



AE NEWS

newsletter of the Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Never Stand Still

Music Performance Unit

September Events

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Free lunch hour concert

Tuesday September 6, 2016

1.10 - 2.00pm

Leighton Hall, Scientia Building

Musgrave: *Narcissus* for flute and digital delay

Peterson: *Encomium* for clarinet & cello

Mozart: *Duo* for violin & viola in B flat

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

2017 Season Launch

Tuesday September 6, 2016

for donors and guests

Keep an eye on the website for information about the 2017 season!

www.music.unsw.edu.au

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Subscription Concert 5, 2016

Saturday September 10, 2016 at

8pm

Sir John Clancy Auditorium

Light, Time and Gravity

Hindson: *Light is both a particle and a wave*

Ravel: *Mirrors* nos. I, IV & V

Barber: *Summer Music* Op.31

Messiaen: *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*

Burgundian Consort evening recital

Wednesday September 21,

2016 at 7.30pm

Sir John Clancy Auditorium

Draw on, sweet night

exploring the darkness of night and sleep, with works by composers including Wilbye, Poulenc, Kodaly, Gorecki, and UNSW's Ian Munro.

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Seeing the light

SONIA MADDOCK

In a speech in tribute to his teacher and mentor, Peter Sculthorpe, composer Matthew Hindson remarked "Peter's desire was not for us to blindly follow trends or aesthetics, but instead to find what was in ourselves. To find our own unique voice, and to develop our skills to allow this uniqueness to flourish and find our own place in the world. Don't just do something because it's trendy, or the 'done thing' – do everything because it's important to you, because it comes from your heart, find your own way. What an important lesson this was. It is THE most important lesson of all."

Sculthorpe's legacy has shown itself in the next generation of Australian composers, of which Hindson is one of the leading figures. The breadth of Hindson's work and his investment in the next generation of compositional minds ensures that, indeed, what he describes as Peter's "generous and optimistic advice" continues to be evident in the entire yield of Australian composition, and will continue in years to come.

Hindson has never been shy about taking on a new challenge, with works across myriad forms and exploring all manner of instrumental and vocal combinations. He has incorporated electronics into numerous works and composed for unusual combinations, writing for leading ensembles the world over. He chooses quirky titles demonstrating all manner of influences. At the other end of the spectrum, he has also contributed to music education through the composition of works specifically for beginners and student performers, aside from his role as Professor of Music at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Presuming Hindson is following Sculthorpe's recommendation that he do things which are important to him suggests that he holds many things dear to his heart, including education, Australian culture, puzzles, popular culture, music of other cultures, and of course science, all things which are interwoven in our modern society. Hindson's notes about his own work refer to the "great potential for the future" in scientific discovery through biology and technological advances – he is legitimately curious about the progress of scientific research and the extraordinary impact it could have on the future for all. It is not surprising



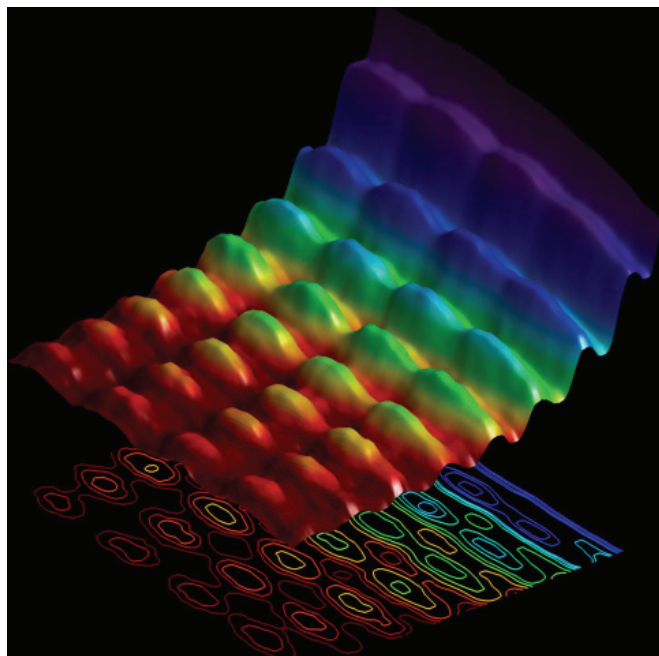
Matthew Hindson

that such an inquisitive and engaged mind came up with the chamber piece *Light is both a particle and a wave*.

In 2010, Hindson wrote this work for flute, clarinet, piano, two violins, viola and cello having been commissioned by devoted Australia Ensemble subscriber and supporter, Justice Jane Mathews, who had also been Deputy Chancellor of UNSW from 1992 until 1999. Jane has long been a supporter of the arts, and was keen to commission Hindson and his unique compositional voice for the Australia Ensemble, a group she had been involved with and supportive of for many years. Hindson's inquisitive mind led him to one of the great conundrums of physics, the duality of the nature of light. A quick online search beginning "light is both..." generates responses indicating this duality – 'light is both a wave and a particle', 'light is both energy and matter' and of course 'light is both a particle and a wave', which provided the title for Hindson's work. This immediacy of access to information in the modern world supplies Hindson with an endless source of material for stimulation.

The enthusiasm with which Hindson describes his musical portrayal of minute photons and his formation of wave structures throughout the first movement is invigorating, only exceeded by the music itself which abounds in energy and musical metaphor. Hindson poses the idea of interstellar travel in the second movement, with the speed of light in some ways being interminably slow due to the vastness of the universe. He makes no promises as to solving these mysteries of physics and biotechnology, but the relationship between his music and the scientific world with which he is captivated provides audiences with further food for thought about the links between otherwise seemingly disparate parts of our world.

Join Matthew Hindson as he talks with Australia Ensemble Artistic Chair in a pre-concert Composer Conversation on Saturday September 10, 2016 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, UNSW Chancellery, next door to the Clancy Auditorium.



Light imaged as both a wave and a particle

The sweetest of nights

LUKE IREDALE



The Burgundian Consort annual recital in 2016 takes as its theme *Draw on, sweet night*, in a program exploring the darkness of night and sleep. It will be the culmination of an especially busy year for the 'Gundies', a year in which the group has undertaken a raft of new activities and challenges.

Draw on, sweet night – it's a perfect caption for the accompanying picture (left) of the Burgundian Consort, venturing out onto the main campus's beautiful main walkway at sunset this past May. As the fading autumn sun stained the sky, sweet madrigals drifted along the hallowed Uniwalk. It was just one of many enterprises in 2016 that has seen UNSW's resident chamber choir enriching the cultural fabric of the University.

Singing in a choir, after all, is about finding a personal connection with the music and sharing that connection with others. When a small group of dedicated musicians combine their individual personalities into a greater whole, the results can be remarkable. Even more remarkable again is the effect of live performance; drawing on the palpable enjoyment of an audience gives the music a vitality and energy it can easily lack behind the closed doors of a rehearsal room.



An impromptu twilight performance on UNSW's main walkway, May 2016

In March this year the Burgundian Consort brought together a one-off group of past and present members to make a special appearance at a Symposium in honour of Roger Covell's 85th birthday. A short program of some of Roger's favourite choral works (including selections by Byrd, Faure and Mozart's utterly perfect *Ave Verum Corpus*) added memorable musical colour and pathos to the day.

July's annual workshop has become something of an institution for the Burgundian Consort. Over the course of one day

during mid-semester break, the year's repertoire is broken down and studied in-depth (with plenty of time set aside for cake, sandwiches and great conversation). Past activities have included warm-up exercises, language workshops, Psalm-singing, as well as lessons in rhythm, harmony and sight-reading. The highlight of this year's workshop day was undoubtedly Francis Greep, currently working with Gondwana Choirs, who joined the Burgundians for some superb coaching on singing in French (rather a different beast to speaking it!)

It's been a big year for special guests – in August, the Australia Ensemble @UNSW Lunch hour workshop series granted the opportunity for Burgundian Consort member Lucy Valley to undertake a public lesson with the stunning Australia soprano Sara Macliver, famous for her versatility, impeccable musicianship and heavenly clarity of tone.

July saw the Burgundians hit the road to UNSW Canberra for the premiere performance of a new work by Australia Ensemble @UNSW pianist Ian Munro. The work, *Non nobis* ('Not Us') was based on a text by Australian historian and WWI war correspondent Charles Bean, written especially for the Burgundian Consort and pianist Harrison Collins. Commissioned as part of a conference celebrating the life of Charles Bean, it was a marvellous opportunity for our singers to bring fine choral music to listeners in a different territory.

September's *Draw on, sweet night* program draws together the year's musical threads and ties them up into a glorious nocturnal bow. Renaissance doyen Thomas Tallis' stately Dorian Service is still frequently performed in choral church services today, and is an appealing introduction to the recital. Further highlights include Francis Poulenc's wintery chamber cantata *Un soir de neige* ('Night of Snow'), in which the French composer's tangy vocal blend and faculty for word-painting vividly depict nature's beauty as well as its sometimes cold, stark indifference. Three Hungarian pieces by Kodaly (including the desperately serene *Esti Dal*, 'Evening Song'), a selection of quirky children's songs by Alec Wilder, Gorecki's hypnotic *Five Kurpian Songs* and Ian Munro's *Lullabies for left-handed mothers* round out a darkly alluring evening of music.

Well may the Burgundian Consort wish the sweet night to draw on, given how much they've packed into 2016. Hear these fine young musicians again at concert 2 of the 2016 Collegium Musicum Choir series on Sunday October 23, and once more at UNSW's annual *Festival of Carols* on Sunday November 27.

Draw on, sweet night commences at 7.30pm on Wednesday September 21 in the Sir John Clancy Auditorium. Tickets may be purchased at the door or in advance by contacting Yvette Goodchild on cmc@unsw.edu.au or 02 9385 4874.

Top to bottom:
Workshop day on July 22 with vocal coach Francis Greep; enjoying new repertoire in rehearsal; July 29 performance of Ian Munro's *Non nobis* at UNSW Canberra; soprano Lucy Valley in a masterclass with Sara Macliver on August 11.



Access for all

We understand that some subscribers accustomed to parking in the disabled zone outside the Clancy Auditorium encountered access difficulties for our fourth concert on Saturday August 13, refused entry by a security guard. We have confirmed that this arrangement was in place for a separate function, not mindful of the impact on our concert patrons. We can confirm that access to the disabled parking will be in place for future concerts, and apologise for any disruption or anxiety this may have caused.



Inside a masterpiece

HILARY SHRUBB



Making sense of some of the great works of the repertoire can sometimes represent a challenge for the listener. Hilary Shrubbs shares some insight into the story of Messiaen's magnificent *Quartet for the End of Time*, which concludes the Australia Ensemble's September program.

Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, or *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* in French, is in eight movements and calls for clarinet, violin, cello and piano. Its first performance is distinguished in that it took place in Barracks 27 of Stalag VIII on 15 January, 1941, a freezing night with mounds of snow piled up outside. About 400 or so inmates and guards were completely captivated by Messiaen's musical rendering of eternal hope and love, and given their circumstances, there was, perhaps, no better audience for this message. The composer later recalled, "Never was I listened to with such rapt attention and understanding."

Messiaen was a medical auxiliary when he was captured at Verdun, along with three other musicians. He had with him a bag which had in it 'a little library of musical scores... going from Bach's Brandenburg Concertos to the Lyric Suite of Berg'.

While imprisoned, Messiaen was lucky to befriend a guard who brought him pencils and paper so he could continue to compose. The story goes that Messiaen was divinely inspired – the Book of Revelation was the source of inspiration and he transcribed a passage that served as the score's preface.

While listening to this extraordinary piece, it is worth noting that only half of the eight movements involve all four players – one is a solo, two are duets, and one is a trio. And even more curious is that the clarinet and cello are absent for the last ten or so minutes of the work.

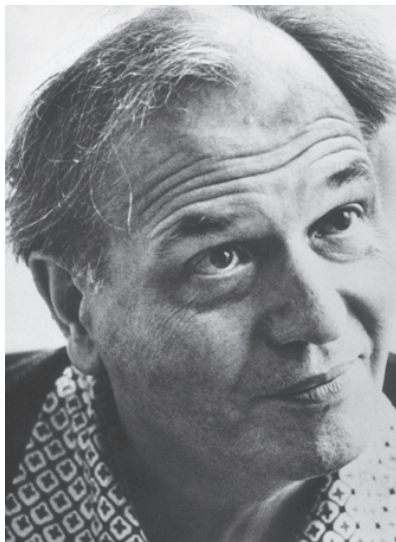
The highlight of this nearly hour-long piece is most certainly the final movement, '*Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus*' for violin and piano. This movement, with its exquisite long, flowing melodic lines, is enough to break even the hardest of hearts. Heavenly and divine are words that are not out of place here.

Perhaps the most eloquent description of the work's genesis comes from the composer himself. Messiaen wrote in the preface to the score.



Tackling Messiaen's masterpiece will be David Griffiths (clarinet), Dene Olding (violin), Ian Munro (piano) and Julian Smiles (cello)

Messiaen writes:



"I saw a mighty angel descending from heaven, clad in mist, having around his head a rainbow. His face was like the sun, his feet like pillars of fire. He placed his right foot on the sea, his left on the earth, and standing thus on the sea and the earth he lifted his hand toward heaven and swore by Him who liveth for ever and ever, saying: 'There shall be time no longer, but at the day of the trumpet of the seventh angel the mystery of God shall be consummated.'" - REVELATION, X

Conceived and written in the course of my captivity, the Quartet for the End of Time was performed for the first time in Stalag 8-A on January 15, 1941, by Jean Le Boulaire, violinist; Henri Akoka, clarinetist; Etienne Pasquier, cellist, and myself at the piano. It is directly inspired by this excerpt from "The Revelation of St. John." Its musical language is essentially transcendental, spiritual, catholic. Certain modes, realising melodically and harmonically a kind of tonal ubiquity, draw the listener into a sense of the eternity of space or time. Particular rhythms existing outside the measure contribute importantly toward the banishment of temporalities. (All this is mere striving and childish stammering if one compares it to the overwhelming grandeur of the subject!)

Composer Olivier Messiaen

This quartet contains eight movements. Why? Seven is the perfect number, the creation of six days made holy by the divine Sabbath; the seventh in its repose prolongs itself into eternity and becomes the eighth, of unfailing light, of immutable peace.

Messiaen goes on to give evocative and vivid descriptions to preface each movement (included in the concert program for the Australia Ensemble's performance on September 10), partly as performance instruction but moreso to give thrilling context to the movement for the performer. For example, the solo clarinet third movement is described as:

III. Abyss of the birds. Clarinet solo: The abyss is Time, with its sadnesses and tediums. The birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and for jubilant outpourings of song!

Surely anything we can offer on this piece is similarly mere striving and childish stammering if one compares it to the overwhelming grandeur of the subject!