

April 17, 2019 – The Choral Grapevine, hlyth2013 [i.e. Helen Lyth]

Capella St. Crucis Hannover: April 11th, 2019

Basilica of St Mary of the Angels, Geelong



Geelong music lovers were treated to some outstanding choral singing at Capella St. Crucis's concert of Easter music, titled ***Media Vita*** (in the midst of our lives), in the beautiful acoustics of St Marys Basilica.

The choir of around 50 musicians performed music by Johann Christoph Altnickol, Bach, Mendelssohn, Max Reger, and James MacMillan.

From the opening note, it was clear that this concert was something very special indeed. ***Befiehl de deine Wege*** is the opening line of a hymn by Paul Gerhardt, commonly known in English as the hymn ***O Sacred Head***, and used by Bach as the linking chorale in his ***St Matthew Passion***. In Altnickol's setting the first and last stanza are set as chorales with verses II to XI a set of challenging variations, both for full choir, and various solo ensembles. ***Capella Crucis***, and its many accomplished soloists worked together as a precision music-making unit, sensitively conducted by Florian Lohmann.

Bach's ***Komm, Jesu, komm***, a motet for double choir, followed, retaining the mood of solemnity. The only one of Bach's motets not to feature a biblical text, ***Komm Jesu Komm*** is thought to have been composed as a funeral motet.

For ***Mitten wir im Leben sind*** by Mendelssohn demands male and female choruses, and full 8-part chorus in counterpoint. Here, the dynamic scope of ***Capella Crucis*** came to the fore with a full range of dynamics from pianissimo to a rich fortissimo.

With Max Reger's bleak motet, ***O Tod, wie bitter bist Du*** the program moved into the 20th century. The text contrasts the bitterness fear that death holds for the prosperous, with the welcome death gives to the old, weak, fearful and needy. The music moves from clashing harmonies and unison solo lines and full choir to rich warm harmonies, finishing on a sustained triple pianissimo. This was a moving performance.

The program concluded with a beautiful setting of ***Miserere*** by James MacMillan.

After enthusiastic applause, **Capella Crucis** presented an encore – **Weep** by Australian contemporary composer Joseph Twist.

This choir has an extraordinary depth of talent. For this performance, there were at least 13 different soloists, and one had the feeling that many others could step into this role at need.



Photos by Music at the Basilica

The Geelong concert was presented by [Music at the Basilica](#).

Geelong was lucky to have been one of only six Australian towns to hear this wonderful ensemble. **Capella St. Crucis** from Hannover are on a whirlwind tour of Australia, presenting concerts at McLaren Vale, Adelaide (with Adelaide Philharmonia Chorus), Port Fairy, Geelong, Melbourne (with the Australian Chamber Choir), culminating in a concert at the Sydney Opera House with the Sydney Philharmonia Chorus on April 20th.

I was lucky enough to hear **Capella St. Crucis** again at their concert in Melbourne, which featured, as well as some of the above works, a performance of Charles-Marie Widor's **Messe Solennelle Opus 36** for two choirs and two organs. **Capella St. Crucis** were joined for this by the **Australian Chamber Choir** and the **Choir of Scots Church**.

You can hear some of the sound from this concert [here](#).