

FLINDERS QUARTET

THIBAUD PAVLOVIC-HOBBA violin

WILMA SMITH violin

HELEN IRELAND viola

ZOE KNIGHTON cello

BEETHOVEN 130

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

This concert is dedicated to impresario, Clifford Hocking AM. Clifford was instrumental in enabling Flinders Quartet to focus solely on becoming a string quartet of the highest calibre, and it is his spirit of programming that has infused this concert. A melding of words and music are the best of collaborations between audience and performers.

ANTON WEBERN 1883-1945

Six Bagatelles for string quartet, Op. 9 (composed 1911-13)

I. Mäßig

II. Leicht Bewegt

III. Ziemlich Fließend

IV. Sehr Langsam

V. Äußerst Langsam

VI. Fließend

These little vignettes are some of the most perfect examples of twelve tone music. Webern said of composing the bagatelles,

"I had the feeling that when all 12 notes had gone by the piece was finished ... In my sketchbook I wrote out the chromatic scale and crossed off the individual notes. Over in an instant, every single note has been painstakingly chosen and the amount of detail on every note can be excruciating for the player."

This comment on his process reminds us of the way a wordsmith will agonise over a syllable in a Haiku poem, and therein lay the foundations for our project to invite our audience to write Haikus to match this music. On each subsequent listening of these gems, they gain clarity and meaning with layer upon layer being infused into 20-40 short seconds.

Webern was most famously a pupil of Arnold Schoenberg and engaged in what some would determine hero worship. In letters Webern wrote to Schoenberg, he told him,

"You are set up in my heart as my highest ideal whom I love more and more, to whom I am more and more devoted", and in another letter, *"What I am, everything, everything is through you; I live only through you."*

It seems that Webern was a troubled soul, finding it difficult to have consistent employment. Between 1908-13 he took up and quit five jobs conducting in theatres; and between 1911-20 he applied for, was offered and subsequently changed his mind about a job conducting at the Deutsches Landestheater in Prague. He applied for the job seven times and held it, in total, for about six months across separate occasions in 1916, 1917 and 1920.

While Webern successfully campaigned twice to have Schoenberg excused from military service, Webern came to grief himself as the victim of a military accident when he was mistakenly shot whilst having a cigar during a sting operation at the end of the second world war.

The entire works of Webern fit onto three CDs, and are shorter in combined duration than the one late Beethoven quartet played later in this concert program.

FRANZ SCHUBERT 1797-1828

Quartettsatz (composed 1820)

This short movement by Schubert represents one of his three incomplete string quartets. It stands so wonderfully as a complete piece, it is hard to imagine the movements that might have followed this tarantella-like 'first' movement. One can speculate about why this work was abandoned, but we can be fairly sure that Schubert was not in a healthy

state of mind while he was composing during this time in his life. Was there something going on in his personal life that was reflected in this piece of music? It could be that he was experiencing the early symptoms of syphilis, with which he was later diagnosed.

Like Beethoven, string quartets were an integral part of Schubert's overall compositional output and he returned to them throughout his career. As a teen, he played in the family quartet, so composing in this form was somewhat of a necessity. He composed over twenty quartets (trumping Beethoven) but many were lost. There are sixteen surviving quartets, three of which are incomplete.

While Schubert and Beethoven are never reported to have met formally, there is one story of Schubert seeing Beethoven in a coffee house and being too nervous to say hello. For two titans of the early 19th century, it seems unfathomable that they remained practically strangers until Beethoven's death. Beethoven is said to have been given some of Schubert's songs to peruse on his deathbed, and Schubert in turn called for Beethoven's Op. 131 string quartet to be brought to him while he lay bitterly ill before his own death. The fact that Schubert was a pall-bearer at Beethoven's funeral says more about his standing in the Viennese community rather than his close association with Beethoven. As was his wish, Schubert was buried next to Beethoven.

This work is heavily chromaticised, using chromatic decoration of motives and larger harmonic progressions such as through a D flat chord, and a modulation to the distant key of B flat major. It is these experiments with modulation that give the work such complex flavour with unexpected twists and turns.

DEREK BROOKES 1965-

String Quartet No. 1 (composed 2017)

I. Kisetsu no Oto ('sounds of seasons')

II. Tsubasa no Oto ('sounds of animals')

III. Views of Edo

FQ 'discovered' Derek Brookes in our 2018 Composer Development Program and was immediately taken with how these works complement the Six Bagatelles of Webern. It was Derek's pairing of Haiku poetry and music that inspired us to put a call out to explore the connections with Haiku and music further.

A note from the composer:

"This piece emerged at a time when I was exploring different ways of expressing joy in music. In this case, I was trying to find poems and images that would embody or even evoke the qualities of joy. The idea was that I could then draw on these sources to inspire the compositional process.

I started looking more closely at the qualities of joy. One key feature of this emotion, I discovered, is its ephemeral, elusive, transient quality. Joy tends to arise in situations such as falling in love, witnessing a sunset, making a discovery, receiving a gift, the birth of a child, playfulness, and so on. There seems to be an underlying connection between all these situations. We can at least say that joy is usually evoked by (and perhaps reveals) what we value and cherish in life, no matter how small or commonplace.

Reflecting on these qualities of joy led me to explore 'haiku', an aphoristic form of Japanese poetry. A haiku has been called 'the poem of a single breath': each consists of a mere 17 syllables, ordered in a 5-7-5 structure. Haiku are designed to have the force of immediacy, a 'lightning flash' of insight which can illuminate the essence or value of something in the world, no matter how (seemingly) insignificant or familiar. They reflect the view that life can only be lived in the 'now', and that a lack of attention to the present moment can result in a kind of squandering of one's life. Each haiku is open-ended, with little or no resolution. Yet it will hint of connections with the past and what is yet to come. Indeed, there is often an underlying continuity or cyclical pattern within any collection of these poems.

I selected 12 beautiful haiku to serve as the inspiration for the first two movements of this piece. What emerged was a sequence of 12 highly condensed, discrete 'moments' of music. Each 'moment' was inspired by the imagery, structure and mood of the corresponding haiku. But there are also connections across the sequence - the first eight haiku represent two complete cycles of the seasons. The next 4 each focus on a winged animal (a chick, woodpecker, sparrow and a firefly). Musical themes are also occasionally restated, especially where there is a connected subject (e.g. fireflies).

For the final movement I decided to use images as my 'source' for the expression of joy. In keeping with the Japanese aesthetic, I selected two woodblock prints from Utagawa Hiroshige's "100 Famous Views of Edo" (1857). The first print is of an eagle as it prepares to dive for prey in the wintry marshes below. The second portrays a starlit sky, with fishing boats gently rocking in the port and Tsukudajima Island lying silent in the distance. I then asked the simple question 'what do I see?' The dramatic and emotive aspects of the images seemed to come to life in my imagination. I was especially aware of the joy that I felt in this encounter with the sheer beauty of the woodprints. I started composing by

ear, guided only by my reflection on what I was seeing, my emotional responses and my sense of the 'inner logic' of the music itself. The final movement was the organic result of this process."

While the translations of the twelve Haiku poems don't fall into the standard syllabic constraints of a traditional Haiku, their concise beauty is worth considering while listening to the music.

Movement I

1. Snow melts ~ and the village floods ~ with children
2. Summer rain ~ it drums on the heads ~ of the carp
3. The moon ~ wanders around the pond ~ all night long
4. No escaping it ~ I must step on fallen leaves ~ to take this path
5. On the ebb tide beach ~ everything we pick up ~ is alive
6. Cool clear water ~ and fireflies that vanish ~ that is all there is
7. The harvest moon ~ rabbits go scampering ~ across Lake Suwa
8. It's play for the cranes ~ flying up to the clouds ~ the year's first sunrise

Movement II

9. Unexpectedly ~ a chick has hatched ~ midwinter rose
10. In the far depths of the forest ~ the woodpecker ~ and the sound of an axe
11. The footsteps of a sparrow ~ walking on the tatami floor ~ sound familiar
12. From the cage ~ fireflies one by one ~ turn into stars

DEREK BROOKES (composer) has a B.Mus in composition from the Elder Conservatorium (Adelaide University) and a M.Mus in composition (HD) from the Sydney Conservatorium, supervised by Ross Edwards. Derek also has a PhD in philosophy (ANU), and has worked in both academia and a range of social justice areas, including restorative justice, disability, domestic violence and child abuse prevention.

INTERVAL

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

String Quartet No. 13 in B flat major, Op. 130 (composed 1825)

- I. Adagio, ma non troppo – Allegro
- II. Presto
- III. Poco scherzoso. Andante con moto, ma non troppo
- IV. Alla danza tedesca. Allegro assai V. Cavatina. Adagio molto espressivo
- VI. Finale. Allegro

Controversy and a significant re-write shaped the development of the last of the string quartets commissioned by Prince Nikolay Gallitzin. The prince, a cellist and patron of Russian music, wrote to Beethoven in 1822 asking if he would compose up to three quartets for him. Opus 130 was the last of these quartets and was written just two years before Beethoven's death.

Conceived as a six-movement work, the quartet in B flat major was premiered by the Schuppanzigh Quartet in March 1826. In fact, when this piece was premiered, two of the movements had to be encored (proof that audiences indeed clapped between movements). Beethoven told Karl Holz, second violinist of the Schuppanzigh quartet, that *"the Cavatina was composed in the very tears of misery and that never had one of his own pieces moved him so deeply, and that merely to relive it in his feelings always cost him a tear"*. However it was the response to the last movement that had the public and critics divided. This lengthy fugue (the 'Grosse fugue') was so rich and complex, both musicians and listeners found it difficult to follow. One critic described the quartet as, *"serious, dark and mysterious, and sometimes bizarre, abrupt and capricious"*.

After the premiere, Beethoven's publisher Mathias Artaria suggested that the final movement be arranged into a piano version, to help players and audiences understand it more easily. While a piano version was arranged,

Beethoven was later persuaded to separate the Grosse Fuge into a quartet in its own right. So the fugue became Opus 133 and a new finale was composed for Opus 130. Sadly, the revised version of the quartet with its new final movement was not published until after Beethoven's death, however he did agree that the rewritten final movement was an improvement and was disappointed that the engravers published the first edition with the Grosse Fuge ending.

It was during the composition of the 'second' finale that Beethoven and his nephew Karl went and stayed with Beethoven's brother Johann at his country estate in Gneixendorf, so that Karl could recover following a failed suicide attempt. Indeed, one can hear the rollicking sunshine in this replacement finale movement.

Musicologist Angus Warson wrote, *"Beethoven spent most of his time during those weeks in Gneixendorf enjoying the countryside and composing a new finale for the last of his Gallitzin quartets; he completed it appropriately on St Cecilia's Day, 22 November 1826. The first version of op. 130, with the Grosse Fuge as finale, had already been engraved by Artaria in August 1826, but because of the proposed changes it was withheld from publication. The second version with the new Gneixendorf finale, rightly hailed by Schuppanzigh as 'exquisite', was published posthumously in 1827 by both Artaria in Vienna and Schlesinger in Paris."*

Beethoven was never paid for this work. At the time of his death Prince Gallitzin owed Beethoven 50 ducats for this quartet, an amount of approximately \$10,500 in today's currency.

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