

THE FIRM
2020
CONCERT 2

The Firm's annual concert seasons
are conceived, programmed, curated and directed by
composers Quentin Grant and Raymond Chapman Smith.

The Firm was founded in 1996.

This is our 128th concert.

“Music is the one incorporeal entrance into the higher world of
knowledge which comprehends mankind but which mankind
cannot comprehend.”

Ludwig van Beethoven

Elder Hall provides wheelchair access via the side (eastern) doors.

Toilets can be accessed in the foyer.

Parking: can be accessed in the University car park to the east of
Bonython hall.

SEP 21st 2020

The Firm

presents

Konstantin Shamray

Belinda Gehlert

Pandora's Box

Luke Altmann

Idle Hands

Quentin Grant

Preludes

Beethoven

Sonata No. 6 in F major, Op.10 No.2

- Short interval -

Stephen Whittington

Le Tombeau de Satie

John Polglase

**Variations on a Czech Folksong
"Andulko"**

*Commissioned by Olga and Tom Sankey in
memory of Vera Marek*

Raymond Chapman Smith **Fantasien**

Robert Schumann

Waldszenen (selections)

Belinda Gehlert

Pandora's Box, Opening Titles

In 2019 I was commissioned by the Mercury Cinema to re-compose the sound-track to the 1929 silent film "Pandora's Box" as part of the 'Silent Remasters' Program.

With its queer themes and feminist ideals this film was way ahead of its time.

This piece is an excerpt from the title sequence and first act.



Louise Brooks in *Die Büchse der Pandora*

Luke Altmann

Idle Hands

- I Idyll
- II Crosscurrents
- III The Right Environment
- IV Sprite Mockery
- V Berceuse

Take the Jervois Bridge west to the coast. Take it east to Port Adelaide, where at dawn I sit riverside with a composer.

His silence differs from mine; the stillness ripe. Hums and murmurs play at the rim of the void. Always the seeds of a theme – in the sun's horizontal ray, in a red-glazed hull, in the gull's croak and a bluing sky.

My hands are cold. I stuff them into my coat pockets and attempt to conceive how for my friend colour is not only colour, it is pitch. Form is rhythm, and contour melody. I would ask him again about Hesse, Mann, and Woolf; about Oskar Matzerath (albeit I suspect he has yet to make young Oskar's acquaintance); about the nine circles, and the white whale. His rapture, though, is too precious. So I think back to our once taking tea and cake, the unplayed piano and the blank score near; a child's crayon abstraction; slanting books like a line of toppling dominoes frozen; commingled accounts of history and the blurred present; of serialist phrasings and if on a winter's night a traveller...

Over a bass still fleshless, still grumbling five fathoms deep: a warm, held note. Viola? Clarinet? Or just an angled streak of orange, across this firmament clinging to its indigo stain. How many octaves must be scaled before a fitting complement is met? And where between them does the lean melody weave? Into which clouds will it plummet? Through what echoing grottos will it creep?

Now the all too perceivable din of a broken, dissonant chord; all the spacious vault filled with clamour; a rainbow come unknit, seven score stripes dyed black and sent clanking off the walls of a great glass cube. Overcome, I quake at the uproar, even as it somehow morphs into a human voice, harsh yet elegant, issuing from a strangely dressed man – a foreigner, if that word spoke more of era than place. He has joined us on the bench. When and by what surreptitious means did he arrive?

"Greetings, gentlemen. How crisp the air of this newborn day! Admirably quiet, the two of you, for now, at least; save, that is, for a tune rippling; a landless, time-unmoored anthem. I remember it...yes; though I must call on some daybreak plucked from the millennium before last, when it pulsed across the arcade, swooping the arches and circling the fountain's crystalline jet. True, for a moment even that rank stench emanating from the rose garden was quelled!"

Succeeding the foreigner's address, there comes a lilting, mellifluous line, seemingly blown in on the gust that shakes free the yellowed leaves. They sprinkle the ground about us. I am lost (for how long?) in this honeyed strain, until turning again to the mysterious newcomer, for I wish to ask him whether he knows, too, this sweeter phrase, this euphony bringing all into balance. The composer remains, eyes closed and faraway, navigating a jungle of tones, intervals, and cadences; but there is no one else.

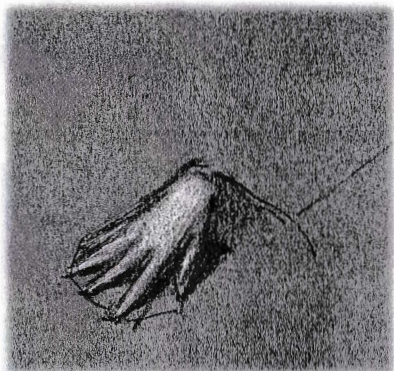
So on this the fifteenth morning of autumn's closing moon, I leave my friend to his work, and take the Jervois Bridge west.

At the height of its gentle arc I pause. That same, alien accent...it should not be audible from such a range. Looking back, I see the composer unmoved on the bench, the stranger beside him again.

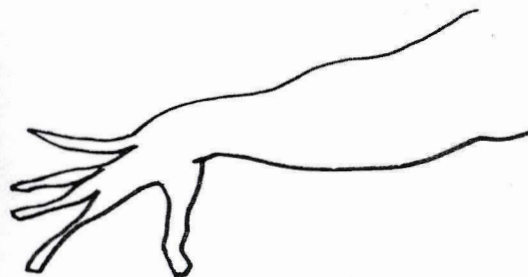
"...Yes, a most regrettable injustice, some thought it. He even healed the

Procurator's hemisrania, I believe. Anyhow, you know all this, I'm sure! Let me keep you no longer, for I am not one to badger the invisibly occupied. Lest mischief unbridled sweep the land, lest centuries be razed and noonday skies turned crimson, one's paws must be kept busy, no?"

Michael Hocking
Winter, 2020



Michael Hocking *Study of a Hand (detail)*



Arm and Hand



Crouching Man

Quentin Grant

Preludes (selections)

The Season of Phantasmal Peace

Derek Walcott

Then all the nations of birds lifted together
the huge net of the shadows of this earth
in multitudinous dialects, twittering tongues,
stitching and crossing it. They lifted up
the shadows of long pines down trackless slopes,
the shadows of glass-faced towers down evening streets,
the shadow of a frail plant on a city sill—
the net rising soundless as night, the birds' cries soundless, until
there was no longer dusk, or season, decline, or weather,
only this passage of phantasmal light
that not the narrowest shadow dared to sever.

And men could not see, looking up, what the wild geese drew,
what the ospreys trailed behind them in silvery ropes
that flashed in the icy sunlight; they could not hear
battalions of starlings waging peaceful cries,
bearing the net higher, covering this world
like the vines of an orchard, or a mother drawing
the trembling gauze over the trembling eyes
of a child fluttering to sleep;

it was the light
that you will see at evening on the side of a hill
in yellow October, and no one hearing knew
what change had brought into the raven's cawing,
the killdeer's screech, the ember-circling chough
such an immense, soundless, and high concern
for the fields and cities where the birds belong,
except it was their seasonal passing, Love,
made seasonless, or, from the high privilege of their birth,
something brighter than pity for the wingless ones
below them who shared dark holes in windows and in houses,
and higher they lifted the net with soundless voices
above all change, betrayals of falling suns,
and this season lasted one moment, like the pause
between dusk and darkness, between fury and peace,
but, for such as our earth is now, it lasted long.

Ludwig van Beethoven**Sonata No. 6 in F major, Op.10 No.2
(1804)**

Allegro
Allegretto
Presto

**Stephen Whittington****Le Tombeau de Satie****John Polglase****Variations on a Czech Folksong
"Andulko"**

*Commissioned by Olga and Tom Sankey in
memory of Vera Marek*

I enjoy very much writing variations, particularly when the inspiration comes from direct and simple sources. Truly effective simplicity is, I believe, the most difficult thing any artist can strive for and this work takes its source from that almost infinite wealth of effective simplicity; the European folk song.

The simple, clear lines of this little Czech melody are given greater dimension as it was a favourite of Vera Marek, a music loving immigrant to Australia and mother to Olga, who would often sing it, together with other folk songs from home with her family. When Olga and Tom approached me to compose something to celebrate the memory of Vera it was an obvious choice to take one of her favourite songs and set it in this fashion. It is actually one of several Czech folk songs with the 'Andulko' in the title and its otherwise direct, diatonic tonality is given a modal colour in the accompaniment chosen. This minor phrygian inflection is the only liberty taken in the subject. There are plenty of liberties to be found in the succeeding set of ten variations.

Andulko, my child, I really fancy you,
Andulko, my child, I do love you.
Village people don't want me to follow you everywhere,
village people don't want me to go to your home.
Andulko, my child, I really fancy you,
Andulko, my child, I do love you.

Raymond Chapman Smith Fantasien

- | | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| I | Allegretto, quasi andante |
| II | Allegretto |
| III | Adagio cantabile |
| IV | Vivace assai |
| V | Andante con moto |
| VI | Moderato e sostenuto |
| VII | Allegro, ma non troppo |
| VIII | Allegretto, grazioso e con moto |
| IX | Andante, quasi allegretto |
| X | Con moto leggiermente |
| XI | Andante teneramente |
| XII | Allegro molto e con brio |

When light seeks union with a body, it will choose one which is completely transparent.

But you much attach yourself lovingly to that which is translucent and opaque.

For when that which is most opaque of all stands between you and the sun, you will see a splendid rapture of purple.

And when light seeks to break free of what is most opaque, it will kindle a glowing red.

And as the opacity evaporates and vanishes, the red pales to the brightest yellow.

When at last the air is pure and clear, the light is white, as it was at the beginning.

When a milky grey stands in front of the darkness, and the sun illuminates it, it becomes blue.

On mountains, in the purest heights, deep reddish-blue is nearness to heaven.

You look in amazement at this royal splendour, and at once the night is black as velvet.

And thus, in perpetual peace, darkness remains separated from light.

To say that they can conflict with each other is sheer foolishness.

They conflict with the world of bodies, which holds them perpetually apart.

Goethe, Farbenlehre Epigramme

Robert Schumann

**Waldszenen *Forest Scenes* (selections)
Op. 82 (1849)**



Patrons with a meal-ticket are invited to join us after the concert for carefully served complimentary wines from Firm sponsor Karland Estate, and a packet of hermetically sealed nibbles.

Please join our email list to be informed of all Firm events and concerts: send an email with 'subscribe' to:

info@firmmusic.com.au

Next concert:

Michael Ierace, solo piano

October tba

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