

J.S. Bach – Fantasia in G minor, BWV 542 for organ (approx. 1720)

Robert Davidson – “Barossa Deutsch” for clarinet, viola and piano (2023)

1. Bethanien
2. Kartoffeln

Max Reger – from Suite Op 131d no.1 for solo viola (1916)

1. *Molto Sostenuto*
4. Molto Vivace

David John Lang – “Gomersal – an appreciation” for cello and piano (2023)

1. Sky and Land
2. Ngadjuri Country
3. German and Prussian Settlers
4. Pastorale
5. Bitumen
6. The Sky and the Land Endure

L. van Beethoven – Trio, Op. 11 for clarinet, cello and piano (1797)

1. *Allegro con brio*
2. *Adagio*
3. Tema con variazioni ("Pria ch'io l'impegno": *Allegretto*)

Josh van Konkelenberg, piano / organ

Steph Wake-Dyster, clarinet

Anna Webb, viola

Kim Worley, cello

In 1720, **J.S. Bach** applied for the post of music director at St Jacob’s Church in Hamburg. As part of the audition, Bach performed an organ recital lasting more than two hours, including this mighty Fantasia, often known as “The Great”. It is operatic in scope, full of drama, recitative-like lines and ornate flourishes. Harmonically, based in the stern, earthy key of G minor, it is complex and unsettled, displaying much chromaticism and dissonance, and emotionally it displays a full palette from tenderness to terror.

Robert Davidson’s music is most often focused on telling stories, especially using recorded speech and its inherent melody, but also through using aspects of many genres freely combined. His quintet Topology is very interested in collaborating without worrying about style boundaries. Such an attitude attracted him to study with Terry Riley before spending a year in India studying the rich dance-drama traditions of Kerala.

Robert also tours widely as a bassist and as a lecturer. He teaches at the University of Queensland, after years as an orchestral bassist. He writes a lot of music for Topology, but is also always at work on string quartets, orchestral music, film scores, choral music and much more.

He writes of this new work:

“Barossa Deutsch takes its melody from the distinctive spoken intonation of South Australia’s own German dialect, departing from European ways of speaking after nearly two centuries of isolation in the Barossa Valley. Researchers Peter Mickan and Kateryna Katsman spoke to three elderly gents who I’m told are some of the last native speakers of Barossa Deutsch. In the first interview, two neighbours discuss their memories of growing up in Bethanien (Bethany), going to their German language school in the 1930s, being confirmed and learning the Lutheran catechism in German, and then the language being banned during World War Two. In the second interview, Don Ross walks around his farm, talking about his crops.

The music is taken directly from the speech, with the instruments providing an accompaniment that fosters hearing the speech as melody. In addition, the piece incorporates music composed by Martin Luther. Before becoming a theologian, Luther had toyed with the idea of becoming a professional musician. He channelled his musical talent into composing hymns, many of which were centuries later used in glorious settings by J.S. Bach and other Lutheran composers. His first four hymns, for which he composed melody and text, were first printed in the collection *Achtliederbuch* in 1524. The first hymn in the collection is "Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein", or "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice". I’ve used this melody to accompany the speech of the two neighbours in Bethany. The melody is slowed down considerably, becoming something like a *cantus firmus* above which the spoken melody dances.

In Don Ross’ movement, the music also echoes his speech, which turns out to be very lilting, and easily fitting a rather Mozartian harmonic framework, closely related to his *Kegelstatt Trio*, especially the Minuet movement, or perhaps to a Schubertian lied, though “sung” by Don in a peculiarly Australian manner.

I’m very grateful to the Kegelstatt Ensemble for coming up with the idea for this piece and trusting me to compose it, and for their great artistry in bringing brand new music to life with such vigour.”

Max Reger (1873-1916) was an organist and a devotee of J.S. Bach. He loved giving his own voice to Baroque forms, and this suite for solo viola certainly contains powerful echoes of Bach. As do Bach’s sonatas, partitas and suites, this work takes a single-line instrument and weaves the music into a tapestry of counterpoint. This is done not only via double-stopping (playing 2 notes on adjacent strings simultaneously) but also through the skilful use of intervals to create an impression of multiple voices, even in a single line of notes. Again, like the “great” fantasia we heard earlier, this piece is in the key of G minor.

David John Lang is an Australian composer living in Adelaide. He writes music for orchestras, choirs, singers and instrumentalists, always seeking to create art that is inventive, thoughtful and heartfelt. David’s music often reflects his love of nature, his Christian faith, his whimsical sense of humour, and an instinct for drama.

David’s music has been performed around Australia, in the USA, Canada and Germany. Commissioners of David’s music have included the Adelaide and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, Adelaide Youth Orchestras, Benaud Trio, Recitals Australia, and the Adelaide Chamber Singers. David is currently working on a large bi-cultural collaborative project that celebrates the Kurna Seasons of the Adelaide area.

David was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy in Music Composition in 2019 from Adelaide’s Elder Conservatorium of Music. His topic was the storytelling potential of variation form in instrumental music, and his mentors included Graeme Koehne, Anne Cawrse, David Harris, John Polglase, and Charles Bodman Rae. In 2016, David spent several weeks in Alaska on a *Composing in the Wilderness* course, and in 2012 he attended the Atlantic Music Festival in Maine.

David is also active as a writer and performer. He has written concert program notes for many performers and ensembles, including the Australian String Quartet and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. He has conducted the Adelaide Wind Orchestra and Unley Concert Band in many concerts, sometimes including his own compositions. Since 2019 he has performed on keyboard, trumpet, and vocals with the aptly-named Music is Fun Band, sharing the joy of music with primary school children all over South Australia.

When David remembers there is more to life than music, he enjoys reading, bushwalking, and eating good chocolate.

He writes of this work for cello and piano:

“This is a landscape in music. Gomersal lies on the edge of South Australia’s Barossa Valley, just west of Tanunda. Its gently rounded hills and valleys, shaped by Gomersal Creek, are overlooked by the higher hills of the Barossa Range to the southeast, which curve away further south to the distant Adelaide Hills. The sky feels unusually large and close here, particularly when bobs of fluffy cloud are floating overhead.

This land has been lived on and loved by countless generations of the Ngadjuri, the traditional custodians, and more recently by the farming communities established by German and Prussian settlers in the 1850s. Today it is an undulating patchwork of pasture, crops and vineyards. For many people it is just another part of the Barossa, an area they may barely notice as they speed along the Gomersal Road shortcut to Tanunda (sealed in 2002). But for those who live here, whether lifelong residents or relative newcomers, it is a quiet place with its own unique character.

I have tried to capture something of the shape of the land and its story in this suite of connected movements. There are musical motifs that suggest the vastness of the sky, the gentle slopes up from the creek, and even the contour of the Kaiserstuhl hills in the distance. A phrase from the famous Lutheran hymn *Ein feste Burg* (‘A Mighty Fortress is our God’) makes an occasional appearance, in a nod to Gomersal’s church community.

This work was commissioned by Nat Schmaal in memory of her husband Ian, a direct descendant of the first German settlers in the area in the 1850s.”

Beethoven, just 26 years old at the time of composing this trio Op.11, was growing a reputation as a pianist with a gift for improvisation, and beginning also to establish himself as a composer of chamber music. The same year saw the premiere in Vienna of Joseph Weigl’s comic opera, *L’Amor Marinaro* (“The sailor’s love”) featuring a song, *Pria ch’io l’impegno* (“before beginning work”... followed by the words “I need to eat something”!). This song became so popular that it was often heard sung or whistled in the streets at the time, hence this work is sometimes nicknamed the “Gassenhauer” (Street song) trio, with Beethoven’s 9 brilliant and inventive variations on that tune appearing in the final movement.

In this period, the clarinet was still uncommon as a solo instrument in chamber music. Mozart had essentially introduced the idea not much more than a decade earlier. Op. 11 is also sometimes known as Beethoven’s fourth piano trio, a violin alternative part having been provided by the composer for reasons of pragmatism, and is often performed by that more conventional ensemble. But today you are hearing it as it was originally intended.