cultures of northern Australia and the Torres Strait, the latter a more abstract composition. Bourbaki's August concert presents a more searching view of our country. *From Ubirr* is a string version of Peter's *Earth Cry* (1986), an impassioned and sometimes angry plea against both the degradation of the environment and the "self–interest", "bogus... identity" and "commercialisation" which the composer then saw in certain aspects of Australian society.

We would like to express our gratitude to all at St. Stephen's for allowing us to present concerts in the marvellous acoustics and wonderful surroundings of their church. If this is your first Bourbaki Ensemble concert and you would like to receive advance information about future performances, please email `david@bourbakiensemble.org`. We trust that you will enjoy tonight's programme of music you may not have heard before!

PROGRAMME

Josef Suk Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale "St. Wenceslas", Op. 35a

Derek Davies India, prelude for string orchestra

Derek Davies, viola

Henry Purcell In nomine a7 – Fantasia upon one note – In nomine a6

Peter Sculthorpe Cello Dreaming

John Napier, cello

INTERVAL — 20 minutes

Jean Sibelius Rakastava, Op. 14, for strings, timpani and triangle

I Rakastava (*The Lover*)
II Rakastetun tie (*The Path of the beloved*)
III Hyvåå iltaa... Jåå hyvåsti (*Good evening... farewell*)

Henry Purcell Chacony for strings

Traditional The Salley Gardens, arranged by Derek Davies

Ludwig van Beethoven Violin Concerto: first movement, adapted by Derek Davies

Inga Courtney–Haentjes, violin

Andrew Schultz Endling, Op. 72

There can be few in the Anglophone world who are not acquainted with the carol of “Good King Wenceslas”. Victorian in origin (John Mason Neale, 1853), as are many popular Christmas carols, it is a somewhat sentimental account of a supposed episode in the life of its protagonist. The real St. Wenceslas (Svatý Václav, in the Czech language) was born in about 907 and became Duke of Bohemia in 921. Despite being celebrated as a defender of the Bohemian state and benefactor of the poor, he was assassinated in 935 by rivals for his dukedom. Today he is the patron saint of the Czech Republic, and, according to legend, sleeps within Blaník Mountain (some 50km south–east of Prague), from where he will emerge at the head of an army of knights to save the Czech people in their hour of need.

The *St. Wenceslas Chorale* dates from the twelfth century, and is still today an important and living part of Czech musical culture. The *Meditation*, for string orchestra or string quartet, was composed in 1914 by **Josef Suk** (1874–1935). A calm but sonorous chorale theme is announced by the violas and is immediately ornamented by flowing counterpoints. The work passes through episodes of increasing and decreasing fervour before reaching a climactic restatement of the opening theme and subsiding to a quiet ending.

Derek Davies is a Sydney–based freelance violinist, violist, composer and arranger. He played violin and viola with the ABC Sinfonia from 1983 to 1986, and in 1987 he formed one of Sydney's premier music groups *The Penguins*. After many thousands of performances in Australia and overseas, they continue to attract new audiences. *The Penguins* have recorded three CDs: *Freestyle*, *In the Mall* and *Ice Breaker*. Derek has been a member of the Bourbaki Ensemble for a number of years.

In 1990 Derek composed a body of work inspired by his girlfriend Jill's travels in India. The prelude *India* featured on his 1997 CD *Caravans*. Derek and Jill (now his wife) have since travelled throughout India together. Derek's version of the prelude for string orchestra with obbligato viola was made for, and first performed by, the Bourbaki Ensemble in 2011.

This evening's concert also sees the premieres of Derek's arrangement of *The Salley Gardens*, in which words of W.B. Yeats (in fact, a reconstruction of verses the poet had heard sung by an elderly peasant woman) are set to a traditional Irish air; and of his adaptation for strings and solo violin of the first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, of Beethoven's violin concerto.

Perhaps the last truly great English composer for almost two centuries, **Henry Purcell** (1659–1695) was an important figure in the theatrical life of his native London. He wrote incidental music for (at least) 44 of the numerous plays which burst onto the London stage after the restoration of Charles II, and was one of the leading composers among those who sought to increase the significance of music in such productions by gradually turning them into masques and then into fully–fledged operas. He composed important works for the church and for royal occasions, notably the ode *Hail, bright Cecilia!* and the *Funeral Music for Queen Mary* (which was also performed, a year later, at Purcell's own funeral).

Purcell's purely instrumental works are smaller in number, but no less in stature. Two under the title *In nomine* arise from the vogue among seventeenth century English composers of writing "instrumental motets" based on a specific plainchnnt melody. Though the pieces would originally have been performed by viols, their fluid and engaging counterpoint works well on modern instruments. Tonight we perform first the seven–part *In nomine* (three violin parts, two viola, cello and bass), and later that in six parts (the cello and bass sharing one line). In between the two we present the *Fantasia upon One Note* for five voices. The work shifts back and forth between slower and faster tempos, some marked in the original sources, others the suggestions of the pioneering early music scholar Thurston Dart, and features in its faster sections intricate metrical irregularities in the violins and first violas. The second viola line consists, literally, of one note – the *ne plus ultra* of boring viola parts.

The *Chacony* is an early instance of a piece constructed upon a repeating ground bass. After five repetitions, Purcell's eight–bar bass line is transferred to the violas, and then to the second violins where, startlingly, it moves to a different key and is truncated after only five bars. The theme is subsequently heard in the bass again, and in various voices; near the end of the *Chacony* there is a brief episode which makes no use of the theme at all. The last two harmonisations of the ground bass are identical except for a change from *forte* to a soft and expressive *piano*, in which mood the piece ends.

From the appearance of *Irkanda IV* in 1961 until his death in August last year, **Peter Sculthorpe** (1929–2014) was universally regarded as one of Australia's greatest composers. Born and brought up in Tasmania, he studied in Melbourne and later at Oxford University. His was soon recognised as a voice which largely forsook European models (though he ackowledged Mahler as an influence) and spoke with the authentic accents of Australia and its Asian neighbours. Perhaps paradoxically, Peter composed a series of eighteen works for string quartet, an ensemble he described as "one of the great achievements of

Western civilisation". His dozen or so pieces for string orchestra are treasured by players, while music for larger orchestra ranges from the early *Sun Music* series to the later *Earth Cry* and *Kakadu*.

Cello Dreaming (1998) is inspired by the cultures of northern Australia, the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea. The solo cello, in its upper register, begins with an adaptation of an indigenous lullaby. A brief evocation of birdsong (high *glissandi* in first violins, playing independently of each other) leads into the second theme. Marked *estatico*, a "tumbling strain" for the soloist is made up of falling phrases of from three to six notes, set above a quietly active semiquaver accompaniment in the violas. After some repetition and development of these motives, a central section employs the solo cello alone above cello–bass drones, with the occasional interpolation of percussion. The soloists's instruction *sul ponticello* (to be played near the bridge of the instrument) creates an eerie timbre not altogether unlike that of the didjeridu. A return to the *estatico* music leads to a glowing climax before the music disappears, as it were, into the maritime haze of Australia's northern seascapes.

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) originally wrote the *Rakastava* suite for unaccompanied chorus. That its origin is in no way discernible in the final version (Grove's dictionary wisely and significantly refers to it as "recomposed" rather than "arranged" for strings, timpani and triangle) is testament to Sibelius' extraordinary instrumental imagination and his intimate understanding of the string orchestra.

The suite begins with a magical texture of syncopation, flexible tempo and mysterious harmonies. Typical of Sibelius' later music, these harmonies often consist of combinations of chords, individually consonant, but dissonant when superimposed. With the entry of the timpani the strings descend into a hushed murmuring, and the movement ends with a brief reminder of its opening.

The middle of the three movements consists of a simple melody animated with repeated notes to give a shimmering effect. Only six bars long, the theme is played over and over, gradually transforming itself into different but recognisably similar shapes. This intensely quiet movement is described by Raymond Tuttle as "a hushed and ecstatic *moto perpetuo*" which "whispers along with a joy so intense that it cannot raise its voice for fear of vanishing". Six strokes on the triangle herald a slight increase in volume and a new theme; but the theme has hardly begun when the movement does indeed vanish, a last ascending scale disappearing into silence.

The third movement, *Good evening... farewell*, begins with a rocking figure which turns out to be the accompaniment to a calm violin solo. A single cello adds a dissonant note, lending the music an unquiet texture and hinting at the turmoil to come. Suddenly everything falls apart. Three scurrying, trembling passages are interrupted by silences; accents and crescendi lead the music into the grief–stricken *Lento* which concludes the work in an atmosphere of frozen despair.

Born in Adelaide in 1960, **Andrew Schultz** moved with his family to Brisbane at the age of 10. After learning the clarinet at school he turned to composition, undertaking tertiary and postgraduate studies in Queensland, the USA and the UK, where his teachers included such eminent composers as Colin Brumby, David Lumsdaine, George Crumb and Luciano Berio. He has since held positions at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and the School of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong; at the beginning of 2009 he was appointed Professor of Music at the University of New South Wales.

Andrew has stated his compositional credo in the words, "My aim has been to find a poverty of means that is both elemental, broadly expressive and communicative. An ideal musical world for me is one in which to change a single note alters the balance and meaning of a piece."

Andrew's compositions range over a wide variety of genres, including orchestral, chamber, vocal and dramatic works. A prominent artistic concern is the interaction between indigenous and European Australians, explored in works such as the cantata *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* and the opera *Black River*. The former was released as a CD by ABC Classics; other recordings of Andrew's compositions include two discs of chamber music (Tall Poppies) and one of choral pieces (The Song Company).

The term "endling" refers to the last surviving individual of a species or plant. Andrew's work under this title expresses, in the composer's own words, "a feeling of immense regret and sorrow about all that has been lost from the face of the earth". It opens with a calm but somehow forlorn theme for violins in their high register; the first three notes of the upper part will be heard in varying guises throughout the work. A horn solo is set above harmonies which begin on violas, deepening to include celli and basses. There is a brief episode in which vigorous quavers in the violas accompany a more complex interweaving of lines based on the initial three–note figure. After an extensive development, initially quiet but later increasingly urgent, of the ideas already heard, the three note theme launches a fugal section featuring complex cross–rhythms. This in turn fades into an eerie passage for horns, timpani and basses, before the texture dissolves into nothingness.

David Angell, conductor

David has been playing viola for many years with some of the best known non–professional orchestras in Australia. As a violist and chorister he has performed under internationally famous conductors including Sir Charles Mackerras, Stuart Challender and John Hopkins. He took up conducting in 1998 with a highly successful season of *West Side Story* for Holroyd Musical Society. In February 2001 he assembled the Bourbaki Ensemble and conducted its inaugural performance, featuring works by Sculthorpe, Debussy, Mahler and Dvořák. In March 2014, David was the conductor for the Orchestra 143 Mozartathon, which presented thirty–nine Mozart symphonies in the course of five concerts spread over a single weekend.

John Napier, cello

John Napier started performing in public as a boy soprano when he was ten. Cello was more permanent. He trained at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, graduating with the Medal for Excellence in 1983. Shortly after he became principal cellist of the Queensland Theatre Orchestra, before embarking on a colourful performing and composing career ranging from international festivals to Darlinghurst squats, tail coats to nudity, Schubert to salsa. An interest in multicultural music fed into studies in ethnomusicology and a Senior Lectureship at the University of New South Wales. He has studied North Indian music since 1990, both as a performer and a scholar. His 2013 book *They Sing the Wedding of God* documents the epic performance traditions of beggar musicians in Rajasthan. Recent and forthcoming creations include the *Chi Udaka* with TaikOz and the Lingalayam Dance Company, and a performance featuring tabla maestro Faizal Qureshi. He has participated in Bourbaki Ensemble concerts both as a cellist and as a tenor soloist.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

Formed in 2001, the Bourbaki Ensemble enjoys playing music of the present century, and is strongly committed to supporting Australian composers. Music performed in 2015 includes works by Peter Sculthorpe, Greg van der Struik, Derek Davies and Andrew Schultz.

General Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was well known as a *connoisseur* of music. Unusually for his time, he did not restrict himself to European art music, but was well acquainted with, and appreciative of, musical cultures from as far afield as the shores of Australia. It seems that the young Bourbaki spent hours listening to the tales of an elderly neighbour who had travelled on the *Géographe* with Baudin's 1800–1803 expedition, which gave Europeans their first knowledge of Australian indigenous music. However, the name "Jean le Long–d'Argent" borne by the neighbour may possibly not have been his true name, and diligent attempts to investigate the Bourbaki connection further have proved in vain.

Violins Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Dawid Botha, Camille Hanrahan–Tan, Madeleina Hanrahan–Tan, Paul Hoskinson, Greta Lee, Rob Newnham, Richard Willgoss.

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Kate Hughes plus one, Ed McKnight, Monique Mezzatesta.

Violoncellos Jemma Thrussell, Michael Bowrey, Ian Macourt, Nicole McVicar.

Basses Mark Szeto, Daniel Morris.

Horns Rafael Salgado, Stephen Smith.

Percussion Kane Wheatley.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

many moods for strings

Peter Sculthorpe From Ubirr
Honegger Concerto da Camera
Arensky Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky
Puccini Crisantemi
Henry Cowell Hymns and Fuguing Tunes
Priaulx Rainier Movement for String Orchestra

Christine Draeger, flute
Rachel Tolmie, cor anglais

2.30 pm, Sunday 16 August 2015
St. Stephen's Church, Newtown
Tickets \$32, concessions \$22

A programme of diverse moods, ranging from the nonchalance of the Honegger *Concerto* for the unusual combination of flute, cor anglais and strings (which does, however, centre upon a slow movement of a more serious atmosphere), through the romanticism of Arensky and the operatism of Puccini, to Sculthorpe's impassioned, sometimes perhaps angry, plea for the environment. Cowell's *Hymns and Fuguing Tunes* (one for strings alone, one with oboe) inhabit a world of neoclassical serenity, while Priaulx Rainier's *Movement*, in virtue of its journey from darkness to light, performs a transitional function in this programme.

Further information 0433074322 or `www.bourbakiensemble.org`
Programme details subject to change