THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

music for brass and strings

Shostakovich Chamber Symphony, Op. 118a

Peter Sculthorpe Morning–Song

Greg van der Struik Concertino

Brooke Green Graceful Ghost

Erik Satie Gymnopédie No. 3

Thea Musgrave Aurora

Brian Evans, trumpet
Greg van der Struik, trombone
David Angell, conductor

7.30 pm, Friday 4 December 2015

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to the Bourbaki Ensemble's final concert for 2015! We regret that Peter Sculthorpe's marvellous *Shining Island*, advertised as a part of our tribute year to Australia's beloved composer who passed away in 2014, will not be performed. Despite the music being ordered in the normal way from the publisher's agent, unexplained delays meant that it had still not arrived the week before we began rehearsals. Under the circumstances, there was no option but to reluctantly remove the work from our programme. We hope to perform it in the future.

Despite this disappointment, we are delighted that we have been able to assemble at short notice a bracket of shorter pieces to replace *Shining Island*. The first, one of Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies*, will be familiar to most listeners from its original piano version. It will be followed by Sculthorpe's brief *Morning–Song*, and then Sydney composer Brooke Green's *Graceful Ghost*. The latter piece was originally written by Brooke for her ensemble *The Emerald City Viols*, and upon request she adapted it for (modern) string orchestra within a couple of days – the score bears the date 24 November 2015! We are immensely grateful to Brooke for generously giving of her time and enthusiasm to provide this wonderful work for our programme. In its original scoring for viols (and under its alternative title *The Shades*), the piece appears on Brooke's recently released CD *The Emerald Leopard*, which will be available for purchase during the interval of tonight's concert.

Our concert will also feature the premiere performance of Greg van der Struik's *Concertino for Trumpet and Trombone*. In 2009, Greg performed with Bourbaki his own work *Piangi*, as well as the *Concertino* of Lars–Erik Larsson, and we are thrilled that he is able to join us again, together with his colleague Brian Evans from the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. We are confident that you will enjoy Greg's exciting new composition.

PROGRAMME

Thea Musgrave Aurora

Erik Satie Gymnopédie No. 3, arranged for string orchestra by David Angell

Peter Sculthorpe Morning–Song

Brooke Green Graceful Ghost

Greg van der Struik Concertino for Trumpet and Trombone

1. Introduction
2. Intermezzo
3. Rondo Impetuoso

Brian Evans, trumpet
Greg van der Struik, trombone

INTERVAL
20 minutes

Dmitri Shostakovich Chamber Symphony, Op. 118a, arranged by Rudolf Barshai from the String Quartet No. 10

I Andante
II Allegretto furioso
III Adagio—
IV Allegretto

A sense of musical drama is one of the salient characteristics of the music of Scottish composer **Thea Musgrave** (born 1928). This is exemplified not only in her dozen or so operas, but also in her concert music. In the final section of the *Horn Concerto*, for instance, the orchestral horns leave the stage and take up positions in the auditorium, from where they "converse" with the soloist. This work and Musgrave's other concertos are particularly rich in what the composer refers to as "dramatic–abstract" musical ideas.

The string work *Aurora* (1999), on the other hand, is inspired by a concrete and quite specific dramatic idea, specifically, Puck's words from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> . . . yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
> At whose approach ghosts, wand'ring here and there,
> Troop home to churchyards.

The work begins with soft, pale chords (the composer employs the unusual instruction *velato*, "veiled") enfolding a sombre viola solo. The eerie mood is enhanced by *tremolo* and *glissando* effects, and by stabbing *sforzandi*. As the opening section is repeated and developed in passages of increasing urgency, the viola is joined by solo violin and cello. A magical and luminous texture featuring the ethereal sound of harmonics depicts the arrival of dawn; it gradually leads into a faster and more rhythmic section marked "full and joyous", before the music dissolves into fragments of theme which fade into silence.

Erik Satie (1866–1925) was born in southern France and studied briefly at the Paris Conservatoire. In his later years he was closely associated with a wide circle of leading Paris–based artists including Cocteau, Picasso, Diaghilev, Massine, Clair and Picabia, and was "adopted" as a father–figure by younger

French composers. To this period of his life belong the stage works *Parade*, a "cubist ballet" whose score includes typewriters and revolvers, and *Relâche*, whose title means "tonight's performance is cancelled". These kinds of productions provoked some commentators to assess Satie as a visionary, others as no more than a practical joker. Whatever the merits of his later compositions, Satie's most popular and best known works will always, most likely, be the early piano pieces *Trois Gymnopédies*. Undemonstrative and elegant, their austere melodies exhibit a poise which has been compared to that of classical sculpture.

"I regard the string quartet," wrote **Peter Sculthorpe** (1929–2014) in his autobiography *Sun Music*, "as one of the greatest achievements of Western civilisation". Though best known at the beginning of his career as the composer of sometimes confronting orchestral works depicting the harsh and sun–drenched Australian landscape, Sculthorpe had in fact been writing string quartets since his early years. Many of these youthful works were later discarded by the composer, individual movements sometimes being preserved as "occasional" pieces; his acknowledged quartets begin with No. 6 (1965) and extend to No. 18 (2010).

Now and then, Peter composed short independent pieces for string quartet. *Morning–Song* (1970) is one of these. It is based upon Peter's unaccompanied carol *Morning Song for the Christ Child* (1966), and seems to have been a work for which its composer had a good deal of affection: some years later he arranged it again as part of *Four Little Pieces* for piano duet. In this evening's performance, the work will be performed by full string orchestra. The principal content of *Morning–Song* is a gently undulating theme for first violins, set above a rocking accompaniment. The warm, consoling E major tonality is, characteristically, undercut by the occasional flattened pitch. After a brief interlude, the main theme returns in a more expansive setting, and the piece ends on a chord which is unconventional but quietly sonorous.

Brooke Green (born 1964) is a Sydney violist, violinist, producer (for ABC Classic FM) and composer. She has perfomed early music with leading ensembles including the Hanover Band (UK) and the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, and is the director of *The Emerald City Viols*. Collaborating with soprano Josie Ryan, the consort has appeared as *Josie and the Emeralds* in Sydney and Canberra, and has recently released the CD *The Emerald Leopard* on Tall Poppies.

Brooke's composition *Graceful Ghost* was loosely inspired by American composer William Bolcom's piece of the same name; listeners familiar with the latter will detect a certain similarity of mood, though the musical material is entirely original. The work was originally written for viol consort (treble, tenor and three bass viols) under the title *The Shades*, and in this form won the Audience Prize as the best of four prize–winners in the Viola da Gamba Society of America's 2013 composition competition for new music for viols. At short notice, Brooke very generously adapted *The Shades* for string orchestra, in order to fill the gap in tonight's programme caused by the unavailability of one of the scheduled works.

Graceful Ghost is based on a flowing rhythm of 3+3+2. The first theme, repeated over and over with subtle and increasingly expressive modifications, is set in a minor key with constant chromatic alterations which make it sound "even more minor". Yet the overall atmosphere is not one of despondency but of a gentle melancholy.

Trombonist **Greg van der Struik** (born 1965), for many years a leading figure among Australian brass players, is lately attracting increasing attention as a composer. In a Bourbaki Ensemble concert in November 2009, Greg played the solo part in his own composition *Piangi*, inspired by his experience of performing at Anzac Day celebration concerts and visiting military cemeteries in Holland and France in 2005. We are delighted to welcome him back, together with colleague Brian Evans, to perform his recent *Concertino for Trumpet and Trombone*.

The first of the *Concertino's* three movements opens with a brief but majestic *andante* which soon accelerates into the main part of the movement. Characterised by varied rhythms including triplets and syncopations, the solo trumpet, solo trombone and orchestral parts are united by a constant semiquaver accompaniment. After an extended cadenza shared between the two soloists, the full ensemble builds to a powerful climax before the strings round off the movement with a quiet *codetta*. The *Intermezzo* is again based on a running semiquaver accompaniment. The composer's skill is shown by his ability to obtain a very different atmosphere by means of passages which, on paper, seem quite similar to the first movement. Shared between first and second violins, the semiquavers support poignant and somewhat nostalgic melodies in the two solo instruments.

The concluding *Rondo Impetuoso* begins with a tightly syncopated near–unison theme for the strings, and continues with a succession of exciting and contrasted episodes. Notable among these are the first trombone solo, forcefully punctuated by cello and bass; a suggestion of pealing bells in the soloists, offset by rushing semiquavers and a walking bass; and an emphatic and strongly accented passage of short–long rhythms for cellos and bass. A brief drop to *piano* shortly before the end serves to augment the impact of the final bars.

Few composers have divided opinion among the musical public as much as **Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906–1975). During his lifetime he was seen in the official Soviet view, and almost universally abroad, as a dedicated and orthodox Communist. This was especially so during World War II, when the "Leningrad" Symphony was seen both as an act of musical defiance towards the invading Nazi forces and as a demonstration of allegiance to the Soviet state. (In fact, Shostakovich did not become a member of the Communist Party until 1960 – and then, according to various personal accounts, only under duress.)

Then in 1979, Russian musicologist Solomon Volkov published *Testimony*, purportedly an authorised record of conversations with Shostakovich. The book claimed to reveal the composer as a lifelong secret dissident, one whose every utterance might contain hidden meanings, and whose apparent support of the regime had been in actual fact a matter of mockery and satire. Unsurprisingly, *Testimony* was denounced by the Soviet government as a forgery, while those of opposing political views welcomed the claim that one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century – little argument from either side on this point – had not been the committed socialist that he had seemed.

So, anyone nowadays performing the works of Shostakovich has a choice between two opposing views of his music. In the case of the tenth string quartet (1964), reworked for string orchestra by Rudolf Barshai, much of the music (particularly in the first and last movements) can seem bland and innocuous.

So the choice appears to be between a work with hidden implications and a work which must be accounted a failure. The quartet begins nervously, with a theme of unstable key and broken rhythms; a succeeding warmer, more diatonic theme soon develops a sense of unease and leads the listener back to the first theme. Much of the movement is constructed from these two themes; there is also a sombre tune for celli and bass beneath a muttering of violas. The movement ends with muted harmonies, all instruments playing in their highest registers.

The second movement, *allegretto furioso*, bursts forth in violent contrast. Irregular rhythms, slashing accents and grindingly dissonant harmonies make up a whirlwind which is not so much furious as savage and malevolent. The conclusion is tumultuous and abrupt. The concentration of the succeeding *adagio* is equal in degree but of a totally different kind, lyrical rather than dramatic. The main theme, announced by the cellos with great intensity, is heard eight times in a variety of settings. A lengthy violin descant, initially concordant with the theme, soon develops into a mournful lament so chromatic that it might well be in a different key. When the principal theme passes to the violins it turns to the major mode – more or less: the continuing chromaticism precludes any sense of relaxation.

Sustained notes in solo violin and cello link the third movement to the rather glum dance tune with which violas initiate the finale. What is a post–*Testimony* interpretation to make of this? Perhaps that after acknowledging in the preceding movements the hopelessness, violence and grief of life in Soviet society, the composer's only recourse is to pretend to be joyful, lest worse befall. Ultimately the mood reverts to that of the first movement. The final halting appearance of the dance tune, high in a solo violin, seems to pose Shostakovich's questions to his fellow citizens: must we go on pretending? Is this all there is?

Brian Evans, trumpet

Brian Evans enjoys the rare distinction of having attained a professional standard both as a trumpeter and as a lyric tenor. Few musicians could boast of having undertaken both the solo trumpet and solo tenor roles in Handel's *Messiah* – sometimes in the same performance! Nor would it be common for an orchestral musician to work as both trumpeter and singer for the same company in the same season. Brian has both of these achievements to his credit.

Beginning his music study at age 7, Brian commenced playing in brass bands aged 12. He was a member of the Australian Army Band and the ABC National Training Orchestra before joining the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. In the course of 39 years with the AOBO he has performed most of the major opera and ballet repertoire and has specialised in Solo Cornet. He has worked with conductors including John Pritchard, Mark Elder, Stuart Challender, Richard Bonynge, Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Hickox, Christopher Hogwood, Willem van Otterloo and Simone Young.

Brian is currently working on brass quintet projects with Opera Australia Brass, as well as planning a CD of trumpet and cornet solos.

Greg van der Struik, trombone

Gregory van der Struik currently enjoys a busy career as an orchestral and solo trombonist. He has held since 1987 the position of Principal Trombone with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, and has been featured as soloist 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 with ensembles such as the Orchestre de Picardie, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Cuivres d'Amiens and the Sydney Youth Orchestra. He has been active as an adjudicator at many competitions and 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 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 own compositions.

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 Richard Bonynge. David 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. The Ensemble has subsequently attracted note for its imaginative programming and its support of Australian composers.

Since its inception in December 2002, David has been the conductor of Orchestra 143, a classical chamber orchestra based in Turramurra. In March 2014, he directed the Orchestra 143 Mozartathon, conducting 39 Mozart symphonies in the course of five concerts spread over a single weekend. David has guest conducted the Crendon Chamber Orchestra (UK) in a programme of Mozart, Mahler and Australian composers, and in 2016 will make his debut with the Woollahra Philharmonic Orchestra.

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, Brooke Green, 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. It was, no doubt, Bourbaki's army career which led to his enthusiastic patronage of military bands. There is reason to believe that he himself was a brass player of no ordinary merit before the etiquette incumbent on those of high rank made him abandon his instrument in favour of the violin. Occasional references in the obscure journal *Les cuivres militaires*, alluding to the annual award of the Bourbaki Medal to the most skilful ophicleidist in French divisional bands, bear no signature but the initials "S.E.G.", and the author's identity can only be surmised.

Violins Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Paul Hoskinson, Sarah Allison, Camille Hanrahan–Tan, Madeleina Hanrahan–Tan, Ie–Wen Kwee, Rob Newnham, Justin White, Richard Willgoss, Victor Wu.

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Tamara Auer, Marilyn McLeod, Monique Mezzatesta, Carl St Jacques.

Violoncellos Jemma Thrussell, Michael Bowrey, Giacomo Molteni, Catherine Willis.

Bass Sasha Cotis.