



September 2013
Edition 5

B-A-C-H - STAGE NEWS & SOUNDS

Bach in Australia

Dear friends and Bach enthusiasts,

How it all begun...:

On Palm Sunday 25 March 2005 J.S. Bach's choral masterpiece 'Matthäus-Passion' (BWV 244) was performed in East Melbourne, a joint presentation of St. Johns Southgate, VCA and the German Lutheran Trinity Church. This was a courageous undertaking, inspired by Graham Lieschke, Director of Music at St. Johns Southgate who had just returned from a study tour to Leipzig where he met Thomaskantor Georg Christoph Biller. An invitation to Melbourne followed for the next year. That's when I met Bach's 16th successor for the first time, and the rest is history as you say.

But this history is very much alive, as you will see in this edition of our Newsletter. Happy reading!

Hans Schroeder

President Australian Bach Society Inc.

Not to be missed:



Pianist Angela Hewitt is regarded as an expert on the music of JS Bach, particularly after embarking on an eleven-year project to record all his major keyboard works. For the first time in Australia, Angela will perform perhaps Bach's most remarkable music: **The Art of Fugue**. Angela's also chosen some smaller golden musical filigree to show off Bach's gems to best advantage, including late sonatas by Beethoven.

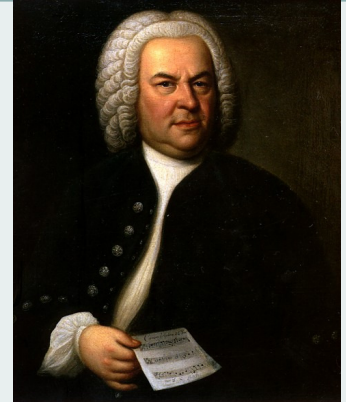
Tuesday 24 September 7 pm & Saturday 28 September 2013 8 pm

Elisabeth Murdoch Hall, Melbourne Recital Centre

Musica Viva International Concert Season 2013 Bookings:

www.musicaviva.com.au/Hewitt

For a **10 % discount** on full price tickets, simply enter the word FUGUE under "Promo Code" (top right of the screen) on the internet booking site or mention it to Musica Viva's box office staff on the phone.



Australian Bach Society Inc

Founded in 2011 as an initiative of the German Lutheran Trinity Church East Melbourne.

Our **mission** is to cultivate and disseminate a local appreciation of the music of J.S. Bach, his family and contemporaries, as well as sacred/classical music in general by arranging performances, lectures and other activities.



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IMPRESSIONS FROM BACHFEST 2013 LEIPZIG

‘*Vita Christi*’ was the theme for this year’s Bachfest, inviting the international Bach community to discover well-known and lesser known works by J.S. Bach and many others in a new context. The ‘B-minor Mass’ traditionally is the final performance. This year the ‘Freiburg Baroque Orchestra’ was ‘ensemble in residence’ performing with the St. Thomas Boys Choir under the baton of Thomaskantor Georg Christoph Biller to a capacity crowd of 2.200 at St. Thomas.

From 14 – 23 June 2013 a total of 466 works by 140 composers were presented in Leipzig involving 205 soloists and 64 ensembles and choirs. 65.000 music lovers from 31 nations including Australia attended the various events plus more than 10.000 via Internet. Both opening and final concerts were transmitted live and are still available on YouTube.

Next year’s Bachfest Leipzig is scheduled for 13 – 22 June 2014 focussing on Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and celebrating his 300th birthday. Ticket sales start on 15 October 2013. More info <http://www.bach-leipzig.de>.

Melbourne-based Lingua Musica is preparing a guided tour to LeipzigBachfest 2014 and other exciting destinations. For more information visit www.linguamusicatours.com

It’s been a couple of weeks already since my return from this year’s Bachfest in Leipzig but I am still recuperating from so many impressions, meeting people from around the world (and many from Sydney and Canberra I dare say), catching up with friends and making new ones, visiting all these famous sites, enjoying music at various venues plus food and wine at St. Thomas Church Court next to the monument of J.S. Bach. New contacts were made and invitations extended for the coming years. But I am also delighted to report there is growing awareness and interest in our own fine musicians. Keep fingers crossed, I hope we’ll see more in Leipzig in the future.

When I returned I was thrilled to see **Limelight’s** feature article on ‘Bach’ with some eye-and ear-opening reading including a well-written report on this year’s Bachfest by Melissa Lesnie. Highly commended!

More: <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/356061,deconstructing-the-genius-of-bach.aspx>

Hans Schroeder



Outside St. Nicolai Church



© Bachfest Leipzig, Gert Mothes, St. Nicolai Church



Anthony Halliday before and after his debut at St. Thomas Leipzig



Old Town Hall



Hans Schroeder presenting K. Rapp’s ‘Bach Household’ to Roland Weise for St. Thomas Boys’ Choir new alumnat



“I CAN’T IMAGINE LIFE WITHOUT BACH” (GRAHAM LIESCHKE)

St Johns Southgate recently celebrated a milestone, presenting the hundredth different Bach cantata in its popular series. Professor Graham Lieschke, Director of Music at St Johns, reflects on this vast achievement.

Professor Lieschke, you’re a clinical and research haematologist. You’re internationally renowned for your research into blood disorders and cancer, yet you’ve also received the Dame Roma Mitchell Churchill Fellowship for your work with the music of J.S. Bach. How do you find the time?

My profession is in medicine and medical research but I’ve always had a passionate love of music, and particularly the music of Bach. Through school I studied organ and accompanied the choir. I grew up next door to a Lutheran church and went to a Lutheran boarding school, so I played regularly for the church. Then I went to university, where I became the organ scholar at Ormond College under Douglas Lawrence. From my first days there, I started playing at St Johns. It’s been an intense passion outside my career. So I don’t know how I find the time but I can’t imagine life without music, and certainly not without Bach.

You direct the St Johns Bach Choir and Orchestra. How is the ensemble put together?

We have a core group that plays regularly but the Bach cantatas use orchestras of very diverse compositions, so we also recruit peoples as necessary. I’m fortunate to have the support of the early music community and the great enthusiasm amongst them for presenting this music, so I’m able to get many excellent players. Similarly, St Johns is a small congregation and could never have a choir that could sing Bach, so the choir is assembled from a group of names. There’s again a core that sings in most events but there’s another group of skilled enthusiasts who join in to make up an ensemble of 20 or 24 voices. Everyone who takes part gets paid something but we also rely on their goodwill and love of the music for the program to be viable. I readily acknowledge that what we do is built on the success and a lot of hard work by many other music directors in town, who turn inexperienced singers into people who can sing Bach.

For someone who hasn’t been to a cantata service, what can they expect?

The driving vision is to present the cantatas as part of a Sunday morning service. We have a 9:00 a.m. liturgical

service every Sunday at St Johns and eight or ten times a year, that includes a cantata. We don’t charge an admission fee and as a matter of policy we never will. Some people choose to leave after the cantata, while others stay for the whole service.

The services incorporate not only the splendid cantatas but customarily also splendid organ music, most usually by Bach as well. The organ here at St Johns was built to play the music of Bach uncompromisingly well and of the instruments in town, I think it is one of the very successful ones in doing so.

Recognising that we have a lot of visitors, we print a service order with the cantata libretto in it. It also has all the music so that people can participate in the other parts. So they’ll find a traditional, liturgical service with congregational chant and hymn singing, drawing particularly from the Lutheran chorale tradition. This is exactly the type of thing that you would experience if you went to hear a cantata presentation at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig in Bach’s day or now.



Congratulations on performing the hundredth different Bach Cantata at St Johns! How did it all begin?

During my postdoctoral studies in America, I observed that Boston and New York had a Bach cantata program. This was in the mid-1990s, when I also had my first chance to visit Leipzig, so a lot of things came together to put the idea in my mind. We approached the Victorian College of the Arts and proposed that we collaborate to present Bach cantatas with the students. Marco van Pagee, who was at the VCA at the time, was very enthusiastic and was able to get the support of the School of Voice and the leadership of the VCA. So we started off doing three cantatas with the VCA. With the momentum of that collaboration, it quickly became possible for the church to do other smaller cantatas with our own ensemble. Those things went happily side by side until the



... Interview with Graham continued...

VCA was amalgamated with the University of Melbourne. There is still a residual of that link in the cantata in September, which is a collaboration between us and the Early Music Studio of the University. The program would not have started without the VCA. That certainly needs to be acknowledged. But the VCA went through a difficult time and we were grateful that by that stage the program had enough of its own momentum to keep going.

And how have things changed over the hundred cantatas?

By the early 2000s, we decided that this would be a period instrument ensemble rather than a modern. That was a very significant change. Period instruments call for a style that emphasises agility, clarity and a lot more variation in the number of timbres. They're softer, too, and they're much more difficult to play in tune. We've purchased several period instruments, including a pair of oboes di caccia – a unique tenor oboe that Bach calls for. They were built to match and I think they're the best in the country.

And finally, can anyone come along to a cantata service and is there space for more audience members?

Well, we don't really need to advertise any more to get a substantial congregation but there is still room for people to attend. We are very aware that we have many visitors, some of whom may not have a strong connection with the church, and we want them to feel as comfortable as those who are regular members of the congregation.

To learn more about the cantata program, please visit <http://www.stjohnssouthgate.com.au> or call 9682 4995.

Interview was conducted by Adele Schonhardt

STOP PRESS: The Classical Guitar Society of Victoria in collaboration with the Australian Bach Society has just launched the 2013 Composition Competition '**Homage to Bach**'.

More: <http://www.cgsv.org.au/default.aspx?d=409781>

UPCOMING ABS EVENTS

Reformation Concert (Bach - Beethoven - Brahms)

19 October, 3:00-4:30pm, \$35 Adults/\$25 Concession: Iconic church, iconic music. The **Melbourne Chamber Choir** (Music Director: Dr. David Kram) and Anthony Halliday (organ) will present J.S. Bach's Cantata BWV 80 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' and 'Missa Brevis (*Lutheran Mass*) BWV 233 plus vocal works by L. van Beethoven and J. Brahms interspersed with two organ pieces played on the church's historic 1874 organ.

More: <http://www.bach.org.au/images/programs/ReformationConcert.pdf>

Brilliant Baroque and Classics at St. Paul's

22 October, 7:30-8:45 pm. \$35 Adults/\$25 Concession: On their first tour to Australia and New Zealand acclaimed **Camerata Novesia** (German Chamber Orchestra Neuss), conductor: Joachim Neupart, will perform at Melbourne's majestic St. Paul's Cathedral with works by J.S. Bach, F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, CPE Bach and finishing with E. Grieg's well-loved 'Suite from Holberg's Time'.

More: <http://www.bach.org.au/images/programs/BaroqueClassicStPauls.pdf>