
Brendan O'Donnell – Recorder & Early Music

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Described as a “virtuoso, scholar, [and] presenter ... of rare charm and lucidity” by the press, recorder player and chamber music specialist Brendan O'Donnell is dedicated to bringing both early and contemporary music to life for a 21st-century public. As a soloist and as a founding member of both Bowerbird Ensemble in Australia and Cembraless in Germany, he has earned a reputation for direct communication and thoughtful programming, inviting his audiences to experience and enjoy music they might otherwise never encounter.

Performing in churches and cabaret clubs, in concert halls and on dingy stages normally reserved for DJs or late-night comedy, Brendan regularly aims events at young adult audiences, foregoing traditional concert venues in favour of settings that encourage intimacy, interaction, and dynamic presentation: with Bowerbird Ensemble he has played in The Rhino Room, The Promethean, and Carclew Youth Arts Centre (raising funds for *Opportunity International*) in Adelaide; with Cembraless, in a historical building site in Würzburg (in conjunction with *LeerRaumPioniere* and *Klangkartei*) and Herbrand's Club in Cologne (a fundraiser for *Lebensdurst-ich*).

In Australia, Brendan has performed as both soloist and chamber musician with Ensemble Galante, Adelaide Baroque, Adelaide Chamber Singers, Syntony, and Accademia Arcadia, and has taken part in the Adelaide Fringe Festival, the St. John's Feast of Music, and the acclaimed Woodend Winter Arts Festival. Since leaving Cembraless at the end of 2016, he has performed regularly in Germany with Ensemble Raccanto in locations such as the Bach Museum in Leipzig, the Barocksaal in Benediktbauern Abbey, and the Neues Schloss in Meersburg.

In August 2013, Brendan won the Don Cowell Memorial Trust competition in Melbourne, Australia's most prestigious recorder prize. More recently, he received the 'Golden Prize' in the professional woodwind category of the Svirél competition in Slovenia, and won the special prize for best interpretation of a contemporary composition in the competition of Recorder Festival Nordhorn. As a member of Cembraless he won audience prizes in both the Biagio Marini competition in Neuburg an der Donau and in the first ZAMUS 'Spielwiese' in Cologne, and received a coveted grant from the *Dörken Stiftung* in Herdecke.

Brendan has played recorder since the age of four. Growing up with early musicians as parents, he had many opportunities to perform in professional circles during his teenage years, but initially studied political science rather than music after completing high school. His passion for the recorder was reignited a few years later – though in truth he had never stopped playing and performing – and he went on to study at a tertiary level: first in New Zealand with David Coomber and Kamala Bain, later in Salzburg with Dorothee Oberlinger and Matthias Lunenburg, where he completed a master's degree in 2013.

He continues to educate himself through courses, masterclasses and private lessons with leading recorder players including Dan Laurin (SE), Han Tol (NL), Bolette Roed (DK), and Andreas Böhlen (DE), and has attended classes on baroque improvisation led by violinist Davide Monti (IT).

When in Australia, Brendan gives workshops for both the Victorian and South Australian recorder societies. He now teaches at the Volkshochschule in Hallbergmoos and privately in Munich, Germany, where he lives with his wife and two children.

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