
Christopher's Classics - Series XXIV 2019

Presents the lively Christchurch ensemble

Les Bons Vivants

Amandine Guerin *violin*

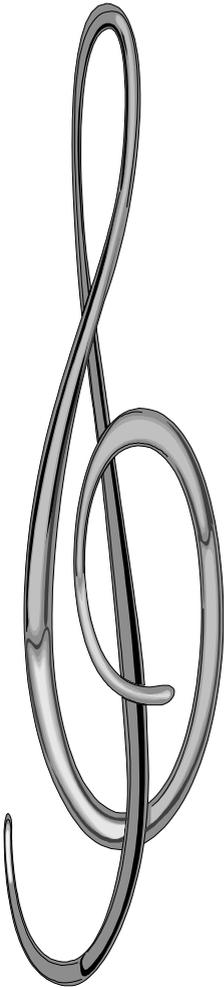
Mark Menzies *violin, viola*

Tomas Hurnik *violoncello*

Helen Webby *harp*

Anthony Ferner *flute*

Jenny Johnson *oboe*



Presented by
Sunday Classics Inc



Elizabeth Ball Trust



Thursday, October 3rd, 2019, 7.30pm
The Piano, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch

The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.

Les Bons Vivants, Thursday 3rd October 2019, at 7.30pm

Chamber music with 'joie de vivre' is the theme of **Les Bons Vivants**, featuring five Christchurch Symphony players: Amandine Guerin *violin*, Tomas Hurnik *cello*, Anthony Ferner *flute* and Helen Webby *harp*. For this concert they are joined by Mark Menzies, Professor of Music at University of Canterbury, playing *violin* and *viola*.

The inspiration for this program came from their desire to play *Shuo Shu Ren (The Storyteller)*, by friend and composer **Gao Ping**. This sextet celebrates the Chinese traditional art of storytelling, and the intensely vivid music takes audiences on a wild journey through Old China. The work is framed by works by **J. C. Bach**, **Mel Powell**, **Jean Francaix**, **Elena Katz-Chernin**, and a premiere by young Canterbury composer **Rosa Elliott**.

We hope this music enhances your mood, aids your digestion, and adds to the spice of life.

Bon Voyage!

Programme:

Johann Christian Bach: Quintet in C major op.11, no.1 W.B 70 (1772)
1: Allegretto; 2: Andantino; 3: Minuetto con Variatione

Mel Powell: Divertimento for Violin and Harp (1954)
1: Allegro; 2: Adagio; 3: Allegro

Jean Francaix: Quintette pour Flute, Violin, Alto, Violoncelle et Harpe (1934)
1: Andante tranquillo; 2: Scherzo; 3: Andante; 4: Rondo

----- Interval 15 minutes -----

Rosa Elliott: a painting of three, for flute, violin and harp (2019)

Gao Ping: Shuo Shu Ren (The Storyteller)
for Flute, Oboe, Violin, Viola, Violoncello and Harp (2001)
1: Overture; 2: Monologue I; 3: Tale I; 4: Monologue II;
5: Tale II; 6: Epilogue

Elena Kats-Chernin: Russian Rag (1996)

Notes

Johann Christian Bach (1735 -1782) was the youngest son of J.S. Bach, and moved to London to write for the King's Theatre. Known as 'John Bach', he forged a very clean, melody-orientated musical style. His *Op. 11 quintets for flute, oboe, strings and continuo*, are particularly appealing for their charming conversational style and their use of colour. In terms of the aesthetic of the time, they are typical works for connoisseurs and music lovers, who would have heard J.C. Bach perform them in his extremely popular public chamber music series - a template for classical concert series of today! The connoisseur enjoyed the elegant part-writing and the distinctive combinations of sound, while the music lover was delighted by the melodic richness of every movement and, naturally, Bach's speciality - the singing allegro, which Mozart himself admired so much. When the eight-year old Mozart toured London, the two formed a warm friendship and improvised together. The music of J.C. Bach became an important early influence for Mozart as he developed his own personal musical style.

Mel Powell (1923 - 1998)

Mark Menzies writes: "I never met Mel Powell, but I worked for 17 years at the university at which he established the music school - the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) - and at which he taught, inspiringly, for the better part of three decades. Everywhere built into the school were signs of his multi-dimensional artistry: he was a performer/composer - famous for his jazz piano playing in the swing era, with Benny Goodman and Glen Miller; a composition student of Paul Hindemith, works such as the *Divertimento we're playing tonight*, perhaps convince one to believe not only did he fully absorb his teacher's legendary craft, he could at the same time charm in a way that perhaps eluded his model. Later in life, shortly before establishing the CalArts music department in 1969, Powell converted to composing in the post-Webern style, the hallmark of the high modernists at the time: with characteristic elegance and endlessly nuanced refinement, Mel steadily produced extraordinarily charismatic compositions that climaxed with *Duplicates for 2 pianos and orchestra* that promptly won the top American composition award - the Pulitzer Prize - in 1990; and, despite its clunky 1960s title, it remains one of the most scintillatingly evocative late-20th century compositions imaginable."

Jean Francaix (1912 - 1997) was a French neoclassical composer, pianist and orchestrator, known for his prolific output and vibrant style,

characterised by great wit and clarity. The son of the director of the Le Mans Conservatory, Francaix began to compose very early, publishing a piano composition at age nine. He later studied at the Paris Conservatory with Nadia Boulanger. The quintet performed tonight, is an early work written in 1934, and Francaix uses several well-known French childrens songs, to create this charming piece.

Rosa Elliott is a 21-year-old composer from Christchurch in her fourth year at the University of Canterbury where she is studying a Bachelor of Music in Composition, and English under a Bachelor of Arts. Rosa's love for composition began throughout her time at Burnside High School, during which she was the winner of the SOUNZ Big Sing Composition Competition in 2015 for her choral work, Requiem. Rosa has been a recipient of the Leigh and Judith Pownall Prize for Music and the First Douglas Lilburn Composition Prize from the University of Canterbury in 2017 and 2018. She was also a winner of the NZTrio Composition Competition for her work Voices of the Air. Most recently, Rosa was a composer and performer in Free Radicals as part of the Word Festival and participated in the Oxford Composing for Choirs Summer School 2019.

Rosa writes: "a painting of three draws inspiration from two particular spaces I found myself in the midst of this year. The first was a silent retreat, where I sat for a few hours in a small chapel, buried in the quiet of Peel Forest, observing Rublev's Holy Trinity Icon hanging on the wall. The painting depicts the three engaged around a table with a space left at the front, beckoning the viewer to sit down with them. The second experience occurred a few weeks later in the New College Chapel, Oxford, a rather more glamorous location. In this space myself and 40 others sang the Gregorian chant, *Haec Dies* and listened to it reverberate around the cloisters. This trio is an articulation of these experiences, both far from and close to home. The central theme, introduced by the flute, is taken from *Haec Dies*, to which the violin mimics the echo of the chapel. Moving between stillness and spiritedness, I hope the audience is also beckoned to engage with the trio before them."

Gao Ping (b. 1970) is a composer-pianist, born in Chengdu, Sichuan province of China. He studied in the USA in the 1990s, and was professor of Composition at University of Canterbury. In demand as a composer, he has received commissions and performances from musicians around the world. The Beijing-based musicologist Li Xián has referred to Gao Ping as a leading member of the 'sixth generation' of Chinese composers after the 'fifth generation' composers such as Tan Dun and Qu Xiaosong. Gao Ping writes:

'*Shuo Shu Ren*', or '*The Storyteller*', was inspired by my childhood memories of listening to folk stories. Folklore and the oral tradition were very much a part of people's lives before television invaded China in the 1980s. In the period in which I grew up, there were regular power cuts in the evening, and neighbours always came together to share stories in the dark. The stories never seemed to run out. We visited the 'cha guans' (tea houses) where tea was served and fantastic tales would be spun by expert storytellers. Often I would run home from school to catch the late afternoon broadcast of a particular storyteller's account of some epic tale, usually based on a classical novel in a historical setting. This was before my family owned a TV set, and the memories of those joyful moments are as vivid now as 35 years ago. From a composer's perspective, the theatrical characteristics of Chinese story-telling, which range from shouting to vocalising to intense facial expressions and body movements, are extremely seductive and lead naturally to almost operatic ideas. I have always thought of myself as a story-teller of sorts, but in place of words I use music. In *Shuo Shu Ren*, the communal stories that a story-teller shares are interwoven with the personal narratives of the individual. Blurring the boundaries between myth and reality, this work exists within the space of a 'third reality'. In the epilogue to the piece, as the stories come to a close, what remains is the theme of the story-teller who sighs in desolation while fragments of stories flash by, ephemeral as light. *Shuo Shu Ren* was commissioned by the Zurich based Ensemble Pyramide, who gave its first performance in 2001. I dedicate this work to my dear friend, the flautist Markus Bronnimann, without whom this work would never have come into being."

Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1957) was born in Tashkent (now the capital of independent Uzbekistan, but then part of the Soviet Union). She studied at the Gnessin State Musical College in Moscow from age 14, and migrated to Australia in 1975, continuing her studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. She also participated in the Darlinghurst underground theatre scene, with groups such as Cabaret Conspiracy, Fifi Lamour, Boom Boom La Burn and others. Elena Kats-Chernin often writes small rags as an antidote to the pressure of serious large scale composition. Deeply personal objects, often written as a release in some time of personal difficulty, they are vessels that carry deep waters, small worlds that embrace bittersweet feelings, the contradictory states of pain and joy intermingled; the smiling through tears that is both deeply Russian and feminine. To hear one of Elena's rags is to know a small part of her own life intimately. Russian Rag was written in 1996 for solo piano, and has been transformed into many different versions by the composer.

Biographies

Amandine Guerin studied music in France and graduated from the Conservatoire National de Region of Montpellier with prizes in performance, chamber music, sight-reading and solfege. Besides her teaching activities, she was concertmaster of the Ensemble Instrumental Contrepoint. From 1998 she lived in Tokyo, Japan where she taught violin and coached young chamber ensembles at the International Music School Solfran. She was also a freelance player in various orchestras and ensembles. Together with her husband, a mushroom and truffle scientist, Amandine moved to Dunedin in 2004, where she played first violin and Acting Concertmaster of the Southern Sinfonia. In 2009 she moved to Christchurch, and joined the first violin section of Christchurch Symphony. As well as performing in many groups, Amandine has introduced her friends to the fascinating world of fungi!

Mark Menzies moved to Christchurch in 2016 to take up the professor of music position at the University of Canterbury in an effort to rebuild the department and performance programme. An internationally active soloist, conductor and composer, Mark previously was based in Los Angeles for 17 years. Since he is a hyper-active musician that never takes vacations, spare time is usually taken up with running and hiking, and while staying in Los Angeles, usually because of rehearsals with his Formalist Quartet and other performance projects, spends quality time with his American cat - Dr Cornwall.

Tomas Hurnik is Associate Principal Cellist for Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, and holds a Masters degree from the Academy of Music in Prague. He played and recorded as a soloist with different orchestras and as a member of chamber groups for Czech radio and concerts both in Czech Republic and abroad (Germany, Austria, Japan and France). In 1998 he was hired as the principal cellist for the Malaysian Philharmonic in Kuala Lumpur, with which he played for four years. He then returned to Europe to study Baroque cello in Frankfurt with Rainer Zipperling. He continued to perform with a variety of period instrument chamber groups such as Musica Florea, Capella Regia Prague, Musica Aeterna and Solamente Naturali. In 2015 he founded Baroque Music Community and Educational Trust of New Zealand to organise and perform concerts, workshops and masterclasses of Baroque music on period instruments. Tomas enjoys his family, good food and Czech beer.

Helen Webby is Principal Harp with Christchurch Symphony and teaches harp at University of Canterbury School of Music. Born in Whangarei, Helen studied at University of Auckland, the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Netherlands, and in 1996 completed *Diplom Harfe* from the Hochschule for Music in Hamburg. During Christchurch's Quake year Helen commissioned nine NZ composers to write short works for harp and in 2012 released her solo harp CD *Pluck* (MANU), the first anthology of New Zealand harp music. *Pluck* was nominated for Best Classical CD in the 2013 NZ Music Awards, and was made in to a DVD film *Harps make Fine Companions*, screened on Television New Zealand. Helen performs on a concert harp built of NZ Red Beech by her brother Kim Webby. Helen's favourite activity as a 'bon vivant' is to bake French apple tart, from apples grown in her orchard garden, and to squeeze her French accordion.

Anthony Ferner is Principal Flute of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, lecturer in flute at the School of Music University of Canterbury and conductor. He has been a frequent soloist with the CSO and is a recitalist and chamber music player. At the university he has regular masterclasses, coaches ensembles and performs chamber music. After winning the National Concerto competition in 1972, he studied flute, piano and conducting in London at the Guildhall School of Music. He later taught and performed in Milan, and in 1992 studied conducting at the St Petersburg Conservatory. In Sydney for 17 years, he played in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. In his spare time, Tony can be found tending his micro vineyard at home, from which he has managed to produce some excellent pinot noir.

Jenny Johnson has been the Principal Oboist of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra since 2011. Prior to moving to Christchurch Jenny graduated from The University of Waikato with a Bachelor of Music with First Class Honours and The University of Tasmania with a Masters of Music. While at The University of Waikato Jenny was a recipient of the prestigious Sir Edmund Hillary Scholarship throughout her studies. Jenny has performed for many orchestras in Australasia, including the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, The Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Dunedin Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Wellington, The Tasmania Discovery Orchestra, The Hobart Chamber Orchestra and Opus Chamber Orchestra. Apart from making reeds, you will find Jenny in her spare time, painting landscapes and reading in her Tiny House which her and her husband built themselves.

2020

Christopher's Classics are delighted to present these concerts in 2020:

12 March 2020 - Thursday - **Michael Endres**, piano

23 April 2020 - Thurs - **Tennant Austin Duo**, piano and cello

9 July 2020 - Thurs - **Vesa & Friends** (NZSO musicians)

20 August 2020 - Thurs - **NZ String Quartet**

3 September 2020 - Thurs - **Aroha String Quartet**
with **Robert Orr** oboe

7 October 2020 - Wednesday - **Marmen Quartet**

28 November 2020 - Saturday - **Michael Houstoun**

Full details will be posted on our webpage in due course.

Your contact to Christopher's Classics

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or Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/christophersclassics/

Acknowledgements : Elizabeth Ball Trust, Rata Foundation, The Piano, Antonio Strings, Gloria Streat, The Philip Carter Family Concert Hall at The Piano and private donors - thank you all.