

## The Art of Finding a Cover Image for a CD Booklet



*Still life with imaginary view, circa 1646*

Deciding what will be on the cover of our CD booklets is a process that often begins even before we have recorded the actual CD! For our last three CD releases we have chosen works of art, which usually requires sifting through hundreds of images worldwide to find just the right one for each CD. Our criterion is usually quite simple – an artwork by an artist from the same country and period as the music we perform on the CD. For our last Italian CD, this meant finding a painting by an Italian artist working between 1600 and 1650. Guido Reni's beautiful painting of the patron saint of music, *St Cecilia* (1606), fitted our requirements perfectly.

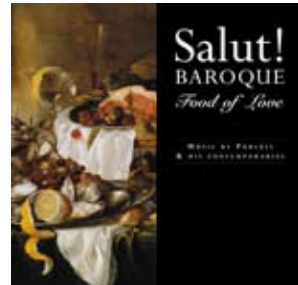


Our next task was to get permission from the gallery that owns the work, the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California. When we still hadn't received a reply to our request after six weeks, we reluctantly decided to go back to the drawing board and begin the searching process again. Fortunately, just as we were beginning to feel we were running out of options, permission arrived from California.

Galleries often have their own stipulations about how an image can be used. For our *Food of Love* CD (Jan Davidsz de Heem *Still Life with Imaginary View, 1646* from the Art Gallery of NSW) we were allowed to



use a section of the artwork, as long as we credited it as such in the booklet. However, for our *Pepusch* CD (Joseph Highmore's painting of *Susanna Highmore*, from the National Gallery of Victoria), we had to use the artwork as a complete image.



Often these works of art have an interesting history in themselves. For example, the Jan Davidsz de Heem painting on our *Food of Love* CD was a gift to the Art Gallery of NSW from Sir Arthur

Downes in 1929. The painting is said to have been won at a card game by one of his gambling ancestors.

For our next CD, *Italians Abroad* (to be recorded in December), we will be looking for a painting by an Italian artist who worked "abroad" between around 1700 and 1750. There is always that magical moment when you find the "right" original painting which evokes the spirit of the baroque period and blends with our chosen music.

# NEWS Salut!

August 2008



*"It is certain of all nations in this latter age the Italians have most diversified and improved musick..."* (Roger North).

## August Concert: The Grand Tour

Our August concert focuses on Handel's Italian sojourn. Italy was a great musical centre during the baroque period, and music lovers from all over Europe ventured there to do the 'Grand Tour' - a concept first described by Richard Lassels as early as 1670. Following in the footsteps of many of his fellow countrymen, Handel travelled to Italy at the age of 21. He met many of the leading composers of the day, including Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti and Caldara, and heard the latest operas by Albinoni and Lotti.

With modes of transport limited to foot, horse, carriage or boat, it was usually only the most intrepid gentleman who would venture more than a day's ride away. Getting to Rome was no mean feat – particularly if coming all the way from London, or from the north of Germany, or even Sweden. George Frideric Handel was not of inestimable means but when, in 1706, Scarlatti's patron, Prince Ferdinando de' Medici was in Hamburg and suggested Handel might call on him in Florence, Handel wasted no time packing his trunk and loading it onto the first Alpine carriage that came along. It would have been a perilous trek across the Alps via the St Bernard Pass – a Roman road that was usually covered in snow more than waist deep – without falling prey to an avalanche. Once this had been traversed, and the most arduous part of the journey complete, the first stop was in Turin in the North for a bit of recuperation and decadent party-going – Italian style. Then it was on to Florence to take in the wonders of the Renaissance and eventually to Rome.

For all intents and purposes, once in Italy, Handel may as well have been an Emperor, an Elector or a Prince because he soon became fêted as such. Mixing with all the noted composers that appear on our concert program, Handel eventually went to England where he was considered to be an Italian composer.

## Anna Fraser - Soprano



It is now six years since my educational sojourn to the United States. Boston, Massachusetts: a wonderful, historical town with much art and culture to offer. A city which has sustained for decades a thriving pool of academic and artistic institutions, housing thousands of students from all over the States and abroad keen to acquire the appropriate knowledge to drive them into their desired profession, settle their doubts about their chosen vocation or provide them with a sustainable job which interests them. For a young musician it's a funny world entering graduate school: what does it really offer you?

Coincidentally Salut! Baroque's own Sally Melhuish mentioned to me that she had also been in Boston during the same period of my study at New England Conservatory, however it is only now that our paths have crossed. It's interesting

to look back on the study I undertook at NEC: located just a block down from Boston Symphony Hall, an inspiring place for those instrumentalists interested in some of the best symphonic jobs on offer, but what's on offer for singers, particularly for sopranos that some may consider sound like hundreds of other sopranos?! The particular institution that was my choice in 2000 was a school that offered a huge variety of musical opportunity but, as one fresh out from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, I was still in search of my preferred direction as a young singer. The question was: what to invest my time in at an institution which offered opera and stagecraft, extensive repertoire and poetry classes in 19th century art song, lieder and chanson, vocal pedagogy, endless hours of choral ensemble experience as well as perfecting one's recital etiquette. Beyond the vocal department, the school had well established and reputable contemporary music and composition departments. Jazz and world music could also be explored, as well as extra curricula opportunities for those interested in the renaissance and baroque sound worlds.

Now it is commonly known that Boston boasts a plentiful number of Baroque ensembles, namely Cantata Singers and Boston Baroque, the latter presenting entrancing semi-staged productions of Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* and *L'Orfeo* – productions I'll never forget. Similarly contemporary groups are well represented in this diversely musical city, with many young composers given the chance to showcase their compositions

to audiences who are eager to listen to and support new works. Inspired by these musical extremes and very much intrigued by how a singer can study and perform both genres successfully, two questions arose in my mind: where should I be investing my time, and is it possible to establish a career in both arenas and still be successful and respected by their respective enthusiasts?

After posing these questions to myself I literally threw myself at every musical opportunity - I can honestly say I felt I had never worked so hard in my life but it was worth it! I felt I lived and breathed it and felt I'd been adequately exposed to it all. I was also working in Jordan Hall, NEC's exquisite concert hall, beloved for its unique acoustics (particularly for singers), intimacy and beauty - its interior design reminiscent of baroque Italianate grandeur and one of my favourite theatres in the world. Maybe I would find an answer to my questions and be able to pursue more clearly an avenue in the performing arts that suited not only my voice type but would compliment my personality and intellect as well as satisfy me emotionally. A steep order - I know!

Two years flew by and my time in Boston eventually came to end. However, before I returned to Sydney I had the pleasure and honour of being a part of the Britten-Pears Young Artistic Programme in Aldeburgh, a programme offering bespoke training and development opportunities to UK and international artists. A Handel masterclass with guest director Anthony Rolfe Johnson was a wonderful week of exploration for me, offering expert guidance through the

vocal repertoire of Handel's sacred and secular works peaking with my involvement in a Handel programme scheduled as part of the Aldeburgh Festival - *Dixit Dominus* and *Acis and Galatea* (broadcast on BBC Radio 3) under the baton of Richard Egarr; two dramatically contrasting works which complimented nicely the solo masterclasses with Anthony.

Aldeburgh is a special place, I was quite besotted with it. You can't help but be wholly immersed in the tranquil and unique environment of this part of Suffolk, from the pebbly beaches of this small seaside town to the wind blown grasslands of the fens at Snape which can only bring to mind images of Britten's famous opera *Peter Grimes*, a contemporary masterpiece. I returned to Sydney shortly after, contemplating my studies and reflecting back on what I had learnt and gained musically from these very different places and I couldn't help but think how similar the vocal approach to early music is to contemporary music and what my love for both could offer me as a singer.

Now working full time as a singer, I feel that the questions I posed for myself are now answered and the current work I undertake as an artist compliments my experience. In summary one can be satisfied with extremes, in fact it might be the only thing that keeps this soprano technically and emotionally challenged! Whether it's undertaking a unknown 21st century composition or exploring a forgotten cantata from the 17th - here's to the challenge of the new!

