

## A note from the Quartet

For Arnold Schoenberg, Stefan George's poems 'Litany' and 'Rapture' struck an emotional chord and moved him to add solo voice to his soulful and intense Second String Quartet. Fusing poetry with music, the listener travels to magical new realms when the soprano sings "I feel air from another planet". Schoenberg revealed ways of speaking in music that inspired Alban Berg's experimentation with sound. Across the mesmerising depths of the *Lyric Suite's* six movements, Berg hid messages that suppress – and finally expose – his secret love affair. The fathomless world beyond the shoreline also holds many secrets. In *The Abiding Tides*, Arts Laureate Ross Harris sets shipwreck odes by beloved New Zealand poet Vincent O'Sullivan to music. It tells nautical tales from the *Titanic* to hopeful immigrant rafts to show how the mighty sea channels its own path.

## About the New Zealand String Quartet

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 more than 80 concerts to popular and critical acclaim each year.

Career highlights have included highly-praised performances at London's Wigmore Hall, the prestigious Frick Collection in New York and in Washington's Library of Congress. The Quartet's extensive discography includes Brahms, Mendelssohn, Bartók, Ravel, Debussy, Beethoven, Schubert, Dvorák, Wolf, Berg, Takemitsu, Tan Dun and numerous New Zealand composers including the complete chamber works for strings by Douglas Lilburn. In February 2019 the quartet released the final volume in a three-CD Brahms set for Naxos.

The ensemble has been Quartet-in-Residence at the New Zealand School of Music at Victoria University of Wellington, since 1991, where three of the members are Associate Professors. Violinist Helene Pohl and violist Gillian Ansell are Co-Artistic Directors of the biennial Adam Chamber Music Festival in Nelson. The longest-serving Quartet members have each been awarded the MNZM honour for services to music in New Zealand.

## Biographies

### 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 founding 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 since 1994.

Rolf plays a 1705 Francesco Goffriller cello made in Venice.

### Jenny Wollerman – Guest Soprano

Jenny Wollerman is noted for her expressive interpretations of unfamiliar works and premieres. As well as Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 2 and *The Abiding Tides*, highlights include Jenny McLeod's opera *Hohepa*, *Fragments from Wozzeck* with Auckland Philharmonia, Harris's *The Floating Bride* with NZSO, and Anthony Ritchie's *Stations: Symphony No. 4* recording – nominated for MusicWeb International's 2015 Recording of the Year. Senior Lecturer in Voice at New Zealand School of Music, she is one of New Zealand's best known sopranos.



New Zealand String Quartet | Aotearoa/New Zealand

# Secrets of Sea and Space

## Musicians

**First Violin** Helene Pohl

**Second Violin** Monique Lapins

**Viola** Gillian Ansell

**Cello** Rolf Gjelsten

**Guest soprano** Jenny Wollerman

## Music

**Arnold Schoenberg**

String Quartet No. 2 (1908)

**Alban Berg**

*Lyric Suite* (1925–6)

**Ross Harris**

*The Abiding Tides* (2012)

## Arnold Schoenberg – String Quartet No. 2

- i. Allegro molto
- ii. Intermezzo (Andantino grazioso)
- iii. Theme and Variations (Andante con moto)
- iv. Allegro

## Alban Berg – *Lyric Suite*

- i. Allegretto gioviale
- ii. Andante amoroso
- iii. Allegro misterioso – Trio estatico
- iv. Adagio appassionato
- v. Presto delirando – Tenebroso
- vi. Largo desolato

## Ross Harris – *The Abiding Tides*

1. The morning is clear
2. A child at the rail
3. Time's slow distant surf
4. Remember
5. This is a charm I wear
6. Attend what you must
7. Light
8. Nox perpetua



NEW ZEALAND  
STRING QUARTET

Tue 10 Mar, 6pm

St Mary of the Angels

1hr 40mins (incl. interval)

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21 Feb – 15 Mar 2020

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## **Text for Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), String Quartet No. 2: *The Seventh Ring* (1907), Stefan George (1868–1933)**

### **Litanei**

Tief ist die trauer die mich umdüstert,  
Ein tret ich wieder, Herr! in dein haus.

Lang war die reise, matt sind die glieder,  
Leer sind die schreine, voll nur die qual.

Durstende zunge darbt nach dem weine.  
Hart war gestritten, starr ist mein arm.

Gönne die ruhe schwankenden schritten,  
Hungrigem gaume bröckle dein brot!

Schwach ist mein atem rufend dem traume,  
Hohl sind die hände, fiebernd der mund.

Leih deine kühle, lösche die brände.  
Tilge das hoffen, sende das licht!

Gluten im herzen lodern noch offen,  
Innerst im grunde wacht noch ein schrei.

Töte das sehnen, schliesse die wunde!  
Nimm mir die liebe, gib mir dein glück!

### **Entrückung**

Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten.  
Mir blassen durch das dunkel die gesichter  
Die freundlich eben noch sich zu mir drehten.

Und bäum und wege die ich liebte fahlen  
Dass ich sie kaum mehr kenne und du lichter  
Geliebter schatten—rufer meiner qualen—

Bist nun erloschen ganz in tiefern gluten  
Um nach dem taumel streitenden getobes  
Mit einem frommen schauer anzumuten.

Ich löse mich in tönen, kreisend, webend,  
Ungründigen danks und unbenamten lobes  
Dem grossen atem wunschlos mich ergebend.

Mich überfährt ein ungestümes wehen  
Im rausch der weihe wo inbrünstige schreie  
In staub geworfner beterrinnen flehen:

Dann seh ich wie sich duftige nebel lüpfen  
In einer sonnerfüllten klaren freie  
Die nur umfängt auf fernsten bergesschlüpfen.

Der boden schüttert weiss und weich wie molke.  
Ich steige über schluchten ungeheuer.  
Ich fühle wie ich über letzter wolke

In einem meer kristallnen glanzes schwimme—  
Ich bin ein funke nur vom heiligen feuer  
Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der heiligen stimme.

### **Litany**

Deep is the sorrow that darkens around me,  
Once again, Lord! I enter your house.

Long was the journey, exhausted are my limbs,  
Empty are the altars, full only is my grief.

My thirsty tongue craves wine.  
Hard did I fight, numb is my arm.

Grant some peace to my faltering steps,  
For my unsated palate break your bread!

My breath is bated, recalling the dream,  
Palms are lifted hollow, fevered my mouth.

Quench the conflagration, coolness shall follow,  
Extinguish all hope, vouchsafe the light!

In my heart’s fires, glows are still unsuspending,  
Deep in my core, a cry still waiting.

Yearning shall perish, the wound shall be closed!  
Ease me of passion, give me your joy!

### **Rapture**

I sense the air of another planet.  
The faces that just turned towards me so amicably  
Now fade through the darkness.

Trees and paths that I once loved are now so indistinct  
That I can barely see them and you,  
Beloved luminous shadow – invoker of my anguish –

You are now completely eclipsed within a more intense  
Radiance whence comes, after the raging tumult’s frenzy is over,  
The soothing tremor of sacred awe.

I am dissolving into sound, circling and weaving my way:  
Full of boundless thanks and indescribable praise,  
I thus surrender myself selflessly unto the mighty breath.

In a sacred rapture where fervent women throw themselves,  
With frantic cries onto the dusty ground in prayer, I am  
Overwhelmed by a powerful rush of wind.

Then I see hazy vapours lifting over a sunlit, vast  
Expanse that extends far far away towards the most  
Distant mountain cliffs.

Beneath my feet a flooring soft, white and milky.  
I tread over frightening chasms with ease.  
Carried aloft beyond the highest cloud.

I am afloat upon a sea of crystal splendour –  
I am only a sparkle of the holy fire  
I am only a resonance of the holy voice.

To you, my only dear one  
Rises my cry  
out of the deepest abyss into which my heart has fallen

There the land is dead  
The air like lead  
And in the darkness curse and terror reign.  
Six months the sun gives no warmth.  
Six months darkness covers the earth.  
Not even the polar lands are so barren.  
No stream or tree nor field nor flock

## **Text for *Lyric Suite*, Alban Berg (1885–1935) – *continued***

Erreicht doch keine Schreckgeburt des Hirnes Das kalte  
Grausen dieses Eisgestirnes und dieser Nacht.  
Ein Chaos risengross!  
Ich neide das gemeinsten Tieres Los,  
das tauchen kann in stumpfen Schlafes Schwindel.

So langsam rollt sich ab der Zeiten Spindel.

No imagination of the fevered brain approaches  
the horror of this icy star, and of this night,  
a gigantic chaos!  
How I envy the commonest beast  
That can sink into the numbness of senseless sleep

So slowly does the spindle of time unwind.

## **Text for Ross Harris, *The Abiding Tides*, poems by Vincent O’Sullivan**

### **1. The morning is clear**

The morning is clear, the sea is pure glitter,  
We might have harvested diamonds  
had we brought the right net.

The sea we still dream because we have seen it,  
Seen from the beach, its paths opening without end.

Another world is rising the merest mile  
Beyond sighting. The streets know our names.

The songs have already begun, ‘This is yours, and yours.’  
The boat to Ithaca calling, who says no to that?

The boat from the richest wharf, from the midnight beach.  
We follow the moon’s ribbon tied to our wrist.

### **2. A child at the rail**

A child at the rail is telling  
Her doll of the famous city.  
‘It is taller than us, by far,  
The city is coming towards us.  
She is so high,’ she tells it,  
‘The lady white as her torch.  
We will count them every morning,  
The days until she can see us.’

The girl holds her doll up high,  
How far to the west?  
While the famous lady  
Is walking, walking towards them.  
To the girl who is counting,  
To the doll that is watching.  
And at night she is telling it  
Too, how the city is shining,  
It is brighter even than these,  
Chandeliers of the sky!

And the doll she is holding to see  
How the white lady is coming,  
The doll whose eyes glitter  
Like chips of ice.

### **3. Time’s slow distant surf**

Young girls don’t cross the ocean without what was that, sir?  
Without glamour? Without promise? Oh, I know, I know!  
Look there in the mirror, how the world is at my shoulder,  
Look across the ballroom, all the nations looking back!

Touch your bracelet. Tap your necklace.  
Toy the tiny buttons of your glove.  
The famous opera singer’s raising her Parisian lorgnette.  
Mrs Astor told me ‘Swell!’ when she passed me on the staircase.

There is so much crystal flashing you’d think the sky had lowered.  
There is so much laughter, love, you cannot imagine silence.  
When the band strikes up its Straussing, oh yes, oh yes!  
If God could waltz can you imagine he’d ever miss a beat?

The whole world colluding as you whirl in the crescendo!  
My heart’s a golden rabbit in that diamond hutch, delight!  
Young girls, sir? What was that, sir? Without what?  
My watch is in my cabin. Without time’s slow distant surf.

### **4. Remember**

Remember how the lead boat used to sink in the bath,  
How the plastic fish floated,  
How the yellow ball you held above your head  
Was the moon that gloated!

Remember how when it rained you could lick your arm  
And the wide sky smelled of water,  
If it rained enough the street would spread like the sea  
And your mother would call out, ‘Where,  
where are you my daughter?’

Remember when you splashed in the sea that was once a street  
The sea that can flood the moon so  
Its blackness floats where the lead boat sinks,  
And the game is over so soon, so.

### **5. This is a charm I wear**

This is a charm I wear, I am holding  
It now. The day has become a disc  
Too hot to touch. Salt walks  
On my lips, talks its fatal talk.

If I cut my arm it will bleed  
The colour of the sea. There is nothing  
Moves in my head but the hills of the sea.  
We have sailed a thousand miles. We have never moved.

The water that is left to drink is as bitter as copper.  
The mother bites her arm to stop calling out.  
The child closes its eyes. It will not wake up.  
The new world, the mother whispers,  
It cannot be far, she whispers.

I take the charm from my neck for the child’s throat.  
I hold a hand which is dry as five small sticks.

### **6. Attend what you must**

Attend what you must encounter, the seven demons.  
You hallucinate in the desert, you see rivers flow.  
You think of home, a place that no longer exists,  
A friend is a hand you hold until it is still,  
The horizon burns its rope to every side.  
You have counted six demons when you find the last.  
The boat will take you to sea, where the sea will win.

### **7.Light**

Light seeps its grey  
Composure on the mild day.  
On the waters of creation  
Peace lays its palm.  
Sea, whose beginning and end  
Ride abiding tides.

### **8. Nox perpetua**

Nox perpetua et aeterna.  
Stellae et mare in manus tuus sunt.  
Dona eis pacem, Deus absconditus,  
In tenebrae, in tenebrae, absconditus.

[Perpetual, everlasting night.  
The stars and the sea are in your hands.  
Grant them peace, God whom we never see,  
Whom we never see, in darkness, darkness.]