THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

Eastern European classics for strings

Weiner Divertimento on Old Hungarian Dances

Betty Beath Lament for Kosovo

Lutosławski Five Folk Melodies

Dvořák Nocturne in B major

Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings

David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 23 February 2003

St. Stephen's Church, Newtown

Welcome to The Bourbaki Ensemble's third season! Once again we shall give three performances in St. Stephen's, featuring both popular and lesser–known works for string orchestra.

We begin with a programme of music from Eastern Europe and Russia – and, as always, Australia. In the middle of the nineteenth century, composers from Eastern Europe began to enjoy an increasing presence in the concert halls of the west: names such as Borodin and Smetana, later on Stravinsky, Bartók and Rachmaninov, became well known to audiences. In Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* and Dvořák's *Nocturne*, today's concert includes works by two of the greatest among these composers. Many of the Eastern Europeans were strongly influenced by their native folk music, so different from that of Germany and Austria: Weiner's *Divertimento*, based on Hungarian dance tunes, and Lutosławski's *Folk Melodies* from Poland both employ authentic material. Eastern Europe has been not only a source of wonderful music, but also, sadly, a frequent centre of national and international unrest. In 1999, the developing conflict in Kosovo deeply affected Brisbane composer Betty Beath as she wrote her slow movement for strings, *Lament for Kosovo*.

Our future concerts in 2003 feature solos for recorder and guitars: details are on the back cover of this programme. Please note that our third concert at Newtown will be on a Saturday (not Sunday as usual), and will be repeated on the Sunday at Macquarie University. To ensure that you always have the latest details about Bourbaki Ensemble performances, why not add your name to our email list? To join, simply fill in and hand back a form at the door, either at interval or after the concert.

At the conclusion of the performance Fran Morris will again be offering her fascinating (and free!) guided tour of the cemetery. If you want to hear about the Dunbar tragedy, the bees, the Dickens connection and much more, don't miss it!

PROGRAMME

Leó Weiner Divertimento No. 1, on old Hungarian dances

1. Jó alapos csárdás (A fair dinkum csardas)
2. Rókatánc (Fox dance)
3. Marosszéki keringős (Marosszek waltz)
4. Verbunkos (Recruiting dance)
5. Csürdöngölő (Barn dance)

Betty Beath Adagio for Strings: Lament for Kosovo

Witold Lutosławski Five Folk Melodies

1. Ach, mój Jasieńko (O my Johnny)
2. Hej, od Krakowa jade (Hey, down from Krakow)
3. Gaik (The Grove)
4. Gasior (A Gander)
5. Rektor (The Schoolmaster)

INTERVAL — 20 minutes

Antonín Dvořák Nocturne in B major, Op. 40

Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings, Op. 48

1. Pezzo in forma di sonatina
2. Valse
3. Elegia
4. Finale (Tema russo)

The most important Hungarian composers of the twentieth century were, without doubt, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály; among their lesser known compatriots, an honourable position is held by **Leó Weiner** (1885–1960). He studied, and later taught, at the Academy of Music in Budapest, and was particularly esteemed as an instructor in chamber music.

Weiner's *Divertimento No. 1* for string orchestra dates from 1923, and consists of arrangements of five old Hungarian dances. The first is entitled *Jó alapos csárdás*, which might be translated as "a fair dinkum csardas" (thanks to George Szekeres for this suggestion!) The csardas is one of the most characteristic of Hungary's national dances, and any gypsy band will have many examples in its repertoire. Weiner's arrangement emphasises its march–like aspects by means of a regular rhythmic tread in the lower instruments and frequent dotted rhythms in the melody. The "fox dance" which follows appears to have been one of Weiner's favourites; he arranged it not only for strings but also for clarinet ensemble, and again for piano solo. The excitement of the main dance is interrupted near the end by a more flexible melody supported by a drone bass.

The *Marosszek waltz* which constitutes the third movement must be among the most un–waltz–able music ever written! Maybe Weiner was having a joke at the expense of the villagers of the Marosszék region, tagging them as country bumpkins who wouldn't know anything about "proper" dance music. If so, then the rhythmic sophistication of much Hungarian and Transylvanian folk music would certainly leave the villagers with the last laugh. The *verbunkos* was originally danced by hussar regiments in order to attract new recruits to their dashing company. Weiner marks his version *un poco grottescamente*, "somewhat grotesquely", and emphasizes the military connection by including optional parts for piccolo, trumpet and horn.

The concluding movement of the *Divertimento* is a rapid and exciting *csürdöngölő*, an old dance which in village custom was used to stamp down the earth for a newly built house or barn.

Betty Beath was born in Bundaberg in 1932. Musical studies began with piano lessons before she had even reached her third birthday, and Betty learned to read music before she could read words. She undertook tertiary studies in Sydney and Queensland, and now makes her home in Brisbane, where she teaches at the Queensland Conservatorium and St. Margaret's Girls' School. Betty has a longstanding interest in the music and cultures of Asia and the Pacific region, and has spent time travelling and living in Bali, Java and Papua New Guinea.

The *Lament for Kosovo* is one of Betty Beath's most popular works, and has received many performances both in Australia and overseas. In a note to the score, the composer describes the origin of the work in 1999 as a commissioned piece for mandolin ensemble.

> At the time of writing I was concerned with the fragility and decline of my mother and, day by day, the events unfolding in Kosovo brought feelings of deep sadness and anger. Although I intended the mandolin piece to be a joyful experience for performers and audience the feelings that were uppermost in my heart and mind emerged in the work.

After completing the mandolin version of her work, as well as a piano arrangement, Betty realised that it "needed the warmth and voice of strings" to fully express her intention. The revised and extended *Lament* became a commemoration not only of Kosovo but of the East Timor conflict. In a recent communication to the present writer she said, "It is so sad to reflect on current world events. *Lament for Kosovo* could well be a lament for so much else".

The work begins with a mildly dissonant tolling, as of funeral bells, in alternation with a mournful theme which is often stated in two parallel lines. There is a furious figure which tumbles down from the highest register of violins and violas, and a central section, slightly faster, which suggests the remorseless clamour of military activity. This dissolves into a sorrowful passage which eventually comes to rest quietly on a chord of A major. From a brief silence there emerge once again the bells, beginning quietly and growing in strength, losing every shred of dissonance as in the end they proclaim peace rather than war.

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

Polish composers in the middle of the twentieth century suffered greatly from political interference in their work. As in the Soviet Union, it was an official requirement that composers bow to the dictates of "socialist realism" – an essentially meaningless concept which, in practice, was taken to mandate the composition of popular, uplifting music and to forbid any sort of individuality or experimentation. Thus the emergence of a truly modern voice in Polish music began only in the late 1950s after the death of Stalin. The most prominent among the "new Polish school" of composition were Henryk Górecki, Krzysztof Penderecki and **Witold Lutosławski**.

Essentially, Lutosławski spent 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 occupation in the Second World War. The 1960s brought opportunities for travel abroad, where he participated in many composition workshops and also became a noted conductor of contemporary music. Nonetheless, Warsaw was always his permanent home, and he died there in 1994.

One of the ways in which Polish composers before the thaw sought to write music of personal significance without incurring official censure was to base their music upon national folk material. Lutosławski wrote a number of such works, among them *Five Folk Melodies* for string orchestra (1952). The melodies are presented in a straightforward way, usually in the first violin part, and are provided with an accompaniment which often involves rather untraditional but somehow appropriate harmonies. The melancholy *O my Johnny* is succeeded by *Hey, down from Krakow*, in which violins and violas play *pizzicato* throughout while the celli and bass are silent. The remaining three pieces are dances from Silesia in south–western Poland. *The Grove* is fast and lively, *A Gander* slow and perhaps reminiscent of Sibelius' *Swan of Tuonela*. The last dance portrays the slightly pompous and self–important character of *The Schoolmaster*.

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.

No–one could turn a scale into a tune with as much skill as **Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky** (1840–1893). The great cello theme in the pas de deux for the prince and the sugar–plum fairy from *The Nutcracker* is probably the most famous example, but the symphonies and the *Serenade for Strings* are also full of scales. The melody which opens the third movement, *Elegia*, for instance, is simply a ten–note ascending scale, given some rhythmic interest and contrasted with a descending scale in the bass; similar themes are scattered throughout all four movements.

The *Serenade* opens in emphatic style, with a majestic introduction whose theme is in fact the top line of a series of chords scored for the full orchestra. On repetition the theme, essentially a scale with a few interpolated notes, is transferred to the lower instruments and the harmonies to the violins and violas; the tension relaxes through further statements until a brief silence is reached. The main part of the movement, *allegro moderato*, then begins. It is in two sections, the first built upon a surging figure which is heard in the first four notes of the *allegro*, the second starting quietly as *pizzicato* celli and bass support a dancing theme for violins and violas. The first section is repeated note for note, followed by the second with minor variations. In a brilliant stroke, the composer brings back the majestic introduction at the conclusion of the movement.

Tchaikovsky loved the waltz. He was the first to include it in symphonic music (with the isolated exception of Berlioz in his *Fantastic Symphony*), and gave it great prominence in his ballet scores, composing such famous set–pieces as the *Waltz of the Flowers* from *The Nutcracker*. That which forms the second movement of the *Serenade* is marked *dolce e molto grazioso* (sweetly and very gracefully). Once again the opening is a simple rising scale, as is the coda which ends the movement.

The beginning of the *larghetto elegiaco*, hesitant and wistful, soon leads into a more confident section whose *cantabile* (songlike) theme is given initially to violins, then in a more expansive version to violas and cellos. After a brief development section with a pulsating triplet background, the *cantabile* theme resumes quietly on violas. The music becomes increasingly passionate before breaking off on two mighty chords: melodic fragments are passed from cellos to first violins, fading into silence. After a long pause the opening of the movement returns and the *Elegia* gradually winds down to a peaceful close.

The finale is the most clearly Russian part of the *Serenade*. A mysterious opening employing the typical shapes of Russian folk music falls silent – a favourite Tchaikovsky device, and one which has already been heard twice in the *Serenade*. This time the pause is broken by a dance tune of rather square shape. Most of the movement is constructed from bits and pieces of this tune, though there are two interruptions for a gloriously lyrical cello theme accompanied by *pizzicato* violins. In fact, the dance theme is really just a faster version of the introduction from the first movement, a connection made clear when rushing scales lead to a reprise of that introduction. This in turn accelerates back into the final version of the dance, and brings our concert to an exciting conclusion.

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. He has performed in orchestras and choirs 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 Bourbaki Ensemble since its inception, and has programmed works by composers including Sculthorpe, Mahler, Shostakovich, Butterley, Villa–Lobos and Britten. In 2002 he co–wrote and conducted the soundtrack for the film *Compost Monster* which has been screened in Sydney and in London, and he is the editor of a revised score of the *Concerto for Strings* by Margaret Sutherland.

Last December David conducted the inaugural performance of Orchestra 143, a classical orchestra based in Turramurra, and will conduct three further concerts with them in 2003. David has studied conducting privately with Richard Gill.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble numbers among its members professional musicians, talented amateurs, current students and recent graduates. The ensemble aims to perform both familiar and lesser–known works from the string orchestra repertoire, and takes a particular interest in Australian composition. Bourbaki's first two seasons have included music by Colin Brumby, Nigel Butterley, Peter Sculthorpe and Margaret Sutherland.

General Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was the commander of the French Eastern Army during the Franco–Prussian War. In 1871 the army crossed the Swiss border and voluntarily entered into a period of internment, an event commemorated in an immense painting by Edouard Castres. The Bourbaki Panorama, Lucerne, which houses Castres' work, suffered many years of neglect, but has recently undergone extensive restoration and was reopened in January 2000.

In his private life General Bourbaki was a keen patron of music. As one of the leading members of the anti–Wagner faction in Paris he demonstrated the impetuousity which was to serve him so well in his military career, being imprisoned for three weeks in 1861 on account of his role in the demonstrations which had disrupted the Paris premiere of *Tannhaüser*.

Violins Warwick Pulley, Patrick Wong,
Natalie Adby, Valerie Gutenev,
Paul Hoskinson, Margaret Howard,
Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Dale Wilson.

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

Violoncellos Rosalind Graham, Chloe Miller,
Kirsty Vickers.

Bass Nicole Murray–Prior.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

music for recorder and strings

Purcell Incidental music from *Abdelazer*
Arnold Cooke Concerto for treble recorder and strings
Vivaldi Concerto for sopranino recorder and strings
Colin Spiers Music, like the dark husk of earth, abiding
Biber Battalia

2.30 pm, Sunday 18 May 2003

A programme featuring one Baroque and one modern recorder concerto, and Colin Spiers' deep and evocative composition. We begin with Purcell's music for a Restoration tragedy and end with Biber's startling and sometimes eccentric battle suite.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

music for guitars and strings

Warwick Pulley Delta–H
Richard Charlton Serenade for Guitar and Strings
Holst Brook Green Suite
Máximo Pujol Suite Buenos Aires
Vivaldi Concerto for Two Guitars and Strings
Rawsthorne Concerto for String Orchestra

2.30 pm, Saturday 25 October 2003
2.30 pm, Sunday 26 October 2003

Tango rhythms permeate Pujol's suite for guitar and strings, while Holst's music is decidedly English. Warwick Pulley's short piece opens the concert with energetic gestures. Alan Rawsthorne's concluding *Concerto* is by turns turbulent, elegiac, and serene.

Programme details subject to change