THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

poems, dreams, lullabies: music for voice and strings

Dvořák Serenade for Strings

Peter Sculthorpe Island Dreaming

Peter Sculthorpe Maranoa Lullaby

Chausson Chanson Perpétuelle

Wayne Dixon Poplar

Humphrey Searle Poem

Ayşe Göknur Shanal, soprano
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 11 August 2019

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to Bourbaki's winter concert for 2019! We are delighted to welcome distinguished soprano Ayşe Göknur Shanal as our guest soloist. Ayşe will perform four works, two of them settings of Australian indigenous texts and music by Peter Sculthorpe. Latest in the extensive Bourbaki tradition of world premieres, Wayne Dixon's *Poplar* will receive its first performance. There will also be a poignant and delicate *mélodie* by Ernest Chausson, the only composer known (*trivia alert*) to have died in a bicycling accident.

Today's programme also includes the *Poem for 22 strings* by Humphrey Searle, great–uncle of one of our cellists! Among his many film and TV credits, Searle wrote the music for a few episodes of *Doctor Who*, and although the *Poem* is an entirely independent work, its opening bars certainly have a "spacey–timey–wimey" feel. It's a strict twelve–tone serial composition which somehow manages, in parts, to give a hint of Mahlerian chromaticism carried to the extreme.

Our final concert for the year, *Italian connections*, will be presented on Sunday 8 December, and will feature music by Tchaikovsky, Respighi and Raffaele Marcellino: for more details, see the back cover. To receive early information about all our concerts, please join our mailing list by leaving your name and email address on the form at the door. Visit Bourbaki on Facebook, or check out Eventbrite closer to the time for tickets. Or just buy them at the door as usual.

As always, we are immeasurably indebted to the ministers and congregation at St. Stephen's for welcoming us into their beautiful church and giving us the opportunity to make music in its marvellous acoustic. We hope to continue to do so next year, which will open with our fiftieth concert – pretty good for an ensemble originally conceived as a one–off!! We hope you can join us.

PROGRAMME

Humphrey Searle *Poem* for 22 strings, Op. 18

Ernest Chausson Chanson Perpétuelle, Op. 37

Ayşe Göknur Shanal, soprano

Peter Sculthorpe Island Dreaming, for mezzo–soprano and string orchestra

Ayşe Göknur Shanal, soprano

INTERVAL
20 minutes

Wayne Dixon Poplar, Op. 34

Ayşe Göknur Shanal, soprano

Peter Sculthorpe Maranoa Lullaby

Ayşe Göknur Shanal, soprano

Antonín Dvořák Serenade for Strings in E major, Op. 22

I Moderato
II Tempo di Valse
III Scherzo: vivace
IV Larghetto
V Finale: allegro vivace

Humphrey Searle (1915–1982) was a well mannered English gentleman, a rebellious musical rule breaker, and a pioneer of serial music in the UK at the end of the Second World War. He was also a quiet, anxious and introverted character, self–effacing to the detriment of his musical achievements and probably ahead of his time.

Humphrey composed over 100 works for orchestra, a range of eclectic chamber ensembles, and spoken voice with a variety of instrumental combinations. He delighted in cats and wrote a number of feline–inspired works, including *The Owl and the Pussycat* (after the poem by Edward Lear) for speaker, flute, cello and guitar. He was also commissioned for radio plays, TV and film scores, composing the incidental music for the third story of the third series of *Doctor Who* called *The Myth Makers*, broadcast in 1965 (now missing from the BBC archives and existing only in stills and fragments), and *Anna Karenina* (1948) with Vivien Leigh. His serialist 12–tone style lent itself nicely to the horror movie genre, and Humphrey is known to modern–day classic horror movie film buffs as composer of the film scores for *The Abominable Snowman* (1957) and *The Haunting* (1963).

Serialism is a highly specialised compositional method in which the traditional conventions of keys, harmony and melody are replaced by the twelve notes of the chromatic scale and associated tone rows (non–repetitive ordering of the notes of the chromatic scale). At the time, music written in this style challenged people's ideas of tonality and pitch and what sounded "correct" to the western classical ear. Humphrey used his role as producer at the BBC from 1946 to 1948 to promote the genre to the British public. It is said that he consequently took the brunt of acrimonious criticism of serial music in the UK; however he consistently defended his beliefs: "the music business is a savage jungle, and some music lovers are fickle, subscribing to the immature notion that what cannot be whistled or immediately understood is rubbish". His Schoenbergian seriousness did not lend itself well to English ears, and many of his works were first performed in Germany to critical acclaim.

Humphrey was educated in classical Latin and Greek studies at Oxford; on the side, he actively pursued his growing interest in music. Early exposure to the classics in his teens had revealed that "violent music" appealed more to him than the classics: "I loved Richard Strauss and even Wagner... it took me a long time to appreciate Haydn and Mozart properly". In 1936 he was accepted to study in Vienna with Webern, to the disapproval of his father. It was the Viennese school that gave him his fundamental guidance with the 12–tone serialist style of Webern and Schoenberg. It may be said that although Humphrey respected tradition, he did not abide by it, as the establishment in the UK could be relied upon to stifle progress in the arts. Fresh air needed to come from outside: "I want to write what I want to write. Anyone can copy someone else and dress it up in the mendacious disguise of originality. Lesser composers have done this, and some have made a name for themselves in this mercenary way but it says absolutely nothing for their integrity or the advancement of music".

Humphrey's *Poem* for 22 strings was composed in 1950 as a wedding gift for his first wife Lesley, who died unexpectedly in 1957. It was first performed in Darmstadt in Germany. He describes the piece as being "like the growth of a plant or tree becoming increasingly animated after a very quiet start, rising to a climax, then collapsing and reviving in a different manner".

Programme note by Nicole McVicar, cellist in the Bourbaki Ensemble and Humphrey Searle's great–niece.

Born into a wealthy Parisian family, **Ernest Chausson** (1855–1899) had no need to earn a living from music. He graduated in law (solely, it seems, to please his parents), and consid-

Chanson perpétuelle

Bois frissonnants, ciel étoilé,
Mon bien-aimé s'en est allé,
Emportant mon coeur désolé!

Vents, que vos plaintives rumeurs,
Que vos chants, rossignols charmeurs,
Aillent lui dire que je meurs!

Le premier soir qu'il vint ici
Mon âme fut à sa merci.
De fierté je n'eus plus souci.

Mes regards étaient pleins d'aveux.
Il me prit dans ses bras nerveux
Et me baisa près des cheveux.

J'en eus un grand frémissement;
Et puis, je ne sais plus comment
Il est devenu mon amant.

Je lui disais: "Tu m'aimeras
Aussi longtemps que tu pourras!"
Je ne dormais bien qu'en ses bras.

Mais lui, sentant son coeur éteint,
S'en est allé l'autre matin,
Sans moi, dans un pays lointain.

Puisque je n'ai plus mon ami,
Je mourrai dans l'étang, parmi
Les fleurs, sous le flot endormi.

Sur le bord arrêtée, au vent
Je dirai son nom, en rêvant
Que là je l'attendis souvent.

Et comme en un linceul doré,
Dans mes cheveux défaits, au gré
Du vent je m'abandonnerai.

Les bonheurs passés verseront
Leur douce lueur sur mon front;
Et les joncs verts m'enlaceront.

Et mon sein croira, frémissant
Sous l'enlacement caressant,
Subir l'étreinte de l'absent.

Charles Cros

Shivering woods, starry sky,
My beloved has gone away,
Taking with him my desolate heart!

Let your plaintive murmurs, winds,
Let your songs, sweet nightingales,
Tell him that I am dying!

The first night he came here
My soul was at his mercy.
I had no thought of pride any more.

My eyes betrayed my feelings.
He took me in his nervous arms
And kissed my hair.

I gave a great shudder;
And then, I no longer know how
We became lovers.

I said to him, "Love me
For as long as you can!"
I slept content only in his arms.

But he, feeling his heart cool,
Left without me the other morning,
Setting off for a distant land.

Since my lover is lost to me, I will die
In the pond, among the flowers,
Beneath the sleeping waters.

Washed up on the shore
I will say his name to the wind,
Recalling how I used to wait for him.

And in the golden shroud
Of my unbound hair
I shall abandon myself to the wind.

Past joys will paint their soft glow
On my forehead;
Green bulrushes will embrace me.

And my trembling breast will fancy,
In their caressing tangles,
The embrace of the absent one.

Translation: Google/David Angell

ered devoting himself to painting or literature before resolving to pursue music. The comfort of his circumstances may have been a mixed blessing: some of his works give an impression of over–complication, perhaps the result of a concern to avoid accusations of dilettantism, when a simpler approach may have been wiser. His home in Paris boasted an extensive and glittering guest list of painters, poets and musicians including Manet, Renoir, Mallarmé, Fauré, Satie, Ysaÿe and Debussy.

An interest in Arthurian legend is evident in Chausson's tone poem *Viviane* and his opera *Le Roi Arthus*, though his most popular works have always been the *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* for voice and orchestra and the *Poème* for violin and orchestra. The *Chanson Perpétuelle*, for voice accompanied by orchestra or by strings and piano, was his last completed work.

Peter Sculthorpe (1929–2014) had a deep, long–lasting and respectful interest in the indigenous music of northern Australia and the Torres Strait. Some of his works, such as the orchestral pieces *Kakadu*, *From Uluru* and *Nourlangie*, are associated with specific places; in others, such as *Earth Cry* and the *Sun Music* series, the inspiration is more general.

Island Dreaming, originally written for mezzo–soprano and string quartet, was premiered by the Brodsky Quartet with Anne Sofie von Otter in 1996. It alternates between a slowish, almost ritualistic chant marked *misterioso* and a faster section marked first *poco estatico* and then *molto estatico*. The text, drawn from modern and archaic indigenous poetry, speaks of the deep ocean and those who journey upon it. The *Maranoa Lullaby* is a northern Australian indigenous melody, a favourite of Sculthorpe from his boyhood.

Wayne Dixon, born in Sydney in 1945, counts among his teachers eminent musicians including John Antill and Edward Cowie (composition) and Sir Adrian Boult and Vernon Handley (conducting). He has occupied a wide variety of posts in the academic and community sectors of the Australian musical scene, particularly in the Illawarra region. His compositions range from major orchestral works to chamber music and songs.

The composer writes: I have always loved seeing poplars, whether they be lining roads in the Corot–like landscapes of northern France, or around the hilly villages of Provence, or lined up at the lake's edge in Queenstown, New Zealand, or, closer to home, delineating green fields in the Shoalhaven valley. When, in 2017, I discovered Richard Aldington's poem "The Poplar" (dating from the early 1900s), I knew I had found a Poplar text which begged a musical response.

Wayne's setting receives its premiere performance today.

The Poplar

Why do you always stand there shivering
Between the white stream and the road?

The people pass through the dust
On bicycles, in carts, in motor-cars;
The waggoners go by at dawn;
The lovers walk on the grass path
at night.

Stir from your roots, walk, poplar!
You are more beautiful than they are.

I know that the white wind loves you,
Is always kissing you and turning up
The white lining of your green petticoat.
The sky darts through you like blue rain,
And the grey rain drips on your flanks
And loves you.
And I have seen the moon
Slip his silvery penny into your pocket
As you straightened your hair;
And the white mist curling and
hesitating
Like a bashful lover about your knees.

I know you, poplar;
I have watched you since I was ten.
But if you had a little real love,
A little strength,
You would leave your nonchalant
idle lovers
And go walking down the white road
Behind the waggoners.

There are beautiful beeches
Down beyond the hill.
Will you always stand there shivering?

Richard Aldington

First among Czech composers, **Antonín Dvořák** (1841–1904) was born in the village of Nelahozeves, where his father was a butcher and innkeeper. An early interest in music led to studies in Zlonice and then Prague, where he played viola in the Czech National Opera orchestra. Dvořák's early compositions were influenced by Wagner, but of far greater moment was the encouragement and patronage of Brahms, who succeeded in placing Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* with Brahms' own publisher. The popularity of this music led to an increasing reputation in western Europe, and particularly in England, where Dvořák was a frequent and welcome visitor. A stay in America was perhaps less happy, but did result in the composition of such masterpieces as the *New World* Symphony and the cello concerto. One of Dvořák's keenest extra–musical enthusiasms was railways; he died from the after–effects of a chill brought about by excessive outdoor engine–spotting in cold weather during the spring of 1904.

Dvořák's *Serenade*, one of the best loved pieces in the string orchestra repertoire, is a work of few shadows. An introductory movement in the "bright" key of E major begins with brief thematic fragments which gradually coalesce into more sustained melody, the whole bound together by an almost constant pulsation in the violas; a change of key brings a more dance–like section suggesting the folk music of Dvořák's native Bohemia. The second movement, *tempo di valse*, occasionally adopts dotted rhythms which are decidedly more Czech than Viennese; attractive use is made of the vibrant tone of violas in their lowest register.

There follows a scherzo, in duple time rather than the customary triple, which features a good deal of imitation between the parts. Celli are echoed by first violins, violins by violas, second violins by firsts, and so on throughout a large part of the scherzo. After a central section in which a singing violin melody is accompanied by suave offbeat figures from the violas, the scherzo returns, slightly varied. The fourth movement, *larghetto*, introduces a relaxed and somewhat nostalgic mood, full of charm, if lacking the depth of feeling to be found in the slow movements of Dvořák's later symphonies. The movement features a contrasting episode in a somewhat more urgent vein, proceeding to a recapitulation of the *larghetto*, which expands into a hushed and almost motionless ending.

The finale begins with further imitative writing; twice the piece stops and waits, as it were, for one half of the orchestra to catch up with the other. A feature of the opening is the series of accents falling on the last quaver of each bar and disrupting the expected melodic flow. The main theme from the fourth movement and the close of the first are recalled before the Serenade ends with a return to the syncopations and offbeat accents typical of the finale.

Ayşe Göknur Shanal, soprano

Brisbane born soprano Ayşe Göknur Shanal is one of Australia's most versatile classical singers, having performed in Europe, the USA, Japan and Turkey. As the Dame Joan Sutherland Scholar, she studied at London's Royal College of Music, and she has held an adjunct post at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. She has won awards and scholarships including the Australian Singing Competition and the Symphony Australia Young Performers' Award (Vocal Category).

This year, Ayşe will be performing at prestigious venues including the Sydney Opera House and Melbourne Recital Centre, as well as touring the UK, Bosnia and Turkey. She will also be embarking on recording projects with pianist Ashley Hribar.

General **Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki** (1816–1897) figured prominently in the French military at the time of the Crimean and Franco–Prussian wars. In his later years he was a *habitué* of the salons of Parisian high society, where he was welcomed as a skilled, though amateur, violinist and a noted scholar in the field of Ruritanian music. Tradition attests to his ability to hold his interlocutors spellbound both with witty anecdotes and with wise reflection. It would appear, however, that at some stage his caustic *bons mots* regarding the Army hierarchy came to the attention of his superiors; he was placed on the retired list, and the *Sûreté* (then, as now, the French organ entrusted with matters of especial sensitivity) was instructed to locate and destroy all written reference to Bourbaki's place in society.

Violins Paul Pokorny, Julia Pokorny, Joanna Buggy, Clare Fulton, Stephanie Fulton, Camille Hanrahan–Tan, Madeleina Hanrahan–Tan, Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Deborah McGowan, Jenny Mee, Danny Morris, Rob Newnham, Warwick Pulley, Richard Willgoss, Victor Wu.

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Marilyn McLeod, Monique Mezzatesta, Daniel Murphy.

Violoncellos John Napier, Ian Macourt, Nicole McVicar, Naomi Power, Catherine Willis.

Bass Sasha Cotis.

Piano Bianca Zatz

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

Italian connections: music for strings

Tchaikovsky Souvenir de Florence
Respighi Ancient Airs and Dances
Raffaele Marcellino L'arte di volare

David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 8 December 2019
St. Stephen's Church, Newtown
Tickets $35, concessions $25

Music from Italy and about Italy! Raffaele Marcellino is an Australian composer of Italian ancestry: his *L'arte di volare* (The art of flying) is a vibrant and exciting five–movement suite for strings. Respighi's loving look at ancient Italian music is complemented by Tchaikovsky's reminiscences of his travels in the country.

`www.bourbakiensemble.org`
`www.facebook.com/BourbakiEnsemble`

Two portraits of Humphrey Searle