



Blackheath
Chamber
Music
Festival



ORAVA QUARTET

Quartet in residence

Saturday 20 April 2023, 7:00 pm

Phillips Hall | Blackheath Blue Mountains NSW

Daniel Kowalik | violin

David Dalseno | violin

Thomas Chawner | viola

Karol Kowalik | cello

PROGRAM NOTES

Nordic Folk Music | arr. Danish String Quartet (from *Wood Works*) [2014]

“Folk music is the music of all the small places. It is the local music, but as such it is also the music of everywhere and everyone. Like rivers, the melodies and dances have flowed slowly from region to region: whenever a fiddler stumbled on a melody, he would play it and make it his own before passing it on. You don’t own a folk tune, you simply borrow it for a while.

“The string quartet is capable of expressing a myriad of colours, nuances and emotions – just like folk music. Our idea is to marry these two simple but powerful things, the folk music and the string quartet. Normally the string quartet has been reserved for the classical masters. Now we want to see what happens when we let the Nordic folk music flow through the wooden instruments of the string quartet.”
– The Danish String Quartet

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Elena KATS-CHERNIN [1957-] | *For Theodora* | a ‘first’ in NSW and the Blue Mountains [2022]

“Receiving a commission of such a personal nature is a huge honour but it is also a big responsibility. This piece is a tribute to the commissioner’s beloved and complex family. It was very helpful to have the structure and instrumentation gifted to me by Katrina, leaving a lot of space for the actual creation. The folk song that her grandmother used to sing became the basis for the whole suite and is woven into the tapestry of all the movements.” – Kats-Chernin

For *Theodora* is in four distinctive movements.

- i. **Chrysanthe 1** is named after Katrina's grandmother. I wanted to highlight the uplifting and cheerful nature of the original folk song in a "happy" key of G major and I employed the unusual metre of 7/8 of the original. I attempted to create a carefree atmosphere and to keep the feeling of lightness throughout this first movement.
- ii. **Theodora** is named after Katrina's mother. This movement starts with the shifting chords tremoli in G minor. The folk song enters in violin solo, in tribute to Theodora who used to play violin. The material gets darker and darker and yet finishes in a calmer and more content place than when it started. The main melody returns towards the end of this movement and ends on a hopeful chord of C major.
- iii. **Katerina** is named after the commissioner. My starting point was number 4 as in 4 characters of this whole piece. They are built in pairs, two intervals in a succession, each two bars. B flat and C, then A and D. Then it does same a step down and so on. Then, the pulse starts, like a beating heart, this piece is the most personal of all the movements, as it represents the soul of the whole project.

I compare writing this movement to painting a portrait. Responding to the person on the other line of the phone, their inner feelings and also respond to the sound of their voice, to what is being said, to how it is being said and then also create a work that feels like it is connecting to the portrait's subject. Some of this movement is reflective, but with an underlying urgency. Some of it is dramatic in a later part and it leads to the folk song in almost a chorale-like texture.

- iv. **Chrysanthe 2** is named after Katrina's daughter. I wanted to create a dance-like energetic and vibrant piece full of syncopated rhythms and with a carefree manner corresponding to movement 1. The piece ends with a quote of the folk song with a kind of a symbolic melodic wave from Chrysanthe 2 back to her grandmother Chrysanthe 1. – Elena Kats-Chernin, March 2022

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Erwin SCHULHOFF [1894-1942] | Five Pieces for String Quartet [1923]

"Music should first and foremost produce physical pleasures, yes, even ecstasies. Music is never philosophy, it arises from an ecstatic condition, finding its expression through rhythmical movement." – Erwin Schulhoff (1919)

The Five Pieces for String Quartet, dedicated to Darius Milhaud, were written after the great success of Schulhoff's String Quartet No. 1. The dances are written in the

style of a Baroque dance suite, but with the harmonic dissonances and rhythmic barbarism each dance is verging on a parody of itself, bringing the work squarely into the modern era.

- i. Valse Viennese. Allegro
- ii. Serenata. Allegretto con moto
- iii. Czeca. Molto Allegro
- iv. Tango. Andante
- v. Tarantella. Prestissimo con fuoco