



Dramatic Skies 3: Cirrus

Franz Schubert: Sonatensatz, D. 28

Rachel Clement: Shifting States

Andrzej Panufnik: Piano Trio Op. 1

Gillian Whitehead: Ka maranga ngā kapua (new commission)

Sergei Rachmaninov: Trio élégiaque No. 2 in D minor, Op. 9

Cirrus sweeps us into the heights of Schubert's musical charm, shifting us into Rachel Clement's glassmaking inspired sound world. Through passionate mood changes and luscious melodies reminiscent of the late French Romantics, Panufnik's piano trio takes us into the depths of the nebulous glow of Aotearoa's clouds in our new commission by Gillian Whitehead. Rachmaninov's masterpiece reflects on the huge journey of the whole series and brings the year to a dramatic close with a sense of pathos and heightened emotion.

Franz Schubert (GER; 1797 – 1828): Sonatensatz in B flat Major, D. 28

Allegro

Schubert was only fifteen when he wrote this delightful little trio. He'd already been composing for years – Salieri had been teaching him since he was seven – and as a performer had so far outstripped his father on violin and his brother on piano that all anybody could do, apparently, was look on him in silence and awe. His choir master would say, with tears in his eyes, that he had never had such a pupil as Schubert.

It was also a tumultuous year for young Schubert – his mother had just died at the end of May, and his voice had broken; he'd been thrown out of the Imperial Chapel College choir as a result and spent the August working on this trio before the return to school. Just one movement; Schubert was never one to belabour a piece if he felt that's all he had to say! And the astonishing thing is that he's all there already – those divine Schubert melodies (already an experienced song composer), his boldness and whimsy, whiplash change in moods, perfect writing for the instruments, above all that sense that the music always existed and we just follow wherever it wants to go wandering. All wrapped up in classical sonata form, perfectly.

Rachel Clement (NZ; b. 1972): Shifting States

sabbia (sand)

filigrana (filigree)

bullicante (with bubbles)

millefiore (thousand flowers)

sommerso (submerged)

Rachel Clement studied composition with John Rimmer and John Elmsly at the University of Auckland, graduating with a Bachelor of Music (Hons.) in 1995 and a Master of Music (composition) with distinction in 1997. She has composed for a range of contemporary performers and groups, including 175 East and Stroma, lectured part-time in Composition at the University of Canterbury, managed the library of the Christchurch Symphony, and worked as the National Secondary Schools Arts Co-ordinator for Music (on behalf of the Music Educators of NZ, Aotearoa) under contract to the Ministry of Education. In 2005 and 2006 she held the position of Mozart Fellow at the University of Otago.

Rachel writes: “This set of short pieces is inspired by an interest in mid-Twentieth Century glassmaking, in which the process of changing state, or changing phase, essential to the production of the many types of art glass. Each piece is titled with the name of a different technique and express some of the processes of freezing, melting, vaporization, condensation and sublimation.”

Shifting states was commissioned in 2005 by NZTrio with funding from Creative New Zealand.

Andrzej Panufnik (POL; b. 1914 – 1991): Piano Trio Op. 1

- I *Poco adagio – Allegro – Poco adagio*
- II *Largo*
- III *Presto*

This fabulously arresting and beautiful piano trio has quite a story behind it. It's by a Polish hero who actually returned to Poland during WWII, saved the Warsaw Philharmonic, composed music for the resistance, and made international headlines when he eventually defected to the west in 1954 (a story straight out of John Le Carre, involving a bogus conducting engagement in Switzerland and a night-time taxi ride through Zurich being chased by the Secret Police). In that time he did more for Polish music than anyone – his clandestine concerts with Lutosławski during the war were the only way that anyone could hear Polish music, since mass gatherings were banned – and he ended up fleeing Warsaw no less than three times.

That's where the story of this trio comes in. When he fled in 1944, just before the Warsaw uprising with his ailing mother in tow, he left all his music behind. The following spring he returned to the ruins of the city to collect it, also to bury his brother's body and see if his apartment had survived. The apartment had – but the music had not. Even after the war was over, a stranger squatting in his house had used it to start a bonfire in the desperate cold. He lost everything. He chose only three works to reconstruct from scratch, from memory, and this piano trio he had written when he was 19 was one.

It began as a student exercise, apparently: the opening movement in sonata form, the second song form, the third a rondo. But it's so much more than a student work. There's something profoundly original and thrilling about it, displaying all the hallmarks of the later Panufnik – exciting harmonies and effects, taut and perfect structure, the heartbreakingly beautiful melody of the slow movement, and the Polish dance-inspired energy of the last. His daughter Roxanna reports that he said of it: ‘without thought of public performance, I

was trying not to control essential technicalities but to write a true musical composition containing some expressiveness of feeling and vitality’.

Dame Gillian Karawe Whitehead, Ngāi Terangi (NZ; b. 1941): *Ka maranga ngā kapua* (new commission)

Considered one of the most important composers in Australasia, Dame Gillian Whitehead’s vast collection of award-winning works includes operas, orchestral works, choral pieces, vocal and instrumental chamber compositions, solo works, pieces involving taonga puoro and improvisational work. After many years of overseas experience and global recognition, she became an inaugural Artist Laureate of the NZ Arts Foundation (2000) and a Distinguished Companion of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Order of Merit (2009). She writes:

"*Ka maranga ngā kapua* translates as ‘the clouds will lift’. There are three short pieces in the set, and the last two were written just after the whole of Aotearoa went into level 4 lockdown in August. The pieces reflect our changing perceptions through the juxtaposition of ideas or styles from different times."

Commissioned in 2021 with funding from Creative New Zealand.

Sergei Rachmaninov (RUS; 1873 – 1943): Trio élégiaque No.2 in D minor

I *Moderato*

II *Quasi variazione: Andante - Allegro - Lento - Allegro scherzando - Moderato - L'istesso tempo - Allegro vivace - Andante - Moderato*

III *Allegro risoluto*

"Of all the people and artists whom I have had occasion to meet, Tchaikovsky was the most enchanting. His delicacy of spirit was unique. He was modest like all truly great men and simple as only very few are. Fame had not spoiled him."

This second trio, just like the first, is Rachmaninov’s tribute to his beloved mentor, Tchaikovsky. Rachmaninov had known him since he was a twelve year old boy, recently arrived in Moscow and newly enrolled at the Moscow conservatory; and though Tchaikovsky was no longer teaching on staff, he was still the head of the examinations board and immediately moved to get this boy into the best classes, even giving him his first paid commissions, first a piano four-hands of the Sleeping Beauty and then the piano pieces opus three. It was Tchaikovsky who made sure that his first opera was staged at the Bolshoi, who made sure all the right people were at his concerts. And Rachmaninov repaid the favour. When he was eighteen he gave the first of his many dedications to Tchaikovsky, the first trio "élégiaque", and a very fruitful friendship ensued.

And then, on 25 October, 1893, Tchaikovsky suddenly died. The musical world was rocked – and none more so than Rachmaninov. They had caught up only weeks before at a funeral after not seeing each other for some months, had a very happy brain-storming session together, and Tchaikovsky actually asked Rachmaninov to join him in St Petersburg for that last, fateful premiere. But Rachmaninov couldn’t make it – he had to be in Kiev to conduct a performance of his opera. He records the evening in his memoirs: "I played him The Rock,

and he said with that nice grin of his: 'It's amazing how many things you have managed to write this summer! A symphonic poem, a concerto, a suite, etc etc! All I've managed to write is just this one symphony!' This symphony was his sixth and last."

Rachmaninov began this trio that very same evening, finishing it quickly in less than two months. It's a huge, grand and passionate work, written on a much larger scale than his first trio, paying tribute to Tchaikovsky's own preferences (the first movement is in perfect classical sonata form) and opening with that clear lament on the cello. The second movement, Andante, is a variation movement modelled on Tchaikovsky's own trio Op. 50, with eight variations following the main theme and Rachmaninov very much asserting his brilliance at the piano; and the finale is an outburst of passion and energy when suddenly the strings bring in an echo of the lament at the beginning – and that magical descending phrase brings the trio full circle.

Rachmaninov dedicated his trio "To the memory of a great artist" and continued to perform and conduct Tchaikovsky for the rest of his life.

Programme notes by Charlotte Wilson