

AE NEWS

newsletter of the Australia Ensemble @UNSW

April Events

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Free lunch hour concert

Tuesday April 4, 2017

1.10 - 2.00pm

Tyree Room, Scientia Building

Beethoven: *Sonata* in G Op.30 no.3

Hindson: *Flash* for solo marimba

Kats-Chernin: *Violet's Etude*

Edwards: *Animisms*

with guest artists Claire Edwardes,
percussion

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Masterclass

Thursday April 6, 2017

1.10 - 2.00pm

Tyree Room, Scientia Building

Clarinetist David Griffiths works with

UNSW students Ben Curry-Hyde

and Cameron Burgess on works of
Brahms and Debussy

Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Subscription Concert 2, 2017

Saturday April 8, 2017 at 8pm

Sir John Clancy Auditorium

Fantasy and Variations

Vine: *Fantasia*

Nielsen: Wind Quintet

Durufle: *Prelude, recitatif et
variations*

Mozart: Clarinet Quintet K581

**7pm: Composer Conversation in
the UNSW Chancellery Council
Chamber, adjacent to Clancy
Auditorium. Free, all welcome**

www.music.unsw.edu.au

A Night of Pure Music

MYLES OAKEY

When your heart picks up pace, your breath becomes short and light, and your brow gathers sweat – you have entered Carl Vine's *Fantasia* (2013). Carl's fantasy, as with the spirit of the genre, emerges from the free-flowing imagination of the composer, unrestricted by a fixed form. But when the tempo peaks, and the intensity tightens up your chest, don't worry, Carl is "in control every step of the way", says cellist Julian Smiles.

It is this natural body rhythm in performance that Carl hopes translates to the audience. And the Australia Ensemble will be doing just that when *Fantasia* opens the program *Fantasy and Variations* on April 8. Ahead of the program, Julian is looking forward to audiences hearing what he hopes they will find a "very refreshing piece".

"There's a wonderful sense of building rhythmic drive that evolves throughout several tempos – And it's this feeling of growing excitement that is one of the most effective things about it," says Julian.

This is "pure music", Carl tells us. No representation here folks; no manifestation of the sublime. It is straight up musical fragments that only a master craftsman like Carl can interweave and intensify through a piano quintet.

Carl divulges that when he approached the work "it was precisely that sense of freedom, the exemption of a formal framework for composition," that led it to evolve into a fantasia.

"It came together organically as I was composing. I was fairly sure what track it was going to take, but different ideas take on a life of their own. Then I interwove them back together. It had to be a fantasia. Because that's what it was.



Composer Carl Vine [photo: Keith Saunders]

And it emerged quite quickly that there were strong tonal implications towards it being more of a directly tonal work. Yet it doesn't have a fixed tonal centre; it tends to drift quite a lot."

Talking about Carl's compositional style, Julian offers,

"Carl will often write the four string parts to sound like one instrument playing quadruple notes. A lot of it will sound like the piano is one instrument and the four string instruments are another instrument in themselves. So, in a way, it is a duo between a piano and string quartet.

"The music is written in a very prescribed way. Carl's very precise about the tempos he wants, and in fact a lot of the way the music evolves depends on metric modulation, where you arrive at new tempo by a manipulation of the previous tempo. It's very precise and mathematical, yet the result of these florid runs and fixed parts of music end up sounding very free."

Running alongside Vine's *Fantasia* (2013) is an old friend of the ensemble, Mozart's *Clarinet Quintet* in A K581 (1789), as well as Nielsen's *Wind Quintet* Op.43 (1922), and Duruflé's *Prelude, Recitativ et Variations* Op.3 (1928).

As a performer, Julian enjoys what the contrasting pieces have to offer. "Compared to Carl's piece, we'll play the Mozart with a lot more freedom and comfort in knowing that we can do things slightly differently on the night and everything will be fine. And while Carl's piece is titled as a fantasia, we actually have little room for doing much outside what Carl has written, yet this is how it becomes such a beautiful and exciting piece."

In a program that stretches from Mozart to Vine, there is a deeper continuity here. "Carl's skills as a composer are very much based in the European classical tradition with heavy influences from jazz; but you can see in his music the lines of a musical style of writing that goes back to Mozart and other composers that wrote so well," remarks Julian.



Australia Ensemble cellist Julian Smiles
[photo: Keith Saunders]

Myles Oakey is in his fifth and final year at UNSW, doing the honours year of a Bachelor of Music (Honours)/Bachelor of Education. He frequently writes for CutCommon Magazine. <http://www.mylesoakey.com/>

To hear Carl Vine in our first Composer Conversation for 2017, join Artistic Chair Paul Stanhope as he discusses the finer points of the *Fantasia* prior to the subscription concert on Saturday April 8. The University Council Chamber in the Chancellery building immediately adjacent to Clancy Auditorium has been generously opened to accommodate our audience, with the talk beginning at 7pm and concluding in plenty of time to make the short walk to the Auditorium for the performance. All are welcome to take this exciting opportunity.



A master of class

There are people in the world who love to take an opportunity, and many such people have made their way into the world of music. Fortunately, some have found their way to the UNSW campus, and two have put their hands up to take the opportunity of working with Australia Ensemble clarinetist David Griffiths (pictured left) in a free public masterclass. David is, of course, an extremely experienced performer but also a leading educator, as Senior Lecturer in Clarinet, Coordinator of Woodwind and a member of Ensemble Liaison ensemble-in-residence at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, Monash University. It is a rare gift for two students of UNSW to have the chance to work through some repertoire with him, even for a short time as in the Australia Ensemble's free public masterclasses. Also one to

take an opportunity, David jumped at the chance to work with young performers from UNSW, such is his enthusiasm and drive for excellence of performance and of education.

Ben Curry-Hyde is a second year student studying music at UNSW as a clarinet performance major, undertaking a Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Education (Secondary). He has been studying with Deborah de Graff for several years, prior to which he learned from Mark Walton. Although still quite young, Ben has been playing clarinet in ensembles for eleven years, including at UNSW, the North Shore Wind Symphony, and now in the recently-formed Seaside Wind Quintet. He is tackling the first clarinet sonata of Brahms, and felt that the second movement would be a good project for a masterclass with David Griffiths.

Contrastingly, our second masterclass participant has already graduated with a Bachelor of Music (Honours) in clarinet performance in 2014, having studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. His studies enabled some international experiences, including a music travel scholarship allowing him to take lessons and conduct Honours research in the UK and Europe. He has worked with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Sinfonia, and holds his LMusA in clarinet. Fortunately for us, he is currently pursuing a Masters in Environmental Management at UNSW, and has taken on the Principal Clarinet position in the UNSW Orchestra. He will be performing Debussy's *Premiere Rapsodie* for the masterclass.

All are welcome to join these young musicians as they tackle some fantastic repertoire under the able guidance of David Griffiths. Thursday April 6, 1.10pm Tyree Room of the John Niland Scientia Building.



Student clarinetist Ben Curry-Hyde will work through a movement of Brahms' F minor clarinet sonata in a masterclass with David Griffiths

The Tale of Edwards and Edwardes

Back in 2015, the Australia Ensemble had the pleasure of giving the premiere performance of Ross Edwards' newly commissioned work *Animisms*, written in celebration of the 80th birthday of Peter Maxwell Davies. Unusually for an Australia Ensemble commission, the five-movement work was scored for flute, clarinet, percussion, violin and cello, requiring the inclusion of a guest percussionist. While writing the piece in 2014, Ross mentioned to percussionist Claire Edwardes that he really had her playing in mind when he wrote the percussion part, and so it was a magical alignment that his imagining came to fruition and Claire was indeed engaged for the first performance.

The piece was well-received, as so often Ross's new works are, and the Australia Ensemble immediately put it high



on the 'To Be Recorded' list of works. Thanks to the support of a generous Australia Ensemble subscriber, in April this year the Ensemble will be reunited with Claire Edwardes to record the work. In advance of the recording, however, will be an opportunity to hear *Animisms* again in live performance through the free lunchtime concert on Tuesday April 4. As an extra treat, Claire Edwardes will also perform two Australian solo marimba works on the same program, Matthew Hindson's *Flash* and Elena Kats-Chernin's *Violet's Etude*. The concert is free, 1.10pm on Tuesday April 4 in the Tyree Room of the Scientia building UNSW, and all are welcome.

Guest percussionist Claire Edwardes [photo: Heidrun Lohr]

The Chemistry of Performer and Listener: Dene Olding and Mozart's clarinet quintet

LUKE IREDALE

In any discussion about the most enduring jewels of the chamber music repertoire, Mozart's clarinet quintet warrants a special mention. It's a work that embodies the formal clarity and balance of the classical era, but in true Mozart style, there's so much more beneath the surface. We spoke with Dene Olding about the challenges and joys of performing a beloved masterpiece.

For those who came in late, AE violinist Dene Olding has recently stepped down from his long-held position as concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. One of the upshots is that Dene has more time in his (still very busy) schedule to focus on chamber music.

"It's hard to break the habit of a lifetime," Dene says. "I still have to pinch myself now that I don't have a mountain of orchestral music to study. Instead it seems I have a mountain of different music to learn!"

Despite the wealth of experience Dene has gained over the course of his remarkable career, he says he never stops learning. "I don't think any musician anywhere would say they've learned everything about music. I gradually learn better ways to perform a piece through long familiarity."

It's a notion which must surely apply to a piece like the Mozart clarinet quintet, to be performed in the Australia Ensemble's upcoming subscription concert. Even for listeners with only a passing interest in chamber music it's a familiar work; for chamber music enthusiasts, and especially for chamber musicians, it is almost ubiquitous. Frequently performed and recorded, the challenge lies in keeping performances fresh and vital, as much for the musician as for the listener.

Dene is one such musician for whom the Mozart is very familiar. Having recorded it and performed it countless times over the years (including on an award-winning AE disc with Catherine McCorkill), how does Dene approach it now, in 2017?

"The Mozart quintet has a very personal and amiable quality, and the whole piece exudes an atmosphere of peaceful contentment," Dene says. "When in front of a live audience and faced with a masterpiece of the literature, it is almost impossible not to feel inspired. The chemistry of performer and listener creates an energy that is palpable."

Even in rehearsal, the presence of just one other person

can dramatically change the mood, "galvanising the performers into performance mode", as Dene puts it. In the recording studio, many musicians find that musical 'electricity' is often much harder to cultivate. Dene agrees: "In a sterile atmosphere, it is hard to create the spontaneity and freshness of a live performance."

Good news, then, that listeners will get to hear Mozart's masterpiece performed live, as was originally intended.

The new factor for this performance, of course, will be the presence of AE Associate Artist David Griffiths on clarinet. It's a work dear to the heart of every clarinet player; indeed, learning the famous slow movement, with its utterly perfect main theme, is the very moment when many young clarinetists first fall in love with the instrument. How is the rehearsal process affected by playing the Mozart with someone new for the first time?

"Although there is no better way to refine an interpretation and to develop a cohesive unity that performing many times with the same players, it is very healthy to perform with different musicians from time to time," Dene says. "You are challenged to re-think and sometimes to defend your own interpretation, which is all part of the musical process. We've come to know David and his playing for some time now, and it will be a pleasure to play

such a standard of the literature with him."

And a pleasure it will be for AE audiences to hear it in April. "Every note is a jewel and perfect in its position in the score," Dene says, beautifully summing up the pure joy of Mozart.

For many listeners, the Mozart quintet is one of those pieces that is enormously comforting. You can hear it a hundred times, you know exactly what's coming – and you can't wait for it.



Violinist Dene Olding [photo: Keith Saunders]