THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

Italian connections: music for strings

Tchaikovsky Souvenir de Florence

Raffaele Marcellino L'arte di volare

Respighi Ancient Airs and Dances

David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 8 December 2019

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to the final Bourbaki Ensemble performance for 2019, in which we are delighted to present a concert of "Italian music". The quotation marks are deliberate: as often with Bourbaki programmes, things are not quite as straightforward as might be imagined. Only one of the three works to be presented today consists of Italian music by an Italian composer living in Italy. The others are by a Russian composer, prompted by his memories of Italy; and by an Australian composer of Italian ancestry, inspired by his family's (and many others') migration around the world. So, as our title says: not so much Italian music as *Italian connections*.

Just before beginning rehearsals for the present concert, the Bourbaki Ensemble spent a couple of sessions in St. Stephen's Church with flute soloist Christine Draeger and recording engineer Jayson McBride, making a recording of Christine's flute concerto *Three dances for imaginary animals*. The recording will be available on MP3 in the new year; you can secure an advance copy by donating to our crowdfunding campaign. Further details on the inside back cover of this programme.

Bourbaki activities for 2020 are still in the planning stage. (Although we trust that we contribute something of value to the Sydney musical scene, we recognise that we are a small fish in a very big pond, and therefore wait to hear other organisations' dates before setting our own.) However, there will definitely be a concert with a lot of J.S. Bach in February, and some Wagner towards the end of the year. For (a little) more information, see the back of the programme booklet.

As always, the best way of keeping informed about Bourbaki dates and programmes is to put your address on our mailing list (forms available at the door: or contact us online), or to make friends with us on Facebook. We thank you for joining us this year, and look forward to seeing you again in 2020.

PROGRAMME

Ottorino Respighi Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 3

I Italiana
II Arie di corte
III Siciliana
IV Passacaglia

Raffaele Marcellino L'arte di volare

I La prima lezione: il decollo
II La seconda lezione: aliante
III La terza lezione: la formazione
IV La quarta lezione: la gran volta
V L'ultima lezione: l'atterraggio

INTERVAL

20 minutes

Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky Souvenir de Florence, Op. 70

I Allegro con spirito
II Adagio cantabile e con moto
III Allegretto moderato
IV Allegro vivace

Though his compositions include no fewer than nine operas, **Ottorino Respighi** (1879–1936) is one of the relatively few post–Baroque Italian composers whose reputation depends rather on his instrumental works. He is widely known for *The Fountains of Rome* and the other symphonic poems of his "Roman trilogy"; also frequently heard are two suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances* for orchestra. The third suite, for strings alone, is somewhat less familiar.

In each of the suites, Respighi borrows melodies and harmonies from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, clothing them in his own orchestral style. The third suite, composed in 1932, begins with an *Italiana*, an anonymous melody from the sixteenth century, which Respighi sets in a flowing and graceful style. The second movement, "Airs of the Court", a compilation of songs by Jean–Baptiste Besard (*ca.* 1567–1617), consists largely of short, rhythmically lively songs, though it begins and ends with the doleful "C'est malheur que de vous aymer".

The third movement is an anonymous sixteenth–century *Siciliana*. This dance form acquired immense popularity in the Baroque period, its dotted rhythm in triple time being heard throughout the works of major composers. Respighi's setting ends with a descent to the cellos' lowest register and a serenely grave conclusion. The suite finishes with a *Passacaglia* based on guitar music by Lodovico Roncalli. Beginning with brief cadenzas from violin, viola and cello, the movement soon introduces the full string orchestra before broadening in scope and ending with a grandiose rescoring of the opening material.

Respighi was born in Bologna, the capital of the Emilia–Romagna region in northern Italy, and studied violin, viola and composition at the Liceo Musicale in that city. After graduation he gained a post as principal viola in the St. Petersburg Opera. He took the opportunity afforded by his residence in Russia to study with Nikolai Rimsky–Korsakov, whose influence is clearly discernible in the scoring of his later symphonic poems. Further engagements and studies took him to Berlin and finally to Rome, where he died at the age of 56.

Australian composer **Raffaele Marcellino** (born 1964) graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 1985 after studying with Richard Toop and Martin Wesley–Smith, and since then has held posts in Tasmania, Sydney and Melbourne. His compositions include opera and music theatre, as well as concert works both instrumental and vocal. His *Canticle* for singers, actors and ensemble (1999) was awarded the prestigious Paul Lowin Song Cycle Prize. Raffaele has composed for leading performing groups such as the Australia Ensemble, the Song Company and Sydney Philharmonia; notable works include *Mrs Macquarie's Cello* for six voices and cello; an opera *The Flight of Les Darcy*; a tuba concerto entitled *The Art of Resonance*; *Ein Psalm Davids* for choir and solo violin.

L'arte di volare ("The art of flying"), a five–movement suite for strings, was premiered by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in 2002. The composer writes:

This work is dedicated to the migration of Southern Italians during the first half of the twentieth century. This is a concept close to my heart, as my family were part of this global migration that took us to Australia and other family members to America and Argentina. The other inspiration for this work is the animated film *Porco Rosso* by Hayao Miyazaki, set in post–WWI Italy. The work evokes the artistry of flight and the Italian "flight" across the world as combined ideas of inspiration. The movements take their names from aspects of flying – take-off, gliding, formation, loop-the-loop and landing – to create a musical portrait and does not seek to follow a programmatic narrative of the film or migration. As a portrait, it seeks to capture the essence of the ideas in music with the intention that the listener is transported in imagination. The different movements expand and contract in terms of their musical textures that are analogous to flight and contribute to forming the overall arch of the piece. I invite the listener to be attentive to these nuances. In the same way, a textured surface can project the implication of movement through depth perception and shifting focus from high to low, small details to the whole and the detailed rhythmic interplays to broad gestures.

In early 1878, fleeing a catastrophic marriage which had culminated in his attempted suicide, **Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky** (1840–1893) found himself in Florence. Financially secure as the result of a substantial allowance from his friend and patron Nadezhda von Meck, he was once again able to concentrate on composition, and produced some of his finest works. The fourth symphony and the opera *Eugene Onegin* belong to this happy period, though each has a clear psychological basis in the emotional traumas of the past year; at the same time, one may imagine, the composer was stockpiling his recovered happiness, and his pleasure at life in Italy, for use in future works. The

dazzling *Capriccio Italien* appeared in 1881, and in 1890 the *Souvenir de Florence*. Originally for string sextet, the *Souvenir* is frequently performed in a version for string orchestra, the original two violin, two viola and two cello parts being augmented by a line for double bass.

Dispensing with any introductory gestures, the opening *Allegro con spirito* bursts into life with a passionate theme above a turbulent accompaniment. After a couple of varied episodes, the first violins introduce the second main theme, supported by a repetitive rocking figure in the lower parts. Like many of Tchaikovsky's melodies, this one is open–ended, repeating and renewing itself rather than coming to any definite conclusion. A *pianissimo* statement of the first theme builds inexorably to its "true" reprise in a passage of even greater force and vigour than the opening.

A brief passage based on converging scales – a favourite device of the composer – sets the scene for the main theme of the ensuing *adagio*. Vocal, one may even say operatic, in character, marked *dolce, cantabile* (sweetly and singingly) and poised above a guitar–like *pizzicato* accompaniment, the melody evokes a lover's serenade on a balmy Italian summer's night. Given first to violins and then to cellos, the theme ultimately issues into a majestic chordal passage which eases away into silence. A greatly contrasting central episode abandons melody for a texture of murmuring triplets before the movement concludes with a fairly literal repeat of the first part.

Despite the work's title and origins, its final two movements are no less Russian than Italian in character. A principal theme of a distinctly Slavic slant, consisting of a succesion of short phrases followed by a strongly rhythmic pendant, is heard first in the violas and subsequently throughout the *scherzo*, while a vivacious *saltarello*–like middle section hints at a return to Italy. The finale is based largely upon a dancing peasant tune which Tchaikovsky even manages at one stage to turn into a short *fugato*, though it is known from his letters that he had great doubts about the viability of this passage. A pyrotechnic *coda* brings the work to its thrilling conclusion.

General **Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki** (1816–1897) earned a great reputation as a leading figure in the French military during the Crimean and Franco–Prussian wars. Throughout his life he was devoted to the music not only of his native land but of other cultures, among them the Shetland Islands and Ruritania. A sojourn in Italy fired his enthusiasm for the glories of that country's ancient music. An anonymous notebook consisting of a dozen or so Italian lute pieces from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was listed in the catalogue of the library of the Liceo Musicale in Bologna in the 1880s and was said by some to be in Bourbaki's handwriting. It was last signed out in June 1897 by "Signor O. Hiporetti", which is not recorded as the name of any student or professor of the Liceo. The manuscript, therefore, must be considered lost, and no modern authentication of its authorship is possible.

David Angell, conductor

photo: Steve Dimitriadis, www.mestevie.com

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 one with the Eastern Sydney Chamber Orchestra. A highlight was the Orchestra 143 Mozartathon, in which he conducted all the symphonies of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in a series of five concerts spread over a single weekend. David has also directed two concerts with the Crendon Chamber Orchestra (Thame, UK), presenting programmes featuring works by Mahler, Vaughan Williams and Australian composers. He has studied conducting with Richard Gill.

David is actively involved in arranging music for strings. His orchestration of Debussy's *Children's Corner* suite has been performed in Australia and the UK; he has (with the composer's permission) adapted Andrew Ford's *Oma Kodu*, originally composed for clarinet and string quartet, as a work for clarinet and string orchestra; and he has arranged Marc–Antoine Charpentier's *Noëls* for (modern) string orchestra. He is the editor of a revised score of the *Concerto for Strings* by Margaret Sutherland, and has contributed translations of Russian and Italian poetry to the *Lied and Art Song Texts* website.

The inaugural concert of the Bourbaki Ensemble took place in 2001, with a programme of Sculthorpe, Dvořák, Mahler and Debussy. At the time, no second performance was contemplated; but now, almost two decades on, the Ensemble is approaching its fiftieth concert. Bourbaki's aims have always been to perform the great masterpieces of the string orchestra repertoire, as well as seeking out fine lesser–known compositions: "music you (probably) haven't heard before". This leads naturally to a focus on music of the 20th and 21st centuries, though Bach, Mozart and Purcell have by no means been absent from our programmes. Among our favourite recent performances have been Pēteris Vasks' haunting *Stimmen*, Julia Wolfe's dramatic *Cruel Sister* and Béla Bartók's wonderful *Divertimento*.

Bourbaki also has a passionate commitment to Australian music. We are delighted to have premiered and thereby given a voice to pieces by Greg van der Struik, Carl St. Jacques and Christine Draeger – and that's just in the last two years! Every Bourbaki programme includes at least one Australian work, whether by an established or an emerging composer, and always will do. We invite you to join us for the ride!

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

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Liz D'Olier, Marilyn McLeod, Monique Mezzatesta, Daniel Murphy, Rob Nijs.

Violoncellos Ian Macourt, Clara Blazer, Nicole McVicar, Catherine Willis.

Bass Danny Morris.

THREE DANCES FOR IMAGINARY ANIMALS

Christine Draeger and the Bourbaki Ensemble

Many of you will have heard the world premiere in Bourbaki's April concert this year of Christine Draeger's marvellous concerto for flute and strings, *Three dances for imaginary animals*. More recently, Christine and Bourbaki spent a couple of evenings in St. Stephen's Church to record the concerto, together with Christine's encore from the concert, her own arrangement for flute and strings of the traditional Irish melody *The Minstrel Boy*. There will be a video which will be put on YouTube, and an MP3 which will be available through the Australian Music Centre.

Of course, recordings don't come for free, and we are seeking to cover costs by a crowdfunding campaign through Pozible. In return for your donation, you can receive a copy of the recording, or a print copy of the concerto with accompaniment arranged for piano – an ideal Christmas present for the flute player in your life! Alternatively, you can receive two tickets for a Bourbaki Ensemble concert in 2020. Or of course you can just make a voluntary contribution of any amount – every bit helps. Please visit

`pozible.com/project/imaginary-animals-recording`

if you are able to help, or even if you would just like to learn a bit more about this project. Any assistance you can give will be greatly appreciated.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

Bach and others: music for voices and strings

A programme built around a selection of the marvellous vocal music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Details are yet to be finalised. This concert will take place in a new venue for the Bourbaki Ensemble.

Ayşe Göknur Shanal, soprano
Jill Sullivan, mezzo–soprano
Diana Blom, harpsichord

David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 16 February 2020
Christ Church St. Laurence, Railway Square

We also expect to give Bourbaki concerts in 2020 at our regular venue of St. Stephen's Newtown, to take place in April/May and November/December. Exact dates are still to be decided. The latter programme will feature Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*, a set of five songs having much in common with the composer's great *Tristan und Isolde*; the soprano soloist will be Camille Mercep, who last appeared with Bourbaki in 2004, singing Ottorino Respighi's radiant *Il Tramonto*. There will be music you (probably) haven't heard before by Graeme Koehne and Eric Whitacre; and perhaps even, if you can believe it, music by Beethoven that you haven't heard before. We look forward to seeing you at our concerts next year.

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