

# LANGBEIN STRING QUARTET

David Miloway

Violin

viola

Raymond Chapman Smith

String Quartet No 2

Nicholas Milton

Michael Milton

Julie Espartero

Barth Candiga

INTERVAL

John Polglass

from String Quartet No 2

Quentin S.D. Grant

Three Places on Themes of Schubert

Franz Schubert

Quartett für Violin, Viola, Violoncello und Kontrabaß

## THE FIRM

SERIES 2002

**LANGBEIN STRING QUARTET**

Nicholas Milton	violin 1
Michael Milton	violin 2
Juris Ezergailis	viola
Sarah Denbigh	cello

**MONDAY OCTOBER 14, 2002**

**David Kotlowy**

Renga

**Raymond Chapman Smith**

String Quartet No.5

INTERVAL

**John Polglase**

from String Quartet No.3

**Quentin S.D. Grant**

Three Pieces on Themes of Schubert

**Franz Schubert**

Quartettsatz c-moll D.703

## David Kotlowy

### Renga

Renga is the linked verse form that has been popular in Japan from the earliest literate times. As a parlor game, one poet would write a verse of seventeen syllables, divided into groups of five, seven and five syllables. Another poet would then have to cap that with a verse of fourteen syllables, divided into two groups of seven syllables.

The object of this single, thirty-one syllable poem was extended in the fifteenth century by poets who became renga masters. A third poet would add another verse of seventeen syllables that would be linked to the first two in poetical intention. A fourth poet would cap that, and so on. The poem could extend to hundreds or even a thousand verses that were linked with associations shared by the participants, and the movement in imagery, intention and implication would, when successful, be fulfilling for all the poets involved. (A similar venture is undertaken when a composer writes a piece on the theme of another.)

The notion of linked segments and patterns is central to my quartet, a caprice. Although something of an aberration in my output, I feel the lively, light flavour of the caprice complements the somewhat frivolous origins of the poetic form. The composition's rhythmic structure follows clear patterns of five and seven, and phrases of seventeen and fourteen units. The pattern idea is embellished through a hocket-like weaving of two- and three-note groups across the instrumental lines.

My pitch structure is a twelve-tone row composed by chance procedures. The notes of the row are slowly revealed through the linked rhythmic forms. The use of chance may be compared to the poetic challenge of capping verses; "How can the previous idea develop with *these* pitches and in *this* rhythm?"

Of personal significance is the use of chance and the borrowing of the piece's title as cryptic references to composer John Cage, a modest homage in the ninetieth anniversary of his birth and tenth anniversary of his dying.



## **Raymond Chapman Smith**

### **String Quartet No.5**

Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo

Allegro molto vivace

Allegro moderato

Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Presto

Adagio quasi un poco andante

Allegro

My fifth quartet concludes a set of three, condensed works, each based on closely related variants of a four-note motive from the heart of the quartet canon. The seven, brief movements of Quartet V are continuous and most easily read as a set of contrasting variations which arrive at a compressed, polyphonic straightening (stretto) of the essential material from this work and its two predecessors. The brittle, spare sound of this music is, in part, my response to the prototypical quartet sound of Haydn's Opus 1 and 2 Divertimenti.

The overarching poetic impetus for this trilogy of quartets was, however, visual rather than musical, deriving from my first acquaintance with "Der Inferner Park" - the remarkable, and little known, suite of sixteen "baroque" drawings which Paul Klee completed in 1939 - works which inhabit a region somewhere between pure abstraction and a deeply expressive but always elusive and mysteriously organic figuration.

## **John Polglase**

### **from String Quartet No.3**

#### **Fourth Movement: Variations on a Theme of Quentin S. D. Grant**

Theme: poco andante, dolente

Quasi scherzando

Grave

Giocoso

Tranquillo e semplice

Reprise

The fourth movement of my third string quartet (the first two movements were performed by the Langbein Quartet as part of the 2001 Firm series) takes its theme from a small piece by Quincy Grant, from the piano cycle "Meditations and Essays".

I know few composers with a voice as unique as Quincy's who are capable of creative acts so simple and beautiful. Such an act is, I believe, amongst the most difficult things any creative person can strive for, and it is amongst my failings that I so rarely achieve anything close to the inspiration for this movement. Since first hearing this piece at its premiere several years ago I have wanted to base something on it, but the opportunity did not arise until last year.

The theme is deceptively simple, with accompanying fragments orbiting about themselves under an arching modal melody and, as is usual for my treatment of variations, ideas based on it tend to run away under their own momentum. The reprise is a variation in itself, but contains the original, guiding the work to a conclusion.

## **Quentin S.D. Grant**

### **Three Pieces on Themes of Schubert**

In a year in which the Firm has featured Franz Schubert as its 'Posthumous Composer-in-Residence' I have been even more preoccupied with this gentle, melancholy and generous friend than in other years. And as my meager knowledge of music and music-making grows, so does my respect for his work. Long could we talk of his songs and of the profound brevity and directness of his settings, of his feeling for expressing the essence of an idea. That is the word I would most use when talking to you of him - essence - he being the one most able to strip all excess away to reveal the essence of an idea, be it yearning, love, loss, despair, or any other.

I can think of no other who so deals in the essential, in music or any other of the arts. (Let me confide in you: if there is one over-riding ambition I have in my music it is to, in some way, touch the essential). So to finish the year I have once again turned to his music: with three small pieces, each one referring to a different Schubert work.

## **Franz Schubert**

### **Quartettsatz c-moll D.703**

### **Quartet Movement in C minor D.703**

#### **Allegro assai**

The so-called Quartettsatz, a single Allegro movement in C minor, was composed in December, 1820. There are significant sketches for a second movement but the Allegro, on its own, has become familiar as Schubert's chamber music "Unfinished". A long way from the numerous "domestic" quartets he had completed up to 1816, the Quartettsatz is one of his most intense and assured "false starts" - an essential prelude and transition to the great triptych of quartets that was to come in 1824.



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.

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