

BACH A CHILD OF THE STARS



Venus by Kevin Merritt

CONCERT 1: Friday 22nd September 7:30pm
Great Hall, The University of Sydney

CONCERT 2: Saturday 23rd September 7:30pm
St Finbar's Catholic Church, Glenbrook

CONCERT 3: Sunday 24th September 2:30pm
Our Lady of Dolours, Chatswood

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GRAPHIC DESIGN: Justin Archer | JellyTreeStudio.com

COVER ART:

Venus by Kevin Merritt. "This is the story of the beautiful morning star, Venus. I was inspired by [astrophysicist] Ray Norris on a field trip to Boolardy Station, at the site. We were walking around at 4 o'clock on a dark morning to catch a glimpse of the 'Morning Star Rope' phenomenon, which at certain times of the year appeared. Ray Norris excitedly explained how it appeared. So this is the painting to depict what actually occurs."

PHOTO CREDIT: Kevin Merritt/Shared Sky

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to 'Bach – A Child of the Stars', a program unlike anything we have presented before.

For many years it has been my dear wish to find a way of somehow uniting our musical heritage and inspiration of western Europe and J.S. Bach with the land we stand on here in Australia. We are an ensemble dedicated to the works of J.S. Bach, but we are Bach Akademie Australia, and therefore seek to unite these two incredibly rich musical cultures together, through music.

As the indigenous astronomers Karlie Noon and Krystal De Napoli state in their book *Sky Country*, "To truly understand a culture, we must explore its relationship to the land, but also to the skies. The land and sky are as one, forever connected." So, it is with a spirit of connectivity that we present this program of music inspired by the heavenly body that both J.S. Bach and the first nations peoples of Australia have seen every day for millennia – the Morning Star.

I have curated this program to begin with Bach and end with Bach, our great inspiration, as for us, he is the Alpha and the Omega of music. We also explore the music of other greats of Western music who were inspired by the heavens with Tomás Luis de Victoria and Vincenzo Galileo, the father of the great astronomer and physicist Galilei Galileo. But how to find a link to Australia? I did this by looking up. There I saw twinkling at me the morning star, otherwise known as Venus. After reading Karlie and Krystal's incredible book *Sky Country* which highlights how important Venus is to indigenous astronomy, I remembered that J.S. Bach also wrote a cantata about the Morning star – 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' BWV 1. I had found my link! Both J.S. Bach and the first peoples of Australia were both affected and inspired by this shining heavenly body, as we still are today.

With the aim of musically uniting both western and indigenous Australian cultures, we are incredibly proud and excited to have commissioned a new work by Australian indigenous composer Troy Russell, inspired by the Morning Star, just as J.S. Bach was centuries ago. His new work 'Clans' will be premiered in this series. We are also thrilled that Professor Jonathan Bland-Hawthorn, Professor of Astronomy at The University of Sydney will give a presentation on the western view of the heavens, alongside Uncle Jimmy Smith, who will give a presentation about indigenous astronomy, helping us better understand our land and the skies above from the perspective of both cultures.

I hope that this program of music both old and new from both the northern and southern hemispheres unites us all under the same shining star, Venus.

Madeleine Easton

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA



PHOTO: NICK WATT

ORCHESTRA

Madeleine Easton – Director / violin

Simone Slattery – violin

Rafael Font – violin

James Armstrong – violin

James Tarbotton – violin

John Ma – viola

Anton Baba – cello

Pippa MacMillan – double bass

Mikaela Oberg – recorder

Marko Sever – chamber organ

Tommie Andersson – lute

Adam Masters – oboe 1

Kailen Cresp – oboe 2

Simon Wolnizer – corno 1

Michael Dixon – corno 2

CHOIR

Susannah Lawergren – soprano

Brianna Louwen – soprano

Hannah Fraser – alto

Michael Burden – alto

Timothy Reynolds – tenor

Andrei Laptev – tenor

Jack Stephens – bass

Phillip Murray – bass

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach

Cantata 'Himmelskönig, sei willkommen' BWV 182 – Sinfonia

Tomás Luis de Victoria

O Magnum Mysterium

Presentation by Professor Jonathan Bland-Hawthorn
'Galileo, Bach and the western view of the heavens'

Vincenzo Galilei

Excerpts from the Well Tempered Lute

Tommie Andersson – Lute

(i) Romanesca prima

(ii) Moravia

(iii) Saltarello sesto

(iv) Calliope Gagliarda

Presentation by Uncle Jimmy Smith
about indigenous astronomy

Troy Russell

Clans

J.S. Bach

Cantata 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' BWV 1

1. Chorale Fantasia 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern'

2. Recit 'Du wahrer Gottes und Marien Sohn'

Andrei Laptev

3. Aria 'Erfüllet, ihr himmlischen göttlichen Flammen'

Susannah Lawergren

4. Recit 'Ein irdscher Glanz, ein leiblich Licht'

Jack Stephens

5. Aria 'Unser Mund und Ton der Saiten'

Timothy Reynolds

6. Chorale 'Wie bin ich doch so herzlich froh'

PROGRAM NOTES

In writing these program notes, one of the first things that occurred to me was that indigenous people would have been far more aware of the stars of the heavens because of the complete absence of light pollution. And Bach in Leipzig would have had far less light pollution in an age before electricity. That being said, I believe that generations before us had a much closer relationship to the stars than we do today. For the first peoples of Australia, the sky informs about the land. What is observed in the sky is mirrored on the land, and what is observed on land is echoed in the sky. To quote Karlie Noon and Krystal De Napoli, "Ngarinyin elder Uncle David Mowaljarlai from the Kimberley region in Western Australia teaches us that 'Everything under Creation is represented in the soil and in the stars. Everything has two witnesses, one on Earth and one in the sky. Everything is represented in the ground and the sky'."

Almost every person throughout history has looked up at the night sky and seen more than just a random scattering of light. The constellations and galaxies have helped us shape our own stories and cultures – creating meaning in the sky above, that guides us in our life on the ground below. From the very first astronomers to our present day, the study of the stars has, and continues to guide us and help us understand our place in this world and the universe. It is also the one thing that is universal to every being on our planet. We all share in the story of the heavens, regardless of our race, religion, creed or background. The heavens have inspired stories and storytelling from the very beginning of our evolution. For many, those stories are musical ones. The concepts of music and our fascination with the stars above are as ancient as our species. Today, we celebrate that delight and fascination through music.

J.S. Bach's Cantata 'Himmelskönig, sei willkommen' (King of Heaven, welcome) BWV 182, is one of his earliest and an undisputed masterpiece. Bach takes the heavens as inspiration in the opening sinfonia which depicts Christ's (Heaven's King) entry into Jerusalem. The French overture-style dotted figures of the solo recorder and violin are aptly chosen to reflect the majesty of the occasion, with the rest of the small ensemble playing in pizzicato in audible, measured and regal foot falls.

We all share in the story of the heavens, regardless of our race, religion, creed or background.

About 150 years earlier, the Spanish Renaissance composer Tomás Luis de Victoria took the morning star as the guiding light of the Christmas story in his justly famous motet 'O Magnum Mysterium'. The origin of this Nativity poem is in itself a great mystery. It is not a biblical text, however the poem/chant was incorporated in mediaeval times into the Divine Office as the fourth of the nine Responsories for Matins on Christmas Day. Victoria's use of serene polyphony throughout the opening bars leads to a hushed chordal declamation at the words "O beata Virgo" (O Blessed Virgin). An extended "Alleluia" section, first in triple meter, then in duple, concludes the motet.

It is, I feel, no coincidence that music played a seminal role in Galileo Galilei's life, as the relationship between the stars, mathematics, physics and music is a celebrated one. He was blessed with a father who was a talented musician and clearly passed his love of music onto his son, no doubt contributing to his extraordinary achievements in the world of science. The modern sequence of keys had yet to be invented when Vincenzo Galilei set out to traverse them all—138 years before Bach's seminal 'Well-tempered Clavier'. The resulting demands on the sixteenth-century lutenist are ferocious. Vincenzo Galilei's *Libro d'intavolature di liuto* (1584) demonstrated the ability of the lute to transpose pieces into any of the twelve degrees of an equally tempered scale, while using the two modes that most resemble the more modern notion of minor and major tonality - Dorian and Ionian. The *Libro* was created by a man who, together with his closest colleagues, had devoted his adult life trying to unravel the power of ancient Greek music and applying it to music-making in his own time. Galilei embedded his conclusions in the music of this collection.



Saltarello sesto by Galilei from the *Well-Tempered Lute*
– Tone 4, Book 1, No. 12

'Clans'

In this period of Australia's history, with us all standing on the precipice ready to witness the emergence of something new, bright, and hopeful on the horizon, it is an honour to write this composition, as Bach once observed a Morning Star, Australia may witness the birth of one.

Morning Star is a composition for clans. The clans from the old country and the clans from the new world. Venus, visible in the eastern sky just before sunrise, is one of the brightest objects in the night sky and has been observed by civilisations throughout history. Various cultures and mythologies have associated significance with Venus, often considering it a celestial body of importance from which has sprung a well of great art and song.

The cultures and languages in Australia are diverse and unique, and they have a significant impact on the cultural identity of the country. In that culture, the First Nations people of Australia saw the Morning Star as very significant in the daily lives of the various clans throughout the country and it is still very much alive. There are more than 250 Indigenous languages including around 800 dialects and almost all have the Morning Star playing a significant role. It is my privilege to present Bach Akademie Australia with the composition, Morning Star 'Clans'.

– Troy Russell

Finally, we come to our major work, Bach's magnificent cantata 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' BWV 1. Despite its BWV number, it is the last of the chorale cantatas of his cycle of 1724-5, and one of the most joyful. The text, by an anonymous librettist, both paraphrases and quotes from Philipp Nicolai's hymn of 1599 and relates to the reading of the day - The Annunciation and the coming of the saviour. Bach's miraculous composition makes full use of the positive and appealing text, underlining its charm and depth of feeling. The opening chorus is a chorale fantasia but made all the more remarkable by use of a concerto grosso texture. The morning star itself is marvellously depicted by two solo concertante violins which sparkle over the ensemble, deriving its brilliance from two horns, two oboe da caccias and strings.

The chorale melody rings out courtesy of the sopranos in unison with the first horn, whilst the lower voices support the cantus firmus, making full use of the thematic material provided by the orchestra. Word painting abounds whilst the orchestra develops its own independent thematic material. Overall, it is a musical tapestry of genius, perfectly depicting the joy of the text.

A secco recitative is followed by an extremely unusual aria which employs a tenor instrument, the oboe da caccia, to accompany the high soprano voice, no doubt to emphasise deep and profound ardent feelings alongside divine flickering flames that fill the heart that longs for God. The text paraphrases some of Mary's words of joy quoted in the bible which describe her joy when she realises what her Lord has asked of her – "My spirit with rapture is ardently burning, unceasingly yearning, to know all the joys that await me above." The next secco recitative gives special emphasis to the words 'Freudenschein' (joyful light) and 'Erquickung' (refreshment) with melismatic effects, before Bach launches into his balancing second aria, this time written for a solo tenor voice with the two solo violins returning as double obbligato instruments accompanied by strings. In this joyful, dance-like movement, the two solo violins once again sparkle in and out of the texture, representing the morning star, shining above one and all throughout the cantata as an overriding metaphor for a guiding light, pointing the listener to goodness, joy, love and fulfilment.

Always with an eye for balance, Bach concludes his cantata with a festive chorale marked by an incredibly agile 2nd horn part. The full sound of the entire ensemble enriched with wind concludes in a similar style to the opening chorus of what is surely one of Bach's most joyful compositions.

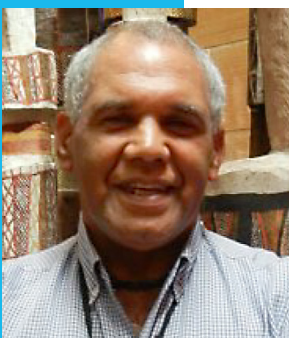
– Madeleine Easton



Troy John Russell is of the Biripai people of the Greater Manning area near Taree, and the Gamillaroi people of the North West Slopes and Plains. His journey with music began at 11, when a neighbour offered to teach him the fundamentals of music, and he flourished. He found an old photograph of his father playing a banjo and learned that his family from Taree was a musical family - a great revelation that has been inspiring him for the last 40 years. After an injury whilst working for Telecom, Troy found himself attending a TAFE college called Eora, where he also made a good friend in Christopher Sainsbury who taught him more about music than anyone. Russell has produced a small legacy of impressive works as his reputation as a composer gains momentum.



Joss Bland-Hawthorn is an ARC Laureate Fellow Professor of Physics and Director of the Sydney Institute for Astronomy (SIFA). He was born in England before moving overseas in 1985. After receiving his PhD from the Royal Greenwich Observatory and the University of Sussex, he took a 3-year postdoc in astrophysics at the Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii. In 1988-1993, he was a tenured professor at the Space Physics & Astronomy Department, Rice University, Texas. In 1993, he joined the Australian Astronomical Observatory, Sydney. In 2000, he was appointed Head of Instrument Science, a new division that was created to reflect the increasing need for complex novel solutions to astronomical instrumentation. In 2007, Joss was awarded the prestigious Federation Fellowship with a tenured professorship in the Sydney Institute for Astronomy (SIFA), School of Physics, University of Sydney. In 2009, he co-founded the Institute of Photonics and Optical Science (IPOS). In 2012, he was elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and the Optical Society of America. In 2014, Joss was awarded the Australian Laureate Fellowship. He has won numerous awards and serves on several boards including Section H (IAU) and the Annual Reviews of Astronomy and Astrophysics (USA). He has delivered numerous lecture series (e.g. Saas Fee, Bologna, Wisconsin) and is a regular speaker on the conference circuit, in addition to delivering occasional addresses at schools, clubs and industry. He was the Canon Lecturer at Canon Inc, Shinegawa, Tokyo (2012), the Plenary Speaker at the Supreme Court Judges conference (2013), and the Allison Levick Lecturer (2009, 2014) and gave the address at the AAS Burbidge dinner in Auckland, NZ (2019). In 2019, a review by The Australian identified him as the research leader in astronomy and astrophysics. He is a regular guest at the University of Oxford, the University of Bologna and the University of Marseille.



Jimmy Smith is an Aboriginal educator and cultural practitioner. Jimmy comes from Erambie mission outside the town of Cowra, New South Wales. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Education and a Masters in Education (Aboriginal Studies) and has extensive experience in teaching Aboriginal art, culture and heritage in Australia and abroad. In his role as a cultural practitioner, Jimmy scope and breadth ranges from early childhood, primary, high school to university, TAFE and community groups. He currently works with the Australian Museum, EORA TAFE Redfern, and other agencies that employ him as a cultural educator. Jimmy believes that through education about Aboriginal history, culture and knowledge, we can bring about social change: "People don't fully understand the depth and breadth of Aboriginal culture or Australian history and therefore make assumptions and believe the negative stereotypes that exist in Australia. Education is the key to changing this problem." Jimmy has particular passion in Aboriginal science and technology including Astronomy and traditional land usage. Further to this he is keen to share the strength of epistemologies and Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing. Jimmy is passionate about health particularly inspiration from Eastern (Asian) cultures that look at health and well being from a holistic perspective which is related to many Indigenous knowledge's about traditional health.



Bach Akademie Australia is dedicated to performing the works of J.S. Bach. It was established in late 2016 by Australian violinist Madeleine Easton who has recently returned after 19 years of living and working in Europe. Its aim is to enrich and enhance the musical life of Australia. The ensemble's focus on mastery of performance, authenticity and originality of interpretation brings the music of J.S. Bach to life. Bach Akademie Australia is also focused on forging close links with academic institutions around the country in order to establish educational and learning opportunities for young musicians.

Having been inspired by the world's leading Bach exponents, Bach Akademie Australia aims to give audiences the very best experience of J.S. Bach's music. Bach Akademie Australia gave its first public performance in April 2017, which sold out in Sydney, and later that year at the Canberra International Music Festival. These concerts were met with glowing reviews in *Limelight Magazine* and *Canberra City News*. The orchestra also made its debut recording for ABC Classic FM of Bach's Cantata BWV 4 'Christ lag in Todesbanden' and Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, both of which have been broadcast nationwide.

The subsequent years saw Bach Akademie Australia consolidate its growing reputation as one of Australia's outstanding period instrument ensembles by further sold out performances in Sydney and Canberra to critical acclaim. 2019 saw the formation of the Bach Akademie Australia Choir which performed to great acclaim with the orchestra in their debut performance of Bach's 'Ascension Oratorio' in March of that year.

Bach

O Magnum Mysterium

O magnum mysterium
Et admirabile sacramentum
Ut animalia viderent Dominum natum
Jacentem in praesepio!
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
Meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum
Alleluia

*O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!
Blessed is the virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!*

Bach Cantata 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' BWV 1

1. Chorale Fantasia

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern
Voll Gnad und Wahrheit von dem Herrn,
Die süße Wurzel Jesse!
Du Sohn Davids aus Jakobs Stamm,
Mein König und mein Bräutigam,
Hast mir mein Herz besessen,
Lieblich,
Freundlich,
Schön und herrlich, groß und ehrlich, reich von Gaben,
hoch und sehr prächtig erhaben.

*How beautifully shines the morning star
full of grace and truth from the Lord,
the sweet root of Jesse!
You son of David from the line of Jacob,
my king and my bridegroom,
have taken possession of my heart,
[you who are] lovely,
friendly,
beautiful and glorious, great and honest, rich in gifts,
lofty and exalted in splendour.*

2. Recitative (Tenor)

Du wahrer Gottes und Marien Sohn,
Du König derer Auserwählten,
Wie süß ist uns dies Lebenswort,
Nach dem die ersten Väter schon
So Jahr' als Tage zählten,
Das Gabriel mit Freuden dort
In Bethlehem verheißen!
O Süßigkeit, o Himmelsbrot,
Das weder Grab, Gefahr, noch Tod
Aus unsern Herzen reißen.
can tear from our hearts.

*You true son of God and Mary,
you king of those you have chosen,
how delightful is your word of life,
by which our earliest fathers already
counted both years and days,
[the word] which Gabriel with joy there
in Bethlehem promised!
O sweetness, o bread of heaven,
that neither grave nor danger nor death
can tear from our hearts.*

3. Aria (Soprano)

Erfüllet, ihr himmlischen göttlichen Flammen,
Die nach euch verlangende gläubige Brust!
Die Seelen empfinden die kräftigsten Triebe
Der brünstigsten Liebe
Und schmecken auf Erden die himmlische Lust.

*Fill, you divine flames of heaven,
the faithful hearts that long for you!
Our souls feel the mightiest impulses
of the most ardent love
and taste on earth the delight of heaven.*

4. Recitative (Bass)

Ein irdscher Glanz, ein leiblich Licht
Rührt meine Seele nicht;
Ein Freudenschein ist mir von Gott entstanden,
Denn ein vollkommnes Gut,
Des Heilands Leib und Blut,
Ist zur Erquickung da.
So muß uns ja
Der überreiche Segen,
Der uns von Ewigkeit bestimmt
Und unser Glaube zu sich nimmt,
Zum Dank und Preis bewegen.

*A glitter from the earth, a light from the body
does not move my soul;
there is a gleam of joy that comes to me from God,
for a perfect good,
the saviour's body and blood,
is there to give refreshment/new life.
Therefore we must
by this abundant blessing,
which was intended for us from eternity
and is acquired by our faith,
be moved to thanks and praise.*

5. Aria (Tenor)

Unser Mund und Ton der Saiten
Sollen dir
Für und für
Dank und Opfer zubereiten.
Herz und Sinnen sind erhoben,
Lebenslang
Mit Gesang,
Großer König, dich zu loben.

*Our mouths and the sound of strings
should for you
for ever and ever
prepare thanks and sacrifice.
Our hearts and minds are lifted up
throughout our lives
with song,
great king, to praise you.*

6. Chorale

Wie bin ich doch so herzlich froh,
Daß mein Schatz ist das A und O,
Der Anfang und das Ende;
Er wird mich doch zu seinem Preis
Aufnehmen in das Paradeis,
Des klopf ich in die Hände.
Amen!
Amen!
Komm, du schöne Freudenkrone, bleib nicht lange,
deiner wart ich mit Verlangen.

*How full I am therefore of heartfelt joy
that my treasure is the alpha and the omega,
the beginning and the end;
To his reward he will
take me up to paradise,
and so I clap my hands
Amen!
Amen!
Come, you sweet crown of joy, do not long delay,
I wait for you with longing.*

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern. Violino Concerto: 1.

Bach Cantata 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' BWV 1

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– LIMELIGHT

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MUSIC IN THE CASTLE OF HEAVEN

CELEBRATING 300 YEARS OF BACH IN LEIPZIG

2023 brings us an opportunity to celebrate one of the greatest events in musical history, J.S. Bach's appointment as Thomaskantor in Leipzig. As a result, a new era in music history began. For the next 27 years, the requirements of his appointment combined with his deep faith and desire to encourage faith in all others, inspired Bach to produce music of such staggering beauty, complexity and profundity that changed the course of music forever. These works, particularly the cantatas, are still performed and idolised around the world today, demonstrated by the more than 300 Bach choirs and societies that exist worldwide. To celebrate this momentous event, we have chosen 3 of his most celebrated Leipzig cantatas and his jubilant motet 'Singet dem Herrn'. How can the works of Bach ever be adequately summed up? We will leave it to our international patron Sir John Eliot Gardiner 'But it is Bach, making music in the Castle of Heaven, who gives us the voice of God – in human form. He is the one who blazes a trail, showing us how to overcome our imperfections through the perfections of his music: to make divine things human and human things divine.'

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach Chorale Prelude 'In Dulci Jublio' BWV 729

J.S. Bach Cantata 'Unser mund sei voll Lachens' BWV 110

J.S. Bach Motet 'Singet dem Herrn' BWV 225

J.S. Bach Cantata 'Jesu, der du meine Seele' BWV 78

J.S. Bach Cantata 'Wachet auf' BWV 140

DATES

Saturday 18th November, 7pm
St Finbar's Church, 46 Levy St,
Glenbrook NSW*

Sunday 19th November, 2:30pm
Our Lady of Dolours Church,
94 Archer St, Chatswood

Thursday 23rd November, 7pm
City Recital Hall, Angel Place, Sydney

*This concert will feature an amended programme

BOOKINGS

www.bachakademieaustralia.com.au 1300 785 377

Bach

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BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF ITS PARTNERS

