

Salut! NEWS!

February 2008

Welcome to Salut! 2008



Welcome to the first edition of Salut! News for 2008 which will keep you up to date with news and concerts for this year. Also visit our recently launched new-look website (www.baroque.com.au) for more details on concerts, CDs and news.

Thanks

Many thanks to all our subscribers, donors and supporters for your concert attendance, encouragement and support as we celebrate 13 years of presenting “The Best of Baroque” in 2008. We look forward to seeing you at our concerts this year.

Salut! also wishes to thank artsACT and the Australia Council for the Arts for their continuing support in 2008.

We also thank Karella and John at Orient Point House (<http://www.oz-stays.com/18361>) for again generously offering one of our subscribers a weekend for two at their beautiful place. We will announce the winner in our May newsletter, and also the winner of our second subscriber prize – a set of 6 Salut! CDs.

News

Our Canberra concert in February will be part of the National Multicultural Festival, and we look forward to performing for the first time in The Playhouse.

Tim has recently been in Western Australia in his capacity as Artistic Director of the Australian Classical Era Orchestra, performing in Perth and Margaret River. More about this in a future newsletter.

Sally will be going back to Boston for three months between our February and May concerts to do some more research at Harvard University music library. We look forward to discovering more rarely heard composers and works and presenting them in future concert programs.

We are very sorry to be saying goodbye to Anna Cerneaz, who has been with us for 10 years. Anna has taken up the position as General Manager of Synergy Percussion and TaikOz. We wish Anna well in her new job.

The Magic of Programming

- Planning a Salut! Concert

People often ask how we come up with our concert programming ideas and themes. These are often developed over several years, and an idea might begin with something small (for example, a specific piece of music or composer, or even a particular musician or instrument we would like to work with), and then develop from there.



Planning a concert program begins years in advance and has a habit of taking on a life of its own. And so it was with our 2008 concert series, which actually started life as a completely different idea around travelling composers. But as research progressed, the name Handel seemed to pop up everywhere.



Handel lived and was famous in three countries, and he knew composers and musicians from as early as Buxtehude (born 1637) to as late as Gluck (died 1787). He composed

across the entire spectrum of music: opera, oratorio, concerti, chamber music, music for the theatre, sacred and



secular vocal music, English, French, German and Italian cantatas, and even a Spanish cantata. He shamelessly “borrowed” ideas from other composers, and also recycled his own works. He was a favourite with royalty in England, and was also highly regarded in Germany and Italy.



So, Handel emerged as the theme of this year’s concerts – not just his music, but also music by Handel’s contemporaries and influences, his friends and foes. As always, there will be a tremendous variety of well known and lesser known pieces and we hope you enjoy them all.



Meet our Musicians



Jane Downer - Baroque Oboe

My long-time occupation as an oboist was the natural consequence of a privileged musical upbringing in Canberra, where I sang from an early age in the Canberra Children's Choir run by Judith Clingan. Later I studied the oboe at the Canberra School of Music with Sharman Pretty and joined the Canberra Youth Orchestra under Richard McIntyre. With three siblings playing more than one instrument, ours was a noisy household, nonetheless greatly encouraged by our parents. Even on Sundays we enjoyed sessions of extensive chamber music repertoire with friends, under the guidance of Geoffrey Benjamin.

I was introduced to the wonderful obbligato arias of JS Bach at Early Music Summer Schools run by baroque violinist Cynthia O'Brien, a strong influence in my decision to specialise in early wind instruments. My interest in historical performance practice having been kindled, I first majored in performance on modern oboe at the University of Adelaide. I was lucky to study under Jiri Tancibudek - after my Honours degree, Jiri retired and the oboe teaching position at the Conservatorium was frozen. Today I'm still in touch with my tutors from the small but thriving early music department.

After a period working with the State Opera of South Australia, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and Adelaide Chamber Orchestra, I turned down a full-time opening as an oboist with the police band in favour of my baroque persuasion. Portentous events surrounded my initial foray into the early music world - among my favourite recording artists were the Chandos Baroque Players, a group led by the baroque oboist Valerie Darke. As it happened, Valerie was the god-daughter of my school's headmistress. Not only that, but it transpired she lived in the Oxfordshire village where I had spent a couple of years when my father took his sabbatical at Oxford University. It was therefore with trepidation that I opened Valerie's reply to my asking if she would be willing to teach me!

A few weeks later saw me leaving sunny Australia for a foggy Cotswold village on a year's student visa. Valerie was an inspiration (and made yummy gingerbread) - I spent the winter months holed-up and ironing out the squeaks. After some months I auditioned for a David Reichenberg Award. The American baroque oboist, David Reichenberg, had died shortly before I arrived in England, and a Trust was set up in his memory to give financial help to baroque oboe students. A scholarship enabled me to carry on a further year's studies with Paul Goodwin, Professor of baroque and classical oboe at the Royal College of Music.

Initial work opportunities came from the Orchestra of the Golden Age and The King's Consort, although the Home Office were not happy about my change of status and became a force to be reckoned with. When served with a deportation order back to Australia, I hid in a friend's basement in Munich for a month. Actually, the German nation didn't mind my living in their country for a bit. I survived by finding some Deutschmarks on the ground at a Christkindl market, and when that ran out, by babysitting for a family in Berlin. On my return to Britain, I made the final trek to join a pre-dawn queue at the Immigration Agency and was granted permanent residency.



Work often brings great travel opportunities and experiences of foreign culture (excursions abroad are otherwise prohibitive owing to the very high cost of living in the UK!). Particular highlights include being part of the Bach Pilgrimage 2000 with the English Baroque Soloists, and a trip to the Canary Islands with Florilegium, where we played four concerts - two different Bach programmes of Brandenburg concertos and orchestral suites - over two days. And we had time for the beach and seafood paella.

Adventures such as these compensate for less fortunate times when work is sparse (learn the violin!), but things have certainly improved since the days of living in low-cost housing, practising in coat & hat, surrounded by mouldy washing; source of income from busking at Covent Garden! My chamber music group, the Frideswide Ensemble (named after the patron saint of Oxford) was created with a view to performing and giving workshops in Oxford and surrounding rural areas. It also allows me the unending pleasure of researching fresh and unusual concert programmes. When invited to accompany choirs and choral societies, the group can reap some financial reward. Teaching at New College School, Oxford, working in the London Recorder Centre, and CD department of Blackwell's Music Shop, and concert-managing for Music at Oxford provide further musical activity.

A trip to the southern hemisphere makes a year special, and it usually combines seeing family with concert-giving. I am excited to be performing in Australia's expanding early music scene which includes Adelaide Baroque, the Australian Classical Era Orchestra, Pinchgut Opera and Recorder Festivals in Armidale directed by my sister, Caroline. With Salut! Baroque I look forward to being back in my hometown Canberra, where my mother, Jill runs Early Music Enterprises.

The Oboe



The oboe was virtually an entirely new instrument created at the end of the 17th Century (mid-baroque period). It is an instrument made with a conical bore and is played with a double reed gripped between the lips i.e. two strips of cane vibrating together as air is forced over their tips, with the other ends of the reeds bound around a small, brass tube, which is inserted into the top of the instrument. The tone is broad and sweet and blends exceptionally well with the violin and other strings.

The oboe replaced two instruments: the shawm and the curtal. These were rather raucous by comparison and were often used exclusively windbands for outdoor entertainment. It was these Renaissance instruments' unsuitability for indoor playing that led to the refinement and development of the oboe. Various makers began to produce refined shawms with a more tolerable volume. Richard Haka, an expat Englishman living in Amsterdam, was one of the first. He built an instrument known as the Deutsche Shalmei, before reducing the length of the bore to a more recognisable oboe size. Jacob Denner, in Nuremberg, improved Haka's design and produced what were truly oboes. By 1670, the new oboe was in fairly common use in Paris and by the 1680s, it had infected other European centres as an instrument imbued with great expressive powers.

The early oboe had three keys; one of these is a fitted with a long, forked touchpiece so that it can be operated by either pinkie. This key sits open whilst the other two remain closed until activated. By making tiny adjustments on the pressure of air being forced through the reed, the player is able to make enough adjustment to the pitch of most notes, making playing in most temperaments possible.