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**the
firm**

**series
2000**

concert five

strings and piano

The Langbein String Quartet

with Leigh Harrold

and Margaret Blades

The Langbein String Quartet

Nicholas Milton

Michael Milton

Juris Ezergailis

Sarah Denbigh

with guest artists

Leigh Harrold, piano

Margaret Blades, violin

programme

j s bach

Largo from the F minor Keyboard

Concerto BWV 1056

quentin sd grant

Sky and Vertigo

john polglase

Quartet for violin, viola, cello and piano

short interval

david kotlowy

Piano and String Quartet

raymond chapman smith

Quartet for Piano, Violin, Viola and Violincello

johannes brahms

Finale from Piano Quartet in G minor, op.25

alla zingarese

Quentin SD Grant

Sky and Vertigo (2000)

A total rewriting of a piece originally for cello and recorder and very influenced by Eastern European Orthodox music. What's it about? - the tenuous grasp we have on our brief lives, the continual sense of loss that stays with us till our last breath? - I don't quite know: let's ask our resident French philosophers:

"A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilising, calm and stable, centre in the heart of chaos. Perhaps the child skips as he sings, hastens or slows his pace. But the song itself is already a skip; it jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos and is in danger of breaking apart at any moment."

(Deleuze and Guattari : 'A Thousand Plateaus')

John Polglase

Quartet for violin, viola, cello and piano

I. Adagio ma non tanto, quasi tristo.

II Adagio deliberato. Pesante minaccevole.

The composition of this two movement work began in 1998 during a three month residency in Switzerland thanks to a Fellowship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. While in Zürich my host was a woman of great culture and generosity who provided me with board, lodging and use of her well appointed music studio. It was on her Pleyel grand piano that the bulk of the first movement was written and as a result it reflects a very pianistic style, acting almost as a small concertino for piano and strings. It is also a homage of sorts to a tradition, long dormant, of a soloistic style of pianism for which I have an affection and respect but which suffers from a 'fashionable' neglect. It is the tradition exemplified by music from the early part of this century, of composers such as Prokofiev who are, in my opinion, long overdue for serious revival.

The second movement also contains elements of this idea, particularly in the explosive gestures of the opening but is, on the whole, much more of an ensemble piece. It is 'through composed' with ideas that, while unified by harmonic and fragmentary motives, flow from one to the next with little surface reference to each other. Following the rising string scales and supporting piano chords which open the second main section

(marked *Pesante minaccevole* or 'heavy and menacing') the 'cello dominates with an intense and melodic solo which is taken up first by the violin and then by the whole ensemble before it dissolves away to become almost static. A new section (marked *stridente, ben ritmato*) acts as a bridge into the odd, almost lop sided dance-like finale which is the only part of the work which has anything like a development before the *pesante* returns as a coda to round the whole work off.

One feature of this piece which I found a little bemusing while I was composing it is that, despite the many tempo directions used in the second movement there is only one metronome mark from the *pesante* to the end.

This work is dedicated to Beate Schnitter in gratitude for her friendship and generous hospitality.

David Kotlowy

Piano and String Quartet (2000)

This piece develops an investigation into the interval of a fifth that began with the 'Piano Quartet' of 1999. At least now, the relationship is clearer – a perfect fifth for five players. The title refers to Feldman's 1985 piano quintet, and indicates the contrasting approach to the material by instruments of both ensembles.

Both compositions are concerned with physicality and immediacy of sound. In Feldman's composition, the piano plays isolated arpeggios, while the strings primarily sustain chords. In my substantially shorter piece, the piano approaches each pitch from a neighbouring semitone; the strings brush each pitch with microtonal nuances. As with Feldman's music, reiteration is always changing and things that change always seem the same.

The performers offhandedly suggested that the piece have a Japanese name; so from my limited vocabulary I have chosen *unsui* – "cloud-water". Because of their virtuous attributes, images of clouds and water are found in many temples throughout the Far East. Clouds move freely, forming and reforming in response to the conditions affecting them. Water is yielding but all-conquering. Piano & String Quartet may suggest the gentle, non-torrential, attributes of clouds and water.

Raymond Chapman Smith

Quartet for Piano, Violin, Viola and Violincello

This music was completed on the 15th of September, the central day in my private musical calendar. There are three movements:

I. *Molto moderato*

II. *Lento - poco animato - lento - molto lento - lento - poco animato - lento - lentissimo*

III. *Tranquillamente mosso - poco piu lento - Tranquillamente mosso*

The **Langbein String Quartet** is an invention of the Firm, in recognition of the late Brenton Langbein - violinist of international repute; friend and mentor to many South Australian composers and musicians, and a composer whose works we are just beginning to appreciate.

Brenton was a great advocate for new music and the Langbein Quartet will focus on the performance of recent compositions alongside quartets by some of Australia's senior composers and a necessary sprinkling of pieces from the broader repertoire.

The establishment of this ensemble is also an acknowledgement of the leading Adelaide Symphony players who we have been privileged to work with in recent years.

Leigh Harrold is a first-class honours graduate of the Elder Conservatorium where he is currently a postgraduate award recipient studying for a Masters degree in Piano Performance under Gil Sullivan. His awards include the Patrick Cecil Greenland Scholarship for Piano, the 1998 and 2000 Geoffrey Parsons Memorial Award for Associate Artists and first prize in the Elder Conservatorium 1999 Classical Music Awards. He is the recipient of two university medals - one for Applied Science and one for Music. He performs regularly in Adelaide as both soloist and chamber musician, records for ABC-FM, and is a well respected teacher and accompanist.

Margaret Blades is Associate Concert Master of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and is widely regarded as one of Australia's leading instrumentalists through her many and varied appearances in chamber ensembles and as a concerto soloist.

About the Players of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

An orchestra's place in its community extends much further than the concerts it presents: it is an integral part of the fabric of a town's cultural life. Adelaide's orchestra enjoys a much closer integration with its community than many other orchestras do. The interaction ranges from the highly-visible participation in large-scale community celebrations to activities such as those of The Firm, where public profile is not so much the issue.

Over a period of years Adelaide's active and wonderfully self-motivated community of composers have drawn on the members of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra to help in the realisation of their works, building, un-selfconsciously, a long-term collaboration that has become a fantastic little tradition.

The benefits are mutual: as well as airing the works of local composers the musicians also develop their skills as chamber musicians and interpreters of contemporary music. What's more, they enjoy the music-making and the discovery of new music.

James Koehne, Artistic Administrator
Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

acknowledgments

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