

Peter Roennfeldt

Harpsichord

Peter Roennfeldt is a keyboard musician and vocal ensemble director with over forty years of experience in presenting a diverse range of repertoire. With a focus on music of the baroque and romantic periods using period instruments and historically informed practices, Peter's repertoire includes both familiar composers and lesser known repertoire. As a pianist, he has performed much solo and chamber music including works by the Leipzig circle of Schumann, Mendelssohn and their contemporaries featuring his Viennese Streicher piano built in 1843. As a harpsichordist, Peter has been a continuo player and member of various Brisbane ensembles including the Badinerie Players and, as a guest principal player, with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the former Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra.

In addition to instrumental music, Peter has directed numerous vocal and choral works with various ensembles. During the 1990s he directed Cantilena Singers, a chamber choir of 12-15 voices, and since 2023 he has returned to this genre with the flexible ensemble Peter Roennfeldt and Friends comprising up to five voices supported by string, wind and keyboard instruments. With the latter ensemble he presents an annual Easter Vigil Concert and a mixed program 'Bach and x' – to date the other composers featured have been Rosenmüller, Handel and later this month, Zelenka. A recurring theme has been the church cantatas and violin sonatas of Bach, as well as major works including Buxtehude's 'Membra Jesu Nostri'. For three decades Peter has also been presenting French baroque music, particularly works by Lalande and Charpentier, including most recently the latter composer's 'La Descente d'Orphée' for Springboard Opera.

Queensland-born, Peter graduated from the universities of Queensland and Adelaide, followed by studies in the USA where he gained a Doctor of Musical Arts at the University of Cincinnati, all majoring in piano. While in America he also studied harpsichord with Eiji Hashimoto, a former student of Ralph Kirkpatrick. For more than thirty years until 2017 Peter was on the academic staff of Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, serving also as seven years as its Director, and currently in the honorary capacity of Emeritus Professor. Peter's extensive research on Queensland's music heritage has been published in numerous articles and seven books. He also presents many historically-themed programs for 4MBS Classic FM.

On my approach to Bach:

Growing up in a family with a strong German Lutheran heritage, it was natural that JS Bach was my first musical hero. Having experienced his major sacred choral works as a singer and conductor, in addition to many of his solo keyboard works as a piano student, my interests have evolved to focus on his chamber music and vocal output. When directing church cantatas my preference is to use single performers on each part, which permits greater aural clarity. In a similar vein, I am fascinated by the trio sonatas in which the harpsichord's right hand features as an equal and independent voice in dialogue with the violin, gamba or flute. This focus on melodic lines, articulation and ornamentation repays constant study and creative experimentation. Increasingly I see the printed score as just a beginning point of an interpretation, not a static document that must be literally reproduced. Bach's reputation as a highly rhythmic performer provides another point of reference – his chamber music is brimming with vitality. I hope that audience members will also enjoy the many ways in which each part takes it in turn to be the leader, or a follower, within the ever-changing textures.