

ACO ORIGINALS

MISSY MAZZOLI

Dark with Excessive Bright

MISSY MAZZOLI born 1980

**Dark with Excessive Bright: Concerto for
contrabass and string orchestra** 12'43

Maxime Bibeau contrabass

Australian Chamber Orchestra

Richard Tognetti Artistic Director and Lead Violin

Dark with Excessive Bright by Missy Mazzoli was commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Aurora Orchestra, supported by Bruce and Jenny Lane, and premiered on 1 February 2018 at Wollongong Town Hall.

Missy Mazzoli – *Dark with Excessive Bright: Concerto for contrabass and string orchestra*

In celebration of his 20th year with the orchestra, Principal Bass Maxime Bibeau was given the opportunity to commission a new work from a composer he felt reflected his time with the ACO. After considerable research and exploration (including hours of listening), Max landed on Brooklyn-based Mazzoli, who 'stood out to me as a composer with a very strong and distinctive voice that I hadn't heard anywhere else'.

This is the point in a commission where the story generally ends – one artist passes the baton to the other, and both reconvene at rehearsals. But Missy opted for a different route, tugging at the thread of Max's instrument's history to set the foundation for the work.

'I was inspired in no small part by Maxime's double bass, a massive instrument built in 1580 that was stored in an Italian monastery for hundreds of years and even patched with pages from the Good Friday liturgy,' says Mazzoli. 'I imagined this instrument as a historian, an object that collected the music of the passing centuries in the twists of its neck and the fibres of its wood, finally emerging into the light at age 400 and singing it all into the world.'

From this foundation, Mazzoli and Max worked together throughout the creative process, collaborating through Skype or in person during a special trip to Brooklyn. 'Missy has been very open about bouncing ideas back and forth, and exploring the full range of the instrument,' says Max. 'The solo part features these beautiful, soaring melodic lines, alongside some grittier, crunchier moments from both the bass and the orchestra.'

Missy also took the collaborative approach to heart, while immersing herself in music from the Baroque and Renaissance to keep the old feeling of Max's bass alive. 'I've worked with Maxime on this piece more than I've ever worked with a soloist,' says Mazzoli. 'A contrabass concerto is a tricky medium in that there are all sorts of potential issues with balance and range, but Maxime was very adventurous and willing to help me come up with innovative solutions. While loosely based in Baroque idioms, this piece slips between string techniques from several centuries, all while twisting a pattern of repeated chords beyond recognition.'

The outcome of this collaboration is *Dark with Excessive Bright* – a piece two years in the making that carefully interweaves the unique story of Max's instrument into a modern composition that's considered in every detail, right down to the name.

'*Dark with Excessive Bright*, a phrase from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is a surreal and evocative description of God, written by a blind man', explains Mazzoli. 'I love the impossibility of this phrase, and felt it was a strangely accurate way to describe the dark but heartrending sound of the double bass itself.'

Australian Chamber Orchestra © 2018

About the composer...

As an established composer on the contemporary music scene, Missy Mazzoli's talent draws audiences equally into concert halls, opera houses and rock clubs. Her unique music reflects a trend among composers of her generation who combine styles, writing music for the omnivorous audiences of the 21st century. She inhabits an exquisite and mysterious soundworld that melds indie rock sensibilities with formal training from Louis Andriessen, David Lang, Aaron Jay Kernis, Richard Ayres and others.

Her music has been performed around the world by the BBC Symphony, Kronos Quartet, JACK Quartet, eighth blackbird, LA Opera, Roomful of Teeth, Crash Ensemble, Britten Sinfonia, Detroit Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic, among many others.

Mazzoli is currently on the composition faculty of the Mannes College of Music, a division of the New School, and a co-founder of Luna Composition Lab. An active pianist, Mazzoli performs with Victoire, a band she founded in 2008 which is dedicated to playing her own compositions.

Australian Chamber Orchestra

'The Australian Chamber Orchestra is uniformly high-octane, arresting and never ordinary.'
– *The Australian*, 2017

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its explosive performances and brave interpretations. Steeped in history but always looking to the future, ACO programs embrace celebrated classics alongside new commissions, and adventurous cross-artform collaborations.

Led by Artistic Director Richard Tognetti since 1990, the ACO performs more than 100 concerts each year. Whether performing in Manhattan, New York, or Wollongong, NSW, the ACO is unwavering in its commitment to creating transformative musical experiences.

Testament to its international reputation, the ACO was invited to commence a three-year residency as International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court in partnership with London's Barbican Centre from the 2018/19 season.

The Orchestra regularly collaborates with artists and musicians who share its ideology: from Emmanuel Pahud, Steven Isserlis, Dawn Upshaw, Olli Mustonen, Brett Dean and Ivry Gitlis, to Neil Finn, Jonny Greenwood, Barry Humphries and Meow Meow; to visual artists and film makers such as Michael Leunig, Bill Henson, Shaun Tan, Jon Frank and Jennifer Peedom, who have co-created unique, hybrid productions for which the ACO has become renowned.

In addition to its national and international touring schedule, the Orchestra has an active recording program across CD, vinyl and digital formats. Recent releases include *Water / Night Music*, the first Australian-produced classical vinyl for two decades, *Beethoven*, a collection of the ACO's acclaimed Beethoven recordings, and the soundtrack to the acclaimed cinematic collaboration, *Mountain*.

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Producer Maxime Bibeau
Assistant Producer Lyle Chan
Engineer Simon Lear
Editing Simon Lear
Mastering Bob Scott

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