

## Jacques Arcadelt, Il Bianca e Dolce Cigno - 1507-1568

Arcadelt was the first famous madrigal composer, writing over 250 secular works of this type across his time in Italy and France. He knew Michelangelo and his works were used as teaching materials by many others during his lifetime. His style is well represented here - clear harmonies, four voices and a nice mixture of polyphonic and homophonic textures with very little chromaticism. He wrote in a style that was designed to be easily singable by anyone with a voice and for tonight's concert we've taken that idea a step further by arranging it for 4 instruments that aren't usually heard in this combination! This means you won't hear the poem it was set to but we feel the harmony alone is so beautiful as to be worthy of wordless listening.

Nevertheless, here is the translation of poem originally in Italian by Giovanni Guidiccioni

' The gentle swan dies singing,  
and I, moaning, reach the end of my life.  
Strange and contrary fortune, that he dies comfortless  
and I die blessed. A death that in dying,  
fills me with joy and desire.  
If I felt no other sorrow I would be happy  
to die a thousand deaths a day'

## JS Bach (arranged by Stephen Newton), Wachet auf, ruft und die Stimme , BWV 140

Bach based his cantata, BWV 140, upon the hymn tune, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*. He sourced this from Philipp Nicolai's compilation of hymns that was printed in 1599. Another tune, possibly my favourite hymn tune used by Bach, was on the next page of Nicolai's book, *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*. As a homage to that coincidence, I included the opening phrase of the later hymn tune in my arrangement. This occurs when the violin first enters with high false-harmonics that represent the sparkling of the Morning Star.

Bach's original counter-melody (the sprightly, cheery tune first heard in the viola) is shared by the viola and clarinet. I added some dissonances where their parts intertwine to create two distinct characters from the same melody. I chose to keep the tessitura low and mellow with these two instruments, and similarly the first statements of the hymn tune *Wachet auf*, are given to a soft horn to match the timbre of the clarinet and viola.

Where the original hymn tune is used by Bach as a cantus firmus, I used Bach's figured bass indications to create extra lines of counterpoint. I add one instrument at a time, layering up the counterpoint to the ongoing cantus firmus. As the cantus firmus keeps appearing with increasing intensity, the counterpoint I added became more elaborate. By the end one hears a brief sweeping horn call, small syncopations, ascending scales in the horn and clarinet, doubling in the bass and use of the full polyphonic texture available with septet.

## **Carl Nielsen, Serenata in Vano**

The Serenata in Vano (which translates as Serenade in Vain) was written in 1914 at very short notice for a provincial tour by a group of musicians from the Royal Theatre in Denmark, where Nielsen was deputy conductor.

It is said there was a printed program of the tour which hadn't been checked properly. This program included a serenade by Nielsen which didn't exist! The work was then composed and rehearsed within a week. Interestingly works by Mozart and Beethoven were also included in this concert, which makes it similar to the concert we are presenting tonight.

A serenade is a piece of music intended to be sung or played in the open air, often to court someone or for entertainment. Of the Serenata in Vano, Nielsen wrote "it is a humorous trifle"...."First the gentlemen play in a somewhat chivalric and showy manner to lure the fair one out onto the balcony, but she does not appear. Then they play in a slightly languorous strain (*Poco adagio*), but that hasn't any effect either. Since they have played in vain (*in vano*), they don't care a straw and shuffle off home to the strains of the little final march, which they play for their own amusement"

## **Francis Poulenc, Sonata for clarinet and bassoon**

**Allegro**

**Romance**

**Final**

Francis Poulenc was at the end of a period of creative indecision when he wrote this Sonata in 1922. "I've just finished a new work, Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon. [It's] very good. I'm delighted because after 18 months of uncertainty, I'm back on the right path."

The piece is in three movements and moves between witty, acerbic and tender moments while exploiting the capabilities of these two wind instruments. The first begins with a strident clarinet melody accompanied by a boisterous accompaniment in the bassoon and becomes more unhinged towards the end with dramatic dynamic changes and abrupt disruptions to the beat. The heart of the work is the second movement, "Romance". With its beautifully simple clarinet melodies, languid and undulating bassoon accompaniment, and brief moments of close harmony, this movement shows Poulenc at his most tender. The finale returns to the wit and vitality of the first movement and concludes with a romp to the finish line.

## **WA Mozart, Symphony No.25 in G minor, K 183/173dB**

**Allegro con brio**

**Andante**

**Menuetto and Trio**

**Allegro**

Supposedly written in just two days, when he was 17, Mozart's 25th symphony is one of only two symphonies he wrote in a minor key. The symphony is an exploration by Mozart into the dramatic *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) aesthetic that was popularised in the music world when Haydn went through a phase of writing dark, aggressive, minor key symphonies in the few years preceding this symphony. Symphony 25 was infrequently performed after Mozart's death. It regained popularity when it was featured in the film *Amadeus*.

The original is scored for 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 4 horns and strings. As Melbourne Ensemble is more bass instrument heavy than the original orchestra, the players have to make use of the full breadth of their instruments' range to cover Mozart's melodies. Effective use of the warm upper tones of the horn and bassoon are used to help this imbalance.

This strong low section of Melbourne Ensemble comes into play for the driving bass lines of the first movement. These are accompanied by fast, syncopated rhythms and wide, dissonant melodic leaps – all central techniques of the *Sturm und Drang* style.

The addition of clarinet opens up a new, brighter colour for melodies that are played by the violin or oboe in the original. This can be heard in the lyrical Eb major andante of the second movement, the clarinet takes the role of bassoon, oboe, violin and viola at various points.

The third movement returns to the darkness of G minor for a minuet that is played by only the four string players. This is contrasted by a G major, wind-only trio, in the most cheerful disposition heard in this symphony. Finally the fourth movement echoes the intensity and tumultuous rhythmic drive of the first movement, bringing the symphony to a dramatic close