THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

light and dark: music for strings

Witold Lutosławski Musique Funèbre

Bernard Herrmann Prelude to *Psycho*

Michael Berkeley Coronach

Greg van der Struik Trombone Concerto

Graeme Koehne Divertissement

Joan Trimble Suite for Strings

Greg van der Struik, trombone
David Angell, conductor

2.45 pm, Sunday 22 April 2018

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to the first Bourbaki concert for 2018! Our programme contrasts works expressing darkness, grief and horror with compositions of a much lighter character. In the former category, Michael Berkeley's *Coronach*, evoking a Highland lament, and Lutosławski's *Funeral Music* in memory of Bartók; also, the opening titles from Alfred Hitchcock's classic *Psycho*, the music written by Bernard Herrmann. In a gentler vein, we present Irish composer Joan Trimble's enchanting *Suite for Strings*, and Graeme Koehne's (mostly) light–hearted *Divertissement*.

To complete the programme, we are delighted to welcome back leading Sydney trombonist Greg van der Struik for his third appearance as soloist and composer with Bourbaki. We are sure that you will enjoy the varied moods of Greg's recently written concerto.

There will be two further Bourbaki concerts this year. The next, to be given on Sunday 5 August, will be another programme of contrasts: music by Pēteris Vasks and Betty Beath conveying the suffering of war is juxtaposed with works by Carl St. Jacques (a member of the Bourbaki Ensemble) and Arvo Pärt praying for peace. We hope to be joined by a choir for the Pärt piece – watch this space. Our third and final concert (Sunday 4 November) presents compositions having close connections with earlier music. Violinist Warwick Pulley, a long–term member of Bourbaki, will be the soloist in the popular "recomposition" of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* violin concertos by Max Richter; we shall also perform New York rock guitarist Bryce Dessner's *Réponse Lutosławski*, inspired by the piece we perform today, and Peter Sculthorpe's *Night Song*.

It is easy to keep up with Bourbaki activities – just send your email address to `david@bourbakiensemble.org` and you will receive our newsletter shortly before each concert.

PROGRAMME

Michael Berkeley Coronach

Graeme Koehne Divertissement: trois pièces bourgeoises

I. Rhapsody
II. Scherzo
III. Elegy

Greg van der Struik Concerto for Bass Trombone and String Orchestra

I Moderato – allegro
II Moderato – meno mosso
III Adagio
IV Moderato

Greg van der Struik, trombone

INTERVAL
20 minutes

Bernard Herrmann Prelude to *Psycho*

Joan Trimble Suite for Strings

I Prelude
II Air
III Finale

Witold Lutosławski Musique funèbre, for string orchestra

Michael Berkeley was born in 1948, the son of noted composer Lennox Berkeley (1903–1989); his godfather was Benjamin Britten. In his youth he was a chorister at Westminster Cathedral, and later played keyboard in a rock band; it was only in his twenties that he took up composition seriously. His compositions include orchestral works and concertos: notable is a violin concerto written in memory of Deborah Rogers, the composer's wife, in which the soloist performs on both traditional and electric violins. He has written two operas, *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and *Jane Eyre*, each with a libretto by David Malouf.

Berkeley's early compositions belong, more or less, to the English "pastoral" tradition; later works have become tougher and more dissonant. Written for the 1988 Presteigne Festival, *Coronach* – the title is a Scots Gaelic word denoting a funeral lament – belongs to the latter style, and, in the composer's words, "contrasts the elements of rage and sorrow that are so often a part of mourning". The opening sets an evocation of funeral drumbeats by the cellos and basses against keening *glissandi* in the violins; a brief but powerful motif soon appears in the violas. The recurrent "drumbeat" figure is interspersed with more and more furious activity, until a held cello note leads into an extended and dolorously expressive violin melody poised above eerie and poignant harmonies. A relatively brief return to the earlier active and dissonant textures is dissipated into another melodic line, here given to one violin alone and supported by hushed *tutti* drumbeats. A brief coda crashes into a final set of drumbeats, with violas alone having the last word.

The stylistic journey of **Graeme Koehne** (born 1956) has extended from Boulezian modernism, absorbed through lessons with Richard Meale at the Elder Conservatorium, University of

Adelaide, through an admiration for the impressionist scores of Debussy, Ravel and Takemitsu, to a new simplicity and "radical conservatism". The latter, while probably self–initiated, was greatly reinforced by study with New York neo–classicist Virgil Thomson while Koehne was undertaking postgraduate work at Yale University, supported by a Harkness Fellowship. Since returning to Australia he has earned a reputation as one of this country's leading composers, especially in the fields of orchestral music and dance; among his most frequently performed works are *Unchained Melody* and *Powerhouse*, in both of which the composer seeks to adapt popular musical styles to the idiom of the symphony orchestra.

Koehne's *Divertissement* for strings proclaims in its rather self–deprecating subtitle *Trois pièces bourgeoises* an adherence to the composer's new aims. The opening *Rhapsody* begins with gently arpeggiated pizzicati in the cellos; a rocking barcarolle–like figure introduces an elegantly lilting melody. The second piece, *Scherzo*, features vivacious melodies and bustling quaver accompaniments, with a slightly slower central section performing the function of a brief trio. The final *Elegy* boasts a deeply felt expressivity enhanced by frequent but subtle (and, most likely, not consciously audible) changes of metre, and a gravity emphasized by the bare unison with which it concludes.

Trombonist **Greg van der Struik** (born 1965) has been for many years a leading figure among Australian brass players, and is lately attracting increasing attention as a composer. In a Bourbaki Ensemble concert in 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. Greg joined us again in 2015 to perform his *Concertino for Trumpet and Trombone* in association with colleague Brian Evans. We are delighted to welcome him back for a third performance with Bourbaki.

Greg's *Concerto for Bass Trombone* opens with a majestic and forceful introduction, leading into an *allegro* which alternates similarly rhythmic passages with lyrical, often chorale–like, episodes. The brief second movement has the character of a scherzo in brisk five–beat rhythms, juxtaposed with a trio having something of the feel of a slowish waltz. An *adagio* showcases the lyrical side of the solo instrument, frequently accompanied by lush string textures. Much of the finale is set above a motoric bass line, though on occasion the orchestra dramatically cuts out, leaving the trombone alone. A cadenza, reviewing material from previous movements, leads into an emphatic conclusion.

Frequently cited as the greatest film composer of all time, **Bernard Herrmann** was born in New York in 1911 into a prosperous immigrant Russian–Jewish family. He developed an interest in composition at an early age, and studied at both New York University and the Juilliard School. In the 1940s he held the post of Chief Conductor to the CBS Symphony Orchestra, where he soon attracted notice for his adventurous programming. As a composer, Herrmann is nowadays almost exclusively known for his film scores, which won him an Academy Award and a (posthumous) BAFTA; little attention has been paid to his stage and concert works, which include a cantata based on *Moby Dick* and an opera on *Wuthering Heights*. He moved to England in 1971, and died just after completing a recording assignment in Hollywood in 1975.

Herrmann provided music for many of the great film directors of his time, from Orson Welles (*Citizen Kane*) to François

Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451*) and Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*). By common consent, however, the height of his career was his work on seven films of Alfred Hitchcock. (The director's rejection of an eighth score, *Torn Curtain*, ended their collaboration.) A feature of Herrmann's film music is the variety and unconventionality of his instrumentation. His unused score for *Torn Curtain* employed an extraordinary ensemble of 12 flutes, 16 horns, 9 trombones, 2 tubas and bass–heavy strings; going to the other extreme, he provided Hitchcock's notorious horror movie *Psycho* with music for strings alone, disdaining the tumult of brass, percussion and electronics which might be thought obligatory for such a theme. The use of muted strings – a device generally associated with subdued and harmonious textures, but here maintained throughout passages of high dynamic and strong dissonance – imbues the prelude to *Psycho* with an atmosphere of tension and claustrophobia. The piece is, in effect, a collage of brief elements, a technique which has great practical value in fitting a score to a predetermined length of film, but which also imposes upon listeners, if the composer so chooses, a mood of unpredictability and instability. Within the first thirty seconds one hears the slashing syncopated chords of the very beginning, the twisting figure occurring immediately afterwards in the first violins, and a snapping dotted rhythm for the full orchestra. Constant circulation of these motifs leads to a nerve–racking climax which is brought back to earth with a crunch.

Arthur Benjamin's *Jamaican Rumba* is a staple of the light classical repertoire. It's likely, however, that few who have heard and enjoyed it would be able to name its dedicatees and first performers, the piano duo of sisters Valerie and **Joan Trimble**. Yet Joan, born in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, in 1915, enjoyed an association with many of the twentieth century's best known musicians during her career as a pianist and composer. In 1936, having completed degrees in arts and music in Dublin, she went on tour as a solo pianist with the celebrated Irish tenor John McCormack. This was followed by studies at the Royal College of Music, London, where her composition teachers included Herbert Howells and Ralph Vaughan Williams. A *Phantasy for Piano Trio* won her the prestigious Cobbett Prize in 1940. During the 1940s and 50s, Joan and Valerie's performance schedule became increasingly busy, with many appearances at the Proms and at the Myra Hess wartime National Gallery concerts. Their repertoire included contemporary music by composers such as Stravinsky, Bliss and Lennox Berkeley. An abrupt change of career came in 1977 when, following the death of her father, Joan became editor of *The Impartial Reporter*, an Enniskillen newspaper which was founded by her great–grandfather in 1825 and had been in the family ever since. She died in 2000.

Joan Trimble's 1951 *Suite for Strings* opens with a strongly rhythmic *Prelude*, often featuring violins and violas moving in close three–part harmony above a sturdy bass line, and occasionally relaxing into quieter melodic episodes. A delightfully rhapsodic *Air*, marked *adagio: cantabile e semplice* (slowly: simple and songlike), conveys a distictly Irish atmosphere; possibly a hint of early Vaughan Williams can also be heard. After a short violin solo marked *quasi fantasia*, a final statement of the main theme brings the movement to a serene close. The *Finale* exhibits the clear influence of traditional Irish music (though Trimble's original compositions never quote actual folk material): the spirited and rhythmic tunes which make up its regular eight–bar phrases could easily be imagined as a set of Irish dances accompanying a convivial celebration.

One of the most highly respected composers of the twentieth century, **Witold Lutosławski** spent essentially his whole life in Warsaw. He was born there in 1913, studied composition, piano and mathematics at the Conservatory and University of Warsaw, and lived there during the Nazi occupation. The 1960s brought opportunities for travel abroad, and he became a noted conductor of contemporary music. Nonetheless, Warsaw was always his permanent home, and he died there in 1994.

Lutosławski's *Funeral Music*, written in memory of Béla Bartók, is scored for divided string orchestra: four separate violin parts, two viola, two cello and two bass. The four sections, *Prologue*—*Metamorphoses*—*Apogee*—*Epilogue*, are performed without breaks. The prologue is a rigorously structured movement, the opening soon developing into a four–part double canon. That is, the first cellos, first violas, third violins and first violins play exactly the same theme, starting one after another at two notes' distance; while the remaining cellos, violas and violins play another theme arranged in the same way. At other points, instruments enter successively with identical notes played at different speeds. All this might suggest a mechanical and inexpressive cacophony: on the contrary, the movement builds to a series of thrilling climaxes before fading into silence.

The succeeding *Metamorphoses* is initiated by a sparse line of *pizzicato* basses. Gradually accumulating textures of vibrant melodies for the violins, irregular rhythmic patterns and furious semiquaver figurations all culminate in the cathartic *fortississimo* chord which launches the *Apogee*. The dissonances eventually converge on a single note as the whole ensemble proclaims the principal theme of the *Prologue*. The *Epilogue* recapitulates the main elements of the first movement, more briefly and in different combinations, until at last the whole tumultuous work dies away with the unaccompanied notes of a single cello.

Greg 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 Opera Australia Orchestra since 1987 and has been active as a soloist and composer in Australia, China and Europe. Prior to his appointment as Principal Trombone, he undertook extensive freelance engagements with professional orchestras, as well as holding principal positions in the ABC Sinfonia, the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Sydney Youth Orchestra. Greg was a founding member of the Early Brass Consort of Sydney, and also actively promotes Opera Australia Brass, which toured China in May 2000.

As a soloist, Greg has 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 with ensembles such as the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Cuivres d'Amiens and the Sydney Youth Orchestra. Greg 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."

David Angell, conductor

As a violist and chorister, David has performed under internationally famous conductors including Sir Charles Mackerras, Stuart Challender and Richard Bonynge. Since taking up conducting in 1998, he has directed a number of musical societies and orchestras, most frequently the Bourbaki Ensemble and Orchestra 143. Other recent engagements include two programmes with the Woollahra Philharmonic (one in a replica pirate costume), and two programmes of string music with the Crendon Chamber Orchestra (Thame, UK).

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble is a chamber 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 in its 2018 season music by Australian composers Greg van der Struik, Graeme Koehne, Betty Beath, Carl St. Jacques and Peter Sculthorpe.

Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was a prominent figure in nineteenth century French military circles. It has been suggested that he settled on an army career only after the failure of his drama *Psyché*, which was booed off the stage. (According to some theatre historians, transcription errors have occurred and this was not the original title.) Featuring split personality, cross–dressing and murder, the play was so scandalous that the censor ordered its destruction, and Parisian journals refused to review it. As a consequence, our only knowledge of Bourbaki's sole attempt to make his name in the theatre comes from oral tradition.

Violins Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Paul Pokorny, Ian Colley, Camille Hanrahan–Tan, Madeleina Hanrahan–Tan, Deborah McGowan, Jenny Mee, Rob Newnham, Warwick Pulley, Victor Wu.

Violas Marilyn McLeod, Monique Mezzatesta, Julia Pokorny, Richard Willgoss.

Violoncellos John Napier, Clara Blazer, Margaret Lazanas, Nicole McVicar, Naomi Power.

Basses Cosimo Gunaratna, Danny Morris.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

war and peace: music for strings

Pēteris Vasks Stimmen (“Voices”)
Carl St. Jacques Elemental Prayer Suite
Betty Beath Lament for Kosovo
Arvo Pärt Da pacem Domine

Carl St. Jacques, viola
David Angell, conductor

2.45 pm, Sunday 5 August 2018
St. Stephen’s Church, Newtown
Tickets $35, concessions $25

Our second programme this year revisits the contrasts embodied in the first, but elevates them to concerns of worldwide, even universal, significance. Pēteris Vasks’ symphony *Voices* records the composer’s reactions to the turmoil surrounding his native Latvia’s separation from the Soviet Union in 1991. Its three movements “Voices of Silence”, “Voices of Life” and “Voices of Conscience” are not devoid of hope, though the prevailing mood is one of apprehension in the face of an uncertain future. Similar, somewhat later, events in Kosovo formed one of the inspirations behind Brisbane composer Betty Beath’s *Lament*. Our concert also features the world premiere of Carl St. Jacques’ *Elemental Prayer Suite* for solo viola and strings, in which the composer (a member of the Bourbaki Ensemble) will play the solo part; and a choral work in which Arvo Pärt sets the Latin prayer *Da pacem, Domine*: Give peace in our time, O Lord.