THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

in memoriam: music for horns and strings

Elgar String Quartet

Britten In memoriam Dennis Brain

Pärt Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten

Brooke Green Perfumed with Blood

Haydn Concerto for two horns

Grainger Irish Tune from County Derry

Neil O'Donnell, horn
Natasha Roumanoff, horn
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 6 March 2016

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to the Bourbaki Ensemble's 2016 season! The year begins with music for four horns and strings, in a programme inspired by Britten's intense and spine–chilling work in memory of Dennis Brain. Continuing the "memorial" theme, we have Arvo Pärt's work in memory of Britten, and Elgar's string quartet: its slow movement was beloved of the composer's wife, and was performed at her funeral. (Coincidentally, the Elgar was arranged for string orchestra by British composer David Matthews, while the Britten was edited by David's younger brother Colin.) The horns also enjoy a brief but thrilling climactic appearance in Grainger's *Irish Tune*, and two of them present a concerto written for the spectacularly virtuosic horn soloists of classical–era central Europe. Brooke Green's *Perfumed with Blood* commemorates not an individual but a whole people: inspired by songs of Syrian refugees, this new work is a passionate statement about the plight of displaced people everywhere.

Obtaining music for this concert was at times difficult, and we would like to express our gratitude to various people for their assistance. Score and parts for the horn concerto were supplied by Graham Nichols of *Hornarama*. We are delighted to recommend that you visit `www.hornarama.com` whenever you are in need of horn sheet music, CDs or accessories! (Incidentally, Graham was the soloist with Bourbaki in Britten's *Serenade* some years ago.) EBB Music Publishing, a division of the Britten–Pears Foundation, was terrifically helpful in providing the material for Britten's work in memory of Dennis Brain.

There will be only one more Bourbaki concert this year, mainly because David will be busy conducting the Eastern Sydney Chamber Orchestra and the Woollahra Philharmonic. It will take place at St. Stephen's on Sunday 4 December, and will feature outstanding young oboist Niamh Dell performing the Vaughan Williams concerto.

PROGRAMME

Benjamin Britten In memoriam Dennis Brain, for four horns, bells and strings

Brooke Green Perfumed with Blood

Josie Ryan, soprano

Arvo Pärt Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten, for strings and bell

Michael Haydn (attr) Concerto in E♭ major for two horns and orchestra

1. Allegro maestoso
2. Romance: adagio
3. Rondeau: allegretto

Neil O'Donnell, horn
Natasha Roumanoff, horn

INTERVAL — 20 minutes

Percy Grainger Irish Tune from County Derry

Sir Edward Elgar String Quartet, Op. 83, arranged for string orchestra by David Matthews

I Allegro moderato
II Piacevole (poco andante)
III Finale: allegro molto

The brief yet dazzling career of horn virtuoso Dennis Brain came to an untimely and shocking end on the night of 1 September 1957: he was killed when his car left the road and hit a tree some 30km north of London on the A1. Brain had not only produced celebrated performances and recordings of the established horn repertoire, but had also inspired many contemporary composers to write with his extraordinary abilities in mind, among them **Benjamin Britten** (1913–1976). Following Brain's death, Britten began work on a piece in his memory. Scored for strings, bells and four horns, the composition is based on the *Dirge* from Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*. The earlier work's anonymous fifteenth century text,

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle.
Fire and fleete and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule

is heard in the stifled tones of hand–stopped horns, the phrases punctuated by outbursts of grief. In a subsequent faster section, urgent and irregular rhythms in the strings support fanfare–like passages for the horns. The ending is unlikely to be what Britten intended – he set the work aside, and the sketches were edited for performance only some fifty years later by Britten's sometime assistant Colin Matthews – but it is nonetheless chillingly effective, the horns vanishing into silence as the strings intone the final phrase "And Christe receive thy saule".

Perfumed with Blood is the title of a very moving lament sung by a young Syrian refugee woman about the destruction of war and particularly the destruction of her homeland. I have borrowed the title of her song to add a personal musical response. The first part continues her lament where the ascending and descending lines gradually diverge, building up intensity to a point of great distress. The second part is inspired by a video I found of a young Syrian refugee boy in a Lebanese refugee camp where he sings a popular Arabic song of longing for one's lost loved ones, *Chou badna Nsawi*. I am grateful to Fadi El Azzi for his translation of the text.

Brooke Green has been involved in music in various capacities most of her life. As a Bachelor of Music student at the University of Sydney she spent many evenings playing violin in a string quartet with David Angell and Ian Macourt. At this time she became equally interested in early and contemporary music, moving to The Netherlands to study baroque violin. For several years she played baroque and classical violin in various London–based period ensembles such as *The Hanover Band*, *London Baroque*, *Florilegium* and *The Brandenburg Consort*. In 1993 in London she created the baroque chamber group *Backgammon*, and for the next thirteen years, in London, Sydney, Hobart and Hawaii, presented numerous programs featuring the music of Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre and other neglected baroque composers, particularly women composers. In the late 1990s, a concert given by Jordi Savall inspired her to take up the viola da gamba (viol) and in 2007 she began studying viol and vielle (mediaeval fiddle) with Wendy Gillespie at the Early Music Institute, Indiana University, graduating in 2010 with a Masters in Early Music Performance. Brooke is Director of *Josie and the Emeralds*, a viol consort with soprano Josie Ryan. This en-

Chou badna Nsawi

What can we do!
Our age is nearly gone.
One time we cry, another time we forgive.

If you meet my Love,
tell him/her that my longing can be seen clearly in my eyes.

I miss seeing my loved ones.
The longing of a mother
for her far away child.

This life is not worth it.
Between you and me no one wins.

semble gives regular concerts in Sydney, including an annual concert at the Glebe Music Festival. In the last couple of years Brooke has begun writing for *Josie and the Emeralds*, and their critically acclaimed CD *The Emerald Leopard* (Tall Poppies) features some of her music. Brooke is delighted to write for the Bourbaki Ensemble. In November 2015 she arranged *Graceful Ghost* for the Bourbaki Ensemble strings, and *Perfumed with Blood* is Brooke's second opportunity to write for orchestra. She would like to thank David Angell and the Bourbaki Ensemble for their generosity and support.

Programme note kindly supplied by the composer.

One of the musical results of the decline and eventual collapse of the Soviet Union was that composers of the former eastern bloc began to find it much easier to reach Western audiences. Before the 1980s, by and large, only a very few of the most prominent composers (Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian) were known to the average listener in the West; afterwards one began to hear performances and recordings of a wide range of music from Russia and its satellite states. Composers who benefited from these changes included Giya Kancheli from Georgia, Sofia Gubaidulina (Russia), Peteris Vasks (Latvia) and **Arvo Pärt**.

Born in Estonia in 1935, Pärt studied at the Tallinn Conservatory, graduating in 1963. For the remainder of the 1960s his works, often highly complex in texture and construction, received mixed responses, and in some cases were officially banned from performance. In the early seventies he virtually ceased composition, emerging from his silence in 1976 with an utterly transformed musical aesthetic. The composer refers to this new style as "tintinnabulation" – literally, a tinkling of bells – and explains it as the construction of musical works from "very few elements... one voice, two voices... primitive materials".

The "primitive material" forming the *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten* is no more than a descending scale. The first violins play one note of the scale, then two, then three, extending the scale one note further at each repetition until it covers nearly three octaves. Other instruments, entering later, play just the same material at a half, a quarter, an eighth or a sixteenth of the tempo, while the regular tolling of a bell emphasizes the funereal mood. Despite – or more likely because of – this simplicity of means, the cumulative effect for the listener is hypnotic.

In 1980, frustrated with the restrictions placed on his creative work by the Soviet bureaucracy, Pärt emigrated with his family to Vienna. After the breakup of the eastern bloc he felt able to return to his homeland, and now lives alternately in Tallinn and Berlin.

It is not uncommon for there to be doubts about the authorship of musical compositions from the eighteenth century and earlier. Many works were written, essentially, for private use, and it may have been regarded as superfluous to insist that a score bear the composer's name. If such a work gained wider circulation, it may have accidentally acquired an incorrect attribution. Indeed, certain unscrupulous publishers were not above seeking to augment sales of commonplace music by deliberately associating it with a famous composer. In an age when notions of copyright were at best rudimentary, there was little that could be done about such abuses.

The double horn concerto to be presented in today's performance is a case in point. It was for many years attributed to Joseph Haydn, despite the firmly dissenting view of Haydn expert H. C. Robbins Landon. It has also been attributed to Joseph's brother **Michael Haydn** (1737–1806), whose name appears on a contemporary manuscript score of the concerto; but this evidence is compromised, not to say confused, by the observation that the word "Michael", the word "Haydn" and the music itself are written in three separate hands! Some recent scholars, after carefully comparing the style of the concerto with that of various composers and making reference to the few firmly established facts of its chronology, have nominated **Antonio Rosetti** (*ca.* 1750–1792) as its composer.

The first movement of the concerto opens with an arpeggio theme well suited to the limited range of notes available to the valveless horn of its era. In one of the most striking features of the work, however, the music soon modulates into remote harmonic regions requiring chromatic notes which would, in those days, have been mastered only by leading horn virtuosi. The same is true of the *Romance*, and to a lesser extent of the finale, which in its "hunting" style recalls the horn's origins.

Born in Australia, **Percy Grainger** (1882–1961) spent most of his life overseas, performing and teaching in Europe and the United States. In 1918 he became an American citizen; nevertheless, he always felt his Australian origin to be an important influence on his character and on his music. It appears that he had some intention towards the end of his life of returning to Australia permanently, but this was prevented by a combination of professional commitments, ill health and the possibility of adverse financial effects.

Like many other composers of the early twentieth century, Grainger was actively engaged in collecting, transcribing and publishing folk music. Many of his own compositions exhibit the strong influence of British and overseas folk song: *Brigg Fair* is a setting of a Lincolnshire song and the popular *Country Gardens* an improvisation on a Morris Dance tune, while the *Danish Folk Song Suite* draws on his researches into Scandinavian music. Irish music was less of an interest of Grainger's, but his setting of the *Irish Tune from County Derry*, better known to listeners as *O Danny Boy*, is much admired. It was among the first of Grainger's works to be published.

Though he was to live another fifteen years, **Sir Edward Elgar** (1857–1934) had more or less done with composition by 1920. The disillusionment of the war, a feeling of not belonging to the post–conflict age, and, perhaps most of all, the grief he felt at his wife's death, made him unwilling to embark upon serious writing. In 1918 and 1919, living mostly in a cottage in the Sussex woods, he produced the three chamber works which, together with the cello concerto, were to be his last great music.

The *String Quartet in E minor*, arranged in 2010 for string orchestra by David Matthews, is in many ways an elusive and shadowy work. Notwithstanding occasional markings of *con fuoco* and *nobilmente*, even its (infrequent) approaches to the grandeur of some of Elgar's earlier music seem to be undercut by a certain hollowness which at times approaches despair. The first movement, *allegro moderato*, is notable for the subtle variations of its opening rhythm, and for the recapitulation of its second theme in a broken and plangent form. The second movement alternates its quiet and wistful first theme with passages of ghostly textures and mysterious harmonies. The finale sets out with a theme of quiet resolution, and passes through episodes of a more relaxed nature which recall some of Elgar's lighter music, to an accelerating and emotionally ambiguous conclusion.

Neil O'Donnell, horn

Neil O'Donnell has played french horn in several amateur and semi–professional orchestras since 2002. Growing up on the Central Coast of NSW, Neil began his symphonic journey playing with the Central Coast Symphony Orchestra. Neil was also a regular in the pit orchestras of Gosford Musical Society productions. While completing his Bachelor of Music (Education) under Andrew Bain at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2008, Neil played with SBS Radio and Television Orchestra, under the baton of Matthew Krel. In 2009 Neil moved to London to work as a music teacher and study horn further with Jonathan Lipton, Professor of Horn at Guildhall School of Music and Drama and fourth horn of the London Symphony Orchestra. From 2009 to 2010, Neil was Principal Horn with Sinfonia Tamesa, Southbank. After moving back to Sydney in 2010, Neil became Principal Horn of Strathfield Symphony Orchestra, a position he still holds today. In 2014, Neil travelled to Tasmania to be one of nine horns in the Australian International Symphony Orchestra Institute performance of Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*. Last year, Neil earned a position in the horn roster of the highly acclaimed Metropolitan Orchestra. This is Neil's debut concerto performance.

Natasha Roumanoff, horn

Natasha Roumanoff is currently completing her doctoral degree in historical performance at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, where she is researching horn music of the middle of the eighteenth century. She holds a first class honours double degree in Arts/Law from the University of Sydney and is a keen linguist who has lived, studied and worked in France, Spain, Germany and Austria with masters degrees from the Université Paris X (Nanterre) and the Universidad Carlos III (Madrid), taken in French and Spanish, respectively.

Natasha currently studies with Robert Johnson and Darryl Poulsen, and is an active orchestral player, appearing with groups such as North Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Balmain Sinfonia, Mosman Symphony Orchestra, Penrith Symphony Orchestra, and numerous freelance ensembles (on modern horn) as well as Eastern Suburbs Chamber Orchestra, and the Conservatorium of Music Early Music Ensemble (on period horn). Previous solo performances include on tour with the SBS Television Youth Orchestra, and with the Early Music Ensemble for the Conservatorium's centenary celebrations last year.

As well as performing, Natasha teaches horn privately and conducts a number of local ensembles. Her next doctoral recital will include natural horn performances of Mozart's Horn Quintet and Brahms' Horn Trio.

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. In March 2014, David directed the Orchestra 143 Mozartathon, conducting 39 Mozart symphonies in the course of five concerts spread over a single weekend; he 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.

Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was a leading figure in the French military in the mid–nineteenth century. He was said to be a gifted, but determinedly anonymous, composer, with a penchant for exceedingly virtuosic solo writing; it is possible that many "eighteenth–century" concertos of disputed authorship were actually created by Bourbaki. Regrettably, Bourbaki's heirs were prevented from exercising their rights over these works by threats of legal action from other claimants.

Violins Paul Pokorny, Rob Newnham, Sarah Allison, Harriet Cunningham, Camille Hanrahan–Tan, Madeleina Hanrahan–Tan, Ie–Wen Kwee, Deborah McGowan, Richard Willgoss, Victor Wu.

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Robyn Botha, Marilyn McLeod, Monique Mezzatesta, Carl St. Jacques.

Violoncellos Margaret Lazanas, Michael Bowrey, Ian Macourt, Nicole McVicar, Catherine Willis.

Bass Danny Morris.

Oboes Rachel Tolmie, Ellen Hopper.

Horns Neil O'Donnell, Natasha Roumanoff, Rafael Salgado, Stephen Smith.

Percussion Kane Wheatley, Jacques Emery.