



HELEN AYRES violin
SHANE CHEN violin
HELEN IRELAND viola
ZOE KNIGHTON cello

AND ... ACTION!

There is no doubt about it; music has the ability to pull at our emotional heartstrings. This poses the question: music can exist without film, but can film exist without music? And does music affect how we view an image? To us, this program proves music is an essential partner to film and an essential part of everyday life.

MATTIAS LYSELL 1971-

Le Sculpteur Express* (composed 2015)

*World Premiere, commissioned by Flinders Quartet

Mattias Lysell was born in Sweden in 1971 and was educated at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Most of his output is instrumental music and his work is characterised by containing musical material with which he has a long, intimate relationship – either taken from his own compositions or from other sources. In several works, the basic musical material derives from the works by other composers – preferably from the 16th century.

Besides composing, Lysell is a teacher in composition at The Falun Conservatory of Music, and during 2010-2012, was composer in Residence with Gävle Symphony Orchestra in Sweden. This is the first time his music has been performed in Australia.

ANDREW FORD 1957-

Scherzo perpetuo* (composed 2015)

*World Premiere, commissioned by Flinders Quartet

Andrew Ford is well known to music lovers as the voice and brains of The Music Show heard on Radio National. His compositions have become increasingly sought after and his chamber work, *Last Words*, was named Vocal Work of the Year at the 2014 Australian Art Music Awards. Ford's other prizes include the Yorkshire Arts Composers Award, which he won jointly with Mark-Anthony Turnage in 1982 (for *Portraits*), the Sydney Spring Festival award in 1998 (for *Tattoo*) and the 2002 Jean Bogan Prize (for *The Waltz Book*). In 2004, *Learning to Howl* received both the AMC award for the best composition by an Australian composer and the prestigious Paul Lowin Song Cycle Prize; *Tales of the Supernatural* was named APRA vocal work of the year in 2005; Ford's opera, *Rembrandt's Wife*, to a libretto by Sue Smith, won a 2010 Victorian Green Room Award; and *Rauha*, for wind, brass, percussion, keyboards and double basses, won the 2012 Albert H. Maggs Award.

Ford has also won prizes for his writing about music, notably the Geraldine Pascall Prize for critical writing in 1998. He has published eight books, most recently *Earth Dances: music in search of the primitive* (2015), and has written and presented four acclaimed radio series, *Illegal Harmonies* (1997), *Dots on the Landscape - an oral history of Australian music* (2001), *Music and Fashion* (2005) and *The Sound of Pictures* (2007–10).

Born in Liverpool, England, in 1957, Andrew Ford spent much of his childhood listening to the Beatles and other Sixties pop groups. In 1975, he went to the University of Lancaster where he studied composition with Edward Cowie and John Buller and had a formative meeting with Sir Michael Tippett who told him to forget about musical systems and trust his instincts. In 1983, he moved to Australia to join the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong. While there, he completed a Doctorate, writing his thesis on musical word setting. Between 1992 and 1994, Ford was composer in residence with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

JEAN SIBELIUS 1865-1957

String Quartet No. 4 in D minor, Op. 56 *Voces Intimae* (composed 1909)

I Andante - Allegro molto moderato

II Vivace

III Adagio di molto

IV Allegretto (ma pesante)

V Allegro

You may be surprised to discover the wealth of music Sibelius wrote for the string quartet - at least four other completed shorter works along with the four string quartets plus the piano quintet. Sibelius wrote his fourth string quartet in 1909 when he was 44 and is perhaps his only truly mature chamber work. It was written during a period of health and financial crisis and was one of the last pieces in the publishing contract with Robert Lienau. Written in five movements, it creates the perfect arch shape as used by other composers in their 'significant' works: Mahler's fifth symphony, Beethoven's Op. 132, and later employed by Bartók and Shostakovich.

"It turned out as something wonderful. The kind of thing that brings a smile to your lips at the hour of death ... I feel that I have passed a qualifying examination with the quartet."

After composing his fourth string quartet, Sibelius didn't choose to express himself through chamber music and more's the pity. It does seem through this work that Sibelius was discovering that he was wanting a richer, more orchestral sound. He wrote: *"The melodic material is good but the harmonic material could be 'lighter', and even 'more like a quartet'"*.

The term *voces intimae* comes from an inscription on the score of the third movement of the work and while Sibelius himself didn't apply the name, it is apt in so many ways. This quartet is the epitome of musical conversation.

The opening of the work involves a delicate conversation between the first violin and cello, and what blossoms is a beautiful discourse between the four instruments. A harmonically intricate bridging monologue from the cello brings us back to the opening theme, which quickly disperses into a canonic jigsaw puzzle. The ending of the first movement is a truly orchestral moment leading *attacca* into the short, whimsical second movement. At nigh on two minutes, this movement is over as quickly as it begins with galloping motifs and unexpected pauses: its wit is short-lived.

The heart and soul of the quartet, and delivering that gorgeous arch, is the third movement with the inscription *voces intimae*. The layering of two sublimely beautiful themes works its way through to the absolute stillness of the ending - a true 'hold your breath' moment.

The fourth movement has a certain motivic connection with the first movement and the adagio, and weaves together bubbling triplets with the continued conversation between the first violin and cello. (One does get the sense that this musical coupling develops as the piece goes on.) In the final movement, the four players whip each other into a frenzy with intricate interplay, clever textures and with the sense that there are far more than four players at work.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

String Quartet No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 131 (composed 1826)

- I Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo
- II Allegro molto vivace
- III Allegro moderato
- IV Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile
- V Presto
- VI Adagio quasi un poco andante
- VII Allegro

The reason that Beethoven's Op. 131 was chosen for Yaron Zilberman's film *Performance* is simple: it is one of the most profound works composed. Ever. The film brought up challenges of stamina and technique, but really the work has an emotional depth that seems not only to represent humanity but to stretch it and challenge a transcendence in the listener.

Written as one of the set of quartets commissioned by the Prince Gallitzin, Beethoven yet again reinvents form and takes the string quartet to a higher plane. This was the second to last quartet that he wrote (contrary to the opus numbers) and he was truly testing players' capabilities as well as the musical boundaries of form. There is a wonderful statement from Gallitzin that sums up Beethoven's character extremely well:

"I am sorry to have to tell you that his delicacy was not equal to his genius".

Beethoven famously screamed at Ignaz Schuppanzigh, "*What do I care for your blasted violin?!*" when he had the temerity to suggest something was a little difficult. Indeed, the movement towards string quartets being professional ensembles enabled Beethoven's works to be performed.

According to Anton Schindler, a pupil of Beethoven's in the last years of his life, Beethoven actually asked all the players of Schuppanzigh's quartet (entrusted with premiering the late works) to sign this document:

With this note each of you receives his part, and each is pledged and bound upon his word of honour to do his best, to distinguish himself, and to vie in excellence with his companions.

Each who is to take part in the said matter music sign this paper.

Beethoven

Schindler, secretarius

The choice of C sharp minor is a little cruel for string players; especially violists and cellists who miss out on playing their bottom string unfingered. There is a resignation about the key and a contemplative sadness. Opening with fugal entries, the four instruments weave around each other like maypole dancers, having brief moments of connectivity. The musing eventually rests on a C sharp octave leap as if asking the question - shall we go on? The rather unorthodox resolution to D major makes the joyful second movement a welcome reprieve before a recitative passage sets up the centrepiece of the quartet: the fourth movement.

Almost a piece in its own right, the fourth movement can be read as theme and variations. With so many tempo changes and character transformations, it is not until the main theme returns towards the end of the movement (over the top of some gymnastic trills from the first violin) that we realise we are still in the same movement; the beauty of which is rudely interrupted by the cello. (The cello does quite a bit of interrupting in this piece, making us wonder what Beethoven thought of cellists) The rumpelstiltskin dance that eventuates is lightning quick and seemingly simple; almost like a child's game which seems simple enough, until you try and join in yourself. The game has many rounds, with Beethoven playing numerous dynamic tricks and twists and turns before turning the game into a somber, elegiac interlude with the sixth movement, which really leads into the demonic dance of the seventh movement.

This movement alternates a devilish rhythmical figure with short cascading reprieves. The unified dance to the end begins to wind down, and just when the listener expects a quiet descent into a peaceful C

sharp minor, Beethoven turns the tables and we finish triumphant in C sharp major, much like the transition from C minor to C major in his great fifth symphony. Whatever the turmoil of the past forty minutes, Beethoven propels us skyward, full of hope.

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Le Sculptuer Express is provided courtesy of the Corrick Collection and the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

FLINDERS QUARTET

Flinders Quartet is instantly recognisable as one of Australia's most loved chamber music ensembles, and is Melbourne's only professional string quartet. Their dynamic and stirring 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.

"... the quartet sounded as if they had been playing together for a lifetime: unity of interpretation, tight ensemble, fine balance, matched tone, and fluent dialogues between solo and collective lines." The Australian (May 2014)

FQ regularly commissions and premieres works by Australian composers. In 2014, the quartet commissioned new works by Paul Dean and Paul Grabowsky, and in 2015 premieres works by Andrew Ford, Tom Henry, and Sweden's Mattias Lysell. In their ongoing mission to further the Australian tradition of chamber music, FQ has previously commissioned and premiered works by Peter Sculthorpe, Ian Munro, Calvin Bowman, Richard Mills, Ross Edwards, Stuart Greenbaum, and Katy Abbott.

The quartet is regularly invited to perform and tour for chamber music presenters such as Musica Viva, and is in demand at festivals throughout Australia often in association with some of the country's finest talents, including Slava Grigoryan, Kristian Chong, Ian Munro, Paul Dean, Karin Schaupp, Genevieve Lacey and Jayson Gillham. International engagements have taken them to the UK, Singapore, Sweden and Canada.

FQ's first commercial CD release, *Reinventions* with Genevieve Lacey, was received with great critical acclaim, and was re-released on the ABC Classics label in March 2015. Also on the ABC Classics label is FQ's ARIA-nominated 2011 release, *Fandango*, with Karin Schaupp.

FQ's 2015 performance schedule includes their annual Melbourne subscription series, a tour to Scandinavia to perform in Sweden and to perform the complete string quartets of Sibelius at the 2015 Sibelius and Korpo Music Festival, a collaboration with pianist Hoang Pham, and recitals and masterclasses in various parts of metropolitan and regional Australia.

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