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# CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON

**7.30pm, Thursday 3 October**  
**Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre**

Experience one of cinema's most exciting martial arts spectacles and enduring love stories, together with composer Tan Dun's Oscar®-winning score performed live by the Auckland Philharmonia.

The New Zealand Herald  
**Premier Series**

**Auckland  
Philharmonia.**

# Joie de Vivre

🕒 **7.30PM, THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER**



Film will have the original Mandarin dialogue, with English subtitles. It is rated M for low level violence.

**CONDUCTOR** Samy Rachid

**PIANO** Louis Schwizgebel

**RAVEL** *Le Tombeau de Couperin*

**SAINT-SAËNS** Piano Concerto No.2

**TAKEMITSU** Three Film Scores for Strings

**POULENC** Sinfonietta



For artist biographies,  
please visit our website

# Programme Notes

**Maurice Ravel** (1875-1937)

*Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1919)

- I. *Prélude*
- II. *Forlane*
- III. *Menuet*
- IV. *Rigaudon*

DURATION: c.17'

Around the turn of the 20th century, many French composers started to be interested in earlier French music, partly as a corrective to what many saw as a dangerous interest in German music (by which they really meant Wagner). Maurice Ravel was especially interested in French keyboard composer François Couperin. The transparent keyboard style, careful ornamentation, and the structure of each movement of Ravel's memorial suite (the 'tombeau' of the title refers to a monumental grave) pay homage to the great composers of the past, and Ravel adds in his own brand of modal harmony and chromaticism.

Ravel finished his six-movement piano suite in 1917, with each movement dedicated to a friend who had died in the war. Marguerite Long, whose husband was one of the dedicatees, played the premiere. Ravel decided to orchestrate four of the movements in 1919. As usual, in the

process of orchestration he found new and unexpected colours, especially in the winds. The *Tombeau* is one of the few works that remains equally popular both in its piano version and its orchestral guise.

**Camille Saint-Saëns** (1835-1921)

Piano Concerto No.2 (1868)

- I. *Andante sostenuto*
- II. *Allegro scherzando*
- III. *Presto*

DURATION: c.24'

While Saint-Saëns's modern reputation rests on only a few pieces (including this concerto), during his lifetime every new piece was met with excitement, and by the turn of the 20th century he was considered the most important living French composer. After his death he was usually seen more as a good technician than an inspired composer, but now as more of his music is being rediscovered, we can place him more accurately in the important historical position between Liszt and Berlioz on one side and Fauré (who studied with Saint-Saëns) and Ravel on the other.

This concerto was composed as his fame was increasing: after a stint as a church organist and an organ and piano teacher, he won a major prize for composing a cantata

at Paris's Grande Fête Internationale in 1867; the judging panel was led by no less than Berlioz and Verdi. The concerto was written very quickly for the famous Russian pianist Anton Rubinstein's debut as a conductor, and the soloist was Saint-Saëns himself.

The concerto follows the usual forms, except that it begins with a slow movement instead of a fast one. The musical material is quite eclectic. The first movement begins with a rhythmically free piano solo in the learned style of Bach, the second theme of the second movement is very much in the style of the Second Empire's most popular composer, Offenbach, then the final movement is an exciting Italianate tarantella. Throughout, Saint-Saëns uses regularly-phrased and goal-directed 'classical' melodies in what could be read as a reaction against the 'endless melody' of Wagner, a hugely controversial figure in France in the 1860s.

## INTERVAL

**Tōru Takemitsu** (1930-1996)

*Three Film Scores for Strings* (1995)

- I. *Music of Training and Rest from Jose Torres* (1959)
- II. *Funeral Music from Black Rain* (1989)
- III. *Waltz from Face of Another* (1966)

DURATION: c.12'

Tōru Takemitsu wrote with a unique combination of traditional Japanese musical styles and the textural and timbral innovations of Debussy and Messiaen. His output was large and varied, but it was his music for more than 90 films that gave him the widest audience. This suite is an arrangement for strings of three of those scores. *Jose Torres* is a documentary by Hiroshi Teshigahara about a New York boxer; Takemitsu alludes to 1950s jazz styles befitting the setting. Shōhei Imamura's *Black Rain* is a drama about the aftermath

of the Hiroshima bombing. Takemitsu won a Japanese Academy Award for his quietly mournful score. *Face of Another*, directed by Hiroshi Teshigahara, is a fantastical drama of the Japanese New Wave; the Viennese-style waltz from its score features richly chromatic allusions to both Johann and Richard Strauss.

**Francis Poulenc** (1899-1963)

*Sinfonietta* (1948)

- I. *Allegro con fuoco*
- II. *Molto vivace*
- III. *Andante cantabile*
- IV. *Finale*

DURATION: c.27'

Poulenc's *Sinfonietta* is actually more of a symphony; other than the modestly-sized orchestra there is not much -etta about it. Rather, it is a Haydn-esque piece in the usual four movements, full of humour and good spirits. The BBC had commissioned a 12-minute piece to celebrate the first anniversary of their Third Programme national radio service, but Poulenc felt embarrassed that his submission was twice that long (and nearly a year late) so he offered to take a cut in his fee.

For a post-Second World War piece, the *Sinfonietta* is defiantly tuneful and tonal. At a time when much of the world's musical intelligentsia was turning towards the experiments with integral serialism at the Darmstadt School, Poulenc's music, drawing equally from Mozart and the music hall, was a welcome balm. This was Poulenc's only symphony. Always more comfortable with writing music with a narrative, or in smaller-scale forms, Poulenc did not revisit the work after he wrote it and it is not performed as frequently as its many charms warrant.

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