

CMNZ presents

TRANSFIGURED NIGHT

Touring NZ: 9 – 23 March



“Oh, how I wish I could make those who see my work feel the splendours and terrors of the night! One ought to be able to make people hear the songs, the silences, and murmurings of the air. They should feel the infinite.”

– Jean-François Millet

As day gives way to night, pulling a blanket of stars across the vast black sky, it invites you to lean in and listen closely. As your senses are dimmed by the growing darkness, listen... can you hear it?

NOCTURNES is an evocative collection of night-songs for the piano, played by internationally celebrated concert pianist, chamber musician and educator Professor Jian Liu.

Journey through a dreamscape of lilting lullabies and cradlesongs alongside night-music of mystery and mischief. Beloved nocturnes by Chopin and Liszt light the way for other gems in an intimate evening that celebrates the purity and power of solo piano.

Hear the songs, the silences, the murmurings.

Feel the infinite.

chambermusic.co.nz/nocturnes



CMNZ presents

NOCTURNES

7 – 21 April

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TABEA SQUIRE | *I Danced, Unseen**

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ANTONIN DVOŘÁK | String Sextet in A major, op 48

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—interval—

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG | *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night)

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With Artistic Direction and Choreography by Loughlan Prior

Set and Costume Design by William Fitzgerald

95 minutes including an interval

**New CMNZ commission and world premiere*

Tuesday 9 March, 7.30pm | Auckland Town Hall

Wednesday 10 March, 7.30pm | Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts, Hamilton

Thursday 11 March, 7.30pm | Toitoti: Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre

Saturday 13 March, 7.30pm | The Globe, Palmerston North

Monday 15 March, 7.30pm | Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington

Wednesday 17 March, 7.30pm | TSB Showplace, New Plymouth

Friday 19 March, 7.30pm | Nelson Centre for Musical Arts

Saturday 20 March, 7.30pm | The Piano, Christchurch

Monday 22 March, 7.30pm | Glenroy Auditorium, Dunedin

Tuesday 23 March, 7.30pm | Civic Theatre, Invercargill



All concerts are being audio described provided by Audio Described Aotearoa



Tēnā tatou

As we open 2021 with confidence (and some caution) we are delighted to bring to you a project that has been in the pipeline for some time. Through Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night) award-winning choreographer Loughlan Prior fuses dance with music in a striking theatrical journey of courage, strength, and human warmth. It is brought to life by BalletCollective Aotearoa and the New Zealand String Quartet, joined by NZSO's Associate Principal cello, Ken Ichinose and CSO's Principal viola Serenity Thurlow—truly a wonderful demonstration of artistic partnership and collaboration.

CMNZ is committed to the creation and performance of New Zealand music. In 2021 we will have over 35 New Zealand works performed across our various concert series. I would like to acknowledge the continued generosity of an anonymous donor that enabled CMNZ to commission the new work

from Tabea Squire titled *I Danced, Unseen*. This work has evolved from Tabea's memories of her childhood desire to dance (unseen) to Celtic folk music in particular. Staying with the folk music theme the glorious String Sextet by Dvořák that follows is full of Slavic folk elements.

Thank you to Pub Charity who is contributing to supporting the artists on this tour.

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to all our supporters who have helped us to traverse through these times. We could not do it without you.

Catherine Gibson
Chief Executive
Chamber Music New Zealand



Loughlan Prior

[Artistic Director & Choreographer]

'A creative tour de force' (DANZ), Loughlan Prior is a multi-award-winning choreographer based in Pōneke, New Zealand. He is the Artistic Director of Lo|Co Arts and Choreographer in Residence at the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

His works have been presented in New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Canada, Denmark and the United States and he has created numerous live and digital works for a diverse range of Kiwi organisations, from Te Papa to TV3's Dancing with the Stars.

A graduate of the New Zealand School of Dance, Loughlan joined the RNZB in 2009 and rose to the rank of Soloist. As a choreographer, he became the first recipient of the Ballet Foundation of New Zealand's Harry Haythorne Choreographic Award (2015), was awarded

Creative New Zealand's Tup Lang Choreographic Award (2016) and staged his work at the Assemblée Internationale in Toronto (2017).

He was appointed Choreographer in Residence with the RNZB in 2018 and premiered the highly acclaimed *Hansel and Gretel* in collaboration with composer Claire Cowan in 2019.

BalletCollective Aotearoa

The BalletCollective Aotearoa is a new project-based contemporary ballet company, made up of some of New Zealand's leading professional ballet dancers, exciting young graduates and student dancers seconded from the New Zealand School of Dance.



**Laura Saxon
Jones**
[Dancer]

Laura Saxon Jones began her training at the New Zealand School of Dance in 2011. Subsequently, she was awarded the 2012 Todd Scholarship and joined the Royal NZ Ballet. Her career has led her to perform a variety of illustrious roles including: Jiří Kylián's *Soldier's Mass*, Queen Myrtha in *Giselle*, and Alexander Ekman's *Cacti*. During this time, Laura was heavily involved in the Education programs offered at RNZB. Working with the Women's Arohata Prison inmates in a correctional development program was a particularly meaningful experience; this motivated her to continue sharing dance in an educational manner. In 2020, Laura started up her own coaching initiative, *Plies Please*. Additionally, Laura choreographed and performed in the world premiere of *Dance Me To The End* by Carrie Thiel, an immersive theatre, virtual reality experience, and worked on feature film *Avatar*. Most recently, Laura was the rehearsal director for the inaugural year 'The Nutcracker' by Primarily Dance. Alongside this, Laura gained her Business Diploma with Open Polytechnic University, focusing on leadership and management.



**William
Fitzgerald**
[Dancer]

William Fitzgerald, (pronouns he/she/they) is a freelance artist currently exploring their passion for Design, Fashion and Dance in association with LoCo Arts and the BalletCollective Aotearoa.

William trained with the Kim Harvey School of Dance (2011), and the New Zealand School of Dance (2013). William has performed around the world, to critical acclaim, with The Royal New Zealand Ballet, appeared in a number of films, and has designed for companies across the globe. William is also an ambassador with the New Zealand Aids Foundation and Ending HIV NZ.

William designed the set and costume for *Transfigured Night*. Self taught, he has worked to create costumes for several works that Loughlan has directed including *They/Them* which opened in Michigan in 2018.

"For me I'm practical in the sense that I like problem solving and for me making clothing is just problem solving. As humans we wear clothing everyday, if you take a moment to just think how is a shirt made it's really easy to break down... I guess some people have cross words or Sudoku and I have pattern making."



**Tabitha
Dombroski**
[Dancer]

Tabitha completed her full time training with The John Cranko School in Germany after receiving her certificate in dance at The New Zealand School of Dance. In her time training she fell in love with choreography and coaching, choreographing over 10 solos being performed in Spain, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, USA and Ukraine. She is also the first student in 10 years to have 3 of her own works performed at the gala on the Stuttgart Opera House stage. After graduating she worked in Switzerland with Swiss Offspring Ballet, until COVID-19 brought her home. Since then she has had the greatest pleasure in joining BalletCollective Aotearoa and also working with Primarily Dance, starting her freelance journey. She teaches adult ballet and contemporary for the aDvANCE programme at En Pointe Dance Academy and is also studying a bachelor of Science in Psychology.



New Zealand String Quartet

Celebrating its 34th season in 2021, the New Zealand String Quartet has established an international reputation for its insightful interpretations, compelling communication, and dynamic performing style. The Quartet is known for its imaginative programming and for its powerful connection with audiences of all kinds.

Over the decades the Quartet has cultivated a rich repertoire, including a wide variety of New Zealand music, composers' cycles from Beethoven to Bartók, Mozart to Berg, in addition to theatrical presentations on musical topics ranging from Haydn's "Seven Last Words" to Janáček's "Kreutzer Sonata".



Helene Pohl

[violin 1]

Born in Ithaca, New York to German parents, Helene Pohl spent her childhood on both sides of the Atlantic. At 17 she began tertiary study at the Musikhochschule Cologne, continuing her studies with members of the Cleveland Quartet at the Eastman School of Music and at Indiana University with Josef Gingold.

As first violinist of the San Francisco based Fidelio String Quartet (1988-1993), Helene performed extensively in the USA, Germany, England, Italy and South America. The Fidelio Quartet was prizewinner in the 1991 London International String Quartet Competition and quartet in residence at both the Tanglewood and Aspen Music Festivals.

Helene joined the New Zealand String Quartet as first violinist in February 1994. In 2001 she became Artistic Director, with fellow quartet member Gillian Ansell, of the Adam Chamber Music Festival. In 2014 she was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for her outstanding services to music in New Zealand.



Monique Lapins

[violin 2]

Monique Lapins began her violin studies at the age of 6 with the Suzuki method and continued her studies at the Australian National Academy of Music under William Hennessy, and at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music under Professor Qian Zhou.

As a chamber musician, she has twice been a finalist in the Asia Pacific Chamber Music Competition and has participated in chamber music programmes and festivals in France, the Czech Republic, Holland, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia and at the prestigious Open Chamber Music Seminars in Prussia Cove (UK).

A former Emerging Artist with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Monique has toured extensively with the Australian Chamber Orchestra Collective, the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed under the baton of Seiji Ozawa in Japan and under Philippe Herreweghe in France.

Monique joined the NZSQ 2016.

Monique plays a 1784 Lorenzo Storioni violin, kindly loaned by Mr David Duncan Craig, as trustee of the Lily Duncan Trust.



**Gillian
Ansell**
[viola]

Gillian Ansell made her concerto debut as a violinist with the APO at the age of 16. At 19, an Associated Board Scholarship took her to the Royal College of Music in London for 3 years to study violin, viola and piano. She then won a German Academic Exchange (DAAD) scholarship for further study in Germany at the Musikhochschule Cologne with Igor Ozim and the Amadeus Quartet.

After working professionally in London for three years she returned to New Zealand to become a founding member of the NZSQ in 1987 as second violinist, taking up the position of violist two years later.

In 2001 she became Artistic Director, with fellow quartet member Helene Pohl, of the Adam Chamber Music Festival. In 2008 she was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for her outstanding services to music in New Zealand.

Gillian plays on a 1619 Nicolò Amati viola, generously loaned by the Adam Foundation.



**Rolf
Gjelsten**
[cello]

Rolf Gjelsten began cello studies in Victoria, Canada, with James Hunter and Janos Starker at the age of 15. At 22 he became the youngest member of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. Rolf returned to North America to study with Zara Nelsova which led to further study with the members of the La Salle, Hungarian, Vermeer, Cleveland and Emerson string quartets.

As a member of the Laurentian Quartet for almost a decade he toured internationally, made five CDs and taught at the prestigious Sarah Lawrence College in New York.

Rolf furthered his studies from 1990 with the great Casals protégé and Beaux Arts Trio cellist Bernhard Greenhouse at Rutgers University, where he received his doctoral degree in cello.

He has performed with such eminent artists as Menahem Pressler, Anton Kuerti, Piers Lane, Tasmin Little and Nobuko Imai.

Rolf joined the New Zealand String Quartet in May 1994 and in 2014 he was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for his outstanding services to music in New Zealand.



Serenity Thurlow

[guest viola 2]

Serenity began violin at age five and viola at fifteen. At the University of Canterbury she studied both with Jan Tawroscewicz and was part of the inaugural Graduate Ensemble Programme at Victoria University, studying with the NZSQ. In 2006 she moved to Salzburg to study at the Mozarteum, completing her Masters there with Peter Langgartner and postgraduate studies with Thomas Riebl. There, she was a prizewinner in the Lionel Tertis viola competition and was an active chamber and orchestral musician, performing across Europe and the USA with orchestras such as the Salzburg Chamber Soloists, Camerata Salzburg, Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss among numerous others.

Since 2010 she has been Principal Violist in the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. In 2012 she was Principal Viola of the Aldeburgh World Orchestra, part of the Britten-Pears Festival, which subsequently toured Europe. In 2016 she premiered Chris Cree Brown's Viola Concerto for the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.

Serenity plays a Derazey viola, Malo bow and Leahy bow with the generous support of Christopher Marshall.



Ken Ichinose

[guest cello 2]

British cellist Ken Ichinose is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied with Paul Watkins. During his time there, Ken co-founded the Galitzin String Quartet with which he performed for ten years and completed major tours in the UK, Germany, Holland, Portugal and France. The Quartet were first prize winners of the 2007 Charles Hennen International Chamber Music Competition. Ken is also co-founder of an annual chamber music festival in Brignac near Montpellier, France.

Before joining the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra as Associate Principal in 2014, Ken enjoyed 10 years freelancing with London orchestras including the Philharmonia, Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Ken plays on a Lorenzo Carcassi Cello, made in Florence, 1747.



**Tabea
Squire**
[composer]

Tabea Squire began formal lessons on the violin at the age of six, and started regularly composing from the age of fourteen (with early tunes being dated back to the approximate age of seven). She completed her BMus with Honours in Performance violin under Helene Pohl at the NZSM in 2012.

Tabea has had works commissioned by the New Zealand String Quartet, the Manawatu Sinfonia, the Wellington Chamber Orchestra in conjunction with the Recorders and Early Music Union, the IRMT branch of Wellington, the NZSQ in

conjunction with the Forbidden City Chamber Orchestra of Beijing, and Toru Trio. She has had works performed in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, China, Europe, and Britain.

Tabea has also undertaken study of period instrument interpretation of baroque music. Interests in folk music, improvisation, and past service as an amateur church organist have all been enthusiastically integrated into her playing and composing.

TRANSFIGURED NIGHT

The nature of the relationship between music and dance has been debated for centuries. Whether music and dance are languages, and thus able to translate one another, has often been asked—and this question is further nuanced in tonight's work, *Transfigured Night*, where an unheard poetic text mediates both artistic mediums. It is probably safe to describe both music and dance as gestural languages. Music suggests virtual musical "movements" and "shapes" moving through virtual musical "space," and the actual movements of musical performers may or may not map onto such "movements." Dance, on the other hand, is normally more explicit in its gestural expression: real bodies moving through real space constitute the main focus of expression.

Listeners and viewers of music and dance gain meaning in large part through embodying (mimicking and experiencing through the body) the real or virtual movements of both mediums. Meanings gained from embodying such movements are culturally determined, with certain expectations developing over time. In seeing a dancer leap high

in the air across the stage, or in hearing a violin make a large "leap" upwards, one might experience the exhilaration and freedom that comes from striving up against gravity and falling back down with it. But dance doesn't merely visualise the virtual "movements" of music—for there are endless ways to express a single musical phrase in bodily terms, just as there are endless ways to understand musical "gestures" and danced, physical ones. Rather, dance shapes the way we embody music, and music shapes the way we embody dance. When music and dance co-exist, the commonalities and divergences between the two mediums—creatively explored in Loughlan Prior's choreography tonight—enrich audiences' experiences.

TABEA SQUIRE [1989–]

I Danced, Unseen

“Throughout my childhood and young adulthood, I had a particular unusual ritual. At times, I would shut myself in the living room, turn on some music, and dance. It was free dance—not mimicking the steps I learned in dance classes. I almost exclusively chose Celtic folk music, and most importantly, no-one was allowed to see me. If you walked into the house and heard fiddles and smallpipes, and the living-room door was closed, you’d know it was off-limits.

Still, I would dance onstage quite happily in productions, and I did improvise freely to music in public at weddings or similar events. But there was something about shutting myself away and interacting with the music and my own freedom of movement in such privacy which was deeply important to me.

The main theme of this piece was conceived as a kind of mirror of the particular folk style I was so stuck to, but I didn’t want to evoke the style

itself, so much as how I feel when I hear it. As the piece evolved, I found it mirroring the directions of energy I used to follow in my private dancing time, when I might suddenly stop partway through a track and click frantically onto another one I was suddenly pulled to—but the particular movements I had improvised with my body carried through, subtly transformed into new energy and expression; a wild expressive session tied together by a child improvising with her own body.

I can only wonder whether my younger self would have found similar release in dancing, alone and unseen, to the piece which followed so many years later.”

– Tabea Squire, 2021

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK [1841–1904]**String Sextet in A major, op 48**

1. Allegro — Moderato
2. Dumka. Poco allegretto
3. Furiant. Presto
4. Finale. Tema con variazioni. Allegretto grazioso, quasi andantino

This piece, warmly received at a private première in the home of famous violinist, Joseph Joachim, became a big part of Dvořák's success on the international stage. In 1878, building on his prolific set of chamber music for strings, Dvořák composed what was to be his only string sextet in just two weeks.

Many of the sextet's qualities recall one of Dvořák's heroes, Franz Schubert: the fresh harmonic surprises, the sudden turns from major to minor and back, the transportations of musical themes into sunnier (or not so sunny) keys, and the inspired quality of his melodies that evoke an improvised and spontaneous feel. Prior embraces these qualities with choreography of playful and whimsical delight as courtly baroque partner dances merge with the contemporary.

The opening theme of the first movement lulls us in with repeating notes and patterns gracefully surfing

through time as the music luxuriates in its own beautiful sounds—again recalling Schubert. Sweet consonances in the enchanting duet between first violin and first cello build a sense of elation. The second, effervescent theme (1'45") abounds with leaps and skips, while tinges of the minor key provide moments of cheekiness. Dvořák develops both these themes throughout the movement—sometimes separately, sometimes together—with every recurrence more enraptured and inspired than the last.

The second movement is a Slavic folk dance, the "dumka" (literally: "thought"). This is traditionally a reflective, even melancholic piece with interspersed moments of lightness or humour. The opening theme's circling, sigh-like motifs, and syncopated accents all suggest a wistful grace, but the melodic leaps mid-phrase provide a dance-like elegance that Prior pivots into a humorous sequence.

A Hungarian Roma folk theme tinged with melancholy follows, before a calming lullaby in a bright major key provides further contrast—the choreography playing delightfully with child-like folly. The opening dumka theme finally returns.

The third movement is a rollicking Bohemian dance, the “furiant” (literally: “fiery”; “fury”), which the dancers channel through rapid movements. The music’s happy insistence on motivic and rhythmic repetition bears striking similarities to some of Dvořák’s Slavonic Dances composed earlier the same year—especially Slavonic Dance No. 1.

The fourth movement’s sorrowful main theme is first heard in the rich, lower four strings. This is followed by a set of variations of

different landscapes, all tinged with melancholy. Prior progresses these variations with solos, duets, and trios, building to Dvořák’s final section of rhythmic momentum and exuberance. Prior reminds us of the potent power of musical tempo and rhythm in bringing our bodies to life. The choreography in the final section draws attention to the chaotic aspects of the music, before the languages of music and dance find rhythmic unison in the final notes.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG [1874–1951]*Verklärte Nacht*

Arnold Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night* (1899) was inspired by Richard Dehmel's poem of the same name. The poem describes a man and a woman walking through the woods, the woman's confession that she bears a child to another man, the man's loving acceptance of this news, and the subsequent transfiguration of the night, woman, man, and unborn child.

Transfigured Night is one of the last masterpieces of nineteenth-century romantic decadence, highlights including Schoenberg's shimmering, glittering, ethereal depictions of moonlight. The piece is exemplary of early Schoenberg's tendency to synthesise Wagnerian and Brahmsian compositional techniques.

The more conservative Brahmsian techniques are heard in the traditional contrapuntal lines that weave in and out of each other (realised by Prior, in turn, through the dancers' own weaving bodies), and in the traditional formal structures (realised via the clear stages of the choreography's progression). The Brahmsian technique of "developing variation," whereby musical motifs and themes grow from each other in an organic way, is further realised

by Prior via layered choreography: at the opening, the dancers come onto stage, one by one, reflecting the music's organic progression where a single note turns into a simple descending scale-like motif, which only gradually turns into melody. More progressive Wagnerian techniques, on the other hand, are evident in the music's searching, wandering harmonies (realised by Prior through bodily extension), and in the free use of harmony and texture to respond to emotive suggestions (realised by Prior through sudden visual changes).

Back in Schoenberg and Dehmel's turn-of-the-century Vienna, artists and scientists alike were fascinated in what lay beneath. This is the age of Freud, dissecting the unconscious, dream analysis, new invasive medical techniques, and expressionism—where artists depicted often violent or anxious impulses erupting to the surface. In the poem, it is not difficult to conceive of Dehmel's forest setting as the site for a turbulent dream of unpredictable turns, for the forest had long been used as a metaphor for the mysterious and unforeseen. In the choreography, this dream-state is strengthened

by Prior's use of fabrics, which not only connect dancers and their various emotional states, but also highlight elements of the characters' unconscious communication. The corporeal plasticity of these fabrics is a reminder that Freud's id lurks beneath and can make itself felt in very real ways. Furthermore, choreographed flashes of images, triggered by thoughts—a noose around the neck, a collapse into the foetal position—draw us deeper into the dream-state.

Commenting on both today's world and the Viennese world in which Schoenberg and Dehmel's works were set, Prior's choreography thus seems to represent one, long feverish, Freudian dream—eventually transfigured into lovers' peaceful rest. But the originally heterosexual story is retold here through the primary couple of two women, with the male dancer—often enabled through malleable, ghost-like fabric—frequently symbolising elements of the subconscious. This retelling of an old story is itself related to the dream-state, in and through which humans seek to reimagine narratives, relationships, and cultural norms in ways that help

us make sense of our own truths and realities. This choreography, then, gives new meaning to the last gender-neutral lines of Dehmel's poem: "Two people walk on through the high, bright night."

As a whole, the visual focus of Prior's choreography is often less on the separate bodies, and more on the forms that are shaped, reshaped, and passed through space from dancer to dancer. When a single, continuously morphed shape assumes choreographic focus, Prior dramatically highlights the relationship of form and expression as two sides of the same coin: the structured forms that pass between the characters—themselves unconscious in a dream state—become the focus of emotional substance.

Programme notes by Dr Hamish Robb,
Senior Lecturer, New Zealand School
of Music—Te Kōki, Te Herenga Waka—
Victoria University of Wellington

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