

MELBOURNE
RECITAL
CENTRE

PRESENTS

J.S. Bach

PART TWO

Music for Celebration

*‘Our time on this earth is sacred,
and we should celebrate every moment.’*

Paulo Coelho

Wednesday 31 March 2021, 7.30pm

(J.S. Bach’s birthday)

**Elisabeth Murdoch Hall
Melbourne Recital Centre**

Artists

Rachael Beesley director/violin

Bach’s Musicians

Zoë Black violin

Peter Clark violin

Jessica Oddie violin

Anna McMichael violin

Cameron Jamieson violin

Simon Oswell viola

Katie Yap viola

Josephine Vains cello

Robert Nairn violone

Donald Nicolson harpsichord/organ

Program

POST-HÖRNL

Romanus Weichlein (1652-1706)

Canon über das Post-Hörn

SINGLE SHOT

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Orchestral Suite No.3 in D, BWV 1068
1. Overture

SONATA VIII

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber (1644-1704)

Sonatae tam aris quam aulis servientes

Sonata VIII a Cinque in G

DOUBLE SHOT

J.S. Bach

Concerto for Two Violins in D minor,
BWV 1043

Vivace - Largo ma non tanto - Allegro

SONATA VI

H.I.F. Biber

Sonatae tam aris quam aulis servientes

Sonata VI a Cinque in F

TRIPLE SHOT

J.S. Bach

Concerto for Three Violins in D,
BWV 1064R

Allegro - Adagio - Allegro

PASSACAGLIA

Georg Muffat (1653-1704)

String Sonata No.5 in G from
Armonico tribute

5. Passacaglia

About the music

Music for Celebration explores the joyous repertoire for strings by J.S. Bach combined with imaginative and engaging works by Baroque composers Romanus Weichlein, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber and Georg Muffat, in the reverberating acoustic of Elisabeth Murdoch Hall.

Opening the program with the mischievous *Canon über das Post-Hörn* by Weichlein invites us into the sound world of the Baroque with music for strings and continuo. As a student in Salzburg, where Weichlein earned his Doctor of Philosophy, he became acquainted with Biber and his music. Evidence of this inspired way of creating new textures and timbres for strings is artfully carried off with the thematic material joyfully passed around the ensemble.

Paul Hindemith described Biber as ‘the most remarkable composer before Bach’ and Leopold Mozart instructed his son Wolfgang Amadeus to study Biber’s works. Exploring the rich sonorities and varied instrumental music from the Baroque period, Biber’s *Sonatae tam aris quam aulis servientes* - Sonatas as much for the altar as for the table (sacred and secular music) served dual purposes. Biber tried to bypass the ban on the sonata da camera in the church at the time in order make his music accessible and commercial. Biber was himself a virtuoso on the violin and this is evident in his compositions. The string parts although idiomatic, require technical facility and an approach that should make the music sound spontaneous, evocative and energetic. Kroměříž, where Biber resided at the time, was a wealthy palace holding a fabulous collection of art, an extensive library, including many musical manuscripts, and an impressive band of 36 musicians.

Serving the Archbishop of Salzburg as Biber had done, Muffat effortlessly brought together the compositional styles of the European continent. His magnificent Passacaglia in G from his *Armonico Tributo (Harmonious Tribute)* contains 25 variations on a ground bass, also used by J.S. Bach in his *Goldberg Variations*. Muffat carried on the tradition of the Lullists which employed the regimented use of the rule of the down bow creating ‘dexterity and uniformity’ in the sections of the ensemble as well as lively playing with ‘extraordinary delicate beauty’.

J.S. Bach revelled in writing music for musicians, with rhythmic dance movements, melodic motifs that bend and weave, counterpoint that develops and blossoms in a way no other composer could achieve. His music is at the cornerstone of Baroque and Classical repertoire and knowledge of performance practices before, during and after J.S. Bach’s lifetime is informing practicing musicians of today to understand more fully his musical intentions.

Composed in the French Overture style, J.S. Bach’s early version of the Suite No.3 in D for strings and continuo welcomes us with a grand opening followed by a quick sprightly section, bringing the solo concertante violin to the fore before returning to the slow gestures of the beginning. Bach utilised his knowledge and expertise in bringing together the French and German styles of writing which in-turn invites flexibility of rhythmic nuance and shape by the performer.

J.S. Bach’s buoyant Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, known as the ‘Bach Double’, is fashioned in the Italian concerto style but brings a depth of harmonic richness and tone far beyond Vivaldi’s virtuosic style of composition. Likely composed for the two principal violinists in Prince Leopold of Cöthen’s orchestra, Joseph Speiss and Martin Friedrich Marcus, violinists who had been recruited from Berlin, whose talent enabled Bach’s creative output to shine.

The outrageously energetic Concerto for Three Violins in D also presents violinists with a chance to shine and swagger in the spotlight, with conversations a plenty and fugal passages, sending the listener into a spin. A reconstruction of a lost concerto, which only survived in an arrangement as the concerto for Three Harpsichords in C (BWV 1064), this restoration returns us to the original concept of concertante strings in the Italian style. J.S. Bach’s singing style is exploited in the cantabile writing of the slow movements of both these concertos, whilst flamboyant virtuosity is on display in the concluding movements.

J.S. Bach’s music is truly an inspirational art form, which continues to engage, invigorate and move performers, composers and listeners today.

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About the artists

Rachael Beesley director/violin

Rachael Beesley is an internationally renowned Australian violinist, director and concertmaster. Beginning her professional career with Orchestra Victoria in 1991, Rachael performs as guest concertmaster for Opera Australia, Victorian Opera and Pinchgut Opera. Performing in a wide range of orchestras and ensembles, Rachael has been engaged by the Australian Chamber and Australian Brandenburg Orchestras, directed the Tasmanian and Canberra Symphony Orchestras, performs for Musica Viva Australia and has records on over 50 CDs.

Graduating from the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague, The Netherlands in 1999, Rachael’s fascination with historically informed performance has blossomed into years of international experience performing in festivals, concert halls and opera houses worldwide. Constantly seeking out new challenges, Rachael is dedicated to creating and directing new orchestras and ensembles, including the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra and Ironwood, by researching and redefining the approach to performance practices.

As an advocate of music education, Rachael presents workshops and lectures at international conferences and teaches at universities in Europe and Australia, including the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague and The University of Melbourne and is a regular tutor for the Australian Youth Orchestra. For dedication to her work, Rachael has received an Ian Potter Cultural Trust grant and is listed in the Who’s Who of Australian Women.

rachaelbeesley.com



Zoë Black, Josephine Vains, Simon Oswell, Rachael Beesley & Cameron Jamieson

Bach’s Musicians

Featured in numerous performances of J.S. Bach at Melbourne Recital Centre, *Bach - The Passions of the Soul* and *The Genius of J.S. Bach*, directed by violinist Rachael Beesley, the ensemble Bach’s Musicians bring a warmth and depth of understanding, knowledge and experience of the repertoire, style and instruments of the time to the music of J.S. Bach and his contemporaries. Performing on gut strings creates an environment where historical precedents, notation and dedicated musicians all factor into, jostle, blend and react to each other to create dynamic and invigorating performances. Knowledge, expertise and experience then feed these musicians’ imaginations and create environments of curiosity, experimentation and creativity. In this performance of *J.S. Bach - Music for Celebration*, joining Rachael Beesley as soloists for Bach’s renowned concertos will be violinists Anna McMichael, Peter Clark and Jessica Oddie.

Melbourne Recital Centre acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, live and learn. We pay our respects to people of the Kulin nation, their Elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



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