

Mysterious, majestic music

The Pocket Score Company, *Nachtmusik: A Concert of German Music from the 13th to the 18th centuries.*

All Saints, Ainslie, Sunday July 5.

Reviewer: **Jennifer Gall**

It was a great pleasure to attend a concert in which so much thought had been given to every detail of the performance.

All Saints was the perfect venue for the all-male Pocket Score Company because of the intimate size of the church and the beauty of its interior.

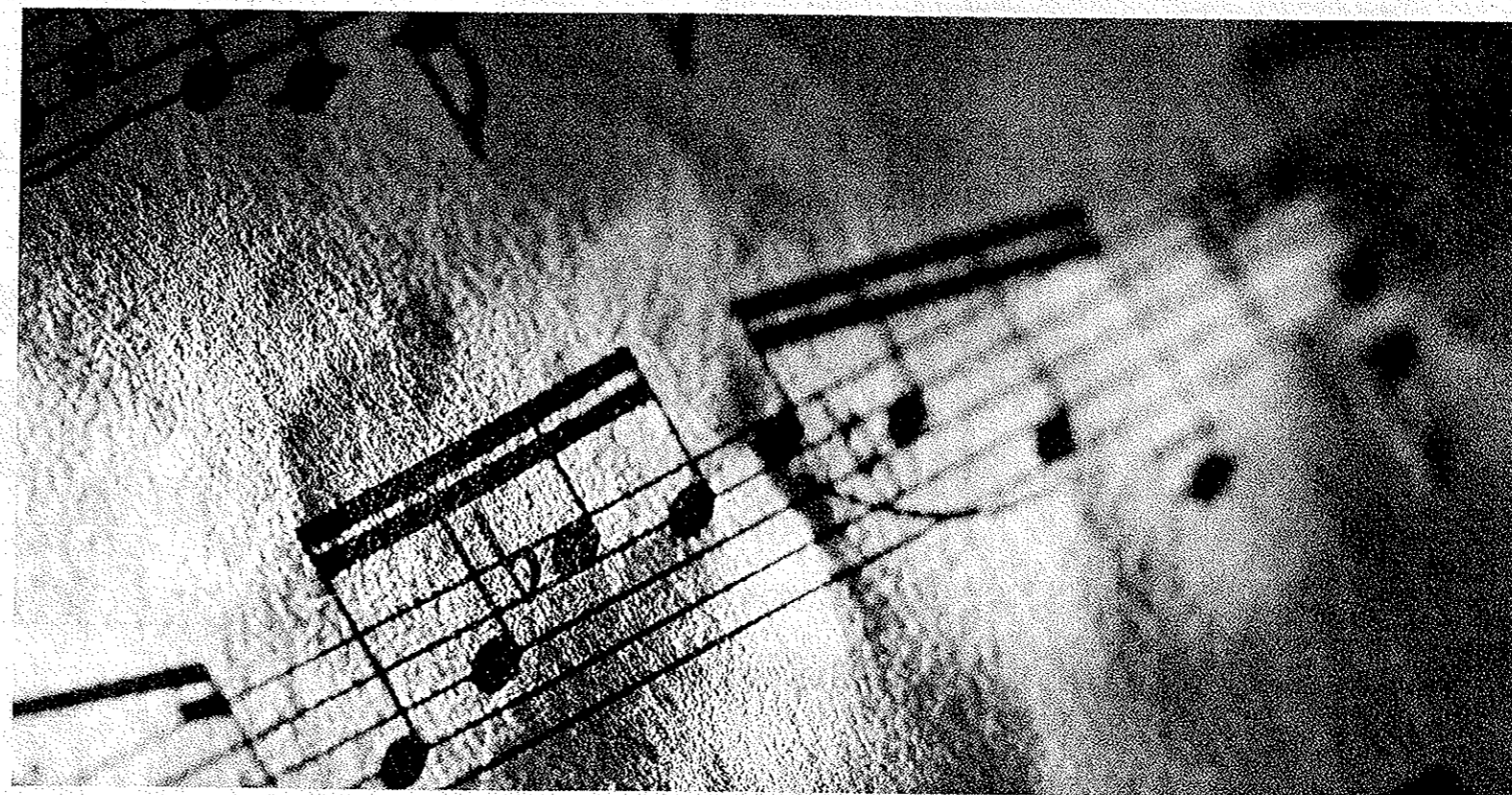
The way in which afternoon light through the stained glass windows continually shifted and illuminated the space complemented the delivery of the music.

Each member of the ensemble spoke at different points to describe the next bracket of songs with knowledgeable comments and amusing asides, introducing the audience to the composers and the singers themselves as fellow human beings rather than talented aliens. The program sheets were elegant and simply laid out with translations for each item.

My one regret was that this interesting and carefully constructed program had just a single performance.

A season of several nights would allow audiences a second listening and help the ensemble develop further the rapport between each other, with the music and with the audience to reach a new level of excellence.

These songs are rarely, if ever, performed in Australia and patrons would welcome the chance to hear them again.



Heinrich Isaac's beloved *Innsbruck, Ich Muss Dich Lassen* opened the concert and the ensemble gave an original, unsentimental version, conveying the contemplative mood of the piece with refreshing spaciousness conveyed through their phrasing. Each vocal part moved in a seamless conversational exchange.

Adam Gumpelzhaimer wrote songs that were as challenging to sing as his name is to pronounce. So *Fahr Ich Hin Zu Jesu Christ* and *Mit Fried Und Freud Fahr Ich Dahin* were two tantalisingly short

pieces from this neglected composer. The following bracket of songs by Senfl and von Wolkenstein were cleverly grouped around the mysterious *Der Mai* by Neidhart von Reuenthal, featuring Ian Blake's agile bass. Some lovely moments followed in *Entlaubet Ist Der Walde* in the interweaving parts between tenors David Mackay and George Brennan and countertenor David Yardley.

A conflation of three versions of *In Dulci Jubilo* concluded the first half of the concert; the first by

Praetorius – clean and joyous – the second by Buxtehude – florid and outrageous – and finally Bach – robust and majestic.

In the second half I enjoyed the low tenor entry and the smooth exchange between the voices in *Der Winter Kalt* by Eccard.

The most fun was certainly had by audience and singers in *Es Gieng Guot Tröscher*, a song in which a maid and a thresher “indulge in a bout of mutual metaphorical activity” and Orlande de Lassus's wild ditty about a partying farmer.

However, the outstanding performance of the afternoon was *Tota Pulchra Es*, by Heinrich Isaac, a hypnotic, darkly sonorous, densely arranged piece where the four male voices blended perfectly as the one instrument.

David Yardley's countertenor was at its best here, touching the grave harmonies with brightness and accentuating the power of the silences.

This setting of selections from *The Song of Solomon* was absolutely unforgettable.