

BACH'S EASTER ORATORIO



PROGRAM

Friday 8th April 7:30pm
St Francis of Assisi Church, Paddington

Saturday 9th April 7:30pm
Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre,
Penrith

Sunday 10th April 2pm
Our Lady of Dolours Church, Chatswood

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Our plans for 2022 will most definitely whet your appetite for the amazing music of Johann Sebastian Bach! However, running an arts organisation such as ours presents a huge financial challenge.

We invite you to consider joining our generous family of individual donors by either purchasing a ticket to one of our forthcoming events, or making a donation to support our work and help us to bring the wonderful music of J.S. Bach to life. Unless you wish to remain anonymous, your contribution will be acknowledged on our website and in our concert programs.

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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



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



As many of you are aware, Bach Akademie Australia had planned to perform these beautiful works of Bach for the last 2 years, so it is with so much joy and pleasure that I finally write these words to welcome you to our Easter Oratorio concert series!

In the Christian world, we have the two main festivals of Easter and Christmas. Some might argue that Easter is in some ways more important than Christmas. It was without doubt exceptionally important to J.S. Bach both personally and musically, providing him with an opportunity to unleash his unbridled passion, inspiration and creativity into interpreting the Easter story musically. And how glad we are that he did just that.

He was exceptionally fond of his Easter oratorio, reworking it no less than 3 times in his lifetime. I too am especially fond of it, having lived with it for decades now. It has truly become a part of me. I cannot help but imagine how it must have felt sitting in the congregation at St Thomas' in Leipzig that year of 1725. On Good Friday, you would have heard the St John Passion for the first time which would have undoubtedly affected the congregation deeply. You would have had Easter Saturday to reflect, then on Easter Sunday you would have heard the golden blaze of the choir, trumpets and timpani signalling the joy of the resurrection in his Easter oratorio! What a weekend to be in Leipzig.

The physical, spiritual and emotional benefit of experiencing that music live would have been palpable and tangible. I truly believe it will be the same for us. These last few months have taken an enormous toll on all of us. On top of what we've been through over the last 2 years, we've also just lived through the worst floods in living memory, and all of us are devastated by the situation in Ukraine. The only thing I feel I have the power to do is to present this music of Bach, giving us all a way of lifting ourselves above the power, greed and politics, and providing an opportunity to feel cleansed of all the bad in the world.

This is the power of Bach, and I am so very happy that you are here to share it with us.

Madeleine Easton

BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

PROGRAM

J.S Bach Cantata BWV 42 'Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats'

1. Sinfonia
2. Recit (Tenor): 'Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats' – Richard Butler
3. Aria (Alto): 'Wo zwei und drei versammelt sind' – Hannah Fraser
4. Duet (Soprano/Tenor): 'Verzage nicht, O Häuflein klein' – Anna Fraser/Richard Butler
5. Recit (Bass): 'Man kann hiervon ein schön Exempel sehen' – Thomas Flint
6. Aria (Bass): 'Jesus ist ein Schild der Seinen' – Thomas Flint
7. Chorale: 'Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich'

J.S. Bach Cantata BWV 6 'Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden'

1. Chorus: 'Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden'
2. Aria (Alto): 'Hochgelobter Gottessohn' – Russel Harcourt
3. Chorale (Sopranos): 'Ach bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ'
– Susannah Lawergren/Anna Fraser
4. Recit (Bass): 'Es hat die Dunkelheit an vielen Orten' – Thomas Flint
5. Tenor Aria: 'Jesu, laß uns auf dich sehen' – Richard Butler
6. Chorale: 'Beweis dein Macht, Herr Jesu Christ'

INTERVAL

J.S. Bach Easter Oratorio BWV 249

1. Sinfonia
2. Adagio
3. Chorus/Duet, (Tenor/Bass): 'Kommt, eilet und laufet' – Richard Butler/Koen Van Stade
4. Recit (SATB): 'O kalter Männer Sinn'
– Anna Fraser/Russel Harcourt/Richard Butler/Koen Van Stade
5. Aria (Soprano): 'Seele, deine Spezereien' – Susanna Lawergren
6. Recit (Alto/Tenor/Bass): 'Hier ist die Gruft'
– Hannah Fraser/Richard Butler/Koen Van Stade
7. Aria (Tenor): 'Sanfte soll mein Todeskummer' – Richard Butler
8. Recit (Soprano/Alto): 'Indessen seufzen wir' – Susannah Lawergren/Hannah Fraser
9. Aria (Alto): 'Saget, saget mir geschwinde' – Russell Harcourt
10. Recit (Bass): 'Wir sind erfreut' – Thomas Flint
11. Chorus: 'Preis und Dank'

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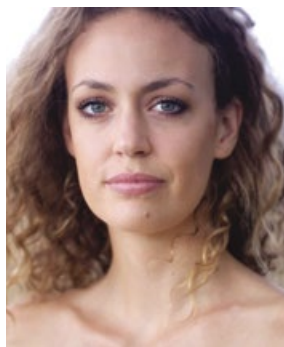
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Susannah Lawergren
SOPRANO



Anna Fraser
SOPRANO



Hannah Fraser
ALTO



Russell Harcourt
COUNTERTENOR



Richard Butler
TENOR



Andrei Laptev
TENOR



Koen Van Stade
BASS



Thomas Flint
BASS

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ORCHESTRA

Madeleine Easton	Director
Stephen Freeman	leader/violin 1
Tim Willis	violin 1
Michele O'Young	violin 1
Meg Cohen	violin 2
James Armstrong	violin 2
Karina Schmitz	viola
Anthea Cottee	cello
Laura Vaughan	double bass
Anthony Abouhamad	harpsichord
Timothy Brigden	timpani (April 8 & 10)
Mark Robinson	timpani (April 9)
Nathan Cox	organ
Mikaela Oberg	flute 1/recorder
Ruth Crosby	recorder
Adam Masters	oboe 1/Taille
Kailen Cresp	oboe 1/2
Fiona McMillan	oboe 2
Ben Hoadley	bassoon
Richard Fomison	trumpet 1
Leanne Sullivan	trumpet 2
Simon Wolnizer	trumpet 3

Even in an era that had recently emerged from the bloodbath that was the Thirty Years' War, Bach's personal experience of death was above average. Two brothers and a sister expired during his infancy, he'd lost both parents by the age of ten, a son and his first wife Maria Barbara had died by the time he was 35, and before his own passing he would lose a staggering seven of his children by his second wife Anna Magdalena. Little wonder, then, that when death is the subject of his music, the response is deep and personal.

As John Eliot Gardiner puts it in his magisterial *Bach, Music in the Castle of Heaven*: "While his library contained copious examples of theologians relishing the opportunities to portray the approach of death and bodily defilement in harrowing terms, Bach's cantatas that deal with the subject offer deep reservoirs of solace to those who mourn."

Eastertide is when Christianity concerns itself most intently with death and consolation, but it's also a time of Resurrection and the various proofs given by Jesus that he had risen from the tomb. Bach's "Emmaus Cantata" – "Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden" (Abide with us; for it is toward evening) – was written for Easter Monday in 1725 as part of his second Leipzig cycle. The day's text would have described the encounter between two disciples and the unrecognised Jesus as they journeyed towards the town of Emmaus. Arriving at dusk, Jesus seemed about to continue along the road but the two men invited him home for supper, thus providing a neat parallel between acts of Christian hospitality and the Lutheran injunction to invite Jesus into our hearts.

Bach's anonymous librettist opens with the disciples' words from Luke's Gospel and includes texts by the protestant reformers Philipp Melancthon and Nikolaus Selnecker, before wrapping things up with the second stanza of Luther's hymn "Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort" (Maintain us, Lord, within thy word).

The opening chorus manages to convey both a sense of recent bereavement and a gentle urgency as Bach uses repetitions of the text to plead for Jesus to enter into us in body and spirit. It's likely no coincidence if the music – not unlike a stately sarabande – reminds the listener of the elegiac "Ruht wohl" chorus that concludes the *St. John Passion* (a work that Bach had revived just a few days earlier). Strings and a trio of plangent oboes support the voices whose occasional long held notes suggest the steadfastness of the Christian soul.

The alto aria that follows, "Hochgelobter Gottessohn" (Highly praised Son of God), features a perky obbligato oboe da caccia, juxtaposing an upward swinging melody in praise of Jesus with a subsequent drooping line reflecting a sense of trepidation at the impending fall of darkness. The subsequent chorale sets serene harmonies against a scurrying solo line for a violincello piccolo, a rare instrument often favoured by Bach in these late cantatas.

The second and final aria, "Jesu, laß uns auf dich sehen" (Jesus, let us look upon You), pits the mournful solo tenor against the heavy tread of strings leavened with a solo violin. It's then left to Luther's solemn chorale to end the cantata on a serious and reflective note.

By way of complete contrast, Bach opens his cantata "Am Abend desselbigen Sabbaths" (On the evening of the same Sabbath) with an extended *Sinfonia*, grand yet lightly sprung, that pits bustling strings against a clucking group of two oboes and bassoon. In fact, the whole work is a cunning recycling of a lost birthday *serenata* for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, but you'd never know it, so fit does the composer render it for its new purpose.

First performed in 1725 on Quasimodogeniti Sunday (that's the first Sunday after Easter), it too formed part of Bach's second Leipzig cycle with a text expounding on Christ's appearance to his disciples a week after the Resurrection. An immaculate miniature of

religious storytelling, the Evangelist's role is shared between tenor and bass soloists, with reflective arias for alto and bass and a chorale duet for soprano and tenor.

To drive the drama forward, the first recitative employs ticking continuo and weird harmonic progressions to create an eerie build-up to the divine manifestation. That's then offset dramatically by an alto aria with a pair of melancholy oboes contrasting the hope of future joys with memories of happier times while reflecting on Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The following chorale duet with its plucky bassoon does a sterling job of lifting the spirits before the bass launches into "Jesus ist ein Schild der Seinen" (Jesus shields His own people), a fiery aria that focusses on the Saviour's hoped for protection when persecution strikes. Fortunately, a final Lutheran chorale is on hand to pacify matters with the rather pointed request that, like God in his Heaven, local authorities should offer some much-needed "good government and peace".

Surely its convoluted compositional history can be the only reason why the *Easter Oratorio* isn't better known. The original version of "Kommt, eilet und laufet" (Come, hasten and run) was written in 1725 for Leipzig's Easter Sunday service. The "Oratorio" tag came ten years later after Bach revised and expanded it, with further reworkings in the 1740s when he beefed up the third movement from a duet to a four-part chorus.

In fact, the Oratorio is based on a pastoral *dramma per musica* intended to celebrate the 43rd birthday of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels. In its original form, four shepherds somewhat neglectfully abandon their flocks in their haste to dash off and congratulate the royal birthday boy. The ink would scarcely have been dry before Bach was pressing the poet Picander, his collaborator on both projects,

to repurpose "The Shepherd's Cantata" for the Easter service, transforming his quartet of rustic bumpkins into the more sober-minded Apostles Peter and John who now hasten to the tomb where they converse with Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary".

Uniquely for Bach, the first three movements of the *Easter Oratorio* are all in triple time. First comes a brilliantly scored Sinfonia with swinging trumpets and drums followed by an elegant Adagio where a warbling oboe chirrup above a gentle bed of strings. The dance-like opening chorus gets matters off to a joyful start with chuckling madrigalian touches on "Lachen und Scherzen" ("laughter and gladness").

Dance forms very much a part of the Oratorio's three substantial arias as well. The first, "Seele, deine Spezereien" (O Soul, your spices), is a graceful minuet for soprano with an obligato flute that coils around the vocal line like aromatic smoke ascending to heaven. It's the tenor's turn next with a rustic bourrée in which Bach incorporates a pair of rippling recorders. "Sanfte soll mein Todeskummer" (My final agony shall be gentle) conveys ideas that would be re-explored the following year in the solo cantata "Ich habe genug".

Finally, "Saget, saget mir geschwinde" (Tell me, tell me quickly) is set as a lively gavotte. To represent Mary Magdalene searching for the risen Christ, the alto soloist is paired with a sensual oboe d'amore. The rollicking final chorus, "Preis und Dank" (Laud and thanks) manages an impressive trifecta by praising the Lord and vanquishing the devil, before ushering in the Lion of Judah in a blaze of ululating trumpets.

BWV 42 'Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats'

1. Sinfonia

2. Recit (Tenor)

Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats,
Da die Jünger versammelt
Und die Türen verschlossen waren
Aus Furcht für den Jüden,
Kam Jesus und trat mitten ein.

*On the evening of the same sabbath
as the disciples were gathered together
and the doors were locked
for fear of the Jews
Jesus came and stood in the midst of them.*

3. Aria (Alto)

Wo zwei und drei versammelt sind
In Jesu teurem Namen,
Da stellt sich Jesus mitten ein
Und spricht darzu das Amen.
Denn was aus Lieb und Not geschicht,
Das bricht des Höchsten Ordnung nicht.

*Where two or three are gathered together
in Jesus's beloved name,
then Jesus appears in the midst of them
and says to them Amen.
For what happens from law and necessity
does not break the arrangements of the most*

4. Chorale Duet (Soprano/Tenor)

Verzage nicht, o Häuflein klein
Obschon die Feinde willens sein,
Dich gänzlich zu verstören,
Und suchen deinen Untergang,
Davon dir wird recht angst und bang:
Es wird nicht lange währen.

*Do not lose heart, oh my dear little flock,
even if your enemies intend
to destroy you completely
and seek your downfall,
so that you're really distressed and fearful:
this will not last long.*

5. Recit (Bass)

Man kann hiervon ein schön Exempel sehen
An dem, was zu Jerusalem geschehen;
Denn da die Jünger sich versammelt hatten
Im finstern Schatten,
Aus Furcht für denen Jüden,
So trat mein Heiland mitten ein,
Zum Zeugnis, dass er seiner Kirche Schutz will sein.
Drum lasst die Feinde wüten!

*An excellent example of this can be seen
in what happened in Jerusalem;
for when the disciples had gathered together
in dark shadows
for fear of those Jews,
then my saviour came into the midst of them,
As witness that he will be the protection
Therefore let the enemies rage.*

6. Aria (Bass)

Jesus ist ein Schild der Seinen,
Wenn sie die Verfolgung trifft.
Ihnen muss die Sonne scheinen
Mit der güldnen Überschrift:
Jesus ist ein Schild der Seinen,
Wenn sie die Verfolgung trifft.

*Jesus is a shield for his people
when persecution strikes them.
For them the sun must shine
with the words written in gold:
Jesus is a shield for his people
when persecution strikes them.*

7. Chorale

Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich,
Herr Gott, zu unsern Zeiten;
Es ist doch ja kein andrer nicht,
Der für uns könnte streiten,
Denn du, unsr Gott, alleine.

*Graciously grant us peace
Lord God, in our time;
there is no one else
who could fight for us
except you, our God, alone.*

Gib unsern Fürsten und all'r Obrigkeit
Fried und gut Regiment,
Dass wir unter ihnen
Ein geruhig und stilles Leben führen mögen
In aller Gottseligkeit und Ehrbarkeit. Amen

*Grant to our princes and those in authority
peace and good government
so that we under them
may lead a calm and peaceful life
in all godliness and respectability. Amen*

BWV 6 'Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden'

1. Chorus

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

Stay with us, for evening is coming and the day draws to an end.

2. Aria (Alto)

Hochgelobter Gottessohn,
Laß es dir nicht sein entgegen,
Dass wir itzt vor deinem Thron
Eine Bitte niederlegen:
Bleib, ach bleibe unser Licht,
Weil die Finsternis einbricht.

*Most praiseworthy Son of God,
Let it not be against your will
that we now before your throne
lay down a request:
Stay, ah stay as our light,
since darkness comes over us.*

3. Chorale (Soprano)

Ach bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ,
Weil es nun Abend worden ist,
Dein göttlich Wort, das helle Licht,
Laß ja bei uns auslöschen nicht.

*Ah, stay with us, Lord Jesus Christ,
since evening has now come,
your divine word, the clear light,
do not allow to be put out amongst us.*

In dieser letzt'n betrübten Zeit
Verleih uns, Herr, Beständigkeit,
Dass wir dein Wort und Sakrament
Rein b'halten bis an unser End.

*In these last, troubled times
grant us, Lord, constancy
so that your word and sacrament
we may keep purely until our end.*

4. Recitativo (Bass)

Es hat die Dunkelheit
An vielen Orten überhand genommen.
Woher ist aber dieses kommen?
Bloß daher, weil sowohl die Kleinen als die Großen
Nicht in Gerechtigkeit
Vor dir, o Gott, gewandelt
Und wider ihre Christenpflicht gehandelt.
Drum hast du auch den Leuchter umgestoßen.

*Darkness has
spread over many places.
How has this happened?
Simply for this reason, because both the lowly and the great
have not justly
walked before you, O God
and they have acted against their Christian duty.
Therefore you also have turned over their candlestick.*

5. Aria (Tenor)

Jesu, lass uns auf dich sehen,
Dass wir nicht
Auf den Sündenwegen gehen.
Laß das Licht
Deines Worts uns heller scheinen
Und dich jederzeit treu meinen.

*Jesus, let us look towards you
so that we may not
go along the way of sin.
Let the light
of your word shine clearly for us
and always bring you to mind faithfully.*

6. Chorale

Beweis dein Macht, Herr Jesu Christ,
Der du Herr aller Herren bist;
Beschirm dein arme Christenheit,
Dass sie dich lob in Ewigkeit.

*Show your might, Lord Jesus Christ,
you who are the Lord of lords;
protect your poor Christian people,
so that they may praise you for ever.*

Easter Oratorio BWV 249

1. Sinfonia

2. Adagio

3. Aria Tenor/Bass) and Chorus

Kommt, eilet und laufet, ihr flüchtigen Füße,
Erreicht die Höhle, die Jesum bedeckt!
Lachen und Scherzen
Begleitet die Herzen,
Denn unser Heil ist auferweckt.

*Come, hurry and run, you swift feet,
get to the cave that covers Jesus!
Laughter and jokes,
accompany our hearts,
for our saviour is raised from the dead.*

4. Recit: (SATB)

Alto:

O kalter Männer Sinn!
Wo ist die Liebe hin,
Die ihr dem Heiland schuldig seid?

Alto (Mary Magdalene):

*O cold minds of men
Where is the love gone
that you owe to the saviour?*

Soprano:

Ein schwaches Weib muss euch beschämen!

Soprano (Mary, daughter of James):

A weak woman puts you to shame!

Tenor:

Ach, ein betrübtes Grämen

Tenor (Peter):

Ah, affliction and grief

Bass:

Und banges Herzeleid

Bass (John):

and fearful sorrow of heart

Tenor, Bass:

Hat mit gesalzenen Tränen
Und wehmutsvollem Sehnen
Ihm eine Salbung zgedacht,

Tenor, Bass (Peter, John):

*with salty tears
and melancholy longing
intended an anointing for him,*

Soprano, Alto:

Die ihr, wie wir, umsonst gemacht.

Soprano, Alto (Mary Magdalene, Mary daughter of James):

which you, as we, have done in vain.

5. Aria (Soprano)

Seele, deine Spezereien
Sollen nicht mehr Myrrhen sein.
Denn allein
Mit dem Lorbeerkranze prangen,
Stillt dein ängstliches Verlangen.

*My soul, your spices
should no more be myrrh.
For only
with the splendour of the laurel wreath
will your anxious longing be satisfied.*

6. Recit (Tenor/Bass/Alto)

Tenor:

Hier ist die Gruft

Tenor (Peter):

Here is the tomb

Bass:

Und hier der Stein,
Der solche zugedeckt.
Wo aber wird mein Heiland sein?

Bass (John):

*And here is the stone
which covered it.
But where will my saviour be?*

Alto:

Er ist vom Tode auferweckt!
Wir trafen einen Engel an,
Der hat uns solches kundgetan.

Alto (Mary Magdalene):

*He has risen from the dead!
We met an angel
who proclaimed this to us.*

Tenor:

Hier seh ich mit Vergnügen
Das Schweiß Tuch abgewickelt liegen.

Tenor (Peter):

*I see here with pleasure
the veil lies unwound.*

7. Aria (Tenor):

Sanfte soll mein Todeskummer,
Nur ein Schlummer,
Jesu, durch dein Schweißstuch sein.
Ja, das wird mich dort erfrischen
Und die Zähren meiner Pein
Von den Wangen tröstlich wischen.

8. Recit (Soprano/Alto):

Indessen seufzen wir
Mit brennender Begier:
Ach, könnt es doch nur bald geschehen,
Den Heiland selbst zu sehen!

9. Aria (Alto):

Saget, saget mir geschwinde,
Saget, wo ich Jesum finde,
Welchen meine Seele liebt!
Komm doch, komm, umfasse mich;
Denn mein Herz ist ohne dich
Ganz verwaiset und betrübt.

10: Recit (Bass):

Wir sind erfreut,
Dass unser Jesus wieder lebt,
Und unser Herz,
So erst in Traurigkeit zerflossen und geschwebt
Vergisst den Schmerz
Und sinnt auf Freudenlieder;
Denn unser Heiland lebet wieder.

11. Chorus:

Preis und Dank
Bleibe, Herr, dein Lobgesang.
Höll und Teufel sind bezwungen,
Ihre Pforten sind zerstört.
Jauchzet, ihr erlösten Zungen,
Dass man es im Himmel hört.
Eröffnet, ihr Himmel, die prächtigen Bogen,
Der Löwe von Juda kommt siegend gezogen!

Aria (Tenor) Peter:

*Gentle should be the sorrow of my death
only a slumber,
Jesus, through your veil.
Yes, that will refresh me there
and the tears of my suffering
it will wipe comfortingly from my cheeks.*

Recit (Soprano/Alto):

*Meanwhile we sigh
with fervent yearning:
Ah, if only it might soon happen
to see the saviour himself!*

Aria (Alto) Mary Magdalene:

*Tell me, tell me quickly
Tell, where may I find Jesus
whom my soul loves!
Come then, come, embrace me,
for my heart is without you
quite orphaned and distressed.*

Recit (Bass) John:

*We are delighted
that our Jesus lives once more
and our heart
before so dissolved and suspended in sadness
forgets its sorrow
and thinks of songs of joy;
for our saviour lives once more.*

Chorus:

*Praise and thanks
remain your song of praise
Hell and the devil are overcome
their gates are destroyed.s
Shout and cheer, you loosened tongues,
so that you are heard in heaven
Open up, you heavens, the splendid arches,
the Lion of Judah comes drawn in victory!*





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

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

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

After two years of disruption and silence forced upon us by the pandemic, we are overjoyed to be performing to a live audience once again.

Bach

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