

AE NEWS

newsletter of the Australia Ensemble @UNSW

May Events

Australia Ensemble @UNSW
Free lunchtime concert
Tuesday May 8, 1.10-2pm
Tyree Room, Scientia building

Burgundian Consort
Free lunchtime concert
Thursday May 10, 1-2pm
Tyree Room, Scientia Building
including works by Gjeilo, Elgar,
Purcell, Seiber and Tormis

Inner Circles lecture
Dr Gene Moyle (QUT)
Thursday May 17, 1-2pm
discussing 'The psychology of
performance: Health and wellbeing in
the performing arts'

Australia Ensemble @UNSW
Subscription Concert 3, 2018
Saturday May 17 at 8pm
Sir John Clancy Auditorium
Robert & Clara
Robert SCHUMANN |
Märchenerzählungen (Fairy Tales)
Op. 132
WILLIAMS | New work (Letters to
Clara) - first performance (2018)
Clara SCHUMANN | Piano Trio Op. 17
Robert SCHUMANN | Piano Quintet

UNSW Wind Symphony and
UNSW Orchestra
Friday May 25 at 7pm
Sir John Clancy Auditorium
including Dvorak's Symphony no. 8
and the world premiere of Gregory
Van Der Struik's Tuba Concerto

Collegium Musicum Choir
Friday June 1 at 7pm
HAYDN | Mass in Time of War
JENKINS | Mass for Peace

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Four Reflections on the life of Clara Schumann

FELICITY CLARK

The Australia Ensemble @UNSW commissioned for their 2018 concert season a chamber piece commemorating the work of Clara Schumann. Composer Natalie Williams wrote 'Letters to Clara' to celebrate Schumann's life and influence as a prominent performer and composer.

In Williams' suite of four movements – *Piano Queen*, *Whispered Breath*, *Frei Aber Einsam*, and *Regenlied* – each reflects an aspect of Clara's life and relationships. Williams quotes extensively from music by Clara and her husband Robert Schumann, as well as Johannes Brahms who was Clara's dear friend and supposedly unrequited beloved. Williams studied biographies of these three greats, and read the published letters preserved from their estates. Williams' homage to Clara uses life-themes of love and loss as structural pillars. I'll share background on each movement and suggest some listening homework so that you, the audience of Australia Ensemble, can receive our premiere with educated ears.

Piano Queen - Clara loves music

When young, Clara was considered amongst Europe's foremost pianists and was hailed 'queen of the piano'. Even as a mother of seven, she maintained an international concert-touring schedule and supported Robert's composing career. Her daughter's memoirs revealed that Clara was so musically impassioned that her offspring "would sometimes wonder whether our mother would miss us or music most." Williams' *Piano Queen* quotes:

- ◆ Clara's *Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann*, Op. 20.
- ◆ *Piano Trio* in G Minor, Op. 17 (1846), Clara's best-known chamber work.



Composer Natalie Williams reflected on the life and work of Clara Schumann for her new work

Whispered Breath – Robert's love

Clara and Robert shared a happy and fruitful marriage despite difficulties in Robert's final years stemming from his mental illness, hospitalisation and suicide attempts. Their mutual love was expressed in musical form – they frequently quoted one another. They wrote letters and journalled about their musical experiences. Clara's diary tells of Robert's death in 1856, "It was as if his magnificent spirit hovered above me, oh – he has taken my love with him!" In *Whispered Breath*, Williams quotes:

- ♦ Clara's *Romance variée*, Op. 3 (1833), written at age 14 for Robert.
- ♦ Robert's *Impromptus sur une Romance de Clara Wieck*, Op. 5: his musical reply that quotes Clara's own themes.
- ♦ Robert's *Piano Sonata* in F# Minor, Op. 11, quotes Clara "in every possible form," as "a cry from my heart to [hers]," he wrote in 1832.

Frei Aber Einsam - The love of Brahms

Clara (35) met Brahms (20) when he came to study with Robert in 1853. The three became fast friends though Clara and Robert shared a special bond. After Robert's death, Clara and Brahms never married but stayed close until Clara's passing in 1896. Brahms quotes Clara in his *Piano Quartet*, Op. 60 and *Violin Concerto*, Op. 77. They are each dedicated to her as birthday gifts. Brahms also dedicated his *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann*, Op. 9 (1854) to Clara. It wove in Clara's theme from *Romance variée*, symbolising the Schumanns' relationship. After Clara performed Brahms' *Piano Trio* in C Major, Op. 101 in 1887, she wrote in her diary, "No other work of Johannes' has transported me so completely." Williams' *Frei Aber Einsam* commemorates each composer by stratifying her instruments into three groups. The strings carry nostalgia while high pitched figurations signify 'a wash of bells'. *Frei Aber Einsam* quotes:

- ♦ Brahms' Piano Trio in C Major, Op. 101.
- ♦ a constant cycle of F–A–E, a musical cryptogram that stands for *Frei Aber Einsam* (free but lonely), that Brahms came to know as his violin teacher Joseph Joachim's motto. It appears in his *Piano Trio* in C Major, Op. 101.
- ♦ *F.A.E. Sonata*, written collaboratively for Joachim by Brahms, Robert Schumann and Albert Hermann Dietrich.
- ♦ Brahms' *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, Op. 121, *O Tod* (O Death) composed to grieve the loss of Clara.



Johannes Brahms

Regenlied - Death and eternity

Regenlied (rain song), referring to tears, weds the music of Clara, Robert and Brahms in "an ode to death and eternity," says Williams. Williams uses the piano in this movement, fading in and out of clarity, as "the memory of Robert." On her deathbed, Clara wished to hear Brahms' *Violin Sonata*, Op. 78 (1873), but she actually heard a *Romance* by her late husband. *Regenlied* quotes:

- ♦ Brahms' *Violin Sonata*, Op. 78, third movement based on his Op.59 songs.
- ♦ Robert's F# major *Romance*, Op. 28, second movement.
- ♦ Robert's *Intermezzo* Op. 4.
- ♦ a chorale from Brahms' *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, second movement.

Natalie Williams' chamber piece 'Letters to Clara' for The Australia Ensemble is intended as a celebration of Clara Schumann's life and work. The commission has presented Williams with a rare opportunity to delve into the music and stories of a fellow creative success, and as we will hear, she has thoughtfully included glistening and personal snippets that tie together themes of Clara's life and loves.



Robert & Clara Schumann
[Lithograph by Eduard Kaiser 1847]

Congratulations to Australia Ensemble Artistic Chair Paul Stanhope for the recent nomination in the Australian Independent Records (AIR) Awards in the category 'Best Independent Classical Album'. The album Paul Stanhope: *Lux Aeterna* was recorded by the Sydney Chamber Choir under Paul's direction in 2017 and was recently released by ABC Classics.

The winners will be announced at the 12th AIR Independent Music Awards at Adelaide's Queen's Theatre on Thursday 26th July, 2018.

We wish Paul good luck!





Professor Gene Moyle [photograph by David Kelly]

Keeping artists' minds well

The issue of wellbeing has recently reached prominence in social discussion and workplaces, with an increased awareness of mental health concerns in individuals and in particular industries and work environments. Creative industries have long battled with issues of mental illness and wellbeing, and elite performance brings other issues such as mental management of goals and expectations to align with physical capacity.

Former ballet dancer and academic in psychology Professor Gene Moyle is coming to UNSW in May to present a free public talk entitled 'The psychology of performance: Health and wellbeing in the performing arts'. This presentation is the second in the Music Performance Unit's *Inner Circles* series of public talks on issues of creative minds.

Having studied ballet to an elite level, Professor Gene Moyle went on to further her education in psychology, focusing on the application of performance psychology and performance enhancement in the performing arts, elite sports and in the corporate sector. She is now the Head of the School of Creative Practice in the Creative Industries Faculty at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane.

The *Inner Minds* public talk will be held on **Thursday May 17 at 1pm in Central Lecture Block Theatre 2**. Entry is free, and all are welcome.

[Central Lecture Block is UNSW map ref. E19]

April happiness

Tuesday April 10 was a busy day, with lots of joy!

At 10.30am the Music Performance Unit combined with the UNSW Bookshop and UNSW Early Years to present a Cushion Concert of the Seaside Ensemble, comprising four undergraduate musicians in the Tyree Room. The Seaside Ensemble played lively snippets of music to colour each scene of Alison Lester's wonderful story *Imagine*, read by a favourite of many of the Early Years children, Emily, a staff member of the UNSW Bookshop. The short concert was wonderfully received, and the seventy children had a very joyful experience, including some singing and movement.

Two hours later, across town at City Recital Hall, the Australia Ensemble with guest artist Alice Giles performed a lunchtime concert entitled *A French Affair*. Works by Duruflé, Milhaud, Saint-Saëns and Ravel delighted the city audience. We hope to return to City Recital Hall for future performances, following such a positive experience.



Left: Children from UNSW Early Years enjoyed the MPU's first Cushion Concert



Right: Alice Giles, harp, and the Australia Ensemble receive their applause for Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* at City Recital Hall



Writing to Clara

Composer and academic Natalie Williams will be at the Clancy Auditorium prior to the premiere of her new work for the Australia Ensemble, *Letters to Clara*, for the first of our Composer Conversations for 2018. Artistic Chair Paul Stanhope will talk with Williams to unfold some of the stories behind the creation of this work, as well as providing opportunity for the audience to pose their own questions.

Williams is a Lecturer in the School of Music at the Australian National University in Canberra, and her work has been performed throughout Europe, Australia and the United States. Commissions have included a multimedia

orchestral tribute to Sir Donald Bradman AC entitled 'Our Don', commissioned and performed by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in 2014.

The Composer Conversation will begin at 7pm on Saturday May 12, prior to the 8pm concert, in the foyer of the Sir John Clancy Auditorium. All are welcome.

The merry, merry month of May

Tuesday May 8, 1.10pm
Australia Ensemble

Free lunchtime concert
Tyree Room, Scientia Building

In quite the international program, the Australia Ensemble offers two string works, Webern's quartet *Langsamer Satz* and Schubert's delightful D471 *String Trio*, as well as arrangements by our own Ian Munro for flute, clarinet and piano - Debussy's *Six Epigraphes Antiques*, and tangos of Brazilian composer Ernesto Nazareth and Colombian Luis Calvo, with guest percussionist Alison Pratt. Free, all welcome.



Saturday May 12, 8pm
Australia Ensemble
Subscription concert

Sir John Clancy Auditorium
The Australia Ensemble's tribute to Robert & Clara Schumann includes the premiere performance of a new work by Natalie Williams, as well as Clara Schumann's celebrated G minor Piano Trio and Robert Schumann's Piano Quintet in E flat. In a change

of program, we regret that Kurtag's *Hommage à Schumann* for clarinet, viola and piano will not be performed and instead will be replaced by Robert Schumann's much loved *Märchenerzählungen* (Fairy Tales) Op. 132, written for the same instrumentation.

Tickets available online:
www.music.unsw.edu.au/australia-ensemble

Thursday May 10, 1.10pm
Burgundian Consort

Free lunchtime concert
Tyree Room, Scientia Building

UNSW's 18 voice chamber choir has prepared a program of delicious unaccompanied choral works of Gjeilo, Elgar, Purcell, Seiber and Tormis. Free, all welcome.



Saturday May 12, 7pm
Australia Ensemble

Composer Conversation
Clancy Auditorium foyer

Australia Ensemble Artistic Chair Paul Stanhope will be in conversation with composer Natalie Williams to discuss her new work for the Australia Ensemble, *Letters to Clara*. This is an opportunity to gain further insight into the composer's art as well as greater background to the work itself. Free, all welcome.

Thursday
May 17, 1pm
Inner Circles public talk
Professor Gene Moyle [QUT]

Central Lecture Block Theatre 2
Former ballet dancer and academic in psychology Professor Gene Moyle presents a free public talk entitled *The psychology of performance: Health and wellbeing in the performing arts*. Free, all welcome.

Friday May 25, 7pm
UNSW Wind Symphony & Orchestra Evening concert

Sir John Clancy Auditorium

The UNSW Wind Symphony and Orchestra present their second concert of the year. Conductor Paul Vickers leads



the Wind Symphony in a program including Lorenz's *El Muro*, while UNSW alumni Harrison Collins conducts the UNSW Orchestra for Dvorak's Symphony no. 8 and the premiere performance of a Tuba Concerto by Australian composer Gregory Van Der Struik, with soloist Edwin Diefes, principal tuba of the Opera Australia Orchestra. Tickets available online:
www.music.unsw.edu.au/instrumental



Friday June 1, 7pm
Collegium Musicum Choir

War and Peace: Haydn & Jenkins
Sir John Clancy Auditorium

Although not strictly in May, the concert preparations are definitely completed in May - the Collegium Musicum Choir concludes the first half of the year's concerts with an evening performance of Haydn's *Mass in Time of War* and the choral suite of Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*. The 85-voice choir will be directed by Sonia Maddock, and supported by the Collegium Musicum Orchestra with soloists Sarah Ampil (soprano), Nyssa Milligan (alto), Richard Butler (tenor) and Andrew O'Connor (bass),

who return to Clancy after their 2017 performance in Mozart's Requiem (pictured above).

Tickets available online:
www.music.unsw.edu.au/choral