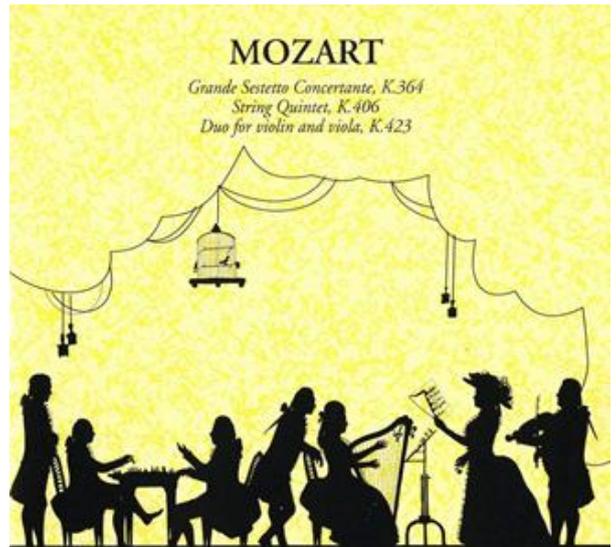




UNIVERSITY OF
THE THIRD AGE

Benalla & District Inc.



Programme Notes
22nd October,
2021



About Today's Music Selections



Douglas Lilburn - Aotearoa Overture

In Māori, Aotearoa,

ao = cloud, tea = white and roa = long,

"the land of the long white cloud".

Douglas Lilburn was born in Wanganui, New Zealand, in 1915. He attended Waitaki Boys' High School from 1930 to 1933, before moving to Christchurch to study at Canterbury University College (1934-6). In 1937 he began studying at the Royal College of Music, London. He was tutored in composition by Ralph Vaughan Williams and remained at the College until 1939.

He returned to New Zealand in 1940 and was guest conductor in Wellington for three months with the NBS String Orchestra. He shifted to Christchurch in 1941 and worked as a freelance composer and teacher until 1947. Between 1946 and 1949 and again in 1951, Lilburn was Composer-in-Residence at the Cambridge Summer Music Schools. The manuscript score of Douglas Lilburn's 'Overture Aotearoa' was written for orchestra and premiered in 1940, part of an event to celebrate the centenary of the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.



The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document. It takes its name from the place in the Bay of Islands where it was first signed, on 6 February 1840. This day is now a public holiday in New Zealand. The Treaty is an agreement, in Māori and English, that was made between the British Crown and about 540 Māori rangatira (chiefs).



Signing of the Treaty

The Treaty is a broad statement of principles on which the British and Māori made a political compact to found a nation state and build a government in New Zealand. The document has three articles. In the English version, Māori cede the sovereignty of New Zealand to Britain; Māori give the Crown an exclusive right to buy lands they wish to sell, and, in return, are guaranteed full rights of ownership of their lands, forests, fisheries and other

possessions; and Māori are given the rights and privileges of British subjects.

Douglas Lilburn's neo-classical 'Overture: Aotearoa' is rooted firmly in his nationalistic phase. Premiered in London, it made an immediate impression on the first listeners who discerned in its spacious musical ambience, correlations with the solitude and luminosity of New Zealand's landscapes.

Opening with a short, lilting flute solo, it moves through a series of musical tableaux illuminating various features of this country's natural environment. One writer likened its impact to viewing New Zealand for the first time, as early settlers might have done when approaching its coastline after several months at sea.

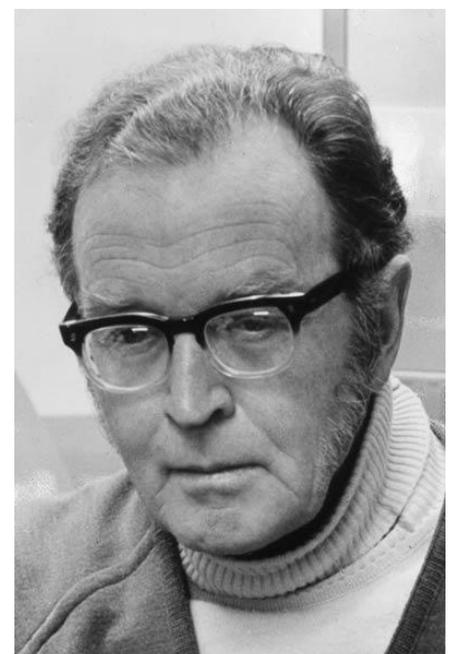


The Overture was premiered at a matinee concert in His Majesty's Theatre, London, on 15 April 1940. The event was planned as a celebration of the New Zealand centenary, and Lilburn's new composition, played by the Sadler's Wells Orchestra under expatriate conductor Warwick Braithwaite, opened the programme. At that time Lilburn was a student in London at the Royal College of Music.

Almost twenty years passed before the first New Zealand public performance of 'Overture Aotearoa', given by the National Orchestra under John Hopkins on 30 March 1960, but the work has since entered the orchestral repertoire in New Zealand, and has been commercially recorded four times.



The recording we hear is by The Christchurch Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Benjamin Northey.



The receiver of honours, citations and numerous awards and prizes, described as "the elder statesman of New Zealand music" and the "grandfather of New Zealand music," Lilburn died peacefully at his home in Wellington on 6 June 2001.

Douglas Lilburn, around 1975

WA Mozart - Grand Sestetto Concertante in E flat major, K364

First of all let's deal with the terminology:

The word **'Grand'** in this context means large or grand in style and expression. **'Sesetto'** is simply Italian for 'Sextet'. A **'Concertante'** is a composition for more than one solo instrument or where prominent instrumental parts are present throughout a piece of music, especially in baroque and early classical compositions.

A **'Sinfonia Concertante'** is a composition for more than one solo instrument and orchestra. Each of these terms is relevant to the development of this work.



This composition dates from the year 1779. At that time the 23-year-old Mozart was chomping at the bit to break free from the restrictions imposed by his employer in Salzburg, the Prince-Archbishop Colloredo. His recent tour westward to Mannheim and Paris had proved of decisive importance; it apparently stirred a desire to experiment with some of the instrumental forms and styles he had been encountering.

One result was the Sinfonia Concertante, a work that bursts with the joy of exploring new instrumental sound combinations and possibilities. It also marks a sort of turning point, in essence

summing up much of what Mozart had achieved to date as an artist. Not long afterward - and in part on account of indulging in such purely pleasurable creative endeavours, at the expense of his duties as court organist - he was summarily dismissed by his boss (as he sardonically puts it in a letter, "with a kick on my arse") and left Salzburg for good to live in Vienna.

As the name indicates, a sinfonia concertante is basically a hybrid between the symphony and the concerto - what, later in the 19th century, in the case of this work would be labelled a double concerto for violin and viola. For many, this piece represents the grandest of Mozart's violin concertos, surpassing the five official



ones. Although it must be said at the same time, that the viola is not exactly playing second fiddle.

It would be nearly 30 years later (1808) that Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante was arranged for six stringed instruments. It is not known who the arranger was, but it wasn't Mozart.

This arrangement was made for two violins, two violas, and two cellos, although one cello may be replaced by a double bass, as in the recording we hear today.

The three movements all have a distinct character. The first movement has the somewhat unusual tempo marking of “Majestic,” but that is just what it is. The second is like a tragic opera duet with two lovers singing passionately to each other. The ebullient finale gives each player the opportunity to show off.

The opening movement is the longest of the three (it lasts for some thirteen or fourteen minutes) due to the extraordinary abundance of ideas and melodies poured into it. Some analysts point out Mozart’s use in this movement of the “Mannheim crescendo” (going from very soft to very loud in a single phrase). The dotted rhythm of the opening bars, as well as the orchestral crescendo at the end of the introduction, to name just two, were both common features of music at Mannheim.

Mozart would have taken note of this spectacular effect practice when on a visit to Mannheim just prior to his composition of this work.



The second movement, an unusually (for Mozart) slow ‘andante’ in the minor key, is said to reflect the unhappiness and even melancholy Mozart was experiencing at the time when employed by the Archbishop of Salzburg, or with the sense of loss in coping with the recent death of his mother (or perhaps both).

With the presto final movement, Mozart’s irrepressibly joyful spirit returns, in a kind of “country dance” finale.

The performance in our recording is given by an ensemble drawn from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra

JS Bach - Musikalisches Opfer (Musical Offering), BWV 1079

The Musikalisches Opfer is a special collection of chamber music within the work of Johann Sebastian Bach, written for Frederick the Great of Prussia. Musikalisches Opfer means ‘a musical offering’, and that is precisely how the collection originated.

It all started in May 1747, when Bach went to Potsdam to visit his son Carl Philipp Emanuel, who was working at the court of Frederick the Great as an overworked and underpaid harpsichordist and chamber musician to the flute-playing monarch. Frederick had been badgering C.P.E. about getting his father, the renowned organist and composer, to make the journey from Leipzig.



When J.S. arrived, Frederick, who had heard that Bach was a great improviser, escorted him through the palace, stopping to have him improvise on each of the keyboard instruments they encountered, and asked him on the spot to improvise a fugue on a given theme.

According to the sources, Bach made a brilliant job of it and showed such enthusiasm about one of these 'royal theme' that he promised to have the fugue engraved 'on copper' and printed. No sooner said than done.

Two months later, Bach published a series of compositions: a trio sonata, a three-part and a six-part ricercar and ten canons, all inspired by the king's theme. Frederick was sent a splendid luxury print and Bach distributed his masterpiece among his friends, despite the high costs of printing.

Incidentally, Bach himself did not call the collection *Musikalisches Opfer*, but rather "Regis Iussu Cantio Et Reliqua Canonica Arte Resoluta" (the theme given by the king, with additions, resolved in canonic style). The initials of this long title form the term RICERCAR a name used at the time for an instrumental piece in which various themes are introduced and imitated.

The title "Regis Iussu Cantio Et Reliqua Canonica Arte Resoluta" translates "Canticles And Other Canons by Order of the King", or, "Theme given by the king's command together with additions resolved in canon style". Bach's Ricercars can be interpreted in two ways: either simply as a notated improvisation or as a response to the question of what is permitted by a fugue.

Because the two ricercars in the *Opfer* could hardly be more different to one another: one in galant style with almost un-Bachian interludes (Ricercar a 3) versus the other one in accordance with the very strictest counterpoint (Ricercar a 6).

Our recording is from the former of the

above (Ricercar a 3) played on the harpsichord by courtesy of the Netherlands Bach Society.



Franz Schubert - Offertorium "Intede Voci", D 963



The final year of Franz Schubert's ill-fated and short life (1828) was perhaps one of the more prolific composition periods for the young composer. Exceeded only by Mozart in the sheer number of final-year compositions, Schubert sealed his place in history as one of the greatest composers with works composed in every form and medium he had used throughout his life, with the exception of opera.

Highlighted works during this time include: The Grand Symphony in C (Jan./Feb.), Miriam's Siegesgesang (Mar.), Mass in Eb (June/July), Schwanengesang (Aug.), Piano Sonatas in C minor, A Major and Bb Major (Sept.) and the String Quintet in C (Oct.).

Composed in Schubert's final moments, Intede voci was penned just a month prior to his death. Perhaps sensing within himself the final moments of his life, Schubert's chosen text was the Psalmist's cry, "Intede voci orationis meae, rex meus et Deus meus. Quoniam ad te orabo, Domine." From the King James Version of the Holy Bible it reads, "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray." (Psalm 5:2)

Written as an Offertory — the first part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist — this prayer would have been presented as offerings were brought forth and laid upon the altar in preparation for the Sacrament.

Offerings would include bread, wine and gifts for the poor and needy.



Was Schubert presenting to God his gift — life works and musical contributions — as he approached Heaven's holy altar? This is of course, unknown; likewise, the exact impetus for composing this work is also concealed. However, it is believed to have been written for the Franciscans at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Alsergrund, Vienna — a church Schubert would have revered as there he attended Beethoven's funeral and bore his coffin.

What is known is that *Intende voci* was conceived during the same time Schubert was composing the Mass in Eb. Also bearing similarity to the Mass in Eb is Schubert's choice of orchestration. The Eb Mass boasts a large orchestra of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, trumpets and horns in pairs, three trombones, timpani, strings, full chorus and five soloists. *Intende voci* scales back utilizing only tenor and oboe as soloists, no trumpets and no timpani. However, for both compositions, the vast size of the orchestration often prohibited performances due to their financial requirements. This offers one suggestion as to why *Intende voci* has remained rather unknown and seldom performed since its inception.



The recording is by the Bozen String Academy together with the Collegium Musicum Bruneck – both from the South Tyrolean region of northern Italy—and the vocal ensemble “Cantus Firmus Surselva” from Grisons, a large province located in the Eastern region of Switzerland.

The conductor is the musical director of “Cantus Firmus Surselva” Clau Scherrer, and the vocal soloist is American operatic tenor Kenneth Tarver

Jean Francaix - Cor Anglais Quartet for English Horn, Violin, Viola and Cello



The cor anglais, or English horn, is a double-reed woodwind instrument in the oboe family. It is approximately one and a half times the length of an oboe, with a bulbous bell and, at the top end, a bent metal crook on which the double reed is placed. Whereas the base pitch of the oboe is that of a woodwind tuned to C, the cor anglais is an F woodwind with a base pitch tuned a perfect fifth lower, to F. How might the oboe and the cor anglais differ from one another structurally?

There is a law that every doubling of the length of the pipe lowers the pitch by one octave. Thus, to lower the pitch from a C to an F (that is, lowered by a perfect fifth), the length of pipe should be 1.5 times as long. There is also a law of woodwind instrument design by which a doubling of the length of the pipe also doubles the cross-sectional area of the bore. The increased bore size also has the effect of altering the tone.

What's in a name? The very name Jean Françaix or to give him his full name - Jean René Désiré Françaix - has an unmistakable lilt to it. That his music would be consonant with the Parisian flair of his name was not exactly ordained, but that it does indeed exemplify that distinctive indifference of the city of light is a happy circumstance.



Born in 1912, Francaix became a neoclassical composer, pianist, and orchestrator, known for his prolific output and vibrant style. A fine pianist, Francaix took a first prize for piano in 1932 while in the class of Isidor Philipp at the Paris Conservatory. The same year, still a composition student of Nadia Boulanger, he composed a Piano Concertino that forthrightly presented his Parisian credentials by revealing – at the tender age of 20 – both a highly developed skill and a distinct musical personality.

Turning a deaf ear to the atonal and 12-tone music that was filling the air at that period, Francaix followed his own muse, composing unproblematic tonal pieces that flourish in gracefulness, freshness, and spontaneity.

Since he was a virtuoso pianist, many of his works feature the piano, particularly his numerous chamber works which he wrote for nearly every orchestral instrument and standard ensemble. He was a skilled orchestrator, which was reflected in his use of tone colours. Francaix wrote the majority of his earlier works for saxophone between the mid 1930s and the early 1960s. He wrote pieces in many of the major large musical forms, including concerti, symphonies, opera, theatre, ballet, and works drawing on traditions falling out of favour in the 20th century, such as the cantata.

Francaix's style is marked by lightness and wit (a stated goal of his was to "give pleasure"), as well as a conversational style of interplay between the musical lines. It changed little throughout his career.

The present Quartet was composed in 1971, a year that saw little else come from the Francaix pen. The unconventional instrumental combination of English horn and strings clearly sparked Francaix' deft inventiveness, which begins in a first movement that doesn't lose a moment in taking off on a cheeky ragtime escapade. The cor anglais is the star of the show in this piece – music that is at once delightfully witty, gorgeously lyrical and quietly reflective. Gliding effortlessly from quiet contemplation to the cheekiest of musical moods, it can't fail to make you smile.



Of the work's five movements, the first, third, and fifth are strictly fun and games - clever, insinuating, and slyly sophisticated. These are set off by a sweetly expressive second movement, in which the plangent quality of the English horn is especially eloquent, and a reflective fourth movement that takes a brief, quasi-serious glance at life in the fast Parisian lane.

The recording for our listening contains three movements performed by an ensemble from The Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Acknowledgment of Sources

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