

FLINDERS QUARTET

2019

TRANSLATIONS

The Clifford Hocking Concert: music in the memory of Australia's great impresario, Clifford Hocking AM

Macedon Music ~ Sunday 13 October, 2.30pm
Primrose Potter Salon ~ Wednesday 16 October, 7.00pm
Montsalvat Barn Gallery ~ Sunday 20 October, 2.30pm

NICHOLAS WATERS violin
THIBAUD PAVLOVIC-HOBBA violin
TOM HIGHAM viola
ZOE KNIGHTON cello
GENEVIEVE LACEY recorders
HAO ZHENG erhu

This program encompasses so many elements that are quintessentially 'Flinders': collaborations with old and new friends, celebrating the masterworks of our repertoire, and delving into uncharted waters. Curated as a tribute to impresario Clifford Hocking AM, the cross cultural rich melange of repertoire with just the right amount of risk taking is a concert program of which we hope Clifford would have been proud.

ZHANG ZHAO 1964-
String Quartet No. 1 "Totem" (composed 2001)

I "The Singer" Rubato Largo
II "The Musician Quaternary" Moderato
III "The Wizard Fugue" Lento
IV "The Drummer Sonata" Allegro

There are some performances that stay in the memory for years, and the performance by China's Amber Quartet of Zhang Zhao's "Totem" in the 2013 Asia-Pacific Chamber Music Competition was certainly one of them. Since that time, we had been trying to source the music but it hasn't been published. Imagine our joy when the Amber Quartet sent us the score with Zhang Zhao's blessing.

Zhang Zhao was born in Yunnan province in 1964 and is a postgraduate tutor at Minzu University of China College of Music. He is a member of Musician's Association of North America, Beijing Musician's Association and also the first Chinese composer to have ever been selected in ABRSM. Zhang's works are highly acclaimed in Europe, America and Southeast Asian countries, with scores and CDs published in Germany, Britain and Switzerland.

Zhang Zhao wrote his first string quartet "Totem" in 2001 after having spent two years in Yunnan province observing and researching local folk music. The obvious synergies with Bartok's work in this field certainly don't go unnoticed with the unbridled joy of the folk melodies infusing a work of great energy.

1st Movement: The Singer
The viola plays a theme of free folk song reminiscent of locals hearing the tune echoing around the mountains.

2nd Movement: The Musician Quaternary
In a tip of the hat to Debussy, this second movement uses all manner of pizzicato techniques with quirky rhythmical interplay.

3rd Movement: The Wizard Fugue
Wizards are the inheritors and transmitters of the nation's ancient culture. They often preside over folk ritual activities, and are highly respected. Zhang Zhao uses quarter tones and other extended techniques to tell these stories of mystery.

4th Movement: The Drummer Sonata
Drum beats have a special significance as part of the ancient customs of Hua Yi people in South Yunnan. Drumbeats during the spring ploughing are used to inspire people to work harder.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY 1862-1918
String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10 (composed 1893)

I Animé et très décidé
II Assez vif et bien rythmé
III Andantino, doucement expressif
IV Très modéré – En animant peu à peu – Très mouvementé et avec passion

Debussy is often branded an "impressionist" composer: the visual art world has Monet; we have Debussy. Those atmospheric and alluring titles to his piano pieces, like "the submerged cathedral" or "the girl with the flaxen hair", can sometimes mask the daring and risk taking that cause some to claim that Debussy gave more to the development of harmony in the twentieth century than any other composer.

All this, and he had no formal education, except that in music. Emerging from a rather humble background, he was admitted into the Paris Conservatoire at the age of ten but his precociousness didn't translate to fame until he was middle aged.

Debussy met the much loved violinist Eugene Ysaÿe early in 1893 when he was pretty much an unknown quantity. ("Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" was still to come). They immediately bonded, with Ysaÿe pronouncing Debussy his "little brother". In the summer of that year, Debussy wrote Ysaÿe this quartet and

it was premiered December 29 at the Société Nationale in Paris.

Apparently, the first audience was rather baffled. Reviewers used words like "fantastic" and "oriental", and Debussy's friend Ernest Chausson confessed mystification. Debussy must have felt the sting of these reactions, for he promised Chausson: "Well, I'll write another for you... and I'll try to bring more dignity to the form." One can imagine the crushing blow as Debussy had intended the work to be dedicated to him.

After the initial explosion of sound, there are a few elements that we recommend listening out for. At the end of the first movement, all four instruments mark out a pentatonic scale (a scale with only five notes, in reference to an East Asian flavour of sound) with ferocious intensity. The second movement features a heavy use of pizzicato and perhaps one of the most famous ostinatos in the repertoire (of course given to the viola). The third movement's long unending phrasing seamlessly merge into the fourth movement which contains some of the most adventurous harmonic shifts in the work.

INTERVAL

PETER SCULTHORPE 1929-2014

"A Song for Neilma" for tenor recorder and string quartet
(composed 2010)

We have strong and fond memories of performing this piece for its first outing on the open air stage at Bermagui, complemented by a chorus of local frogs. Peter wrote these precious words:

"This work was lovingly commissioned by Marigold Southey as a gift for her sister, Neilma Gantner. Certainly it was written with much love. It is fitting that it was commissioned especially for the 2010 Four Winds Festival, for performance by my friends Genevieve Lacey and members of the Flinders Quartet. The work is dedicated to Neilma. It is a tribute to her from my heart."

I chose to write the solo part for tenor recorder, for me the most expressive of the instruments of the recorder family. A Song for Neilma begins quietly, with suggestions of the musical material that follows. This consists of a long melody mostly for recorder, accompanied by Balinese-like figurations in the second violin. I often use such figurations in pieces that suggest Australia's coastal waters, as this does. The first violin and viola add counterpoints to the melody and the cello part is punctuated by sounds of seagulls. Following a statement of the melody by the first violin, the recorder brings the music to its close."

HUANG HAI HUAI 1935-1967 **arr. JULIAN YU** 1957- "The Horse Race" for erhu and string quartet (arranged 2002)

This little folk tune is one of the most famous pieces by Chinese composer, Huang Hai Huai. Born in 1935, he was an erhu player himself so it's little surprise that this piece exploits the dexterity and unique beauty of this instrument. Combining string instruments from different cultures, Julian Yu has made this arrangement for string quartet and erhu, and then we added some of our own little additions to spice it up even further. The title gives the programmatic game away, as the erhu depicts an annual horse race held during a harvest festival.

STUART GREENBAUM 1966-

"Translations" for recorder, erhu and string quartet
(composed 2017)

Commissioned by Carrillo Gantner AC for his wife, Ziyin Wang Gantner

- I Snow in Beijing (recorder and erhu)
- II Haiku 1 (solo recorder)
- III Dream House (erhu and string quartet)
- IV Wilderness (recorder and string quartet)
- V Haiku 2 (solo erhu)
- VI Generations (recorder, erhu and string quartet)

Flinders Quartet's association with Stuart Greenbaum goes back to our very first concerts in 2000, so this commission is more than appropriate to begin our 20th birthday celebrations (even if slightly premature).

Stuart is Professor and Head of Composition at The University of Melbourne. FQ has performed almost all of his seven string quartets and has spent many hours in the rehearsal room nutting out textures and effects. Stuart was a featured composer in our 2016 season, and so it was natural for Stuart to take on the role of mentor for our Composer Development Program. His gift of knowing not only what to put in, but what to take out from a composition has been a fascinating process to be a part of. It has proven startlingly informative in approaching the masterworks of the repertoire.

Stuart's writing has many influences. One will easily hear an element of jazz, pop or minimalism in his compositions; but he also considers philosophical questions in his music. The idea of feeling lonely in a crowded room seems perfectly apt as this piece utilises movements of solo instruments among conversational and aesthetically beautiful duets, trios and quartets.

Of his work, "Translations", Stuart writes:

"'Translations' was commissioned by Carrillo Gantner as a birthday gift for his wife, Ziyin Wang Gantner. The 1st and 3rd movements allude to her Chinese heritage (Snow in Beijing) and her notable work in the film industry (I wrote the score for the documentary film, Dream House, which Ziyin directed). The haiku interludes (movements 2 and 5) refer to Ziyin and Carrillo's shared love of the refined aesthetic of Japan and the 4th movement (Wilderness) similarly represents their shared history of long distance hiking across Europe, Asia and Australia. The final movement is a testament to Ziyin's love of family and the joy shared across generations."

This work was written for recorder, erhu and string quartet and presents contrasting solo, duo and quintet subsets of that combination, finally revealing the complete sextet ensemble in the final movement."

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GENEVIEVE LACEY (recorders) is a musician working in many contexts, with all kinds of people.

She creates large-scale collaborative works across radio, film, dance, theatre and public art, and has premiered scores of works, written for her. She's a recorder virtuoso, artistic director, spokesperson and leader, with a significant recording catalogue and a career as an international artist.

Her recent works include one infinity (a music-dance piece for Melbourne, Sydney, Perth Festivals, created with Jun Tian Fang, Gideon Obarzanek, Max de Wardener, DanceNorth and Beijing Dance Theatre), Pleasure Garden (a kinetic sound sculpture for Sydney Festival, touring UK/Europe/Asia 2019-), Life in Music (a 5-part radio series for ABC RN, written, composed and narrated by Genevieve), and Namatjira (a theatre piece, and documentary film with arts and social change company Big hART).

Genevieve has commissioned and premiered works for recorder by composers as diverse as Liza Lim, Elena Kats-Chernin, Brett Dean, Erkki-Sven Tuur (Estonia), Lou Bennett, Jan Bang (Norway), Christian Fennesz (Germany), Ben Frost (Iceland), Andrea Keller, Hollis Taylor, John Surman (UK) and Nico Muhly (USA).

Her wide-ranging musical interests have seen her representing Australian culture with a performance at the Lindau International Convention of Nobel Laureates, playing for the Queen in Westminster Abbey, playing on a basketball court on Thursday Island with The Black Arm Band, playing as a concerto soloist in Albert Hall for BBC Proms, making music in a prison in remote Western Australia, and at the opening night of the London Jazz Festival. Her repertoire spans ten centuries and long-term collaborators include filmmaker Sophie Raymond, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Danish musician Poul Høxbro, choreographer-director Gideon Obarzanek, and singer-songwriter Paul Kelly.

Genevieve's work has won ARIAs, a Helpmann, Green Room, Australia Council, Freedman and Churchill Fellowships and Outstanding Musician, Melbourne Prize for Music. She holds degrees (including a doctorate) in music and English literature from universities in Melbourne, Switzerland and Denmark. She was the 2018 Artist in Residence at Melbourne Recital Centre, and 2019 recipient of the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award for an Individual.

Genevieve is Chair of the Australian Music Centre board, Artistic Director of FutureMakers, Musica Viva's leadership program for early career artists, and Artistic Advisor to UKARIA.

genevivelacey.com

HAO ZHENG (erhu) Born in China, Hao learnt to play the Erhu at age of six. Just a year later he was accepted to study at the Primary School of Nanjing's Academy of Arts, a well-known prestige school which is famous of its children ensembles which are formed by only accepting children with demonstrated talents in performing arts. Hao toured extensively throughout China and overseas playing with the ensemble and performed as a soloist. He then studied in the conservatory attached to Nanjing University of the Arts before migrated to Australia in 1995.



Since then Hao has performed in many high profile concerts, festivals and music events in his new home country. These have included the ABC's "Music Deli", the Melbourne Festival, Four Winds Festival, the Port Fairy Folk Festival and many major corporate events. In 2008 he was invited by the Australian film music composer David Hirschfelder to record soundtracks for the Hollywood movie Children of Huang Shi. In 2010 he was invited by another successful Australian film music composer, Frank Strangio, to record soundtracks for the American film Dragon Pearl featuring actor Sam Neill. In 2011, he was accompanied by the string members of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, performing, Horse Racing, an Erhu solo piece re-arranged by the Australian composer, Julian Yu. Hao Zheng has been a member of the Australian Chinese Ensemble since 1997. His extensive repertoire ranges from the traditional to the contemporary and from the East to the West.

FLINDERS QUARTET is instantly recognisable as one of Australia's most loved chamber music ensembles. Their dynamic performances of a full spectrum of repertoire have audiences and critics articulating their esteem, and the quartet is a highly-respected force in Australian chamber music.

"... exciting and effervescent ... had the audience sitting up in their seats paying close attention to the impeccable intonation, rhythmic unity and open communication of the four players..."

- CLASSIC MELBOURNE, March 2019

2020 sees Flinders Quartet celebrating their 20th anniversary and undertaking their annual Melbourne subscription series; performing recitals and masterclasses in various parts of metropolitan and regional Australia; continuing their role as Artistic Patrons of John Noble's Quartet Program, a program that provides ongoing professional mentorship to student ensembles in regional Victoria; premiering a new work by Katy Abbott at Canberra Festival; and supporting emerging composers through the quartet's fifth annual Composer Development Program.

**2020 subscription and single tickets on sale now through
Melbourne Recital Centre box office
melbournerecital.com.au or 9699 3333**

Want to get in touch with Flinders Quartet?

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