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
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 16 August 2015

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to the Bourbaki Ensemble's winter concert for 2015! At the time of writing, Sydney is facing the prospect of particularly cold weather on our concert day: but we hope that, if nothing else, we will be able to warm your hearts with our programme of "many moods for strings".

We are particularly glad to be joined today by two soloists who have frequently played with us in past concerts. Rachel Tolmie performed music by Phillip Wilcher and Aaron Copland in a 2007 Bourbaki concert, and in 2010 Charles Ives' wonderful *The Rainbow*, as well as undertaking the important cor anglais part in Wayne Dixon's *Songs of Transience* last year. She was also the principal soloist on our CD *Mozart in Love* (Publications by Wirripang), which includes, among other works, the Honegger concerto to be performed today. Christine Draeger's first appearance with Bourbaki was as alto flute soloist in Tōru Takemitsu's evocative *Toward the Sea* in 2005, followed in 2008 by Anne Boyd's flute concerto. Together with her own ensemble, the Tucana Flute Quartet, she joined Bourbaki again in music by Ives, James Wilson and Hamilton Harty. Both Rachel and Christine took on solo parts in Phillip Wilcher's *Adagio*, written especially for Bourbaki and premiered at our tenth anniversary concert in December 2010.

We are also delighted to be able to include in today's concert the *Movement for strings* by Priaulx Rainier. This work was first performed at the Cadogan Hall in London as part of the 2013 BBC Proms, sixty years after its composition: David Angell was present in the audience and immediately felt keen to programme the piece in a Bourbaki concert. There is also a local connection, in that one of Rainier's students was Australian composer (and inner–west resident) Nigel Butterley. We have had a fascinating if sometimes nerve–racking time rehearsing this complex work: we hope that you will enjoy it!

PROGRAMME

Peter Sculthorpe	From Ubirr
Giacomo Puccini	Crisantemi
Arthur Honegger	Concerto da camera, for flute, cor anglais and string orchestra I Allegretto amabile II Andante III Vivace Christine Draeger, flute Rachel Tolmie, cor anglais

INTERVAL
20 minutes

Anton Arensky	Variations on a theme of Tchaikovsky, Op. 35a Moderato—Un poco più mosso—Allegro non troppo—Andantino tranquillo—Vivace—Andante—Allegro con spirito—Andante con moto—Moderato
Henry Cowell	Hymns and Fuguing Tunes No. 5 and No. 10 Rachel Tolmie, oboe
Priaulx Rainier	Movement for string orchestra

In 1960, **Peter Sculthorpe** (1929–2014) returned from Oxford to the family home in Tasmania, his studies left incomplete by the necessity of being with his gravely ill father. The 1961 composition *Irkanda IV*, written in memory of Joshua Sculthorpe, is the first in a series of important orchestral works concerned with aspects of the Australian environment. *Irkanda* itself was inspired by the vision of the sun as life–giving force expressed by D.H. Lawrence in his poem *Sun in Me*, while the various *Sun Music* pieces which appeared over the next decade often seem, on the contrary, to stress the indifference to human amenity of the sun in the arid and semi–arid places of inland Australia. In later years, Sculthorpe added to these "abstract" concerns a frequent association of his compositions with more specific sites, as for example in the orchestral work *Kakadu* (1988) and the guitar concerto *Nourlangie* (1989).

From Ubirr, with its clear allusion to the famed rock art gallery in the Kakadu region and its origin as a version for strings of Sculthorpe's earlier *Earth Cry*, links the concrete approach and the abstract. An ABC commission for an orchestral piece in 1986 prompted the following thoughts from the composer.

> Whenever I have returned from abroad in recent years, this country has seemed to me to be one of the last places on earth where one could honestly write quick and joyous music. I therefore decided to write such a piece. . . [However], it soon became clear that it would be dishonest of me to write music that is altogether quick and joyous. The lack of a common cause and the self–interest of many have drained us of much of our energy. A bogus national identity and its commercialisation have obscured the true breadth of our culture. . . Perhaps we now need to attune ourselves to the continent, to listen to the cry of the earth, as the Aborigines have done for many thousands of years.

So, *Earth Cry* and its successor *From Ubirr* (2003) begin with a percussive bass and a sombre, perhaps even menacing theme for violas in their darkest register. A subsequent episode, marked *ardente*, introduces a more active and forward–moving melody in the second violins, though it is still underpinned by the insistent threatening mutter of the violas. A third strand subsequently added by first violins suggests a ritual keening, a lament for the earth. As the music reaches a climax it slows to the tempo of the opening; the violas' first theme returns, its outlines slightly softened so that it becomes more an expression of regret than of menace. The work ends quietly, but without compromising its message. Reviewing the first performance of *Earth Cry*, Stephen Whittington wrote that the work "[seems] to speak, admittedly in an entirely indefinable way, with the authentic voice of this country."

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) is one of those composers, not insignificant in number, whose work belongs almost exclusively to the opera house. Yet his catalogue, like Verdi's and Rossini's, does include a small amount, one might almost say a token amount, of chamber music. Puccini's string quartet *Crisantemi*, nowadays frequently performed by a larger string ensemble, was composed in 1890 as an elegy in memory of Amadeo di Savoia, Duke of Aosta. The title of the work alludes to the traditional Italian view of chrysanthemums, which flower around All Souls' Day in November, as symbols of sorrow or mourning. The quartet consists of two melancholy themes, the first reprised to end the piece, both of which are sufficiently "operatic" in nature and in treatment that Puccini chose to reuse them three years later to accompany the imprisonment and exile of the heroine at the end of his opera *Manon Lescaut*.

Duke Amadeo was, it seems, not one to insist upon a quiet life. Second son of Vittorio Emanuele II, king of Italy, he renounced his place in the Italian royal family to assume the position of elected constitutional monarch of Spain. Within three years, beset by republican conspiracies and assassination attempts, he had abdicated, proclaiming the Spanish people "ungovernable", and had resumed his dukedom. Perhaps Puccini should have written him an opera instead of a string quartet.

The *Concerto da camera* for flute, cor anglais and strings of Swiss/French composer **Arthur Honegger** (1892–1955) was composed in 1948. Its three movements are briefly summarised in the composer's own words.

> The first part is based on very simple themes of popular character, which stand out against the background of string harmonies from which they arise. The *andante* contains a melodic theme, which progresses from solemnity to a sharp brilliance in an atmosphere of somewhat melancholy calm. The finale has the feeling of a *scherzo*.

To this one may add that though the work opens, stereotypically, with a plaintive cor anglais melody and sparkling flute figuration, the soloists' roles are combined and exchanged many times during the first movement; that the melodic theme of the *andante*, played at the outset by lower strings, is soon taken over by the soloists, its phrases quietly echoed in the orchestra; and that the final *scherzo* is, perhaps, not so much conventionally humorous as grotesque and quietly sardonic.

Though his music is little performed nowadays, **Anton Arensky** (1861–1905) enjoyed the acquaintance of a number of the great Russian composers of the late nineteenth century, and held during his short life a variety of prestigious academic posts.

In his youth he studied with Rimsky–Korsakov (who appears, however, to have held no great opinion of his talent), and in later life was the teacher of Rachmaninov and Scriabin. At various times he was a professor at the Moscow Conservatoire and the director of the Imperial Choir in St. Petersburg. He composed many piano pieces, and chamber works of which the D minor piano trio is probably the best known. His orchestral works, fewer in number, include two symphonies, concertos for piano and for violin, and the *Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky*.

The latter work has its origin in Arensky's second string quartet (1894), unconventionally scored for violin, viola and two cellos. The quartet is dedicated to the memory of Tchaikovsky, who had died the previous year, and its slow movement consists of a set of variations on the fifth of Tchaikovsky's *Children's Songs*. Bearing the rather uninformative title *Legend*, the song is commonly known either by its first line "The Christ Child had a garden" or by the alternative title *The Crown of Thorns*. Arensky's quartet movement received at its first performance a level of approval from the audience which encouraged the composer to arrange it for string orchestra. Beginning with a straightforward transcription of Tchaikovsky's original, the work offers seven variations: the first is contrapuntal, while the second adds to its basic theme the lightness of a Mendelssohn scherzo. The third variation introduces the romanticism of the major key, the fourth has the character of a Russian peasant dance. The fifth and sixth are, respectively, plaintive and vigorous. The final variation, in which Tchaikovsky's theme is turned upside down, is rounded off by a quiet and sustained coda.

American composer **Henry Cowell** (1897–1965) was noted as a young man for his imaginative and searching approach to music. Among his many innovations, he pioneered new ways of playing the piano, such as using the forearm on the keyboard to produce dense tone clusters (*Tiger*, 1930), and plucking or scraping the strings directly (*The Banshee*, 1925). He experimented with rhythm and instrumentation, being one of the earliest Western composers to write for percussion alone, and was among the first to take a serious interest in the music of non–Western cultures.

The two *Hymns and Fuguing Tunes* included in today's concert belong to a series of twenty or so works under the same title, and date from a period when Cowell had turned to more traditional forms and textures. The pieces are scored for a wide variety of forces, ranging from full orchestra to a duo of soprano and contrabass saxophones. We shall perform No. 5, for strings, followed by No. 10, for oboe and strings. Each work begins with a *Hymn*, which is slow to moderate in tempo, sustained and melodic in texture: in short, hymn–like, though sometimes more harmonically adventurous than the average congregation could be expected to cope with. The *Fuguing Tunes*, which follow their respective *Hymns* after a brief silence, are faster and more contrapuntal in texture.

One of the leading modernist composers of the mid twentieth century, **Priaulx Rainier** (1903–1986) was born in South Africa, but won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, London, in 1919, and spent the remainder of her life based in England. She moved in a circle of progressively inclined artists which included composer Michael Tippett, poet Edith Sitwell and sculptor Barbara Hepworth. A number of her early chamber and vocal works were well received, though success with the orchestra had to wait until the 1960s and 70s: these decades saw a cello concerto performed by Jacqueline du Pre, a violin concerto commissioned by Yehudi Menuhin, and other works such as *Aequora Lunae* ("Seas of the Moon"). Her style has been described by Calum MacDonald as "eloquent dissonance", free of "dull, grubby 'atonalism'".

The *Movement for strings* was substantially written while Rainier was staying at Hepworth's home in Cornwall in the winter of 1950–1951; in early 1953, the composer undertook a revision of the score in preparation for its premiere performance at the St. Ives Festival in June of that year. For reasons which are unclear – perhaps because Rainier was overwhelmed with the work of more or less single–handedly organising the festival – it was withdrawn, and she did not complete the revisions. Nevertheless, five decades later, the manuscript was found to bear sufficient details of her intentions to enable composer Douglas Young to reconstruct the work. In this form it was, at last, premiered at the BBC Proms in August 2013.

The expressive structure of the *Movement*, though straightforward, is extremely effective, progressing from a dark, mysterious opening to a bright and outgoing conclusion. Every aspect of the music serves this aim: the tempo, fairly slow at the start, gradually increasing until it has doubled by the end; the harmonies, initially complex and chromatic, becoming clear and diatonic. Throughout the work, and especially towards the end, Rainier has specified the frequent use of open strings for the sake of the "folk–style" sonority thus obtained. Though the work has no melody in the traditional sense, it abounds in beautifully shaped phrases which are heard for a moment, frequently in the middle voices of violas and second violins rather than in the first violins, and then vanish. The vigorous closing section of the work culminates with the antipole of its opening, a fiercely blazing final chord of C major.

Rachel Tolmie, oboe and cor anglais

Rachel started playing the oboe at ten years of age and the cor anglais at twelve. While at school she played in the Sydney Youth Orchestra; during her undergraduate years at the Sydney Conservatorium, and for many years afterwards, she was the principal oboist of the East–West Philharmonic Orchestra.

After completing with distinction a Postgraduate Diploma at the Royal College of Music, London, Rachel returned to Sydney and started recording her first CD with the brilliant pianist John Martin. John and Rachel continue to perform regularly together and have released further recordings on CD, Itunes and CD Baby. In 2006, Rachel's book *An Introduction to the Cor Anglais and Oboe* was published by Wirripang Publications.

Rachel has appeared as soloist with the Bourbaki Ensemble, the Central Coast Symphony and numerous other orchestras. Her solo albums include *Mozart in Love* (2008) with Bourbaki, and *Bushfire* (2011) with the Concertante Ensemble.

Christine Draeger, flute

Christine studied at the Tasmanian Conservatorium and with Zdenek Bruderhans at Adelaide University. She was a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra from 1981 to 1986 and has worked with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra and the Adelaide and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras. She has also appeared as guest artist with many chamber ensembles including Synergy, the Song Company and Perihelion.

From 1982 until 2007 Christine was a member of Australia's leading contemporary music ensemble Sonic Art Ensemble (formerly The Seymour Group). She has recorded three CDs of Australian flute music: *Streeton's Noon* (1999), *Eat Chocolate and Cry* (2009) and *Spirit of the Plains* (2013). She also writes and arranges educational flute music through `fluteworthy.com.au`.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble is a string orchestra based at St. Stephen's Church, Newtown. Formed in 2001, the Ensemble is strongly committed to performing music of the twentieth and twenty first centuries, and includes in every programme at least one Australian composition. Music performed in 2015 includes works by Peter Sculthorpe, Greg van der Struik, Derek Davies and Andrew Schultz.

Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was a leading figure in the French military in the mid–nineteenth century. He came to prominence in the African campaigns of the 1840s, rose to the rank of general and served with distinction in the Crimean War. Of Greek ancestry (his father's family name was *Βούρβακηζ*), he was entreated in 1862 to accept the throne of Greece, but declined the honour. It is rumoured, but is firmly denied by the archives of the Italian duchy of Aosta, that there exist manuscript letters in which Amadeo di Savoia, hearing of this decision, castigates Bourbaki for his timidity; but Amadeo's own subsequent catastrophic reign as King of Spain shows Bourbaki's judgement to have been, in this as in other matters, acute.

Violins Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Dawid Botha, Sarah Allison, Marcel Fernandes, Camille Hanrahan–Tan, Madeleina Hanrahan–Tan, Rob Newnham, Justin White, Richard Willgoss.

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Marilyn McLeod, Monique Mezzatesta.

Violoncellos John Napier, Michael Bowrey, Ian Macourt, Nicole McVicar, Catherine Willis.

Basses Sasha Cotis, Mark Szeto.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

music for brass and strings

Shostakovich Chamber Symphony, Op. 118a
Peter Sculthorpe Shining Island
Greg van der Struik Concertino
Thea Musgrave Aurora

Brian Evans, trumpet
Greg van der Struik, trombone

7.30 pm, Friday 4 December 2015
St. Stephen's Church, Newtown
Tickets $32, concessions $22

Peter Sculthorpe's *Shining Island* is one of his later works, having been written in 2011 in memory of the Polish composer Henryk Górecki. The *Chamber Symphony* is one of a number of transcriptions for larger forces of Shostakovich's string quartets, in this case, the tenth. Greg van der Struik's *Concertino* for solo trumpet and trombone receives its first performance in the recently completed version with string accompaniment, and our programme also features a short work by Scottish composer Thea Musgrave.

St. Stephen's Church, designed by Edmund Blackett, is an outstanding example of colonial architecture. It is also a superb venue for chamber and small orchestral music. This sparkling programme, performed in the church's glorious acoustic, makes up a concert you will not want to miss!

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