



Wesfarmers Arts

SYNOPSIS & CASTLIST

West Australian Opera presents

ORATORIO

in association with UWA Conservatorium of Music

20 – 22 April 2023, Winthrop Hall, UWA

Composer J.S. Bach (Easter Oratorio)

Composer Lachlan Skipworth

Conductor Christopher van Tuinen

Director Margrete Helgeby Chaney

Lighting Designer Mark Haslam

Soprano Bella Marslen

Alto Jillian Halleron

Tenor Ry Charleston

Bass Jake Bigwood

UWA Symphonic Chorus

UWA Symphony Orchestra

Sung in German

Duration: 60 minutes

Scan QR Code for Translation



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

West Australian Opera is supported by the State Government through the Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries and Lotterywest, and the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES **Margrete Helgeby Chaney**

Bach's Easter Oratorio, born as a birthday cantata for a Duke, re-worked six weeks later for the service on Easter Sunday has lived through many iterations since 1725. It's exciting to be working with the immense talent and graciousness of Lachlan Skipworth to conjure yet another iteration; one that is framed by contemporary sensibilities and sensitivities and yet still honouring that universal search for redemption.

Winthrop Hall is the perfect venue for this semi-staging of the Oratorio and it is a real treat to work with the students here.

The similarities between the core themes of the story of the resurrection and those that broadly exist in humanity, regardless of creed, are where we have focussed our creative discussions: to redeem and be redeemed, to experience hope, doubt, longing, yearning, to experience the reverie of being in the presence of real beauty, to betray, to deny, to feel love that is pure and all-encompassing and, because it is just that, hurts deeply.

Chris van Tuinen created a great moment when he gave Lachlan the licence to consider the recitatives anew. Suddenly we were looking at a World Premiere of a work that had been performed for the last 298 years.

This semi-staged production, collaborating with Lachlan and lighting designer, Mark Haslam, was never going to be a narration, but an evocation. An evocation of the way the universal themes make us feel, not the events per se. The performers, musicians, lighting, staging and reconsidered recitatives have a task; and that, we hope, is to facilitate a state of repose that allows the audience to reflect, to feel. To that end we are not including any surtitles in these performances, the English text for both the Bach and the Skipworth are available via the adjacent QR code. Where you see text highlighted in bold, these are the specific words that either Lachlan or I have focussed on within that particular number.

We hope you experience an hour in which the Bach carries you as it always has, and that the Skipworth carries you even further. Wherever you arrive, and however you arrive there, redemption, while the language of religious texts is a quality that also lies in the hands of each and every one of us.