

Christopher's Classics - Series XXVI 2021

presents

# Les Bons Vivants



Amandine Guerin (violin), David McGregor (clarinet), Mark Menzies (viola), Helen Webby (harp), Anthony Ferner (flute), Cathy Irons (violin), Tomas Hurnik (violoncello)

Presented by  
Sunday Classics Inc

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Elizabeth Ball Trust

 THE PIANO  
CLASSICAL MUSIC FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Thursday, 7th October, 2021, 7:30 PM  
**The Piano**, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch

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*The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.*

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## Programme:

**Dorothea Franchi** - Suite for clarinet, viola & harp

**André Caplet** - Conte Fantastique, for harp and string quartet (NZ Premiere)

**Pieta Hextall** - The Poetics of Water, for harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet.  
(World Premiere, commissioned by Christopher's Classics Chamber series 2021)

Interval: 15 minutes

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** - Clarinet Quintet, K.581

**Maurice Ravel** - Introduction & Allegro, for harp, flute, clarinet & string quartet

## Les Bons Vivants

**Amandine Guerin** is a member of the first violin section of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and a violin teacher. She studied music in France and graduated from the Conservatoire National de Région of Montpellier with prizes in performance, chamber music, sight-reading and solfège. 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. Amandine arrived in NZ in 2004, where she played first violin and acted as Concertmaster of the Southern Sinfonia, Dunedin before she moved to Christchurch in 2009. As a bon vivant, Amandine finds any occasion to share a meal with friends and introduce them to Japanese or French culture and cuisine.

**Cathy Irons** performs concerts from baroque and classical to contemporary and jazz throughout New Zealand and abroad. She graduated with a distinction for her Bachelor of Music in Orchestral Performance at the University of Natal, South Africa. In her final year of study she received an internship with the KwaZulu Natal Philharmonic Orchestra, which she joined subsequently, before immigrating to Christchurch. Cathy is currently a first violinist with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. A founding member of the Tres Cordes String Trio, Cathy has toured for Chamber Music NZ and performed in the Deia International Festival in Mallorca, Spain. Another string to her bow is her cross-over playing with the Classical Jazz Quartet. Cathy was until recently the CSO's Head of Community Engagement; her innovative and collaborative work as part of the CSO's community programme receiving recognition with two national Arts Access Awards for music experiences given in Corrections and with the disability sector. Cathy enjoys being upside-down and together with her husband, has recently performed in her first Circo-Arts acrobatics show, raising funds for Christchurch City Mission.

**Mark Menzies** has established an important, world-wide reputation as a violist and violinist, pianist and conductor. He has been described in the Los Angeles Times as an 'extraordinary musician' and a 'riveting violinist.' His career as a viola and violin virtuoso, chamber musician and pianist, conductor and advocate of contemporary music, has seen performances in Europe, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and across the United States, including a series of appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall. In February of 2017, Menzies performed the debut of a remarkable series of solo recitals in Los Angeles. Called 4:7 (4-in-the-time-of-7) – four separate solo violin/viola programs in one week, the concerts received considerable critical praise with the "New Classic LA" blog writing 'Menzies was in full command' 4:7 has been performed in Christchurch (2017), Sacramento (2019), Wellington (2020) and Auckland (2021). Viola, violin professor and coordinator of conducted ensembles at the California Institute of the Arts, from 1999-2016, where Mark Menzies curated a remarkable series of concerts at REDCAT at Disney Hall in downtown Los Angeles. He moved to New Zealand in 2016 to take up a Professor of Music & Head of Performance position at the University of Canterbury. Mark loves to admire the ever-changing scenes of sea that he observes from his house in Sumner, and enjoys following cats on Instagram.

**Tomas Hurnik** is Associate Principal Cellist for the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, and holds a Masters degree from the Academy of Music in Prague. He has 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.

Principal Harp with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, **Helen Webby** loves to come out of the back of the orchestra and play her amazing Concert harp, made by her brother Kim Webby. 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, and was lucky to be mentored by several top European harpists. After the Christchurch earthquakes in 2011, 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. Helen's recordings are frequently heard on RNZ Concert, and she enjoys collaborating with friends, both musically, and as a 'bon vivant' Her

favourite activity is to bake French apple tart, and to squeeze her French button accordion.

New Zealand clarinettist **David McGregor** studied with Philip Green at Victoria University of Wellington from 2011 to 2014. In 2015 he moved to Hobart, Tasmania, where he studied with Francesco Celata (Sydney Symphony) at the University of Tasmania Conservatorium of Music. David was selected as a Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellow in 2017 playing with the orchestra frequently. The Fellowship programme involved performances in mixed chamber ensembles with the other Fellows in Central Sydney, as well as regional NSW. The role also involved education work and outreach in the greater Sydney area. David returned to New Zealand in 2018, where he was appointed principal clarinet of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. In October 2020, David appeared as soloist with the CSO performing Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. In his spare time, David enjoys cooking (currently obsessed with Filipino cuisine), multi-track recording the odd Bach chorale for bass clarinet quartet, teaching the clarinet to people of all ages, and occasionally exploring the beautiful South Island!

**Anthony Ferner** (flute) is a lecturer in flute at the School of Music University of Canterbury and a conductor. He has been a frequent soloist with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, is a recitalist and chamber music player and has conducted the orchestra on several occasions. 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 was a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra acting as principal flute in both orchestras. He recently completed 25 years as principal flute of the CSO. He is now looking forward to more time sharing his experience and knowledge conducting orchestras in New Zealand. In his spare time as a bon vivant, Tony tends his vines in his backyard micro vineyard and enjoys sampling wines from around the globe.

**John Allison** is a Christchurch poet with six collections previously published, and poems appearing regularly in literary journals here and overseas. Most recently his poem 'Father's Axe, Grandfather's Machete', was selected as one of 25 'Best New Zealand Poems 2020'. He is currently gathering together his Collected Poems for publication next year, and is on the committee of the Canterbury Poets Collective, active in organising poetry events and the annual reading series.

## **Dorothea Franchi (1920 – 2003) Suite for clarinet, viola & harp**

- I. *Ostinato: Allegro Alla Marcia*
- II. *Pastorale: Larghetto*
- III. *Hornpipe: Allegro giocoso*

New Zealand composer and harpist Dorothea Franchi (1920 – 2003) wrote the Suite for clarinet, viola and harp in 1947, and dedicated it to her friends George and Helen Hopkins. She revised it in 1983, changing the instrumentation to flute, viola, harp.

Born in Auckland, Dorothea Franchi graduated 1939 with a BMus, built up an impressive music department at Epsom Girls Grammar and in 1948 went to London to study composition and harp at the Royal College of Music London. A grainy photograph of Franchi, ticket in hand, on the Hobsonville tarmac is a classic study in Kiwi determination. In 1951, she carried off the Lionel Tertis Prize for a Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra, and other works were performed. But in 1952 she returned to New Zealand, to care for her ageing father.

During five loyal years as pianist for the New Zealand Ballet from 1952-57, Franchi became as celebrated for her skill at doing a quick fix-it on rural pianos as she was for her one-woman Petrouchka - no mean feat, this. It was her association with the company that led to her 1956 Do-Wack-a-Do, an elegant piece of 20s frippery the Royal New Zealand Ballet revived in the 90s. An orchestral suite from the ballet gets an occasional airing, most recently by the Auckland Philharmonia, and Franchi herself famously conducted it with the NZBC Symphony Orchestra in the 1960s.

Unlike her more privileged male colleagues, Dorothea Franchi never had the security of a university position to support her as a composer. And yet she wrote concertos and suites as well as a number of song cycles.

Helen Webby is looking forward to playing this delightful work by her first harp teacher Dorothea, in its original instrumentation.

## **André Caplet (1878 – 1925) Conte Fantastique**

French composer and conductor André Caplet (1878 – 1925) could have written Conte Fantastique as a foretelling of the current Covid-19 pandemic. It is inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's short story, The Masque of the Red Death, in which a masked ball is visited by a terrifying stranger at the time of a plague. A lovely way in to the work is to hear the music as a silent movie score: The opening harp notes are marked 'haletant' or breathless; the sinister bass notes depict Death stalking the land and the horrors that ensue. Cut to a fairy tale castle where the Prince has locked the gates from outside and commanded his court to enjoy themselves without a care. The masked ball opens. The music whirls faster. The clock strikes 11 and the guests notice a masked stranger who leads them in a seductive, magnetic dance from room to room. They end up in the red and black chamber, where – as the clock strikes midnight – he drops his mask. The Horror! Death stalks again, this time inside the castle.

The music is full of marvellously spooky effects and highly original - yet elegant - string writing, and Caplet liberates the harp from its traditional role of being decorative and

decorous. Conte Fantastique was published in 1924, but was based on an unpublished "symphonic study" dating from 1909.

Caplet's incredible compositional talent was appreciated by his friend Debussy, who asked him to orchestrate his works. Caplet died in 1925 from the effects of poison gas in the trenches of the First World War. He was only forty-seven, and his death was widely regarded as a great tragedy for French music.

This is the first time Conte Fantastique is performed in NZ

**Pieta Hextall 'The Poetics of Water'**, commissioned in 2021 by Christopher's Classics for Les Bons Vivants.

- I. *Allegro moderato*
- II. *Scherzo (Allegro)*
- III. *Andante cantabile ma però con moto. Poco piu adagio*
- IV. *Allegro moderato — Presto*

Composer Pieta Hextall writes: *'The Poetics of Water' is a three movement work based on a poem sequence of the same name, written by John Allison. The poem-sequence 'Poetics of Water' begins with a first premonition of rain, Petrichor, that exquisite smell of dust as the first weighty splatterings come (this word 'petrichor' is from ancient Greek: petra = stone; and ichor = the fluid that flows in the veins of the gods). The second section, Krisis, is the difficult passage: 'when water dies / humanity will have died already'; which resolves into a zen-like statement: 'a river dreams of becoming the sea / and sea will be rain.' The third section is a rhapsodic (and slightly erotic) paeon to Leucothea, Greek goddess of sea-foam and oceanic liveliness.'*

Christchurch-based Pieta Hextall has forged a successful career as a composer, performer and teacher. A graduate of the New Zealand School of Music in Wellington, she has received a number of prizes for her compositions that are written principally for chamber music (particularly wind ensembles) and orchestra, and which have been work-shopped and performed in Australia and New Zealand. Most recently her compositions have been performed by the Christchurch Symphony, Hannah Darroch & Andrew Crooks, and cLoud Collective. In 2021 the Resonance Ensemble will premiere her latest orchestral work.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791) Clarinet Quintet, K.581**

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Larghetto*
- III. *Minuetto*
- IV. *Allegretto con variazioni*

Composed in 1789, Mozart's Quintet for clarinet and string quartet is a stunning result of his friendship with Austrian clarinetist, Anton Stadler. It was this friendship that inspired Mozart to view the clarinet as not just an orchestral voice, but also a virtuosic and soloistic instrument.

As the clarinet was still quite a young instrument, it was constantly being modified and redeveloped. This prompted Stadler to experiment with extending the instrument's lower (chalumeau) register by extending the length of the instrument and adding many keys, resulting in the basset clarinet. The quintet, along with his concerto for clarinet written two years later, is thought to be composed for this instrument, which is unfortunately less common today, with the work being predominantly performed on a clarinet in A. The Quintet is a work that pioneered chamber music for this combination, as it is not just a work for solo clarinet and accompaniment, but a fully integrated work that allows all the instruments of the ensemble to feature fabulously yet maintain a beautiful blend of timbres.

This work is a wonderful example of just how well matched the clarinet is with the string quartet with its stunning lyricism and sonority in the Allegro and Larghetto movements, and great humour, character, and virtuosity in the Minuetto and Allegretto con variazioni movements. The final movement especially is a lot of fun, as it gives the ensemble a good chance to show off!

## **Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937) Introduction & Allegro, for harp, flute, clarinet & string quartet**

Maurice Ravel was commissioned by French harp manufacturer Erard to write 'Introduction and Allegro for harp, with the accompaniment of a string quartet, flute and clarinet.' It is a brilliant concert piece for harp and a miniature orchestra (the septet). Ravel wrote it quickly in 1905 and it was first performed in 1907. It follows a sonata structure, with the harp Allegro as exposition, the development being a slow acceleration into the cadenza, with the Allegro returning for the recapitulation.

Ravel was born, in a village near Saint-Jean-de-Luz in France, of a Swiss father and a Basque mother. His family background was an artistic and cultivated one and the young Maurice received every encouragement from his father when his talent for music became apparent at an early age. At age 14, he entered the Paris Conservatoire where he remained until 1905. Many of his most famous works date from this period and show the astonishing early perfection of style and craftsmanship that are the hallmarks of Ravel's entire oeuvre. He is one of the rare composers whose early works seem scarcely less mature than those of his maturity.

Ravel's life was in the main uneventful. He never married and, though he enjoyed the society of a few chosen friends, he lived the life of a semi-recluse at his country retreat at Montfort-L'Amaury, in the forest of Rambouillet, near Paris. He served in World War I for a short time as a truck driver at the front. The strain was too great for his fragile constitution and he was discharged from the army in 1917.

For Ravel, music was a kind of ritual having its own laws, to be conducted behind high walls, sealed off from the outside world and impenetrable to unauthorised intruders. When his Russian contemporary Igor Stravinsky compared Ravel to "the most perfect of Swiss watchmakers", he was in fact extolling those qualities of intricacy and precision to which he himself attached so much importance.

**Christopher's Classics Next Concert:**

# **New Zealand String Quartet**

performing **Purcell, Britten, Gao Ping** and **Smetana**

**Tuesday 9th November 2021, 7:30 PM**

at **The Piano** 156 Armagh St.



**Tickets: Door Sales: \$45 (students \$20) by cash**  
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