

The Marais Project

Easter Reflection 2010

Belinda Montgomery
& Megan Cronin
- Soprano

Jennifer Eriksson
- viola da gamba

Chris Berensen
- organ & harpsichord

*Directed by
Jennifer Eriksson*



“Because of the
Lord’s great love we
are not consumed,
for His compassions
never fail.”

(Lamentations 3:22)

“Music is a gift
and largesse of
God, not a human
gift. Praise through
word and music is a
sermon in sound.”

(Martin Luther)

3.00pm Sunday 28th March.

**St Martin’s Anglican Church, Arnold St, Killara.
(Part of St Martin’s 100th Anniversary Celebrations)**

7.00pm Monday 29th March.

MLC School Chapel, Rowley St, Burwood

www.maraisproject.com.au

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Program

• Welcome

1 François Couperin (1668–1733)

PREMIÈRE LEÇON DE
TÉNÈBRES POUR LE
MERCREDI SAINT À UNE
VOIX

ALEPH
BETH
GIMEL
DALETH
HE
Jerusalem

2 J.S. Bach

(1685 – 1750)

Chorale “O Sacred Head,
Sore Wounded” from
St Matthew Passion

3 François Couperin

DEUXIÈME LEÇON DE
TÉNÈBRES POUR LE
MERCREDI SAINT À UNE
VOIX

VAV
ZAIN
HETH
TETH
Jerusalem

4 Marin Marais (1656-1728)

Pièces de viole, 3e livre
– Paris 1711

Menuet
Sarabande Grave
Rondeau

5 François Couperin TROISIÈME LEÇON DE TÉNÈBRES POUR LE MERCREDI SAINT DEUX VOIX

JOD
CAPH
LAMED
MEM
NUN
Jerusalem



Welcome


Thank you for joining us for our Easter Reflection concerts which also commence our subscription series for 2010. For several years now we have been performing Couperin's *Leçons de Ténèbres* (literally, "Lessons in the dark"), initially in a concert setting and over the past few years in partnership with various churches across Sydney.

In reading this I am sure many people are asking, "why bother?" Why bother to play music that is more than 250 years old and consists of settings of obscure Hebrew Scriptures that are more than 2000 years old? There are several answers I would give. Firstly, this is beautiful music and the product of a great French composer. We specialise in French music of this era and just love performing the *Leçons*. In presenting the *Leçons* we also add to the more well known Easter repertoire: Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Passions*. Secondly, in his introduction to the published music Couperin makes it clear that he wrote these works for the week before Easter so they have a place in the Church calendar. Finally, the pitiful cries of the author of *Lamentations* as he describes the destruction of Jerusalem caused by the Jewish people turning away from their God I find arresting. His experience should give us all pause for reflection whether or not we are formally "religious". Musically, Couperin's reflective settings offer us the opportunity to stop and think for a moment about our lives, the evil of the world and the direction we are heading, just as much now as 250 years ago.

We intend to continue performing the *Leçons* at Easter time over the next few years. I am excited to announce that we have commissioned a leading Australian composer to write a companion piece to the existing three *Leçons* which we will premiere in 2011. This commission will consist of selections from Chapter 3 of *Lamentations*. If you would like to assist in supporting this commission financially, please let me know.

In closing, I would like to thank St Martin's for allowing us to be part of their very special 100th Anniversary year. I would also thank the Principal, Chaplain and Head of Music at MLC School for generously making their Chapel available to us.

Jennifer Eriksson,
Founder and Director



Program notes

François Couperin (1688 – 1733) was born in Paris, where he lived and worked for most of his life. At eighteen he inherited his father's post as organist at St Gervais, and in 1693 he was appointed organist at Versailles. Couperin's musical approach is

a conscious blending of the elegant French style and the flamboyant Italian style. He is widely regarded as one of the finest composers of the Baroque era - which spanned the period from 1600 to 1750 – and worthy of mentioning in the same breath as Handel and J.S. Bach.

Background to the Leçons

'That which was established only to produce a holy and beneficial remorse in Christian souls has been transformed into entertainment!' thundered one conservative eighteenth-century critic back in the 1730s. He was referring to the increasingly popular Holy Week services held at the Abbey of Longchamp near Paris where on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Saturday, musical settings of the highly emotive words found in the Old Testament book "Lamentations of Jeremiah" were presented. The prophet Jeremiah's writings were considered particularly apt in assisting Christians to reflect on Jesus' crucifixion and death during the pre-Easter period. The attendees were throngs of fashionable Parisians, who in the weeks leading up to Easter, would have busily discussed where they would be 'doing Ténèbre' this year. The intriguing name, 'Leçons de Ténèbre' or 'Lessons in the Dark', owes to the fact that these services were sung in the dark in accordance with the Lenten regulations of the Catholic Church.

Couperin's offerings in this genre are in the intimate semi-theatrical style known at that time as the 'chamber style', building on the refined and expressive secular French tradition of the 'air de cour'. One of his three Leçons is composed for two sopranos, the others for one soprano. The accompaniment is to be provided not by the large church organ which was not permitted in Holy Week, but by a portable chamber organ if available, harpsichord and lutes. Additionally, Couperin made specific mention of the necessity of the viola da gamba or bass viol.

A slightly more controversial element of the Longchamp experience was that singing-stars from the opera and court were involved. One of the greatest stars of the time was Mademoiselle Catherine-Nicole Le Maure, of whom it was said an opera company could be bankrupted if she became ill. Indeed, her absence from a performance on more than one occasion caused shows to fail, and once she was imprisoned for this. At Easter time, she contributed to the Leçons de Ténèbres of Couperin and his contemporaries at the Abbey. Eventually she tired of the politicking of the secular music world and became a nun.

Throughout the setting of the three Leçons Couperin demonstrates an extraordinary ability in the art of vocal declamation as well as a well-developed feeling for word painting. The music is rich in dissonance and chromaticism. The texts, sung in Latin, are interspersed with elaborate, melismatic vocal phrases (that is, many notes sung on one syllable) that have an almost improvised feel to them. Each melisma is inspired by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and occurs at the beginning of each section of Jeremiah's text.



All three Leçons conclude with a phrase from Hosea, “Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum” (Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God).

Couperin wrote the following in the published edition of the music:

A few years ago I composed three Tenebrae Lessons for Good Friday at the request of the nuns of L(ongchamp), where they were sung with success. For the last several months this has made me determined to compose those for Wednesday and Thursday. However, I am only offering here the three for the first day, not having had enough time before Easter to get the other six engraved.

The first and second Lessons for each day will still be for one voice, and the third Lesson for two: thus two voices will suffice for their performance; although the voice part is written in treble cleff, all other kinds of voices can sing them, especially as most accompanists these days know how to transpose. I shall give the public the six others, in two groups of three, if it is content with the present ones. If a bass de viole or a bass de violon can be added to the organ or harpsichord accompaniment, that will do very well.

J.S Bach's famous setting of “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” draws on a hymn based on a long medieval Latin poem, *Salve mundi salutare*, with stanzas addressing the various parts of Christ's body hanging on the Cross. The poem is often attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), but it first appears in the 14th century. The music for the German and English versions of the hymn is by Hans Hassler, written around 1600 as a secular love song. The tune was appropriated for Gerhardt's German hymn in 1656. J.S Bach arranged the melody and used it five times in his *St. Matthew Passion* and it has come to be known widely as “The Passion Chorale”. Bach also used this melody in the opening choral and triumphant final chorus of his *Christmas Oratorio*, BWV 248. Franz Liszt includes an arrangement of this hymn in the sixth station, *Saint Veronica*, of his *Via Crucis* (the Way of the Cross).

Marin Marais was one of the greatest string virtuosos of all time – the Paganini of the viola da gamba. Although not so well known in the English-speaking world, Marais' life (1656-1728) spanned the mid-Baroque period and overlapped with Couperin. We know from historic accounts that they knew each other. Marais' fame has continued to this day in his native France to the extent that his life was celebrated in the renowned novel and film *Tous les Matins du Monde* (All the Mornings of the World), which was a huge hit in Western Europe in the early 1990s. The film soundtrack featuring the great Spanish gambist Jordi Savall even reached the French Top 40!

The full breadth of Marais' genius is revealed in his five-volume opus *Pièces de Violes* which contains more than 600 individual works. *Pièces* is increasingly seen by musicologists and performers as a significant achievement: a summary of the technical, pedagogical and musical possibilities of the viola da gamba.

Program Notes by Jennifer Eriksson, Chris Berensen and Philip Pogson

Text and Translations

from the first chapter
of Lamentations

English translation from the King
James Version of the Bible, 1611.

• PREMIERE LEÇON DE TÉNÈBRES

Aleph

Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! Facta est quasi vidua, Domina gentium: princeps provinciarum facta est sub tributo.

How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

Beth

Plorans ploravit in nocte, et lachrymae ejus in maxillis ejus: non est qui consoletur eam ex omnibus charis ejus. Omnes amici ejus spreverunt eam, et facti sunt ei inimici.

She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

Gimel

Migravit Juda propter afflictionem et multitudinem servitutis: habitavit inter gentes, nec invenit requiem: omnes persecutores ejus apprehenderunt eam inter angustias.

Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

Daleth

Viae Sion lugent, eo quod non sint qui veniant ad solemnitatem: omnes portae ejus destructae, sacerdotes ejus gementes, virgines ejus squalidae, et ipsa oppressa amaritudine.

The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

He

Facti sunt hostes ejus in capite, inimici ejus locupletati sunt; quia Dominus locutus est super eam propter multitudinem iniquitatum ejus: parvuli ejus ducti sunt in captivitatem, ante faciem tribulantis.

Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.
Jerusalem, turn to the Lord thy God.

Responsory: In monte Oliveti ...



J.S. Bach - O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded

(J.W. Alexander's version, 1830)

O sacred head, sore wounded,
with grief and shame weighed down;
O kingly head surrounded
with thorns thine only crown.
Death's pallor now comes o'er thee,
the glow of life decays;
yet hosts of heaven adore thee
and tremble as they gaze.

What language shall I borrow
to praise thee, heavenly friend,
for this thy dying sorrow,
thy pity without end?
O agony and dying!
O love to sinners free!
Jesus, all grace supplying,
turn thou thy face on me.

In this thy bitter Passion,
good Shepherd, think of me
with thy most sweet compassion,
unworthy though I be:
beneath thy cross abiding
for ever would I rest,
in thy dear love confiding,
and with thy presence blest.

Be thou my consolation,
my shield, when I must die;
remind me of thy passion
when my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold thee,
upon thy cross shall dwell,
my hear by faith enfold thee;
who dieth thus, dies well.

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• DEUXIÈME LEÇON DE TÉNÈBRES

Vau

Et egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor ejus: facti sunt principes ejus velut arietes non invenientes pascua: et abierunt absque fortitudine ante faciem subsequentis.

And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

Zain

Recordata est Jerusalem dierum afflictionis suae et praevaricationis, omnium desiberabilium suorum, quae habuerat a diebus antiquis, cum caderet populus ejus in manu hostili, et non esset auxiliator: viderunt eam hostes, et deriserunt sabbata ejus.

Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.

Heth

Peccatum peccavit Jerusalem, propterea instabilis facta est: omnes, qui glorificabant eam, spreverunt illam, quia viderunt ignominiam ejus: ipsa autem gemens conversa est retrorsum.

Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turned backward.

Teth

Sordes ejus in pedibus ejus, nec recordata est finis sui: deposita est vehementer, non habens consolatorem: vide, Domine, afflictionem meam, quoniam erectus est inimicus.

Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully; she had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself.

Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Jerusalem, turn to the Lord thy God

Responsory: Tristis est anima mea ...



• TROISIÈME LEÇON DE TÉNÈBRES

Jod

Manum suam misit hostis ad omnia desiderabilia ejus: quia vidit gentes ingressas sanctuarium suum, de quibus praeceperas ne intrarent in ecclesiam tuam.

The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things; for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

Caph

Omnis populus ejus gemens, et quaerens panem: dederunt pretiosa quaeque pro cibo ad refocillandam animam. Vide, Domine, et considera, quoniam facta sum vilis.

All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile.

Lamed

O vos omnes, qui transitis per viam, attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus: quoniam vindemiavit me, ut locutus est Dominus in die irae furoris sui.

It is nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in day of his fierce anger.

Mem

De excelso misit ignem in ossibus meis, et erudit me: expandit rete pedibus meis, convertit me retrorsum: posuit me desolatam, tota die moerore confectam.

From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he that turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

Nun

Vigilavit jugum iniquitatum mearum: in manu ejus convolutae sunt, et impositae collo meo: infirmata est virtus mea: dedit me Dominus in manu, de qua non potero surgere.

The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.

Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Jerusalem, turn to the Lord thy God.



Biography

Belinda Montgomery graduated in 1997 from Sydney University with a Bachelor of Music (Honours) in Voice. She later studied with Emma Kirkby and Evelyn Tubb in England and has since established a freelance career in Sydney, where she is particularly active as an early music specialist. Belinda has appeared with various ensembles, most notably the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Salut! Baroque, Concertato, The Sydney Consort and, of course, The Marais Project. She has also appeared with contemporary music specialists, Halcyon. Solo engagements have included Bach Cantatas (The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra), Handel's Dixit Dominus (Sydney Philharmonia Motet Choir), Bach's Mass in B Minor, Handel's Israel in Egypt, Faure's Requiem, Mozart's Requiem and Solemn Vespers (Sydney Chamber Choir) and Steve Reich's rumming (Synergy Percussion). In March, 2003, she gave the world premiere performance of Andrew Ford's new song cycle, Learning to Howl, which later won the APRA award for Best Composition in 2004 as well as the Paul Lowin prize for Song Cycle. As both a soloist and chorus member Belinda has performed extensively with Cantillation, Australia's leading professional chorus, directed by Antony Walker, appearing on many of their ABC recordings. She has recorded music for radio broadcast and has appeared on many CDs for the labels Tall Poppies, Walsingham and Celestial Harmonies.

Megan Cronin grew up in Canberra where she sang with the Canberra Children's Choir, played oboe in the Canberra Youth Orchestra and Canberra Symphony Orchestra and studied at the Canberra School of Music. As a chorister Megan has sung with some of Australia's finest choirs, including the Australian Chamber Singers, The Contemporary Singers, Sydney Chamber Choir and ACO Voices. Megan is a founding member of the Early Music/Celtic ensemble Pastance, with whom she has recorded and toured extensively. With Pastance Megan has taken early music to some of Australia's largest folk festivals, including Woodford, Port Fairy and The National. For the past 14 years she has performed in schools throughout Australia, New Zealand and Singapore for Musica Viva in Schools and the Queensland and Victorian Arts Councils.

Megan has performed as a soloist in the Monteverdi Vespers and has also sung a number of dramatic roles, including Filia in Carissimi's oratorio Jephte, music theatre works by Canberra composer Judith Clingan and the lead role in the early Mozart opera, Lo Sposo Deluso for the Mostly Mozart festival. Megan also sings regularly with the Baroque/contemporary music ensemble Phoebus Fire.



Chris Berensen is a freelance performer of early keyboard instruments and recently completing a Research Masters degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He has performed with Salut! Baroque, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, La Folia, the New Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra of Cologne, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, and toured nationally throughout 2007 as the Principal Continuo player with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

As a Bach player, Chris has performed in over fifty Bach cantatas and both of Bach's Passions with the Sydneian Bach Choir and other ensembles. As a composer he has explored contemporary and baroque sounds, winning a Musica Viva competition at age 15, and in 2005 he performed his own concerto as part of his Bachelor degree - a first in the history of the Sydney Conservatorium. Chris also has a keen interest in jazz and contemporary popular music, and regularly works with the trio Lucid3 and the vibrant music ministry of St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Sydney playing the electric bass.

Chris is involved in many projects including statewide touring as a member of the Musica Viva in Schools programme, tutoring in the Sydney Conservatorium's Open Learning Academy, and performing with the Sydneian Bach Choir's Cantata project, the Marais Project and Lucid3.

Jennifer Eriksson completed her initial musical studies at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music studying music education and cello with Barbara Woolley. She subsequently studied the viola da gamba with Jaap ter Linden at the Rotterdam Conservatorium for three years where she completed post-graduate studies in baroque music. Whilst in Europe she performed regularly in Holland and Germany including a guest appearance at the Utrecht Festival. Jennifer has performed with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Salut! Baroque, Opera Australia, the Renaissance Players, the Early Dance Consort, and the Sydney Consort. Jennifer performs in regular broadcasts for ABCFM and tours for Musica Viva in the ensemble "Sounds Baroque". Jennifer founded "The Marais Project" in 2000 with a view to performing the complete works of Marin Marais and to provide a vehicle to bring ancient and modern music for the viola da gamba to a wider audience. The Marais Project recently released its second CD, "Love Reconciled", on the MOVE label.



Thanks

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The Marais Project Concerts 2010

"Improvising the Baroque"

Monday 10 May 6.00pm

Recital Hall East, Sydney Conservatorium of Music

The Marais Project joins with jazz piano master and composer, Kevin Hunt.

Tickets – at the door or via the Sydney Conservatorium.

"Love Reconciled" – the launch of our new CD

4.00pm Saturday 5th June.

Recital Hall West, Sydney Conservatorium, Macquarie St, Sydney.

Tickets – www.maraisproject.com.au (Bookings recommended)

"Across the Channel" – English music for viols and voice

3.00pm Sunday 24th October.

Mosman Art Gallery & Community Centre,
Cnr Gallery Way and Myahgah, Rd Mosman.

Tickets – www.maraisproject.com.au