



AE NEWS

newsletter of the Australia Ensemble @UNSW

Never Stand Still

Music Performance Unit

May Events

Australia Ensemble @UNSW
Free lunch hour concert
Tuesday May 10, 2016
1.10 - 2.00pm
Leighton Hall, Scientia Building
Arnold: *Suite Bourgeoise* for flute, clarinet and piano
Beethoven: *String quartet* in F, Op.135

Australia Ensemble @UNSW
Subscription Concert 3, 2016
Saturday May 14, 2016 at 8pm
Sir John Clancy Auditorium
Bright Young Things
Milhaud: Sonata for flute, oboe, clarinet and piano
Strauss: Piano Quartet Op.13
Ball: *Three Dreams in Pulse* (first performance) for clarinet & piano
Mendelssohn: Octet in E flat Op.20
7pm: Composer Conversation in the UNSW Chancellery Council Chamber
Free, all welcome

Collegium Musicum Choir
Sunday May 29, 2016 at 5pm
Sir John Clancy Auditorium
HANDEL: *Messiah*
AE subscribers 15% discount on pre-booked tickets
p. 02 9385 4874

www.music.unsw.edu.au

The brightness of youth

On Saturday May 10, 1980, a newly-formed group named the University of New South Wales Ensemble gave its inaugural concert at UNSW's Sir John Clancy Auditorium, a program including Don Banks' Horn Trio, Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, and concluding with Mendelssohn's Octet for strings Opus 20. It was no accident that the very first program of the group which was later to be renamed as the Australia Ensemble included this superb string work as its final piece – it is a work worthy of celebration, and its magnificence makes it appropriate for such a significant occasion. The Ensemble did look very different in 1980 – with a nucleus of five men including only two string players, the Ensemble had invited six female guest artists to form the eight for the Mendelssohn Octet.

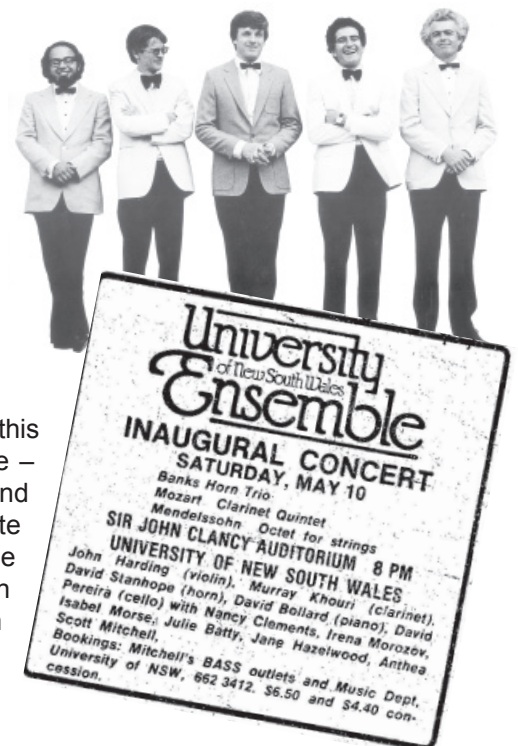
It proved to be quite the success. In a review in *The Australian*, Laurie Strachan declared “The Octet turned out to be the high water mark of the concert; a surging, vigorous performance that marvellously realised the ebb and flow of Mendelssohn’s teenage masterpiece.”

Fred Blanks painted an equally vivid picture in his *Sydney Morning Herald* review of the same performance:

“So high-spirited and impetuously did the University of NSW Ensemble throw itself into Mendelssohn’s Octet in the Clancy Auditorium on Saturday evening that one suspected they were running late for some momentous appointment. Hardly more momentous, however, than the concert itself. Quite simply, this deserves to be hailed as one of the most impressive and significant chamber-music recitals to come from a home-based group for many a season.

It was impressive for purely musical reasons, showing how relatively young and not very experienced performers can be mixed with others of long standing and practice to coalesce into a technically and stylistically unified body.”

One such “relatively young and not very experienced” performer on that momentous occasion was our very own violist Irina Morozova, the only player from that initial performance who remains in the Ensemble. Now in its



How it all began - a 1980 publicity photo, and Sydney Morning Herald advertisement of the first concert of the University of New South Wales Ensemble (including Mendelssohn's Octet), which was renamed Australia Ensemble in 1984



Guest artists for the Mendelssohn Octet, the Tinalley String Quartet (L to R): Adam Chalabi, violin; Lerida Delbridge, violin; Justin Williams, viola; Michelle Wood, cello

thirty-seventh season, the Australia Ensemble returns to the Mendelssohn Octet for only the fourth time in its history, having subsequently performed it in the 1987 and 1996 series. This will be, however, the first time in a subscription season that they have performed the work with a guest string quartet rather than with guest individual players, something they expect will make a substantial difference to the preparation process. Although it is always a great experience to perform with quality musicians, the involvement of another complete quartet brings an extra element of ensemble to the performance, four players who are used to communicating through their music, and working together to create their own unique sound.

The Octet quite clearly adheres to the theme of the program, *Bright Young Things*, written when Mendelssohn was only sixteen years old. As Roger Covell wrote in the program of the 1980 performance, "There is nothing of the merely gifted and promising student in the work, however; it is a fully realised masterpiece. Mendelssohn attained in this work the brilliance of technique and the sparkling invention of his best music, together with a good measure of his adult range of expression." The

string players of the Australia Ensemble are well used to the uncommon maturity of Mendelssohn's writing, although in chamber music primarily through his two Piano Trios. The Octet provides a unique opportunity to work to a bigger scale. The Tinalley Quartet has been invited to play for this performance – the Australia Ensemble audience will already be familiar with cellist Michelle Wood (who performed in two concerts in 2015 while Julian Smiles took a period of leave), and with violist Justin Williams who recently appeared in the March performance of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. Violinists Adam Chalabi and Lerida Delbridge complete the ensemble. As a quartet, Tinalley have performed the piece a number of times, including in last year's Canberra Festival with the New Zealand String Quartet. They look forward to this performance with the Australia Ensemble, as cellist Michelle Wood suggests: "We have grown up as a quartet listening to their wonderful artistry, and having worked together in various guises, all get along famously. There's also something incredibly special about pairing two quartets together in a piece like the Mendelssohn, especially those which have been together for a good many years! Like a joining of two musical families. And in terms of families - the performance will also be fairly unique in that it will contain not one, not two, but THREE married couples!"

Of the Ensemble's first performance of the Octet in 1980, Laurie Strachan also remarked "It's rare to see so many top quality string players on one chamber concert platform – and the sound lived up to the spectacle, rich and warm, almost an orchestra in miniature."

Thirty-six years on, we expect this particular combination of experience and youth in fine Australian string playing to result in a momentous occasion, fitting for a work of such quality and stature.

Sonia Maddock

The Tinalley String Quartet performs as guest artists with the Australia Ensemble @UNSW on Saturday May 14 at 8pm in Mendelssohn's Octet, the final work on the program *Bright Young Things*, in the Sir John Clancy Auditorium UNSW.

The sound of an expert



On Thursday April 14, flautist Geoffrey Collins presented the first of our masterclass series, with young musicians Rachel Woolley and Austin Lee. Rachel worked through the third movement of the flute sonata of Georgian composer Taktakishvili, while Austin presented the opening movement of Mozart's Flute Concerto no.1 Both were accompanied by Harrison Collins, whom many of you will recognise as our resident page turner. Certainly some positive results, and happy performers.



Our next free public masterclass will be with soprano Sara Macliver, on Thursday August 11 at 1.10pm in Leighton Hall, Scientia

Realising a dream

Back in 2013, clarinettist of the Australia Ensemble, Catherine McCorkill, received a lively email from a young clarinettist lamenting in the lack of clarinet sonata repertoire, and suggesting that part of the solution was for him to commission such a work from an Australian composer. He was very clear that the work not be 'too virtuosic', rather something that clarinettists other than only the very elite would be able to play. Discussions between Catherine and this very pragmatic philanthropist, Dr Andrew Kennedy, resulted in the proposal of a new work from young composer and saxophone specialist, Andrew Ball.

A Brisbane local, Ball is resident composer with the Barega Saxophone Quartet, and spends his time performing, writing and teaching. His new work, *Three Dreams in Pulse*, commissioned by Andrew Kennedy but dedicated to Catherine McCorkill, will be fittingly part of the Australia Ensemble's upcoming subscription concert entitled *Bright Young Things*. The composer writes that the title refers to "each movement having a unique rhythmic theme. Each movement is inspired by, and re-appropriates, different rhythmic traditions, such as old-school delta blues, Korean Jangdan music and Afro-Cuban clave rhythms."

Andrew Ball will be joining Artistic Chair, Paul Stanhope, for a Composer Conversation prior to the subscription concert, so our audience can gain further insight into the compositional process behind this new work.

Dr Andrew Kennedy, an anaesthetist and active chamber and orchestral musician, has persevered with the commission of this work, true to his original intent to build on the clarinet sonata repertoire and create quality Australian music. This fits neatly with the Australia Ensemble's own commissioning intent - a perfect match!

Andrew Ball's new work, *Three Dreams in Pulse*, will be discussed in a free pre-concert Composer Conversation with Artistic Chair Paul Stanhope, on Saturday May 14 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, UNSW Chancellery, immediately adjacent to the Clancy Auditorium. Free entry, all welcome.



Dr Andrew Kennedy (left) with composer Andrew Ball

The Viennese way

Keen-eyed subscribers may have noticed that the string players of the Australia Ensemble sat in a different configuration for the recent performance of Haydn's String Quartet Op.50 no.5 'Ein Traum', with the second violin seated opposite rather than next to the first violin. This is something of a 19th century Viennese performance convention, although there was often further seating experimentation with violins on chairs and the viola and cello on higher stools. It is unknown if performers of Haydn's era experimented with using iPads for their music as ours have taken to doing.

Behind the scenes

The Music Performance Unit is thrilled to welcome Music Honours student Phillipa van Helden to the role of Operations Assistant, supporting Yvette Goodchild for two days of each week. We also welcome Madeleine Preston into the new role of Digital Media Officer - Madeleine will be assisting with maintaining the website, social media platforms and keeping in touch with our audience and supporters through online mechanisms. Although Madeleine is only with us one day each week, already we are excited about the possibilities this role affords the Music Performance Unit. Welcome to them both!

Quartet makes the final round



Congratulations to Australia Ensemble pianist and leading composer Ian Munro, whose *String Quartet*

no.1 'from an exhibition of Australian woodcuts' has been selected as one of three finalists in the New Works Competition of the Villiers Quartet. The quartet, based at Oxford University, will perform these works live in the final round on May 27 at 7pm GMT (which is May 28 at 4am EST!) - the concert will be streamed live, and the audience will vote for the winner.

For more details and to support Ian in this competition, visit www.villiersquartet.com/competition2016

A view from the risers

Back in my days as an undergraduate student at UNSW, I had the pleasure of being a member of the Collegium Musicum Choir (CMC). The Choir was in its infancy (I joined in its third year), it numbered between 40-50 singers, and was led by Dr Patricia Brown. Our performances were conducted by Patricia's husband Professor Roger Covell.

We rehearsed each week in an old army building, constructed as a 'temporary' building during World War II. It was cold in winter and very hot in summer, it was pretty basic, but we enjoyed rehearsing there, as we explored great choral pieces together. This was a defining time for music at UNSW – regular concerts were being scheduled, a chamber opera company and vocal ensembles were inaugurated, the Australia Ensemble was established in 1980, and eventually the UNSW Orchestra and Wind Symphony. It was exciting to be part of this creative activity. The choir was gaining in its reputation, and was receiving good reviews.

Now fast forward quite a few years to 2010, when I returned to UNSW as a member of staff in the UNSW legal office. UNSW had changed so much from my student days, the campus was almost unrecognisable in parts, the number of students and staff had grown dramatically, the pace was more hectic and the number of courses on offer had mushroomed (there were even degrees in Music!). While coming to terms with this bewildering change, I re-joined CMC, and experienced a strong sense of déjà vu. Despite the passage of time, the choir still focuses on great choral music, it still rehearses on Wednesdays at the same time for three hours, it still holds three performances a year in the same venue, and the choir continues to partner with the fantastic Handbell Ensemble for Christmas concerts.

There have been changes of course. The number of singers has increased significantly, including a large number of international UNSW students. I have a sense that life for the average undergraduate student is more demanding now than was the case in the pre-digital, fee-free days at UNSW. It can be a challenge for students to find time for extra-curricular activities on campus. I have great admiration for current student members of CMC, who give generously of their time to enthusiastically participate in their choir, producing performances of a high quality.

Our current leader, Sonia Maddock, (UNSW's Director of Music, Art and Culture) is inspirational. Sonia brings high

standards and enthusiasm to the role. The choir is a large and diverse group, and goes through a major change of membership every 12 months as graduates move on. At our weekly rehearsals Sonia melds us into a professional ensemble, and does so with humour and good will. She provides us with an education in the choral tradition and choral technique. Sonia also conducts the orchestral rehearsals and the ultimate performances, instilling in



Alan Melrose (left) is a member of the Collegium Musicum Choir and works in the Legal Office of UNSW. He first performed with the CMC as a student, as in this 1979 performance conducted by Roger Covell (Alan is in the back row, fifth from the left)

us a sense of pride in the achievement. Our Operations Coordinator, Yvette Goodchild, is also a great asset to CMC, ensuring that all the necessary detail and preparation are attended to with good grace and professionalism, as a vital part of the overall team effort.

CMC is a great way for students, staff and community members to meet people with similar musical interest and to enjoy some fun together. A recent study in the UK found that people singing in choirs report significantly higher psychological well-being than solo singers. And choristers feel their choirs to be more meaningful social groups than, for example, football players consider their teams. In the end, it's all about a sense of community being forged with a group of people who share a common interest, whether it be sport, music or any other worthwhile activity. CMC does it for me.

Alan Melrose

The Collegium Musicum Choir will perform Handel's Messiah on Sunday May 29 at 5pm in the Sir John Clancy Auditorium, with the Collegium Musicum Orchestra led by Dene Olding.