



NEW ZEALAND
STRING QUARTET

NATIONAL TOUR 2021



AUGUST — SEPTEMBER 2021

Proudly celebrating 20 years of support
from the Turnovsky Endowment Trust



www.nzsqu.org.nz

PROGRAMME ONE

Hamilton, Auckland (Devonport), Dunedin, Blenheim, Wellington (Public Trust Hall)

HAYDN	String Quartet Op. 76, No. 4 ("Sunrise")
GARETH FARR	<i>Te Kōanga</i>
LIGETI	String Quartet No. 1 ('Métamorphoses Nocturnes')
INTERVAL	
DVOŘÁK	String Quartet No. 10, Op. 51

PROGRAMME TWO

Martinborough, Tauranga, Auckland (Parnell), Nelson, Napier, Wellington (Hunter Council Chamber)

MOZART	String Quartet No. 21, K. 575
LOUISE WEBSTER	<i>this memory of earth</i>
SHOSTAKOVICH	String Quartet No. 11, Op. 122
INTERVAL	
MENDELSSOHN	String Quartet No. 2, Op. 13



A message from our National Tour Principal Sponsor – the Turnovsky Endowment Trust



FRED TURNOVSKY

Welcome to this concert in the New Zealand String Quartet's National Tour, where together we celebrate 20 years of this wonderful series. Fred Turnovsky, founder of the Turnovsky Endowment Trust, was an early advocate for the formation of a national string quartet and enjoyed a close relationship with the ensemble from its earliest days in 1987.

Fred wrote in his autobiography "And then there appeared the young string quartet of exceptional quality... whose playing captivated me from first hearing... every time I hear them I preen myself for having done something useful in my fifty years of living in New Zealand."

The Turnovsky Endowment Trust is proud to have sponsored the Quartet's annual tour of New Zealand for 20 years. Fred's vision was to bring the music of great European composers to audiences here in his adopted country and I know he would have been thrilled to hear the music of fellow countryman, Anton Dvořák, alongside new New Zealand works, to enrich and expand our musical experiences.

Helen Philpott
Trustee, Turnovsky Endowment Trust

A message from the NZSQ on 20 years of support from the Turnovsky Endowment Trust

Kia whakanui tātou, It's time to celebrate! This is our 20th season of our National Tour, all of which have been generously sponsored by the Turnovsky Endowment Trust. We are indebted to the Turnovsky Trust for their visionary and consistent support of our mission to share our music far and wide around the country, with the artistic freedom to choose repertoire we hope will stimulate and delight our audiences.

Our National Tour has become our flagship concert series and the highlight of our year – we feel privileged to curate two programmes of great music to perform for you in small and large centres around Aotearoa each year.

We've had huge fun over the years selecting the repertoire, sometimes presenting works by a single composer – Beethoven, Mozart,

Haydn, or highlighting a particular country – "Czech" (our first such tour in 2002) and "The French Connection", where we first played Dutilleux's wondrous "Ainsi la Nuit" – a work rarely heard in Aotearoa.

We've particularly enjoyed commissioning and performing over 50 new New Zealand works, and are delighted to present one of our recent commissions on this tour – *this memory of earth*, by Louise Webster.

As the years have gone by, we've been able to increase the number of concerts on tour, reaching more places – last year, our most ambitious of all, we planned over 30 concerts celebrating Beethoven's 250th birthday.

Our grateful thanks to the Turnovsky Endowment Trust for their generous and continued support – this one's dedicated to you.

Ngā manaakitanga,
Helene, Monique, Gillian and Rolf



The New Zealand String Quartet

Helene Pohl (first violin), Monique Lapins (second violin), Gillian Ansell (viola), Rolf Gjelsten (cello)

Since 1987 the New Zealand String Quartet has been New Zealand's leading chamber ensemble, with a distinguished record of international touring success and a body of acclaimed recordings. Much-loved by audiences at home and around the world, the Quartet performs over eighty concerts alongside education concerts and workshops to popular and critical acclaim each year.

Career highlights have included highly-praised performances in London at the Wigmore Hall, in New York at the prestigious Frick Collection and in Washington's Library of Congress. The NZSQ regularly tours worldwide, with recent tours and digital performances in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as performing across Europe, Asia and North America. Known equally for their compelling interpretations of European and NZ compositions, the NZSQ have championed NZ music since their inception – commissioning over 50 New Zealand works for string quartet, and performing alongside celebrated taonga pūoro artists Richard Nunns and Rob Thorne.

The Quartet's extensive discography includes the complete Mendelssohn, Bartók and Berg string quartets, works by Ravel, Brahms, Debussy, Beethoven, Schubert, Dvořák and Wolf, as well as the premiere recording of the remarkable Zoltan Székely quartet. Recent CD releases include Janáček's String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2 alongside his Sonnets 1 and 2.

The Quartet has been Quartet-in-Residence at the New Zealand School of Music – Te Kōkī at Victoria University of Wellington since 1991, where the members hold associate professor and lecturer positions. Violinist Helene Pohl and violist Gillian Ansell are co-artistic directors of the biennial Adam Chamber Music Festival in Nelson, regarded as one of the foremost festivals of its kind in the southern hemisphere. The three longest-serving members have each been awarded the MNZM honour for services to music in New Zealand.

Helene Pohl *First Violin*



Helene Pohl studied at the Musikhochschule in Cologne, with members of the Cleveland Quartet at the Eastman School of Music and at Indiana University with Josef Gingold. She was first violinist of the prize-winning San Francisco-based Fidelio String Quartet before joining the NZSQ in 1994. In 2001 she became Artistic Director, with Gillian Ansell, of the Adam Chamber Music Festival.

Helene plays a 1730 violin made by Pietro Guarneri in Venice.

Monique Lapins *Second Violin*



Monique studied at the Australian National Academy of Music and at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music in Singapore. She has twice been a finalist in the Asia Pacific Chamber Music Competition and has participated in chamber music programmes and festivals in Europe, Asia and Australia.

Monique plays a 1784 Lorenzo Storioni violin kindly on loan from David Duncan Craig and the Lily Duncan Trust.

Gillian Ansell *Viola*



Following studies at the Royal College of Music in London and at the Musikhochschule in Cologne, Gillian worked as a professional player in London before becoming a founder member of the New Zealand String Quartet in 1987. She was second violinist for two years before taking up the position of violist with the group. In 2001 she became Artistic Director, with Helene Pohl, of the Adam Chamber Music Festival.

Gillian plays a 1619 Nicolò Amati viola kindly loaned by The Adam Foundation.

Rolf Gjelsten *Cello*



Rolf studied cello in North America with James Hunter and Janos Starker, as well as chamber music with the LaSalle, Hungarian, Vermeer, Cleveland and Emerson string quartets. He played professionally with the Berlin Symphony, the Laurentian Quartet and New York Trio before coming to New Zealand. He has a doctorate from Rutgers University and has played with the New Zealand String Quartet from 1994.

Rolf plays a 1705 Francesco Goffriller cello made in Venice.

PROGRAMME ONE



FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732 – 1809)

🕒 21 minutes

String Quartet Op. 76, No. 4 'Sunrise' (1797/98)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| I. Allegro con spirito | III. Menuetto. Allegro |
| II. Adagio | IV. Finale. Allegro, ma non troppo |

Commonly known as the father of the symphony, Franz Joseph Haydn's contribution to the string quartet genre is equally impressive. He composed around seventy works in the genre, so it's no wonder a number of them have been affectionately nicknamed (or some might say burdened!) with titles of great variety. *The Frog*, "How Do You Do?", *The Donkey*, and *The Joke* being some of the more memorable names bestowed, often by music enthusiasts rather than the composer himself.

The name 'Sunrise' - which characterises the opening theme - may have been given simply to distinguish it from other quartets written in the same key. It should be noted that this particular sun rises six times in the space of one short movement, as well as upside down (in inversion) twice!

The 'Sunrise' quartet is one of a set of six written while Haydn was employed at the court of Prince Nicolaus Esterházy II, and was composed around the same time as *The Creation*. Perhaps the subtle influence of *The Creation* is why the Op. 76 quartets are among some of Haydn's most ambitious chamber works, deviating from their 60 or so predecessors in structure, harmonic exploration and thematic development.

The critics seemed to agree, with acclaimed theorist at the time writing to Haydn with a glowing review: "I have never received more pleasure from instrumental music: they [Op. 76] are full of invention, fire, good taste and new effects..."

PROGRAMME ONE

GARETH FARR (1969—)

🕒 10 minutes

Te Kōanga (2017)



Written in the Spring of 2017, *Te Kōanga* or 'Planting Season' is a celebration of life and regeneration, and the happiness that the return of the sun gives us after the bitter cold of winter. *Te Kōanga* was commissioned by the family of Wellington luthier and cellist Ian Lyons, a well-known figure among the Aotearoa string community whose instruments he serviced and cared for before passing away unexpectedly in 2015.

Gareth Farr says "In addition to his passion for music, Ian was passionate about nature and the outdoors and spent much time observing and experiencing the beautiful and rich environment that Wellington boasts. This piece is not a lament for Ian - rather, it is a joyous celebration of the things that were most important to him."

Premiered by the Heath Quartet in 2018, the sound world of *Te Kōanga* was inspired by the Tūi calls heard in the Marlborough Sounds – the very same call noted down when Farr was just 16. Although written for string quartet, Farr at times seems to transform the Quartet into a percussion ensemble with powerful plucks and snaps on the strings.

Distinguished New Zealand composer Gareth Farr has received commissions from orchestras, ensembles, and soloists from around the world. His music has reached diverse audiences not only inside theatres and concert halls, but also at international events, including the 2000 and 2008 Olympic Games and the 2011 Rugby World Cup. Farr has received prestigious awards for his music and in 2006 became an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to music and entertainment. He studied composition and percussion at the University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington and the Eastman School of Music in Upstate New York.

© Chamber Music New Zealand

PROGRAMME ONE

GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923 – 2006)

🕒 20 minutes

String Quartet No. 1 'Métamorphoses nocturnes' (1953-54)



- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| I. Allegro grazioso | V. Andante Tranquillo |
| II. Vivace, capriccioso | VI. Tempo di Valse, moderato, con eleganza, un poco capriccioso |
| III. Adagio mesto | VII. Allegretto, un poco gioviale |
| II. Vivace, capriccioso | VIII. Prestissimo |
| IV. Presto | |

Hungary in the early 1950s was a grim place for a composer who wanted to explore new forms of musical expression. A stiflingly Stalinist regime 'disallowed' works that did not conform to the required folk music style. Fortunately for Ligeti, his studies at the Liszt Academy in Budapest had given him an excellent grounding in counterpoint and Renaissance polyphony as well as the folk music studies of Bartók and Kodály. This gave him the ability to produce some works that were approved for performance while also writing works "to be put away in a drawer" knowing that he had no chance of hearing them.

The young Ligeti was, at that stage, in the extraordinary position of having heard virtually none of the music written by older avant-garde composers such as Schoenberg, Webern, and Messiaen. Even the music of Bartók - who was recognised as Hungary's greatest national composer - was censored, so that Ligeti had not heard some of the older composer's more radical works.

Ligeti's String Quartet No 1, written in Budapest in 1953-4, was one of his 'secret' works to be "put away in the drawer". According to the composer, it was influenced both by Bartók and by the Lyric Suite of Alban Berg: "I only had the score, and hadn't actually heard any of Berg's works, but the score impressed me a great deal" Ligeti says.

String Quartet No 1 is performed as a single-movement work, but consists of a number of linked sections. Ligeti explains that the word 'Métamorphoses' in the title "signifies a set of character variations without an actual theme but developed out of a basic motivic idea which develops an initial four-note motif".

© Written by Jane Dawson for Chamber Music New Zealand / New Zealand String Quartet

PROGRAMME ONE

ANTON DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

🕒 32 minutes

String Quartet No. 10, Op. 51 (1879)



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I. Allegro ma non troppo | III. Romanza: Andante con moto |
| II. Dumka: Andante con moto — Vivace | IV. Finale: Allegro assai |

Anton Dvořák, along with Leoš Janáček and Bedřich Smetana, is considered a principal composer of the nationalist movement in the region that would eventually become the Czech Republic. Dvořák's music has had an enduring effect on synthesising traditional Czech folk traditions (and folk traditions Dvořák heard elsewhere) with western symphonic genres. He is most famous for his Ninth Symphony ('From the New World'), composed during his three years in New York directing the National Conservatory of Music.

After a thorough musical upbringing and study at the Prague Organ School, Dvořák spent nine years as an orchestral violist, mostly under Smetana's directorship. In 1875, Dvořák received the Austrian National Prize a second time, which led to several commissions – among them a violin concerto for the virtuoso Joseph Joachim, Brahms' close friend, whose quartet would eventually premiere String Quartet No. 10.

Dvořák wrote his tenth quartet at the request of Jean Becker, the leader of the Florentine Quartet – who specifically asked for a "Slavonic Quartet" evoking feelings of Bohemia, in the wake of Dvořák's Slavonic Dances and Rhapsodies for orchestra. The Slavonic character of String Quartet No. 10 derives from the folk-like melodies and traditional Czech dances which can be heard throughout. The playful polka in the first movement perfectly contrasts with the dark and melancholic 'Dumka' (elegy) in movement two, setting up a jubilant and sunny 'Skočná' (quick dance) finale to send the listener on their merry way.



Artists in residence—New Zealand String Quartet

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PROGRAMME TWO

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756 – 1791)

🕒 23 minutes

String Quartet No. 21, K. 575 (1789)



I. Allegretto
II. Andante
III. Menuetto: Allegretto
IV. Allegretto

While visiting Potsdam (Germany) in 1789 with his former piano pupil Prince Lichnowsky, Mozart was welcomed at the court of the cello-playing King Frederick William II. The King delighted in bringing the latest French and Italian operas to Berlin, and he greatly admired Mozart's string quartets. It was therefore natural and appropriate that he should commission Mozart to write six new string quartets as well as six easy piano sonatas for his daughter.

Mozart began work on the quartets when he arrived back in Vienna, though without much enthusiasm – there is evidence that he used material discarded from previous quartets to try and stimulate his imagination. The works were to have a substantial cello part in honour of the King, which created interesting problems of balance and led to Mozart describing them as 'concertante' quartets.

String Quartet K. 575 opens with a singing allegro theme, to be played 'sweetly and gently'. containing two motives later exploited – three staccato chords, and a concluding cadence. The cello introduces the second theme, lyrical and darker, and soon shares it with the higher instruments.

The slow movement is delightfully simple, contains an echo of Mozart's most famous song, Das Veilchen [The Violet], sometimes used as a nickname for the Quartet. The Menuetto makes great play with strongly marked accents off the beat, in a manner that seems to anticipates Beethoven. The contrasting trio section features a lyrical cello solo, and that instrument is also prominent in the rondo finale, which has a principal theme similar to that of the first movement. Contrapuntal sections alternate with sections of melody and accompaniment as the instruments are mixed in various combinations, and the music ends with deceptive serenity.

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PROGRAMME TWO

LOUISE WEBSTER

🕒 15 minutes

this memory of earth (2019)



Our earliest memories of the land shape who we are, who we become. Early experiences are stored as implicit memory, formed before conscious recollection is possible, but remembered by our bodies, our senses, our emotional responses as we move through life. At a time when our world is under such threat, these threads of memory nudge us, reminding us of what we must hold, treasure, reclaim, rebuild; the smell of rain, the coolness of shadow beneath trees, the pull of the sea, the cry of a bird in the night.

This quartet too is built of recurring snatches of melody, rhythmic fragments, overlapping textures and abrupt interruptions, interwoven and accumulating throughout the course of the work. Slow-moving duos segue into dancing figures that are tossed from one instrument to another, passages in which textural elements predominate are punctuated by strident outbursts, and the brief but insistent melodic figures that open the work, return at the close. The words of the title come from 'Fields in Midsummer' by New Zealand poet, Ruth Dallas.

This memory of earth was commissioned by the New Zealand String Quartet and had its first performance in May 2020.

© Louise Webster

NZSQ EDUCATION

The New Zealand String Quartet are proud to work with children, young people and families from all walks of life through our education concerts, workshops and mentoring programmes each year.

Alongside our annual Adam Summer School and Queen's Birthday Weekend chamber music coaching, we connect with young people of all ages and abilities through our workshops and mentoring with Sistema Aotearoa, Virtuoso Strings, Tironui Music Trust, Arohanui Strings and the Rauhi Project, and many more primary and secondary schools throughout Aotearoa.



If you're interested in finding out more about our education activity, or would like to help us connect with even more New Zealanders each year please visit nzsqu.org.nz/education or get in touch with Marcus Norman, General Manager, at manager@nzsqu.org.nz

PROGRAMME TWO

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

🕒 16 minutes

String Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 122 (1966)



- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| I. Introduction | V. Humoresque |
| II. Scherzo | VI. Elegy |
| III. Recitative | VII. Finale |
| IV. Étude | |

Dmitri Shostakovich wrote as many string quartets as symphonies – fifteen of each. His symphonies present emotional rawness and power on an immense scale, yet his quartets show he used the voicing and connection between each of the string instruments as a vehicle for more intimate utterances few symphonies could adequately capture. Born into a musical family in pre-revolutionary Russia, Shostakovich encountered political intrusion from the communist regime throughout his career that led to both setbacks and opportunities.

Shostakovich's artistic relationship with the Soviet Union was frequently uneasy – hardly surprising for a composer who lived through the 1917 Revolution, two world wars, and a succession of repressive state controls. A number of his quartets appeared at key points in European history. The Fourth, exhibited “Jewish” themes at a time of widespread anti-Semitism; the Eighth, written during a visit to the badly bombed city of Dresden, was dedicated “to the memory of the victims of facism and war”.

String Quartet No. 11 was one of three string quartets (No.s 9 – 11) written in the aftermath of his Symphony No. 13, a sombre work based on five poems by the Russian Poet Yvtushenko. Quartet No. 11 inhibits this same world of suffering and desolation: its spare textures and melodies arranged over multiple accompaniments, seem to recall the pared down orchestration of his thirteenth “Babi Yar” symphony.

String Quartet No. 11 is in the form of seven short interlinked movements, played without a break. Each movement is built on one of two themes first heard in the Interlude and Scherzo. The fleeting shifts in mood and tempo produce a fragmentary effect which underlines the work's cryptic nature. The longest movement, Elegy, commemorates Vassily Shirinsky, a member of the Beethoven Quartet which had given the first performances of most of Shostakovich's works in this genre.

© Written by Paul Goodson for Chamber Music New Zealand / New Zealand String Quartet

PROGRAMME TWO

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809 - 1847)

🕒 35 minutes

String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 13 (1827)



- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| I. Adagio | III. Intermezzo |
| II. Adagio non lento | IV. Presto |

“Is it true that you always wait for me there in the leafy path by the vineyard and ask the moonlight and the little stars about me? Is it true? What I feel can only be understood by someone who feels it with me, and who will stay forever true to me.”

So begins Mendelssohn's song “Frage” [Question] (Op. 9 No. 1), composed in 1827 when he was just 18 and experiencing the first pangs of love. Mendelssohn was no ordinary teenager, and before he reached his twenties he had already achieved distinction as a pianist and composer. The same year he wrote this song, he also composed his String Quartet in A minor (Op. 13), one of his most individual and harmonically adventurous chamber works, and a composition which owes much to Beethoven's late string quartets as well as to the little song “Frage”.

The three-note motif to which Mendelssohn set the words “Ist es wahr?” [Is it true?] in the song, appears throughout the quartet as both a melodic and a rhythmic device, while references to Beethoven's late quartets are evident in the quartet's structure. However, unlike Beethoven's dark and introspective late quartets, this one by Mendelssohn is full of life and passion.

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Nelson Mail, May 2017

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The 1619 Amati viola played by Gillian Ansell,
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Photo: Mark Robinson

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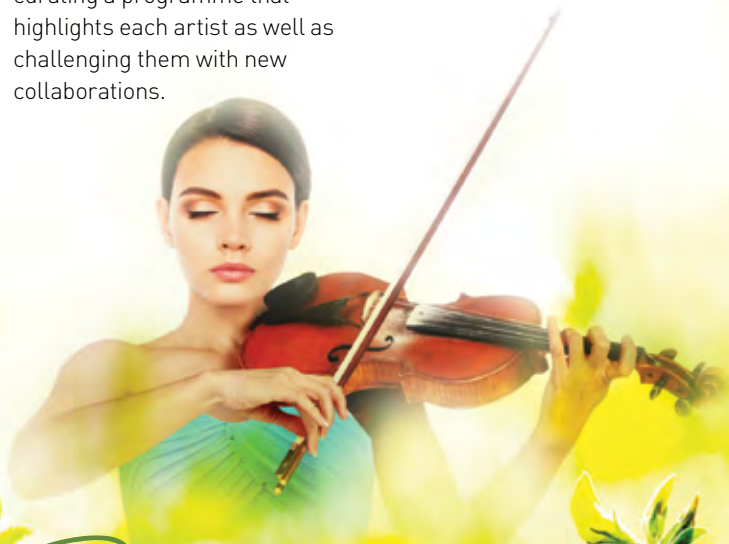
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