

SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRETT WEYMARK OAM



BACH'S

CHRISTMAS
ORATORIO



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SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRETT WEYMARK OAM

BACH'S CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON and MATTHEW DOYLE

Tarimi Nulay – Long time living here†

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248: Part I – The Birth of Jesus

JOSEF RHEINBERGER

Abendlied (Evening Hymn), from Three Sacred Songs, Op.69 No.3

J.S. BACH

Part II – The Annunciation to the Shepherds

INTERVAL

J.S. BACH

Part III – The Adoration of the Shepherds

MICHAEL PRAETORIUS arranged JAN SANDSTRÖM

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen (Lo, how a rose e'er blooming)

J.S. BACH

Gloria in excelsis Deo – Cantata for Christmas, BWV 191

Brett Weymark conductor

Penelope Mills soprano | **Margaret Plummer** mezzo-soprano

Andrew Goodwin tenor | **Christopher Richardson** bass-baritone

Chamber Singers

Sydney Philharmonia Orchestra

Saturday 16 December 2023 at 2pm

Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

†100 Minutes of New Australian Music 2020 commission

The performance will run for approximately 2 hours, including a 20-minute interval.

Pre-concert talk at 1:15pm in the Northern Foyer with choristers Charlotte Moore and Dion Marks and host Michael Field, supported by 2MBS Fine Music.



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SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRETT WEYMARK (AM)

Photo: Keith Saunders | Design: Smorgasbord

Welcome

For as long as I can remember, Christmas Day has followed a predictable timetable. Coffee, rise and shine, the dog tearing apart the wrapping paper... then, just as preparations for lunch begin, I'll put on a recording, listen to the opening bars of Bach's Christmas Oratorio and know that it is Christmas.

From the first timpani notes and the waking up of oboes and flutes, to the cascading scales of the strings, the unfurling excitement of this music says something remarkable has taken place. It is music of drama, vitality and story telling as Bach brings the Christmas story alive.

Because the nativity story is so familiar, we can hear the connections Bach makes between text and music, thought and emotion. We can relate to the majestic sweep of the orchestra announcing the arrival of the Christ child, to the simplicity of a duet between voice and violin signifying mother and child, to the hushed chorale as whispered lullaby. As in Bach's passions, the choruses rouse emotion, the evangelist recites gospel passages, the chorales are collective responses to the events, and the soloists give our most private and personal reactions a voice.

I've always loved this music, and I cannot believe that it's nearly 20 years since last we performed this work that speaks to us



PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

so directly. In this concert we perform the first three cantatas, interspersed with moments for choir alone, functioning much as the liturgy and sermon would have done in Bach's time. And we finish with Bach's powerful Christmas cantata BWV 191, which you may recognise as the Gloria from his monumental Mass in B minor.

As in our own time, Bach's world was not without its international tensions, its violence and injustices. But in this music we find hope and a collective sense of the answer: that through listening, making space for others, knowing how our parts interact and intersect, and knowing we are mere fragments of a whole, we can together build monuments in sound of great unity and cohesion. For surely music is as powerful a force for good today as it was in Leipzig in 1734.

Brett Weymark OAM
Artistic and Music Director

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, upon whose Country we rehearse, sing and work, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. Our voices bring to life the songs of many cultures and countries, from across the ages, in a spirit of sharing, learning and understanding. The ancient customs and cultures of this land inspire us to create harmony – in music and in our society.

An Oratorio in Instalments

Unlike that other beloved ‘Christmas’ oratorio, Handel’s *Messiah* – which was intended for concert performance in theatres during Lent – Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio* was composed specifically for liturgical use during the 1734 Christmas season. Its six parts (or cantatas) would have been heard in six different church services, complete with sermons.

It is, in other words, an oratorio to be experienced in instalments: six cantatas that lead us through episodes in the birth of Christ. It’s a far cry from the self-contained drama of oratorios such as Handel’s *Israel in Egypt*, or even Bach’s own Passion-oratorios, which take us on a dramatic journey in a single sitting. For this reason, it is sometimes argued that the *Christmas*

Oratorio is not an ‘oratorio’ at all. But while it is true that it doesn’t conform to the oratorio genre as it was known in the 18th century, all the evidence – especially in the music itself – suggests that Bach conceived the work as an integrated whole.

Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio* isn’t quite – and yet is more than – your typical oratorio. And this goes beyond its unusual multi-part structure. The oratorio of Bach’s day was characterised by a poetic libretto and an emphasis on drama. Narration and dialogue took precedence over reflection. The *Christmas Oratorio* departs from that pattern, combining prose and reflective poetry in a text dominated by quotations

from the Bible. (In this there’s a kinship with *Messiah*, itself not a typical oratorio.)

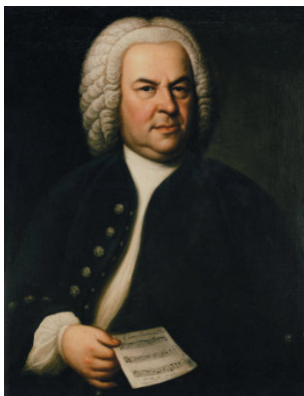
Bach’s model was not the *oratorio* – an Italian import not much cultivated in Leipzig – but the Lutheran *historia* of the 16th and 17th centuries. In addition to the use of Biblical quotations, these works featured a solo Evangelist part (a narrator, in effect), some dramatic treatment of

individual characters, and reflective interpolations that bring the story back to the perspective of the Christian believer. It’s as if Bach is striving for a type of oratorio that would have an affinity with the Lutheran liturgy: less a spiritual entertainment and more an act of worship.

And yet, although this is liturgical music – satisfying the requirements of the Christmas services – Bach

has created a monumental work with a single artistic vision.

The result is a conceptual juggling act. We can listen to each cantata as a vignette and contemplate how it might have been experienced by Bach’s listeners, in the context of prayers, the service, a sermon, and congregational singing. Or we can turn our attention to the characteristics that Bach most certainly intended but would never have been able to realise in performance in 18th-century Leipzig: the larger harmonic structure, the play of contrasts between rich and colourful groups of instruments, the satisfying working out of a continuous narrative.



What's truly impressive is that Bach establishes a compelling sense of unity in a way that would have been apparent to even the most inattentive of the Leipzig parishioners, and even in the serialised form in which it was first heard.

First, Bach's label for the music. Not 'Six Cantatas' but 'Oratorio Which Was Performed Musically During the Holy Christmas [Season] in Both Principal Churches of Leipzig.' This was printed at the top of the published libretto, available to all. All would have been aware that each cantata was a part of a larger work, especially since Bach numbered the musical sections continuously as if dividing a single piece. And none would have been puzzled, since the feasts from Christmas Day to Epiphany were regarded as one integrated festival.

Second, Bach makes bold musical gestures, varying the colours of his orchestra from cantata to cantata in a way that would have been impractical or extravagant for a single 'concert'; using key relationships to establish an overarching structure and set off each cantata from the next; and using repeated choruses and chorales to tie the work together.

Third, and this could not have escaped attention, Bach took liberties with the lectionary in order to create a more satisfying and logical narrative. Although a cantata typically took its theme from the lesson for the day, it made no dramatic sense to include the Prologue to the Gospel of John ('In the beginning was the Word') or to have the holy family fleeing to Egypt *before* the arrival of the Magi. Bach's priority was the drama, and the first three

parts themselves form a satisfying group, based on a nearly complete passage from the Gospel of Luke, recounting the birth of Christ and the arrival of the shepherds.

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

If the Electress Maria Josepha of Saxony had attended the Leipzig Thomaskirche on Christmas Day in 1734, she would have found the music strangely familiar. The grand chorus that had bid her good health on her birthday – 'Sound, you drums! Ring forth, trumpets! Sounding strings, fill the air!' – was now heralding the birth of the Christ child, leaving Bach's striking opening with solitary timpani to make its own effect.

The just-turned-eleven Crown Prince, would have recognised in the exquisite alto aria of Part II ('Sleep, my Dearest') the temptations of Pleasure from his birthday cantata, *Hercules at the Crossroads*, but with the original seductive text replaced by a lullaby for the Saviour.

No one would have found this kind of recycling incongruous. Bach himself believed the purpose of *all music* – sacred and secular – was for 'the refreshment of the spirit and the glory of God.'

And recycling (including the 'parody' technique – setting new words to existing music) was common among baroque musicians. It was a helpful strategy if the composer was busy or rushed – and by 1734 Bach was heavily involved with the performances of the famous Collegium Musicum as well as his many obligations

for the church. But while a lesser composer may have adopted it *only* for expediency, Bach recognised the symbolic potential of the parody technique. Either way, it was not looked down on as it might be today – obsessed as we are with Romantic concepts of originality and inspiration.

Even so, the *Christmas Oratorio* is remarkable for the amount of recycling it contains. In the first three parts alone we hear all the choruses and arias from the birthday cantata for the Electress (BWV 214), as well as several arias from *Hercules at the Crossroads* (BWV 213). Bach possibly planned the *Christmas Oratorio* and these secular cantatas in tandem, intending all along to reuse the material. The texts of the originals are both by Picander (Christian Friedrich Henrici), and so skilfully is the poetry rewritten and transformed to fit the themes of the new work that it's often speculated that he was the anonymous librettist for the *Christmas Oratorio* as well. In any case, Bach must have worked closely on the preparation of the text: ensuring that the new words fit easily with the existing music and its expressive ideas.

**And there were shepherds
living out in the fields near by,
keeping watch over their flocks
at night. An angel of the Lord
appeared to them, and the
glory of the Lord shone
around them.**

Part II of the *Christmas Oratorio* elevates traditional baroque gestures to new heights. The use of G major to convey tenderness and a bucolic lyricism; the ancient 'cradle-rocking' song, with its roots in mediæval convents; the lilting pastoral sinfonia; the use of oboes to suggest the

bagpipes of the shepherds – these were ciphers in the baroque world, part of an accepted code. In Bach's hands these gestures acquire new sophistication, while still retaining their power to communicate to the faithful. The Sinfonia, for example, carries the voices not only of shepherds, but of angels, represented by the strings and the flutes. The use of G major is not merely a signal of a pastoral mood, but provides a secure harmonic link to the cantatas in D major that surround it.

**When the angels had left
them and gone into heaven,
the shepherds said to one
another, 'Let us go to
Bethlehem and see this
thing that has happened.'**

When in Part III Bach returns to D major and to the festive orchestral colours of the first cantata, there is a tangible sense of coming home that mirrors perfectly the arrival of the shepherds at their destination and our starting point – a lowly stable with its holy occupant, 'just as they had been told'.

In its first three cantatas, the *Christmas Oratorio* makes the journey from the stable to the shepherds in the fields and back again. We take you on that same journey in one joyous concert program. While we may not be presenting the music in its original, 'authentic' context of a festive liturgy, we are surely realising Bach's original conception of a work that celebrates the mystery of the Nativity with perfection of architecture, brilliance of expression, and the humility of an authentic faith.

Abridged from a note by
Yvonne Frindle © 2003

The Words

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

TARIMI NULAY – LONG TIME LIVING HERE

*Tarimi nulay ngalawa yura
garrabarra baraya yagu barrabugu
ngyiningi ngara
ngyiningi berong*

Long time here live the people
dancing and singing today and tomorrow,
your way of knowing
your way of belonging

Words by Deborah Cheetham Fraillon, translated into Gadigal by Matthew Doyle

CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Part I – The Birth of Jesus

No.1 Chorus

*Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset die Tage,
Rühmet, was heute der*

Höchste getan!

*Lasset das Zagen, verbannet die Klage,
Stimmet voll Jauchzen und Fröhlichkeit an!
Dienet dem Höchsten mit herrlichen Chören
Lasst uns den Namen des Herrschers
verehren!*

Shout, rejoice, rise up, glorify the days,
praise what the All Highest this
day has done!

Set aside fear, banish lamentation,
strike up a song full of joy and mirth!
Serve the All Highest with glorious choirs!
Let us worship the name of the Lord!

No.2 Recitative – Evangelist

*Es begab sich aber zu der Zeit, daß ein
Gebot von dem Kaiser Augusto ausging,
daß alle Welt geschätzt würde. Und
jedermann ging, daß er sich schätzen
liesse, ein jeglicher in seine Stadt. Da
machte sich auch auf Joseph aus Galiläa,
aus der Stadt Nazareth, in das jüdische
Land zur Stadt David, die da heisset
Bethlehem; darum, daß er von dem Hause
und Geschlechte David war, auf daß er sich
schätzen liesse mit Maria, seinem
vertrauten Weibe, die war schwanger. Und
als sie daselbst waren, kam die Zeit, daß
sie gebären sollte.*

And it came to pass at this time, that a
decree went out from Caesar Augustus,
that all the world should be taxed; and
everyone went to be taxed, each to his
own city. Then also Joseph arose from
Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into the
land of Judaea, to the city of David, which
is called Bethlehem; because he was of
the house and lineage of David; and he
took with him to be taxed Mary, his
espoused wife, who was with child. And
when they were there, the time came
she should be delivered.

No.3 Recitative (Alto)

*Nun wird mein liebster Bräutigam,
Nun wird der Held aus Davids Stamm
Zum Trost, zum Heil der Erden
Einmal geboren werden.
Nun wird der Stern aus Jakob scheinen,
Sein Strahl bricht schon hervor.
Auf Zion, und verlasse nun das Weinen,
Dein Wohl steigt hoch empor.*

No.4 Aria (Alto)

*Bereite dich, Zion, mit zärtlichen Trieben,
Den Schönsten den Liebsten bald
bei dir zu sehn!
Deine Wangen
Müssen heut viel schöner prangen
Eile, dein Bräutigam sehnlichst zu lieben!*

No.5 Chorale

*Wie soll ich dich empfangen,
Und wie begegn' ich dir?
O aller Welt Verlangen,
O meiner Seelen Zier!
O Jesu, Jesu, setze
Mir selbst die Fackel bei,
Damit, was dich ergötze,
Mir kund und wissend sei.*

No.6 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und sie gebar ihren ersten Sohn, und
wickelte ihn in Windeln und legte ihn in in
eine Krippe, denn sie hatten sonst keinen
Raum in der Herberge.*

No.7 Chorale (Sopranos) with Bass

*Er ist auf Erden kommen arm
Wer will die Liebe recht erhöh'n
Die unser Heiland vor uns hegt?
Daß er unser sich erbarm,
Ja, wer vermag es einzusehen,
Wie ihn der Menschen Leid bewegt?
Und in dem Himmel mache reich
Des Höchsten Sohn kommt in die Welt
Weil ihm ihr Heil so wohl gefällt*

Now shall my beloved Bridegroom,
now shall the hero of David's house
for the solace and salvation of earth
at last be born.

Now will the star of Jacob shine,
its radiance breaks through already.
Up, Zion, and leave weeping now,
thy good mounts on high!

Prepare thyself, Zion, with tender desire
the Fairest and Dearest to behold
with thee soon!
Thy cheeks today must shine the lovelier;
hasten most ardently the
Bridegroom to love.

How shall I receive Thee
and how encounter Thee ?
Oh, desired of all the world,
oh, my soul's adornment!
Oh, Jesu, Jesu, set
the torch by me Thyself,
whereby that which pleases Thee,
may be manifest and known to me.

And she brought forth her first born Son,
and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and
laid him in a manger, because there was no
other room for them in the inn.

He came poor upon earth.
Who can extol the love aright,
our Saviour cherishes for us,
for that he pities us;
yea, who is capable of comprehending,
how man's distress so moved Him?
Make us rich in heaven
The son of the All Highest comes into the
world because its salvation pleases Him
so well

*Und seinen lieben Engeln gleich.
So will er selbst als Mensch
geboren werden.
Kyrieleis!*

No.8 Aria (Bass)

*Großer Herr, o starker König
Liebster Heiland, o wie wenig
Achtest du der Erden Pracht!
Der die ganze Welt erhält
Ihre Pracht und Zier erschaffen,
Muß in harten Krippen schlafen.*

No.9 Chorale

*Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein
Mach dir ein rein sanft Bettelein,
Zu ruhn in meines Herzens Schrein,
Daß ich nimmer vergesse dein!*

and like unto His beloved angels
that He will Himself be
born as man.
Lord have mercy on us!

Great Lord and mighty King,
beloved Saviour oh how little
dost Thou esteem earthly pomp!
He who maintains the whole world
and did create its ornament and splendour
must sleep in a hard manger.

Oh little Jesu my heart's love
make Thy self a clean soft little bed
in which to rest in my heart's inmost shrine
that I may never forget Thee.

ABENDLIED

*Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden,
und der Tag hat sich geneigt.*

Luke 24:29

This tiny six-part motet is the best known of the choral works that **Josef Rheinberger** (1839–1901) composed for use in Catholic church services. He counted composers such as Brahms and Mendelssohn among his influences, but he also found inspiration in the Bach Revival of the 19th century. The first version of the *Abendlied* or ‘Evening Hymn’ was composed when he was a teenager, not yet 16, and revised in 1863. The text is taken from Luke’s account of the road to Emmaus appearance: the two disciples inviting Jesus – whom they’ve yet to recognise – to stay with them.

Bide with us, for evening shadows darken,
and the day will soon be over.

CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Part II – The Annunciation to the Shepherds

No.10 Sinfonia

No.11 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend
auf dem Felde bei den Hürden die hüteten
des Nachts ihre Herde. Und siehe, des
Herren Engel trat zu ihnen und die Klarheit
des Herren leuchtet um sie, und sie
furchten sich sehr.*

And there were shepherds in the same
country abiding in the field keeping watch
over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel
of the Lord came upon them and the glory
of the Lord shone round about them and
they were sore afraid.

No.12 Chorale

*Brich an, o schönes Morgenlicht,
Und laß den Himmel tagen!
Du Hirtenvolk, erschrecke nicht,
Weil dir die Engel sagen,
Daß dieses schwache Knäbelein
Soll unser Trost und Freude sein,
Dazu den Satan zwingen
Und letztlich Friede bringen.*

Break through, oh lovely light of morn,
and let the heavens down!
You shepherd folk, be not afeared,
because the angel tells you,
that this weak babe
shall be our comfort and joy,
thereto subdue the devil
and bring peace at last.

No.13 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und der Engel sprach zu ihnen:
Fürchtet euch nicht, siehe, ich verkündige
euch große Freude die allem Volke
widerfahren wird. Denn euch ist heute der
Heiland geboren, welcher ist Christus, der
Herr; In Der Stadt David.*

And the angel said unto them:
Fear not, behold, I bring you good tidings of
great joy, which shall be to all people. For
unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

No.14 Recitative (Bass)

*Was Gott dem Abraham verheißen,
Das läßt er nun dem Hirtenchor
Erfüllt erweisen.
Ein Hirt hat alles das zuvor
Von Gott erfahren müssen.
Und nun muß auch ein Hirt die Tat
Was er damals versprochen hat,
Zuerst erfüllet wissen.*

That which God promised Abraham,
He now lets be manifested to the
shepherd band, fulfilled.
A shepherd it was had to learn
all this before from God,
and how also must a shepherd .
first know the act fulfilled,
which He promised.

No.15 Aria (Tenor)

*Frohe Hirten, eilt, ach eilet,
Eh' ihr euch zu lang verweilet,
Eilt, das holde Kind zu sehn.
Geht, die Freude heißt zu schön,
Sucht die Anmut zu gewinnen,
Geht und labet Herz und Sinnen!*

Joyful shepherds, haste, oh, haste,
lest you tarry too long,
haste to see the lovely babe.
Go, the joy is all too fair,
seek to gain grace,
go, and refresh heart and mind.

No.16 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und das habt zum Zeichen: Ihr werdet
finden das Kind in Windeln gewickelt und in
einer Krippen liegen.*

And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall
find the babe wrapped in swaddling
clothes, and lying in a manger.

No.17 Chorale

*Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern Stall,
Des Herrschaft gehet überall.
Da Speise vormals sucht ein Rind,
Da ruhet jetzt der Jungfrau'n Kind.*

Behold here: there in a dark stable lies
the One who has dominion over all.
Where, before, an ox sought food,
there now rests the Virgin's Child.

No.18 Recitative (Bass)

*So geht denn hin, ihr Hirten, geht,
Daß ihr das Wunder seht;
Und findet ihr des Höchsten Sohn
In einer harten Krippe liegen,
So singet ihm bei seiner Wiegen
Aus einem süßen Ton
Und mit gesamttem Chor
Dies Lied zur Ruhe vor!*

No.19 Aria (Alto)

*Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieße der Ruh,
Wache nach diesem vor aller Gedeihen
Labe die Brust,
Empfinde die Lust
Wo wir unser Herz erfreuen!*

No.20 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und alsobald war da bei dem Engel die
Menge der himmlischen Heerscharen, die
lobten Gott und sprachen:*

No.21 Chorus

*Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe,
und Friede auf Erden
und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen.*

No.22 Recitative (Bass)

*So recht, ihr Engel, jauchzt und singet,
Daß es uns heut so schön gelingt!
Auf denn! Wir stimmen mit euch ein,
Uns kann es, so wie euch, erfreuen.*

No.23 Chorale

*Wir singen dir in deinem Heer
Aus aller Kraft Lob, Preis und Ehr,
Daß du, o lang gewünschter Gast,
Dich nunmehr eingestellt hast.*

So go then hence, you shepherds, go,
that you may witness the miracle;
and if you find the Son of the most High
lying in a hard manger,
then sing Him by His cradle,
in a sweet voice
and with full choir,
this lullaby to rest.

Sleep, my Dearest, enjoy Thy rest,
from henceforth watch over the
wellbeing of all,
Refresh The breast, experience the joy,
there where we gladden our hearts.

And suddenly there was with the angel a
multitude of the heavenly host, praising
God, and saying:

Glory be to God in the highest,
and on earth peace,
good will toward men.

Then fittingly, you angels, rejoice and sing,
that things turn out so favourably for us this
day. Up then! We will join in with you,
for we can rejoice just as you.

We sing to Thee in Thy host
with all our might and main: praise, honour
and glory, that Thou, O long-desired guest,
hast now appeared.

INTERVAL

CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Part III – The Adoration of the Shepherds

No.24 Chorus

*Herrscher des Himmels, erhöere das Lallen,
Laß dir die matten Gesänge gefallen,
Wenn dich dein Zion mit Psalmen erhöht!
Höre der Herzen frohlockendes Preisen,
Wenn wir dir jetzo die Ehrfurcht erweisen,
Weil unsre Wohlfahrt befestiget steht!*

Ruler of Heaven, hear our stammering tones, let our feeble singing please Thee, when Thy Zion exalts Thee with psalms! Hear our hearts' triumphant praise, when we now display our awe before Thee, because our welfare is assured.

No.25 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und da die Engel von ihnen gen Himmel
fuhren, sprachen die Hirten
untereinander:*

And when the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another:

No.26 Chorus

*Lasset uns gehen gen Bethlehem
und die Geschichte
sehen, die da geschehen ist,
die uns der Herr kundgetan hat.*

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

No.27 Recitative (Bass)

*Er hat sein Volk getröst', Er hat sein Israel
erlöst, die Hülff aus Zion hergesendet und
unser Leid geendet. Seht, Hirten, dies hat er
getan; Geht, dieses trifft ihr an!*

He has comforted his people, He has delivered His Israel, sent help out of Zion and ended our suffering. Behold, shepherds, this has He done; go, this is what you will find!

No.28 Chorale

*Dies hat er alles uns getan,
Sein groß Lieb zu zeigen an;
Des freu sich alle Christenheit
Und dank ihm des in Ewigkeit.
Kyrieleis!*

This has He done for all of us His great love to proclaim in that all Christendom shall rejoice and thank Him for it to all eternity. Lord have mercy on us!

No.29 Duet (Soprano And Bass)

*Herr, dein Mitleid, dein Erbarmen
Tröstet uns und macht uns frei.
Deine holde Gunst und Liebe,
Deine wundersamen Triebe
Machen deine Vätertreu Wieder neu.*

Lord, Thy compassion, Thy mercy comfort us and make us free. Thy gracious favour and love Thy wondrous desire make new once more Thy father-faith.

No 30 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und sie kamen eilend und funden beide,
Mariam und Joseph, dazu das Kind in der
Krippe liegen. Da sie es aber gesehen*

And they came with haste and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they

hatten, breiteten sie das Wort aus welches zu ihnen von diesem Kind gesaget war. Und alle, für die es kam, wunderten sich der Rede, die ihnen die Hirten gesaget hatten. Maria aber behielt alle diese Worte und bewegte sie in ihrem Herzen.

No.31 Aria (Alto)

*Schließe, mein Herze, dies selige Wunder
Fest in deinem Glauben ein!
Lasse dies Wunder, die göttlichen Werke,
Immer zur Stärke
Deines schwachen Glaubens sein.*

No.32 Recitative (Alto)

*Ja, ja, mein Herz, soll es bewahren,
Was es an dieser holden Zeit
Zu seiner Seligkeit
Für sicheren Beweis erfahren.*

No.33 Chorale

*Ich will dich mit Fleiß bewahren,
Ich will dir leben hier,
Dir will ich abfahren,
Mit dir will ich endlich schweben
Voller Freud
Ohne Zeit
Dort im andern Leben.*

No.34 Recitative – Evangelist

*Und die Hirten kehrten wieder um,
preiseten und lobten Gott um alles, das sie
gesehen und gehöret hatten, wie denn zu
ihnen gesaget war.*

No.35 Chorale

*Seid froh dieweil,
Daß euer Heil
Ist hie ein Gott und auch
ein Mensch geboren,
Der, welcher ist
Der Herr und Christ
In Davids Stadt, von vielen auserkoren.*

No.24 Chorus (reprise)

published abroad the word which was spoken to them concerning the child. And all that heard it wondered at the tidings which the shepherds had told unto them. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Lock, my heart, this blessed wonder
fast within thy belief
Let this miracle of the divine works
ever be the strength
of thy weak faith!

Yes, yes my heart shall guard
for sure and certain proof
that which, at this auspicious hour
it has experienced for its bliss.

I will keep Thee diligently in my mind,
I will live for Thee here,
I will depart with Thee hence
With Thee will I soar at last
filled with joy,
time without end
there in the other life.

And the shepherds returned again, praising and giving thanks to God for everything that they had seen and heard, as it was told unto them.

Be joyful, meanwhile,
that our Saviour
is here born both God
and man,
He, who is
the Lord and Christ
in the city of David chosen of many.

ES IST EIN ROS ENTSPRUNGEN

*Es ist ein Ros entsprungen
aus einer Wurzel zart,
als uns die Alten sungen:
von Jesse kam die Art
und hat ein Blümlein bracht
mitten im kalten Winter
wohl zu de halben Nacht.*

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
as men of old have sung.
It came a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half spent was the night.

Translation by Theodore Baker

This *a cappella* miniature unites an anonymous German hymn tune from the 16th century, its enduringly popular harmonisation from 1609 by **Michael Praetorius**, and a Swedish composer best-known for his 'Motorbike' trombone concerto, written for Christian Lindberg. **Jan Sandström's** setting of 'Es ist ein Ros entsprungen' divides the choir into two groups. Choir I presents the Praetorius harmonisation but in slow motion – its familiar rhythmic syncopations transformed into aching suspended harmonies. Choir II, divided into eight parts, envelops the original in Sandström's own shimmering, hummed harmonisation.

CANTATA FOR CHRISTMAS, BWV 191

Part I

Chorus

*Gloria in excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax hominibus
bonae voluntatis.*

Glory to God on high
and on earth peace to men
of good will.

Part II ('post Orationem')

Duet (Soprano and Tenor)

*Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui sancto.*

Glory be to the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.

Chorus

*Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper
et in saecula saeculorum, Amen.*

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever
shall be, world without end, Amen.

All of **J.S. Bach's** surviving cantatas are in German – the language of his listeners – with the exception of this one. With its Latin text, it's unlikely it was performed in the Thomaskirche; one possible occasion was the thanksgiving service held in Leipzig's University Church on Christmas Day in 1745 to celebrate the Peace of Dresden. Perhaps this is why Bach based it on the Gloria from his B minor Mass (BWV 232), composed for the Elector of Saxony in Dresden. More likely he was working at great speed – news of the peace treaty had broken just days earlier. The opening Gloria with its trumpets and drums is instantly recognisable from the Mass. Part II (intended for 'after the oration') sets new texts to existing music. The duet for soprano and tenor features a joyous obbligato flute part, and the magnificent final chorus returns to the brilliant and triumphant colours of Part I.

About the Artists

Brett Weymark conductor

One of Australia's foremost choral conductors, Brett Weymark OAM is celebrating his 20th season with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. Appointed Artistic and Music Director in 2003, he has conducted the Choirs throughout Australia as well as internationally. He has also conducted the Sydney, Adelaide, Queensland, West Australian and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, Orchestra of the Antipodes, Sydney Youth Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Hong Kong Philharmonic, as well as productions for WAAPA, Pacific Opera and OzOpera, and he has performed with Opera Australia, Pinchgut Opera, Australian Chamber Orchestra, The Song Company and Musica Viva.

He studied singing and conducting at the University of Sydney and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, continuing his conducting studies with Simon Halsey, Vance George, Daniel Barenboim and John Eliot Gardiner, amongst others.

His repertoire at SPC has included Bach's Passions and Christmas Oratorio, the Mozart, Verdi, Duruflé and Fauré requiems, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. He champions Australian composers, and has premiered works by Matthew Hindson, Elena Kats-Chernin, John Peterson, Daniel Walker, Rosalind Page, Peter Sculthorpe, Andrew Schultz and Ross Edwards. In 2011 he premiered his own work *Brighton to Bondi* with the Festival Chorus. He has also conducted musical theatre programs including Bernstein's *Candide*, which won multiple BroadwayWorld Sydney awards.



PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

Under his direction, SPC received a Helpmann Award for *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, directed by Peter Sellars, and was nominated for a Limelight Award for Purcell's *King Arthur*.

He was chorus master for the Adelaide Festival productions of *Saul* (2017), *Hamlet* (2018) and *Requiem* (2020), and he has prepared choirs for Charles Mackerras, Zubin Mehta, Edo de Waart, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Simon Rattle. He has recorded for the ABC and conducted film scores for *Happy Feet*, *Mad Max Fury Road* and *Australia*.

Recent conducting highlights include *Sweeney Todd* (West Australian Opera), *Jandamarra* by Paul Stanhope and Steve Hawke (SSO), Michael Tippett's *A Child Of Our Time* (Adelaide Festival) and *Carousel* (State Opera South Australia).

In 2001 he was awarded an Australian Centenary Medal and in 2021 the Medal of the Order of Australia.

Brett Weymark is passionate about singing and the role music plays in both the wellbeing of individuals and the health and vitality of a community's culture. He believes music can transform lives and should be accessible to all.

Sydney Philharmonia Choir's 2023 season reflects highlights of his distinguished tenure with the organisation and the strengths of the choirs he leads.



PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

Penelope Mills soprano

Penelope Mills performs across Australasia, appearing with the Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, West Australian and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Sydney Chamber Choir, Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, Sydney Concert Orchestra, Sydney Soloists and the Australia Ensemble, as well as Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. She works with leading conductors and ensembles and holds degrees from the Royal Northern College of Music and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Recent engagements include Villa Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras* No.5, *BBC Planet Earth II* and *Last Night of the Proms* (SSO); Mahler's Fourth Symphony (Australian Youth Orchestra); *Messiah* (St Andrew's Cathedral); *The Creation* (Sydney University Graduate Choir); and *Carmina Burana*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Handel's *Messiah* and *Saul*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, all with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. She gave the premiere of Carl Vine's *Wonders* at the Sydney Opera House, and sang Miranda in the Australian premiere of *The Tempest* by Thomas Ades with the MSO, conducted by the composer.

She has also performed *Messiah* with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra, Bach's *Matthew Passion* at the Sydney Town Hall, *Carmina Burana* at the Concourse, Chatswood, Bach cantatas and Mozart's Requiem at St Andrew's Cathedral, and appeared at the Sydney Opera House in the Taste of Opera series.



PHOTO: KURT SNEDDON BLUEPRINT STUDIOS

Margaret Plummer mezzo-soprano

Margaret Plummer was a principal artist at the Vienna State Opera for seven years, during which time her roles included Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Mercedes (*Carmen*), Waltraute (*Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung*), Third Norn (*Götterdämmerung*), Flosshilde (*Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*), Flower Maiden (*Parsifal*), Siebel (*Faust*), Varvara (*Katya Kabanova*), Tebaldo (*Don Carlos*), Herodias' Page (*Salome*), Fenena (*Nabucco*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*, also for Hamburg State Opera), Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*), Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Wood Sprite (*Rusalka*) and Fjodor (*Boris Godunov*).

Her key engagements for 2023 include house debuts at La Scala, Milan (Auntie in *Peter Grimes*) and the Bayreuth Festival (Flower Maiden), Flosshilde in *Das Rheingold* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and *Messiah* with Perth Symphonic Chorus.

She has also sung Charlotte (*Werther*) and Marguerite (*La Damnation du Faust*) for the Tiroler Landestheater, Innsbruck; Beethoven's Ninth with the Vienna Philharmonic; Haydn's *Theresienmesse* with the Savaria Symphony Orchestra in the composer's birthplace; Berg's Seven Early Songs with the Tirol Symphony Orchestra; the Witch (*Hänsel and Gretel*) with the SSO; Phoebe (*Castor et Pollux*) and Diane (*Iphigenie en Tauride*) for Pinchgut Opera; and in Mozart's Requiem with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.



Andrew Goodwin tenor

Andrew Goodwin has performed with opera companies and orchestras in Europe, Asia and Australia, including the Bolshoi Opera, Gran Theatre Liceu Barcelona, Teatro Real Madrid, La Scala Milan, Opera Australia, Pinchgut Opera, Sydney Chamber Opera, St Petersburg Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, the Moscow and Melbourne chamber orchestras, and the New Zealand, Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Adelaide, Tasmanian and West Australian symphony orchestras, and as well as in recital with Daniel de Borah at Wigmore Hall and the Oxford Lieder, Port Fairy and Canberra International Music festivals.

This year he has returned to the QSO for Beethoven's Ninth, to the SSO for Britten's Serenade for tenor, horn and strings, and as Mime in *Das Rheingold*, and will sing *Messiah* with the MSO. He will also feature at the Brisbane Festival in Britten's *War Requiem*, perform with the Australia Ensemble at UNSW, and in recital in Brisbane and Ukaria (Adelaide), and with the vocal ensemble AVÉ.

Recent engagements have included Handel's *Il trionfo* with Yulia Lezhneva and Dmitry Sinkovsky (Zaryadya Hall, Moscow), Beethoven Nine with the Brandenburg State Orchestra, Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Adelaide Festival), Jacquino in *Fidelio* (WASO), Nadir in *The Pearlfishers* (State Opera South Australia), *Diary of One Who Disappeared* and *Rape of Lucretia* (Sydney Chamber Opera) and the title role in *Artaxerxes* (Pinchgut Opera).



PHOTO: DANIEL SOMMER

Christopher Richardson bass-baritone

Christopher Richardson is a graduate of the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music, and the recipient of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Aria Award and the Frances MacEachron Award at the Oratorio Society of New York's Solo Competition at Carnegie Hall.

He has appeared with Pinchgut Opera, Opera Queensland, Handel in the Theatre, Canberra, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Perth Symphonic Chorus, Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, Festival of Voices Hobart, Canberra Choral Society, the Allegri Ensemble, Hobart, and the Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Queensland and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, as well as Sydney Philharmonia Choirs.

Recent performances include Brahms's *German Requiem* as guest soloist with The Song Company, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the ASO, and *Messiah* at St Andrew's Cathedral and with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis. For Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, he sang Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and Handel's Coronation Anthems in 2022, Handel's *Samson* in April, and ChorusOz Mahler 8 in June.

He has also been invited to appear in The Enchanted Island (10 Days on the Island Festival, Tasmania), The Genius of J.S. Bach (Melbourne Recital Centre); Beethoven's Mass in C (Victoria Chorale), and Fauré's Requiem (Perth Symphonic Chorus). He features on the CD of Calvin Bowman songs, *Real and Right and True*.

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Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs presents the art of choral singing at the highest standard, and develops the talents of those with a passion for singing, in Sydney and beyond. Founded in 1920, it has become Australia's finest choral organisation and is a Resident Company of the Sydney Opera House.

Led by Artistic and Music Director Brett Weymark OAM and Associate Music Director Dr Elizabeth Scott, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs comprises three auditioned and three community choirs that perform repertoire from choral classics to musical theatre and commissions by Australian composers. SPC presents its own annual concert season as well as collaborating with leading conductors, soloists and orchestras in Australia and overseas. In 2002, SPC was the first Australian choir to sing at the BBC Proms (Mahler's Symphony No.8 under Sir Simon Rattle), returning again in 2010 to celebrate its 90th anniversary. The Choirs perform in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's season every year, as they have done for more than 80 years. SPC also presents community singing events throughout the year – Chorus Oz (the annual Big Sing), Big Heart Sing at the Sydney Opera House and choral workshops throughout Sydney and NSW.

2020 was Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' centenary and saw the realisation of the 100 Minutes of New Australian Music project, featuring commissioned works by composers including Elena Kats-Chernin, Deborah Cheetham Fraillon and Brett Dean. In 2022 the Choirs took part in the reopening of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall, performing Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and in 2023, Brett Weymark celebrates his 20th anniversary as Artistic Director.

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