

THE FIRM

SERIES 2001

David Kofsky
Ascending Afterglow

Graeme Kohne
Divertimento Trois Pièces Boléro-like

Concert three

Langbein String Quartet

Langbein String Quartet

Nicholas Milton violin 1

Michael Milton violin 2

Juris Ezergailis viola

Sarah Denbigh cello

MONDAY AUGUST 27, 2001

Raymond Chapman Smith
String Quartet No.4

Quentin S.D. Grant
String Quartet No.2

SHORT INTERVAL

David Kotlowy
Ascending Afterglow

Graeme Koehne
Divertissement: Trois Pièces Bourgeoises

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 acknowledgment of the commitment and superb musicianship of the leading Adelaide Symphony Orchestra players with whom we have been privileged to work with in recent years.

Raymond Chapman Smith
String Quartet No.4 (2001)

Adagio ma non troppo
Presto
Andante con moto, ma non troppo
Allegro assai
Adagio molto espressivo
Allegro

My Fourth Quartet, completed in July, is based on material closely related to the central motives of its predecessor. Where the earlier piece was essentially hieratic and restrained, several of the new work's six short movements attempt a slightly more playful, "scherzo" character that is a further product of my continuing fascination with the "divertimento" origins of this marvellous medium.

Rather than making any reference to the developing, tonally dependent, sonata structures of the High Classical quartet, I was concerned to find some sort of formal hybrid of suite and variation form.

The scherzi in this piece also suggested an opportunity for an attempted concert portrayal, particularly in the third movement, of some of the enjoyably frenetic and high-spirited mischief that is such a frequent feature of the Langbein/composer rehearsal process.

Quentin S.D. Grant
String Quartet No.2 (2001)

Andante/Leggiero
Adagio
Andante/Presto
Allegro

Why write a string quartet in the age of the Internet? It is a question that, of course, we are continually conscious of, with the fashions of the age flowing against us. To me the question is analogous to "Why write a novel?" or, "Why paint a picture?" in the age of comic books and film. For me the answer is that these older forms – the novel, the chamber music work, the poem – can delve deeper, can foster a conversation that goes beyond the trivial and the current to include the most profound ideas of not only the modern age but of the past several hundred years. That is my interest in the medium – to not only converse with the audience and with my contemporaries, but also (as one-sided as this conversation may be) with those minds that have gone before: the great composers, writers and artists. This level of connection with a wide range of ideas – and I feel this deeply – does not seem to be possible at this time in the new forms of the new media. So, until a better medium for complex, flexible and interesting musical conversation comes along here is another string quartet.

David Kotlowy
Ascending Afterglow (2001)

This composition continues an investigation into the pitch rows of Schoenberg's *Klavierstück*, Op.33 that I began earlier this year with of *shade to light*. Here, the twelve-note row from Opus 33a is cast into semi-static cells that emphasise a range of sonorities and tonalities inherent within it. The seemingly static cells contain interior movement; "You never step into the same river twice, for fresh waters are always flowing in upon you." Cycles of prime numbers – seven, eleven and thirteen – ebb and flow through the work, governing the rhythmic structure of the pitch cells. The players must work hard at getting nowhere.

With the strong compositional processes in place, I was surprised by the resemblance to musical sibling rivalry in the violin writing. This notion is also supported by the viola and cello parts that mostly avoid the violins' dissension.

Graeme Koehne
Divertissement:
Trois Pièces Bourgeoises (1983)

Despite its air of unashamed pleasantry, *Divertissement* for string quartet dates from a period of radical questioning and change for its composer. The score for the ballet *The Selfish Giant* was a turning point; the process of its writing brought Koehne into much closer familiarity with the music of, in particular, Maurice Ravel. As well as drawing him into a musical language that seemed immediately relevant to his personal aesthetic, making a virtue of tenderness, elegance and simplicity, Koehne's study of Ravel also revealed a compositional approach firmly based in a sense of community. Living in the New South Wales town of Armidale at the time and teaching at the University of New England, Koehne was commissioned for the opening of the New England Regional Art Museum. He resumed the style and language he had developed for *The Selfish Giant* and put it to use for the three short movements that he composed for the occasion. Both reinforcing the Gallic roots of its style and its deliberate lack of grandiose aspirations, the piece's title frankly signals its intention as a musical 'diversion', provided in the spirit of an offering for the delight of his fellow citizens. *Divertissement* was first performed by the New England String Quartet in January 1983.

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