

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER CHOIR

directed by Douglas Lawrence AM



Entrance to the Grand Canal, Venice, Giovanni (Canaletto) Canal, oil on canvas, c.1730, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Saturday 23 April at 3PM

Thompson Memorial Church TERANG

Sunday 24 April at 3PM

St John's FLINDERS

Saturday 30 April at 3PM

Church of the Resurrection MACEDON

Sunday 1 May at 3PM

Basilica of St Mary of the Angels GEELONG

Saturday 7 May at 3PM

The Scots' Church MELBOURNE & on ACCess

ot every day, nor every year nor even every decade, does an Australian program include a work performed for the first time in almost three centuries (and perhaps performed for the first time ever). But such is the case with this concert.

Vivaldi's Gloria was written in 1715 for the famous allfemale ensemble of Venice's Ospedale della Pietà. During Vivaldi's time teaching at this orphanage (1703-40), the Pietà developed an international reputation for its private concerts, presented exclusively by the young women who were educated there.

In around 1720, Agata (pronounced like Agatha), a baby born without fingers on her left hand, was passed through the small revolving door (called a *scaffetta*) in the orphanage's exterior wall. Later, she became a star student, performing as a soprano soloist and composing cantatas. Her compositions have remained hidden until today as fragments in a Venetian library.

You are one of the first people to hear Agata's Cantata outside the walls of the Venice orphanage where it was written.

The works on today's program all come from a time when there was more stillness in people's lives – three works written during the 18th century and one work, Christine McCombe's *Power in stillness*, written recently, as Melbourne endured the world's longest lockdown.

PROGRAM

FRANCESCO DURANTE (1684-1755)

Magnificat (formerly attributed to Giovanni B Pergolesi)

CHRISTINE MCCOMBE (born 1967)

Power in stillness

AGATA DELLA PIETÀ (c.1720-c.1780)

Ecce nunc (Psalm 134, Latin Vulgate 133)

INTERVAL

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

Gloria RV 589

PROGRAM NOTES

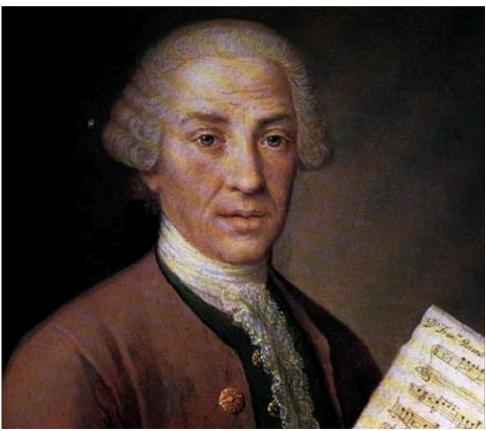
MAGNIFICAT in Bb - Francesco Durante

Born in Frattamaggiore, Italy, 31 March 1684; died in Naples, 30 September 1755

This work's origins formed a long-standing puzzle.
Starting from 1910, it was widely assumed that the Magnificat had been written by a much better-known and shorter-lived composer from the next generation: Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, who had been one of

DURANTE Magnificat

Durante's numerous pupils in Naples. On stylistic grounds, the Pergolesi attribution made sense; the music's buoyant, predominantly diatonic character seemed closer to Pergolesi's habitual idiom than it did to the complex, rarefied, and highly chromatic manner that Durante often cultivated. Later, though, the discovery of a manuscript of the Magnificat in Durante's handwriting (and, crucially, also containing Durante's signature as evidence of authorship), pointed to the older man's ultimate responsibility for the piece.



Portrait of Francesco Durante, Anonymous 18th century painting, Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale

DURANTE Magnificat

At the beginning, the main theme – as the music's original audiences would have realised – constitutes a long-drawn-out plainchant melody traditionally associated with the Magnificat's opening words. Few moments in the entire choral literature can surpass, for sheer excitement, the return of this theme at the words 'Sicut erat in principio', elaborated this time, but accompanied by similar chugging Vivaldian string motifs.

Chorus

Magnificat anima mea
Dominum,
Et exsultavit spiritus meus in
Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit
humilitatem ancillae suae;
ecce enim ex hoc beatam
me dicent omnes
generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna qui
potens est, et sanctum
nomen eius.

Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done great things for me, and holy is His name.

My soul doth magnify the

Soprano, Alto solos

Et misericordia a progenie in progenies timentibus eum. Fecit potentiam in bracchio suo; And His mercy is on them that fear Him throughout all generations. He hath shown strength with His arm; He hath

DURANTE Magnificat

dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.

scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

Chorus

Deposuit
potentes de sede
Et exaltavit
humiles.
Esurientes implevit
bonis et
divites dimisit
inanes.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away.

Tenor and Bass Duet

Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae,

Remembering His mercy, He hath holpen His servant Israel:

Chorus

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini eius in saecula.
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto:

As He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost:

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

TWO WORLD PREMIERES

POWER IN STILLNESS - Christine McCombe

Born in Rosebud, Victoria, 3 April 1967

Christine McCombe studied at the University of Melbourne, during which time she sang in the Choir of Ormond College under the direction of Douglas Lawrence, After studies with James McMillan at the Royal Scotish Academy of Music and Drama she went on to complete a PhD in composition at the University of Edinburgh. Composition prizes and awards include the Dorian Le Galienne Composition Award, the Lyrebird Music Society Composition Prize, a Keith and Elisabeth Murdoch Fellowship, a Centre Acanthes (France) Bursary, a Bundanoon Artists Trust Residency and most recently, the 2018 Pythia Prize. Her compositions have been performed by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Piano Trio, Topology Ensemble, Australia Ensemble and the Australian Chamber Choir to name a few. Recent performances of her works have taken place in the Resonant Bodies Festival (New York), the National Gallery of Victoria and the Melbourne Recital Centre. A CD of her chamber music, entitled Three kinds of silence was released on the Tall Poppies label in 2018.

Power in Stillness was commissioned by the ACC in 2020 with support from Modest Expectations. The work was to be performed by the ACC as part of their 2021 European tour, which was cancelled due to COVID restrictions.

Christine explains the origins of her new work (for which, in August 2020, she wrote the text) as follows:

I composed Power in Stillness during the COVID lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, while navigating the reality of having two teenagers at home attempting school and a husband in the next room attempting to teach high school English remotely. I remember feeling that time itself had taken on a strange quality. There were long pauses, a lot of waiting, a lot of time to sit and think and just be. As a family we spent a lot of time together in the same place, and daily 'mental health walks' became a necessity. We live near a hidden gem of a creek - Edgars Creek - that snakes quietly through some of Melbourne's northern suburbs, the land of the Wurundjeri / Woi Wurrung people. Many of my walks would be along this creek, through the quiet groves of eucalypts, past rocky escarpments, listening to the quiet, the waters gently passing over mossy rocks, the native birds, particularly the kookaburras. It was time to breathe, to listen, to feel the ground under my feet, to spend time with trees and the feeling of slowness they evoke, the sense

of connection to the land and the land's history reaching back before European voices were heard here. Hoved these walks: the connection with stillness and the land, listening with my whole body. The concept of listening to the land, 'Deep Listening', is as old as the land itself. It reminds me of the immense wisdom and knowledge of First Nations peoples, it reminds me to be humble and grateful. In composing Power in Stillness, I sought to evoke these qualities of stillness, of listening to the 'spaces between', and also reflect on the concepts of isolation and connectedness that the various lockdowns seemed to bring into focus.

There is a power In stillness In silence In waiting

Looking up to the sky
Feeling the earth below
Standing in awe
And silence
Listening

There is a power In stillness In silence In waiting

Listening
To the spaces between trees
As we stand
And breathe
Finding the quiet within

There is a power In stillness In silence In waiting

Remembering
That we can stand alone
And still be connected
Like the quiet language of trees
Beneath the surface
Their roots entwined
Reaching out and holding strong

There is a power In stillness In silence In waiting

ECCE NUNC - Agata della Pietà

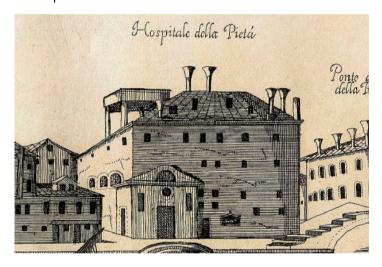
Born probably in Venice approximately 1720; died approximately 1780

Not every day, nor every year nor even every decade, does an Australian program include a work performed for the first time in almost three centuries (and perhaps performed for the first time ever). But such is the case with this concert. Elizabeth Anderson explains the feats of musicological sleuthing that enabled her to revive the six-movement *Ecce Nunc*, which incorporates words taken from Psalm 134 (Psalm 133 in the Latin Vulgate translation):

I've always been fascinated by the idea that orphans in eighteenth-century Venice were given an excellent education in music. Evidently it was only selected female orphans who had this privilege, as it was considered more useful to teach male orphans a trade. When still at high school, I read about Vivaldi teaching at the Ospedale della Pietà. Since then I've pondered the idea that there might be compositions by unknown female composers to be rediscovered.

When we decided on a performance of the Vivaldi *Gloria* for our 2022 program, my curiosity was reignited. Browsing Google

to see what might be unearthed, I entered an Italian-language search, as I've found that Google doesn't search very effectively across languages. A cluster of Italian articles about music education in Venetian orphanages confirmed that I was on track to find at least some fragments of compositions by female orphan composers.



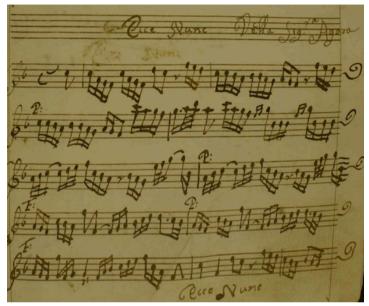
My search narrowed to a Venetian library, which I contacted by email. One particular librarian was more than happy to help and after a further exchange of emails, furnished me with copies of an incomplete set of manuscript parts for *Ecce Nunc*, by Agata della Pietà. You can imagine my excitement when, the day after requesting the manuscripts, the set

of yellowed images arrived in my inbox. All the surviving manuscript parts were put at my disposal: I had a complete first violin part and a complete cello part. Choir parts for alto and bass gave only three of the six movements, with the remaining three movements marked tacet. Those three movements in which the choral singers were silent must be vocal solos, which would need to be reconstructed. The handwriting was very clear, but there were crossings-out and, at first glance, the parts for each movement seemed to have different numbers of bars.

I decided to key in the available material for the opening movement for choir and orchestra to create a skeletal full score, from which we could assess the composition and calculate how much work would be involved in a possible reconstruction. After an hour's work, it was clear that we were dealing with an exciting piece of choral and orchestral writing similar in style to the Vivaldi *Gloria*. At this point, Douglas Lawrence and I knew that we had struck gold!

I'm grateful to our son, Jacob Lawrence, (who recently completed a Masters

degree specialising in Baroque repertoire at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis) for his assistance in reviewing my drafts.



Page one of the first violin part of Agatha della Pietà's Cantata. Ecce Nunc

The composer, whose surname is unknown – the records identify her purely as 'Agata' – triumphed over physical disability: she had been born without the four fingers of her left hand. She arrived at the Pietà around 1720, most likely given up by her parents because of her apparent disability. Agata soon shone as a star student. Two local musicians, Andrea Bernasconi and Giovanni Porta, left manuscripts of cantatas that specifically identify Agata as a soprano soloist.

Agata never married and continued to live at the Pietà, employed first as a teacher of singing and later also as

the institution's administrator. She is mentioned in a poem, of unknown authorship, which describes the Pietà's musical life. It is a privilege to ensure that Agata, after 280 years of silence, can have her creativity appreciated by a wider audience.



Save the Children Douglas Lawrence and Elizabeth Anderson recently donated to Save the Children to help children caught in escalating conflict in Ukraine.

Click here to donate to Save the Children

Soprano solo, Chorus

Ecce nunc benedicite

Dominum,

Now bless our Lord:

Soprano solo

omnes servi Domini:
Qui statis in domo
Domini, in atriis
domus Dei nostri.

all ye servants of our Lord; Who stand in the house of our Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.

Alto solo

In noctibus extollite manus vestras in sancta, et benedicite Dominum.

In the nights lift up your hands in the holy places, and bless ye our Lord.

Chorus

Benedicat te Dominus ex Sion, qui fecit caelum et Our Lord out of Sion bless Thee, who made heaven

terram.

Soprano Duet

Gloria Patri, et Filio,

et Spiritui Sancto:

Soprano solo, chorus

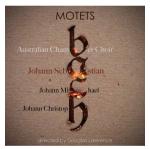
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. and earth.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,

and to the Holy Ghost:

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

INTERVAL



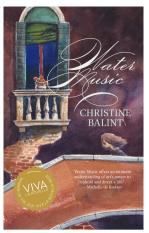
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Available at the box office today: signed copies of Christine Balint's prize winning new novel. Drawing on archival research in Venice, Water Music tells the story of a young girl growing up and learning music in a Venetian orphanage.

GLORIA Antonio Vivaldi

Born in Venice, 4 March 1678; died in Vienna, 28 July 1741

Considering that the Vivaldi *Gloria* (number 589 in the catalogue released during the 1970s by Danish scholar Peter Ryom) ranks second only to *The Four Seasons* as the composer's greatest popular hit of modern times, it remains odd how little we know about its origins. We cannot say with any confidence when he penned it. The year 1715 has been suggested, but a mere suggestion it remains. Few realise that Vivaldi set the same text twice more, though only one of these alternative settings survives, the other being – perhaps irretrievably – lost. The alternative setting, now identified as RV588, is in the same key (D major) as its far better-known companion, inspiring the hypothesis that it served as a first draft, and that Vivaldi later gave it a comprehensive overhaul.

If this hypothesis is true, it demonstrates unusual behaviour on the composer's part. On the whole, Vivaldi lacked the enthusiasm for creative recycling which both Bach and Handel many times showed. (So much for the ignorant and facetious jibe, often attributed to Stravinsky, about Vivaldi 'writing the same concerto five hundred times.')

Far from hypothetical, indeed remarked on almost to the point of notoriety in the last eighty years' scholarly literature, is Vivaldi's dependence for part of RV589 (and, for that matter, RV588) upon the output of an otherwise totally obscure fellow Italian: Giovanni Maria Ruggieri, thought to have been born around 1665 and to have died around 1724. The grand finale to RV589, 'Cum sancto spiritu,' is closely based upon a Ruggieri fugue.

Before we condemn Vivaldi outright for such plagiarism, three extenuating circumstances warrant emphasis. First, the drastic pressures of time under which Vivaldi always operated: rather than writing for a posterity which might or might not condescend to applaud him decades after he died, he needed to have his compositions ready for audiences (in this case for audiences at Venice's Pietà), and paid for by accounts departments within weeks or sometimes days. Second, during the early eighteenth century – as British critic William G. McNaught wrote in 1935 – 'copyright was then but half established, either in morals or at law.' Third, the expectation prevailed among Vivaldi's contemporaries that a composer who borrowed

music had to pay it back with abundant interest, improving on the borrowed item rather than lazily reproducing it note-for-note. This Vivaldi certainly did, because his 'Cum sancto spiritu' contains passages nowhere hinted at in the Ruggieri original. Handel exhibited similar enterprise in his own borrowings from other composers' scores; as Handel's admirer William Boyce observed, 'He takes Pebbles and turns them into Diamonds.'

It should never be forgotten that Vivaldi thought of himself - as did his contemporaries - as chiefly an operatic composer. However seldom his forty-odd operas are heard now, during his lifetime they carried his fame outside the Italian peninsula, in a way that The Four Seasons never then managed. The twelve movements of the Gloria suggest the opera house. The boisterous, fanfare-laden opening (which returns near the end); the vivacity of the vocal duetting in Laudamus te; the atmosphere of Yuletide pastoral calm throughout Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, with its haunting oboe solo (taken in some performances by a violin); the unusually chromatic choral harmonies in Qui tollis; all these, and many other sections, reveal that Vivaldi saw no need to purge secular elements from his writing of sacred music. Nor would his original listeners have desired such purgation: much of this music owed its very existence to the fact that Venice's theatres had closed for Lent, rather than to any more unctuously spiritual pretext.

Almost the sole concessions to ecclesiastical requirements at the Pietà were the metal grilles behind which the female performers were partly concealed while they played and sang. Jean-Jacques Rousseau found the Pietà to be 'always full of music lovers ...' He complained that what grieved him were 'those accursed grilles, which allowed only notes to go through and concealed the angels of loveliness of whom they were worthy.' Better luck befell visiting French politician Charles de Brosses, who reported of the ladies: 'I vow to you that there is nothing so diverting as the sight of a young and pretty nun, in a white habit, with a bunch of pomegranate blossoms over her ear, conducting the orchestra and beating time with all the grace and precision imaginable.'

Did either tourist hear the Gloria? While it would be pleasant to think so, documentary proof has not been found. Though the sheer neatness of its manuscript implies that Vivaldi could well have taken special trouble over the piece, such neatness failed to prevent its neglect for almost two centuries after Vivaldi's death in 1741: a neglect in which almost all his music shared (the main exceptions being those concertos known through Bach's arrangements). Only in 1939, when the composer Alfredo Casella – aided by, among others, the Vivaldiloving poet Ezra Pound – organised a week-long festival in Siena to pay the composer homage, did the *Gloria* come afresh to public notice. Since then, it has been

accorded over a hundred recordings (the first of those appears to be one from 1954, involving a Paris Conservatoire ensemble under the little-known conductor André Jouve). In 2022 it has yet to wear out its welcome with the general public.

Chorus

Gloria in excelsis Deo, Glory to God in the highest,

Chorus

Et in terra pax hominibus And on earth peace to bonae voluntatis. people of good will.

Soprano Duet

Laudamus te, benedicimus We praise You, we bless te, adoramus te, You, we adore You, glorificamus te. we glorify You.

Chorus

Gratias agimus tibi We give You thanks

Chorus

propter magnam gloriam for the great glory that is tuam. yours

Soprano solo

Domine Deus, Lord God, Rex coelestis, heavenly King, Deus Pater omnipotens. O God Almighty Father.

Chorus

Domine Fili unigenite Lord Only Begotten Son,
Jesu Christe, Jesus Christ,

Alto solo and Chorus

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Chorus

Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.

Alto solo

Qui sedes ad dexteram patris, miserere nobis.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

Chorus

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus Jesu Christe. For You alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord, You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ.

Chorus

Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris, Amen With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father, Amen.

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Tenor

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Isobel Todd

Jennifer Wilson-Richter

Bass

Thomas Drent*

Kieran Macfarlane

Alex Owens

Lucas Wilson-Richter

Violin I

Jennifer Kirsner

Viola

David Hanner

Double Bass

Bill Cawte

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Rhys Boak

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Arun Patterson or Mary Johnston

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Edwina Cordingley

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Joel Brennan

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Pamela Rosso
Gonni Runia
Jennifer Samild
Ben Slater
Margaret Slattery

Jill Smith
Jaga Szczepanik
Suzanna and Paul Tait
Lee and Tim Thorn
Nancy Toohey

Nancy Toohey
Rosalie Toomey
Anita Willaton
Rose-Marie van
Hoogstraten
Verena Voigt
Brian Walker
Tony Ward
Kathy White
Robert White
Anita Willaton
Gave Wirney

Frances and Andrew Wood

Eva Wynn