



Kettering Concerts

KetteringConcerts.au

Première Performance

We've been talking about the Elena Kats-Chernin commission for 2 years now, and sought donations to pay for it. Well, we will finally be hearing it performed - in Kettering on 22 September.

Elena has told the story of the quartet in this way.



A couple of years ago Dave Davey and Annick Anselin (Kettering Concerts) suggested and commissioned this unusual idea to me, to write a quartet based on 4 B's - the great composers of the past whose names started with "B": Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Borodin. I pondered over this challenge over a few months and kept listening to these composers' music, not just string quartets but many diverse works, in order to make a plan of how to go about it. In every piece I was searching for inspiration that would guide me towards my own composition. While it was clear to me that the quoted motives should be recognisable, I also felt that ultimately the whole quartet would have to sound like my piece and have unity. A little bit like with my earlier work "Re-Inventions" (based on Bach's "Two-Part Inventions"). While working with original material of the B composer, I also wanted to add my own original material to go alongside it. Slowly the work started to form in my head and sometimes I was drawn to more than one motive of a composer. Ultimately it felt like I needed one last movement, a fifth, to unite all four in one final movement, which is essentially a medley of their most famous tunes.

The quartet is in 5 movements. I: *Risoluto* (Resolute) - Based on Beethoven, the movement starts similarly to the first movement of quartet opus 127, but in a much darker key. Instead of the original E flat major, my piece starts in C sharp minor with quavers in the Viola and repeated notes in the Cello, while the Violins have

longer notes. Soon after, it becomes clear that the cello material is a premonition of the Waldstein Sonata quote, and becomes the pillar of this movement. I grew up listening to this work, always marvelling at its drama, determination, passion and inventiveness. The drive of it, is what fascinated me in this quartet. I added a tango-like syncopated motive later on in the movement. The strings have a real workout in this first movement and set the tone of strength for the whole piece.

II: *Pensieroso* (thoughtful) - The movement begins with lonely bass notes by the Cello, with the first Violin entering with short melodic cells. The other instruments join in, with material reminiscent of J.S. Bach's style. It starts as a moderately slow movement, but becomes energetic when Bach's D minor Double Concerto is quoted.

III: *Dolce* (sweetly) - After solid first two movements I felt it needed something a little less defined, more blurry, interwoven notes, atmospheric texture with some tremoli, and bouncing bows. Starting very quietly, a repeated figure begins preparing a famous Borodin Nocturne Melody from his first string quartet. It becomes the main material for this movement. Of course my treatment of this melody is very different to the original, but the melody is clearly stated. I also used material from the other movement of the quartet, later in the cello part.

IV: *Con Amore (With Love)* - This movement starts with harmonics in 5/4 in first violin, while the chords in the rest of the quartet grow into a broad melody, of which Brahms always had plenty, but here is my take on such a lyrical melody. After a short section of repeated chords, Brahms' famous horn solo from the 4th Movement of his C minor Symphony No. 1, is quoted by the Viola, and then moves to the first Violin.

V: *Finale - Gigue of the Bees*. This movement begins with a figure inspired by the sounds that the bees make. And their stings! It is a medley of all the 4 composers, it has Beethoven's 5th Symphony, Bach's Oboe/Violin double concerto in C minor (D minor here), Brahms' Hungarian Dance, Borodin's Polovtsian Dances from his opera Prince Igor. It is strung together by a recurring dance-like motive. Overall this movement is hoping to bring joy and a sense of fun and the hypothetical idea of what might happen if all these composers got together to have a jam session.

Elena decided to call the quartet *Be.Four.Quartet* a somewhat querkly play on the original idea and open

to different interpretations. She may have more to say at the concert - she will be there.

On the day, Elena's quartet will be preceded by Dvořák's *American* quartet and a short folk-song like work from the Danish String Quartet.

The programme will be presented by the Tasmanian String Quartet.



Douglas Coghill (viola), William Hewer (cello), Tobias Chisnall (2nd violin), Jennifer Owen (1st violin)

Full details of the programme and bios of the musicians are available at

<https://ketteringconcerts.au/concerts/2024-09-22.php>.

As of this writing, a few tickets can be still be booked on-line at

<https://www.trybooking.com/CTUQX>.

Remaining 2024 Concerts

October 13: *Piano & viola duo* - Jennifer Marten-Smith (piano) & William Newbery (viola)

November 10: *Piano Recital* - Sheng-Yuan Lynch
A programme focussed primarily on Chopin and Listz.

A Festival in Richmond

Tickets to the Chamber Music Festival to be held over the weekend of 8-10 November 2024 in Hobart and Richmond are sold out, but some tickets to the **Prelude Festival** concerts on Sunday 3 November in Richmond are still available. There will be three concerts: *Cuckoo and the Nightingale* performed by a trio from Van Diemen's Band; *Divertimento* (Mozart) played by the trio *String Theorem*; and *Beethoven Harp Quartet* - a programme of quartets from Bach to Beethoven played by *Alma Moodie*. Looks like a great day out!

Other Chamber Music Concerts

If you want to find chamber music concerts, including the Kettering ones, use the [ChamberMusicTas website](https://chambermusic.tas.gov.au). If you know of any concerts that are not listed, please let webmaster@chambermusic.tas.gov.au know.

Can you help?

Absolutely. Note we are all volunteers. Without volunteers there will be no concerts.

There is a lot our volunteers must do. There are the obvious activities on the day: putting up the sails and

artwork; putting the platforms in place; getting the chairs out; setting up for the afternoon tea, checking and sometimes cleaning the toilets. That all has to be done in the morning before the musicians arrive for their rehearsal. Then there is the food preparation, assisting the musicians with their set-up, managing the heating, scanning or selling the tickets. Then that all-important afternoon tea that requires a small army of people. Afterwards there is the bumping out, the washing up and the hall cleaning.

But there are other activities: e.g. preparing posters, flyers and programmes; preparing and erecting the roadside signs etc.

So assistance will always be appreciated.