

Bel
cappella

Musical Director: Monica Buckland

*Of a Rose
sing we*



2.30pm
10 December 2023

St Augustine's
Catholic Church
Balmain



website: www.belacappella.org.au email: info@belacappella.org.au

Youtube: **Bel a cappella Choir**

BEL A CAPPELLA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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Musical Director: **Monica Buckland**

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PROGRAM

Acknowledgement of Country:

Upon a high rock platform Christopher Sainsbury (World premiere)

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen Michael Praetorius

Annunciation John Tavener

There is no rose of such virtue John Joubert

A tender shoot Kerensa Briggs

There is no rose Cheryl Frances-Hoad

There is no rose Alison Willis (Australian premiere)

Blessed be! Melanie DeMore (Australian premiere)

Deutsches Magnificat Heinrich Schütz

~ Interval ~

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen Praetorius / Jan Sandström

Rosa mystica Benjamin Britten

A spotless rose Herbert Howells

Nabd (Heartbeat) Shireen Abu-Khader (Australian premiere)

Gaudebat et ridebat! Katherine Parton (Australian premiere)

A May Magnificat William Mathias (Australian premiere)

We ask our audience to turn off all sound-emitting devices. Thank you.

Bel a cappella

Bel a cappella is a chamber choir of experienced singers who are dedicated to the performance of diverse, high quality choral music in fine venues around Sydney and further afield. Established in 1995, Bel a cappella continues to attract able singers who are keen to explore the more demanding repertoire to the highest possible standard.

Bel a cappella normally presents three concerts a year, providing a mix of well-loved choral works with lesser-known pieces of merit and appeal. Although we specialise in a cappella repertoire, we regularly perform with piano, organ or small ensembles to offer a variety of musical experiences for our growing audiences.

The choir has undertaken two European tours, in 2015 travelling through Italy, Slovenia and Austria to Vienna, and in 2018 singing in Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Highlights included performances in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Basilica San Marco in Venice and the Schönbrunn Palace. Our third tour to Europe, postponed by COVID-19, will be going ahead in May of 2025.

In addition to our regular concert series, Bel a cappella has also performed in consort at the Independent Theatre, the Sydney Conservatorium International Jazz Festival and Judith Neilson's Phoenix Central Park; and has hosted several 'Come and Sing' events, the most recent in the unique setting of Cockatoo Island.

Bel a cappella

Soprano

Amanda Durham
Vanessa Goryl
Margaret Grove
Gillian Haslehurst-Smith
Katrina Jenns
Margot McLaughlin
Sally Ross
Diana van Breda

Alto

Jenny Bradford
Barbara Chmiel
Eve Killick
Tiffany Lim
Belinda Markham
Allison Moore
Pepe Newton
Olivia Watson

Tenor

Gary Brewer
Darrall Cutting
Bruce Daniel
Geordie Marsh
David Morris
Chris O'Keeffe

Bass

Hubert Chan
James Devenish
David Goodwin
Michael Johnson
Rod Lander
Clive Lane
Edward Phillips
Peter Phillips
Bruce Watson



Monica Buckland - Musical Director

With 30 years' professional conducting experience in Europe, the UK, USA and Australia, Monica brings the vision and passion to build on Bel a cappella's reputation for high quality performances which explore the diversity of choral repertoire.

Monica's extensive choral experience includes 16 years as musical director of ars cantata zürich. She has directed many other professional and amateur choirs, and led singing workshops and seminars.

As an orchestral conductor Monica most recently conducted the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts for schools, and a program of film music with the Orange Symphony Orchestra. In Europe, she directed the orchestras at the TU Dresden and in 2019 was named ITV's Woman of the Year for North-East England for her work with the New Tyneside Orchestra, before moving to Sydney where she is also Musical Director of the Balmain Sinfonia.



Monica started working with Bel a cappella in March, midway through rehearsals for the first concert of 2023, the program of which she was delighted to inherit. Her own concert programs for the remainder of the year build on Bel's strong tradition of exploring lesser-known but enjoyable repertoire. www.buckland.ch

Acknowledgement of Country

As a choir, we wanted to sing our Acknowledgement of Country, rather than have someone intone a spoken formula before our concerts.

We approached Christopher Sainsbury, who as well as being an accomplished and very versatile composer, is responsible for the Ngarra-burria First Peoples Composers program at Australian National University, for which he won the APRA National Luminary Award in 2020. Chris is a member of the Dharug nation, the Indigenous people of Sydney, and so we felt commissioning him to write a song for us would be an appropriate thing to do.

What Chris has produced for us is perfect. Far from any dry formulaic text, he has written words that truly acknowledge the Country on which we rehearse and perform, and set them to music that beautifully illustrates the act of carving sandstone, the violence of bushfires, and the wash of rain across the waters.

We are thrilled to be able to premiere this song today, and to include it at the start of all our future concerts.

Program notes

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. Isaiah 11:1

Our program for Advent 2023 is based on the symbolism of green things growing, and particularly the Virgin Mary and her association with roses.

Early Church legend has it that roses first grew in the Garden of Eden, but only acquired thorns after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden. According to St Ambrose, the 4th-century Bishop of Milan, the beauty and perfume of rose blossoms serve as enduring reminders of Paradise, even as roses' thorns remind us that Paradise has been lost. The Virgin Mary is "the rose without thorns" – i.e. sins.

As Mary's association with the rose grew, symbols of the rose appeared in Christian practice: from the 12th century it became tradition for a cathedral to have a rose window; and a century later, St Dominic instituted the Rosary, a series of prayers to the Virgin using beads that may be made of or scented with rose petals. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) wrote, "Eve was a thorn, wounding, bringing death to all; in Mary we see a rose, soothing everybody's hurts, giving the destiny of salvation back to all."

Each of the concert's two halves begins with a version of "Es ist ein Ros", and ends with a Magnificat, Mary's song of praise. In between, there are shorter, rose-themed traditional carols, and brief excursions into other Christian traditions.

The concert opens with "Es ist ein Ros" – possibly the best-known German Christmas carol – a tune first printed in the (Catholic) Speyrer Gesangbuch of 1599, and set by the (Protestant) composer Michael Praetorius in 1609.

This is followed by "Annunciation" by John Tavener, a 20th-century English composer whose musical style was significantly influenced by his conversion to the Orthodox Church. The text is taken from St Luke's Gospel, with the words of the Archangel sung – thunderously – by the main choir, while Mary, a quartet of solo voices, responds "How shall this be?" with what the composer describes as "humility, terror and total acceptance".

The Trinity Carol Roll is a 15th-century manuscript held at Trinity College, Cambridge. One of the poems in it, "There is no rose of such virtue", has inspired countless musical settings. We are performing three, by British composers John Joubert, Alison Willis, and Cheryl Frances-Hoad, the last of whom won the Bach Choir's Carol Competition when she was only 14. This group of short pieces also includes "A tender shoot" by another young British composer, Kerensa Briggs.

"Blessed be!" by Melanie DeMore represents a different tradition of religious music: a piece based on the stick pounding tradition of the Gullah people from the islands off South Carolina. The slaves brought to these islands found ways to communicate – and to rebel – using rhythms, and these rhythms were also used in their sacred songs "to get the spirit rolling".

To follow on from this revolutionary music, we end the first half with a setting of the Magnificat for double choir by 17th-century German composer Heinrich Schütz. In St Luke's Gospel, Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and sings a song with words that were – and still are – revolutionary:

He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
 And exalted the lowly.
 He has filled the hungry with good things,
 And the rich he has sent away empty. Luke 1:52–53

The second half of our concert again opens with “Es ist ein Ros”, this time with Praetorius' setting embedded in an ethereal and seemingly timeless cloud of chords, by contemporary Swedish composer Jan Sandström.

This is followed by a group of four pieces taking us on a journey from a meditation on Mary, the spotless rose, by two 20th-century (male) English composers, to the birth of the baby Jesus in the stable, by two living (female) composers.

“Rosa mystica”, with words by the poet and Jesuit priest Gerard Manley Hopkins and music by the 19-year-old Benjamin Britten, is followed by another setting of “Es ist ein Ros”, this time in English, by Herbert Howells.

Shireen Abu-Khader is Palestinian Jordanian composer and choral conductor, now living in Canada. She brings her experience with the Edward Said Conservatory in Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem to her compositions, as well as her knowledge of choral music from the Levant. “Nabd (Heartbeat)” combines melodies from Greek, Byzantine and Arabic Christian traditions.

The starting point for composing this carol, she says, was the question: “Why do all beautiful Christmas carols not match the soundscape of the actual birth?” This piece starts with a traditional Greek melody celebrating the Virgin Mary, followed by a section focusing on a mother's emotions before the arrival of her child, feeling scared and vulnerable; and then a section welcoming children with all the blessings they bring to the world. A traditional Byzantine chant carries a universal prayer – in Arabic – for peace and love, with the underlying heartbeat of a child.

“Gaudebat”, by Australian composer Katherine Parton, is a short, snappy shout for joy at the birth of Mary's son.

Finally, we circle back to the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, in “A May Magnificat” for double choir by William Mathias. One choir muses on the growth and blossoms of spring, and its association with Mary, while the other answers with verses from the Latin Magnificat.



Upon a high rock platform – Christopher Sainsbury (b. 1963)

Upon a high rock platform,
An ancient voice greets me.
Speaking through carvings in the
sandstone, the clans have spoken.
Etchings by Dharug hands
are seeking someone to know them.

Beside the wide blue water,
An ancient voice greets me.
Whispering through casuarina
Dreams crossing generations.
Quietly a message in the
mist brings a revelation.

Spanning moons, eons blown,
Enchanting stars that gods have loaned.
Surviving firestorm, surviving rain.

Upon a high rock platform,
I humbly ask: teach me, teach me.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen – Michael Praetorius (1571–1621)

Solo quartet – verse 2: *Margaret Grove, Eve Killick, Gary Brewer, Bruce Watson*

Solo quartet – verse 3: *Katrina Jenns, Allison Moore, Chris O'Keeffe, James Devenish*

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen
Aus einer Wurzel zart.
Wie uns die Alten sungen,
Von Jesse kam die Art.
Und hat ein Blümlein bracht,
Mitten im kalten Winter,
Wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half-spent was the night.

Das Röslein das ich meine,
Davon Jesaja sagt,
Ist Maria, die Reine,
Die uns das Blümlein bracht.
Aus Gottes ew'gem Rat
Hat sie ein Kind geboren,
Wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The rose I have in mind,
With Mary we behold it.
The Virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
She bore to them a Saviour,
When half-spent was the night.

Das Blümelein, so kleine,
das duftet uns so süß,
mit seinem hellen Scheine
vertreibt's die Finsternis.
Wahr Mensch und wahrer Gott,
hilft uns aus allem Leide,
rettet von Sünd und Tod.

O Flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispel with glorious splendour
The darkness everywhere;
True man, yet very God,
From Sin and death now save us,
And share our every load.

Speyer Hymnal, Cologne 1599, after Isaiah 11:1

Translated by Theodore Baker (1894)

Annunciation – John Tavener (1944–2013)

Mary (Solo quartet): *Amanda Durham, Pepe Newton, Geordie Marsh, Edward Phillips*

How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail!
Hail, thou that art highly favoured.

How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail!
The Lord is with thee.

How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail!
Blessed art thou among women.

How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

Luke 1:28, 34

There is no rose of such virtue – John Joubert (1927–2019)

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu;
Alleluia.

For in this rose contained was
Heaven and earth in little space;
Res miranda.

By that rose we may well see
There be one God in persons three,
Pares forma.

Then leave we all this worldly mirth
And follow we this joyful birth;
Transeamus.

*Anonymous, c. 1420
From Trinity Carol Roll*

A tender shoot – Kerensa Briggs (b. 1991)

A tender shoot hath started
Up from a root of grace,
As ancient seers imparted,
From Jesse's holy race,
It blooms without a blight,
Blooms in the cold bleak winter,
Turning our darkness into light.

This shoot Isaiah taught us
From Jesse's root should spring;
The Virgin Mary brought us
The branch of which we sing;
Our God of endless might
Gave her this child to save us,
Thus turning darkness into light.

*Based on "Es ist ein Ros"
Versified by Otto Goldschmidt (1829–1907)
Translated by William Bartholomew (1793–1867)*

There is no rose – Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b. 1980)

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu;
Alleluia.

For in this rose contained was
Heaven and earth in little space;
Res miranda.

By that rose we may well see
There be one God in persons three,
Pari forma.

The angels sungen the shepherds to:
Gloria in excelsis Deo:
Gaudeamus.

Leave we all this worldly mirth,
Follow we this joyful birth;
Transeamus.

There is no rose – Alison Willis (b. 1971)

Soprano solo: *Amanda Durham*

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu;
Alleluia.
Lullay, lullay.

For in this rose contained was
Heaven and earth in little space;
Res miranda.

By that rose we may well see
That he is God in persons three.
The angels sungen the shepherds to:
Gloria in excelsis Deo:
Gaudeamus.

Now leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth;
Transeamus.
Lullay, lullay.

Blessed be! – Melanie DeMore (b. 1954)

Blessed Be!
Blest, Be, Blessed Be the Living Tree.

Blessed Be the Tree of Life
that grows within you and me.

Steady and true, Rooted in love.
Shelter and peace, Below and above.

Sing to the sky,
Rise from the earth.
Seasons come round again,
Death to rebirth

Blessed Be the Tree of Life
that grows within you and me.

Deutsches Magnificat, SWV 494 – Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)

Meine Seele erhebt den Herren,
Und mein Geist freuet sich Gottes, meines
Heilandes;
Denn er hat die Niedrigkeit seiner Magd
angesehen.
Siehe, von nun an werden mich selig preisen
alle Kindskind.

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his hand-
maiden.

For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call
me blessed.

Denn Er hat grosse Dinge an mir getan,
Der da mächtig ist und des Namen heilig ist.
Er übet Gewalt mit seinem Arm und
zerstreuet, die hoffärtig sind in ihres Herzens
Sinn.

For he that is mighty hath magnified me:
and holy is his Name.

He hath shewed strength with his arm:
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of
their hearts.

Er stösset die Gewaltigen vom Stuhl
und erhöht die Niedrigen.
Die Hungerigen füllet er mit Gütern,
und lässt die Reichen leer.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and
hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the
rich he hath sent empty away.

Er denket der Barmherzigkeit und hilft
seinem Diener Israel auf,
Wie er gered't hat unsern Vätern,
Abraham und seinem Samen ewiglich.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen
his servant Israel:

as he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed, for ever.

Ehre sei dem Vater und dem Sohn
und auch dem Heiligen Geiste,
wie es war im Anfang, jetzt und immerdar
und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit, amen.

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.

Luke 1:46-49, 51-55, trans. Luther 1545

Book of Common Prayer, 1662

~ INTERVAL ~

Es is ein Ros entsprungen – Jan Sandström (b. 1954)

Solo quartet: Margot McLaughlin, Jenny Bradford, Chris O'Keefe, Hubert Chan

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen
Aus einer Wurzel zart.
Wie uns die Alten sungen,
Aus Jesse kam die Art.
Und hat ein Blümlein bracht,
Mitten im kalten Winter,
Wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half-spent was the night.

Rosa mystica – Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine
Find me a place by thee, mother of mine.

The Rose in a mystery, where is it found?
Is it anything true? Does it grow upon ground? —
It was made of earth's mould but it went from men's eyes
And its place is a secret and shut in the skies.

In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine
I shall look on thy loveliness, mother of mine.

But where was it formerly? which is the spot
That was blest in it once, though now it is not? —
It is Galilee's growth: it grew at God's will
And broke into bloom upon Nazareth hill.

In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine
I shall keep time with thee, mother of mine.

Tell me the name now, tell me its name.
The heart guesses easily: is it the same? —
Mary the Virgin, well the heart knows,
She is the mystery, she is that Rose.

I shall come home to thee, mother of mine.

Is Mary that rose then? Mary the tree?
But the blossom, the blossom there, who can it be? —
Who can her rose be? It could be but one:
Christ Jesus our Lord, her God and her son.

In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine
Shew me thy son, mother, mother of mine.

Does it smell sweet too in that holy place? —
Sweet unto God, and the sweetness is grace:
The breath of it bathes the great heaven above
In grace that is charity, grace that is love.
To thy breast, thy breast, to thy glory divine
Draw me by charity, mother of mine.

Rosa mystica,
Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844–1889), 1902

A spotless rose – Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

Baritone solo: *Bruce Daniel*

A Spotless Rose is blowing,
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshowing,
Of Jesse promised fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold, cold winter,
And in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest Maid;
For through our God's great love and might
The Blessed Babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winters night.

"Es ist ein Ros",

Translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878)

Nabd – Shireen Abu-Khader (b. 1972)

Tenor Soloist: *Darrall Cutting*

Baritone Soloist: *Bruce Daniel*

هَلِّلي يا نَجْوَمَ
يا جِبَالَ اسْجُدِي

O stars, rejoice and sing!
O mountains, kneel before Him!

طِفْلٌ كَنُورِ الفَجْرِ آتٍ
مَجْدُهُ للأَبَدِ

Like light into the world, comes a newborn child,
An everlasting glory!

هو المحبة هي السلام
هو المحبة هي السلام

He is Love, she is peace!
He is Love, she is peace!

من الله نطلب المحبة، الرحمة والسلام

We ask our divine for love, mercy and peace

I am warm, but scared
There is love, there is care
By this grace I'll pray
Courage I shall bear

Let us all embrace
Kindred souls pure and brave
Breathing love on earth
With this wondrous birth

With a cry, they come
Beating hearts, fast and strong
Open souls, how they shine
With might, how divine

Arabic text by Samir Azar, 2022

English text by Shireen Abu-Khader, 2022

Gaudebat et ridebat! – Katherine Parton (b. 1982)

Drum: *Olivia Watson*

Rejoice, ridebat,
rejoice, exultabat cum videbat,
Rejoice, ridebat,
rejoice in the birth of Mary's son,

Quam laeta et beata,
exultabat, cum videbat
nati partum inclyti.
Gaudebat exultabat, rejoicing, rejoicing.
Fuit illa immaculata,
Mater Unigeniti!

Latin text based on Stabat Mater speciosa, attributed to Jacopone de Todi (1230–1306), verses 2 and 4

A May Magnificat – William Mathias (1934–1992)

Soprano soloist: *Vanessa Goryl*

Glockenspiel: *Olivia Watson*

May is Mary's month, and I
Muse at that and wonder why:
Her feasts follow reason,
Dated due to season—
Candlemas, Lady Day;
But the Lady Month, May,
Why fasten that upon her,
With a feasting in her honour?
Is it only its being brighter
Than the most are must delight her?
Is it opportunist
And flowers finds soonest?
Ask of her, the mighty mother:
Her reply puts this other Question:
What is Spring?—
Growth in every thing—
Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
Grass and greenworld all together;
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
Throstle above her nested
Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin
Forms and warms the life within;

And bird and blossom swell
In sod or sheath or shell.

All things rising, all things sizing
Mary sees, sympathising
With that world of good,
Nature's motherhood.

Their magnifying of each its kind
With delight calls to mind
How she did in her stored
Magnify the Lord.

Magnificat, anima mea, Dominum
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo, salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem
ancillæ suæ:
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est, et
sanctum nomen eius,
et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath
rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his
handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall
call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy
is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout
all generations.

Well but there was more than this:
Spring's universal bliss
Much, had much to say
To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple
Bloom lights the orchard-apple
And thicket and thorp are merry
With silver-surfed cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes
Wood banks and brakes wash wet like lakes
And magic cuckoocall
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through mothering earth
Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth
To remember and exultation
In God who was her salvation.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto:
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc,
et semper, et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

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

Magnificat (Luke 1:46-50) and Doxology

May Magnificat by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889); from *Poems*, 1918

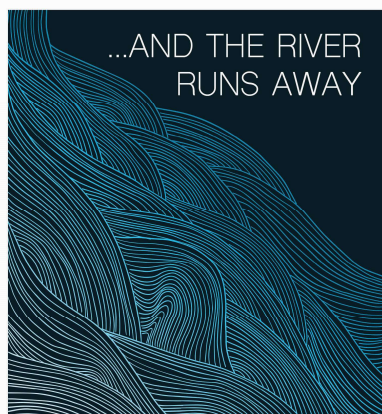
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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David Kimpton for the use of his drum
Annette Brown, Wilhelmina Brown, Josh Davis, Marjory Ellsmore
for being our front of house team today.



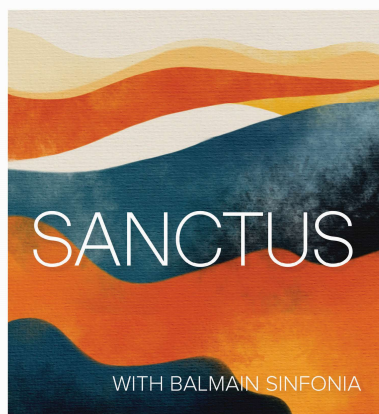
Bel
a
cappella

2024



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*A diverse program of
songs about love, water,
and loss.*



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*Bruckner's Mass in E minor,
together with the piece
that inspired it, Palestrina's
Missa Brevis.*



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century composers for
the patron saint of
music, together with
Frank Martin's electrifying
Mass for double choir.*