



250th Anniversary Memorial Concert

St Christopher's Cathedral

28 July 2000



Where there is devotional music, God with his grace is always present.

Welcome to St Christopher's for tonight's performance by the Canberra Bach Ensemble, celebrating the passing of 250 years since the death of Johann Sebastian Bach. Throughout 2000 there has been an intense focus on the music of Bach around the world which culminates at today's anniversary. It is a great pleasure that so many distinguished local and interstate musicians have joined the CBE to share this special occasion with us. We are greatly honoured to have Barbara Jane Gilby leading the orchestra, with solo contributions by Richard Anderson, Chris Field, John Gould, Rachael James, Chris Lancaster, Robyn Mellor, Christine Nuttall, Amelia Skinner, Hannah Sless, Rodney Waterman, Peter West, and Vivienne Winther. We are also honoured to have Philip O'Brien lead us through the proceedings.

The difficult question is what to perform to mark such a special occasion. Many of our Bach colleagues in this country and around the world have faced this question, and of course there are a number of great works which prompt suitable reflection on Bach's contribution to our musical culture. The Mass in B minor, BWV 232, would be the most obvious choice and probably the most popular work to be revisited today. But as great as this work is, it does not remind us of Bach's contribution to other significant areas of his life's work, nor his cultural or religious heritage. And what of his instrumental and orchestral music? Keyboard and organ works? Pedagogical or contrapuntal music? For so many of us who share in the communion of music, Bach's precious testaments are the most fundamental treatises of Western music and the cornerstones of virtually every area of musical composition that he put his quill to throughout his life.

There is no single work that Bach wrote which could adequately reflect the whole scope and significance of his life's work. Tonight's performance is an unusual deviation from the CBE's regular programming. The program consists of thirty selected pieces from Bach's entire oeuvre divided into ten sections. Each piece is a representative of a significant work or series of works – its purpose to remind us of those great works, or to draw our attention to a particular genre or section of repertoire which Bach contributed to. This is an occasion to capture in a single performance, even if only fleetingly, the breadth, depth, and intensity of Bach's life's work. The program integrates as completely as possible the complete gamut of Bach's output – choral, orchestral, vocal, instrumental, solo, keyboard and organ, pedagogical and contrapuntal music – sacred, secular, simple, complex, virtuosic, dance and rhetorical music – naïve, fresh, joyous, learned, mature, intellectual, didactic, profound and moving – ranging fifty years of Bach's creative career, from his very first known piece to his very last. Each piece has been chosen either for its historical, cultural or musical importance, its natural beauty and aesthetic appeal, or its emphasis on human mortality and the symbolic focus of tonight's occasion. We all know Bach in our own differing ways – it is hoped that this evening's performance will refresh and replenish our acquaintance with the many facets of Bach and his music – even though the window through which we look to his world can only be small.

Choristers

Soprano

Nadeena Beck
Alison Cone
Rachael James*
Alice Richardson
Catherine Stuart

Alto

Chris Field*
Jaki Kane
Louise Skelt
Richard Walker

Instrumentalists

Violin and viola

Barbara Jane Gilby* (leader)
Jocelyn Evans
Anne Ewing
John Gould*
John Ma
Leah Moir
Katherine Quirk
Gabrielle Robin
Hannah Sless*

Cello

Peter West*
Lindy Reksten

Double bass

Chris Gilbert

Recorder

Robyn Mellor*
Rodney Waterman*

Flute

Amelia Skinner*

Director

Andrew Koll

Tenor

James Carter
Graeme Hill
Stewart Skelt

Bass

Richard Anderson*
Andrew Freeman
Alex Roose
David Woodgate

Oboe

Christine Nuttall*
Meera Parish

Bassoon

Zoey Pepper

Trumpet

Greg Flynn
Tom Waldran
Megan Jackson

Timpani

Steven Strach

Organ

Chris Lancaster*

Harpichord

Vivienne Winther*

Keyboard continuo

Peter Young
* Denotes soloist

Narrator

Philip O'Brien

Although it was engraved soon after composition, it remained unpublished until after Bach's death. There is some debate about the final fugue: is it unfinished or not? It appears in the first printing as **Fuga a 3 soggetti**, i.e. a fugue with three subjects, of which the third is the four notes B flat, A, C, B natural, which in German notation is B, A, C, H. At the end of the manuscript, where the music stops abruptly, there is a note in what is believed to be Emanuel Bach's handwriting: 'NB. While working on this fugue, in which the name BACH appears in the countersubject, the author died'. The first printing contains a note to this effect, and also says 'it was wished to compensate the friends of his muse by including the four-part church chorale added at the end, which the deceased man in his blindness dictated on the spur of the moment to the pen of a friend'. Nonetheless, many scholars believe this is a fiction. Indeed, the chorale in question, **Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein**, is in fact a reworking of one of the chorales in the *Orgel-Büchlein*.

In May 1747 Bach visited Berlin and Potsdam, to visit the court of King Friedrich II of Prussia, where Emanuel had been working for the past seven years. Bach invited Friedrich to give him a subject for a fugue. The king obliged, upon Bach which Bach proceeded to improvise a number of fugues. The king wanted him to play a six-part version, but Bach was unable to do this on the spot, instead playing a six-part fugue on a subject he chose to make the task easier. Nonetheless, after returning to Leipzig, Bach set out to write the six-part fugue – the **Ricercar a 6** – on the royal subject. He assembled a collection of fugues and a trio sonata based on the theme, and sent it to the king, calling it **Musikalisches Opfer** (Musical Offering).

Bach had completed the Kyrie and Gloria (enough for a Lutheran mass) of the **Mass in B minor** in the early 1730s, but returned to it later, adding the remaining movements. The **Agnus Dei** is in two movements; the first, a parody (i.e. reworking) of a movement from an earlier cantata, is a stunning aria for alto. The mass, in its completed form, is probably the work Bach worked on last.

Johann Sebastian Bach died on 28 July 1750 in Leipzig at the age of 65.

Further reading

John Butt (editor), *The Cambridge companion to Bach*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Hans T. David, Arthur Mendel, and Christoph Wolff: *The New Bach Reader*, Norton, 1998.

Alfred Dürr, *Die Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach*, sixth edition, Bärenreiter Verlag and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995. (In German)

Pedagogical keyboard works

Sinfonia no. 8 (F major), BWV 794

Clavier-Übung part 1: Partita no. 1, BWV 825

3. Courante

Das wohltemperierte Clavier, book 2

Prelude and fugue no. 6 (D minor), BWV 875

Arias for solo voice

Ich habe genung, BWV 82

1. Aria: Ich habe genung

Weihnachts-Oratorium, BWV 248, part 6

57. Aria: Nur ein Wink von seinen Händen

Mass in B minor, BWV 232

Aria: Agnus Dei

Interval

Choral music

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 61

1. Chor: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden, BWV 230

Johannes-Passion, BWV 245

39. Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine

Late contrapuntal works

Clavier-Übung part 4 ('Goldberg Variations'), BWV 998

Aria

Musikalisches Opfer, BWV 1079

Ricercar a 6

Die Kunst der Fuge, BWV 1080

Fuga a 3 soggetti (Contrapunctus 14)

(The third fugue subject is BACH)

Finale

O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht, BWV 118

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin, BWV 125

6. Choral, sung to the text of verse 1: Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin

18 chorales ('Leipzig' chorales)

Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein, BWV 668a

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach on 21 March 1685, the seventh child of Johann Ambrosius Bach and Maria Elisabeth Lämmerhirt. He attended a German school, and then the Latin school in Eisenach. His mother died in 1694 and his father died a year later, so at the age of ten he and his thirteen-year-old brother Johann Jacob went to live in the house of their oldest brother, Johann Christoph, in Ohrdruf, where Sebastian attended the Lyceum. Christoph provided Sebastian's early training in keyboard playing, but denied him access to his book of keyboard works by the masters of the day, such as Pachelbel and Froberger. Over a period of six months Sebastian secretly copied the book at night in the moonlight, but Christoph found the copy and confiscated it. Emanuel Bach later speculated (in his father's obituary) that such hard work in such poor light contributed to Sebastian's eventual blindness.

In 1700 he moved to Lüneburg, where he was a choral scholar at the Michaeliskloster (St Michael's School). After leaving school he was employed by Duke Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar as a court violinist. After six months, he left to take up the position of organist in Arnstadt's Neue Kirche. At about this time Sebastian wrote what is probably his only programmatic keyboard work, the **Capriccio "sopra la lontananza de il fratello diletissimo"** (capriccio on the departure of the most beloved brother), most likely following the model of Johann Kuhnau's »Biblische Historien«, a set of six sonatas based on Old Testament stories, which had been published in 1700. The capriccio begins with an **arioso**, subtitled 'His friends flatter him, in order to deter him from his journey'.

In November 1705 he visited the great organist and composer Dietrich Buxtehude in Lübeck. He had been granted four weeks' leave, but stayed for four months, assimilating the North German style that would so strongly influence his early works. This was one of a number of incidents that saw him in trouble with the authorities.

In the middle of 1707 Sebastian became organist at the Kirche Divi Blasii in Mühlhausen, and about three-and-a-half months later he married his cousin, Maria Barbara Bach. During this period the cantatas **Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit** (God's time is the best of all times) and **Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr, zu dir** (Out of the depths I cry to you, o Lord) were written. The former is sober funeral music; the latter may have been written as a memorial service after a fire destroyed large parts of the town.

Bach was soon frustrated with conditions in Mühlhausen, and left within a year for Weimar, where he became organist and chamber musician at the court of Dukes Wilhelm Ernst and Ernst August. The Weimar years produced compositions such as the first cantata setting of **Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland**, the opening movement of which is a French-style overture based on the chorale tune of the same name. Also from this period is the **Orgel-Büchlein** (Little organ book), a set of over forty four-part organ chorales designed to show the possibilities of the form. In 1714 he was appointed as concertmaster of the court, with duties including the regular composition and performance of cantatas.

In August 1717 Bach signed a contract to become court capellmeister in Cöthen, but failed to secure release from his Weimar position. In November he forced the issue, and was imprisoned for almost a month before being issued a unfavourable discharge.

The first few years of Bach's tenure in Cöthen were probably the happiest of his life, musically speaking; his patron, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, was a true music lover and regarded Bach as a friend. Music from this period includes the **Brandenburg concertos**, the **cello suites**, the **partitas and sonatas for violin**, and the first book of **Das wohltemperierte Clavier** (the well-tempered keyboard).

Maria Barbara died in 1720, leaving Bach to look after four children. At the end of the following year he married Anna Magdalena Wülke, one of the Cöthen court singers. But eight days later, Leopold married an unmusical princess, and began to lose interest in Bach. At the end of 1722 Sebastian applied for the cantorate in Leipzig. He auditioned in February 1723, and by April he had taken up the position.

All of the works in this evening's concert that have not been mentioned previously (with the exception of a few works whose dating is uncertain, such as the **Sinfonias** and the motet **Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden**) were written during the Leipzig years.

Bach had written only a small number of cantatas before coming to Leipzig. Now he was charged to present a cantata at the main service every Sunday morning. This he did, by reusing his earlier works, and composing (it is believed) about three hundred new ones, including **Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott**, **Ich habe genung**, and **Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin**, at the rate of one per week for some of that time. Thus there were enough for five yearly church cycles, as well as others for special occasions.

Although primarily occupied with cantata composition, the early Leipzig years also saw the creation and first performance of the two great passions, the **Johannes-Passion** (St John Passion) in 1724, and the **Matthäus-Passion** (St Matthew Passion) in 1727. **Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine**, the final chorus of the Johannes-Passion, demonstrates Bach's extraordinary sense of drama and his unsurpassed ability to bring out the significance of the text in the music.

The middle Leipzig years were a time of consolidation. Bach no longer faced such a hectic composition schedule; whereas in the early 1720s he wrote upwards of forty compositions in a year, in the 1730s this was cut back (with a couple of exceptions) to about five or six per year. Highlights of this period include the **Weihnachts-Oratorium** (Christmas oratorio) of 1734, the second book of **Das wohltemperierte Clavier** (1739–42) and the **Goldberg variations** (1741–2).

Bach's final years were occupied with the composition of works that are often considered more 'intellectual' or 'austere', but have nonetheless become recognized as masterpieces and some of his most-performed music. In the early 1740s Bach set out to write an instructional work that would demonstrate by example the manifold possibilities of the fugue; he called it **Die Kunst der Fuge** (the Art of the Fugue). No particular instruments are specified; we have chosen to use a string ensemble.

Opening

Orchestral suite no. 3, BWV 1068

1. Overture

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 80

1. Chor: Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

8. Choral: Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn

Early works

Capriccio "sopra la lontananza de il fratro diletissimo", BWV 992

1. Arioso: Adagio; »Ist eine Schmeichelung der Freunde,

um denselben von seiner Reise abzuhalten.«

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106

1. Sonatina: Molto adagio

Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr, zu dir, BWV 131

3. Chor: Ich harre des Herrn

Organ works

Trio sonata no. 6, BWV 530

1. Vivace

Orgel-Büchlein

O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß, BWV 622

Prelude and fugue in B minor, BWV 544

Interval**Instrumental and orchestral concertos**

Concerto for oboe and violin, BWV 1060

1. Allegro

Concerto for harpsichord and strings, BWV 1055

2. Larghetto

Brandenburg concerto no. 4, BWV 1047

3. Presto

Solo instrument

Suite for cello no. 1, BWV 1007

1. Prélude

Solo [partita] for flute, BWV 1013

3. Sarabande

4. Bourrée anglaise

Partia [sic, Bach's spelling] for solo violin no. 1, BWV 1002

5. Sarabande

7. Tempo di borea

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,

ein gute Wehr und Waffen;

er hilft uns frei aus aller Not,

die uns itzt hat betroffen.

Der alte böse Feind,

mit Ernst ers itzt meint,

groß Macht und viel List

sein grausam Rüstung ist,

auf Erd ist nicht seingleichen.

Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn

und kein Dank dazu haben.

Er ist bei uns wohl auf dem Plan

mit seinem Geist und Gaben.

Nehmen sie uns den Leib,

Gut, Ehr, Kind und Weib,

laß fahren dahin,

sie habens kein Gewinn;

das Reich muß uns doch bleiben.

Our God is a secure castle,

a powerful defence and weapon;

he helps us out of all the distress

that has befallen us.

The old evil enemy,

with his sure intent –

his terrifying armaments are

great power and much cunning –

on earth there is no one his equal.

They must allow the word to stand

and accept no thanks.

He is with us on the scene,

with his own spirit and gifts.

Even if they take our body

goods, honour, child, and wife,

let all go;

they won't win:

the kingdom remains ours.

Ich harre des Herrn,

meine Seele harret,

und ich hoffe auf sein Wort.

I wait for the Lord,

my soul waits,

and I hope in his word.

Ich habe genug.

Ich habe den Heiland,

das Hoffen der Frommen,

auf meine begierigen Arme genommen;

ich habe genug!

Ich hab ihn erblickt,

mein Glaube hat Jesum

ans Herze gedrückt;

nun wünsch ich, noch heute mit Freuden

von hinnen zu scheiden.

Ich habe genug!

I have enough.

I have accepted the Saviour;

the hope of the pious,

in my hungry arms;

I have enough!

I have caught a glimpse of him,

my faith has impressed

Jesus on my heart;

now I wish, even today,

to depart for there in peace.

I have enough!

Nur ein Wink von seinen Händen

stürzt ohnmächtiger 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 his hands

overthrows the power of powerless humans.

Now all strength is ridiculed!

The almighty need speak but one word,

to put an end to the pride of his enemies,

o, so mortal thoughts must

turn around immediately.

Agnus Dei,

qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Lamb of God,

*who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.*

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,

der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,
des sich wundert alle Welt,
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt.

Come, saviour of the heathen,

*revealed as the Virgin's child;
the whole world wonders
at the birth God ordained for him.*

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,

und preiset ihn, alle Völker!
Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit
waltet über uns in Ewigkeit.
Alleluja.

Praise the Lord, all heathen,

*and praise him, all peoples!
For his grace and truth
rule over us for eternity.
Hallelujah.*

Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine,

die ich nun weiter nicht beweine;
ruht wohl,
und bringet auch mich zur Ruh.
Das Grab, so euch bestimmt ist
und ferner keine Not umschließt,
macht mir den Himmel auf
und schließt die Hölle zu.

Rest in peace, you sacred bones,

*that I will no longer mourn for;
rest in peace,
and bring me also to rest.
The grave which is prepared for you –
and which will enclose no distress –
will open heaven for me
and close hell.*

O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht,

mein Hort, mein Trost, mein Zuversicht,
auf Erden bin ich nur ein Gast
und drückt mich sehr der Sünden Last.

O Jesus Christ, light of my life,

*my refuge, my comfort, my confidence,
on earth I am only a guest
and the weight of sin oppresses me greatly.*

Auf deinen Abschied, Herr, ich trau,

darauf mein letzte Heimfahrt bau,
tu mir die Himmelstür weit auf,
wenn ich beschließ meins Lebens Lauf.

O Lord, I trust in your farewell –

*on it I am building my final journey home;
open wide for me the gate of heaven
when I conclude my life's course.*

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin

in Gottes Willen;
getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn,
sanft und stille;
wie Gott mir verheißt hat,
der Tod ist mein Schlaf worden.

I depart in peace and joy

*according to God's will;
my heart and senses are comforted,
gently and quietly;
as God promised me,
death has become my sleep.*

Bach was more than just a composer and his legacy is more than notes on a page. Those notes are only the ghostly remains of a life once lived in a world long since gone. Bach was an ordinary man and lived an ordinary life – but he had an extraordinary mind and his work shows us that he was an extremely thoughtful, insightful and enlightened human being. The dots and dashes which he left behind reveal much about him and his ideas, and we can still feel his spirituality radiating across the centuries to us today – there is so much to learn and enjoy from his creative acts. Through hard work and the careful cultivation of his gifts, Bach showed the world how joyous, deep, and intense the human experience can be.

— Andrew Koll, Director

Bach's music

The »Bachs Werke Verzeichnis« (catalogue of Bach's works) is grouped as follows:

- 1–200 Church (sacred) cantatas (about another hundred are lost)
- 201–215 Secular cantatas
- 225–230 Motets
- 232–243 Masses, mass movements, Magnificat
- 244–249 Passions and oratorios
- 250–438 (Four-part) Chorales
- 439–507 Songs, arias, and quodlibet from Schemelli's song book
- 510–524 Anna Magdalena Bach's Clavierbüchlein
- 525–591 Organ trio sonatas, preludes and fugues, toccatas, passacaglia
- 592–598 Organ concertos (arrangements of works by other composers)
- 599–644 Orgelbüchlein
- 645–668 'Schübler' chorales, 18 ('Leipzig') chorales
- 669–689 Chorale arrangements from Clavier-Übung part 3
- 690–770 Miscellaneous chorales
- 772–801 Fifteen two-part inventions, fifteen three-part inventions (sinfonias)
- 802–805 Four (organ) duettos from Clavier-Übung part 3
- 806–817 Six English suites, six French suites
- 818–823 Other keyboard suites
- 825–844 Six partitas (Clavier-Übung part 1), miscellaneous keyboard works
- 846–893 Das wohltemperierte Clavier, books 1 and 2
- 894–994 Other preludes, fugues, toccatas, concertos, capriccios, Goldbergs
- 995–1013 Solo music for lute, violin, cello, flute
- 1014–1039 Chamber sonatas for violin, viola da gamba, flute
- 1041–1069 Violin and keyboard concertos, Brandenburgs, orchestral suites
- 1072–1078 Canons
- 1079–1087 Musikalisches Opfer, Die Kunst der Fuge, other canons
- 1090–1120 Neumeister chorales

There are gaps in the numbering; these represent works originally thought to be by Bach, but later shown to be by other composers. Conversely, a number of authentic works by Bach have been discovered since the compilation of the catalogue.