

ANAM RECITAL: HELENA BURNS (VIOLA) Contrast and Conversations

TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 3.30PM
ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

- Ross EDWARDS (b. 1943)** *Prelude and White Cockatoo Spirit Dance* (1994) 9'
i. Prelude
ii. White Cockatoo Spirit Dance
- Natalie WILLIAMS (b. 1977)** *Talking Points* (2016) 7'
i. Explanations
ii. Recollections
iii. Declamations
iv. Reflections
- Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)** *Viola Sonata in E-flat Major, op. 120 no. 2* (1894) 22'
i. Allegro amabile
ii. Allegro appassionato
iii. Andante con moto – Allegro
- Peter SCULTHORPE (1929-2014)** *String Quartet No. 11 Jabiru Dreaming* (1990) 15'
i. Deciso
ii. Liberamente – Estatico

Helena Burns* (QLD) viola
Leigh Harrold (ANAM Associate Faculty) piano
Lili Stephens* (QLD) violin
Lydia Sawires* (NSW) violin
Heesoo Kim* (QLD) cello

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

Helena is supported by ANAM Syndicate donors Mick and Margaret Toller, George and Kathy Deutsch, Moyna Wilson.

** Denotes a musician supported by ANAM Syndicate*

Lydia plays a Peter Goodfellow 2022 violin, generously on loan to ANAM from Jannie Brown.



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PROGRAM NOTES *Written by Helena Burns*

I am thrilled to be sharing this recital with you, which I have titled *Contrast and Conversations*. These themes have been focal points for me in my first year of study at ANAM and are showcased beautifully in this repertoire. In each of the diverse pieces, I aim to highlight the contrast in musical styles, sounds and eras and the rich conversations that emerge between the performers. Most importantly, I hope to create a dialogue that resonates with you by drawing connections between the vivid storytelling of Australian composers and the enduring brilliance of masters like Brahms.

Enyato II: Prelude and White Cockatoo Spirit Dance is a contemporary Australian work written by **Ross Edwards** in 1994. The word *Enyato* simply means contrast, and acknowledges the musical juxtaposition that Edwards creates through the fusion of his two distinct writing styles in a single piece. The *Prelude* is representative of his sacred writing style and is an introspective adagio while the *White Cockatoo Spirit Dance* displays the maninya style which is recognisable by its rhythmic drive and euphoric character. The maninya style is a dance, founded on repetitive sounds, shapes and patterns distilled from the natural environment in Australia. The piece was written for Patricia Pollett who gave the first performance in 1994 at a Perihelion concert in Brisbane. Patricia is a fierce champion of new Australian works for the viola and was my viola teacher up until this year. Preparing this piece has given me the confidence to experiment with different sounds and explore the extremities of my viola playing. I am grateful for all Patricia taught me, and I wish to dedicate today's performance to her.

Talking Points by Australian composer **Natalie Williams** is a suite for viola and piano that embodies communication through music, reflecting the nuances of conversation in our daily lives. The piece was commissioned by ACO principal viola Stefanie Farrands in 2016 and is a suite of four short pieces depicting simple types of conversation and interaction between the two instruments, who function as characters within the piece. Movement one, *Explanations*, introduces the two players as they each reveal their character traits to the other player, sometimes in unison, other times apart. *Recollections* explores the gentle faintness of memory, as both players seek to explore a shared, nostalgic past. *Declamations* reveals an argumentative side to the performing duo, as each player jostles with the other for musical and topical supremacy. The final movement, *Reflections*, unites the two voices in a shared love and longing for the past. A soft wash of sound in the accompanying piano line, highlights the plaintive viola melody which gradually disappears into eternity.

Johannes Brahms' Sonata for Viola and Piano in E-flat major is a beautiful exploration of partnership and dialogue, making it a cherished gem in the viola repertoire. From the outset of the first movement, *Allegro amabile*, Brahms invites listeners into a warm and friendly atmosphere. The viola sings with a soulful melody, complemented by the piano's flowing accompaniment. This movement captures a sense of intimacy and connection, highlighting the expressive capabilities of both instruments. The second movement, *Allegro appassionato*, takes a dramatic turn, showcasing Brahms' characteristic blend of passion and introspection. The dialogue between the viola and piano becomes more dynamic, filled with contrasts of intensity and tenderness. Here, the music explores deeper emotional currents, featuring a broad spectrum of emotions from passion to loneliness, redemption and resignation. The final movement, *Allegretto*, offers a serene and reflective conclusion through a theme and variations structure. With the gentle, dance-like quality of the theme and the contrasting character of each variation, the movement brings a sense of closure and reconciliation, allowing both instruments to weave together in a harmonious conversation. After the journey of the entire sonata, the final bars leave the listener with a sense of joy and resolution. This movement encapsulates the essence of Brahms' style—rich in melody, emotional depth, and a profound understanding of the partnership between the two instruments.

The final piece in the program is **Peter Sculthorpe's** eclectic eleventh string quartet. The string quartet is one of my favourite places to have a musical conversation with my colleagues, so naturally, I decided to include one in this recital. The subtitle *Jabiru Dreaming* takes its name from a rock formation on the lands of the Bininj and Munggyu people in what is now Kakadu National Park. Sculthorpe writes: "This rock is regarded as sacred, but there is nothing forbidding about it: on the contrary, it seems to beckon and welcome." The piece is in two movements and the instruments often mimic the natural sounds of the Australian landscape, creating a sense of movement and life that is both haunting and serene. The first movement, *Deciso*, contains rhythmic patterns found in the indigenous music of the Kakadu area. Some of these patterns also suggest the gait of the jabiru, a species of stork. The jabiru does not vocalise like so many other species of Australian birds, but instead makes a rhythmic tapping sound by rapidly clacking its beak. This is replicated through the use of *col legno* throughout the movement which is achieved by playing with the wood of the bow instead of the hair. The second movement, *Estatico*, is based upon a First Nations chant transcribed by a member of the Baudin exploratory expedition to the area in 1802. This is believed to be the first such music committed to Western notation. The chant is first stated by the cello in its original form and is later played by the second violin as the piece develops. Sculthorpe describes this movement as "a joyful one: it stems from my belief that Australia is one of the few places on earth where one may write straightforward, happy music."

While the exact details surrounding the transcription of this music are unknown, I want to recognise that it may have been done without permission from First Nations people. I would like to acknowledge this ambiguity and say that while we cannot undo the past, we must acknowledge it and work together on the path towards reconciliation. I want to dedicate this performance to the Bininj and Munggyu people and hope that this performance can further enhance the process of reconciliation through our musicmaking.