

Sydney
Festival
2024

TEMPERAMENT



Artist image: Benjamin Skepper. Photo by Giovanni Gastel

TEMPERAMENT

23-28 January
ACO, The Neilson

A NOTE ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach is a true avant-gardist. One of the most prolific composers in Western classical musical history, his contribution to the evolution of composition, harmony and sublime beauty is timeless.

The event title *Temperament* refers to Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier (Das wohltemperierte Klavier)*, a seminal collection of preludes and fugues representing the first complete excavation of every major and minor key for keyboard instruments of the Baroque era.

In music, 'temperament' refers to the particular tuning systems employed to tune musical instruments. Bach employed many of them, resulting ultimately in the invention of the equal temperament system which sonically works well in all keys. This set the trend for the most prevalent system of musical tuning now used today.

The program we have assembled for *Temperament* – a week-long celebration and deconstruction of Bach – pays homage to the revolutionary advances in music that Bach so powerfully spearheaded and to the many composers his music influenced, through an exceptional group of local and international artists and ensembles, each dedicated to pushing musical boundaries 300 years on.

Co-Curators

Olivia Ansell and Benjamin Skepper

TEMPERAMENT PROGRAM IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Bach Akademie Australia: JS Bach - A Life in Music
Korkmaz Can Sağlam in Concert
ACO Up Close: Inspired by Bach
Andrew Bukenya: Bach in Colour
Australian Brandenburg Orchestra: Bach and the Artists
Benjamin Skepper: Praeludium y Fuga Remixed
Ensemble Apex: Come, Sweet Death



GOVERNMENT PARTNER





BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA: JS BACH - A LIFE IN MUSIC

Bach Akademie Australia

ACO, The Neilson
23-24 January
1 hr 10 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Director/violin Madeleine Easton
Violin 1 Simone Slattery
Violin 2 Rafael Font
Viola Karina Schmitz
Cello/viola da gamba Anthea Cottee
Viola da gamba Laura Vaughan
Double bass Pippa MacMillan
Solo harpsichord Neal Peres Da Costa
Organ Nathan Cox

Bassoon Ben Hoadley
Recorder 1 Mikaela Oberg
Recorder 2 Alicia Crossley
Oboe 1 Adam Masters
Oboe 2 Kailen Cresp

Soprano Susannah Lawergren
Alto Hannah Fraser
Tenor Richard Butler
Bass Andrew O'Connor

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach Cantata 106 - *Actus Tragicus*

1. Sonatina

2a. Chorus: 'Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit'
(God's time is the very best time)

2b. Tenor arioso: 'Ach, Herr, lehre uns bedenken'
(Ah, Lord, teach us to think)

2c. Bass aria: 'Bestelle dein Haus' (Put your house
in order)

2d. Chorus and soprano solo: 'Es ist der alte Bund'
(It is the old covenant)

3a. Alto aria: 'In deine Hände befehl ich meinen
Geist'

(Into your hands I commit my spirit)

3b. Bass arioso and Alto chorale: 'Heute wirst du
mit mir im Paradies sein' (Today you will be with
me in paradise)

4. Chorus: 'Glorie, Lob, Her und Herrlichkeit'
(Glory, praise, honour and majesty)

J.S. Bach Brandenburg Concerto No.5 in D major, BWV 1050

Allegro

Affettuoso

Allegro

J.S. Bach Motet - 'Lobet den Herrn' (Praise the Lord), BWV 230

(based on Psalm 117)

J.S. Bach Cantata - 'Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats' (On the evening of the same sabbath), BWV 42

1. Sinfonia

2. Tenor recitative: 'Am Abend aber desselbigen
Sabbats'

3. Alto aria: 'Wo zwei und drei versammelt sind'
(Where two or three are gathered together)

4. Chorale duet for soprano and tenor: 'Verzage
nicht'

(Do not lose heart)

5. Recitative: 'Man kann hiervon ein schön
Exempel sehen' (An excellent example of this can
be seen)

6. Bass aria: 'Jesus ist ein Schild der Seinen'
(Jesus is a shield for his people)

7. Chorale: 'Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich'
(Graciously grant us peace)

ABOUT THE SHOW

Through Bach's music, we chart the journey of his remarkable life from beginning to end. Bach's earliest cantata (his *Actus Tragicus*, c.1708) is a perfect place to start. An introspective and innovative funeral cantata, it shows emotional profundity well beyond his years. In his splendid Brandenburg Concerto No.5, written a decade later, we hear what is arguably the first keyboard concerto ever written. From Bach's later life in Leipzig, comes his motet 'Lobet den Herrn', one of his most joyful works, and his cantata 'Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats', a narrative of faith and hope in seven captivating movements. Played in intimate, acoustically excellent surroundings, *JS Bach: A Life in Music* promises spiritual depth, instrumental brilliance and choral splendour.

A MESSAGE FROM BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

Madeleine Easton's journey with Bach began as a child, performing the simplest of minuets, to the solo sonatas and partitas, then on to the concertos. When she began her studies and embarked upon her professional life in London, she discovered Bach's cantatas, an event which turned out to be life changing. After 20 years performing, recording and touring these great works, Madeleine decided to return to Australia and form her very own dedicated Bach ensemble, Bach Akademie Australia. She has a passion to showcase Bach's music at the very highest level here in her home country and strongly believes in the positive impact of his music on society as a whole.

She describes Bach as the 'Alpha and the Omega - the beginning and the end'. For her, his music is the embodiment of emotional and spiritual perfection. No other music holds such magic for the heart and mind as Bach's.

From the very humblest of beginnings, his personal and musical journey is contained in every one of these magnificent and important works. All who came after could not help but be influenced and inspired by his music which continues to affect us and remain relevant centuries later, reaching all genres of music and demographics.

With her international connections and vast



knowledge of the repertoire, she brings together the very best exponents of Bach from around the world to showcase these masterpieces from all periods of Bach's life.

BACH AKADEMIE AUSTRALIA

Established by Australian violinist Madeleine Easton in 2016, Bach Akademie Australia is dedicated to performing the works of J.S. Bach and giving audiences the very best experience of his music. Bach Akademie Australia gave its first public performances in April 2017, which sold out in Sydney, and later that year at the Canberra International Music Festival. These concerts were met with glowing reviews in *Limelight* magazine

and *Canberra City News*. The orchestra's debut recording, for ABC Classic, featured Bach's Cantata BWV 4 ('Christ lag in Todesbanden') and Brandenburg Concerto No.4, both of which are regularly broadcast nationwide. The ensemble's focus on mastery of performance, authenticity and originality of interpretation has brought national recognition to this ensemble in the few short years since its inception.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bach Akademie Australia is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and TLE Electrical and Data Suppliers.





Photo by Jaimi Joy

KORKMAZ CAN SAĞLAM IN CONCERT

Piano+ | Türkiye

ACO, The Neilson
24 January
1 hr 10 mins

CAST AND CREDITS

Piano Korkmaz Can Sağlam

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach arr. Franz Liszt

Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542

Dmitri Shostakovich

Prelude and Fugue in A major, Op.87 No.7
Prelude and Fugue in B minor, Op.87 No.6

J.S. Bach Partita in B flat major, BWV 825

Frederic Chopin 12 Preludes from Op.28

No.13 *Lento* in F sharp major

No.14 *Allegro* in E flat minor

No.15 *Sostenuto* in D flat major ('Raindrop
Prelude')

No.16 *Presto con fuoco* in B flat minor

No.17 *Allegretto* in A flat major

No.18 *Molto allegro* in F minor

No.19 *Vivace* in E flat major

No.20 *Largo* in C minor

No.21 *Cantabile* in B flat major

No.22 *Molto agitato* in G minor

No.23 *Moderato* in F major

No.24 *Allegro appassionato* in D minor

ABOUT THE SHOW

After wowing audiences in the 2023 Sydney International Piano Competition (and collecting the People's Choice Award for doing so), Korkmaz Can Sađlam returns to Sydney where, courtesy of Piano+, he will make his Sydney solo debut in The Neilson - an ideal space in which to experience this 24-year-old's utterly graceful, seemingly effortless command of the keyboard.

Born and raised in Türkiye - where he gave his first recital aged 11 - Korkmaz studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Juilliard School and has already played at concert and recital halls in Paris, Nice, Brussels, Verona, New York and Salzburg.

In this recital, Bach is both an inspiration and a bridge to works by Chopin and Shostakovich.

A MESSAGE FROM KORKMAZ CAN SAĐLAM

This program is a homage to Bach, celebrating his influence and his importance in the history of music. The music of Bach is an everlasting source of inspiration, and I was very excited when I found out I will be a part of the *Temperament* series at the Sydney Festival, celebrating Bach's legacy.

The program opens with a transcription by Liszt, of Bach's Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542, originally composed for the organ. The fantasia is one of Bach's darkest and most improvisatory works, and the fugue is transcribed seamlessly for piano by Liszt.

The program also includes preludes by Shostakovich and Chopin, who were both inspired by Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. While Chopin and Shostakovich brought new light to the genre, it was Bach's unique idea to compose a series of preludes and fugues in all the major and minor keys.

In the middle of these preludes and fugues by different composers, we have Bach's first keyboard Partita, one of the greatest examples of the Baroque dance suite.

I am looking forward to celebrating and exploring Bach's legacy and sharing it with you.

PIANO+

Piano+ is an exciting new company emerging from the almost 50-year-old Sydney International Piano Competition (The Sydney). Piano+ provides an essential resource for pianists and concertgoers nationally, fostering the joy of piano-playing and provide opportunities for music education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sydney Festival enjoys our partnership with Kawai Australia. The performance by Korkmaz Can Sađlam is performed on a handcrafted Shigeru Kawai Concert Grand piano.



ACO UP CLOSE: INSPIRED BY BACH

Australian Chamber Orchestra

ACO, The Neilson
25 January
1 hr 10 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Australian Chamber Orchestra

Violin Ike See

Violin Aiko Goto

Viola Elizabeth Woolnough

Cello Melissa Barnard

Actor Ariadne Sgouros

Director Carissa Licciardello

Concept, programming and script Toby Chadd

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach arr. Bernard Labadie Aria and Variations
1, 13 and 14 from the *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988

Caroline Shaw *Punctum*

J.S. Bach Two-Part Invention No.8 in F major, BWV 779

Elena Kats-Chernin Re-Invention No.1
(after Bach's Two-Part Invention No.8)

Sofia Gubaidulina *Reflections on the Theme
B-A-C-H*

J.S. Bach arr. Calvin Bowman

Chorale Prelude - 'O Mensch, bewein' dein' Sünde groß'
(O mankind, bewail your great sins), BWV 622

J.S. BACH arr. W.A. Mozart Fugue in E flat major, BWV 876

from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 2

Felix Mendelssohn

Fuga from String Quartet in E flat major (1823)

J.S. BACH arr. Bernard Labadie

Aria from the *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988

ABOUT THE SHOW

Some notes on the music:

Bach's *Goldberg Variations* is a set of 32 movements, originally written for keyboard, encompassing every human emotion and mood. Bach chose to begin and end the 'Goldbergs' with the same aria, which in our minds is transfigured by the journey between. This concert is book-ended accordingly.

Caroline Shaw's *Punctum* is based on a Lutheran chorale from Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. The chorale creates a comforting sense of the known, with predictable harmonic progressions and a tune its first audience would have known instinctively; Shaw introduces an element of the unexpected by thwarting the form and harmony. We are aware of glimpsing Bach three centuries after his lifetime, with the passage of time obscuring that view - but ultimately throwing into sharp relief and revitalising the beauty of Bach's music.

Bach's Two- and Three-Part Inventions were written for his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, as a sort of teaching manual. In them we glimpse Bach bequeathing his skills to his children and beginning to set out his compositional legacy. Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin grew up playing these inventions on the piano; her Re-Inventions take them in completely different directions.

Sofia Gubaidulina's *Reflections on the Theme B-A-C-H* similarly takes its basis in the very essence of Bach - this time the four-note motif spelt out by his name (B in German notation is B-flat; H is B natural). The haunting austerity of Gubaidulina's musical vision resolves into Bach's organ prelude 'O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß' (O mankind, mourn your great sins), a deeply affecting reflection on our responsibilities and failure to live up to them.

Mozart and Mendelssohn recognised the genius of

Bach, even as they forged very different musical styles. Mozart arranged various movements from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*; Mendelssohn took on Bach's signature musical form, the fugue, in the final movement of his very first string quartet, written when he was just 14.

A MESSAGE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

The music of Bach is a lodestar for musicians and music-lovers alike. His impact on musical culture is deep, but just as profound is the way in which successive generations have used his music to define themselves and their communities.

ACO Up Close: Inspired by Bach asks who, or what, Bach is now - and how that has changed through time. It acknowledges that our interactions with Bach are mediated by the 300 years since his lifetime, and that those stories we hear tonight can enrich our understanding and appreciation of Bach, rather than obscuring it.

Bach speaks directly and individually to everyone who encounters his music. And so, while we can present his brilliant compositions and trace their passage through the centuries, we leave it in your hands to fill in exactly what Bach means to you.

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its explosive performances and brave interpretations. Steeped in history but always looking to the future, ACO programs embrace celebrated classics alongside new commissions and adventurous cross-artform collaborations.

Led by Artistic Director Richard Tognetti since 1990, the ACO performs more than 100 concerts each year and regularly collaborates with artists and musicians who share its ideology, from instrumentalists and vocalists to cabaret performers and visual artists and film makers.

In addition to its national and international touring schedule, the ACO has an active recording program across CD, vinyl and digital formats as well as the Orchestra's award-winning series of cinematic concert films, ACO StudioCasts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Chamber Orchestra is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body, and is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

Photo by The Photo Studio

ANDREW BUKENYA: BACH IN COLOUR

ACO, The Neilson
27-28 January
1 hr 10 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Andrew Bukenya and Vocal Ensemble

Josephine Brereton

Zohra Bednarz

Jody Houston

Meklit Kibret

Sacha Kilgour

Erin Clare

Atalya Masi

Lanneke Jones

Ali Aitken

Daniel Verschuer

Elias Wilson

Frankie Bouchier

Damien Hall

Dion Biasutti Condack

Timothy Springs

Jesse van Proctor

Austin Menso

PROGRAM

Music by J.S. Bach, his predecessors and composers he influenced, in styles ranging from the Renaissance to contemporary classical, gospel, spirituals and pop - performed by a diverse 16-voice ensemble.

Program to be introduced from the stage.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Bach in Colour spotlights J.S. Bach through the lenses of composers who inspired him and some incredible men and women who have followed in his mighty wake and have been inspired by him to varying extents. Each composer's idiosyncratic hue has provided me with a way to view and approach Bach from different perspectives.

This concert is: 1) An exploration and exposition of music in the vocal ensemble canon from pre-Baroque via Classical to pop, jazz and gospel-flavoured choral gems; 2) A showcase of the kaleidoscope of colours abounding within the various items I have programmed (from the familiar to the unfamiliar); and 3) A chance to reflect on my choral journey and experience as a UK-born-and-raised musician of Ugandan descent, performing art music in Australia in an arena where black and brown people are the exception not the rule.

A MESSAGE FROM ANDREW BUKENYA

Whether you are a first-timer (dipping your toes into all things classical or choral related with zero knowledge of art music) or your heart skips a beat at the prospect of experiencing the magic of a vocal ensemble up close in an intimate environment, I invite you to come and be moved, shaken and hopefully stirred by an array of music that stimulates the mind, fills the soul and touches the heart.

ANDREW BUKENYA

Andrew Bukenya was born in London and studied music at the University of East Anglia, majoring in singing and conducting. While there, his experience included singing with National Youth Choir and National Youth Chamber Choir as well as in concerts with the Gabrieli Consort. He subsequently pursued solo vocal studies on a Japanese Government Scholarship at the Tokyo University of Music and Fine Arts, where he sang in the Bach Cantata Choir, the ensemble founded by Masaaki Suzuki.

His conducting experience ranges from Bach's soprano cantata 'Jauchzet Gott in Allen Landen' and Handel's Dixit Dominus with his own university-created ensemble, to appearances with National Youth Choir of Great Britain, London Chamber Orchestra and the Café of the Gate of Salvation gospel choir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Olivia Ansell: your yes makes up for countless noes.

My Sydney Festival team - Rosa Coyle Hayward, Cally Bartley and Winsome Walker: for your patience, guidance and experience.

Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe: voice of reason, insight and joy.

Dylan Robinson: sound advice in all senses of the word. Geoffrey Mitchell, Mike Brewer, Denise Deering, NYC and **National Youth Chamber Choir of Great Britain:** for ensuring my voice was heard and that my nascent conducting skills were nurtured and encouraged.

Leila Enright and Amy Harris: for providing me with a wonderful platform to program and share classical music in the community at Darlinghurst Theatre Company in innovative ways.

Bev Kennedy: for providing musical assistance.

Rachel Clare & Kirsten Offer: for score sourcing.

Elizabeth Bukenya: for everything.



Photos by Keith Saunders

AUSTRALIAN BRANDENBURG ORCHESTRA: BACH & THE ARTISTS

Australian Brandenburg Orchestra

ACO, The Neilson
27-28 January
60 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Australian Brandenburg Orchestra
Brandenburg Choir
Harpischord/Chamber Organ Paul Dyer
(Artistic Director)
Painter Silvère Jarrosson

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach

Prelude No.1 in C major, BWV 846
The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1

Allegro assai
Sonata No.3 in C major for solo violin, BWV 1005



Andante

Sonata in E minor for flute and continuo, BWV 1034

Chorale: 'In dulci jubilo' (In sweet rejoicing), BWV 368

Courante and Bourée I

Suite No.3 in C major for solo cello, BWV 1009

Chorale: 'Drum so laßt uns immerdar wachen'
(Therefore let us always be awake) from Cantata
- 'Mache dich, mein Geist, bereit' (Make yourself
ready, my spirit), BWV 115

Double (Sarabande)

Partita No.1 in B minor for solo violin, BWV 1002
(transcribed for viola in E minor)

Opening Chorale from Motet - 'Jesus, meine freude'
(Jesus, my joy), BWV 227

Preludio

Partita No.3 in E major for solo violin, BWV 1006

Chorale - 'Nun ruhen alle Wälder' (Now all the
woods are sleeping), BWV 392

Bourée Anglaise

Partita in A minor for solo flute, BWV 1013

Double (Sarabande)

Partita No.1 in B minor for solo violin, BWV 1002
(transcribed for gallichon)

Chorale: 'Lob set Gott, dem Vater, ton' (Praise be
given to God, the father) from Cantata - 'Nun
komm, der Heiden Heiland' (Now come, Saviour of
the Gentiles), BWV 62

Gigue

Partita No.3 in E major for solo violin, BWV 1006

Chorale: 'Herr, ich hoff' (Lord I hope) from
Cantata - 'Erwünschtes Freudenlicht' (Welcome
light of joy), BWV 184

Adagio

Sonata in G minor for violin and continuo,
BWV 1021

Chorale: 'Jesus bleibet meine Freude' from
Cantata - 'Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben'
(Heart and mouth and deed and life), BWV 149

ABOUT THE SHOW

*Artwork in real-time – a French painter,
Brandenburg and Bach*

Collaborating in real space and time, the
Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and French
artist Silvère Jarrosson will create a work of art
before your eyes with the music of J.S. Bach,
played live, as its inspiration.

Ideas of space, balance and symmetry are
encoded into the melodies and harmonies Bach
composed. So, too, is Bach's interest in
mathematics, physics and astronomy, and his
humble yet deep religious devotion. It is little
wonder that we experience such profound
emotional responses when listening to his music.

Using dripping paint and improvised yet graceful
movement, Jarrosson – a former ballet dancer
with the Paris Opera Ballet – will respond to the
sonatas, partitas, suites and chorales over the
course of an hour-long recital to create a unique
work of art based on his instantaneous reactions
to Bach's sublime music.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CREATORS

I have crafted my path as a painter around the
concept of motion - balletic bodies, flowing paint,
rhythmic sounds. Fostering a dialogue between
music and painting enables me to truly unveil the
essence of music, rendering it visible, a feat only
abstraction can achieve. In this way, painting and
music converse in a language that transcends the
limitations of words.

– Silvère Jarrosson

An arts festival can cut through real and imagined social structures. Through creativity, diversity, variety and culture, live performance transcends boundaries both visual and aural. Bach's brilliant use of space, balance and symmetry when combined with a contemporary stage design can create a human and immersive experience. Within Bach's music, mathematics, physics and astronomy are canvased alongside a humble and deep religious devotion, expressed in real-time to evoke a profound emotional response. These are some of the ideas that have inspired me to develop this Bach program.

– Paul Dyer AO

AUSTRALIAN BRANDENBURG ORCHESTRA

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is the national Baroque music flagship. It is a world leader in historically informed performance and hugely influential in the broader musical landscape. The rise and triumph of the Brandenburg through the unflagging passion and vision of its co-founders Paul Dyer and Bruce Applebaum is one of the most extraordinary success stories in Australia's performing arts history. Since its stunning debut at the Sydney Opera House in 1990, the orchestra has introduced Baroque music at a serious level, playing on instruments authentic to the period. The Brandenburg is renowned for its energetic spirit, stylistic diversity, ambition and innovation. The unique company vibrantly reawakens Baroque and Classical masterpieces for a contemporary audience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.





Photo by Bruno Van Mossevelde

BENJAMIN SKEPPER: PRAELUDIUM Y FUGA REMIXED

ACO, The Neilson
27-28 January
50 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Musician and artist Benjamin Skepper

PROGRAM

Benjamin Skepper
Praeludium y Fuga

ABOUT THE SHOW

In 2016 Benjamin Skepper was invited to join a ground-breaking research project about music and genetics at the Moscow State Conservatory in partnership with the Russian Academy of Sciences. As the first Australian research fellow of the esteemed classical music institution, this led to many summers in old Soviet rehearsal rooms and the underground studios of the Moscow Conservatory Centre for Electroacoustic Music. The resulting work, *Praeludium y Fuga*, premiered at the Rachmaninov Hall in 2019 and a live recording was released as a limited edition 12-inch vinyl in late 2023.

The immersive sound design features numerous field recordings captured during world travels over 15 years, and is based on three central themes: love of the natural world, industrial and everyday noise, and ritual and sacred ceremonial sounds. When mixed together, the recordings unlock new and compelling sonic relationships and textures, providing a structure for free improvisation. The composition begins with the piano and moves to electric cello, at times driven by a primal rhythmic pulse composed of recordings of his own - and others' - heartbeats. This major audio-visual work has been remixed for the Sydney Festival as a site-specific installation to delight your senses and challenge the limits of your perception.

A MESSAGE FROM BENJAMIN SKEPPER

What is avant-garde? Bach, Bowie and Brian Eno are all avant-gardists. *Praeludium y Fuga* breaks new ground, not only as it challenges the orthodoxy of classical paradigms, but because it pays deep respect to the very traditions it seeks to deconstruct. In order for progress and healing to occur, dominant power structures must be critically observed, challenged and reconsidered. Only then can they maintain their relevance moving forward.

Preserving the history of classical music is crucial. That said, my creative praxis focuses on expanding (sonic) perceptions, inviting deeper listening, rethinking our relationship with technology, and transcending artistic, cultural and socio-political borders.

ABOUT BENJAMIN SKEPPER

Benjamin Skepper is a modern-day polymath, regularly commissioned to perform and create across continents.

You may know Skepper the musician. He's been performing with cello and keyboard instruments for nearly four decades, schooled in the classical tradition and imbued with the restless spirit of a pioneer.

Or you might know Skepper as a field scientist. His studies include electronics, recording techniques and the music-making potential of the human body. Some of his work even resides in orbit on a satellite, waiting to make connection with our nearest neighbours.

Perhaps you've heard of Skepper the audio-visual collaborator and installation artist? He was recently commissioned, for example, to create a large-scale media work in response to Nakaya Fujiko's fog sculpture at the National Gallery of Australia.

Recent highlights include multiple sold-out shows at the Melbourne Recital Centre and Phoenix Central Park in 2023, and the composition of a contemporary theatre score for the inauguration of the Sydney Modern Project at the Art Gallery of NSW in 2022.

ABOUT CONTRAPUNTAL

Benjamin Skepper founded *contrapuntal*, a nomadic art studio and creative enterprise in Tokyo in 2009, and has since produced a comprehensive body of work across 15 countries. Through this vehicle, he delivers multi-artform installations, performances and exhibitions, collaborating with museums, luxury brands, government agencies, festivals and more.

Under the umbrella of *contrapuntal*, he has also launched his independent music label, with six self-produced solo releases to date. Currently producing his next solo album for piano and electronics, Skepper is chartering new territory in ambient orchestral electronica.



Photo by Keith Saunders

ENSEMBLE APEX: COME, SWEET DEATH

Ensemble Apex

ACO, The Neilson
27-28 January
1 hr 10 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Ensemble Apex presents APEX4
Violin Anna Da Silva Chen
Violin Madeleine Jevons
Viola Henry Justo
Cello James Morley
Electronics Benjamin Carey
Curator and artistic director Sam Weller

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach arr. Arranger Name *Come, Sweet Death*
(‘Kom, süßer Tod’, BWV 478)

George Crumb Black Angels

for electric string quartet with percussion

*I. Departure (Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects -
Sounds of Bones and Flutes - Lost Bells - Devil-Music -
Danse macabre)*

*II. Absence (Pavana lachrymae - Threnody II: Black
Angels - Sarabanda de la Muerte Oscura - Lost Bells
(Echo))*

*III. Return (God-Music - Ancient Voices - Ancient Voices
(Echo) - Threnody III: Night of the Electric Insects)*

Clara Iannotta *Dead Wasps in the Jam-Jar* (iii)
for string quartet with electronics
Australian premiere

J.S. Bach Contrapunctus 19 from *The Art of Fugue*,
BWV 1080

ABOUT THE SHOW

The genesis of this project comes from one of Bach's most sorrowful songs - 'Come, Sweet Death' - which will be performed tonight in a realisation for string quartet. The music of Bach and humanity's experience of death together serve as the thematic thread for the remainder of the program.

George Crumb is an American composer whose music traces a plethora of styles. His work *Black Angels* for electric string quartet is subtitled 'Thirteen Images from the Dark Land' and takes inspiration from the horrific impact of the Vietnam War. For example, the opening movement, *Night of the Electric Insects*, viscerally depicts the terror of the attack helicopters used in the war. You will hear our quartet play their instruments in unconventional ways, while also making use of a vast artillery of percussion. The impact of Bach's compositional style is present but veiled in *Black Angels*; you will hear, however, references to music of ancient times. Clara Iannotta's *Dead Wasps in the Jam-Jar* (iii) takes performance techniques even further, calling for our string players to deck their instruments with paper clips and a variety of mutes. This is the third iteration of her *Dead Wasps* series, which takes its inspiration from the skeletal structures of Bach's solo sonatas. We close the set with Bach's unfinished Contrapunctus 19 from his *Art of Fugue* - he died before he could complete it.

ENSEMBLE APEX

Ensemble Apex is an adaptive collective of Australia's most exciting musicians dedicated to disrupting the lived experience of classical and orchestral music. Practising on Gadigal land, Apex strives to bring new audiences to classical music concerts through inventive and interdisciplinary projects focusing on contemporary repertoire and re-imagining the Western canon. Led by Artistic Director and founder Sam Weller, the collective has performed across the east coast of Australia and has collaborated with Phoenix Central Park, VIVID Sydney and Sydney Festival, as well as presenting five years of sold-out orchestral experiences. Tonight they appear as APEX4.

Anna Da Silva Chen has established a reputation as one of Australia's finest young violinists, having appeared as a soloist internationally and with many of Australia's leading orchestras. She tours regularly as a guest with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and is a founding violinist of the Alma Moodie Quartet.

Melbourne/Naarm-based violinist **Madeleine Jevons** enjoys a vibrant freelance career. She is a current and founding member of Penny Quartet, performs regularly with symphony and chamber orchestras across Australia and appears on many contemporary recordings. She studied at the former Victorian College of the Arts and the Australian National Academy of Music, receiving multiple chamber music and achievement awards.

Henry Justo is a violist hailing from Brisbane, currently studying at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media. He is a recipient of the 2023 Freedman Fellowship, and his ability to bring out "the rich, earthy timbres of the viola" has been described as "stunning" by *Limelight* magazine. He regularly shares the stage with groups such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and Ensemble Offspring.

Swiss-based Australian cellist **James Morley** works as soloist and chamber musician. He has presented solo recitals at the Sydney Opera House and UKARIA (Adelaide), and this year will perform



at Phoenix Central Park. He toured Australia with French cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras and was a finalist of the 2020 Freedman Fellowship. He has premiered works by leading composers in festivals across the globe.

Sydney-based composer, improviser and educator **Benjamin Carey** makes electronic music using the modular synthesiser, develops interactive music software and creates audio-visual works. His research and practice is concerned with musical interactivity, generativity and the delicate dance between human and machine agencies in composition and performance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to Suzie Taylor, Justin de Gouw and Eimer Boyle.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we work on, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We are honoured to make music upon the lands of the oldest continuing music tradition.





**Sydney
Festival
2024**