

2009 SEASON
TEA & SYMPHONY
PRESENTED BY KAMBLY

BACH VOICES

Friday 13 March | 11am
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

Georg Christoph Biller conductor
Jacqueline Porter soprano
St Thomas Boys' Choir, Leipzig

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied – Motet, BWV 225

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf – Motet, BWV 226

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied (Psalm 98), Op.91

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681–1767) and BACH

Jauchzet dem Herrn alle Welt

MENDELSSOHN

Wie der Hirsch schreit (Psalm 42), Op.42

Jacqueline Porter soprano



Music from today's program
has been recorded for
broadcast across Australia
on ABC Classic FM 92.9.

Estimated timings:

14 minutes, 8 minutes,
8 minutes, 12 minutes,
27 minutes

The concert will conclude
at approximately 12.15pm.

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It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this concert in the 2009 Tea & Symphony series.

This concert is special because it represents the Australian debut of a choir with a proud musical tradition. The St Thomas Boys' Choir of Leipzig can trace its history back to the time of Johann Sebastian Bach and before, and in the 27 years that Bach spent working in Leipzig, this choir was *his* choir. So when these choristers perform Bach today they sing with the knowledge that their predecessors sang this same music nearly three centuries before.

The program they've prepared for this concert with the Sydney Symphony reflects their strong tradition in music by Bach; music by Telemann, another composer associated with Leipzig; and music by Mendelssohn, whose vision led to the revival of Bach's music for the Romantic generation and for music-lovers today.

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Kambly is a way of life, dedicated to all those who appreciate the difference between the best and the merely good. In this way it is fitting that we partner with the internationally acclaimed Sydney Symphony, whose vision is to ignite and deepen people's love of live symphonic music.

We hope you enjoy this morning's program, and look forward to welcoming you to future concerts in the Tea & Symphony series in 2009.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oscar A. Kambly".

Oscar A. Kambly
Chairman
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ABOUT THE MUSIC

Three Composers in Leipzig

Leipzig is a city of music and all three of today's composers have an association with it. At the age of 20 Telemann arrived at the university to study law. His fellow students found a psalm setting in his luggage and there was no hiding his musical gifts after that. The psalm was performed at the St Thomas Church, after which the mayor commissioned him to write music for the church every fortnight. Twenty years later, in 1722, he applied for the newly vacant job of Cantor at St Thomas. So did Bach. Telemann, the more famous musician, was appointed but his employers in Hamburg refused to release him – indeed they offered him more money, and so he withdrew. Graupner, a former student at the St Thomas School, was next in line, but he too was offered more money elsewhere, and so the job fell to Bach, the composer best remembered today, not least for the magnificent choral music that he composed in Leipzig between 1723 and 1750. But immediately after his death he was largely forgotten by all but the librarians and a few enthusiasts. When Mendelssohn revived Bach's *St Matthew* Passion in 1829, it was the first performance of the work in nearly a century.

In 1835 Mendelssohn began a 12-year association with Leipzig as its municipal music director and conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. For a composer the terms were excellent: 1000 thalers a year and six months' annual leave. Between October and March each season he conducted 20 subscription concerts, and his influence in shaping the character and repertoire of orchestral concert programming can still be felt today. In 1843 he founded the Leipzig Conservatory and was made an honorary citizen of the city. That same year he began work on a project, instigated by the king: a revitalisation of the Prussian liturgy with new music that placed fresh emphasis on *a cappella* (unaccompanied) choral singing. We hear fruit from that project in today's concert.



Johann Sebastian Bach



Felix Mendelssohn



Georg Philipp Telemann

BACH Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied – Motet, BWV 225 (Sing unto the Lord a new song)

Bach was a devout Lutheran whose music was written to the service of God. So it's not surprising that he set the Psalm text 'Sing unto the Lord a new song' no fewer than three times. This motet from 1726–27 was his second effort, the first appearing in a cantata for New Year's Day two years earlier. The motet is ambitious and complex, with the text and music broken into several contrasting 'movements' in the style of an instrumental concerto.

Bach's use of an eight-voice double chorus was typical for a sacred motet, but the music he writes for these forces is strikingly original. Amidst the expected straightforward textures he includes full-blown fugues, including, in the first section a fugue for choir I ('The children of Zion') accompanied by choir II with music from the beginning. In the slow central section he alternates the two choirs in question-answer style, each choir singing its own text in its own style (simple, chorale-like music against more lyrical and elaborate music). In the final section the two choirs come together for another fugue and the exciting Hallelujahs that conclude the motet send the treble voices into the stratosphere.

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied,
die Gemeinde der Heiligen sollen ihn loben.
Israel freue sich des, der ihn gemacht hat.
Die Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich über ihrem
Könige,
Sie sollen loben seinen Namen im Reihen;
mit Pauken und mit Harfen sollen sie ihm
spielen.

Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet
über seine junge Kinderlein
so tut der Herr uns allen
so wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein.
Er kennt das arm Gemächte,
Gott weiß, wir sind nur Staub,
gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen
ein Blum und fallend Laub.
Der Wind nur drüber wehet,
so ist es nicht mehr da,
also der Mensch vergehet
sein End das ist ihm nah.

DOUBLE CHORUS

Sing unto the Lord a new song,
the assembly of saints shall praise him.
Israel, rejoice in that which he has made.
The children of Zion, be joyful for your
king,
you should praise his name in procession;
with timpani and with harps should you play
to him.

CHORALE (CHOIR II) AND ARIA (CHOIR I) ALTERNATING

Just as a father has mercy
on his young little children
so does the Lord unto us all,
so we innocently fear him, like children.
He knows our feeble doings,
God knows we are merely dust,
just like the grass on the rake
a blossom and fallen leaf.
The wind simply blows across it
and it is no longer there,
even so the human passes away
its end is close at hand.

*Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an,
denn ohne dich ist nichts getan
mit allen unsern Sachen.
Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht,
und trügst uns unsre Hoffnung nicht,
so wirst du's ferner machen.
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest
auf dich und deine Huld verläßt.*

*God, accept us furthermore
for without you nothing is done
by any deed of ours.
Thus be our shield and light,
and if our hopes do not deceive us,
so will you do this furthermore.
Blessed are they, that fast and firmly,
surrender themselves to you and your grace.*

DOUBLE CHORUS

Lobet denn Herrn in seinen Taten,
lobet ihn in seiner großen Herrlichkeit!
Alles, was Odem hat,
lobe den Herrn, Halleluja!

Praise the Lord for his acts,
praise him for his great splendour!
Everything that has breath,
praise the Lord, Hallelujah!

**BACH Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf – Motet, BWV 226
(The Spirit helps us in our weakness)**

For Bach a motet was a sacred vocal composition with no independent instruments – where an orchestra was included the scoring was most probably *colla parte*, doubling the vocal lines note for note. According to Bach's original performing parts for the Motet, BWV 226, the first choir was doubled by the strings, while the second was doubled by the woodwinds – contrasts in textures and groupings supported by contrasts in instrumental colour.

This is one of the few Bach motets where there is surviving evidence of its performance context, in this case the burial in 1729 of J.H. Ernesti, a university professor and the Rector of the St Thomas School. The tone isn't funereal, though – the opening is uncharacteristically buoyant. As in the Motet, BWV 225, Bach takes full advantage of the double choir, with intriguing groupings of the eight voices, before bringing them together for a grand fugue and the finale chorale. The text is drawn from Romans 8:26–27 and, for the chorale, a verse from a hymn by Martin Luther.

DOUBLE CHORUS

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf,
denn wir wissen nicht, was wir beten sollen,
wie sichs gebühret;
sondern der Geist selbst vertritt uns
aufs beste mit unaussprechlichem Seufzen

The Spirit helps us in our weakness;
for we know not what to pray,
as is proper;
rather the Spirit itself intercedes for us
for our good, with sighs too deep for words.

CHORUS

Der aber die Herzen forschet,
der weiß, was des Geistes Sinn sei;
denn er vertritt die Heiligen
nach dem, das Gott gefällt

But the one who searches the heart,
knows what is the mind of the Spirit
because he represents the saints
according to that which pleases God.

Du heilige Brunst, süßer Trost,
nun hilf uns, fröhlich und getrost
in deinem Dienst beständig bleiben,
die Trübsal uns nicht abtreiben.
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit
und stärk des Fleisches Blödigkeit,
daß wir hie ritterlich ringen,
durch Tod und Leben zu dir dringen.
Halleluja.

CHORALE

You holy ardour, comfort sweet,
help us now, joyfully and confidently
to remain constant in service to you,
tribulation not impelling us.
Oh Lord, prepare us by your might
and make strong the weakness of our flesh
that we may forever nightly wrestle
through death and life, urgently toward you.
Hallelujah.

MENDELSSOHN Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, Op.91 (Sing unto the Lord a new song)

Mendelssohn seems to have felt some frustration with King Friedrich Wilhelm IV's attempts to restore liturgical music to a Renaissance ideal – a *cappella* singing in the manner of Palestrina – especially when it appeared that the new church music wouldn't amount to more than 'one piece before the beginning of the service'. This psalm setting is such a piece, the *introit* of the liturgy.

It begins by following the new ideal. The basses intone the opening line, launching an extended section of eight-part unaccompanied choral writing. But soon the text itself ('Shout to the Lord...') gives Mendelssohn a cunning pretext for introducing instruments, literally praising the Lord with trumpets, trombones (*Posaunen*), and harp. The harp, in particular, drew criticism in the sermon at the first performance in 1844 – despite any associations with angels, it was considered a secular instrument with no place in church. Finally, with the roaring sea, clapping floods and joyful hills, a full orchestra was justified and so the psalm ends in radiant triumph.

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied;
den er tut Wunder.

Er sieget mit seiner Rechten
und mit seinem heiligen Arm.

Der Herr lässt sein Heil verkündigen;
vor den Völkern läßt er seine
Gerechtigkeit offenbaren.

Er gedenket an seine Gnade
und Wahrheit dem Hause Israel;
aller Welt Enden sehn
das Heil unsers Gottes.

Jauchzet dem Herrn alle Welt;
singet, rühmet und lobet!
Lobet den Herrn
mit Harfen und mit Psalmen!

Sing unto the Lord a new song;
for he hath done marvellous things:
his right hand, and his holy arm,
hath gotten him the victory.

The Lord hath made known his salvation:
his righteousness hath he openly
shewed in the sight of the heathen.
He hath remembered his mercy
and his truth toward the house of Israel:
all the ends of the earth
have seen the salvation of our God.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth:
make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.
Sing unto the Lord with the harp;
with the harp, and the voice of a psalm!

Mit Drommeten und Posaunen
jauchz't vor dem Herrn, dem Könige!
Das Meer brause und was darinnen ist,
der Erdboden und die darauf wohnen.
Die Wasserströme frohlocken,
und alle Berge seien fröhlich vor den Herrn;
denn er kommt das Erdreich zu richten.
Er wird den Erdkreis richten mit
Gerechtigkeit
und die Völker mit Recht.

With trumpets and sound of cornet [trombones]
make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.
Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.
Let the floods clap their hands:
let the hills be joyful together Before the Lord;
for he cometh to judge the earth:
with righteousness shall he judge the
world,
and the people with equity

Psalm 98

TELEMANN and BACH Jauchzet dem Herrn alle Welt (Shout to the Lord all the earth)

This motet has patchwork origins: the evidence suggests that the first two sections were assembled by Bach, drawing on his own music as well as music thought to be by his contemporary, Telemann. The third section was most likely added after Bach's death by his successor at the St Thomas School, and this comes from a Telemann Christmas cantata. Nowadays we might call this kind of work an arrangement, but an 18th-century inscription in a St Thomas School choir book described it differently: 'by Telemann, *improved* by Joh. Seb. Bach.'

Bach's improvements probably included expanding the opening chorus from an original four voices to eight, all the better to communicate the joyful and noisy words of Psalm 100:1–2. He also introduces a strategy already heard in 'Singet dem Herrn': one choir accompanying a four-voice fugue in the other. The great chorale in the middle of the motet is all Bach – based on Cantata No.28. The final chorus returns to the eight-voice texture with a text from Revelation 7:12.

Jauchzet dem Herrn alle Welt,
Dienet dem Herrn mit Freuden.

Shout to the Lord all the earth,
Serve the Lord with gladness.

Kommet vor sein Angesicht
mit Frohlocken, Alleluja!

Come before his face
with rejoicing, Hallelujah!

Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren,
Gott Vater, Sohn und Heiligem Geist,
der woll in uns vermehren,
was er aus Gnaden uns verheißt,

CHORALE

Give glory and praise with honour,
To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
Who multiplies with favour
His kind and gracious promise blest

daß wir ihm fest vertrauen,
gänzlich verlassen auf ihn,
von Herzen auf ihn bauen,
das uns'r Herz, Mut und Sinn
ihm tröstlich soll'n anhangen
drauf singen wir zur Stund: Amen!
Wir werd'ns erlangen,
glauben wir aus Herzensgrund.

May we in faith believe him
Put all our trust in him
Incline our hearts to love him
That heart and mind alone
May rest their faith upon him
And sing this day: Amen!
For we shall gain him
If in our hearts we believe.

FINAL CHORUS

Amen.
Lob und Ehre und Weisheit und Dank
und Preis und Kraft und Stärke
sei unserm Gott von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit.

Amen.
Laud and honour and wisdom and thanks
and praise and might and greatness
be to our God eternally from eternity to
eternity.

Amen.

Amen.

MENDELSSOHN *Wie der Hirsch schreit nach frischem Wasser, Op.42* (As the hart panteth after the water brooks)

Mendelssohn thought this psalm setting was not only 'by far [his] best sacred composition' but his overall 'best piece of music'. Others agreed: in his lifetime it became one of his most popular sacred works. He began writing it during his honeymoon after marrying Cécile Jeanrenaud in 1837, and for the first play-through (a 'wondrous bellowing') she sang soprano to Felix's alto.

It is more than a psalm setting – with its soprano soloist, orchestral accompaniment and substantial length, it is closer to a cantata, and it's significant that this was not intended for church performance but for the concert hall. Unconstrained by liturgical requirements, Mendelssohn is able to develop his musical ideas over a longer span, highlighting the intrinsic drama of the psalm text.

The yearning of the atmospheric beginning conveys serenity rather than distress. In the following aria, the 'thirsting for God' is personified in the soprano soloist's alternations with the solo oboe. The text journeys from estrangement and longing to the quiet confidence in God heard in the quintet for soprano and four male voices, discreetly accompanied by strings and flute. This leads to the hope and praise of the final chorus, which carries the grand and brilliant air of a coronation anthem.

CHORUS

Wie der Hirsch schreit nach frischem
Wasser,
so schreit meine Seele, Gott, zu dir

As the hart panteth after the water
brooks,
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Meine Seele dürstet nach Gott,
nach dem lebendigen Gott.
Wann werde ich dahin kommen,
daß ich Gottes Angesicht schaue?

Meine Tränen sind meine Speise Tag und
Nacht,
weil man täglich zu mir sagt:
Wo ist nun dein Gott?
Wenn ich dess innewerde,
so schütte ich mein Herz aus bei mir selbst;
denn ich wollte gerne hingehen mit dem
Haufen
und mit ihnen wallen zum Hause Gottes
mit Frohlocken und Danken unter
dem Haufen derer, die da feiern.

Was betrübst du dich, meine Seele,
und bist so unruhig in mir?
Harre auf Gott! denn ich werde ihm noch
danken,
daß er mir hilft mit seinem Angesicht.

Mein Gott, betrübt ist meine Seele in mir;
darum gedenke ich an dich.
Deine Fluten rauschen daher,
daß hier eine Tiefe und da eine Tiefe brausen;
alle deine Wasserwogen
und Wellen gehen über mich.

ARIA

My soul thirsteth for God,
for the living God:
when shall I come
and appear before God?

RECITATIVE

My tears have been my meat day and
night,
while they continually say unto me,
Where is thy God?
When I remember these things,
I pour out my soul in me:
for I had gone with the multitude,

I went with them to the house of God,
with the voice of joy and praise,
with a multitude that kept holyday.

CHORUS

Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted in me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise
him
for the help of his countenance.

RECITATIVE

O my God, my soul is cast down within me:
therefore will I remember thee.
Deep calleth unto deep
at the noise of thy waterspouts:
all thy waves
and thy billows are gone over me.

Der Herr hat des Tages verheißen seine
Güte,
und des Nachts singe ich ihm
und bete zu dem Gott meines Lebens.

Mein Gott! Betrübt ist meine Seele in mir,
warum hast du meiner vergessen?
Warum muß ich so traurig gehen,
wenn Feind mich drängt?

Was betrübst du dich, meine Seele,
und bist so unruhig in mir?

Harre auf Gott! denn ich werde ihm noch
danken,
daß er meines Angesichts Hilfe und mein
Gott ist.

Preis sei dem Herrn, dem Gott Israels,
von nun an bis in Ewigkeit!

Psalm 42

PROGRAM NOTES BY YVONNE FRINDLE, SYDNEY SYMPHONY ©2009

BIBLICAL TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS BASED ON THE LUTHER BIBLE (1545) AND
THE KING JAMES VERSION.

QUINTET

Yet the Lord will command his loving
kindness in the daytime,
and in the night his song shall be with me,
and my prayer unto the God of my life.

My God! My soul is cast down within me.
Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?

CHORUS

Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?

Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise
him,
who is the health of my countenance, and
my God.

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
now and for all time!

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Georg Christoph Biller conductor

Georg Christoph Biller was appointed Cantor of the St Thomas Boys' Choir in 1992, returning to the choir after his own years as a student (1965–1974) and as a guest conductor and vocal soloist. After graduating from the school he studied orchestral conducting under Rolf Reuter and Kurt Masur and founded the Leipzig Vocal Circle. In addition to his guest conducting, he has been director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Choir and has taught choral conducting in Halle, Detmold, Frankfurt/Main and, since 1994, at the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Academy of Music and Theatre in Leipzig. In 1985 he received the Osaka Music Prize, together with the St Thomas Boys' Choir and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and in 1996 he was elected a member of the Academy of Arts of Saxony. He is the 16th Cantor at St Thomas since Bach, and the choir has made several recordings under his direction.



Jacqueline Porter soprano

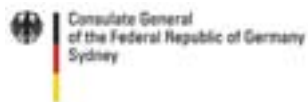
Jacqueline Porter holds an honours degree in music performance and a degree in Italian from the University of Melbourne. She is a principal artist with Victorian Opera and appears regularly as a soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria and MSO Chorus.

Her concert repertoire includes Bach's Cantata No.207, Berlioz's *Nuits d'été*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, Britten's *Les Illuminations* and *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Fauré's Requiem, Gounod's *Messe solennelle de Sainte Cécile*, Haydn's *Maria Theresa Mass*, Mozart's Requiem and *Coronation Mass*, and Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*.

As a Developing Artist with Victorian Opera (2006–2007) her roles included L'Amour (*Orphée et Eurydice*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*) and roles in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. She has also sung the Sandman in *Hänsel und Gretel* for the MSO. This year she performs Saskia and Hendrickje Stoffels in the premiere production of Andrew Ford's *Rembrandt's Wife* (Victorian Opera). This is her Sydney Symphony debut.



St Thomas Boys' Choir, Leipzig



The debut Australian tour of the St Thomas Boys' Choir is supported by the Goethe-Institut and the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany.

We thank the families of St Andrew's Cathedral School for billeting the choristers.

The St Thomas Boys' Choir is one of the oldest and most prominent musical institutions in Leipzig, the city of music. The choir is preparing for its 800th birthday in 2012 and this Australian tour is part of these celebrations. The choristers, aged 10 to 18, live, study and rehearse in the alumnat (boarding house) and attend the St Thomas Secondary College across the street. They sing every day, and give three performances each week in the St Thomas Church: two motet concerts, including a Bach cantata with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra for audiences numbering up to 1200, and the music for the Sunday service, just as in Bach's lifetime. In addition the choir tours, records and gives regular performances of Bach's Passions, his Christmas Oratorio and the Mass in B Minor.

Founded in 1212, the choir and school has long been an important cultural institution in Leipzig, and became well-known outside the city even before Bach's time. The choir's renown grew significantly in the 20th century – in part the result of increasing performances abroad and radio broadcasts in the 1930s, featuring performances of all Bach's extant cantatas.

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