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AUSTRALIAN
COMPOSER SERIES



TASMANIAN
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Brenton Broadstock b. 1952

1	Festive Overture	11'25
2	Timeless	10'50
3	The Mountain	10'45
4	Federation Square: Rooms of Wonder	11'19
5	Symphony No. 4 <i>Born from Good Angel's Tears</i>	14'46
Total Playing Time		59'05

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
Ola Rudner conductor

Musical “Rooms of Wonder”: Transition and Transcendence in Works of Brenton Broadstock

Composer Brenton Broadstock has a number of “firsts” to his credit. He is the first composer at the University of Melbourne to have been promoted to the position of Professor (he is Head of Composition in the University’s Faculty of Music, where he has taught since 1982). He was the inaugural Composer-in-Residence with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 1988-89, when he wrote his Symphony No. 1 *Toward the Shining Light*. He was the first Australian composer to be signed up by the prestigious Schirmer publishing house. Passionate about furthering the dissemination of art music and the cause of his composer colleagues in this country, he compiled the reference book *Sound Ideas: Australian Composers Born Since 1950* (published in 1995 by the Australian Music Centre, Sydney); he received a large grant from Victoria’s Department of Education, Employment and Training to initiate an Australian Music curriculum at the Music Faculty and he also co-instigated the University’s Centre for Studies in Australian Music.

But the road to the position of one of this country’s most well-established, respected and prominent later-mid-generation composers has not been the usual trajectory of intense, formal, classical instrumental tuition during childhood leading to an undergraduate degree in music composition. Brought up in Salvation Army

barracks, where his parents were both Officers, his early life was, he describes, “institutionalised” and his surrounds ranged from Boys’ Homes to Retirement Villages to Youth Training Centres. It was here that Broadstock received his first musical experiences, playing trombone in the Army’s brass bands (but not taking the more traditional AMEB examinations in art music repertoire). Trombone-playing was joined by a stint as bass guitarist in a rock/pop band, Major Eclipse, in Broadstock’s late teens while reading for his first degree (in politics and history at Monash University, 1972-74). It was also during his upbringing with the Salvos, Broadstock believes, that his social conscience was formed as he witnessed the situation of people living at the margins of our social structures, placed there by circumstances beyond their own making.

This sociological consciousness has been reflected in the artistic impulse of many other composers since the turn of the last century, such as Hans Werner Henze, Hans Eisler, Luigi Nono, Cornelius Cardew, John Corigliano, Diamanda Galás, Meredith Monk and John Adams, and, more locally, Neil Currie, Martin Wesley-Smith, Anne Boyd, Andrée Greenwell and Colin Bright, to name only a few. For Broadstock, it was developed still further when a very short-lived tenure with the Education Department gave way to working as one of the country’s first music therapists at Lakeside Hospital, Ballarat in 1976-78.

During his therapist work, the realisation of where his future must lie hit Broadstock like a thunder-clap: he *must* pursue musical composition. He was accepted into postgraduate study with Donald Freund at Memphis State University, Tennessee, during 1979-80, and then took up further studies in 1981 with Peter Sculthorpe in Sydney, before the music teaching offer in 1982 brought him back to his home town of Melbourne.

The works in this collection span 21 years and represent early, middle and current periods of Brenton Broadstock's mature composing life. Surface differences are perhaps quite strikingly apparent and seem to reflect a broad movement over this time from a harder-edged spiky modernism to a more seductive postmodern tonal palette. Yet over the two-plus decades, Broadstock has not altered his essential approach to compositional principles – the overriding one of which might be best described as “writing to please oneself”, a maxim that Broadstock repeats again and again to his young composition students. This might seem an obvious – indeed, mandatory – stance for a creator, and certainly by the time of artistic maturity, it is to be hoped that influences have been taken on board, assessed, digested and transcended. Broadstock's is assuredly a distinctive, recognisable compositional voice. Yet one has the sense that, as for many others, the attainment of this position was hard-won.

Pressure from either “the academy” or critics, even one's peers, from one side, vying perhaps with the strong opinions of audiences on the other, have left countless composers – and indeed artists from all disciplines – since at least Beethoven, in an uncomfortable, even perilous, position. They can feel that if they stray from the style or approach which cemented their reputation, they sound their death-knell for future performances and composer colleagues' respect, or for continued audience acceptance. And in this past half-century, often the first two categories and the latter have been mutually exclusive: one needs only to think of the compositional trajectory of composers such as Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki or George Rochberg, for example, or Australians Richard Meale, Ross Edwards and even Peter Sculthorpe, and how their stylistic changes have been received on the part of audiences compared with (some, not all) reviewers. Broadstock, however, is one of the few who has enjoyed accolades from both camps: as well as winning just about every composition award to date in this country and many international prizes, with a list of commissions and cream-of-the-cream performers that seems to go on for pages, his music has had very warm audience responses (resulting, for instance, in *24 Hours* magazine's Listeners' Choice Award in 1998 for *Bright Tracks*).

And yet when Brenton Broadstock's First Symphony premiered, along with a crop of

positive responses from audiences and reviewers alike, there were the odd charges levelled at the composer of “conservatism”, “New Simplicity” or “New Romanticism” – one barb even went so far as to describe the work as an example of “New Naivety”. Such modernist squeamishness has not, however, deterred Broadstock from pursuing his own forays into neo-tonality – or using “tonal centres”, as he prefers to call it – where there is a sense of pitch centre without recourse to traditional functional harmony; rather, in Broadstock's approach, serialised modal structures are employed. The hallmarks of his mature style are present in all the works on the disc, despite the seeming dissimilarities; these stylistic fingerprints include a strong adherence to the golden mean principle, where the always carefully wrought and inevitably intensely powerful climax occurs around three-fifths of the way through; the use of pitch slides as a fusing device; local, melodic embellishments; juxtapositions of dramatic textural contrasts; transformation of the dorian mode, mathematically and systematically, each cycle flattened by a semitone before the original mode re-emerges; and (predictably!) prominence of brass in the orchestral works.

One Romantic composer to whose works Broadstock *is* avowedly attracted is Finland's Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) and his (in Broadstock's words) “icy Romanticism”. **The Mountain** (1983), for chamber orchestra, for

which the composer won an Australasian Performing Rights Association award in 1984, is dedicated to Peter Sculthorpe. It was composed for the 1983 National Orchestral Composers' School and first performed by the ABC Sinfonia conducted by Wilfred Lehmann. The title is taken from a quote from Sibelius' own diary:

...I begin already dimly to see the mountain that I shall certainly ascend....God opens His door for a moment and His orchestra plays the Fifth Symphony. (September 1915)

A bristly, busy opening gives way to a portentous brass pronouncement which in turn is replaced by a spacious passage full of eerie – indeed, “icy” – wonderment as the mountain comes into view for the observer. From there, busyness alternates with more serene passages, and moments of metrical clarity and regularity are interspersed with ametrical ones – as though the earthbound were in conflict with the extra-terrestrial. The climax (at the typical golden-section point of the work, three-fifths of the way through) includes cascading percussion and piano: “God” opens His door and the viewer is overwhelmed by the revelation. This ushers in a very sparse, slow-paced section featuring pitch-bends, leading to a siren-like effect in the trumpets. The texture then gradually achieves a state of transcendence where the orchestra finally comes together again, only to dissipate gently over the summit.

While Broadstock's one-time teacher, Sculthorpe, has made the defining of an Australian "voice" his lifetime's musical quest, Broadstock only occasionally seeks to reflect his nationality in his music. Very recent forays into this subject matter are two works for string orchestra, *Federation Square: Rooms of Wonder* (2003), inspired by part of Melbourne's cityscape, and *Timeless* (2002), "dedicated with love to my daughter Taryn," a reflection both on the land in which Broadstock has lived his life, and on his own mortality. The title of the latter piece comes from an anonymous poem about the Australian landscape. Part of the poem reads thus:

*This land of red earth and slashing colour
stark yet vibrant
drenched in sun or swirling flood
survives and is timeless.
And we, too, are timeless.*

The opening yearning, mellow sonorities appropriately blur the barline as the music almost imperceptibly evolves, travelling through changing key areas and through subtly shifting levels of intensity almost before the listener realises that the most recent of these has been established.

Federation Square: Rooms of Wonder was commissioned by Jeffrey Crellin with the generous support of BMW to mark the opening of the new Federation Square in Melbourne. When Broadstock was asked to write this work, the first question he posed to himself was, how

does one write a piece about a city square? His answer was:

"Obviously, the 'square' is not a single entity and consists of many places, spaces and rooms – museums, restaurants, shops etc. When walking through Federation Square I was struck by the angularity of structure, by the use of glass, the tessellated features, and by the sense of expectation and excitement of moving through many different rooms and spaces. I was reminded of the old approach (still current?) of treating museums as 'rooms of wonders' (*Wunderkammern*, as the Austrians called them) where each space or room was filled with some amazing relic, craft work, furniture, paintings, sculpture etc. Federation Square evoked a similar response for me."

The opening is an emphatic expression of the sense of being visually *jolted*, experienced by many as they enter this postmodern fractal architecture of clashing angles, unexpected colours, structural turns and protuberances – the design process described by the architects Donald Bates and Peter Davidson as "Tectonic Aggregation," where "images of geological structures and contemporary painting and drawing are used as stimuli. From these, large numbers of two-dimensional pattern variants are automatically generated." But any sense of disquiet as one negotiates the Square, Broadstock finds, gives way to an impression of

approachableness and this, too, is reflected in the unfolding of the music as it becomes strongly (and more familiarly) consonant, and one "tunes" oneself to the building.

An optimistic, chiefly extroverted sensibility is maintained throughout most of **Festive Overture** (1981) for orchestra, with some contrasting more subdued moments, the first marked by sumptuous lush high-register strings juxtaposed against repeated-semiquaver bass instruments and the second comprising the rare duet combination of horn and tuba in semi-melancholic counterpoint with one another. This is followed by a section featuring the snare-drum beating a regular, militaristic rhythm behind a series of more metrically unpredictable stabs from the rest of the orchestra until the percussion section as a whole virtually takes over, revelling in exuberance before being tamed again by the strings. The final section commences sotto voce and pits the original repeated-semiquaver theme against the return of the shimmering strings: the work as a whole is in fact marked by simultaneous competing energies in the different instrumental ensembles, underlining the youthful, "festive" excitement. The work was premiered in Townsville by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra conducted by Werner Andreas Albert. It received First Prize in the 1981 Townsville Pacific Festival's National Composition Competition.

The Salvation Army and music therapy experiences have never left the compositional psyche of Brenton Broadstock. He has made many of his compositions "answer to" this social conscience, highlighting mental and physical disabilities in his first two symphonies, for example, railing against pollution in such chamber works as *Beast from Air* (1985) and *And No Birds Sing* (1986), and expressing the horror of war and genocide (relating specifically to the Second World War's Holocaust and the appalling attempts at the eradication of Aborigines in colonial Tasmania) in his Third Symphony *Voices from the Fire* (1991). In this particular selection of works, it is *Born from Good Angel's Tears*, Broadstock's Fourth Symphony (1995), which most clearly pursues the impulse to meld composing with external world concerns. Commissioned by the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne for its Centenary celebrations with the generous assistance of the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council, the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body, it is dedicated to Warren Bebbington, Ormond Professor and Dean of the Faculty. The first performance was by the Faculty of Music Orchestra conducted by Geoffrey Simon in the Melbourne Town Hall.

While the first two symphonies are musical essays on suffering from the point of view of afflicted individuals – Broadstock's own first-born son, Matthew, severely mentally and physically

handicapped, in the First Symphony, and the eccentric composer Ivor Gurney's mental disorder in the Second, *Stars in a Dark Night* (1989) – this **Fourth Symphony**, like the Third, steps outside the individual to provide a more generalised commentary on malevolent forces at work in human existence that bring about such wide-scale atrocities. Here, in *Born from Good Angel's Tears*, the reflections on world suffering are abstracted still further. The title comes from the fairy story (written in 1976) by the Finnish art/drama therapist Dr Sirkku Hiltunen:

The Good Angel looked down from Heaven and saw all the trouble on earth. She saw many wars...people were destroying each other...nature had turned against them...She saw floods and earthquakes...She saw intense heat. Severe drought caused thirst and starvation. There was death, incurable diseases, and unlimited misery everywhere.

Good Angel felt pity for the people on the earth because of their great suffering...

Then Good Angel looked into the depths of human depths, for she believed that all suffering had opened the eyes and hearts of people. But Good Angel was overcome by heavy grief when she saw that the hearts had become cold. Not even the sight of death could touch their hearts...People did not care about the consequences of their deeds...Everywhere

people were waging wars against each other with their thoughts, words and deeds.

When Good Angel saw all of this, she understood why it was necessary to have so much suffering on the earth. She became overwhelmed by even heavier sorrow and deeper pain. She turned her head away from the earth, covered her face with her hands, and wept. Good Angel wept and wept, and her tears began rolling further and further down. Suddenly when her tears touched the surface of the earth, they became small human beings. These little boys and girls stayed children all their lives. Because they were born of the tears of Good Angel they kept their connection to Heaven all their lives.

When we look into the eyes of these children...we will see mirrored not our outer beauty but our inner selves...

As is the case for Broadstock's other symphonies, this work is monothematic and undergoes processes of thematic transformation. It builds from a gentle, transcendental and reflective opening to intense, exultant climaxes within a relatively and somewhat deceptively slow pace. The inexorable slowness and beauty of the opening embryonic theme, haloed in strings and harp, builds to the first real, radiant statement of the theme, in the horns, seemingly optimistic yet tinged with sadness. There is no "great reckoning"; the

music falls downwards into an almost impossibly slow section of reflection. The return of the horn theme transforms itself almost surprisingly, and with re-found vigour, into the final section. The same slow melodic intervals are wound ever tighter, over more rhythmic accompaniment of ever-increasing tempo, to a final triumphant statement of the same theme, before finishing in an optimistic blaze. The technique of thematic transformation has been a time-honoured one since Berlioz and Liszt in producing a listener's sense of long-term narrative progress, and here, the conclusion seems to assert that from suffering can come joyousness; our "inner selves" are reflected in the tears of the Good Angel, tinged with pain but, finally, exquisite.

When the composer remarks that *Timeless* is dedicated to his daughter Taryn, he then goes on to state in typical self-deprecating and humorous fashion, that she is "the beginning of my 'immortality'!" – but it is equally likely that the works of Brenton Broadstock, consistently proving themselves to be musical "rooms of wonder", will ensure this for their creator.

Linda Kouvaras

Brenton Broadstock

Brenton Broadstock was born in Melbourne. He studied history, politics and music at Monash University, and later composition and theory with Donald Freund at Memphis State University in the USA and with Peter Sculthorpe at the University of Sydney. The University of Melbourne awarded him the Doctor of Music degree in 1987. Further periods of study in Italy have been supported by fellowships from the Civitella Ranieri Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation; in November 2005 he returned to Italy as a fellow at the Ligurian Study Centre.

His music has been performed at the Stroud Festival, the European Brass Band Championships in Birmingham and the BBC Proms; the Berlin Biennale, Darmstadt Summer School and Munich Musica Nova Festival in Germany; Tokyo's Music Today Festival; the Hong Kong and Oslo World Music Days and Asian Music Festivals in Japan and Korea. There have also been performances in New Zealand, Canada, Russia, Sweden, Spain and China. In Australia, Broadstock's work has been heard at the Adelaide Festival, Brisbane's Musica Nova Festival, the Summer Music, Moomba and Spoleto Festivals in Melbourne and the Townsville Pacific Festival.

He has had performances by all of the major orchestras in Australia and by the Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra in Japan, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Pacific Ocean Orchestra, the Krasnoyarsk Orchestra in Russia, Philharmonic Orchestra of

Moldova, the Ulster Orchestra, and the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra in Finland.

Brenton Broadstock has won numerous prizes for composition including the Albert Maggs Award, two APRA Music Awards (*The Mountain and Toward the Shining Light*); First Prize in the Hambacher Preis International Composers' Competition in Germany (Tuba Concerto); the Jean Bogan Prize for his solo piano work *Dying of the Light*; and Australia's richest composition prize, the Paul Lowin Song Cycle Award, for *Bright Tracks*. His orchestral work *Stars in a Dark Night* (Symphony No. 2) received four *Sounds Australian* National Music Critics' Awards including Best Australian Orchestral Work in 1989, and was the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's entry to the Paris Rostrum of Composers in 1990. In 1999 Brenton Broadstock was honoured with the Australia Council's Don Banks Award, for his contribution to Australian music. His Symphony No. 5 *Dark Side* received the AMC's Victorian Award for Best Composition in 2001; the following year, *Federation Flourish* was nominated for an APRA-AMC award as Orchestral Work of the Year. Some 36 compositions are now available on 23 commercial CDs worldwide.

Ola Rudner

Swedish-born Ola Rudner began his career as a violinist – he is a prize winner of the Paganini Competition in Genoa and in 1979 was awarded the annual prize of the Association of Critics in Copenhagen. After ten years as a soloist he took up conducting, and has been Kapellmeister at the Vienna Volksoper, Artistic Director of

Philharmonia Wien and Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. In 2004 he took up the position of Chief Conductor of the Haydn Orchestra in Italy.

Conducting highlights include work with the Sydney and West Australian Symphony Orchestras, The Queensland Orchestra, Bergen, Belgrade and Oslo Philharmonic Orchestras, Scottish and Swedish Chamber Orchestras, Stockholm Sinfonietta, Thüringen Philharmonie, Gothenburg, Aalborg, Trondheim and Erzgebirge Symphony Orchestras, Frankfurt and Swedish Radio Orchestras, NTO Tonkünstler Orchestra, Vienna Volksoper, Izmir State Symphony, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Haydn Orchestra, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie and Latvian National Symphony Orchestra.

His debut in 2001 with Opera Australia at the Sydney Opera House (*The Gypsy Princess* and *Così fan tutte*) immediately led to new engagements for 2002: *Fidelio* in the Sydney summer season and *The Marriage of Figaro* in the Melbourne spring season, and a concert with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra and the Opera Australia Chorus performing Mozart's Symphony No. 25 in G minor and Brahms' *German Requiem*. In recent seasons he has also directed modules of Symphony Australia's Conductor Development Program.

Recent engagements have included a European tour with the Philharmonia Wien, concerts with the Haydn Orchestra, Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, RAI Orchestra Turin, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Symphony and, for Opera Australia, *The Magic Flute* in Sydney.

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

Sebastian Lang-Lessing *Chief Conductor & Artistic Director*

The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is acclaimed as one of the world's finest small orchestras. German-born Sebastian Lang-Lessing is the orchestra's Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

The TSO presents an exciting and diverse annual concert series in Hobart and Launceston as well as concerts in regional centres. With a full-time playing strength of 47 musicians, its core repertoire is that of the Classical and early Romantic periods. It is, however, a versatile orchestra, performing repertoire from Baroque to jazz, popular music, opera and ballet, and is recognised for championing contemporary music.

The TSO records regularly for radio broadcasts, compact discs and soundtracks for television and film. It was the first Australian orchestra to record the complete Beethoven symphonies, and its recent recordings on international and Australian labels have been received with critical acclaim. In 2003, the orchestra launched its Australian Music Program and in 2004 released the first recordings of orchestral music as part of the TSO Australian Composer Series.

Encouragement of young talent is of paramount importance to the TSO. It provides an education program and collaborates extensively on a range of programs with Symphony Australia, the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Australian Music Centre.

The TSO has performed in most of the major Australian festivals and regularly travels to mainland Australia, touring both capital cities and regional centres. It has performed in Greece, Israel, Indonesia, South Korea, China, Argentina, Canada, the USA and Japan.



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