

# ASTRA CONCERTS

## 2004

5 pm Sunday 24 October

### ORGAN CONCERT IN TRANSIT

Church of Mark the Evangelist, North Melbourne  
St Mary's Anglican Church, North Melbourne  
St Mary Star of the Sea, West Melbourne

---

"In Nativitate"

Frescobaldi, Rossi, Nasco, Ligeti, Pozzobon, Costanza, Cage

"In such danger"

Bach,

Vaglini, Pavan, Buson, Perocco

"come, sweet death"

Reger, Brahms

Whiffin, Nystedt, Pauletta

---

Filippo Perocco

The Astra Choir  
conducted by John McCaughey

Today's concert makes use of the Melbourne visit of organist-composer Filippo Perocco for next Sunday's premiere of the new consort work *Fiesta* by Lawrence Whiffin, with recorder, clarinet and bassoon. The programme presents a series of new works for organ and voices by younger Italian composers, dispersed among works of earlier repertoire. It moves through three of North Melbourne's 19<sup>th</sup>-century architectural spaces, each with an organ of great individual character and significance for the city's musical environment. The first two churches are each currently celebrating their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of foundation. The building of Mark the Evangelist itself dates from 1879, and possesses an outstanding single-manual organ of Baroque style by the Danish-Australian organ builder Knud Smenge (1988). The 2-manual instrument of St Mary's Anglican Church by the German builder Werner Bosch was previously in Wellington N.Z. and Toowong Queensland, before its rebuilding and installation here by Knud Smenge in 1983. The Basilica of St Mary Star of the Sea presents the rare opportunity to hear a monumental late-Romantic organ in original condition – a 3-manual instrument by the Australian builder George Fincham (1898-1900), restored pipe by pipe in New Zealand (1992-3).

### I. "in Nativitate"

The late-Renaissance forms of Toccata ('touched') and Ricercar ('seeking out') represent basic elements of organ composition, the first *performative* – physical actions by the player and their sonic consequences, the second more *vocal* – the organization of polyphony transferred to the rows of pipes. The Roman **Girolamo Frescobaldi** and the Venetian **Michelangelo Rossi** show these choreographic and singing qualities at the highest level, written for the Italian organ of their time, delicate and cantabile in character.

The contemporary Hungarian composer **György Ligeti** wrote his early *Musica ricercata* in different forms, for piano and wind quintet, adapted by Filippo Perocco for organ. The cycle of pieces forms an elemental "seeking out" of each musical interval in turn, starting with the unison and ending with the octave – moving from embryonic and austere to more flamboyant and folk-like. Four of the nine pieces are heard today.

**Michele Pozzobon** is a choir conductor in Treviso and organizer of a recent event in which 10 composers wrote organ works to form a cycle of 'meditazioni' around choral motets for the Nativity by the Renaissance composer **Giovanni Nasco**, maestro di cappella at Treviso Cathedral 1551–61. His own contribution takes its style from the early Italian Toccata, extended to modal cluster harmonies. **Federico Costanza** is a Venice-based composer active in performances with theatre and text art. Performative elements of organ playing are the focus of the three short parts of his piece *frescobaldi's skull* – drawing extensions from Frescobaldi's Ricercar "with the obligation to sing" and involving toneless pedal activity, a toy piano and the voice of the performer. The late piece for organ by **John Cage** shows the circling, non-developmental form which he derived from a life-long engagement with percussion music.

### II. "in such danger..."

**J.S. Bach's** organ works transferred both vocal and instrumental forms to the instrument in an unequalled density, and drew together influences from Frescobaldi and other composers from across Europe. His chorale prelude "The old year" emphasises the danger and doubt in the complex Renaissance hymn melody.

The composer-pianist **Francesco Pavan** and the electro-acoustic composer **Nicola Buso** have both created short organ works for today's concert based on the pitches spelling B-A-C-H to form, respectively, a kind of crossfade from manual sonority to pedal ostinato (*ricurvo silenzio*) and a fragile tracery of organ sound (*perimetra*). In **Filippo Perocco's** piece for the Astra Choir, Bach's chorale prelude becomes a distant background to a near-static curtain of choral sound. **Riccardo Vaglini** is Professor of Composition at the Venice Conservatorium and active in a wide range of publishing and artistic events. His music frequently derives musical and political meaning from simple materials upon which complex performance actions are imposed. The Greek title of *louloudhítamou glykiá* is the name of his grandmother, born in a present-day Turkish town, described as a person of 'acerbic' character, and recalled in an acoustic image of her hospital deathbed. The performer's voice, hand and feet are coordinated in a tense and irregular rhythmic countdown.

### III. "Come, sweet death"

The decade of the 1890s in which St Mary Star of the Sea, West Melbourne was under construction (funded substantially by local street collections) was also an epoch of remarkable developments in the organ repertoire. In France, Cesar Franck composed his *Three Chorales*, a major contribution of late-Romantic writing, and Erik Satie wrote the almost 'post-modern' *Messe des pauvres*. In Germany, Brahms broke from his intended retirement to write his final work, *Eleven Chorale Preludes* Op.122, and the 21-year-old Max Reger produced daring new extensions of the chorale prelude in *Komm, süsster Tod*, looking forward to Schoenberg's explorations of the coming century.

The latter two works are introduced by more recent organ sounds. **Gianandrea Pauletta** is active as organist, conductor, composer and record producer in the Venice region. His recent works include a large-scale choral cantata performed at the site of Auschwitz and the Theatre of Padova. *Tom Thumb* was composed for today's concert and uses the multiple levels of organ manuals to create an evolving minimalistic sound-energy. Melbourne composer **Lawrence Whiffin's** early organ Fantasy was a commission for the Festival of Organ and Harpsichord, first performed by Graham Cox. In the tradition of organ fantasia and capriccios, variation techniques produce a changing landscape, from jovial to sombre.

Like the choral tapestry of the contemporary Norwegian composer **Knut Nystedt**, the organ prelude of **Max Reger** is based on Bach's song "Come, sweet death". Reger creates a dense acoustic riddle in which the Bach original almost disappears – the solo melody ornamented and mysterious, the bass pedal moving in extraordinary stepwise dissonances and the middle voices working to reconcile the two.

The concluding 11<sup>th</sup> prelude of **Brahms's** final opus is based on the well-known chorale "O world, I now must leave you", and bids a musical farewell by making two-fold echoes of each of the six phrase-endings, a repeated retreat across the three organ manuals in harmonies that continue to change and suggest new life.

– JMCC

**FILIPPO PEROCCO** holds Diplomas in both organ and composition from the Venice Conservatorium. He is organist at the famous 18th-century Callido organ of the Tempio Monumentale San Nicoló in Treviso, the largest church of the Veneto. He has widening international activities as a composer, with orchestral works performed at the Gaudeamus Music Days in Amsterdam, the Montepulciano Festival, and a premiere last week at Santa Caterina in Treviso. Other recent commissions of chamber works have taken him to Dresden, London and Berlin. Perocco is also a co-founder of the ensemble TECLAS, made up of four composer-keyboardists, playing new repertoire in a blend of early, modern and electro-acoustic instruments. He has previously twice visited Australia as a performer at Sergio de Pieri's January Festival of the Ballarat Goldfields, and returns again as organist and pianist in January 2005.

## PROGRAMME

---

### Part I “in Nativitate”: 5 pm, Church of Mark the Evangelist [duration 25’]

<b>Girolamo Frescobaldi</b>	<b>Toccata and Ricercar ‘Sancta Maria’</b> ‘with the obligation to sing the fifth voice’ from <i>Fiori musicali</i> (1635)
<b>György Ligeti</b>	<b>Musica Ricercata I</b> (1951-3) ‘interval of the unison’ sostenuto, misurato
<b>Michelangelo Rossi</b>	<b>Toccata del primo tono</b> (1634)
<b>György Ligeti</b>	<b>Musica Ricercata II</b> (1951-3) (harmonium) ‘interval of the second’ rigido e cerimoniale
<b>Giovanni Nasco</b>	<b>‘Redemptionem misit’: Antiphon II for the Nativity</b> (c.1560) choir a cappella
<b>Michelle Pozzobon</b>	<b>Meditazione organistica: after Nasco, Antiphon II</b> (2002)
<b>György Ligeti</b>	<b>Musica Ricercata III</b> (1951-3) ‘interval of the third’ Allegro con spirito
<b>Federico Costanza</b>	<b>frescobaldi's_skull</b> (2004) organ, toy piano, voice, first performance
<b>Robert Morton</b>	<b>Le Souvenir</b> from <i>Buxheimer Organ Book</i> (15th C)
<b>György Ligeti</b>	<b>Musica Ricercata VIII</b> (1951-3) ‘interval of the octave’ Vivace, energico
<b>John Cage</b>	<b>Souvenir</b> (1983)

---

### Part II “in such danger...”: 6 pm, St Mary’s Anglican Church [duration 20’]

<b>J.S. Bach</b>	<b>‘Das alte Jahr’</b> (The old year has passed away) Choral setting & Chorale Prelude from <i>Orgelbüchlein</i> (1708-17)
<b>Francesco Pavan</b>	<b>Adagissimo, ricurvo silenzio</b> (2004) first performance
<b>Riccardo Vaglini</b>	<b>louloudhítsamou glykiá</b> (2000) organ, voice
<b>Filippo Perocco</b>	<b>Das alte Jahr</b> (2004) choir a cappella, first performance
<b>Nicola Buso</b>	<b>perimetra</b> (2004) first performance
<b>J.S. Bach</b>	<b>Fantasy in G major BWV 572</b> <i>Très vite ment – Grave – Lentement</i>

---

### Part III “Come, sweet death”: 6.45 pm, Basilica of St Mary Star of the Sea [duration 25’]

<b>Gianandrea Pauletta</b>	<b>Tom Thumb</b> (2004) first performance
<b>Lawrence Whiffin</b>	<b>Fantasy and Adagio</b> (1977)
<b>Max Reger</b>	<b>‘Komm, süsßer Tod’</b> (Come, sweet death) (1894) Chorale Prelude
<b>Knut Nystedt</b>	<b>‘Komm, süsßer Tod’ (Immortal Bach)</b> (1987) multiple choral groups
<b>Johannes Brahms</b>	<b>‘O Welt, ich muss dich lassen’</b> (1896) (O world, I now must leave you) Eleven Chorale Preludes Op.122, No.11

**SUNG TEXTS:**

**Part I.**

**Giovanni Nasco** (antiphon for the Nativity)  
**REDEMPTIONEM MISIT**

Redemptionem misit Dominus populo suo;      The Lord has sent redemption to his people;  
Mandavit in eternum testamentum suum.      he has set forth his testament for ever.

---

**Part II.**

**J.S. Bach** (choral e, chorale prelude)  
**‘DAS ALTE JAHR VERGANGEN IST’**

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist,      The old year has passed away;  
Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ,      we give you thanks, Lord Jesus Christ,  
Dass du uns in so grosser G’fahr      that you might in such great dangers  
So gnädiglich behüt dies Jahr.      as mercifully shield us in this new year.

– Erfurt 1568

---

**Part III.**

**J.S. Bach** (choral song), **Max Reger** (chorale prelude), **Knut Nystedt** (‘Immortal Bach’ for choirs)  
**‘KOMM, SÜSSER TOD’**

Komm, süsser Tod,      Come, sweet death,  
Komm, sel’ger Ruh’,      come, blessed rest,  
Komm führe mich in Friede...      come lead me into peace...

– George Christian Schemelli, *Songbook* 1736

---

**Johanne Brahms**

**‘O WELT, ICH MUSS DICH LASSEN’** (chorale prelude)

O Welt ich muss dich lassen,      O world, I now must leave you,  
Ich fahr dahin mein’ Strassen      I go upon my way  
Ins ew’ge Vaterland;      to the eternal country;  
Mein Geist will ich aufgeben,      my spirit I will give up,  
Dazu mein Leib und Leben      commend my body and life  
In Gottes gnäd’ge Hand.      To God’s merciful hands.

– Nuremberg 1555

---

**The Astra Choir**

*soprano*

Irene McGinnigle, Petra Salsjö, Yvonne Turner, Larissa Cox,  
Maree Macmillan, Diane Peters, Susannah Provan, Catrina Seiffert

*alto*

Pen Alexander, Amy Boland, Marie Bongiorno, Anna Gifford, Bryony Marks,  
Beverley Bencina, Frances McKinnon, Aline Scott-Maxwell

*tenor*

John Clarke, Stephen Creese, Tim Drylie, Wally Gunn,  
Simon Johnson, Kevin March, William Thompson

*bass*

Robert Franzke, James Harland, Nicholas Tolhurst, Piers Bray,  
Oliver Creese, Jerzy Kozlowski, Anthony Ryan, Chris Smith, John Terrell

Accompanist: Kim Bastin  
Recording Engineer: Michael Hewes

---

Thanks to

Ken Falconer, Dr John Smith, Beverley Phillips, Janice Courtney, Briony Marks, Bar 303 Northcote.

Astra concerts receive support from the Commonwealth government through the Australia Council; Arts Victoria, a division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet; the William Angliss Trust; Diana Gibson, and private donors.

© ASTRA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY 2004

Chair: Anna Gifford    Manager: Bobbie Hodge    Musical Director: John McCaughey  
PO Box 365, North Melbourne, Victoria 3051, Australia    ABN 41 255 197 577