THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

WE'RE BACK!!!
music for strings and flute

Christine Draeger Three Dances

Holst St. Paul's Suite

Sibelius Romance for string orchestra

Andrew Howes Ainola

Dvořák Nocturne

Glazunov Theme and Variations

Christine Draeger, flute

David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 22 November 2020

St. George's Hall, Newtown

Welcome back! Since our concert of Bach vocal and instrumental music last February, we had planned to have given two further concerts by now. Well... we all know what has happened to everyone's plans in 2020, and particularly to those of performing organisations. In view of the situation two or three months ago, we count ourselves fortunate to be back in front of an audience in any way at all before the end of the year. Under the circumstances, we felt that it was not yet time to tackle major new repertoire; and so we have put together a programme of works that many of us have played before.

The good news is that this gives us the chance to revisit some of our favourite compositions. Christine Draeger's flute concerto *Three Dances for Imaginary Animals* certainly counts as one of those. We trust that those of you who attended our April 2019 premiere performance of the piece will be as eager to re–hear it as we are to re–play it; and that those who have not yet met this delightful work will be captivated by its warmth and wit. The Sibelius *Romance* and Holst *St. Paul's Suite* have featured in Bourbaki concerts relatively recently, though we've not played the Dvořák *Nocturne* since 2003. We couldn't possibly, however, present a concert without some works that are new to us (and, we expect, to you) – it just wouldn't be the Bourbaki way of doing things. So we hope you will enjoy the little–known *Theme and Variations* of Glazunov, as well as Sydney composer Andrew Howes' *Ainola*, a tribute to Sibelius.

Some listeners will remember composer Chris Williams and his work *Lines at Infinity*, commissioned by Bourbaki and premiered in December 2016. We are delighted to announce that Chris's piece (with minor revisions and a new title) won first prize in the *Musica Per Archi* competition 2020 in the Ukraine. Visit `www.youtube.com/watch?v=dP2bth5DHf8` to listen to the prize performance of the work. Congratulations Chris!!!

PROGRAMME

Gustav Holst St. Paul's Suite

1. Jig
2. Ostinato
3. Intermezzo
4. Finale (The Dargason)

Andrew Howes Ainola, for string orchestra

Christine Draeger Three Dances for Imaginary Animals

I Quadruped
II Bird
III Fish

Christine Draeger, flute

Antonín Dvořák Nocturne in B major, Op. 40

Aleksandr Glazunov Theme and Variations for string orchestra in G minor, Op. 97

Theme	Moderato
Var. I	[Moderato]
Var. II	Poco più mosso
Var. III	Tranquillo
Var. IV	Moderato scherzando
Var. V	Allegro moderato
Var. VI	Allegretto – Tempo I

Jean Sibelius Romance in C, Op. 42

Gustav Holst (1874–1934) is best known, oddly, for a work not at all typical of his compositional output. While *The Planets* is scored for a very large orchestra, Holst was much more at home writing for chamber forces, small orchestra or unaccompanied voices. He possessed the none too common talent of writing attractive and satisfying music for non–professional musicians. The work with which today's concert opens was written in 1913 for the orchestra of St. Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith, where Holst had been director of music since 1905.

St. Paul's Suite begins with a Jig, a sturdy dance using the characteristic rhythms and scales of English folk music; the movement is notable for a central section in which the harmony makes a clearly audible jump into a new area every few bars. The second movement is entitled *Ostinato*. The word is Italian for "obstinate", and in musical terminology denotes a theme which is repeated over and over, obstinately refusing to change, while the musical texture is elaborated in other parts. In this movement Holst actually employs two ostinati. The more prominent is heard at the outset in the second violins and maintained there throughout the entire piece, except for a few short bars in which it is taken over by the firsts while the composer rewards the seconds for their patience with a gracefully springing melody. The second ostinato occurs, as is more usual, in the lower instruments; consisting of a four–note descending scale, it is initially presented by the pizzicato cellos and bass at their first entry.

There follows an *Intermezzo*. The rather unEnglish character of the solo violin theme is explained by its origin in Holst's 1910 *Beni Mora* Suite, inspired by a visit to Algeria. In a faster section is heard a hint of Holst's fondness for five–beat rhythms. The finale returns to the English folk style and uses "The Dargason", a tune which actually sounds rather more like a jig than the first movement does. In passages of adroit counterpoint, the principal theme is combined with another melody in a different tempo. This second theme is too well known to need identification; suffice it to say that in a survey reported by the BBC in 1998, it topped the list of "the most loathsome electronic jingles" to hear when your phone call is put on hold.

Sydney–based composer **Andrew Howes** (born 1992) is building an international reputation for orchestral and choral music. His compositions and orchestrations have been heard in film and TV, as well as on mainstages across Australia, Europe, the UK and the USA. After the Clifton Parker Award afforded him the opportunity to study with Alison Kay and Simon Holt at the Royal College of Music, London, he moved to New York to complete a Master's degree with Susan Botti at the Manhattan School of Music, where in 2017 he won the Manhattan Prize.

Ainola was inspired by a visit to the home of Jean Sibelius (now a museum) near Helsinki. A simple theme is announced by solo violin, joined by another violin and viola and then by the full ensemble. There is a constrasting middle episode with a more complex background, in which second violins take the lead, followed by a varied and abbreviated return, introduced by violas, of the first section. Throughout the work, Andrew's use of melodic shapes characteristic of Finnish folk music, and his carefully crafted textures and harmonies, magically evoke the spirit of Sibelius' own music.

Christine Draeger was born in Melboure in 1955, but grew up in Hobart. She studied flute at the Tasmanian Conservatorium, and with Zdenek Bruderhans at Adelaide University, graduating with a Bachelor of Music (Honours). She was a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra 1981–86 and has freelanced with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the AOBO and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. From 1982 to 2007 she was a member of the contemporary music ensemble The Seymour Group.

Christine has recorded three CDs of Australian flute music, all available through `www.fluteworthy.com.au`: *Streeton's noon* (1999), *Eat Chocolate and Cry* (2009) and *Spirit of the Plains* (2013). She has also made studio recordings for ABC Radio and Fine Music (2MBS) FM. Christine is a partner in Fluteworthy Publications; writing, arranging and editing educational flute music.

As a composer Christine is mostly self–taught. She is an associate represented composer at the Australian Music Centre with works for solo flute, flute and piano, flute quartets, flute choir, woodwind quintet and theatre pieces. Christine writes of her newly–composed concerto *Three Dances for Imaginary Animals* (2019):

> I have always loved the sound of flute with strings. As a student, my favourite pieces were the Bach and Telemann suites and the Mozart flute quartets. However, in my own writing I had never composed for strings. Last year I decided to write a concerto, and David Angell kindly agreed to programme it in the Bourbaki Ensemble series.
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> The idea of three animals came from three kinds of rhythmic energy: walking, flying and swimming. I wanted to explore different ways of creating forward momentum in music. So I conjured into existence a quadruped, a bird and a fish. As I worked on them, the three animals began pushing the music in some unexpected directions.
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> The first movement, *Quadruped*, marked "passeggiando" or strollingly, became a Cha Cha Cha danced by a hoofed animal. The second movement is a pastoral scene

with bird calls, a favourite scenario for the flute. A bird swoops and glides, only rarely landing. In the third movement I have used one of music's most famous "fish" themes to write a set of variations. A *habanera* rhythm suggests the leaping and gliding of the fish.

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.

The *Nocturne* in B major has a somewhat involved history. It began as the slow movement, *andante religioso*, of an early string quartet, the score of which was destroyed when Dvořák sought to repudiate Wagner's influence. It is unlikely that the listener will hear much Wagner in the work we perform today: evidently the composer heard just as little, for he later retrieved the *andante*, reconstructing it from the individual parts, and included it as one of two slow movements in his quintet for two violins, viola, cello and bass. Eventually deciding that one slow movement was enough for the quintet, Dvořák removed the *Nocturne* (its tempo by now adjusted to *molto adagio*) and scored it for string orchestra. In this form it was first performed in 1883.

Unaccompanied cellos and bass begin the *Nocturne* with a sustained melody which rises slowly to a peak and then falls away. It is taken over by first violins, underpinned by a continuous quaver movement which exemplifies the rich scoring found throughout the piece. Further on, melodic fragments in all instruments are combined with a quietly pulsating off–beat accompaniment. The work ends with a luminous chord in the highest register of violins and violas, anchored by a *pizzicato* bass.

Aleksandr Glazunov was born in St. Petersburg in 1865. His early efforts at composition were brought to the attention of Balakirev and Rimsky–Korsakov, who saw to his musical education, and arranged for his first symphony to be performed when Glazunov was only sixteen years of age. He soon achieved fame both in Russia and abroad, and in 1905 was appointed director of the St. Petersburg Conservatorium. Musically conservative, he had little taste for the compositions of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and others; but his generosity of character is attested by the fact that he never let his musical views prevent him from giving young composers all the assistance in his power, both educationally and personally. His most eminent pupil, Dmitri Shostakovich, in his (disputed) memoirs *Testimony* speaks with warmth and respect of Glazunov's personal qualities, though with a certain disdain of his music.

Glazunov's political opinions were also conservative, and after 1917 he soon found himself out of sympathy with the Soviet regime. Nevertheless, he retained his post at the Conservatorium, probably because the authorities could not fail to recognise the excellence of his leadership. In 1928, however, Glazunov took the opportunity afforded by a European tour to leave the Soviet Union permanently. He died in Paris in 1936.

The *Theme* upon which Glazunov bases six variations is distinctly Russian in idiom, both melodically and harmonically; it becomes easy to understand how the composer was at one time regarded as the musical heir of Glinka, Mussorgsky and other great Russians. It leads into a variation where violins are supported by continuous *pizzicato* lower parts. The second variation, a little faster, is based upon a three–note figure passed around between the sections of the orchestra; the third highlights the violas. There follows a vigorous section whose rhythms and motifs suggest a Russian peasant dance; the fifth variation has a time signature of five beats to the bar. A gently flowing *allegretto* leads into a brief coda in which the main theme is gradually broken up into its constituent parts.

Though brief in duration and modest in instrumentation, the *Romance in C* by **Jean Sibelius** (1865–1957) is by no means a "small" work in its musical and emotional content. Its idiom is that of the composer's second symphony and violin concerto, all three works dating from the years 1901–1905. (The attentive listener will find that the third bar of the *Romance* shares a short phrase with the opening solo of the concerto.) An intense and sonorous opening theme, punctuated by forceful chords, is succeeded by more yearning phrases in violins; the first theme returns in a grim and unharmonised two–part texture. A brief silence introduces a gentler episode, *pizzicato* cellos and basses supporting a chordal theme in the upper parts; soon, however, the music begins to regather tension, leading to a more fully scored reprise of the opening. The music follows its earlier course (with minor variations), gradually diminishing in dynamic until a final reminiscence of the main theme, deep in the cellos' lowest register, leads into the concluding chords.

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.

General **Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki** (1816–1897) was a leading figure in the French military during the Franco–Prussian war. In the course of the conflict, the French forces were driven over the Swiss border and into internment in early 1871. Bourbaki made every effort to safeguard the welfare of his troops, who were in a pitiable condition of hunger and disease, exacerbated by the bitter winter conditions. He observed that rates of infection appeared to increase when the soldiers were confined to cramped quarters, and to decrease when they were instructed to maintain their distance. His medical staff – astounded by their general's percipience – were enabled to take appropriate action, without doubt saving many lives. A century and a half later, some still fail to heed the lessons which can be learned from Bourbaki's remarkable medical insight.

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

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, Liz D'Olier, Monique Mezzatesta, Daniel Murphy, Gabriella Parrilla.

Violoncellos Ian Macourt, Clara Blazer, Liesje Jansen Van Rensburg, Nicole McVicar, Catherine Willis.

Bass Sasha Cotis, George Machado.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

America: a new beginning: music for strings

John Adams Shaker Loops
Eric Whitacre The River Cam
Graeme Koehne Shaker Dances

Shaker Loops established John Adams as a new voice in American music, bringing a Romantic aesthetic into the textures of 1960s minimalism. We match it with *The River Cam* by Eric Whitacre, one of the leading figures in a later generation of American composers.

2.30 pm, Sunday 21 February 2021

venue TBA

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

songs of thanksgiving and love

Beethoven Heiliger Dankgesang
Wagner Wesendonck Lieder
Richard Meale Cantilena Pacifica

Beethoven's "Holy song of thanksgiving" is one of his most profound and affecting slow movements. Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* prefigure the intense romantic atmosphere of *Tristan und Isolde*, while Richard Meale's *Cantilena* was written in memory of a close friend.

date and venue TBA