

GHOSTSCAPES

10:00AM

SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2023

ST PATRICK'S HALL



SUTHERLAND TRIO

Elizabeth Sellars *Violin*

Molly Kadarrauch *Cello*

Caroline Almonte *Piano*

Nat BARTSCH (born 1984)

Haze for Days

About the composer: Nat Bartsch is a twice ARIA-nominated Australian pianist and composer known for her ethereal, meditative, lyrical music. Her music deftly walks across a spectrum from neoclassical to jazz, also dipping into the worlds of chamber music, children's music and post-rock. She incorporates a wide range of influences including Arvo Pärt, Debussy, Nils Frahm, Sigur Ros, Nik Bärtsch, Stuart Greenbaum and Sufjan Stevens. Her music is played across the world by people from all walks of life, often in deeply personal moments – literally from the birthing suite, to the final hours before death. She has released eight albums, toured domestically and internationally, and collaborated with many leading Australian artists including Luke Howard, the Grigoryan Brothers, Back to Back Theatre, Inventi Ensemble, Teeny Tiny Stevies, Playschool and Plexus Collective. She recently established her own record label, Amica Records. She is proudly neurodivergent.

About the music: *Haze for Days* is a movement from *Fire Dances*, a suite for piano trio collaboratively written by eight Australian women composers, one from each state and territory. The suite was commissioned by composer Natalie Williams through the support of a Fresh Start Grant, funded by ABC Classic in 2020. The goal of the project was to create a work that reflected on the environmental devastation of the 2019/20 bushfires, as seen through the eyes of composers from across the continent. In the words of Nat Bartsch, "As the fires raged in Victoria, my Melbourne suburb was cloaked in a thick smoke haze. You couldn't see down the street. You could smell it in your house even with all the windows closed. It felt so eerie and visceral, and felt as though it would never disappear. [*Haze for Days*, is a] slow, lyrical movement [that] seeks to capture the grief of the fires, the frustration of climate inaction and the haunting, grey world outside. I can only begin to imagine the impact the smoke (and fire) had on the residents in South East Victoria. This music is dedicated to them."

Pēteris VASKS (born 1946)

Plainscapes

One of Latvia's most distinguished artists and arguably its greatest composer, Pēteris Vasks has amassed a powerful body of work, much of which grapples with the fundamental questions of human existence – the battle between light and darkness, the plight of the natural world and the fate of civilisation, "with the seal of the past, the chaos of the present and hope for the future".

Originally composed in 2002 for eight-voice choir, violin and cello on a commission from the renowned Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer, in 2011 Vasks adapted *Plainscapes* for piano trio on a subsequent commission from the Eindhoven Music Centre. The music is described by its composer as a hymn to the Latvian lowlands and the miracle of the rebirth of nature. Vasks writes, “Because it has given me so many unique and joyous moments, the natural beauty of Latvia has been the stimulus for much of my work. The flatlands are one of the dominant features of the Latvian landscape, a place where you can see ... the starry sky span right up to the horizon. It is past comprehension, but I almost want to embrace the unembraceable.”

Plainscapes is comprised of three main sections (three vocalises originally sung by the choir), introduced by a prelude and separated by interludes, concluding with a *Vision of Nature Awakening* and a final reprise. In the words of music journalist Hilary Finch, “It’s a mirage of glissandos, wingbeats, and ancient, atavistic song, both human and avian.”

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Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770 – 1827)

Piano Trio in D major “Ghost”, Op. 70, No. 1

1. *Allegro vivace e con brio*

2. *Largo assai ed espressivo*

3. *Presto*

Immediately after completing his Sixth Symphony in the late summer of 1808, Beethoven set to work on two ground-breaking piano trios (Op. 70), begun in the town of Heiligenstadt and completed in Vienna over the space of a few months. The first trio in D major has long been known as the “Ghost” Trio on account of its mysterious slow movement – in 1842 one of Beethoven’s friends and former pupils, the composer-pianist Carl Czerny, wrote that it “resembles an appearance from the underworld”. Both trios were dedicated to the Countess Anna Maria Erdődy, one of Beethoven’s closest friends and champions. In autumn 1808, he moved into her Vienna apartments, where the first performance of the trios was given around Christmas with the new tenant at the keyboard.

While in the piano trios of Haydn and Mozart the strings are kept somewhat in thrall to the keyboard, in this work and others like it, Beethoven cuts the leash, allowing all three players to vie for lyrical and technical primacy. The music launches into being with a precipitously frenzied outburst, *fortissimo* and *staccato*, suddenly interrupted by a beautiful, soaring melody from the cello. The whole movement concisely elaborates the tension between these opposing moods. The ensuing *Largo* unfurls onto a strange, enigmatic vista, as if impinging from another realm. One of Beethoven’s slowest, darkest creations, the movement proceeds at a sepulchral tread amid sombre melodies, unstable harmonies and shadowy textures. Daylight is restored with the arrival of the finale, full of long melodic lines, rich harmonies, impish humour and wild, joyful abandon.

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