



The Angel at Ahipara

Ensemble Polymnia

presents

Matariki

A Programme of New Zealand Music

Sarah Bisley, Conductor

Charlotte Fetherston, Viola

*Sunday 12th May 2013, at 5pm
Holy Trinity Church, Devonport*

Maori New Year. Traditionally it was a time for remembering the dead and celebrating new life.

The Pleiades rises just once a year in mid-winter – late May or early June.

Matariki literally means the 'eyes of god' (mata ariki) or 'little eyes' (mata riki). According to myth, when Rangiurui, the sky father, and Papatuanuku, the earth mother, were separated by their children, the god of the winds, Tawhirimatea, became so angry that he tore out his eyes and threw them into the heavens.

PROGRAMME

Douglas Lilburn (1915 – 2001)



Douglas Lilburn was born in Wanganui and spent his early years on the family sheep station. By 1937 he was a student at the Royal College of Music studying under eminent musicians such as Ralph Vaughan Williams. Ten years later he joined the staff at the newly established School of Music at Victoria University establishing a

centre for composition. From the 1960's, Lilburn explored the world of electroacoustic music allowing focus on natural sounds.

The Lilburn Trust was established by Douglas in 1980 to further the growth and development of New Zealand Music. 1988 saw him admitted to the Order of New Zealand for services to music.

Canzonas I and IV for Strings

Canzona 1 was one of the two canzonas composed as incidental music for Ngaio Marsh's Shakespeare productions in the 1940's. It was used as music for the Players' mime in Hamlet (1943).

Canzona 4, on the other hand, was written in 1950 to accompany Maria Dronke's reading of 'Death of Cornet Rilke'.

The Canzonas were arranged in their present form in 1980.

Production Team

Sarah Bisley (Artistic Director)

Anthony Blaschke (Stage Manager)

Mariana Nordmark (Programme Design)

Acknowledgements

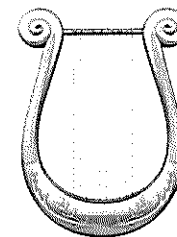
Our grateful thanks are due to Holy Trinity Devonport, St. Aidan's Remuera, The Depot Artspace, Devonport, Michael Park School and Baradene College of the Sacred Heart

Ensemble Polymnia

Contact details

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Matariki – Player List

Violin I

Sarah McCracken (*Concertmaster*)

Kirsten McCrae

Angela Kong

Peau Halapua

Ailin Liew

Viola

Emma Fetherston (*leader*)

Megan Wang

Pat Roderick

Ming-Sui Kao

Contrabass

Glenda Neilson (*leader*)

Ted Malan

Flute

Annie Hong

Clarinet

Melissa Carter

John Jang

French Horn

Anne Robertson-Bickers

Angus Bower-Brown

Violin II

Charmian Keay (*leader*)

Georgiana Williamson-Chan

Jim Hessell

Eric Lin

Don Dilantha

Violoncello

Maxine Cunliffe (*leader*)

Robert Davis

Oboe

Alexandra Vincent

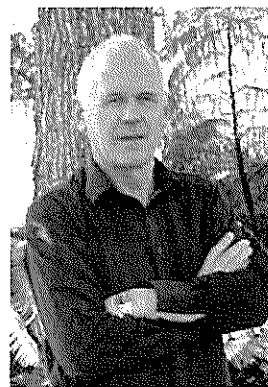
Bassoon

Craig Bradfield

Timpani

Vadim Simongauz

Christopher Blake (b. 1949)



When appointed to the position of CEO of the NZSO, Christopher Blake is quoted as saying "My whole life's been music". This is borne out by the number of major New Zealand music organisations who have commissioned his compositions. His work has received critical acclaim both here and overseas.

The inspiration for *Angel at Ahipara* came from Colin McCahan's painting 'Northland Panels' and Robin Morrison's black and white photographs of Northland. One focused on

landscape and the other on the spiritual domain as represented by churches and their surroundings.

The music was conceived to capture the interplay of spirit, the land and its people as represented by the above artists. The work is performed as a continuous whole with the sections flowing and developing from one to the other.

Angel at Ahipara (1997) for string orchestra

- I. The Angel holds vigil at the grave
- II. The Angel sings her hymns of praise
- III. The Angel makes the spirit soar
- IV. The Angel brings joy
- V. The Angel calms the storm
- VI. The Angel sounds music from heaven
- VII. The Angel holds vigil at the grave

Alfred Hill (1869 – 1960)

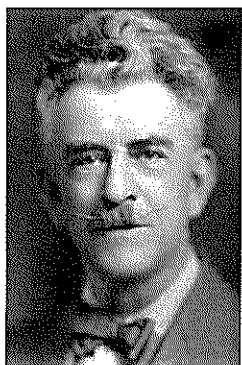


Image courtesy Alexander Turnbull Library

Alfred Hill, born in Melbourne, grew up in New Zealand. After studying violin and composition at the Leipzig Conservatorium in the late 1880's, he worked in both Australia and New Zealand. Hill is one of Australasia's first formally trained composers and was on the staff of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. His compositional style was influenced by his training in conservative German Romantic music. He produced a prolific number of compositions. However Hill's non-progressive stance has meant that his reputation has suffered posthumously.

Hill began playing the viola after settling in Sydney in 1910. He composed this concerto with funding from the Australian Performing Rights Association. It was first performed on 13 February 1946.

The work adheres to conventional Romantic norms in its formal structure and motivic development.

Concerto in A Minor for Viola and Small Orchestra (1940)

- I. Moderato: minor key Sonata form with primary and secondary themes, development and recapitulation.
- II. Andantino: in contrast, the setting is tranquil, emphasising the beauty of the viola's tone interplayed with offerings from the winds.
- III. Decisivo: in the style of a typical 18th century concerto fast movement.

Sarah Bisley



A graduate in English literature and Music from the University of Canterbury, **Sarah Bisley** was a pupil of László Mező at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest.

Conducting began in the Australian outback in the early 80s; her first major appearance was as the conductor of Mozart's "Requiem" in Vienna in 1987.

During 13 years in Austria she continued to give cello-piano recitals worldwide, including in New Zealand. She was the solo 'cellist and Assistant Conductor for Mariahilfer Oper in Vienna, for which she received special critical

mention. This performance of Britten's "Noye's Fludde" in 1995 then sparked a wave of performance of Britten's operas in Vienna, which has continued to this day.

Among her teachers of conducting have been Ernst Smole in Murzzuschlag (Kurs "Furtwangler"), Otto Werner Mueller of the Curtis Institute, Alexander Polianichko of the Mariinsky Theatre and at the Ecole Normale de Paris, Dominique Rouits. In Paris and Massy, France she had many rehearsals and "spot" appearances, and in St.Petersburg in 2002 she was selected to conduct Debussy's "Prelude a L'Apres-midi d'un Faune" in concert with the State Hermitage Orchestra.

Among many orchestral and choral concerts in the Paris and Versailles region, the highlight of her activity was a "Concert Exceptionnel" in 2004 with Ensemble Polymnia, featuring world premieres of the "Flute concerto in D major" by CPE Bach as well as tonight's "Serenade for Strings" by Nigel Keay.

To date in New Zealand, appearances have been with Ensemble Polymnia, Opera Waikato, the Franklin Community Choir, the Devonport Chamber Orchestra and the Pakuranga Choral Society.

Performances of New Zealand works include "A Piece for Sarah" for solo 'cello and "Prelude, Intermezzo and Dirge" for 'cello octet, both by Brigid Ursula Bisley, and "A New Zealand Suite" for 'cello octet by John Wells.

Section Leaders



Sarah McCracken, *Concertmaster*



Charmian Kay, *Second Violin*



Maxine Cunliffe, *Violoncello*

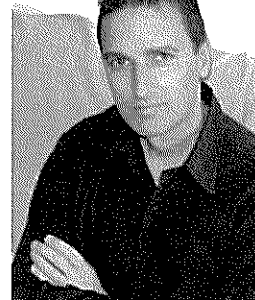


Emma Fetherston, *Viola*



Glenda Neilson, *Contrabass*

Nigel Keay (b. 1955)



Currently Nigel Keay, composer and violinist, lives and works in Paris. Throughout his musical career he has always been an active participant in presenting his own music either as a violinist or as a conductor. Before leaving New Zealand in 1998, Nigel Keay had held several fulltime composer-in-residence positions: the Mozart Fellowship in Dunedin, Nelson School of Music and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra.

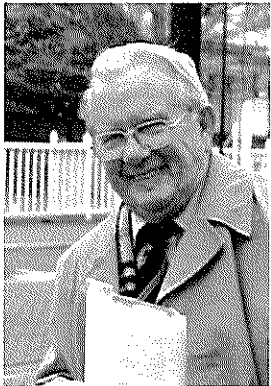
Serenade for Strings (2002) - New Zealand Première

I. Moderato II. Allegro III. Adagietto IV. Vivo

The Serenade is a four movement work initially inspired by playing as a violinist in a string orchestra in Caen, Lower Normandy which was assembling a programme of string serenades. It is dedicated to Valérie Baisnée who played the violin in this group. The world premiere of this work was given by Ensemble Polymnia conducted by Sarah Bisley, in the church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre in Paris, on 21st October 2004.

Concerning the idea of the serenade, today a very imprecise musical form, the idea of the evening or night is kept through using a musical language that is quite dark.

John Ritchie (b. 1921)



Born in Wellington, John Ritchie is one of New Zealand's senior composers. He was conductor of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, founder-conductor of the John Ritchie String Orchestra and guest conductor on many occasions of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Ritchie's wide composing output comprises several works for string orchestra and solo instrument with string orchestra. Prior to his retirement in 1985, John Ritchie was Professor at the University of Canterbury.

Aquarius: Suite No. 2 for String Orchestra (1982)

- I. Allegro vivace
- II. Andante pastorale
- III. Allegro moderato

Aquarius was commissioned by the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand for the Schola Musica and its founding conductor, Ashley Heenan, to mark the 21st anniversary of the orchestra's foundation.

The title conveys an image of An, the ancient sky god, who poured the waters of immortality on the earth, thereby establishing the tradition of the water carrier.

Charlotte Fetherston – viola



Charlotte grew up in Auckland and completed a Bachelor of Music with 1st class honours at the New Zealand School of Music, Wellington. During this time she studied under Professor Donald Maurice and Gillian Ansell. During her last year at the NZSM, Donald Maurice introduced Charlotte to the compositions and life of Alfred Hill. Led by a desire to discover more about this almost forgotten composer,

Charlotte became a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2010. Under the tutelage of Roger Benedict and Dr. Goetz Richter and with the funding of an Australian Postgraduate Award, she has been able to research and play Hill's *Concerto for Viola and Small Orchestra* of 1940. By integrating findings about Hill's compositional aesthetic and influences into performance and scholarly writing, Charlotte hopes to help bring Hill out of historical and musical obscurity by justifying his place in Australasian music history.

Charlotte was a finalist in the New Zealand School of Music concerto competition in 2009, part of the winning ensemble of the University of Auckland annual chamber music competition in 2010 and a string finalist in the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Concerto Competition in 2011 and 2012. Currently based in Sydney while she completes her candidature, Charlotte plays with several ensembles including the Sydney Sinfonia training programme initiated by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. She has also participated in tours and residencies with the Australian Youth Orchestra and Sydney Conservatorium chamber orchestra. This is her first solo engagement with an orchestra.