



The NATIONAL CARILLON

Located on Aspen Island in Lake Burley Griffin, the National Carillon was a gift from the British Government to the people of Australia celebrating the 50th anniversary of the national capital.

Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the National Carillon on 26 April 1970. John Douglas Gordon, after whom the Aspen Island footbridge is now named, played the inaugural recital. The National Carillon was refurbished in 2003, with the clavier chamber and function room on the top floor being substantially expanded and renovated. Two new bells were also added.

A carillon is a set of at least 23 cast and tuned bronze bells, played from a mechanical-action keyboard. With 55 bronze bells, the National Carillon is large by world standards, and the largest in Australia. The pitch of the bells ranges chromatically through four and a half octaves, and each bell weighs between seven kilograms and six tonnes. Cast in England by John Taylor & Co of Loughborough, they are fine examples of the art of bellfounding.

Carillonists play the suspended stationary bells from a keyboard of wooden batons and pedals, called a clavier. A system of individual cables and wire linkages draws soft iron clappers onto the bells as each wooden baton or pedal is struck by the carillonist. A separate system of operation allows the quarter-hour striking of the Westminster chimes.

Much variation of musical expression is obtainable in the hands of a talented carillonist. Carillon 'schools' are well established in Europe and North America and carillonists regularly participate in international recitals.

Timothy Hurd, QSM was appointed as the National Carillon Director in Canberra in July 2001. His graduate training in music was at Yale University, followed by carillon studies in the Netherlands, Belgium and the United States. In the early 1980s Timothy was awarded the Dutch 'Prix d'Excellence' in carillon performance and, in 1994, he received the Queen's Service Medal for services to music. Timothy has performed concerts and taught master classes throughout the world.

Local and visiting carillonists perform recitals at the National Carillon throughout the year. All styles of music are represented, from compositions specially written for the carillon to popular song arrangements and improvisation. It is often used to celebrate special occasions and in conjunction with other events.

The best location to listen to the National Carillon is anywhere with an unobstructed view of the tower, within a radius of about 100 metres. The carillonist may be greeted at the base of the tower approximately five minutes after the recital.



The National Carillon tower, rising to a height of 50 metres, was the prize-winning design of Western Australian architects Cameron, Chisholm & Nicol.

The design of the tower consists of a cluster of three shafts, each a triangle in shape, aligned with the three sides of a central equilateral triangle. Each of the shafts serves a different function: the highest contains a passenger lift, the next shaft holds a steel staircase, and the lowest is a service shaft. The first floor is approximately halfway up the tower and contains the chamber for the clavier that operates the bells. On the next floor is the bell chamber and above that again, at 36 metres from the ground, is a function room. The tower is faced with precast mineral aggregate panels of white marble chippings and white cement.

The tower's height allows the music of the bells to drift across Lake Burley Griffin and through Kings and Commonwealth Parks. The tower is lit at night, providing a magnificent landmark in the national capital.

National Carillon Recital Times

- Sunday and Wednesday 12.30pm–1.20pm
- Special Recitals as advertised

Information and bookings

- phone (02) 6272 2902
- fax (02) 6247 1875
- email nce@natcap.gov.au
- website www.nationalcapital.gov.au

Access to the National Carillon is via Kings Avenue (north bound lane only) or from Constitution Avenue. Turn into Wendouree Drive and proceed under Parkes Way, following the lakeshore through Kings Park.

The National Carillon, Aspen Island is managed and maintained by the National Capital Authority on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia.

