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## MEDIA RELEASE

### 6 Degrees of Separation (Music of 'Les Six')

**Alliance Française de Melbourne, Ballroom, 51 Grey Street St Kilda**  
**Wednesday 16 May 2012, 7pm**

*'Six Degrees of Separation' is the idea that everyone in the world is separated by a chain of 'a friend of a friend', which on average can connect any two people in six steps or fewer.*

On 16 January 1916 in an article in Comoedia titled "Les cinq Russes, les six Français et M. Satie" critic Henri Collet coined the term *Les Six* to describe a group of six composers who were working in Montparnasse in the second decade of the 20th century. Darius Milhaud said:

*"Collet chose six names absolutely arbitrarily, those of Auric, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc and Tailleferre and me simply because we knew each other and were pals and appeared on the same musical programs, no matter if our temperaments and personalities weren't at all the same! Auric and Poulenc followed ideas of Cocteau, Honegger followed German Romanticism, and myself, Mediterranean lyricism!"*

In this recital accomplished performers, Vivien Hamilton (soprano), Mardi McSullea (flute) and Len Vorster (piano) present – in six 'degustation' size courses – a program of French musical delicacies in the format of a gourmet restaurant menu.

Each 'course' of music includes a combination of tasty musical morsels by 'Les Six' alongside songs by composers who are in some way connected to them by six degrees – as teacher, mentor, student or admirer!

The program is influenced by a combination of 'surréalisme, sensualité et sentimentalité' and consists of songs designed for the French concert hall, but influenced by ragtime, baroque music, jazz and the smokey cabaret of 1920s Paris.

These French musical delicacies were composed, in part, as reaction to the harshness encountered by a Europe battered by the atrocities of World War 1. This reaction included a return to the use of compositional forms of the Baroque and other earlier musical eras by "Les Six" and a rejection of the grandiose musical language of composers such as Wagner.

**Admission:** \$25 Full / \$20 AF Members & Students -  
Booking essential online at: [www.afmelbourne.com.au](http://www.afmelbourne.com.au)

Performers' biographies are included on the following pages. For any further information or interview requests, please contact Françoise Libotte on 8598 9265 or at: [cultural@afmelbourne.com.au](mailto:cultural@afmelbourne.com.au)

### **VIVIEN HAMILTON - soprano**

Soprano Vivien Hamilton studied singing at the University of Western Australia with Australian Soprano Molly McGurk, and musicology with Professor David Tunley. Her professional career began as soprano soloist in numerous performances of early French Baroque oratorios and cantatas, which stimulated a developing and long lasting love of all French music. Vivien continued her studies in the UK with Contemporary music specialist Jane Manning, and with David Mason, whilst pursuing a career as both early music and opera singer. Vivien worked with the BBC Singers, the Hilliard Ensemble, Mosaic, English Festival Opera, Mecklenburgh Festival Opera, Kent Opera and New Sadlers Wells Opera.

Vivien has performed throughout Australia in a wide range of musical projects, which include art song recital, theatre and opera, oratorio, early music chamber projects, vocal ensemble performances, chamber opera and contemporary repertoire events. This experience includes recitals of American, French, English song for many Australian festivals and music societies, including Music at Princess Mathilde's Salon Paris 1866 with The Australia Ensemble for the Australian Academy of the Humanities ; recitals of early English, Italian and Restoration English song with The Orpheus Ensemble, and projects of Medieval, Renaissance, High Baroque music with early music groups such as Chaconna, Concert Eclectus, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, La Compagnia, and lutenists Rosemary Hodgson and Samantha Cohen soprano. Soprano solo work in Baroque Oratorio includes Handel's Messiah (e.g. Collegium Symphonic Chorus, WA), and the Australian Premiere of the newly discovered oratorio Vivaldi Dixit Dominus (by Australian musicologist Dr Jan Stockigt); Baroque Opera work includes the role of Clorinda in Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda at the Sydney Opera House (with Ludovico's Band and e21) and Contemporary Music work includes ensemble singing work on the original recording of Arvo Part's Passio (ECM) with the Hilliard Ensemble, the role of speaker in William Walton's Façade; Miss Tina in Michael Hurd's The Aspern Papers, Michael Smetanin's opera The Burrow (Chamber Made Opera), Mrs Andersson in Stephen Sondheim's A Little Night Music (MTC) and Steve Reich's Tellihiim for the Melbourne International Festival (e21).

Whilst performing is her passion Vivien is also a committed educator. She has been Lecturer in Voice at Monash University where she directed several choirs and taught singers for both the Classical and Music Theatre degrees. She has taught for the Victorian College for the Arts and for the Australian Catholic University on a regular basis and is currently on staff at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Melbourne where until recently she lectured in Vocal Pedagogy for the Bachelor of Music Education degree. Vivien is currently Musical Director of the Early Voices vocal ensemble at the Early Music Studio.

Vivien has several CD recordings to her credit including Olympia: The cantatas of Alessandro Scarlatti (ABC Classics), but most recently in partnership with pianist Len Vorster she released the CD "Burns and Beyond: Songs of Robert Burns" (Move Records) as homage to the National Bard of Scotland (Robert Burns) in the year of the 250th anniversary of his birth, and the Year of Homecoming 2009.

[www.vivienhamilton.com](http://www.vivienhamilton.com)

### **Mardi McCullea - flute**

Flautist Mardi McCullea began her musical training in Sydney. Grants from the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Trust Fund for Young Australians and Australia Council enabled her to study in New York with Thomas Nyfenger and with distinguished musicians including Marcel Moyse, Carl Schachter, Harvey Sollberger, Michael Parloff and Robert Dick. She received her Masters Degree from Queens College, City University of New York.

Mardi McCullea has appeared as concerto soloist with the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, the Brandenburg Ensemble in New York, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Chamber Orchestra and the New Jersey Percussion Ensemble. She has given solo recitals in the United States, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Sweden, Finland and New Zealand and recorded chamber and solo works for the ABC Classic FM and for CD release. Involved in a variety of innovative projects in Australia with arts organisations including, Astra, Chambermade Opera, Contemporary Events Company, Pipeline and Danceworks, she is currently engaged in a series of performance projects that explore interactive solo repertoire which has evolved from a generation of research at IRCAM in Paris. Formerly Head of Woodwind at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne, Mardi McCullea has been a guest teacher and Artist in Residence at the Sibelius Academy in Finland, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, School of Music University of Auckland and Queensland Conservatorium.

### **LEN VORSTER - piano**

Len Vorster was born in South Africa and studied under the eminent pianist Lamar Crowson at the University of Cape Town. He migrated to Australia in the early eighties and swiftly established himself as leading pianist and accompanist.

He made his concerto début with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra. In 1996 he premiered Michael Easton's Concerto on Australian Themes. This work was recorded for a Naxos CD with the State Orchestra of Victoria (conducted by Brett Kelly), and Len has since performed the concerto in Italy, Hungary, Germany, and with the Royal Academy Orchestra in London in 2001.

His CD recordings have received outstanding reviews from major publications around the world as well as a Gramophone Magazine award for the recording of the two-piano version (with Robert Chamberlain) of Holst's The Planets, and an ARIA nomination for his Naxos recording of music by Manuel de Falla.

He has recorded the complete solo piano music and songs of Lord Berners with acclaimed British tenor Ian Partridge for Marco Polo. In 2003 he released a solo CD Summer Waves, and ABC Classics released two CDs of Brahms Clarinet Chamber Music with Len Vorster, Deborah de Graaff and Georg Pedersen. In 2005 Naxos released his CD of solo piano and chamber music of Lennox Berkeley. Last year saw the release of a Move CD "Burns and Beyond" with soprano Vivien Hamilton.

He has performed and recorded with Trevor Wye, Andras Adorjan, Susan Milan, Jane Rutter, Masahide Kurita, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Carl Pini, Asmira Woodward-Page, Jane Peters, Elizabeth Sellars, Miwako Abe, Rita Hunter, Joanna Cole, Alison Rae Jones, Helen Noonan, Wendy Grose, Natsuko Minegishi, Elizabeth Campbell, Lauris Elms, Hartley Newnham (Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire), Gerald English, Michael Smallwood, Peter Coleman-Wright, Ian Cousins, Brian Hansford, and in two pianos with John McCabe.

In 2001 he formed a duo with David Berlin, Principal Cellist of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. The Berlin Vorster Duo toured Taiwan in 2003 and their CD Reflections was re-released for the Taiwan market. Their latest CD Barber and Debussy was released in December 2010 by Tall Poppies.

Len Vorster is on the piano staff of the University of Melbourne, Monash University and VCASS. He is also founding Artistic Director of the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival.