

# chamber music concert 4

featuring

michael milton violin

hilary bruer-jones violin

juris ezergailis viola

jaqueline curiel cello

programme

quentin sd grant

*String Quartet 1*

raymond chapman smith

*String Quartet*

david kotlowy

*x patterns*

john polglase

*Three Pieces for String Quartet*

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The South Australian Department  
for the Arts  
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Thank you for your patronage throughout 1996.  
In 1997 we plan a series of four concerts with a  
variety of ensembles - we hope to see you there.

**quentin sd grant**  
***String Quartet 1***

(Dedicated, in gratitude, to Juris Ezergailis and Jacqueline Curiel)

1. Adagio espressivo
2. Sostenuto espressivo
3. Allegro

The string quartet is one of the supreme mediums for composers in the western art-music tradition. It is a combination with an amazing history of development and repertoire, from Hayden and Beethoven through to Bartok. In the middle of writing this piece I was given a set of recordings of the late Beethoven quartets by a close friend, and I made the mistake of revisiting them. If you do not know the works, please listen to them - they stand as one of the great achievements of western culture, perfect in form and content, full and rich in meaning and execution. In listening to their lightness and mobility, their fluid grace and weightless elocution I felt earthbound and heavy in my efforts to write for the medium. Every movement that I made seemed gross and contrived, every articulation stilted and clumsy in comparison to the perfection of the Beethoven. It was an awkward diversion - I had to disregard what I had heard, and journey on, building up my little evocation of a world, heavily indebted to the 19th century *fin de siecle* composers, that seemed so inferior to LvB's. Here it is.

**raymond chapman smith**  
***String Quartet***

1. Allegro vivace
2. Adagio sostenuto
3. Scherzo (Presto) - Trio (Comodo)
4. Allegretto vivace

Mr Cavalouski had a Ph.D. in pure maths but we only knew him as Mr. He'd come here, shortly after WWII, to a country which had the blissful



arrogance not to recognise his qualifications.

He'd driven a bus for ten years - become requalified and risen to the quiet, Kafkaesque purgatory of teaching mathematics to snotty teenage boys. Mr Cavalouski had a Ph.D. in pure maths and was a cultivated man - he loved fine music, especially chamber music and so, when he found a slightly demented 16 year old boy fervently writing string quartets in the far left-hand back corner of his Wednesday afternoon double maths period, Mr Cavalouski was quietly pleased - pleased enough to leave me to it all year, with never a word spoken, just the occasional conspiratorial, gnostic trace of a grin as he passed on his rounds, reassured that string quartet production was continuing, unabated in that high, light, convict-built room. Thankfully I have little recollection of what all those quartets were like - I just remember that they had to finish when the manuscript book ran out. There were a lot of those small, oblong, smudgy lined books.

A respected musical elder had told me that string quartets were the hardest thing to write so I'd thought I'd better get started and gradually, with Mr Cavalouski's licence and my weekly purchase of each one of Beethoven's quartet scores -in reverse order of composition - I began to discover just how difficult it was to compose a string quartet.

During the past decade I've written, and had performed, three, reasonably weighty, single movement quartets but with this new work I felt it was time to do a "real" quartet with four "proper" movements, making as much use as I could of this very special medium's unique contrapuntal sonority and its rich ambience of repertoire memory.

I worked at the piece throughout October - a lot of it in and around my attendance at what seemed like several thousand Barossa Festival concerts - the quartet became a kind of post concert and review writing recreation.

To prepare for this piece I went into training at the wonderful source of Haydn's early quartets, especially the opus 9 and 20 sets, with their brittle, bright sound and endless invention. They were, I discovered toward the end of my school days, favourites of Dr Cavalouski, which may further explain his subtle sense of mischievous collaboration.

david kotlowy

### *x patterns*

Perhaps I should state at the outset that the piece has nothing to do with the television series The X-Files. Rather, the title is a pun on Morton Feldman's 1978 composition Why Patterns? Surprisingly, this composition is not the quiet, austere piece one might expect, given my track record and the Feldman connection. Indeed, *x patterns* ventures to exclude the percussion accompaniment that so many of my other compositions allow for - the sound of life (which unfortunately is mostly produced by passing traffic).

Rather than simply fulfilling my desire to pun, the title also alludes to the techniques and structures used within the composition. As *x* is the Roman numeral for ten, I have used that number as a rhythmic framework. A ten-quaver unit is divided into cells of two and three, from which rhythmic patterns are then formed: e.g. 2+2+3+3 and 2+2+3+2+3+3+2+3. (The second pattern, a total of twenty quavers, might also be obtained if *x* is used as the symbol of multiplication:  $10 \times 2 = 20$ ).

The violins establish the harmonic centre upon the twenty-quaver pattern. It is a non-functional harmony, woven and developed within a variety of interlocking figures and embellishments. Melodic structures then unfold within the established rhythmic pattern. Viola and cello lines are successively constructed by replacing cells containing rests with note-filled ones. The melodic cells are developed into rising scale patterns that generate both visual and aural counterpoint.

As it was my intention to keep the relationship - the pattern - between harmony and rhythm explicit, the greater part of the piece emerges as an unfolding process, rather than



grand, emotive statements.

(I do not however, allow this process to unfold for a ten minute duration. Still, I do believe I have an x-lent pun, for Xmas not Easter, and so I wish all a happy and safe festive season. Love and kisses, xxx....

**john polglase**

### ***Three Pieces for String Quartet***

- I. Ostinato
- II. Adagio
- III. Sonata scherzando

I sketch a lot.

Most of these sketches are reduced to ash or are 'zeroed'.

Some of those that survive end up as string quartet movements.

This piece is made up of three of the more successful ones.

The *Ostinato* is reactionary, composed during and after working as a copyist on a particularly ugly and aggressive composition.

The *Adagio* is an exercise in dramatic writing for strings.

The *Sonata scherzando* is composed as a lunatic interplay and utilises one of my favourite forms - the sonata style of Alessandro Scarlatti, one of the greatest keyboard writers.

### ***the performers***

The composers are very happy to be collaborating with this fine group of instrumentalists.

**Michael Milton**, originally from Sydney, studied in the United States and is now, with his appointment to the ASO, happily based in Adelaide. He has a morbid desire to have a cat named Dusty.

**Hilary Bruer-Jones** studied in Adelaide, completing her degree with the Swedish violinist Gunner Crantz. After stints with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the West Australian Symphony Orchestra she returned to Adelaide to take up a permanent position in the ASO.

**Juris Ezergailis** is Principal Viola of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and of the Adelaide Chamber Orchestra. He has had a long association with new music in Australia and has been responsible for the premiering of countless new works.

**Jacqueline Curiel** has played with the ASO and ACO for many years, and appeared as soloist in the recent ACO *New Perspectives* concert playing a work by John Polglase. She has worked in a wide variety of chamber music combinations, playing repertoire pieces and premiering many new works. Her immediate aspiration is to get a larger feline than that of Mr Milton.



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