

Melbourne String Quartet



TORQUING POINTS

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AN EXCITING JUXTAPOSITION OF 20TH CENTURY AUSTRALIAN AND 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN MUSICAL STYLES

Carl Pini violin
Gerard van der Weide violin
Jane Hazelwood viola
Arturs Ezergailis cello

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- 1 **ALEXANDER BORODIN: *Nocturne* (1881)** 7'46"
from *String Quartet no. 2 in D*
a haunting movement with rich textures and an evocative melodic line
- 2 **PETER SCULTHORPE: *String Quartet no. 9* (1975)** 12'26"
written with a combination of yearning for the intellectual and emotional climates of Europe and music derived from Australian Aboriginal sources
- 3 **HUGO WOLF: *Italian Serenade* (1887)** 6'52"
a very free rondo form with frequent episodes conjuring images of a romantic evening's entertainment – sounds of guitars, of the band tuning and of the arabesques of the lead violin
- GORDON KERRY: *Torquing Points for string quartet* (1992)**
- 4 1st movement 5'15"
- 5 2nd movement 5'04"
a lyrical work in two movements which, as the title suggests, has implications of twisting, rotating energy and forward motion and some contrapuntal sections
- 6 **FRANZ SCHUBERT: '*Quartettsatz*' (1820)** 8'50"
String Quartet movement in C minor, D.703
full of passionate intensity with sudden changes from tragic to lyric moments
- 7 **MARK C. POLLARD: *The Quick or the Dead* (1992)** 12'46"
a work about moods and dramatic contrast - fast sections full of drama interspersed with slow sections of exquisite beauty
- 8 **PETER ILLYICH TCHAIKOVSKY: *Andante Cantabile* (1871)** 6'39"
from *String Quartet no. 1 in D major, op. 11*
based on a folksong, the *Andante Cantabile* is a great work of sheer beauty and simplicity



ALEXANDER BORODIN (1833-1887)

Nocturne (1881)

from String Quartet no. 2 in D

Russian composer Alexander Borodin was the illegitimate son of Prince Luka Stepanovich Gedianov and, in accordance with common practice was registered as the lawful son of one of his father's serfs, Porfiry Borodin. He was educated at home and at the age of eight began formal music lessons having shown musical aptitude. By the age of fourteen, Borodin had written several compositions, including a 'concerto' for flute and piano and a trio for violins and cello. At the same time he developed an interest in chemistry, making fireworks and experimenting with galvanism. In 1850 Borodin entered the Medico-Surgical Academy in St. Petersburg, continued his studies in western Europe and in 1864 was appointed a full professor at the Academy where he remained in this position for the rest of his life.

Borodin's musical work was constantly subordinated to his professional activities and as such his output was relatively small. He wrote only two string quartets, the first written between 1874 and 1879. Borodin's style of quartet writing derived from Beethoven and Mendelssohn with a wholly individual Russian quality.

Apart from two later quartet movements, the Second String Quartet was his last major chamber music work.

Borodin dedicated his Second String Quartet to his wife, Ekaterina, and it is believed to be a nostalgic evocation of the happy period of their first meeting in Heidelberg. The third movement *Nocturne*, is the most popular movement of this work and has been arranged for many instrumental combinations by other composers. The cello introduces the wistful melody of this haunting love-song. The middle section of the movement is more urgent and moving. When the movement relaxes into the original tempo, the melody is played as a love duet, firstly between the cello and violin and then between the two violins. The movement ends with one of Borodin's characteristic ecstatic, climbing *perdendosi* sequences.

PETER SCULTHORPE (1929-2014)

String Quartet no. 9 (1975)

Peter Sculthorpe was born in Launceston, Tasmania. He studied at the University of Melbourne then at Oxford, where he studied with Rubbra and Wellesz. Reader in Music at the University of Sydney since the late 1960s, he toured the United States as a Harkness Fellow in 1966-67 and was visiting Composer-in-Residence at Yale University. During 1972-73 he was Visiting Professor at the University of Sussex and in 1988 was an honoured guest at contemporary music

forums in the United States and Europe. In 1977 Sculthorpe was appointed OBE and in 1980 the University conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Sculthorpe's music became widely known when performances of his orchestral work *Sun Music I* received acclaim in Australia and London in 1965 and 1966. His String Quartet No. 6, the first of many works commissioned from him by Musica Viva, dates from the same year. The music of Sculthorpe can easily be related to the unique social climate and physical characteristics of Australia, a relationship clearly discernable in his string quartets.

A powerful originality was expressed in Sculthorpe's early quartets and he has created a highly-organised personal style, of which the essential quality is a simplicity of gesture and utterance. He has a marked preference for homogeneous ensembles, and especially ensembles for strings. Sculthorpe's instrumental output includes a large proportion of works for string orchestra. He has written many string quartets, including String Quartet No. 12, with didgeridoo.

The String Quartet No. 9 was commissioned from Musica Viva and was first performed by the Austral String Quartet in Sydney in 1975. Of his music Sculthorpe writes:

In my works for string quartet, I have in addition to this, tended to write with some yearning for the intellectual and emotional climates of Europe; this is perhaps because of the nature of this genre. Thus String Quartet No. 9 juxtaposes and combines this yearning with music derived from Australian Aboriginal sources. In one movement, the work falls into five main sections, of which the first, third and fifth (a varied reprise of the first) are basically slow, with a chant-like, 3-note theme first heard in the first section flowering into what amounts to a twelve-note elegy in the central section. The intervening sections (2 and 4) are quick, the pulse being maintained by an intricate series of overlapping *ostinatos*.

HUGO WOLF (1860-1903) *Italian Serenade (1887)*

Hugo Wolf inherited the musical talents and temperament of his father who was, as revealed in his letters, moody and introspective. Wolf was given a broad musical education starting from an early age but with his wilful and passionate nature, he seemed unable to conform to any degree at the various schools and institutions he visited, including the Vienna Conservatory, and was successively dismissed from each after two years or less.

Wolf was almost hypnotically drawn to the 'otherness' of Mediterranean culture.

The musical results in the *Italian Serenade* represent an attempt to infuse the dogged German animus with a Latin *anima*, serving, as Nietzsche wrote:

... as a great school of convalescence for all the diseases of the senses and spirit, as a tremendous abundance of sun and transfiguration by sun, spreading itself over an autonomous essence that believes in itself.

The conception of the *Italian Serenade* was more directly influenced by Joseph von Eichendorff, whose novella *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* includes an Italian serenade played by a small orchestra. Wolf's work, in G major, is in a very free rondo form with frequent episodes conjuring images (borrowed from the novella) of a romantic evening's entertainment — including sounds of guitars, of the band tuning, and of the arabesques of the lead violin.

The novella's mention of a small orchestra may have prompted Wolf, some years later, to rework the original quartet version for a larger string orchestra. He also considered the addition of two further movements (a slow movement and a *tarantella*), but significantly he never realised this project. In fact, he was back at work revising the quartet version at the time of his final breakdown in 1897.

GORDON KERRY (b. 1961) *Torquing Points for string quartet (1992)*

Melbourne born Gordon Kerry has a compositional output ranging from solo instrumental and vocal music, choral and chamber music to larger scale works for orchestra. His music-theatre treatment of Seneca's *Medea* has met with great acclaim in Australia and the United States. His works are frequently performed by the major Australian orchestras and prominent chamber music ensembles.

Kerry has held residencies with the San Diego State University New Music Ensemble and the Sydney Philharmonia Choir. In 1992 he was composer-in-residence with *Musica Viva*, writing chamber works for performance in schools concerts. It was during this residency that Kerry composed *Torquing Points for string quartet*. The composer writes:

Joseph Haydn, the parent of the string quartet, said that a string quartet should be like four intelligent people having a conversation. Talking. I couldn't resist the pun on talk/torque, with the latter's implications of twisting, rotating energy and forward motion, and 'points', which in traditional music refer to those themes created specifically for counterpoint.

The first of the two movements is about the drama of contrasting speeds, metres, textures, themes and tone colours. After a slow Mahlerian introduction, the first theme appears: a quick nervous tune in the viola which seems

to twist back on itself. At bar 31 there is the first of a number of gear changes, where the tempo is slowed down by an unexpected shift of accent. The material here is a more song-like melody on the first violin set off against a florid counterpoint. The movement continues the alternation of these two speeds, with occasional reference to the slow introduction.

The second movement begins with a series of gestures designed to counteract the relentless motion of the first movement. Twisted motives are repeated “*ad lib*”, but run out of steam, destroying a sense of regular pulse; this is followed by a passage of aleatoric counterpoint, where the four players repeat phrases oblivious of the others. A free cadenza for cello introduces the slow movement proper, slow moving counterpoint which gradually builds in density, dynamics and extremes of tessitura before returning to the movement’s opening gesture and a final series of minor chords played on high harmonics.

(*Torquing Points* is dedicated to Siobhan Lenihan.)

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828) *String Quartet movement in C minor, D. 703* *Quartettsatz* (1820)

Franz Schubert’s contributions to the string quartet literature are evident throughout most of his compositional activity. The earliest examples (dating from years 1810 to 1814) were produced for home consumption and would have been tried out by his family’s own ensemble, in which his brothers Ignaz and Ferdinand took the violin parts, their father was the cellist, and Franz played the viola. Schubert’s use of the string quartet medium in which cello and first violin have predominant interest is first seen in *Quartettsatz*, and in the demands which are made on the players, Schubert is clearly no longer bound by the limitations of the family quartet (particularly in the case of the cello, which was the task of Schubert’s modestly equipped father). This famous Quartet movement in C minor, or *Quartettsatz* as it is known, was to have been the first movement of a string quartet which Schubert had begun to write in December 1820 and never finished. Apart from this one complete movement, a mere 41 bars of an *Andante*, intended to be the second movement, were written down.

Schubert left a number of unfinished scores behind him besides this quartet movement, including the ‘Unfinished’ Symphony (D. 759) and the C major Piano Sonata (D. 840). However, like these other works, the *Quartettsatz* is an important

landmark in Schubert’s compositional career despite its incompleteness. Why Schubert failed to finish it remains a mystery. It is brimming with passionate intensity, an intensity previously unexplored by Schubert in his instrumental writing. It was February 1824 before he again tackled the problem of writing chamber music, suggesting that in the C minor Quartet movement, Schubert discovered a new path — a way of introducing some of the drama of his vocal settings into his instrumental music — which as yet he was unwilling to follow. It is in the great Octet and the String Quartets in A minor and D minor of 1824 that Schubert finally, if belatedly, comes to terms with this potential for dramatic intensity in his chamber music.

The *Quartettsatz* itself, marked *Allegro assai*, is a moody work with sudden changes from tragic to lyric moments and again to fierce outbursts of temper. It follows a modified sonata form with the main theme omitted from the recapitulation completely, only returning right at the end. Consisting of only two themes, the main form is both restless and chromatic, the other a lyrical melody and one of Schubert’s most sublime, ‘song-like’ creations. In all likelihood there was no public performance of the work

during Schubert's lifetime. The manuscript eventually passed into Brahms' possession, and it was he who first championed the work, seeing it through publication in 1870 and even correcting the proofs himself.

MARK C. POLLARD (b. 1957)

The Quick or the Dead for string quartet (1992)

Born in Melbourne, Mark Pollard completed a Master of Arts in Music Theory and Composition at La Trobe University. Further advanced studies were then undertaken during two tours of the United States. He is coordinator of Post Graduate Studies and Music Craft and Lecturer in Contemporary Materials/Composition at the Victorian College of the Arts.

In 1983 Pollard received one of the inaugural Jacobena Angliss Music Awards. In 1984 his orchestral work Chamber Symphony received first place in the National Young Composer's Orchestral Competition. Also in the same year he received a fellowship for the ABC National Young Composer's School. In 1992 he received the Albert H. Maggs Composition Award and in 1993 The Spivokfsky Composition Prize. He has also been a finalist in the prestigious Tokyo Music Today Competition and short listed for the Britten Pears Award.

Pollard has received over twenty-five major commissions and his work is widely broadcast and performed. His eclectic compositional style embraces such diverse materials as free atonality, improvisation/jazz, minimalism and most recently, installations, multi-media as well as the music of Java.

The Quick or the Dead is a work about mood and dramatic contrast, for example rhythmic excitement versus relaxed stasis. A major ingredient in this work is visual activity; for this reason musical ideas are used for their visual as well as their aural impact. This work is one of a series by the composer embracing titles reflecting human experience. *The Quick or the Dead* was commissioned by the Southern String Quartet in 1992 with assistance from the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council.

PETER ILLYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Andante Cantabile (1871)
from String Quartet no. 1 in D major, op. 11

Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky was the greatest of the 19th century Russian composers. His formal conservatory training instilled in him western orientated attitudes and techniques, but his essential nature, as he always insisted, was Russian, both in his actual use of folksong and in his deep absorption in Russian life and thought. Tchaikovsky's natural gifts, especially his genius for what he called the 'lyrical idea', the beautiful,

self-contained melody, give his music a permanent appeal. It was his hard-earned, secure and professional technique combined with his ability to use it in the expression of his emotional life, which enabled him to realise his potential more fully than any of his major Russian contemporaries. The first String Quartet initiated a line of works in which Tchaikovsky's personality stands less than fully revealed. In February 1871 he began work on the Quartet which he planned to include in a concert of his own works from which he hoped to make some money. The concert took place successfully in March. As a medium the string quartet offered Tchaikovsky no scope for the dramatic contrasts or grand rhetoric possible with the orchestra. In his first Quartet he showed himself concerned to compose as absolute a piece as he could, attempting to think, in the sonata structures of the outer movements and in the scherzo, through the mind of a classical composer. Individuality is inevitably sacrificed and the opening of the quartet, for instance, might be taken for Schubert. Only in the second movement, the famous *Andante Cantabile* based on a folksong collected at Kamenka, is Tchaikovsky unmistakably himself.

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Carl Pini is a musician of international reputation, beginning his career in London in 1960 as Leader of the London String Quartet. From 1968 he spent six years in Sydney, forming the Carl Pini Quartet which made three world tours for Musica Viva, as well as recording extensively for EMI. From 1975 he was concertmaster of the Philharmonia in London and played major concertos with Riccardo Muti, Sir Adrian Boult and Zdenek Macal. In 1983 he returned to Sydney as Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra and is now concertmaster of the Melbourne Symphony.

Gerard van der Weide was born in the Netherlands and started playing the violin when he was seven years old. His main teacher was Jacques Holtman, former leader of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and the Amati String Quartet. Other teachers included Igor Ozim, Davina van Wely, Lev Markiz and Lucy van Dael. He graduated from the Royal Conservatorium in the Hague in 1986 where he led the Dutch student orchestra. From 1986 until 1991 he played in the first violin section of the Brabant Symphony Orchestra. He also performed chamber music with his wife, Melbourne born pianist Julie Haskell. Gerard and his family then migrated to Australia where he is now a first violinist in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He has also worked in Australia Pro Arte and the Academy of Melbourne.

Jane Hazelwood began her professional life as a violinist with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. In 1978 the opportunity arose for Jane to play viola within the ACO and after studying in Sydney, she furthered her studies in Berlin with Wolfram Christ. She worked regularly in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under such conductors as von Karajan, Muti and Maazel. While in Europe she also played with the London String Quartet. Jane returned to Australia in 1986 to



become principal violist in the Australian Chamber Orchestra. She has played several series encompassing all the Mozart and Brahms two viola quintets with the Australia Ensemble. As a member of the Bergonzi Quartet she performed all the late Beethoven quartets in the New Zealand International Festival in 1988. Now resident in Melbourne, Jane teaches at the Victorian College of the Arts, plays regularly with Australia Pro Arte and as guest artist with the Australian Chamber Soloists.

Arturs Ezergailis was born in 1957 in Adelaide. He took cello lessons with James Whitehead and later with Kurt Hess. For three years he was a cellist with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and was soloist in the Saint-Saens cello concerto. For two years he was

a member of the Adelaide String Quartet. From 1980 to 1985 he furthered his studies in Switzerland under Stanislav Apolin (Prague) and Marek Jerie, completing a performance diploma with distinction in 1984. In the same year he was awarded the Edwin Fischer Prize. He was a member of the Festival Strings Lucerne under Rudolph Baumgartner, touring through Western and Eastern Europe as well as China and Japan. In 1985 Arturs returned to Australia to take up a position in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He is a regular performer at Music-in-the-Round and has been active in chamber music with prominent musicians such as Marc Neikrug, Jean-Bernard Pommier and Pinchas Zukerman. He is a member of the Chagall Ensemble.