

APRIL 25, 2019 JOHN POLLAK

BACH AND MOZART ... IN THE IMAGINATION OF THEIR HEARTS @ THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Sydney Arts Guide



Brett Weymark. Photo ©Keith Saunders

The Opera House Concert Hall lends itself quite well to a transformation into a vast cavern. The opening of this performance found the audience in an enormous cathedral cave bathed in an eerie light ..the massive organ pipes were stalactites and the doughnuts enormous shimmering droplets of water.

It was a perfect setting for Antony Pitts XLX *Mente Cordis Sui* (in the imagination of their hearts).. a 50 part motet . From the dark recesses of the transfigured hall..north south east west and central..came 100 voices, choristers discerned only by their illuminated song sheets, their voices an array of Gregorian style chants in a multiple of directions.

The motet was a sound bridge between Bachs Magnificat and Mozarts Great Mass. Pitts is an Australian composer with a provenance of international performed works, and this composition was specifically commissioned by **Brett Weymark** , conductor and artistic director of the Sydney Philharmonia choirs. It was a world premiere.

Bachs Magnificat in D major is one of the cornerstones of the church's choral liturgy. "My Soul doth magnify the Lord". Also called the Song of Mary now that she is to be the mother of Christ, and of the humility she feels that she has been chosen. And it is an affirmation of the power and the glory of god written by a penitent and humble Bach.

Interval.

And then came the Mozart Great Mass in C Minor.

Wow!

From the opening Kyrie to its final Hosanna this was a full-throated adoration of The Creator and His Servant Christ.

Soprano Sara Macliver and Mezzo soprano Anna Dowsley sang their heads their heads off. Mclivers voice soared to effortlessly to fill the entire auditorium .Following her so did Anna Dowsley. It was an outpouring of faith and religiosity... captivating in its intensity.

The 150 plus choir was a wall of sound. Visceral. Alive. Sensitive to all the nuance and subtlety of the mass.

It was a huge conglomeration of Capella and Choristers and **Florian Lohmann** conducted it all with verve and precision...to be met at the end with a thunderous applause.

This was music from a time when God was in his Heaven and all was right perfect and secure on Earth.

It was also a rare moment in the choral history of Sydney. The concert took place on Sunday 21 April, 2019 at the Sydney Opera House.