

Music at the Basilica Inc.

Advent Organ Recital 2020

Frank De Rosso – chamber organ (south transept) and great organ (west gallery)

Capriccio cromatico

Tarquinio Merula (1595-1665)

Merula was a key figure in the early development of several music forms which were to mature later in the Baroque era, such as the cantata, the aria, the sonatas da chiesa and da camera, variations on a ground bass, and the sinfonia. His sacred music works were influenced by Monteverdi.

His canzonettas, dialogues, keyboard toccatas and capriccios, a *Sonata cromatica*, and numerous other pieces display an interest in just about every contemporary musical trend of the time.

A capriccio is usually lively in character; fast, intense, and often virtuosic in nature.

The *capriccio cromatico* heard today is very unusual in its structure. The theme that is heard at the very start consists of 16 notes ascending chromatically. (all white and black notes) This chromatic theme is heard in various voice parts of the work, sometimes in its entirety and other times small sections of the theme is highlighted in ascending and descending motion.

Bicinium from Partita Op.8, No.2

Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Based on the Advent hymn 'Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme
(‘Awake calls the voice to us’)

This work has subtle references to the melody with extensive decoration. A bicinium is a composition of two parts stemming from the Renaissance period.

Distler was mostly known for his Church music, becoming organist at St Jacobi in Lübeck and then professor of church music in Stuttgart in 1940. Strong religious roots influenced his style of composition. His music style tends to be very polyphonic or as in the work played today, very melismatic. His works are quite virtuosic but were stigmatized by the Nazi regime as “degenerate art”. Distler became depressed from the deaths of friends, aerial attacks, employment insecurity, and the constant threat of conscription into the German army that he committed suicide in Berlin at the age of 34.

Part of the chorale “Wachet auf!” with harmony by J. S. Bach will be played before the work by Distler.

Canzona Prima

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643)

(from the First book of Toccatas and Partitas published in 1615)

Frescobaldi was one of the most important composers of the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods. A child prodigy, he was influenced by many composers, including Ascanio Mayone, Giovanni Maria Trabaci, and Claudio Merulo. He was appointed organist of St. Peter's Basilica, a focal point of power for the Cappella Giulia (a musical organisation), from 21 July 1608 until 1628 and again from 1634 until his death.

Frescobaldi's printed collections contain some of the most influential music of the 17th century. His work influenced Johann Jakob Froberger, Johann Sebastian Bach, Henry Purcell, and countless other major composers. Pieces from his celebrated collection of liturgical organ music, *Fiori musicali* (1635), were used as models of strict counterpoint as late as the 19th century.

Canzona Prima (song No.1) has four distinct sections. Each section ends in a flamboyant improvisatory style.

Tidings of a fleeting vision

Daniel Pinkham (1923-2006)

Tidings of peace

(from 'Tidings' 1997)

Pinkham is a prolific composer having studied with Aaron Copland, Arthur Honegger, Samuel Barber and Nadia Boulanger, to name a few. His catalogue of works includes four symphonies, large works for

ensembles, cantatas and oratorios; concertos for various instruments; theatre works and chamber operas; chamber music; electronic music; and twenty documentary film scores. In 1990 he was named *Composer of the Year* by the American Guild of Organists and, in 1996, received the Lifetime Achievement Award for contributions to the choral arts.

Tidings of a fleeting vision is a very whimsical piece with syncopated rhythms and changing meters.

Tidings of peace requires the organist to use pencils to hold down three notes to create a continuous drone like effect whilst the music progresses slowly. The music comes to a finish when the drone like sound ends when the pencils are released from the action of the organ.

Chorale Prelude

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Based on the Advent hymn tune "Von Himmel hoch, da komm ich her"
(From Heaven above to earth I Come)

Pachelbel was one of the great organ masters of the generation before Bach. One of his pupils was Johann Christoph Bach, who in turn gave his younger brother Johann Sebastian Bach his first formal keyboard lessons. His organ compositions show a knowledge of Italian forms derived from Girolamo Frescobaldi through Johann Jakob Froberger. Of special importance are his chorale preludes, which did much to establish the chorale melodies of Protestant northern Germany in the more lyrical musical atmosphere of the Catholic south.

(sung in German - translation)

*From heaven to earth I come
To bear good news to every home
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
Whereof I now will say and sing.*

Musette

Roberto Remondi (1851-1928)

Throughout history, pastorals and musettes have become synonymous with the Season of Christmas. Works are usually in a lilting 6/8 or 9/8 rhythm with reed stops being a feature.

Remondi was an Italian organist, composer and music pedagogue who studied at the Milan Conservatory. He was appointed chapel master of the cathedral of Brescia. (1876-1891) Among his works is the opera *Lamberto Malatesta*; large number of patriotic hymns, sacred music, chamber music and pieces for organ and piano.

Three Variations on a French Noel

Josse-Francois-Joseph Benaut (1741-1794)

(2nd movement from Magnificat in d minor)

Benaut was a prolific Belgian-born musician, active in France during the reign of Louis XVI. He later became a Catholic priest and was executed during the French Revolution 1795. He was quite industrious during his short career: between 1772 and 1784 he brought out 260 compositions, 120 of which survive. The bulk consists of popular keyboard arrangements of arias and opera overtures, but he also produced 12 Organ Masses, six Magnificats, a Te Deum, two keyboard concertos, chamber sonatas, motets, ceremonial pieces and songs.

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) often used as a prayer during Advent, is Mary's song of praise to God and acknowledges her blessedness as the mother of Jesus.

Choral prelude on the Gregorian theme 'Rorate Caeli'

Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968)

Isaiah 45:8 'drop down ye heavens from above and let the skies pour down righteousness' (Introit for the 4th Sunday in Advent)

Demessieux studied with the legendary organist Marcel Dupré at the Paris Conservatoire, graduating with distinction in 1941. She served as organist at Saint-Ésprit Church in Paris (1933–62); appointed professor at Liège Conservatoire in Liege, Belgium (1948); enjoyed an artistically triumphant tour of the U.S. (1953); and was the first woman to play the organ in Westminster Abbey, London. Until her appearance in the 1940s, the playing of the organ was largely a male domain.

(Sung in Latin – translation)

*You heavens sprinkle dew from above
you clouds rain down the just One.*

Chorale prelude BWV 739**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

'Wie schon leucht uns der Morgenstern' (Hymn by Philip Nicolai written 1597 pub. 1599)
(‘How lovely shines the morning Star’)

“I, Jesus . . . I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16) The ‘morning star’ is also associated with the Feast of the Epiphany.

This work is one of a few that Bach composed whilst residing at Arnstadt, on the northern edge of the Thuringian Forest. During this so called Arnstadt period, he devoted himself to keyboard music, the organ in particular. And it was during this early period of writing that Bach travelled to Lubeck to hear the great organist Buxtehude. It was said that he walked the distance of 300 km. During these early years in Arnstadt, he learned all that his German predecessors could teach him, arriving at a synthesis of northern and southern German styles in his works.

The hymn tune that this work is based on, is heard in the soprano line with running semiquaver movement underneath. The theme is then taken up by the pedal and then the work ends with a flourish of notes on the manual, not unlike Buxtehude in style.

(Sung in German - Translation)

*How beautifully shines the morning star
full of grace and truth from the Lord,
the sweet root of Jesse!*

FRANK DE ROSSO is the Artistic Director for *Music at the Basilica Inc.* which he established in 2006 to promote the performance of excellent sacred music in Geelong. He is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, having studied with international musicologist and organist John O'Donnell. Frank is organist at the Basilica of St Mary of the Angels where he plays as soloist and accompanist. He was awarded the 'Austin-Healey' award for Meritorious Service to the Church Parish in 2013. He has also established the following programs which have now become a permanent fixture in the years musical calendar; Lenten Encounter series, Easter concert, Seasons Series, Advent Series, Christmas Concert and the annual Windfire Music Festival. In 2012 Frank formed the Windfire Chamber Choir under the direction of Melbourne musician and conductor Rick Prakhoff. A new initiative that began in 2015 is the formation of the Windfire Scholars – a program to attract young singers to choral music through a scholarship program, to sing with the Windfire Chamber Choir. Frank continues to pursue a very active career in performing and as Artistic Director to Music at The Basilica Inc. Last year Frank was awarded an OAM for his services to music in Geelong.