Circa I Fagiolini

How Like an Angel

Yaron Lifschitz artistic director
Robert Hollingworth music director

Tue 7 and Thu 9 May 2013, 9.30pm
Wed 8 and Fri 10 May 2013,
7.30pm and 9.30pm
All Saints Church Hove

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CIRCA

Yaron Lifschitz director

Performers
Gerramy Marsden
Bridie Hooper
Paul O’Keeffe
Skip Walker-Milne
Rowan Heydon-White
Billie Wilson-Coffey

Associate director
Ben Knapton
Producer
Danielle Kellie
Lighting designer/
Technical director
Jason Organ
Production manager
Tim Evans
Costume designer
Libby McDonnell
Electronic composer
Lawrence English

Production photos
Chris Taylor
Robert Hollingworth director

Sopranos
Anna Crookes
Charlotte Mobbs

Mezzo-soprano
Clare Wilkinson

Countertenor
Richard Wyn Roberts

Tenors
Nicholas Hurndall Smith
Matthew Long

Basses
Christopher Adams
Charles Gibbs
Introduction

Jonathan Holloway (former director of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, later of the Perth Festival) had the idea of bringing Circa and I Fagiolini together; but there was no initial narrative or specific musical brief beyond the fact that the repertory should be sacred and the piece partly about the spaces in which it was to be performed. So finding music for this performance was an interesting challenge. In my mind, the project was at least partly inspired by a performance by I Fagiolini in 2009, called ‘Tallis in Wonderland’, in which the experience of hearing pieces of Renaissance music was heightened by various technical and theatrical devices.

The next step for me was to watch Circa in action — which I did in London and Berlin. Initial meetings with Yaron Lifschitz, Circa’s director, involved us playing each other a lot of music; eventually Yaron took a pen and drew a shape that I very much liked. From that point, and from experiencing Circa live, I started to have ideas about pieces that could create some sort of relationship to the company’s physical virtuosity. That led to the first version of How Like an Angel, performed in a large hall in Perth, Australia.

*How Like an Angel* was substantially remade for its presentation in the UK, using our experience of working together but trying to exploit to the full the building in which it was being performed. We wanted to avoid the live music becoming merely a soundtrack and to explore the way energy could flow from one group to the other and how one piece could set up another. In Perth that was fuelled by some interesting and slightly dangerous live improvisations (literally as well as artistically dangerous: I do not think our soprano, Anna Crookes, had expected at one moment to find herself, without warning, standing on an acrobat’s shoulders).

Of course, the music you hear in *How Like an Angel* was not intended to be performed for such an occasion, nor for a mostly atheist, 21st-century concert-going public. Context is everything. We hope that the juxtapositions of music, sounds, light and physical work (both corporeal and vocal) take you somewhere interesting.

Robert Hollingworth
How Like an Angel is about belief, love, failure, ascent, humility, endurance, passion, loss, death and life — about our capacity for belief and the challenges and complexities of that belief. But I choose to work in a medium without words, so this programme note is a trial — a sort of betrayal. A director’s note carries with it the promise of explanation. But if we could say it in words, it would not need enactment. Wittgenstein put it best: ‘whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent’.

We know that bodies will lift and drag, suspend and drop, hurl and recoil. Voices will soar and glide, delivering dense polyphony and intricate rhapsodies. There will be ferocity and tenderness, hope and fear, tension and release.

At the heart of How Like an Angel is a mystery — something that eludes words. Maybe it is a form of wonder. I wanted to create a work of beauty that makes you feel something even if you cannot say exactly why.

Yaron Lifschitz
The music

**Thomas Tallis (c1505–1585)**

Gaude gloriosa (opening section)

Tallis’s *Gaude gloriosa* is an astonishing work devoted to the Virgin Mary. The music throws sound in wide spans, comparable to the way that stone seems to fly in flamboyant 14th-century architecture, making this piece most suitable for the buildings in which *How Like an Angel* is performed. The whole work lasts 17 minutes but we perform only the first section.

Gaude gloriosa dei mater virgo Maria vere honorificanda, quae a domino in gloria super caelos exaltata adepta es thronum.

Rejoice, glorious mother of God, virgin Mary truly honoured, who is exalted by God in glory above the heavens to attain your throne.
Daniel-Lesur (1908–2002)
Dialogue

Daniel-Lesur’s ‘Dialogue’ is the first of his *Cantique de cantiques* (1953), a group of 12-voice settings of texts from the Song of Songs. Although they come from the Old Testament, these texts are in fact erotic Hebrew poems (perhaps written to be read at Jewish marriage services); the yearning and quiet ecstasy they convey makes these settings a highpoint of 20th-century vocal expressivity.

À ma cavalle attelée au char de Pharaon je te compare.
Mon bien-aimée est à moi comme un bouquet de myrrhe
qui repose entre mes seins.
Que tu es belle, ma bien-aimée;
tes yeux sont des colombes.
Comme le lis entre les chardons,
tel est ma bien-aimée entre les jeunes-filles.
Comme le pommier parmi les arbres du verger,
tel est ma bien-aimée parmi les jeunes hommes.
J’ai désirée son ombrage et m’y suis assise
et son fruit est doux à ma bouche.
Il m’a menée au cellier du vin
et la bannière qu’il dresse sur moi, c’est l’amour.
Filles de Jerusalem, n’éveillez pas la bien-aimée
avant l’heure de son bon plaisir.

To the horses that pull that Pharoah’s chariot do I compare thee.
My beloved is to me like a posy of myrrh placed between my breasts.
How fair thou art, my beloved;
your eyes are like doves.
As the lily among thorns,
so is my beloved among the maidens.
As the apple tree among the orchard trees,
so is my beloved among the young men.
I desired his shade and sat down there
and his fruit is sweet to my mouth.
He took me to his wine-cellar
and the banner with which he dresses me is love.
Daughters of Jerusalem, do not wake the beloved
before the hour of his choosing.
The Zulu singer and composer Bheka Dlamini wrote *Umsindisi* for the SDASA Chorale, his male-voice ensemble, with whom I Fagiolini made the crossover recording *Simunye* in 1997. It is written in iscathamiya style: a township a cappella style that originated with the South African Zulus. It is familiar from Ladysmith Black Mambazo's contribution to the song ‘Homeless’ on Paul Simon's *Graceland* album.

**Bheka Dlamini (b 1965)**

*Umsindisi*

When I see the saviour

Dying on a cross…

What can I offer which will be worthy of giving thanks to him?

I have nothing great enough but I'll surrender myself to Thee.

I am full of sin and unrighteousness

Forgive, my Lord.

Let's ascend to Golgotha.

They will be washed whiter there by the blood of the lamb.

Please wash my sins.

O! by the blood of the lamb we will be saved.

We will be saved by that blood…

You will be saved by that blood; it has flowed from the wounds

With the blood of the lamb.

Wound of Jesus; let me hide myself in thee and be forgiven.

Uma ngimbona loMsindisi
Efa esiphambanweni maa…
Ngingayisa ntoni kuye efanele ukumbonga?

Anginakho okwanele kodwa ng’zomnik’ uqobo lwami.
Uqobo lwami lugcwel’ isono lugcwele konk’ ukonakala
Awushwele Nkosi yami.
Asenyuke siye Golgotha.
Ziyohlanzwa zibemhlophe lee ngegazi leMvana.

Awu hlanz’ izono zami.
Ol gazi leMvana siyosindiswa.
Siyosinda k’lelogazi; O kulelogazi…
Uzodinsa k’lelogazi; elaphum’emanezbeni

Ngegazi leMvana ma.
Nxeba l’ka Jesu; ngiz’fihle kuwe; ng’thelelelwe.
Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

O viridissima virga

Hildegard of Bingen was a 12th-century German abbess whose visions (which began when she was in her 40s) inspired her to write rhapsodic monodies on her own non-liturgical but sacred texts.

O viridissima virga ave, que in ventosō labro sciscitationis sanctorum prodisti.

Cum venit tempus quod tu floruiisti in ramis tuis; ave, ave sit tibi, quia calor solis in te sudavit sicut odor balsami.

Nam in te floruit pulcher flos qui odorem dedit omnibus aromatibus quae arida erant.

Et illa apparuerunt omnia in viriditate plena.

Unde celi dederunt rorem super gramen et omnis terra leta factus est, quoniam viscera ipsius frumentum protulerunt, et quoniam volucres celi nidos in ipsa habuerunt.

Deinde facta est esca hominibus, et gaudium magnum epulantium; unde, o suavis virgo, in te non deficit illum gaudium.

Hec omnia Eva contempsit.

Nunc autem laus sit altissimo.
Josquin des Pres (c1440–1521)

Agnus Dei from Missa ‘L’homme armé’ sexti toni

The most famous composer of his generation, Josquin des Pres wrote a number of masses structurally based on pre-existing tunes. This mass uses the 15th-century melody ‘L’homme armé’ ('The Armed Man'), on which many composers based settings of the Mass. In this final section, a bass sings the tune, greatly slowed down, while the other bass sings it backwards and upside down. Over the top of this structure a tenor sings faster-moving roulades followed by another tenor ‘in canon’ (singing the same music) just one note later. On top of this, a pair of sopranos do the same thing. This is Renaissance compositional virtuosity, but it provides a strangely contemporary effect. The vocal harmonics that we produce were inspired by watching Circa’s water work during this routine.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, O Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, miserere nobis. have mercy on us. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, O Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, dona nobis pacem. give us peace.

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)

Alma redemptoris mater

Tomás Luis de Victoria’s Alma redemptoris mater is a two-choir prayer to the Virgin Mother. Victoria was a Spanish composer who worked in Rome in the 1580s. He wrote a series of quite perfect choral dialogues in which the two choirs clearly have to be close enough to each other to converse but they keep their own identity. The language, rhetoric and feel of this music is that of sumptuous confidence — a world away from the Reformation.

Alma redemptoris mater, Gracious mother of the Redeemer,
qua per via caeli porta manes, who remains the ever-open gate to heaven,
et stella maris, succurre cadenti and star of the sea, help your people who fall
surgere qui curat populo. but try to rise again.
Tu, quae genuisti, natura mirante, You, who gave birth, while nature marvelled,
tuum sanctum Genitorum: to your Holy Creator:
virgo prius ac posterius, a virgin before and after,
Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud who heard from the mouth of Gabriel that
Ave: peccatorum miserere. ‘Ave’: have mercy on sinners.
Roderick Williams (b 1965)
Gaude Hildegard patterns

We commissioned the former Fagiolino Roderick Williams to write us some ‘holding music’ for a particular section of How Like an Angel. He has taken the opening of Tallis’s Gaude gloriosa as a starting-point, adding melodies inspired by Hildegard which flow over the top of it.

Adrian Williams (b 1956)
Hymn to Awe

Adrian Williams is a Welsh composer whose music I Fagiolini has championed since 1988. His scores are beautifully crafted but with a strong emotional kick, which is why we have gone back to him on so many occasions (notably for the a cappella track that we sing on Shakespeare – The Sonnets). We originally asked him to write the penultimate piece for How Like an Angel but, when ‘Hymn to Awe’ arrived, I knew it had to be the last word.

Before the Saints
Before bishops, builders and stonemasons;
Before artists and sculptors,
Before music, organists and choirs;
Before architects
Before the poetry of psalm and hymn and common prayer;
Before there was a word for ‘cathedral’
Before there was a word for ‘architecture’
Before there was a word for ‘art’
When our first house was the great original forest
Before there was a word for ‘cathedral’
Before there was a word for ‘architecture’
Before there was a word for ‘art’
When our first house was the great original forest

Before the Saints
Before bishops, builders and stonemasons;

Before there was a word for ‘wonder’,
Names for stars or footprints on the moon;
Before a man looked at a tree and made a cross
And felt the hammering rain and thought of nails
And made a cross
And felt the hammering rain and thought of nails
And made a cross.
Hammering rain.
Hammering nails.

Before…
First mark, first word, first hymn to awe,
First vision of a building taller than a forest,
Aisled, vaulted, clerestoried with sunlight.

Based on the poem ‘Cathedral’
by Gillian Clarke, with permission
Biographies

**Robert Hollingworth** conductor

Robert Hollingworth specializes in the music of Monteverdi, contemporary repertory and ground-breaking projects. He was a chorister at Hereford Cathedral before studying at New College, Oxford, where he founded I Fagiolini in 1986; he subsequently studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Most recently he has directed Accentus, the BBC Singers, the Norddeutscher Rundfunk Chor, the Nederlands Kamerkoor, the Wrocław Philharmonic Choir, the Wuppertal Symphony Orchestra (in *Judas Maccabaeus*), the English Concert and the Academy of Ancient Music. He writes and presents for television and BBC Radio 3 (including *The Early Music Show* and *Discovering Music*). In 2010 he delivered the Lufthansa Lecture, entitled ‘Monteverdi the Modern Man’, and spoke at the REMA (Réseau Européen de Musique Ancienne) conference. He recently arranged the music for the album *Shakespeare: The Sonnets* and has also worked on a number of films, including *Quills*. A regular guest conductor at the Dartington International Summer School, he leads masterclasses and residencies in France, Italy, Spain and Germany; last year he ran a conducting masterclass at the annual conference of the American Choral Directors’ Association. He is an Anniversary Reader in Music at the University of York.

**Yaron Lifschitz** artistic director

Yaron Lifschitz is a graduate of the University of New South Wales, the University of Queensland and the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), where he was the youngest director ever accepted into its graduate directors’ course. Since graduating, he has directed more than 60 productions, including large-scale events, opera, theatre, physical theatre and circus. His work has been seen in 18 countries by over 500,000 people. He was the founding Artistic Director of the Australian Museum’s Theatre Unit and Head Tutor in Directing at the Australian Theatre for Young People, and has been a regular guest tutor in directing at NIDA since 1995. He is currently Artistic Director and CEO of Circa, with which he has created *Wunderkammer*, *CIRCA*, *How Like an Angel*, “S” and, most recently, *Opus*, which receives its world premiere later this year.

**Ben Knapton** associate director

Ben Knapton is a Brisbane-based director and creative producer who holds a BA in applied theatre and an MA in directing (for which he won the Philip Parsons Prize of the Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies); he will shortly complete a practice-led PhD in directing. His independent creations have been acclaimed for their originality and integration of live performance and projection technology. Since 2010 he has been the Associate Director and Creative Producer of Circa, with which he has created *Wunderkammer*, *CIRCA*, *by the light of stars that are no longer...*, *How Like an Angel*, “S” and, most recently, *Opus*, which receives its world premiere later this year.

**Libby McDonnell** costume designer

Libby McDonnell is a freelance costume designer and performer from Brisbane. She has an associate degree in dance from Queensland University of Technology and now specializes in costuming for movement-based performance. She designed the costumes for Circa’s productions *Wunderkammer*, *Strange Familiar Angel*, *On Air*, *Opus* and *Beyond*; she has also designed for Expressions Dance Company’s *SOLO* season, and Claire Marshall’s *Slowdive* and *Cavil Ave*. She was the production designer for Blue Roo Theatre Company’s *Sugar Cane Ball* and the costume designer for Gavin Webber’s collaboration with Regurgitator, *Rockshow*. She has been performing with the choreographer Claire Marshall in *Cavil Ave*, *Slowdive* and *Hey Scenester*; she has also performed in Perth Theatre Company’s *EQUUS*, and has worked with the choreographers Kate Harman, Gavin Webber and Solon Ulbrich. She has also performed in film clips by the musicians Powderfinger, Little Birdy, The Sleepy Jackson and Darren Hayes.
I Fagiolini is a solo-voice ensemble specializing in Renaissance and contemporary music. It has recorded 19 CDs and two DVDs and has performed internationally, from the BBC Proms and the Lincoln Center, New York, to the Far East and Africa. It is Ensemble-in-Residence at the University of York. The group is noted for touring groundbreaking theatrical projects, including The Full Monteverdi (2004), a dramatized account of the composer’s Fourth Book of Madrigals (1603); The Birds (2005); Simunye (2006) with the gospel choir SDASA Chorale; Tallis in Wonderland (2009); Purcell’s King Arthur (2011), a semi-staged production with the English Concert; and How Like an Angel (2012) as part of the London 2012 Festival. In 2011 I Fagiolini celebrated its 25th anniversary with the release, by Decca, of the world premiere recording of Striggio’s Mass in 40 Parts, which won the Early Music Prize in both the Gramophone and Diapason d’Or de l’Année Awards. Last year it released 1612 Italian Vespers. The ensemble’s future engagements include performances of 1612 Italian Vespers, Carnevale Veneziano and Striggio’s Mass in 40 Parts. In autumn 2014 it will give the premiere of its latest music-theatre project, the follow-up to The Full Monteverdi.
Circa

Based in Brisbane, Circa has performed in 22 countries since 2006, under the artistic direction of Yaron Lifschitz. Its bold vision of contemporary circus is characterized by a blending of bodies, light, sound and skills which melds acrobatics and movement into a seamless whole and celebrates the expressive possibilities of the human body at its extremes. Circa’s current touring shows range from works for families in traditional arts centres to productions for European contemporary arts festivals. Its works are highly innovatory genre-bending pieces that stretch the practice and perception of circus performance. It comprises a full-time ensemble, a concentrated administrative team and a dedicated circus studio, and it also runs a training centre with an impressive programme of workshops in its studio, in schools and with partners throughout Queensland and beyond. Its training centre programmes reach an annual audience of over 20,000 people. Circa acknowledges the assistance of the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

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Circa performers

Gerramy Marsden
Gerramy Marsden started his circus training at the age of 14, joining a youth circus based in Queensland. After discovering a natural talent for object manipulation, he soon found himself performing in shows at venues ranging from the Brisbane Powerhouse to the Adelaide Festival Fringe. He recently completed a Bachelor of Circus studying at the National Institute of Circus Arts, where he has further advanced his training in the art of acrobatic basing and Rolla Bolla.

Bridie Hooper
Bridie Hooper joined Spaghetti Circus — one of Australia’s leading youth circuses — at the age of 11, and from the age of 16 she toured nationally with Flying Fruit Fly Circus. In 2008 she began training at the National Circus School, Montreal, and in 2010 she performed in the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Vancouver and represented the Montreal Circus School at Festival CIRCA in France. She performed in the Complètement Cirque Festival, Montreal, in 2010 and 2011, and last year she toured Quebec with Vague de Cirque, and performed in GOP Variété’s Dummy and for L’Arsenal à la Musique in Italy. She joined Circa this year.

Paul O’Keeffe
Since making his professional debut at the age of 16, playing a lead role in Skylark Theatre Company’s Wake Baby, Paul O’Keeffe has toured the world from Kalgoorlie to New York, performing in circus, dance, puppetry, musical and physical theatre. He co-founded the extreme circus company Kronik, set up a professional circus training studio in Melbourne, co-managed Warehouse Circus, ran independent circus troupes, and coordinated and implemented a number of circus workshops, including one for 10,000 scouts over ten days. He has performed with Circus Oz, Circus Monoxide, Kronik, the Australian Choreographic Centre, Out of the Blue Studios and Legs on the Wall; and in Cantina for Strut & Fret, The Lost Thing for Jigsaw Theatre Company and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe for Malcom C. Cooke & Associates. He joined Circa this year.

Skip Walker-Milne

Rowan Heydon-White
Rowan Heydon-White started flying around on a trapeze at an early age. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts, specializing in physical theatre, she moved to New Zealand to complete a diploma in Circus Arts. She has performed throughout Australia and internationally for events ranging from corporate and private functions to festivals and numerous contemporary circus productions. Her career highlights include touring with Circus Oz, Legs on the Wall, Awkward Productions and Catcher. She joined Circa this year.

Billie Wilson-Coffey
Billie Wilson-Coffey began performing as a member of Spaghetti Circus before training at the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne. Since graduating, she has performed in ensemble productions by After Dark Theatre and Charody Productions. In 2009 she made her international debut at the World Circus Festival in Moscow, performing in a duo aerial act ‘Momento’, which was awarded the bronze medal. She is a recipient of an Australian Arts Council grant to allow her further international training and performance. She first joined Circa as a guest artist in 2011, performing Circa’s repertory work, special projects and new creations.
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