Two Sacred Duets
Bendigo, Victoria – 1860s

Fr Henry Backhaus
Paderborn, 1811 – Bendigo, 1882

Edited by
Richard Divall

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Introduction

George Henry Backhaus was born in 1811 in Paderborn, then in the German, but Napoleonic administered Kingdom of Westphalia. The city, with its great cathedral, which dates from before 1240, was returned to Prussia after the Battle of Leipzig in 1813. After early studies in the seminary in Paderborn he was sent to Rome to study for the priesthood, where he obtained a D.D. with a high distinction from Propaganda Fide. After ordination in August 1836 Backhaus was sent on missionary work to India, but health issues in the tropics caused him to seek a more temperate climate. In 1846 he undertook pastoral duties in Sydney, until he was transferred to Adelaide in the following year to work under Bishop Francis Murphy. Because of the need for priests on the Victorian goldfields, Backhaus elected to go to Bendigo in 1852, then named Sandhurst, where on 2 May of that year he celebrated the first Sunday Mass in the area.

In 1855 Bishop James Goold of Melbourne asked that a substantial church was erected for the area, and Backhaus, who had a particular ability to generate wealth through land dealings, commenced the construction of what became St Kilian’s Church. He also established many schools for the education of local children. After a short period of work in Adelaide again, he returned to Bendigo in 1867 where he was appointed Vicar-General by Bishop Martin Crane. He retired from parish duties in 1881 and went to live in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton. But toward his approaching demise, he insisted on returning to Bendigo where he is buried in the churchyard of St Kilian’s Church. He made St Kilian’s and the Diocese his heir in his will, and the probate was 75,000 pounds, then an extraordinary fortune. The effects of Backhaus’ legacy are still felt today in the Diocese of Sandhurst.

Backhaus was known to have enjoyed and composed music, and these two sacred works set to Latin texts are all that have survived of his composition. They are held in the Archives of the Sacred Heart Cathedral, a fine Gothic Cathedral, which Backhaus’ endowments assisted in building. With their quiet reminiscences of the music of Mendelssohn, they are gentle reminders of Catholicism in pre-Wilhelmine Germany. The Ave Regina Caelorum is one of the main Marian antiphons, the others being the Regina Caeli, Salve Regina, Alma Redemptoris, together with the Magnificat. The Ave Regina (Hail, O Queen of Heaven), is recited or chanted after the canonical hours, or in Compline. The In Te, Domine speravi (In Thee Lord, have I hoped; let me not be confounded for ever), is the first verse of Psalm 70. This identical text is also placed as the last line in the Te Deum.

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1 Paderborn Cathedral is dedicated to St. Mary, St Liborius and St Kilian. The naming of the original church was no doubt inspired by Backhaus’ own association with the Irish missionary Saint.

2 Malachy John Nolan, The Enterprising Life of Dr Henry Backhaus (Bendigo: Richard Cambridge Printers, 2008)

3 The Diocese still bears the name Sandhurst.
Rev Dr Henry Backhaus in 1862 – Photograph by F De Kock and Co.
Courtesy of The State Library of Victoria

The Golden Square Diggings – Bendigo, 1857 by George Rowe
St Kilian’s Church – Bendigo - 1857

The Sacred Heart Cathedral – Bendigo
CRITICAL NOTES

The vocal slurs are all editorial.

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Richard Divall
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The Editor
Frà Professor Richard Divall AO OBE is a Vice-Chancellor’s Professorial Fellow at Monash University, an Honorary Principal Fellow in Music at The University of Melbourne, and Visiting Professor at The University of Malta. He is Chairman of the Marshall-Hall Trust and is a Knight of Malta in Solemn Religious Profession. He was awarded a D.Lett. (Hon Causa) in 1992 by Monash University, and a Doc. Univ. (Hon Causa) by the Australian Catholic University in 2004. He holds a PhD in Theology from the University of Divinity on eighteenth-century sacred music on Malta that includes an edition of the complete sacred works of Nicolò Isouard (1773-1818), and is an Honorary Research Fellow at the same university. Richard Divall has edited early Australian music since 1967.
Two Sacred Duets
I. Ave Regina Caelorum

Marian Antiphon

Fr. Henry Backhaus [1811-1882]
Edited by Richard Divall

Soprano I
Soprano II
Organ

Larghetto

Ave, Ave, Ave, Ave. Ave, Ave, Ave, Ave.

Ave, Ave, Ave, Ave. Ave, Ave, Ave, Ave.

Do-mi-na
Do-mi-na, Do-mi-na An-ge-lo-rum!

Do-mi-na
Do-mi-na, Do-mi-na An-ge-lo-rum!
Salve, salve porta! Ex qua mundo lux est orta:
Salve Radix! Salve, salve porta! Ex qua mundo lux est orta:

Super omnes speciosa, Vale, o valde decora,
Gaudete, Virgo gloriosa, Super omnes speciosa, Vale, o valde decora,

Et pro nobis Christum exora!
Et pro nobis Christum exora!

- ra!
- ra!
Psalm 70:1

II. In Te, Domine Speravi

Fr Henry Backhaus
Edited by Richard Divall

[Andante]
In Te, Domi - ne, spe - ra - vi, non con - fundar in ae - ter - num.

In Te, Domi - ne, spe - ra - vi, non con - fundar in ae - ter - num.

In Te, Domi - ne, spe - ra - vi, non con - fundar

In Te, Domi - ne, spe - ra - vi, non con - fundar

in ae - ter - num. Non con - fundar, non, non in ae - ter - num.

in ae - ter - num. Non con - fundar, non, non in ae - ter - num.