



MAGNIFICAT

Bach
AKADEMIE
AUSTRALIA

PROGRAM

Cantata 'O ewiges Feuer' BWV 34
Excerpts from Part 6 of the
Christmas Oratorio BWV 248
Magnificat BWV 243

Friday November 26 2021
Christ Church St Laurence, Sydney

Concert 1: 6.30pm
Concert 2: 8.30pm



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

To be able to walk out in front of our beloved choir and orchestra once again, knowing that in a few moments we will be filling this beautiful church with the life-affirming music of Bach, will surely be one of the most profound and intense moments of gratitude and happiness which I will experience.

To have lived through the shared experience of lockdown, the isolation, the fear, the uncertainty of when it would ever end, is something that will stay with us all for a long while and which we will all need time to process and come to terms with. It is almost unfathomable to think that we were here in this very church at the same time last year, attempting to re-emerge from the ashes of 2020, and that it has taken another year to reach a point where live music can once again be heard. Yet here we are, and thanks to you, our audience, we have a chance to collectively experience the relief of togetherness once again, and of letting the music of Bach transport us all to a more meaningful, joyful, sincere and loving state of grace.

If I had to describe the music of J.S Bach in one sentence, (however daunting that task may be!), I would attempt to articulate my feeling that his music, experienced collectively by the musician and the listener, creates an experience of transcendence. That transcendence is a collective lifting of our souls from ourselves, that results in a pure, untainted, selfless and grateful joy.

Tonight, we will ignite the eternal flickering fire of life and art once more with the first hopeful and triumphant notes of Bachs' Cantata BWV 34, then briefly repose in the comforting beauty of Part 6 of the Christmas Oratorio, before crowning the Christmas season with his Magnificat!

Thank you all for being with us here this evening. As I'm sure J.S. would say if he were here, this music is for you, for all mankind and of all nations.

Madeleine Easton

BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach Cantata 'O ewiges Feuer, O Ursprung der Liebe' BWV 34

1. Chorus: 'O ewiges Feuer, O Ursprung der Liebe'
2. Recit – Tenor: 'Herr, unsre Herzen halten dir'
Richard Butler
3. Aria – Alto: 'Wohl euch, ihr auserwählten Seelen'
Hannah Fraser
4. Recit – Bass: 'Erwählt sich Gott die heiligen Hütten'
Andrew Fysh
5. Chorus: 'Friede über Israel'

J.S. Bach Excerpts from Cantata No. 6 of the Christmas Oratorio BWV 248

- Aria No. 4: 'Nur ein Wink von sinen Händen Stürzt'
Susannah Lawergren
- Recit No. 5: 'Als sie nun den König gehöret hatten'
Richard Butler
- Chorale No. 6: 'Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier'

J.S. Bach Magnificat BWV 234

1. Chorus: 'Magnificat'
2. Aria – Soprano II: 'Et exultavit spiritus meus'
Anna Fraser
3. Aria – Soprano I: 'Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae'
Susannah Lawergren
4. Chorus: Omnes generationes
5. Aria – Bass: 'Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est'
Andrew Fysh
6. Aria – Alto/Tenor: 'Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies'
Hannah Fraser / Richard Butler
7. Chorus: 'Fecit potentiam in brachio suo dispersit superbos mente cordis sui'
8. Aria – Tenor: 'Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles'
Richard Butler
9. Aria – Alto 'Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes'
Stephanie Dillon
10. Aria – Soprano I & II: 'Suscepit Israel'
Susannah Lawergren / Anna Fraser
11. Chorus: 'Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros'
12. Chorus: 'Gloria Patri, et Filio et Spiritui Sancto'

PLEASE NOTE

The 8:30pm concert will be live streamed via the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall

Concert duration is approximately 60 minutes, no interval.

Please note that the concert duration is approximate and is subject to change.

We kindly request that you switch off all electronic devices during the performance.

PROGRAM NOTES

Cantata 'O ewiges Feuer' BWV 34

One of the many reasons Bach's music is so special is that it still remains so very relevant to our human experience today. Although not written specifically for Christmas (it was first performed on 1st June 1727 for Pentecost Sunday), the themes of eternal fire, love, dwelling together and peace could not be more apt for us in 2021. This cantata is a tour de force for the orchestra. From the first blazing upbeats of the trumpet, the idea of invigoration and animation is immediately achieved. In the opening chorus, the violins are called upon to represent the flickering fire of eternal life with no less than 5 pages of lively, figurative semiquavers in a brilliant display of word painting, and stamina. Providing emotion and heart, the oboes are given some of the most beautiful suspensions in all music, whilst the trumpets and timpani reinforce and decorate with burnished brilliance before the basses enter holding a top D for most of five bars, symbolising the 'eternal'. In a virtuosic display of counterpoint, Bach utilises "the other three parts aglitter with 'fiery' embellishments", as Sir John Eliot Gardiner observes.

The two outer choruses are framed by a sequence of recitative-aria-recitative, providing wonderful balance to the work. The central inner aria is particularly beautiful in its gentle, pastoral beauty. Its lilting, comforting, berceuse-like rhythm serves the meaning of the words "Wohl euch, ihr auserwählten Seelen, die Gott zur Wohnung ausersehn" (It is well for you, you chosen souls, whom God has designated for his dwelling) perfectly. To quote Sir John Eliot Gardiner again, he observes "the tender sensuousness of the pastoral writing, the pairings of thirds and sixths, the blending of flutes and muted strings and the satisfying textures and calm enchantment disturbed only momentarily by modulation", and considers that the piece possibly had some "deeper personal significance". Having been allowed to repose in the warmth and comfort of this beautiful alto aria, we are jolted upright by the bass soloist's declamation of blessings over his house, paving the way for a blaze of vocal glory by the choir in the words 'Freide über Israel!' Thrilling upward scales in the orchestra launch us into the final chorus, an extremely unusual bi-part march in which the choir shouts 'dankt' over and over, bringing this joyous Cantata to a close.

Excerpts from Cantata No. 6 of the Christmas Oratorio BWV 248

This is a work I'm sure many of us know and love well, and I dearly wish we could be performing the entire cantata for you this evening, not to mention the whole work! Since time restraints must be observed, we decided, as a tribute to the upcoming Christmas season, to perform the central aria of this cantata, its following recitative, and chorale. This cantata raises the spectre of Herod, and reminds us that dangerous enemies remain, even though the Saviour has been born. To calm and comfort us, Bach utilises the soft colour of a solo soprano and oboe d'amore to perfectly represent the idea that a casual wave of the hand by God can cast away any false hearts or mighty kings. Its gentle but buoyant dance rhythms in three time set us at ease immediately. However the use of darker, more menacing harmony throughout the opening ritornello is there to remind us that the enemy is never far away. The tenor recit continues the evangelist's story, and a tender chorale places us at the story's centre, at the manger holding the baby Jesus, and consequently right at the heart of Christmas.

PROGRAM NOTES

Magnificat BWV 243

The origins of the Magnificat we hear tonight date back to the 9th and 10th centuries. It was the liturgical text most often set to music in the centuries before, apart from the Latin Mass. It followed that Martin Luther would go on to translate the Latin Magnificat into German. When he did, he based his on one of the ancient Gregorian psalm tones, his being a 'tonus peregrinus', the pilgrims tone, and ninth tone commonly associated with the aeolian mode. Many composers before Bach took up this theme and used it in their Magnificats, most notably Johann Hermann Schein, Heinrich Schütz, Johann Pachelbel and Dietrich Buxtehude, all of whom proved to be huge influences on Bach throughout his life.

Mei - ne See - le er - - - hebt den Her - ren,
denn er hat die Nied - rig - keit sei - ner Magd an - ge - se - hen,
und mein Geist freu - et sich Got - tes, mei - - - nes Hei - lan - des,
sie - he, von nun an wer - den mich se - lig prei - sen al - le Kin - des - kind,

There is much to say about Bach's relationship with this ancient melody, suffice to say he utilised it many many times throughout his life. In this work, his Latin Magnificat, he uses the melodic formula as an instrumental *cantus firmus* in movement 10 (Suscepit Israel). However there are many examples of Bach utilising it elsewhere, for example in his "German Magnificat", the cantata *Meine Seel erhebt den Herren* BWV 10, in his chorale harmonisations BWV 323 and 324, and in his BWV 733, Fuga sopra il Magnificat.

The Magnificat's association with Christmas begin with the words being spoken by the pregnant Mary whilst visiting her cousin Elizabeth who was also pregnant. Whilst the exact date of its first performance remains unknown, Bach wrote 4 Laudes, or Christmas interpolations, to be inserted into the first version in E flat to be performed at Christmas in the Thomaskirche in 1723, his first year in Leipzig. His D major version, composed in 1733 does not include these interpolations, perhaps thereby making it usable for other festive occasions. It was a turbulent time for Bach when he revisited his Magnificat. A disillusionment with his work and life in Leipzig had settled over him, and he was hunting for new and fresh employment opportunities. A trip to the Catholic court of Dresden had been made, where he presented his Mass in B minor to King Frederick Augustus II of Saxony, although all he eventually received from that particular court was an honorary title. It was however an extraordinary year in Bach's life where he composed solidly and fervently, creating some of his most mature, large scale and profound works. By 1733, Bach had gained much practice in composition and had experienced profound joy and also profound tragedy. He was now able to his wield his supreme knowledge and skill of counterpoint, access his deep well of human experience, and pour it into every note. For the architecture of his Latin Magnificat, he chose a concertato sectional construction, that is in several movements with chorus, orchestra and vocal soloists, and a non-linear treatment of the text (parts of the text repeated multiple times by the singers). This construction was by no means new, used most notably by Claudio Monteverdi in his Magnificat a 7 voci from his Vespro della Beata Vergine. However what sets Bach's Magnificat apart is an eye for balance and symmetry which is on full display here. Bach builds into the very foundations of the

PROGRAM NOTES

- Verse 1 and 2 (movements 1 and 2, followed by movement A in the Christmas version): **tonic key** (major)
 - Verse 3: starts in relative minor key (movement 3), moving to another minor key (movement 4)
 - Verse 4 (movement 5, followed by movement B in the Christmas version): major key different from tonic
 - Verse 5 (movement 6): minor key
 - Verse 6 (movement 7, followed by movement C in the Christmas version): **tonic key**
 - Verse 7 (movement 8): minor key
 - Verse 8 (movement 9, followed by movement D in the Christmas version): major key different from tonic
 - Verse 9 (movement 10): relative minor key
 - Verse 10 and doxology (movements 11 and 12): **tonic key**

music an overarching metaphor of the human race reaching upwards towards a higher aim. It is a dazzling display of compositional virtuosity. It is a work of creation attesting to Bach's ultimate aim of reaching beyond ourselves, never for himself, but for all mankind. It is a shining example of Bach's approach to music as an art. To quote James Gaines in his book 'An evening in the Palace of Reason, "what sets Bach so far apart from other composers, though, are not specific skills and devices but the heights and depths he could reach from the security of the ground on which he stood." In an age of Galant and enlightenment, and the now ever-present desire for music as 'pleasure' or 'divertisement', Bach "made his music the sum and pinnacle of all the music of this time and so prepared the way not just for a distinctively German musical language but for all of Western music."



BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

ARTISTS



Madeleine Easton
DIRECTOR



Susannah Lawergren
SOPRANO



Anna Fraser
SOPRANO



Richard Butler
TENOR



Koen Van Stade
TENOR

BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

ARTISTS



Hannah Fraser
ALTO



Stephanie Dillon
ALTO



Andrei Laptev
TENOR



Andrew Fysh
BASS

VIOLIN
Simone Slattery
Stephen Freeman
Timothy Willis
Meg Cohen
Michele O'Young

VIOLA
Nicole Forsyth

CELLO
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DOUBLE BASS
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FLUTE
Mikaela Oberg
Jessica Lee

OBOE
Adam Masters
Kailen Cresp
TRUMPET
Simon Wolnizer
Owen Morris
Matthew Manchester

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Timothy Brigden
ORGAN
Nathan Cox

J.S. Bach Cantata 'O ewiges Feuer' BWV 34

1. Chorus (SATB)

O ewiges Feuer, O Ursprung der Liebe,
Entzünde die Herzen und weihe sie ein.
Laß himmlische Flammen durchdringen und wallen,
Wir wünschen, O Höchster, dein Tempel zu sein,
Ach, laß dir die Seelen im Glauben gefallen.

*O eternal fire, O source of love,
enkindle our hearts and coonsecrate them.
Make heavenly flames penetrate and flow through us,
We wish, O most high Lord, to be your temple,
Ah, make our souls pleasing to you in faith.*

2. Recitative (Tenor)

Herr, unsre Herzen halten dir Lord,
Dein Wort der Wahrheit für:
Du willst bei Menschen gerne sein,
Drum sei das Herze dein;
Herr, ziehe gnädig ein.
Ein solch erwähltes Heiligtum
Hat selbst den größten Ruhm.

*Our hearts hold
your word to be the truth:
You want willingly to be among men;
therefore let my heart be yours;
Lord, may you graciously enter in.
Such a sanctuary chosen by you
has itself the greatest glory.*

3. Aria (Alto)

Wohl euch, ihr auserwählten Seelen,
Die Gott zur Wohnung ausersehn.
Wer kann ein größer Heil erwählen?
Wer kann des Segens Menge zählen?
Und dieses ist vom Herrn geschehn.

*Happy are you, you chosen souls,
whom God has picked for his dwelling.
Who can choose a greater salvation?
Who can count the abundance of blessings?
And this is the work of God.*

4. Recitative (Bass)

Erwählt sich Gott die heiligen Hütten,
Die er mit Heil bewohnt,
So muß er auch den Segen auf sie schütten,
So wird der Sitz des Heiligtums belohnt.
Der Herr ruft über sein geweihtes Haus
Das Wort des Segens aus:

*If God chooses the sacred dwellings
that he inhabits with salvation,
then he must also pour his blessing on them,
then the seat of his sanctuary is rewarded.
The Lord proclaims over his consecrated house
the word of his blessing:*

5. Chorus (SATB)

Friede über Israel.
Dankt den höchsten Wunderhänden,
Dankt, Gott hat an euch gedacht.
Ja, sein Segen wirkt mit Macht,
Friede über Israel,
Friede über euch zu senden.

*Peace on Israel.
Give thanks, for the hands of the Most High that work miracles
Give thanks, that God has thought of you
Yes, his blessing works with power,
to send peace on Israel,
to send peace on you.*

J.S. Bach Excerpts from BWV 248

The Christmas Oratorio, Part 6

Aria No. 4 'Nur ein Wink von sinen Händen Stürzt'
Susannah Lawergren

Recit No. 5 'Als sie nun den König gehöret hatten'
Richard Butler

Chorale No. 6 'Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier'

4. Aria (Soprano)

Nur ein Wink von seinen Händen
Stürzt ohnmächtger Menschen Macht.
Hier wird alle Kraft verlacht!
Spricht der Höchste nur ein Wort,
Seiner Feinde Stolz zu enden,
O, so müssen sich sofort
Sterblicher Gedanken wenden.

*Just a wave of your hand
Casts down the powerless strength of men.
Here all might is derided
If the highest speaks one word
To put an end to the pride of his enemies,
Oh, then at once must
Thoughts of mortals be changed.*

5. Recitative (Tenor)

Als sie nun den König gehöret hatten,
zogen sie hin.
Und siehe, der Stern,
den sie im Morgenlande gesehen hatten,
ging für ihnen hin,
bis dass er kam und stund oben über,
da das Kindlein war.
Da sie den Stern sahen, wurden sie hoch erfreuet
und gingen in das Haus und funden das Kindlein mit
Maria, seiner Mutter,
und fielen nieder und beteten es an
und täten ihre Schätze
auf und schenkten ihm Gold,
Weihrauch und Myrrhen.

*And when they had heard the King,
they went away.
And see, the star,
which they had seen in the East
Went before them,
until it came and stood over the place
Where the little child was.
When they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly
And went into the house and found the child with
Mary, his mother,
And they fell down and worshipped him
and opened their treasures
And gave him gold,
frankincense and myrrh.*

6. Chorale (SATB)

Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier,
O Jesulein, mein Leben;
Ich komme, bring und schenke dir,
Was du mir hast gegeben.
Nimm hin! es ist mein Geist und Sinn,
Herz, Seel und Mut, nimm alles hin,
Und lass dirs wohlgefallen!

*I stand here and your crib
O Little Jesus, my life;
I come, bring and give you
What you have given to me.
Take it! It is my spirit and mind,
Heart, soul and courage, take it all
And may it be pleasing to you!*

J.S. Bach Magnificat BWV 234

1. Chorus (SSATB)

Magnificat anima mea Dominum

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

2. Aria (Soprano II)

Et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo

and my spirit has exulted in God my saviour.

3. Aria (Soprano I)

Quia respexit humilitatem
ancillae suae;
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent

*Because he has regarded the lowly state
of his slavegirl; for look!
from now on [they] will say that I am blessed*

4. Chorus (SSATB)

Omnes generationes.

Every generation.

5. Aria (Bass)

Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est,
et sanctum nomen eius.

*Because he who is mighty has done great things
for me, and holy is his name.*

6. Aria (Alto, Tenor)

Et misericordia a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.

*and his mercy [continues] from generation to
generation for those who fear him.*

7. Chorus (SSATB)

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.

*He has made known the power of his arm,
scattered those who are arrogant in the thoughts
of their heart.*

8. Aria (Tenor)

Deposuit potentes de sede et
exaltavit humiles.

*He has put down the mighty from their seats
[of power] and raised up those who are lowly.*

9. Aria (Alto)

Esurientes implevit bonis et divites
dimisit inanes.

*The hungry he has filled with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

10. Aria (Soprano I, II, Alto)

Suscepit Israel puerum suum recordatus
misericordiae suae.

*He has taken under his protection Israel his boy,
and remembered his mercy.*

11. Chorus (SSATB)

Sicut locutus est ad Patres nostros, Abraham et
semini eius in saecula.

*In accordance with what he said to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his seed for ever.*

12. Chorus (SSATB)

Gloria Patri, gloria Filio,
gloria et Spiritui Sancto!
Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

*Glory to the Father, glory to the Son
glory also to the Holy Spirit!
As it was in the beginning and [is] now and always
and throughout ages of ages.*

BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

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.

2018 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 has seen Bach Akademie Australia further cement its place as a major force on the Australian music scene with performances in central Sydney, Parramatta and again at the Canberra International Music Festival to glowing reviews. 2019 saw the formation of the Bach Akademie Australia Choir which performed to great acclaim with their debut in Bach's Ascension Oratorio.

Bach Akademie Australia aims to perform all of J.S. Bach's music showcasing the incredible inventiveness, profundity and joy of his music.

Easton makes the music accessible to anyone with an interest, regardless of their musical education and makes perfect sense as to why her following continues to grow.

— SYDNEY ARTS GUIDE

With its luxury vocal and instrumental casting and sublime performance, it is one of a handful of ensembles that still brings us 'heritage' baroque music played with integrity.

— LIMELIGHT

With thoughtful, well-researched performances and an elegantly constructed program, Easton and Bach Akademie Australia offered an opportunity to really dig down deep into Bach's words and music – a profound and rewarding experience.

— LIMELIGHT

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