# **Australian Brandenburg Orchestra**

# Celestial Vivaldi

PAUL DYER artistic director and conductor SIOBHAN STAGG soprano BELINDA MONTGOMERY soprano JENNIFER COOK soprano TIMOTHY CHUNG sountertenor TIM REYNOLDS tenor JAMES ROSER bass BRANDENBURG CHOIR THE CHOIR OF TRINITY COLLEGE (University Of Melbourne) MELBOURNE GRAMMAR SCHOOL CHAPEL CHOIR

### PROGRAM

Rebel Les Elémens Corrette Laudate Dominum de coelis, motet à grand choeur arrangé dans le concerto du printemps de Vivaldi Dall'Abaco Concerto à più istrumenti in G Major, Op. 6 No. 5 Vivaldi Dixit Dominus, RV 595

### SYDNEY

**City Recital Hall Angel Place** Friday 2, Saturday 3, Wednesday 7, Friday 9, Saturday 10 September all at 7pm Saturday 10 September at 2pm

### MELBOURNE

Melbourne Recital Centre Sunday 4 September at 5pm, Monday 5 September at 7pm

This concert will last approximately 2 hours including interval. We request that you kindly switch off all electronic devices during the performance.

### CONCERT BROADCAST

You can hear Celestial Vivaldi again when it's broadcast live on ABC Classic FM on Saturday 10 September at 2pm.







The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW.





PRINCIPAL PARTNER

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century France was Europe's super power, under the leadership of the charismatic and immensely powerful King Louis XIV. Calling himself the "Sun King", giver of light, Louis asserted absolute authority throughout his long reign of seventy years. His army was the largest in Europe, his palace at Versailles vast, unparalleled in size and splendour. Louis viewed the arts as a powerful propaganda tool, and used dance particularly to reinforce a social hierarchy which placed the king at the top. Baroque French music, strongly centred on dance, is marked by elegance, discipline and restraint, at once grandiose and reserved. Italian music, on the other hand, was impassioned, personal, by turns intensely lyrical and moving relentlessly forward.

The latest Italian music could be heard in France, but the extent to which it should be allowed to influence French music was a hotly debated issue over which supporters actually came to blows. They were particularly nonplussed by Italian instrumental music which seemed to have no purpose – music for the French was to dance to, or to tell a story. In this concert we hear in Rebel's *Les Elémens* the distinct, classically restrained French style, contrasted with Italian extroversion in Vivaldi's *Dixit Dominus*, and the attempts at reconciling these two styles in Corrette and Dall'Abaco.

# Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747)

Le Chaos

Les Elémens:

Loure - Earth and Water	
Chaconne - Fire	
Ramage - Air	
Rossignolo	
Loure	

First Tambourin - Water Second Tambourin Sicilliene Rondeau (Air pour l'amour) Caprice (Rondeau)

... and to hear the sound with ears it seemed even as if Earth and wide Heaven above came together; for such a mighty crash would have arisen if Earth were being hurled to ruin, and Heaven from on high were hurling her down ...

Hesiod (700 BCE) The Theogony

Jean-Féry Rebel was a child prodigy on the violin, a pupil of the great composer Lully, who went on to become one of the leading French musicians in the first half of the eighteenth century. He was a member of the King's elite string orchestra, the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roi* (the King's Twenty-four Violins), and was appointed royal chamber music composer in 1718. From 1734 he was director of the Concert Spirituel, France's first public concert series and one which provided an important forum for new music throughout most of the eighteenth century.

Rebel was just eight years old when he first played for Louis XIV, and he continued to be a favourite of the king into his old age. Towards the end of his life the king shunned public appearances, and Rebel and other leading musicians were required to play privately for him in his apartment at Versailles three times a week.

Rebel composed very little church music and only one opera, concentrating his efforts instead on songs, instrumental chamber works and, most successfully of all, dance music. It was in this last field that he was at his most innovative, introducing for the first time in French music a type of dance work, the "choreographic symphony", that was independent of any larger dramatic spectacle such as an opera. *Les Elémens*, composed in 1737, is one of these works. A French music writer commented that Rebel's music had "French moderation and sweetness, and he refrained from using those frightening and monstrous cadenza passages that the Italians delight in."

### What to listen for

Les Elémens is in two broad sections. The first is a remarkable movement titled *Chaos* (Chaos), which Rebel composed as an independent piece. *Chaos* was celebrated – perhaps notorious – in its own day in particular because of the extraordinary chord with which it begins. Not once, but thirty five times in accelerating succession, the orchestra hammers out a towering dissonant chord made up of all seven notes of the minor scale piled on top of each other to represent the undifferentiated confusion before the Elements – earth, air, fire and water - gradually appear.

The rationale behind the work was explained by Rebel himself in the preface of the score:

...The introduction of the Symphony was natural; it was Chaos itself, that confusion which reigned among the Elements before the moment when, subject to invariable laws, they assumed the place prescribed for them within the natural order.

In order to describe each Element in turn within this confusion I have availed myself of the most widely accepted conventions.

The Bass represents the Earth through notes tied together and played in a shaking manner, the flutes imitate the flow and babble of Water by means of ascending and descending song-like melodies; the Air is depicted by sustained notes followed by cadenzas played on small flutes; finally the lively, brilliant character of the violins represents the activity of Fire.

These distinctive characteristics of the Elements may be recognised, separate or mixed together, in whole or in part, in the various reprises of what I call Chaos, each of which indicates the efforts made by the Elements to free themselves from one another. At the seventh appearance of Chaos these efforts gradually diminish as order is finally established.

This initial idea led me somewhat further. I have dared to link the idea of the confusion of the Elements with that of confusion in harmony. I have risked beginning with all the notes sounding together, or rather all the notes of the scale played as a single sound. These notes then develop, rising in unison in the progression which is natural to them and, after a dissonance, end in a perfect chord.

Finally, I thought that the Chaos of harmony could be even better rendered if, in exploring the different aspects of Chaos on different strings, I could, without offending the ear, make the final note indecisive until it returned, firmly, at the moment of resolution.



The work was first performed in 1737, without Chaos, by the most famous dancers in France (and therefore Europe). A year later the work was given in its complete form. It says much for the sophistication of Parisian audiences that they did not bat an evelid, although music like this had never been heard before. A Paris newspaper praised it as "one of the most beautiful instrumental pieces of its kind [which] met the greatest possible approval from experts".

The dance suite begins with a Loure in which Earth is represented by the low strings, while Water is heard in the flowing melody of the flutes. Next comes Fire, once more represented in the brilliant flicker of the strings, but this time against the inexorable background of a repeating Chaconne bass line. The Sicillienne is marked by the composer to be played "graciously" but it is unusually slow and serious. perhaps to signal the "invariable laws" of balance and order to which all the Elements must submit. In the vigorous Tambourins the baroque oboe evokes the uninhibited jauntiness of a shepherd's pipe. The sounds of nature are directly depicted in the Ramage (meaning birdsong) and Rossignolo (nightingale).

# Michel Corrette (1707-1795) / Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Laudate Dominum de coelis, motet à grand choeur arrangé dans le concerto du printemps de Vivaldi (Spring concerto by Vivaldi arranged as a motet for large choir)

Spring has arrived and festively the birds salute her with happy song; and the fountains at the breath of the breezes with a sweet murmur continually flow: coming to cover the sky with a black mantle are lightning and thunder, chosen to announce her, then when they are silent, the little birds return anew to their tuneful songs.

And later in the pleasant flowery meadow, to the welcome murmurs of branches and leaves. the goat-herd sleeps with his faithful dog beside him.

To the festive sound of rustic bagpipes. nymphs and shepherds dance beneath the lovely canopy of brilliant spring.

Vivaldi, Sonnet prefacing Spring concerto RV 269

Michel Corrette was a French organist and teacher, whose career spanned seventy five years. He was the author of about twenty short treatises on performance methods for a range of instruments, which provide valuable information on performing practice in France and also England in the eighteenth century. Corrette was a prolific composer but not a highly inventive one. He relied heavily on the works of other composers and many of his pieces are, like this one, arrangements of existing compositions. Laws of copyright did not start to be formulated until the late eighteenth century, and it was commonplace for composers to "borrow" from one another. Corrette's arrangement of "Spring" from The Four Seasons was probably composed for the

By then twenty five years had passed since Vivaldi had been buried in a pauper's grave in Vienna, and his works had drifted into obscurity in his native Italy. The Four Seasons concertos had been instantly popular in France when they were published in 1725, and they stayed in the repertoire for much longer than in Italy. probably because their representation of the natural world gelled with French ideas about the purpose of instrumental music.

"Spring" was the best loved of all the Vivaldi concertos and was the particular favourite of Louis XV, who regularly requested it be played at Versailles. It was also a showpiece for the greatest French and Italian violinists of the time, who performed it at the Concert Spirituel in Paris, Throughout the eighteenth century, arrangements of "Spring" were made by a number of French musicians including Nicholas Chédeville in 1739, for a pastoral ensemble including the musette (a small bagpipe), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1775, for solo flute.

### What to listen for

A motet is a sacred work for a number of voices with a Latin text, and was a popular form of composition for French composers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A motet à grand choeur was a large scale motet for orchestra, vocal soloists and large chorus. Corrette's motet is in five movements and is for a choir in five parts (soprano, alto, tenor and two bass parts), soloists, and orchestra. The first movement, an aria for soprano, is entirely new and does not use any of Vivaldi's material. Corrette added an introductory section to the first and third movements (which become the second and fifth movements of the motet) but otherwise he kept the structure of Vivaldi's concerto intact. He also follows Vivaldi's use of ritornello form, in the way the musical material is shared among soloists and choir: the full choir sing the ritornellos or repeating refrains which are played in the concerto by the orchestra, while the episodes, which would have been played by the solo violin, are given to the solo voices. At times the soloists sing the solo violin part but Corrette also interpolates new music for the soloists.

Laudate Dominum is Psalm 148 from the Old Testament of the Bible, an ancient psalm dating from well before the birth of Christ. It would have been exceptionally well known to eighteenth century audiences, as there are more references in the New Testament to this psalm than to any other part of the Old Testament. It features rhetorical calls to creation to assist God's people to praise God, and was used by early Christian writers to express their understanding of the significance of Christ.

All things created by God are called upon to praise him, from the sun, moon and stars, to mountains and hills, trees, animals, and finally people, from kings to children. Even fire and wind must proclaim the glory of God. The last verse highlights the significance of the people of Israel: as God's chosen ones, they must also be praised.

The psalm, which celebrates the glory of creation, is evocative of spring, and dovetails well with Vivaldi's original sonnet which detailed explicitly what he wanted the listener to identify in the music.

## Laudate Dominum de coelis,

motet à grand choeur arrangé dans le concerto du printemps de Vivaldi

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Laudate Dominum de coelis, laudate eum in excelis. Laudate eum omnes angeli ejus, laudate eum, omnes virtutes ejus. Laudate nomen, omnes virtutes ejus.

#### II [Concerto 1st movement]

Laudate Dominum de coelis Laudate eum in excelis ... etc

Laudate eum, sol et luna, Laudate eum, omnes stellae et lumen. Laudate eum, coeli coelorum et aquae omnes quae super coelos sunt.

Laudent nomen Domini. Quia ipse dixit, et facta sunt: ipse mandavit, et creata sunt. Statuit ea in æternum, et in sæculum sæculi: præceptum posuit, et non præteribit.

Laudate eum ... Laudate Dominum de terra, dracones et omnes abyssi.

#### Ш

Ignis, grando, nix, glacies, spiritus procellarum, quæ faciunt verbum ejus: Laudate eum ...

#### IV [Concerto 2nd movement

Montes, et omnes colles, ligna fructifera, et omnes cedri, bestiæ, et universa pecora: serpentes, et volucres pennatæ, Reges terræ, et omnes populi, principes et omnes judices terræ: Laudent nomen Domini.

V [Concerto 3rd movement] Juvenes et virgines,

senes cum junioribus, laudent nomen Domini: Quia exaltatum est nomen ejus solius.

Confessio ejus super coelum et terram et exaltavit cornu populi sui.

Juvenus et virgines ...

Hymnus omnibus sanctis ejus; filius Israël, populo appropinguanti sibi. Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights. Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his hosts. Praise his name, all his hosts.

Praise the Lord from the heavens ...

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all the stars and light. Praise him, heavens of heavens and all the waters that are above the heavens.

Praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created. He has fixed them in position for eternity, and for ages of ages: he has made a decree, and it shall not pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth, dragons, and all the depths.

Fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, which fulfil his word: Praise him ...

Mountains, and all the hills, fruit trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, Kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the earth: Praise the Lord's name.

Young men and maidens, old men, and children, praise the name of the Lord: For his name alone is exalted.

His glory is above heaven and earth and he has raised up a horn for his people. [i.e. has made his people strong]

Praise to all his saints, and to the children of Israel, the people who are close to him.



# Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco (1675-1742)

Concerto a più istrumenti in G Major, Op. 6 No 5

#### Allegro e Vivace Assai Adagio Cantabile Allegro

Although relatively little known today, in his own time Dall'Abaco was regarded as one of the leading instrumental composers in Europe. One of the diaspora of Italian musicians to work abroad in the first half of the eighteenth century, Dall'Abaco was able to adapt his style to the tastes of his employer, Maximilian Emmanuel II, Elector of Bavaria, incorporating aspects of the French style to a much greater extent than most of his Italian contemporaries.

Born in Verona, Dall'Abaco learnt the violin and cello from a young age and moved to Modena when he was about twenty to work as a professional musician. By early 1704 he had secured a position as a cellist and chamber musician in Munich in the service of the Bavarian Elector Maximilian II, an extravagant patron of the arts who, like many aristocrats, maintained his own orchestra. Within months of Dall'Abaco's arrival, Maximilian was forced to flee to the Netherlands following his defeat by the Austrians and their English allies during the War of the Spanish Succession. He took with him a large retinue, including many of his court musicians, and set up court at Brussels, but further reverses meant he was forced to withdraw a number of times, eventually settling in France. During this time the Electoral musicians were thoroughly exposed to French music, and after the court returned to Munich in 1715 Dall'Abaco began to introduce French elements into his compositions.

Dall'Abaco's Concerti a piú istrumenti Opus 6 was published in 1734.

## What to listen for

The concerto a più istrumenti (concerto for many instruments) was an ideal vehicle for showing off the depth and talent of a fine orchestra, allowing soloists drawn from all across the orchestra to demonstrate their talents. A concerto for many instruments flaunts both the number and the diversity of its soloists, often throwing together unorthodox combinations of string, wind and sometimes brass instruments into a very non-homogenous solo group. This concerto is scored more conventionally for three violin parts, viola and continuo. The stylish new *galant* (courtly) idiom is evident in the first movement, in which the first and second violins play the role of a vocal soloist "singing" the elegant melody over a chordal accompaniment from the rest of the orchestra.

# Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

## Dixit Dominus RV 595

Every Sunday and holiday there is a performance of music in the chapels of these hospitals [ospedali], vocal and instrumental, performed by the young women of the place, who are set in a gallery above and, though not professed [i.e. not nuns], are hid from any distinct view of those below by a lattice of ironwork. The organ parts, as well as those of the other instruments are all performed by the young women. ... Their performance is surprisingly good ... and this is all the more amusing since their persons are concealed from view.

## An English traveller to Venice in 1722

It is possible that *Dixit Dominus* was written for the all-female choir of the Ospedale della Pietà, the girls' orphanage famous throughout Europe for its high musical standards, where Vivaldi was employed on and off for most of his working life. The Pietà was one of four *ospedali*, charitable institutions which cared for orphans, children of the destitute, and the diseased or otherwise infirm, and the best church music in Venice could be heard at their chapels. Indeed, travellers came from all over Europe especially to go to church, as it was the only place where these world class performers could be heard.

Each *ospedale* maintained an all-female orchestra and choir. The girls performed to celebrate the glory of God, not for their own fulfilment, and they had to agree never to perform in public anywhere else. Yet the girls were taught by the best musicians in Italy, among them Farinelli's singing teacher Nicola Porpora, and the violinists Tartini and Gasparini, as well as Vivaldi, who was sometime music director at the Pietà. All composed music especially for them. A number of the girls became renowned virtuosi, and many lived their whole lives at the *ospedali*, performing and teaching.

In addition to their very high standard of performance, the pure exoticism of hearing women and girls perform in an age when court and theatre orchestras and conventional church choirs were made up entirely of men and boys, made the *ospedali* a tourist attraction no visitor to Venice wanted to miss. Masses at the *ospedali* more closely resembled concerts than church services: tickets were sold to the Masses, and the congregation turned their chairs to face the musicians rather than the altar in the middle of the service. "You go there to listen to the concert, like going to the opera house", commented the Frenchman Comte de Caylus who visited Venice in 1715.

## What to listen for

The pinnacle of achievement for a composer In the eighteenth century was to have his operas performed, and Vivaldi was one of the most successful opera composers in Italy in his own time. His opera composing career covered almost thirty years, from 1713 to 1741, and he spent long periods travelling throughout Italy staging his own operas. He brought this wealth of experience in composing for the stage to his sacred music.

Vivaldi composed three settings of *Dixit Dominus*, Psalm 109/110, the first psalm in the liturgy of Vespers, the evening service of the Catholic church, as it was given on Sundays and major feast days. The text of the final chorus is the Doxology ("Glory be to the Father" etc), a short hymn of praise which was added to the end of hymns and psalms. This version is sometimes called the "Prague" Dixit Dominus because the only surviving manuscript of the work is held in a museum there. That manuscript is itself based on an earlier one, dating from 1717, taken back to Prague from Venice by the musician Balthasar Knapp. It is Vivaldi's earliest known setting. The second, RV 594, for male voices, dates from about 1730 and the third was discovered only in 2005 by the Australian scholar Janice Stockigt, who found it mistitled in the library of the royal Saxon court in Dresden.

The Psalms are from the Old Testament of the Bible and are heavy with symbolism and metaphor. Psalm 110 contains two oracles, firstly that a king will rule on earth as a representative of God, who promises him victory over his enemies, and secondly that this king will be a priest, with a special and direct relationship with God. New Testament writers identified Jesus as this longed for Messiah, and it was in this context that the psalm passed into Christian worship. Used in this way it celebrates the status of Jesus "at God's right hand", his final victory over the forces of evil, and as the bringer of justice. Like Psalm 148 (Laudate Dominum), Psalm 110 is frequently quoted in the New Testament. It underlined a basic precept of eighteenth century European society, that monarchs were God's direct representatives on earth and that their power derived directly from God. When Vivaldi set this text the French Revolution, which directly challenged the notion of the divine right of kings, was still eighty years away.

*Dixit Dominus* is very similar in style to Vivaldi's *Gloria* (RV 589), also written for the Pietà. It is scored for string orchestra, solo trumpet and oboe, with soprano, alto, tenor and bass solos, and five-part choir – two soprano parts, alto, tenor and bass. In the first performances given at the Pietà all parts and instruments would have been performed by women only. It would have been thought scandalous to bring men in from outside to augment the choir, and the male teachers never performed with the girls. Nevertheless, the tenor and bass parts were probably sung at the notated pitch, which would have given the choral sound a very different tone colour to the one heard in modern performances where the tenor and bass parts are sung by men. Some women would be capable of singing the same pitches as a baritone, much lower than the usual female range, but without much carrying power. To accommodate this Vivaldi set the bass parts in his music for the Pietà relatively high, and doubled the voices with low strings where a lower note is necessary for the harmony.

Vivaldi was an ordained priest and would have been well aware of the importance of the text, but it is the force of his personality expressed through the music which makes the work so memorable, rather than the detail of the word setting. The opening bars contain a Vivaldi trademark – string instruments playing in unison and quickly alternating between an upper and lower octave. This simple device has an almost visceral effect, and the congregation hearing it at the Pietà for the first time would have found it thrilling and awe-inspiring. Two movements are adapted from the work of other composers: Vivaldi "borrowed" "Tu es sacerdos" in its entirety from an anonymous composer, while the "Gloria patri" is a reworked motet by Lotti. He uses a trumpet solo at the beginning of "Judicabit", a device familiar to eighteenth century listeners, signifying the trumpet sounding at the day of judgement. Handel does the same thing in "The Trumpet shall sound" in *Messiah*.

#### Dixit Dominus RV 595

**1. Allegro - Chorus & Solo** Dixit Dominus Domino meo, sede a dextris meis:

2. Andante - Chorus Donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.

**3. Allegro - Aria** Virgam virtutis tuae emittet Dominus ex Sion: dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.

**4. Allegro - Duet** Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae in splendoribus sanctorum: ex utero ante luciferum genui te.

**5. Chorus - Largo/Presto** Juravit Dominus et non poenitebit eum. Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech.

6. Aria - Allegro Dominus a dextris tuis, confregit in die irae suae reges.

7. Solo & chorus – Largo/Allegro Judicabit in nationibus, implebit ruinas: conquassabit capita in terra multorum.

**8. Aria - Allegro** De torrente in via bibet, propterea exaltabit caput.

9. Trio & Chorus - Allegro Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto

et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen. **1.** The Lord said to my lord: sit at my right hand:

2. Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

**3.** The Lord shall send out the mighty sceptre from Zion: rule in the midst of your enemies!

**4.** Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day you lead your forces; From the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you.

**5.** The Lord has sworn, and will not change his mind: You are a priest for ever in the order of Melchisedech.

6. The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings in the day of his anger.

7. He will execute judgement among the nations, filling them with corpses, he will shatter heads over the wide earth.

**8.** He will drink from a brook by the road; then he will lift up his head.

**9.** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Year	Vivaldi's life & career	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1666		Jean-Féry Rebel born. Great Fire of London.
1675		Dall'Abaco born.
1678	Born in Venice.	
1685		Handel, JS Bach and Domenico Scarlatti born.
1703	Appointed violin teacher at the Pietà.	
1704		Dall'Abaco employed by Maximilian, Elector of Munich.
1707		Corrette born. England and Scotland united as Great Britain.
1711	Renowned throughout Europe after publication of twelve concertos, <i>L'estro armonico.</i>	Tuning fork invented. War between settlers and native Americans in North Carolina.
1713	First opera performed.	
1714		Elector of Hanover proclaimed George I, King of Great Britain and Ireland.
1715		The "Sun King" Louis XIV of France dies, succeeded by Louis XV.
1721		JS Bach dedicates concertos to the Margrave of Brandenburg
1724	Opera <i>II Giustino</i> premiered in Rome.	First performance of JS Bach's St John Passion in Leipzig.
1725	Four Seasons published.	Concert Spirituel concert series begins in Paris.
1727		JS Bach composes St Matthew Passion.
1737		Rebel composes <i>Les Elémens.</i>
1741	Vivaldi dies in Vienna; is given a pauper's burial.	
1742		Dall'Abaco dies First performance of Handel's Messiah.
1747		Rebel dies.
1750		JS Bach dies.
1759		Handel dies. Mozart is aged 3, Haydn is 27.
1766		Corrette composes Laudate Dominum.
1774		Louis XV dies, succeeded by Louis XVI.
1789		Storming of the Bastille - French revolution begins.
1793		Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette executed.
1795		Corrette dies.

# Australian Brandenburg Orchestra

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