THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

baroque and beyond: music for strings

Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 3
Corelli Christmas Concerto
Vivaldi Summer, from *The Four Seasons*
Colin Brumby The Phoenix and the Turtle
Villa–Lobos Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9
Respighi Ancient Airs and Dances: Suite No. 3

Valerie Gutenev, violin
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 17 November 2002

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to the Bourbaki Ensemble's third and last concert for 2002! The most exciting news since our July concert is that *Compost Monster*, the comedy/horror movie with our soundtrack, was screened at the Portobello Film Festival in London. We assume (naturally) that it was greeted by rapturous applause – though we don't actually know as nobody connected with the film could be there. We've not yet received an offer from Hollywood, but no doubt it's been delayed in the post.

In the present concert we begin with three well–known and popular Baroque works, and continue with three modern works which exhibit some kind of Baroque influence. The series of *Bachianas Brasileiras* was written by Heitor Villa–Lobos to illustrate the kinship which he claimed to perceive between Bach and Brazilian folk music, while the Respighi *Ancient Airs and Dances* are rather more straightforward settings of old Italian music. Colin Brumby's *The Phoenix and the Turtle* has no specific Baroque influence, but as it includes a part for harpsichord we couldn't resist putting it into the programme.

We certainly cannot finish our year without expressing our sincere thanks to the rector and congregation of St. Stephen's for allowing us to rehearse and perform in their church. Special thanks to Fran Morris for organising the details. Thanks also to Esther Turnbull for the loan of a keyboard for rehearsals – for technical reasons it was not initially possible for us to use the same harpsichord as we are using today.

And finally, thanks to all who have supported the Bourbaki Ensemble by attending our performances this year. Our programmes and dates for next year are not yet settled – if you would like to receive the earliest possible information, why not join our email list? Forms are available at the door (and will be collected this time, unlike last time when we forgot. . .) We look forward to sharing our love of music with you in 2003.

PROGRAMME

Johann Sebastian Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048
- I [Allegro]
- II Largo
- III Allegro

Arcangelo Corelli Concerto Grosso in G minor, Op. 6 No. 8, “Christmas Concerto”

Antonio Vivaldi Violin Concerto in G minor, Op. 8 No. 2, “Summer”
- I Allegro non molto
- II Adagio—Presto
- III Presto

Solo violin Valerie Gutenev

Colin Brumby The Phoenix and the Turtle

Heitor Villa–Lobos Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9

Ottorino Respighi Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 3
- I Italiana
- II Arie di corte
- III Siciliana
- IV Passacaglia

One of the few names which would appear on virtually any list of "great composers" would be that of **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685–1750). A brief glance at the comprehensive BWV (*Bachs Werke Verzeichnis*) catalogue reveals his fecundity in instrumental music, cantata and oratorio, concertos, orchestral music; in fact, in every musical genre of his time but opera.

Among Bach's greatest orchestral works are the four suites and the six *concertos avec plusieurs instruments*. The latter were written around 1720 when Bach was in the service of Prince Leopold at Cöthen, and were presented to the Margrave of Brandenburg; for this reason they are known today as the *Brandenburg Concertos*. A speculative but entertaining theory has it that Bach was not actually very keen on fulfilling the commission, and did his best to make life difficult for the Margrave and his musicians. The Concertos call for unusual instruments and combinations – *violino piccolo* in the first; violas, viols, cello and bass but no violins in the sixth – and present formidable technical difficulties such as the stratospheric solo trumpet in the second and the virtuoso harpsichord part of the fifth. The six separate violin and viola parts of the third concerto may well have exceeded the resources of the Brandenburg orchestra.

The first movement of the third *Brandenburg Concerto* is an extraordinary demonstration of Bach's ability to create superb music out of (almost) nothing. Scarcely a bar in the whole movement lacks the anapaestic three–note motive of the beginning, yet Bach avoids monotony by making this rhythm now the main theme, now the accompaniment. For the most part, the texture of the movement contrasts the three trios of violins, violas and cellos, though occasionally the texture thins out for brief solo passages. The tension increases through a series of mighty wave–like passages in the cellos which issues into a reprise of the opening section.

The most mysterious aspect of Bach's score is the second movement, which consists of just two chords for the full ensemble. Nobody can really say exactly what the composer wished here. Sometimes the chords are played as written; sometimes the opportunity is taken for some kind of cadenza. In today's performance we insert the *Largo* from Bach's violin sonata in G major, BWV 1021. This sort of substitution is in accordance with Bach's frequent practice: the *Largo* is in the suitable key of E minor, and it ends with precisely the two chords written in Bach's score. The chords bring the movement to a half–close which leads into the fast, dance–like finale.

Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) was that rarest of creatures, a musician who died rich. Though he was by no means born poor – many of his relations were prominent in local affairs and his family was quite comfortably off – his fame as a composer increased his wealth still further. On his death he left the then considerable sum of £6000, besides an art collection including works by Breughel and Poussin.

The twelve Concerti Grossi, Op. 6, were among Corelli's last compositions, and were not in fact published until the year after he died. The most famous is the eighth concerto, subtitled "fatto per la notte di natale" and known in English as the *Christmas Concerto*. A few brusque chords introduce a sustained passage in which overlapping entries of different parts create harmonic clashes which will prove to be typical of the whole concerto. The second movement features an intricate intertwining of the two solo violin parts. There follows an *Adagio* with an unusual interpolated faster section, a rather severe *Vivace* and what at first appears to be a concluding *Allegro*. Just as the movement, and with it the concerto, seems to be coming to a close in the prevalent minor key it turns to a surprising G major *Pastorale*. This serene and somewhat rustic *Largo* would have taken its place in the Christmas Eve ceremonies as an evocation of the angels' appearance to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. The end of the concerto fades into silence as the choir of angels recedes into the heavens.

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* are the first four of the twelve violin concertos entitled *Il Cimento dell'Armonia e dell'Inventione* (The Contest of Harmony and Invention). They exemplify the battle between musical rationality on the one side and Vivaldi's surge towards fantasy on the other, the classical instrumental concerto being developed into a programmatic work with a variety of new musical concepts. Each of the four works relies on an accompanying sonnet, possibly written by Vivaldi himself.

Summer is the most true to the text, for here Vivaldi creates complete unity of music and sonnet by following it directly, sometimes having to bend compositional conventions. The concerto starts with a ritornello entitled *Languidezza per il caldo* (languishing in the heat) which alternates with the calls of cuckoo, turtledove and goldfinch, played by the principal violin and continuo. The other strings then become the winds: at first

Sotto dura Staggion dal Sole accesa Langue L'huom, langue 'l gregge, ed [arde il Pino; Scioglie il Cucco la Voce, e tosto intesa Canta la Tortorella e 'l gardelino.	Beneath the summer season's baking sun The pine grove burns, the flocks and [people languish. The cuckoo's voice is loosed, and joining in The turtledove and goldfinch raise their song.
Zeffiro dolce Spira, mà contesa Muove Borea improviso al Suo vicino; E piange il Pastorel, perche Sospesa Teme fiera borasca, e 'l Suo destino;	Sweet breezes blow, but suddenly a challenge Is issued near at hand by the North Wind. The shepherd boy laments in apprehension, Fears the fierce tempest, and bewails his fate.
Toglie alle membra lasse il Suo riposo Il timore de'Lampi, e tuoni fieri E de mosche, e mossoni il Stuol furioso!	His weary limbs are roused from their repose By fearsome lightning, by the roaring thunder And by the furious swarms of gnats and flies!
Ah che pur troppo i Suoi timor Son veri Tuona e fulmina il Ciel e grandinoso Tronca il capo alle Spiche e a'grani [alteri.	Alas, his anxious fears too soon are realised As thunder shakes the heavens, and the hail Cuts down the corn and other crops besides.

sweet breezes, later the overpowering *vento borea* (north wind). The second movement juxtaposes the languishing shepherd of the solo violin with the gnats and flies in the orchestral violins and the approaching thunder of the other strings. The third movement is a representation of stormy, summer weather, and includes passages of virtuosic brilliance for the solo violin.

Programme notes by Valerie Gutenev.

The 1974 tour of Australia by the Academy of St. Martin–in–the–Fields included performances of a new work by **Colin Brumby**, especially commissioned for the occasion by Musica Viva. At this point in his career, as the composer explains in a preface to the score of *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, he had for a number of years been writing in the twelve–tone method, and had come to feel that it was time to reappraise his approach to composition. He therefore sought to "start again", writing a work based on the simplest constituent intervals of tonal music. Inspiration came from Shakespeare's poem depicting the funeral of the phoenix and the turtle(dove), symbols of love and constancy; both Shakespeare's and Brumby's works conclude with a *Threnos* or lament. Upon completion of the work, the composer "felt that [his] musical style had in a sense been reborn [like the phoenix] from the ashes of the old".

The Phoenix and the Turtle consists mainly of gentle string textures, with the occasional background sparkle of a harpsichord. It is in five short movements, though on account of the prevailing tranquil mood the breaks between them may be scarcely perceptible. The general character of the work may be inferred from some of the directions in the score: *semplice*, simply; *teneramente*, tenderly; *lusingando*, alluringly – an unusual term, though also used by Beethoven; *sospirando*, sighing.

Colin Brumby was born in Melbourne in 1933, and studied in Melbourne and Europe. Most of his career has been spent in Queensland, where he was the musical director of the Queensland Opera Company (1968–1971), and a Professor of Music at the University of Queensland until his retirement in 1998.

Extracts from the preface to the score quoted by kind permission of the composer.

The only Brazilian composer to date to achieve an international reputation is **Heitor Villa–Lobos** (1887–1959). The sources of his inspiration are extraordinarily diverse: Bach preludes and fugues which he played as a child, *chôros* (Brazilian urban street music) with which he became acquainted in his teens, the folk music he heard on his travels through the interior of Brazil, and the music of Debussy and Stravinsky by which he was profoundly moved during a sojourn in Paris (1923–1924).

Villa–Lobos' best–loved music is the series of *Bachianas Brasileiras*. The most famous of these works are the first, for eight cellos, and the fifth for eight cellos and soprano (the composer was a proficient cellist), but the others range from a duo for flute and bassoon to a full–scale piano concerto. The ninth is scored for strings, and employs the typically Bachian form of prelude and fugue. As often in Bach, the two parts of the work are related: the fugue subject is simply a faster version of the viola melody heard at the beginning of the prelude. (It is unlikely, however, that Bach ever wished to write a fugue subject with eleven beats to the bar!) The prelude, slow and mysterious, eventually arrives at a rather uneasy pause; the fugue begins forthwith in the cellos, followed by violas and bass. A feature of the work is the important and difficult part given to the bass. After further fugal entries a sustained counter–theme leads to an *appassionato* climax, the fugue ending on a solid unison.

Despite his love for and emulation of Bach's music, Villa–Lobos was anything but an academic composer. "One foot in the academy," he said, "and you are changed for the worse!... My music is natural, like a waterfall."

Though his compositions include nine operas, **Ottorino Respighi** (1879–1936) is one of the few modern Italian composers whose fame depends rather on his instrumental works. He is best 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.

David Angell, conductor

David has been playing viola for many years with some of Australia's best–known non–professional orchestras, including the Australian Youth Orchestra, Melbourne Youth Orchestra, and various Sydney community orchestras. As a violist and chorister he has performed for such well–known conductors as 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 and Dramatic Society. He has organised and conducted the first two seasons of the Bourbaki Ensemble, which have included works by Sculthorpe, Mahler, Shostakovich, Butterley and Britten. Earlier this year he co–wrote and conducted the soundtrack for the film *Compost Monster*, and he is the editor of a revised score of the *Concerto for Strings* by Margaret Sutherland.

David has studied conducting with Richard Gill, and has recently been appointed as the founding conductor of *Orchestra 143*, which will give its inaugural performance next month.

Valerie Gutenev, violin

Valerie commenced violin studies at the age of seven in Ukraine. Since arriving in Australia in 1990 she has studied with numerous teachers, commencing regular lessons in 1995 with Leo Novikov. Valerie has played in many orchestras around Sydney, including the Sydney Youth Orchestra, the East–West Philharmonic, the UNSW Orchestra and the Bourbaki Ensemble. Last year, Valerie participated in various competitions and gained two first places at the Ryde Eisteddfod. She has also been involved in master classes with Dimity Hall and has performed solo on a number of occasions. In the coming year Valerie will complete a Music Degree at the University of New South Wales, and following this wishes to study further overseas.

The Bourbaki Ensemble is a combination of professional musicians, talented amateur string players, and both current and recently graduated students. We all love string orchestra music, both ancient and modern, but don't often get the chance to play it as members of full symphony orchestras. The Bourbaki Ensemble is keen to support Australian composition, and includes at least one Australian work in every performance.

Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was an important figure of French nineteenth–century military history. In 1840 he was appointed to the *Légion d'Honneur* in recognition of his service as "a young officer of high intelligence and impetuous bravery". In his later years he turned to more peaceful pursuits; he was a noted patron of music and one of Wagner's earliest French devotees. A manuscript letter, recently discovered under extraordinary circumstances, names Bourbaki as the sponsor of the Paris premiere of Wagner's *Sternkriege*, an opera of which no other record has survived.

The Bourbaki Ensemble

Violins Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Paul Hoskinson, Esther Cheng, Valerie Gutenev, Margaret Howard, Paul Pokorny, Warwick Pulley, Patrick Wong.

Violas Dana Kern, Kirrillie Abbott–Raymonde, Suzanna Powell.

Violoncellos John Napier, Guy Curd, Ross Warner.

Bass Nicole Murray–Prior.

Harpsichord Chris Berensen.

Announcing the inaugural performance of

ORCHESTRA 143

Bach Orchestral Suite No. 2
Boyce Symphony No. 8 in D minor
Vivaldi Cello Concerto in B minor
Mozart Symphony No. 29

Susan Blake, cello
Sally Cousins, flute
David Angell, conductor

3.00 pm, Sunday 15 December 2002

St. James' Church

King St, Turramurra

Admission by donation

Orchestra 143 is a recently formed chamber orchestra having as its principal aim the performance of music from the 143–year period between the birth of Bach and the death of Schubert. Consisting of a core of thirteen string players, harpsichord and conductor, it seeks to explore both familiar and less familiar works from the extensive Baroque, classical and early romantic repertoire.

At its first concert, Orchestra 143 is delighted to welcome as soloist leading Australian cellist Susan Blake, making her last appearance in this country before leaving for a twelve–month sabbatical overseas.

Further information 91442552/jimbroadfoot@hotmail.com