THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

music for guitars and strings

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

Raffaele and Janet Agostino, guitars
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Saturday 25 October 2003
St. Stephen's Church, 189 Church St, Newtown

2.30 pm, Sunday 26 October 2003
Macquarie Theatre, Macquarie University

Welcome to the final Bourbaki Ensemble performances for 2003! This year we have continued our regular concert series in St. Stephen's Church, Newtown, as well as expanding into other venues. An additional performance was given at The Garrison Church in The Rocks, and today's programme is being presented both at St. Stephen's and at Macquarie University.

One of the highlights of the year for the Bourbaki Ensemble was the world premiere of Colin Spiers' *Music, like the Dark Husk of Earth, Abiding* at our May concert. Though we can't claim any genuine premieres at the present concerts, we shall be performing new versions of two pieces. Máximo Diego Pujol's *Suite Buenos Aires* appears in an adaptation by David Angell of the original scoring for guitar and string quartet, while Warwick Pulley has produced a revised version of his 1988 composition *Delta–H* for string orchestra. The Vivaldi concerto to be performed by our guest soloists, leading Sydney guitarists Raffaele and Janet Agostino, was originally composed for two mandolins, but has long been a favourite with guitarists.

We are obliged to many people for their assistance in presenting this year's concerts. In particular we are very grateful to Peter Rodgers and everyone at St. Stephen's for allowing us to hold concerts in the marvellous acoustics and attractive environment of the church. Thanks also to Kerry Klujin for organising our concert at Macquarie University, Camille Merčep for the Garrison Church performance, and Fran Morris for leading post–concert historical tours of St. Stephen's cemetery.

And finally, thanks to all who have attended Bourbaki Ensemble concerts this year! Our concerts for 2004 are still in the planning stage, but some probable and possible projects are described on the back cover of this programme. We hope that you have enjoyed the music we have presented in 2003 and that we shall see you again in our audiences next year.

PROGRAMME

Warwick Pulley Delta–H

Antonio Vivaldi Concerto in G major, RV532, for Two Guitars and Strings

I. Allegro
II. Andante
III. Allegro

Gustav Holst Brook Green Suite

I. Prelude
II. Air
III. Dance

Richard Charlton Serenade for Guitar and Strings

INTERVAL — 20 minutes

Máximo Diego Pujol Suite Buenos Aires

I. Pompeya
II. Palermo
III. San Telmo
IV. Microcentro

Alan Rawsthorne Concerto for String Orchestra

I. Largo maestoso—Molto allegro
II. Lento e mesto
III. Allegro piacevole

Delta–H by Sydney violinist/composer **Warwick Pulley** was originally a piano work written for the composer's HSC in 1988, and was rescored for strings in the same year. It was a prizewinning entry in the 1988 School Composers Competition, and as a result was performed and recorded by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. The title, a term borrowed from chemistry, denotes a change in energy; here it alludes to the music's wide dynamic and tempo changes, and its rapid harmonic shifts.

Delta–H is constructed in ternary form, with two short and rapid outer sections separated by a considerably slower episode. The work's principal theme, heard immediately in the violas, is an example of a "tone row" – that is, a melody containing all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. Nearly all the melodic material in the work is based on this row, which is heard not only in its original form, but also backwards (the "retrograde" form), upside–down (the "inversion"), simultaneously backwards and upside–down ("retrograde inversion"), and with the durations of its notes expanded ("augmentation"). Tone rows were originally devised by Arnold Schönberg in the early twentieth century as a way of avoiding a tonal centre by making each note equally important. In contrast, the row used in *Delta–H* has been chosen to lend itself to mostly traditional harmonisation – its first five notes are based on the theme of the slow movement of the Symphony in E♭ by Paul Hindemith – and the work has a definite key, E minor. Because the melody contains every note of the chromatic scale, the harmony must change rapidly between remote keys. This is achieved by the use of "pivot notes", pitches common to otherwise unrelated chords.

Warwick Pulley was born in 1970 into a musical family, and was raised in Armidale where he learnt violin, piano and bassoon. He has led numerous ensembles and orchestras around Sydney, and has also written *Chessmen*, for baritone solo and piano. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Engineering and a Master of Mathematics from the University of New South Wales, and is currently employed as a software engineer.

So well known nowadays is the name of **Antonio Vivaldi** (1678–1741) that it comes as quite a shock to realise that his music was almost entirely forgotten after his death until as recently as the 1950s. During his lifetime he was famous throughout western Europe. A number of his concertos were transcribed for keyboard by Bach. This was a somewhat questionable compliment, for while Bach recognised Vivaldi's melodic gifts and rhythmic vitality and left them essentially unchanged, he took certain liberties with the harmony and counterpoint, evidently feeling that they were not incapable of improvement.

Be that as it may, many of Vivaldi's concertos provide delightful listening, and the resurgence of his fame is to be welcomed. The *Concerto in G major*, originally for two mandolins and strings, is frequently performed by guitarists. It is an exemplar of the Baroque solo concerto: two vigorous outer movements alternate solo and orchestral passages, while the central *Andante* sets florid solos over a neutral accompaniment.

Gustav Holst was born in 1874 into a family of German, Russian and English descent. While studying at the Royal College of Music, and after leaving in 1898, he earned a living as a trombonist in seaside bands and opera orchestras, having initially taken up the instrument when the onset of neuritis in his right arm made it clear that he would be unable to establish a career as a pianist. As a composer, Holst was always intent on pursuing his own very individual vision; while *The Planets* and other works achieved a certain popularity in the early 1920s, many of his later works attracted puzzlement from listeners and rejection from publishers. He was recognised as an outstanding, if unorthodox, teacher, and from 1905 until his death in 1934 was director of music at St. Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith.

While Holst is often categorised as a member of the "English folk song" school of composition, his interests were in reality far wider than this label allows. Classical Indian literature and philosophy inspired his opera *Sāvitri* and the *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, for which he provided his own translation from the Sanskrit; he also translated Greek texts from the *Acts of St. John* for his great choral work *The Hymn of Jesus*.

The *Brook Green Suite* was written in 1933 for the Junior Orchestra at St. Paul's; Holst conducted its premiere just two months before his death. Flowing melodic lines above persistent scales make up a delightful *Prelude*; the firm C major with which it begins is later disturbed by a gently exotic chromaticism, perhaps influenced by the composer's attraction to foreign cultures. The *Air* which follows is given to first violins and then violas, a closely related second theme to seconds followed by cellos. For the concluding *Dance* Holst employs a puppet show tune which he had heard whilst on a walking holiday in Sicily.

Guitarist and composer **Richard Charlton** was born in England in 1955 and moved to Australia at the age of ten. He has composed works for the eminent Australian guitar ensembles *Saffire* and *Guitar Trek*, for the Sydney Youth Orchestra and for other orchestras. His *Serenade for Guitar and Strings* was written for the Northern Chamber Orchestra and was first performed by that ensemble in 1987, with the composer as soloist.

Violas begin the *Serenade* with a distinctive theme whose descending chromatic outline will be heard throughout the piece. Another important element is a rising anapaestic (short–short–long) figure which dominates the middle and latter parts of the work. Eventually this leads into a final appearance of the chromatic theme and a tranquil guitar solo. The work concludes with a slowly ascending arpeggio on the guitar, an ethereal chord in the violins and two *pizzicato* chords in the lower instruments.

In the course of musical history many dance forms have entered the concert repertoire. The Baroque suite, as exemplified in the keyboard and string works of J.S. Bach, normally consisted of an overture or prelude, followed by a series of dances which might include the sarabande, gavotte, bourrée and jig. The eighteenth century symphony commonly found a place for a minuet; in the nineteenth its place was occasionally taken by a waltz. In recent times the tango has joined this company, largely through the works of the Argentinian composer Astor Piazzolla, whose *Histoire du Tango* summarises in the titles of its movements the progress of the dance: from *Bordel 1900* through *Café 1930* and *Nightclub 1960* to *Concert d'aujourd'hui*.

One of Piazzolla's most significant successors among Argentinian musicians is **Máximo Diego Pujol**. Born in Buenos Aires in 1957, Pujol has been an active guitarist both in solo and ensemble music, as well as an award–winning composer. His *Elegía para la muerte de un tanguero* (elegy on the death of a tango player), written in memory of Piazzolla, explicitly acknowledges the older composer's influence. The *Suite Buenos Aires* depicts four contrasting localities of that city. Composed in 1993 for guitar and violin, it was later rewritten for guitar and string quartet; with the composer's permission, a version has been prepared for guitar and string orchestra, and will receive its premiere at the present concerts.

Pompeya is the site of many cafes, and is considered the birthplace of the "classical" tango. The composer characterises the district by means of a strongly rhythmic opening and closing which surround a languid *andante*. The second movement, *Palermo*, depicts one of the older parts of Buenos Aires. It is based almost entirely on the phrase of the first two bars, though this is varied between a nostalgic and haunting minor version and an *appassionato* major version. The double bass has an opportunity to shine near the end. The third movement is based not on the tango but on the rhythm of the *candombe*, a dance born of the fusion of African and South American culture resulting from the large immigrant population of the port district of *San Telmo*. Rushing passages in guitar and violins evoke the atmosphere of *Microcentro*, the city's commercial centre; the siren of a police car can also be heard. A nostalgic reminiscence of Palermo on unaccompanied guitar provides some relief, but it is the hectic downtown bustle which ends the suite.

The triumphant mood which, in victorious nations, accompanied the end of the Second World War soon began in some quarters to be overtaken by the fear of an even more devastating conflict. Many listeners heard in the stark outlines and comfortless textures of Ralph Vaughan Williams' sixth symphony, written in 1947, a depiction of a world laid waste by nuclear weapons. Although the composer rather sourly – "it never seems to occur to people that a man might just want to write a piece of music" – repudiated any such intention, it is perhaps not altogether presumptious to suggest that something of the prevailing mood of anxiety insinuated itself into the symphony.

The *Concerto for String Orchestra* by **Alan Rawsthorne** was composed just two years after the symphony and shares much of its mood. The first movement is built around the powerful motto theme which appears at the outset. The turbulent opening section of the movement is notable for its unremitting *forte* dynamics and its high tessitura, the lower notes of cellos and bass being used sparingly. A slower and quieter episode features an elegiac violin solo over a murmuring accompaniment; the return of the opening mood leads to a forceful statement of the motto theme as the movement crashes to a close.

The second movement is marked *lento e mesto*, slowly and sadly, and begins with a solemn viola melody, sparsely accompanied. The music grows to an impassioned climax, with violins, violas and cellos all playing in their high registers, before giving way to a hushed chant–like motif. Fragments of the first theme lead directly into the third movement.

After the astringency of the first movement and the solemnity of the *lento*, the finale begins with a serene *legato* melody in first violins and violas, soon joined by a counterpoint in seconds and cellos. An increase in tempo is arrested by mysterious chords marked *lontano* (distant) and *lusingando* (alluring). The tension increases with the re–introduction of the main theme from the first movement in the guise of a fugato (first violins, with *pizzicato* cello and bass), and is resolved only with the broadening tempo and titanic chords of the last few bars.

Alan Rawsthorne (1905–1971) managed to avoid a career in dentistry, and then in architecture, by failing every examination he took in these subjects. He proceeded to fail the entrance exams for the Royal Manchester College of Music too, but was admitted anyway. As a composer Rawsthorne is mainly noted for his orchestral works, which include three symphonies and eight concertos; he was also a prolific composer of film scores.

Raffaele and Janet Agostino, guitars

Raffaele Agostino is a freelance musician, a teacher and an examiner for the A.M.E.B. In 1981, he founded the Sydney Guitar Quartet, a group that performed extensively for a period of over ten years and was the first ensemble of its kind in Australia. As well as performing in several productions for Opera Australia, Raffaele has appeared as soloist with both the Sydney Youth Orchestra and the Ku–ring–gai Philharmonic Orchestra playing Nigel Westlake's *Antarctica*. In 1998 he released a CD of solo guitar music of Australian composers Richard Charlton and Phillip Houghton. He is currently the Artistic Director of the Classical Guitar Society, Sydney.

Janet Agostino was also a founding member of the Sydney Guitar Quartet. She has played with various ensembles including the Gallery Players, the Amabile Players and Halcyon, and has been a guest soloist with the Northern Chamber Orchestra and Ku–ring–gai Philharmonic Orchestra. Janet has recorded several programmes for radio 2MBS–FM; she has performed in the Sydney Festival and the Australian Women's Music Festival.

Raffaele and Janet share a strong interest in the development of the guitar as an ensemble instrument. Together with fellow guitarist and composer Richard Charlton they form the Sydney Guitar Trio. This ensemble has performed extensively around Australia, and in 2001 made an overseas tour of Argentina, UK and Italy. The Trio has released an album of Australian compositions *One Hour To Madness and Joy*. Raffaele and Janet have been regular performers at the Darwin International Guitar Festival.

"The Sydney Guitar Trio: Raffaele Agostino, Janet Agostino and Richard Charlton, bring with them the most positive assemblage of antipodean acumen I have heard in a long time." – Tim Panting, *Classical Guitar Magazine*, UK.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble aims to perform both familiar and lesser–known works from the string orchestra repertoire, whose many masterpieces are frequently overshadowed by the larger orchestral compositions. The Ensemble takes a particular interest in Australian composition, and has programmed music by Betty Beath, Colin Brumby, Nigel Butterley, Percy Grainger, Peter Sculthorpe and Margaret Sutherland. Last May the Ensemble gave the world premiere performance of *Music, like the Dark Husk of Earth, Abiding* by Colin Spiers.

General Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki (1816–1897) was an important figure in the senior ranks of the French army. As a boy he contracted a violent antipathy towards music, a result of his parents' infatuation with *opéra comique*. Providentially, he was taken to hear the pioneering Beethoven concerts established by Habeneck in 1828 at the Paris Conservatoire. In his subsequent devotion to the Master's music Bourbaki was rivalled only by the youthful Berlioz; the two became frequent allies in the concert hall until the advance of Bourbaki's military career curtailed his time in Paris.

Violins Warwick Pulley, Natalie Adby, Catherine Howard, Margaret Howard, Kirrillie Moore, Rebecca Pulley, Kathryn Topp, Dale Wilson.

Violas Dana Kern, Paul Hoskinson, Philip Silver.

Violoncellos Guy Curd, Steve Meyer, Stela Solar.

Bass Nicole Murray–Prior, Stephen Newton.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

programmes for 2004

Next year we hope once again to give three concerts spread throughout the year. If (as we trust) you have come to expect something a little out of the ordinary from the Bourbaki Ensemble, you won't want to miss our final concert, which will most likely be given in October and will consist of music depicting the ocean in different guises. There will be a new arrangement by **Peter Sculthorpe** of his *Songs of Sea and Sky*, inspired by the indigenous music of the Torres Strait. Its sunny tropical atmosphere contrasts with the storms of the British coast in the *Sea Sketches* by Welsh composer **Grace Williams** and the ponderous swell of the Atlantic in a string symphony entitled *Ocean in the Heart* by **Vasco Martins**, a native of the Cape Verde Islands. The ensemble will perform two short *Aquarelles* by **Frederick Delius**, and will be joined by flute and harp soloists for the haunting nocturne *Towards the Sea* of Japanese composer **Tōru Takemitsu**.

Earlier in the year we hope to present a concert of music from lands bordering the Mediterranean – Spain, France, Italy, Australia. How does Australia get included in a "Mediterranean" programme? Keep in touch and you'll find out!

And of course the best way to keep in touch is, as always, to join our email list. Please pick up, fill in and return a form and we'll make sure that you always receive the earliest possible information about the Bourbaki Ensemble. Thank you for your support in 2003, and we hope to see you again in 2004.

Programme details subject to change