



AE NEWS

newsletter of the Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Never Stand Still

Music Performance Unit

October Events

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Free lunch hour concert

Tuesday October 6, 2015

1.10 - 2.00pm

Leighton Hall, Scientia Building

Shostakovich: *Four waltzes*

Wesley-Smith: *White Knight and Beaver*

Beethoven: String trio in C minor

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Free lunch hour workshop

Thursday October 8, 2015

1.10 - 2.00pm

Leighton Hall, Scientia Building

Composer and double bass

player Robert Davidson

discusses his multimedia work

Big Decisions

Free, all welcome

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Subscription Concert 6, 2015

Saturday October 10, 2015

8.00pm

Sir John Clancy Auditorium

Davidson: *Big Decisions*

Shostakovich: *Cello sonata*

Selections from *The Keating Tangos*

Beethoven: *String quartet* in C major Op.59 no.3 'Razumovsky'

Collegium Musicum Choir

Sunday October 25, 2015 at 5pm

Sir John Clancy Auditorium

Jackson: *Not no faceless angel*

Mendelssohn: Te deum a8

Fauré: *Requiem*

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Maintaining the rage for forty years

Let's begin with a favourite journalistic cliché: November 11 (Armistice Day) 1975 is a date eternally etched into the collective psyche of all Australians over 60 who were living here then. It ranks with November 22, 1963 (the assassination of US President John F Kennedy) and August 31, 1997 (the death of Diana, Princess of Wales) in that everybody knows where they were, with whom they were and what they were doing. After a political deadlock in the Senate over 'supply' (crucial money bills) the worst constitutional crisis in Australia's history was resolved when, after weeks of negotiations between Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and Opposition Leader Malcolm Fraser, the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, unexpectedly sacked the Whitlam Government and commissioned Fraser to form a caretaker Government, pending an election on December 13 of that year.

The Liberal/National coalition romped home in the greatest electoral landslide in Australian history.

Double bass player and music faculty staff member of the University of Queensland, Rob Davidson, was nine in 1975 and has vivid memories of the occasion.

"A friend and I listened to the entire drama unfolding on the radio while sitting on the flat roof of our house in Canberra after school. The following day on the oval opposite my Canberra primary school, there were two groups brandishing placards, both for and against the Governor-General's actions," Robert said. (The pro Kerr/Fraser group, presumably the offspring of private enterprise types, was smaller.)

Canberra kids were obviously politically precocious then.

In 2000, Robert composed a work called *Big Decisions*, inspired by the events of 1975, and will join the Australia Ensemble for its October subscription concert in a revised version of the work to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the dismissal.

The twenty-minute multi-media work originally for woodwind quartet and voices



Double bass guest artist and composer, Robert Davidson



Sacked Prime Minister Gough Whitlam delivering his now famous 'Maintain the Rage' speech in 1975

uses archival news footage, as well as voice grabs from the main combatants, Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, and Sir John Kerr. There are also flashes from Bob Hawke, then president of the ACTU, and a very young Paul Keating who had been given his first ministerial portfolio just weeks before, the then Premier of Queensland, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, and Sir Charles Court, Premier of Western Australia, both ardent foes of the Whitlam Government.

"The overall idiom of *Big Decisions* is lyrical and expressive but the spirit is close to the concept of time travel with perhaps a touch of a contemporary take on Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, minus the mysterious final character portrait.

"Human speech patterns have certain traits in common with music, such as rhythm, phrasing, inflexion and colour.

"Gough Whitlam's impassioned 'Maintain the Rage' address from the steps of Parliament House, which began with the famous line, 'Well may we say 'God Save the Queen', because nothing will save the Governor General...' is oratorical and therefore intended to win the audience over, - not that that particular audience needed convincing: he was preaching well and truly to the converted.

"In this context, the pauses, the ebb and flow (*rubato* in music), the creation of tension and delayed climaxes, become accentuated," Robert said.

This phenomenon of oratory began with Demosthenes, the fourth century Athenian politician who railed against the expansion of Macedonia under Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. His diatribes were termed *Philippics*. Cicero was his Roman counterpart. Two of the most prominent orators of the twentieth century were Sir Winston Churchill and, for better or worse, Adolf Hitler.

"Whitlam's oratory had a natural lilt and the *Maintain the Rage* speech has been set to a waltz in B major, the key of Bach's Sixth Brandenburg Concerto, Mozart's last piano concerto, Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata, Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony and Respighi's *The Pines of Rome*."

Bob Hawke's dignified, measured, statesmanlike contribution is spoken against music which almost fits the Elgarian score marking *nobilmente*.

Paul Keating's words are accompanied by an acerbic tango and Joe Bjelke-Petersen's by bland melodies.

Sir John Kerr's sounds are both pompous and bitter sweet. Having been forced by public opinion to withdraw his acceptance of the position of Australian Ambassador to UNESCO, Kerr ended his days in virtual self-imposed exile in London. When he died, his family withheld news of his death until after the funeral.

Robert Davidson, who will himself be playing double bass, describes the overall effect as carnival-like, bordering on the surreal.

Greg Keane

Robert Davidson will present a free public workshop discussing his work *Big Decisions* on Thursday October 8 at 1.10pm in Leighton Hall, Scientia Building, with members of the Australia Ensemble.

The work will be performed in its entirety at the final concert of the Australia Ensemble 2015 season on Saturday October 10 at 8pm in the Sir John Clancy Auditorium.

Transfiguration in a new light

The sparks raised throughout 2015 will be transfigured for the Australia Ensemble's 37th subscription season capturing new ideas of light, dreams and brightness, ending with the glimmering stars of youth.



The Australia Ensemble @UNSW with Artistic Chair, Paul Stanhope, prepare for a year of imagination and imagery in 2016 [photo: Keith Saunders]

Arnold Schoenberg's expressive string sextet *Transfigured Night* is the starting point and theme for our 2016 program which explores the imagery of night in all its fecundity of imagination. Music is, itself, an abstract activity that thrives in imaginative spaces and is, thus, quintessentially suited to the possibilities of night. The Australia Ensemble is eager to present another year full of expressive and inspiring chamber music performances full of established masterworks, lesser-known gems from the past as well as the excitement of new works.

As a sneak preview, I can let you know that the 2016 program will include much-loved repertoire including Beethoven's Septet, Shostakovich's Piano Trio no. 2, Mendelssohn's youthful and exuberant String Octet and, to round out the year, Brahms' String Sextet in G. Guest Artists include the Tinalley String Quartet (to partner in performing the Mendelssohn), soprano Sara Macliver and in a particularly sparkling program, the extraordinary young singers from the Sydney Children's Choir with their director, Lyn Williams.

We are delighted to be presenting three new works in our 2016 season by three very contrasting and exciting compositional voices: the well-respected and much-awarded Gordon Kerry, the Ensemble's own Ian Munro and the up-and-coming young Brisbane composer Andrew Ball. The creation of these new works is an essential part of the Australia Ensemble's programming and are projects we are proud to continue supporting.

As many of you will be aware, the Australia Ensemble also presents lunch-hour concerts in the week of our subscription series programs, and we are thrilled that audience numbers are going from strength to strength in these free events. I'm proud to announce that a series of student masterclasses will again take place with ensemble members and guest musicians due to the success and popularity of these initiatives this year.

In addition to our lunch-hour programs, we are excited to be part of a new series of Twilight concerts which will present a diverse array of music from a variety of performers including Australia Ensemble members. Stay tuned for more details of what we hope will be a terrific addition to the performance calendar in 2016.

As ever, Australia Ensemble subscriptions are fabulous value for money. In 2016, we will be including the cost of programs within your ticket price so you no longer have to fumble around for that pesky \$2 coin.

I trust you have enjoyed our *Raising Sparks* program in 2015 and hope you will join us for the wonderfully evocative 2016 series, *Transfigured Night*.

Paul Stanhope, Artistic Chair



2016 guest artists include soprano Sara Macliver, the Sydney Children's Choir, and the Tinalley String Quartet



Drivers take note: improvements to Botany Street carpark



Subscribers may have noticed considerable demolition and construction work taking place in the area around Gate 11, Botany St and the nearby carpark frequented by our audience. This work is part of the development of a new Biological Sciences building as an extension of the Biomedical Precinct on upper campus, and improvement to the entire area.

How this affects you...

There has been some impact on the availability of spaces in outdoor carpark area inside Gate 11. Further to this, **the Botany St Carpark will be closed from midnight on Saturday October 10 (after the final subscription concert)** to allow for a required power outage. Please ensure that your vehicle is out of the carpark before midnight after the concert - the carpark will reopen on the morning of Monday October 12.

Completion of construction of the new Biological Sciences building is expected in early 2017 and completion of the refurbishment of the existing building by 2018. <http://www.facilities.unsw.edu.au/bioscience-renewal>

Visions of death, life and love: Fauré, Mendelssohn and Gabriel Jackson

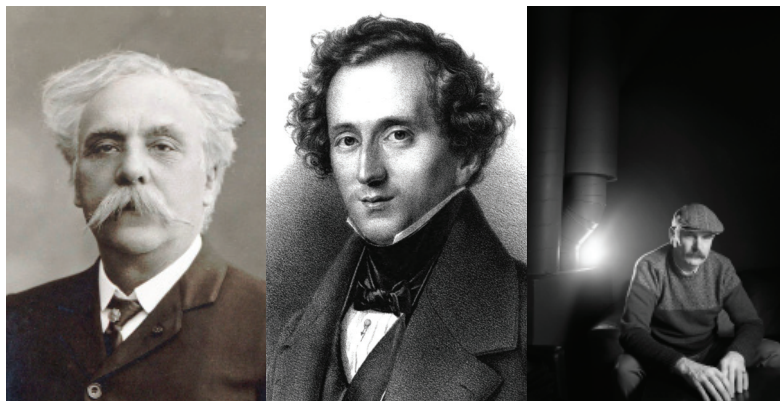
In its second concert of 2015, UNSW's Collegium Musicum Choir presents a sublime program of choral music, running the gamut of emotions from introspection to exuberance. In Fauré's Requiem, Mendelssohn's Te Deum and newcomer Gabriel Jackson's Not no faceless angel listeners will discover a world where the human voice exists as a potent force to move and inspire.

Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* was not composed in memory of any specific person. In the composer's words, he wrote 'for the pleasure of it', and indeed a sense of luxurious indulgence suffuses his music, making for a suitably pleasurable listening experience. This frequently performed and recorded work surely sits near the top of the stack of popular Requiems, rivalled perhaps only by the settings of Mozart, Verdi and fellow Frenchman Maurice Duruflé. Fauré's setting, though, is in a league of its own in terms of its vision of death; whereas many composers in their settings view death as something to be feared, for Fauré it is an anticipation of bliss beyond the grave. "I view death as joyous release", the composer famously wrote, "not as a painful experience".

Composed over a period of twenty years, the *Requiem* went through a variety of orchestrations, initially scored for small chamber forces as a reaction by the composer against Berlioz's ostentatious scoring in his own *Requiem*. The Collegium Musicum will present the better-known, fully orchestrated version of 1900, in an arrangement for choir and organ by Ingo Bredendach. From the warmly resolute chords of its opening, its muscular baritone and heavenly soprano solos to the pure distillation of peace of the *In paradisum* antiphon, there is little wonder why Fauré's vision of death has remained so essential.

The *Te Deum* gospel canticle is a markedly different text; no less poignant but certainly more vigorous in its exclamations (*We praise thee O*

God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord'). Felix Mendelssohn's setting for double choir was among his first mature compositions, coming in 1826 at the tender age of seventeen, around the same time as his superlative *Octet* for strings op. 20 (to be performed by the Australia Ensemble in its 2016 season).



Composers Gabriel Fauré, Felix Mendelssohn and Gabriel Jackson

This bursting-with-life work was composed for, and in subsequent years frequently performed by, the Berlin Singakademie, an *a cappella*-focused choral society of which Mendelssohn was a member. Under the baton of his mentor and composition teacher Carl Freidrich Zelter, Mendelssohn's time in the choir exposed him to the poly-choral music of, among many, Allegri, Bach and Handel; of these, Handel is perhaps most present in Mendelssohn's setting, notably in its lively obbligato continuo line and stately choral themes, but with clear references to the counterpoint of Bach. In the eleventh of his work's twelve movements, Mendelssohn sets eight solo voices against the double choir, his elegant part-writing marrying the young composer's reverent adherence to past idylls with a youthful desire to forge an original sound.

Bermuda-born Gabriel Jackson, meanwhile, is a much-lauded

and sought-after figure on the contemporary choral music scene. Jackson's musical background is steeped in the Anglican tradition and as such he writes with tonal simplicity, often lush and vertical in his harmonies, but also with a genuine seriousness and a desire to illustrate the unfathomable that has the

capability of producing breathtakingly hypnotic performances. The composer writes that his music is "essentially contemplative", an apt descriptor for his secular, ethereal *Not no faceless Angel* for choir with cello and offstage flute, to be performed by the Burgundian Consort. The set text, a poem by Tanya Lake (one of the singers

in the Junior Department Chamber Choir at the Royal College of Music in London, for whom the work was written), speaks beautifully of love and the confusion of bereavement, a perfect foil to Jackson's reflective music, decorated with whispers and gently ebbing solos which illustrate the power of the voice to illuminate even life's most elusive questions.

Luke Iredale

Collegium Musicum Choir & Burgundian Consort
with Paul Stender, cello; Geoffrey Collins, flute; Michael Butterfield, organ
Sunday October 25, 2015 at 5pm
Sir John Clancy Auditorium
Jackson: *Not no faceless angel*
Mendelssohn: *Te deum a8*
Faure: *Requiem*
p. 9385 4874 e. cmc@unsw.edu.au
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