



Saturday 20 November 2021 at 3pm & 7pm
Independent Theatre, North Sydney

Garden of the Soul

Sydney Chamber Choir

Jem Harding *piano*

Anthea Cottee *cello*

Sam Allchurch *conductor*

As a mark of respect to this wonderful music, Sydney Chamber Choir would appreciate it if audience members would turn off all sound-emitting devices. Thank you.

Sydney Chamber Choir on CD



Lux Aeterna

Choral works by Paul Stanhope, including *Agnus Dei (Do not stand at my grave and weep)* and *Exile Lamentations*



Osanna

New sacred works by Australian composer Clare Maclean



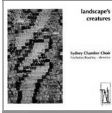
Songs for the Shadowland

Choral works by Paul Stanhope, including *Geography Songs*



Francisco Guerrero

Missa Surge propera and motets, performed under the direction of Michael Noone, accompanied by the Orchestra of the Renaissance on period instruments



Landscape's Creatures

Music by Australian composers Stephen Adams, Raffæle Marcellino, Nicholas Routley and Paul Stanhope



Clare Maclean: Choral Music

Six early works by Australian composer Clare Maclean



Raft Song at Sunrise

Chamber music by Australian composer Ross Edwards



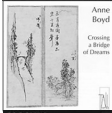
Prayer Dances

Music for voices and percussion by Australian composer Christian Heim



The Ockeghem Legacy

Motets by the 15th-century master Johannes Ockeghem and the musicians of the next generation who claimed him as their musical father



Crossing a Bridge of Dreams

Chamber music by Australian composer Anne Boyd



Josquin

Missa Pange Lingua and other sacred music by Renaissance master Josquin des Prez

Program

Ego flos campi (1555)

Jacobus Clemens non Papa
c.1510–c.1555; Belgium/Netherlands

Zefiro torna (1614)

Claudio Monteverdi
1567–1643; Italy

Vidi speciosam (1572)

Tomás Luis de Victoria
c.1548–1611; Spain



Rosa Mystica (1939)

Benjamin Britten
1913–1976; UK

A Hymn to the Virgin (1930)

Quartet: Amanda Durham *soprano*, Alison Keene *alto*
Mackenzie Shaw *tenor*, Ed Suttle *bass*

Benjamin Britten

Hymn to St Cecilia (1942)

Solos: Megan Cronin & Josephine Gibson *sopranos*, Alison Lockhart *alto*
Richard Sanchez *tenor*, Jesse van Proctor *bass*

Benjamin Britten



An Australian Song Cycle (2021)

WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

Joseph Twist
born 1982; Australia

- 1 Sunrise on the Coast (Banjo Paterson)
 - 2 Andy's Gone with Cattle (Henry Lawson)
 - 3 Wonga Vine (Judith Wright)
 - 4 Magpie (Michael Leunig)
 - 5 Lorikeets (Peter Skrzynecki)
 - 6 Jellyfish (Les Murray)
 - 7 Ashes (Jack Twist)
 - 8 Time Is Running Out (Oodgeroo Noonuccal)
- Belinda Montgomery *soprano solo*
Sébastien Maury *baritone solo*
Jem Harding *piano*
Anthea Cottee *cello*

Sam Allchurch *conductor*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Sam Allchurch *conductor and Artistic Director*

Pedro Greig



Recognised as a leading conductor of choirs in Australia, Sam Allchurch took up his appointment as Artistic Director of the Sydney Chamber Choir at the beginning of 2019, having conducted the Choir in two concerts – *Dance | Chant: Celebrating Ross Edwards* in 2018 and *German Romantics* in 2017 – and prepared the ensemble for concerts throughout 2017 and 2018.

In 2019, Sam conducted the choir in Holcombe Waller’s *Requiem: A Queer Divine Rite*, presented as part of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras arts festival, and in three subscription concerts incorporating music from the 15th century to today. He champions the music of Australian composers, especially Paul Stanhope and Joe Twist as well as focusing on music by female composers: Judith Weir, Ella Macens and Clare Maclean all featured in the 2019 season.

Sam is also Associate Artistic Director at Gondwana Choirs, where he works closely with Lyn Williams AM. He directs the Young Men’s Choir and works with Gondwana’s treble ensembles, having prepared them for performances with Opera Australia and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Sam played a key role in presenting the Gondwana World Choral Festival in July 2019.

In September 2018, Sam was appointed Director of Music of Christ Church St Laurence. This choir, which dates back to 1845, sings music of the Anglican choral tradition within the services offered each week at the historic church, including high mass and choral evensong every Sunday and for festivals of the church’s year.

Recent guest appearances have included City Recital Hall’s Flash Mob Choir, the Combined Schools Music Festival (2017), and Festival of Voices (2019).

Sam holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Melbourne and a Master in Music (Choral Studies) from the University of Cambridge. His studies in Cambridge with Geoffrey Webber and Stephen Layton were supported by a scholarship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Jem Harding *piano*



Jem Harding studied piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and has worked as an accompanist, repetiteur and music / choral director with a number of Australian music ensembles. As an accompanist, he received the pianist prize at the Mietta National Art Song Award in Melbourne in 2008 and 2010. Jem also won the National Eisteddfod (piano) in 2006 and was a semi-finalist in the Concours d'Andorra international piano competition in the same year. He was the recipient of the NSW Music Teachers Association Elizabeth Todd Lieder Memorial Prize in memory of Geoffrey Parsons in 2009.

Jem has been involved with productions at Sydney Chamber Opera, Opera Australia, WAAPA, State Opera South Australia, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Sydney Philharmonia and Sydney Children's Choir. He is a regular guest artist at Gondwana National Choral School and has appeared as a soloist with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Jem is also a recording artist with Eminence Artists (Australia), CIA Artists (Japan) and the ABC. He is currently a full-time staff accompanist, director of choirs and music teacher at Cranbrook School, Rose Bay.

Anthea Cottee *cello*



Robert Catto

Anthea is a renowned performer on a variety of instruments from modern, Baroque and Classical cello to other instruments, including the viola da gamba, lirone and basse de violon. She enjoys the challenges of exploring these different instruments, and the changes of nuance and colour they bring. She has appeared as a soloist on both Baroque cello and gamba for the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, where she has been a regular member since 1998, and has performed as principal cellist for Sydney Philharmonia, Opera Australia, Australian Haydn Ensemble, and Orchestra of the Antipodes for Pinchgut Opera, including their 2020 film *A Delicate Fire*, and at the

Hobart and Brisbane Baroque Festivals. Anthea has toured with CIRCA as solo cellist for their acclaimed program *Il ritorno*, and also premiered Felicity Wilcox's *Gouttes d'un sang étranger* for viola da gamba and saxophone, as part of the Vivid Festival.

Alongside her playing career, Anthea completed a degree with honours in Psychology at the University of Sydney, and is working as a psychologist with Veretis Performance Psychology.

Sydney Chamber Choir

Artistic Director – Sam Allchurch

Sydney Chamber Choir is passionate about choral music and its unique ability to celebrate and reflect upon the stories of our past, present and future.

We love to travel deep inside the music to meet the composers and bring their vision alive in sound. We reach back to explore the masterpieces of the Baroque, Renaissance and beyond, while also championing the music of our own time and place, regularly commissioning and premiering works by established and emerging Australian composers.

Sydney Chamber Choir has toured extensively, singing in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the UK, and in 2009 was a prizewinner in the Tolosa International Choral Competition in Spain. We also tour regularly in regional NSW, most recently for Musica Viva, visiting Armidale, Grafton and Coffs Harbour with a program titled *The Art of Choral Harmony*, showcasing choral works from the 12th to the 21st century.

We have also been honoured to work with such guest conductors as Roland Peelman, Brett Weymark, Carl Crossin and Liz Scott, as well as our three previous directors Nicholas Routley, Paul Stanhope and the late Richard Gill AO.

We collaborate with leading Australian instrumentalists and ensembles including Synergy Percussion, the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra, Joseph Tawadros, Slava Grigoryan, Orchestra of the Antipodes, the Muffat Collective and Continuum Sax. We also enjoy more unconventional partnerships, such as our recent concerts with The Idea of North, the Hilltop Hoods and the Sydney Mardi Gras Community Choir. Committed to inspiring future generations

of choral singers, we are proud to work regularly with youth ensembles such as the NSW Public Schools Singers.

Our performances have been broadcast across the country on ABC Classic and on Fine Music 102.5, and our CD recordings are available on the ABC Classic and Tall Poppies labels. Our most recent album, *Lux Aeterna*, featuring music of Paul Stanhope, has been acclaimed as 'worthy of the highest accolade' (*Fine Music*).

Sopranos

Ria Andriani
Megan Cronin
Amanda Durham
Josephine Gibson
Belinda Montgomery
Liane Papantoniou
Josie Ryan
Rose Trevelyan

Tenors

Rob Hughes
Michael Iglesias
Lachlan Massey
Christopher Othen
Murray-Luke Peard
Richard Sanchez
Mackenzie Shaw

Altos

Allison Blake
Bronwyn Cleworth
Alison Keene
Vicki Kourkoumelis
Alison Lockhart
Sarah Penn
Natalie Shea

Basses

Wei-Ju Chang
Christopher Matthies
Sébastien Maury
Jack Stephens
Ed Suttle
Jesse van Proctor

Pedro Greig



ABOUT THE MUSIC

JACOBUS CLEMENS NON PAPA **Ego flos campi**

We begin our journey through the Garden of the Soul on a somewhat earthy note, with this setting of verses from the Song of Songs. The book, found in the Old Testament, is in fact a series of at times frankly erotic love poems, a dialogue between Bridegroom and Bride, with much mutual admiration of physical qualities, plenty of eager anticipation and frustrated delays, and moments of blissful ecstasy.

As such, its place in the Bible is a curious one – especially since it makes no mention of God at all. Some read it as a simple celebration of human love and marriage, hence its frequent appearances in wedding services. Others see it in allegorical terms, representing the love of God for his people Israel, or the love of Christ for his church. In the Middle Ages, it was enthusiastically embraced as an allegory of the mystical love between Christ and the Virgin Mary, and there are many liturgical settings of verses praising the beauty of the Bride, re-cast as hymns to the perfection of Mary.

The composer Jacobus Clemens non Papa was for a brief time employed as a singer and composer by the Brotherhood of Mary in the Flemish city of 's-Hertogenbosch, and this motet was offered to his confreres as a parting gift. Not only does it give pride of place to the Brotherhood's motto, 'sicut lilium inter spinas' (like a rose among thorns), with those words the only ones set as block chords rather than interweaving polyphonic vocal lines: Clemens, for the first and only time in his career, also deliberately chose to write this piece for seven independent vocal lines – seven being a number particularly associated with the Virgin Mary.

(As for Clemens' intriguing surname: nobody really knows where the 'non Papa' came from. The best guess seems to be that it was a pun on the part of his publisher – 'not Clemens the pope, this is the other one' – but as Pope Clemens died before Clemens the composer published a note of music, there would have been no practical reason to distinguish between them.)

Ego flos campi et lilium
convallium.
Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic
amica mea inter filias:
fons hortorum et puteus
aquarum viventium
quae fluunt impetu de Libano.

[She:] *'I am a Rose of Sharon, a Lily
of the Valley.'*

[He:] *'Like a lily among thorns, so is
my love among the maidens:
a fountain watering the garden, a
well of living water
that streams forth from Lebanon.'*

Song of Songs 2:1-2 and 4:15

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI **Zefiro torna**

In the opening years of the 17th century, the composer Claudio Monteverdi and the respected theorist Giovanni Artusi were fighting it out over the future of music. Artusi had condemned Monteverdi's madrigals as barbaric: harsh to the ear, a corruption of the laws of harmony and proportion, and an offence to the intelligent listener.

Monteverdi, in the foreword to his Fifth Book of madrigals, replied (as avant-garde artists are wont to do!) that there was more to music than rules, and that he had invented a way of composing which could satisfy the senses as well as the intellect. He called it *seconda pratica*, the new (second) way of composing, the 'perfection of modern music', and it was built, he said, upon the foundations of truth.

The key to Monteverdi's radical new approach to music was that the words should be the mistress of the harmony, not the other way around. In the madrigal *Zefiro torna*, from Book Six, we hear how exquisitely he was able to do this.

Like most of the madrigals in this collection, the theme is loss, and here our garden offers pleasures but no true solace. The delights of spring ('Zefiro' or Zephyr was the god of the west wind, which in Greek mythology brought sweetness and warmth after the harsh winter) mean nothing when one's beloved has died. In the closing bars of the madrigal, Monteverdi piles dissonance onto dissonance in an ecstasy of agony and grief.

Zefiro torna e'l bel tempo rimena
 E i fiori e l'herbe, sua dolce
 famiglia,
 E garrir Progne e pianger Filomena,
 E Primavera candida e vermiglia.
 Ridono i prati e'l ciel si rasserena,
 Giove s'allegra di mirar sua figlia,
 L'aria e l'acqua e la terra è d'amor
 piena,
 Ogni animal d'amar si raconsiglia.

*The gentle west wind returns,
 bringing sunshine, flowers and green
 grass, his sweet companions, and
 warbling sparrows, lamenting
 nightingales, and Spring, white and
 scarlet. The meadows smile, the sky is
 blue again, Jove regards his daughter
 with delight. Earth, air and water
 are filled with love, and every animal
 renews its courtship.*

Ma per me, lasso, tornano i più gravi
 Sospiri che dal cor profondo tragge
 Quella ch'al Ciel se ne portò le chiavi;
 E cantar augelletti, e fiorir piagge,
 E'n belle donne honeste atti soavi
 Sono un deserto e fere aspre e
 selvagge.

*But for me, alas, the heaviest sighs
 return, drawn from the depths of my
 heart by the one who took its keys
 with her to heaven; and birdsong,
 and the flowers of the field, and the
 sweet sincerity of lovely women are to
 me a desert and pitiless wild beasts.*

Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374)

TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA **Vidi speciosam**

We return to the Song of Songs with this motet by the greatest composer of the Spanish golden age of polyphony, Tomás Luis de Victoria. Written for the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, which celebrates her being taken up bodily into heaven at the end of her earthly life, *Vidi speciosam* brings together two images of beauty rising up: a dove soaring above the waters, and fragrant incense climbing into the skies.

Victoria spent most of his very long life in Spain, but this exquisite piece was written in Italy, where he had relocated to study for the priesthood at the age of 18. Seven years later, in 1571 he took over from Palestrina as *maestro di cappella* of the Roman Seminary (though it's not clear whether the two knew each other); *Vidi speciosam* was published the following year as part of his first book of motets.

Vidi speciosam sicut columbam
 ascendentem desuper rivos aquarum:
 cuius inæstimabilis odor erat nimis
 in vestimentis eius.
 Et sicut dies verni circumdabant
 eam flores rosarum et lilia
 convallium.

*I saw a fair lady, like a dove,
 rising above the waters,
 whose raiment was filled with
 priceless fragrance:
 and like a spring day, she was
 surrounded by roses and lilies of the
 valley.*

Quæ est ista, quæ ascendit per
desertum sicut virgula fumi ex
aromatibus myrrhæ et thuris?
Et sicut dies verni circumdabant
eam flores rosarum et lilia
convallium.

*Who is she who rises over the barren
land like a plume of scented myrrh
and frankincense?*

*And like a spring day she was
surrounded by roses and lilies of the
valley.*

*Based on Song of Songs 6:8 & 3:6
and Ecclesiasticus 50:8*

BENJAMIN BRITTEN **Rosa mystica**

The 19th-century English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins was a hypersensitive and deeply troubled soul whose passionate embrace of the asceticism of the Jesuit priesthood was at least partially a response to his distress upon becoming aware of his homosexual impulses. These he repressed throughout his life, with the same single-minded rigour that led him, as a newly-converted Catholic at the age of 24, to burn all his poems in order to be entirely free of distractions in his spiritual practice. After some years, however, he was able to reconcile his creativity with his faith by placing the former firmly in the service of the latter.

Rosa Mystica is one of seven poems by Hopkins set by Britten in the cycle *AMDG* – the letters stand for ‘Ad majorem Dei gloriam’ or ‘To the greater glory of God’, which is the motto of the Jesuit order. It’s not clear what inspired Britten to select these texts; he had set one of them the year before, in a quite different style, for a BBC radio oratorio, but he never returned to Hopkins’ poetry after *AMDG*.

It was 1939: Britten had recently arrived in the United States with his soulmate Peter Pears (the two had become lovers just a few months earlier), and the cycle was written for Pears’s madrigal ensemble the Round Table Singers, but what with the outbreak of World War II, Pears was unable to return to London for the concert, so the performance didn’t happen. Britten then withdrew the whole cycle, reallocated its opus number (17) to his choral operetta *Paul Bunyan*, and refused to allow any of *AMDG* to be published. The premiere didn’t take place until August 1984, eight years after Britten’s death.

Rosa Mystica, the second piece in the set, takes its cue from a line of Hopkins’ poem, ‘Mother of mine, I shall keep time with thee’, stripping the music of melody completely and reducing it to pure rhythm – time, indeed – as the basses and tenors, and later, all four parts, chant to each other on a single pitch in an intricate pattern of

cross-rhythms. The insistent forward motion stops only once, for a brief contemplation of the mystical relationship between Mary and her son Jesus – the music at this point blossoms into lush harmonies – before resuming its journey and finally vanishing in the distance.

In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine,
Find me a place by thee, Mother of mine.

The Rose in a Mystery, where is it found?
Is it anything true? Does it grow upon ground?
It was made of earth's mould, but it went from men's eyes,
And its place is a secret, and shut in the skies.

I shall look on thy loveliness, Mother of mine.

But where was it formerly? Which is the spot
That was blest in it once, though now it is not?
It is Galilee's growth; it grew at God's will
And broke into bloom upon Nazareth Hill.

I shall keep time with thee, Mother of mine.

Tell me the name now, tell me its name:
The heart guesses easily, is it the same?
Mary, the Virgin, well the heart knows,
She is the Mystery, she is that Rose.

I shall come home to thee, Mother of mine.

Is Mary that Rose, then? Mary, the Tree?
But the Blossom, the Blossom there, who can it be?
Who can her Rose be? It could be but One:
Christ Jesus, our Lord, her God and her Son.

Shew me thy Son, Mother, Mother of mine.

Does it smell sweet, too, in that holy place?
Sweet unto God, and the sweetness is grace;
The breath of it bathes the great heaven above,
In grace that is charity, grace that is love.

To thy breast, thy breast, to thy glory divine
Draw me by charity, Mother of mine.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)

BENJAMIN BRITTEN **A Hymn to the Virgin**

Britten was 16 when he wrote *A Hymn to the Virgin*, from the sickbay during his last term at school. He found a poem in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ruled up some staves (he wasn't allowed manuscript paper) and got to work. As he recorded in his diary for that day: 'Write ... "Hym to the Virgin", & a set of variations (3/4 of it) for organ, which are rather rubbish – I rather like the Hymn tho.'

The 14th-century text switches back and forth between English and Latin, sometimes mid-line; Britten gives the Latin sections to a solo quartet. In its praise of the Virgin Mary, the poem focuses mainly on her dual nature as mother and virgin, but we can see a number of garden echoes from the Song of Songs imagery: Mary as the source of life-giving water ('The well springeth out of thee'), and as the 'rose without thorns'.

Of one that is so fair and bright

Velut maris stella [like a star
of the sea],

Brighter than the day is light,

Parens et puella [mother and maid]:

I cry to thee, thou see to me,

Lady, pray thy Son for me,

Tam pia [you who are so tender
and good],

That I might come to thee

Maria.

All this world was forlorn

Eva peccatrice [because of the sinner
Eve],

Till our Lord was y-born

De te genetrix [of you, mother].

With ave it went away

Darkest night and comes the day

Salutis [of salvation];

The well springeth out of thee,

Virtutis [virtuous one].

Lady, flower of everything,

Rose sine spina [rose without thorns],

Thou bear Jesu, heavens king,

Gratia divina [through heavenly grace]:

Of all thou bearest the prize,

Lady, queen of paradise

Electa [chosen one]:

Maid mild, mother es

Effecta [you were made a mother].

BENJAMIN BRITTEN *Hymn to St Cecilia*

From the Virgin Mary, we move to St Cecilia, the patron saint of Music.

Exactly who she was is something of a mystery. Her cult sprang into existence out of nowhere around 500AD, at least two hundred years after she must have died – assuming she ever existed at all.

According to the legend, she was a Roman lady who had secretly embraced Christianity and committed herself to a life of chastity. When her family arranged for her to marry, as the wedding music surged around her, she is reported to have sung ‘in her heart’ her own prayer to be saved from contamination: ‘May my heart and my body be kept spotless so that I not be cast into confusion.’ Promising her husband-to-be the chance to see an angel if he respected her vow (and delivering on her promise, apparently), she was able to convince him that chastity was the better course, and convert him to Christianity into the bargain.

That prayer which she sang in her heart on her wedding day is Cecilia’s only connection with music. She never played the organ (which in any case didn’t exist at the time as we know it today); her association with the instrument came about through a mistranslation: The music at Cecilia’s wedding banquet is described in the Latin as being played on ‘organa’ – but the word just refers to musical instruments in general rather than to an actual pipe organ.

Britten’s *Hymn to St Cecilia* dates from his time living in the US, during World War II. There he had reestablished his friendship with the poet W.H. Auden, but the relationship soon became uncomfortable for Britten: once dazzled and dominated by the poet’s brilliance, he was finding Auden’s poetry increasingly difficult to set to music. Auden’s rather flamboyant lifestyle was also awkward for Britten and Pears, who preferred a quieter domesticity.

The anxiety of uncertainty – whether to stay in the US or return home – turned into depression, and Britten, normally a creative powerhouse with no time for those who sit around waiting for the muse to strike, found himself unable to write.

Once on board ship for home, however, the creative block lifted. It was in the cramped confines of the Swedish cargo ship *Axel Johnson*, sailing across the U-boat-infested Atlantic, that the *Hymn to Saint*

Cecilia was completed. Britten had written the first two sections in 1940, but only now was he able to finish the piece.

Auden's text begins reverently enough, but it soon becomes clear that his message is directed squarely at the composer (who also happened to have been born on St Cecilia's Day). Auden never hesitated to pronounce upon the lives of others, and here he offers his advice to Britten. In the struggle between order and chaos which was, in Auden's view, the crucible of all great art, Britten tended too much towards 'Bourgeois Conventions' and refused to embrace the 'Bohemian': he needed to embrace the erotic, the physical, and instead of punishing himself for his loss of innocence, he should celebrate it.

From the serenity of his musical setting, it would seem that Britten must have accepted Auden's eloquent lecture. The piece opens in pure calm: the men intone their melody in long, slow notes which the women embellish with a faster-moving series of gently lilting triads.

The refrain 'Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions to all musicians...' descends softly as if from heaven itself, ushering in a scherzo-like section ('I cannot grow, I have no shadow to run away from, I only play'). Again, the lower voices provide the stable, regular harmonic rhythm; the upper voices flit up and down with a Peter Pan-like impishness. This time, the refrain is supported with rich harmonies: no longer ethereal, it seems to have taken root on earth.

The final section has an almost elegiac quality, as it opens with what could almost be soft footfalls from the basses. Britten savours Auden's musical imagery with his own musical metaphors, as soprano, alto, bass and tenor soloists in turn imitate the timbres of flute, violin, drum and trumpet. The closing refrain reaches down into the lowest registers of all voices, in a moment of profound intimacy and warmth.

I

In a garden shady this holy lady
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,
Like a black swan as death came on
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,
And notes tremendous from her great engine
Thundered out on the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,
Moved to delight by the melody,
White as an orchid she rode quite naked
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing
Came out of their trance into time again,
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

II

I cannot grow;
I have no shadow
To run away from,
I only play.

I cannot err;
There is no creature
Whom I belong to,
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat
When it knows it
Can now do nothing
By suffering.

All you lived through,
Dancing because you
No longer need it
For any deed.

I shall never be
Different. Love me.

III

O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,
Where Hope within the altogether strange
From every outworn image is released,
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast
Into a world of truths that never change:
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.

*O dear white children casual as birds,
Playing among the ruined languages,
So small beside their large confusing words,
So gay against the greater silences
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.*

O cry created as the bow of sin
Is drawn across our trembling violin.
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.
O law drummed out by hearts against the still
Long winter of our intellectual will.
That what has been may never be again.
O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath
Of convalescents on the shores of death.
O bless the freedom that you never chose.
O trumpets that unguarded children blow
About the fortress of their inner foe.
O wear your tribulation like a rose.

W. H. Auden (1907–1973)

JOE TWIST An Australian Song Cycle

Commissioned by Sydney Chamber Choir with the generous support of the Maury family.

Australian composer / arranger Joe Twist is one of the most in-demand music creators in Australia and abroad, straddling film music and concert music arenas. He has a wealth of experience in choral music as both a singer and composer, receiving numerous commissions and performances of his music from choirs in Australia and around the world, including the Choir of Trinity College Cambridge, Chanticleer, Voces8, The Idea of North, The Young New Yorkers' Chorus, L.A. Choral Lab, Sydney Chamber Choir, The Australian Voices, Gondwana Voices, Adelaide Chamber Singers and many others. Twist has worked for decades as a professional chorister in premier church choirs in Australia and the United States.

Twist has received wide acclaim for his music for film and television including the successful animated series *Bluey*, as well as arrangements and orchestrations for many major motion pictures produced in Hollywood. He has created music for such renowned international artists and ensembles as Moby and The Wiggles, and his work has been performed and recorded by internationally acclaimed orchestras, including collaborations with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Colorado Symphony, the Hollywood Scoring Orchestra and all major symphony orchestras in Australia. Twist's works appear on numerous commercial recordings including his own album *Dancing with Somebody*.

The composer writes:

After eight years living and working in the USA, I returned to Australia in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While so many wonderful artists and arts practitioners have lost work during the pandemic, I am extremely lucky that my move back to Australia has turned out to be a wonderful change for me. Returning to the natural beauty of south east Queensland was not only soul nourishing. My works so often draw on my love of beaches, forests, sunsets and other natural wonders – even in LA where I enjoyed stunning West Coast sunsets and frequent Pacific swims. I rode out the early months of the pandemic on the Gold Coast with my parents.

The stunning rainforest and beach at Burleigh Heads wasn't the only inspiration for this work. Working with my father, Jack Twist, a former English teacher, we explored how our unique natural environment and flora and fauna were expressed by our most celebrated poets. The work traverses a comprehensive and contrasting array of Australian voices over the last century, drawing on poets from Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson to Judith Wright, Michael Leunig, Les Murray and Oodgeroo Noonuccal.

These poems are rich with distinctly Australian imagery, perfect for a choral setting, with each exploring different elements of our natural surrounds. Scored for choir, piano and cello, I've tried to highlight these musically. For Banjo Paterson's *Sunrise on the Coast*, I've created calm waves of sustained singing, while Henry Lawson's *Andy's Gone With Cattle* is more intimate and impassioned, a tribute to the life of the drover and the struggles of drought. Judith Wright's *Wonga Vine* is more mysterious in its description of flowers, leading to bursts of colour and driving rhythms from rapid piano flourishes and florid vocal writing for Michael Leunig's *Magpie* and Les Murray's *Jellyfish*.

But something new was needed to relate directly to the bushfires. An author himself, my Dad provided the poetry for the work, *Ashes*, which follows the plight of an animal suffering from the utter destruction of its habitat and highlights the shocking statistics of wildlife lost from devastating fires. The rhythmic grooves that painted the picture of flocks of lorikeets and magpies earlier in the work now become subdued and poignant as the choir begins chanting some of the startling statistics of wildlife killed: '143 million mammals, 2.46 billion reptiles, 180 million birds, and 51 million frogs'.

The colourful celebration at the outset of my Australian Song Cycle culminates with Oodgeroo Noonuccal's *Time Is Running Out*, a passionate response to the destruction of sacred land stolen from First Nations peoples, and here a vital voice to the work. Earlier lyrical melodies give way to loud, declamatory singing and hammered piano chords to match the violence of lines such as: 'The miner rapes the heart of earth'. With this dramatic music I've endeavoured to amplify the need for 'truth-telling' about the social and environmental atrocities of our history as well as the urgency of our climate crisis.

This is my second time setting Noonuccal's words. The Adelaide Chamber Singers produced a brilliant recording of my work *How Shall We Sing In A Strange Land?*, which juxtaposes Christian psalms with Noonuccal's *A Song of Hope*, including both texts throughout the work as a kind of poignant and ironic exploration of Australian history and multiculturalism. For this *Australian Song Cycle*, it was imperative that the work reach its climax with Noonuccal's poem, so that we are left with the poignant, resounding words of an Indigenous voice.

1. Sunrise on the Coast

Grey dawn on the sand-hills – the night wind has drifted
 All night from the rollers a scent of the sea;
 With the dawn the grey fog his battalions has lifted,
 At the call of the morning they scatter and flee.

Like mariners calling the roll of their number
 The sea-fowl put out to the infinite deep.
 And far overhead – sinking softly to slumber –
 Worn out by their watching, the stars fall asleep.

To eastward where resteth the dome of the skies on
 The sea-line, stirs softly the curtain of night;
 And far from behind the enshrouded horizon
 Comes the voice of a God saying, 'Let there be light.'

And lo, there is light! Evanescent and tender,
 It glows ruby-red where 'twas now ashen-grey;
 And purple and scarlet and gold in its splendour –
 Behold, 'tis that marvel, the birth of a day!

A.B. (Banjo) Paterson (1864–1941)

2. Andy's Gone with Cattle

Our Andy's gone to battle now	Who now shall wear the cheerful face
'Gainst Drought, the red marauder;	In times when things are slackest?
Our Andy's gone with cattle now	And who shall whistle round the place
Across the Queensland border.	When Fortune frowns her blackest?

He's left us in dejection now	Oh, who shall cheek the squatter now
Our hearts with him are roving	When he comes round us snarling?
It's dull on this selection now	His tongue is growing hotter now
Since Andy went a-droving.	Since Andy cross'd the Darling.

The gates are out of order now,
In storms the 'riders' rattle;
For far across the border now
Our Andy's gone with cattle.

Poor Aunty's looking thin and white;
And Uncle's cross with worry;
And poor old Blucher howls all night
Since Andy left Macquarie.

Oh, may the showers in torrents fall,
And all the tanks run over;
And may the grass grow green and tall
In pathways of the drover;

And may good angels send the rain
On desert stretches sandy;
And when the summer comes again
God grant 'twill bring us Andy.

Henry Lawson (1867–1922)

3. Wonga Vine

Look down; be still.
The sunburst day's on fire
O twilight bell,
flower of the wonga vine

I gather you
out of his withering light
Sleep there, red;
sleep there, yellow and white

Move as the creek
moves to its hidden pool.
the sun has eyes of fire;
be my white waterfall.

Lie on my eyes like hands
let no sun shine –
O twilight bell,
flower of the wonga vine.

Judith Wright (1915–2000)



4. Magpie

Magpie, magpie, dive on me,
Swoop down from your holy tree;
As I pass the flower bed
Stick your beak into my head.
Magpie, magpie, make a hole,
Through my head into my soul:
As I pass beneath the sun
Bring my troubled head undone.

Magpie, magpie, it is spring:
Is my soul a happy thing?
As I pass around the tree
Make a hole so you can see.

Michael Leunig (b.1945)

5. Lorikeets

North from the rainforests
They invaded our trees
In their screeching flocks
Each morning, bringing summer
On green-and-gold wings, crimson breasts
Purple rainbows of outspread tails...
[Visiting] silky oaks, black-bean trees
Arching with blossoms and honey.
Leaving the ground darkened
With torn leaves, branches, empty buds.
By midday they were gone
Like a storm cloud – south or north
We could never tell,
As they wheeled in circles
Above the valley forests
Or skimmed the river like driven snow...

Peter Skrzynecki (b. 1945)

6. Jellyfish

Globe globe globe globe
soft glass bowls upside down
over serves of nutty udder and teats
under the surface of the sun.

Les Murray (1938–2019)

7. Ashes

A fading sun of dirty orange horizon swathed in smoke,
Goes down relieved to leave a world of starless darkening dust.
Morning shows a valley still, beneath a blanket of black.
Smoke from logs and fallen trees the only thing that moves.
A land of ash, up to the hills into the fallow sky.

What once were trees now still as death, like sentinels clad in black
Who guard a world of ashen waste that abounded once with life.
Rocks and stones that once made homes for creatures underneath,

An arched and shrivelled world, where once were tall providers
Of shelter, food for life.

Now mere tombs that shelter nought
but bones of devastation.

Then one rock moves, or so it seems, of scorched and broken fur,
Lifts its head and tries to move, with pink paws flecked with blood,
Crouches then surrenders low,
Again becomes the ash. Dust to dust.
Disappears.
Awaits its final hours.

a hundred and forty three million mammals
two point four six billion reptiles
fifty one million frogs
a hundred and eighty million birds

Jack Twist (b. 1948)

8. Time Is Running Out

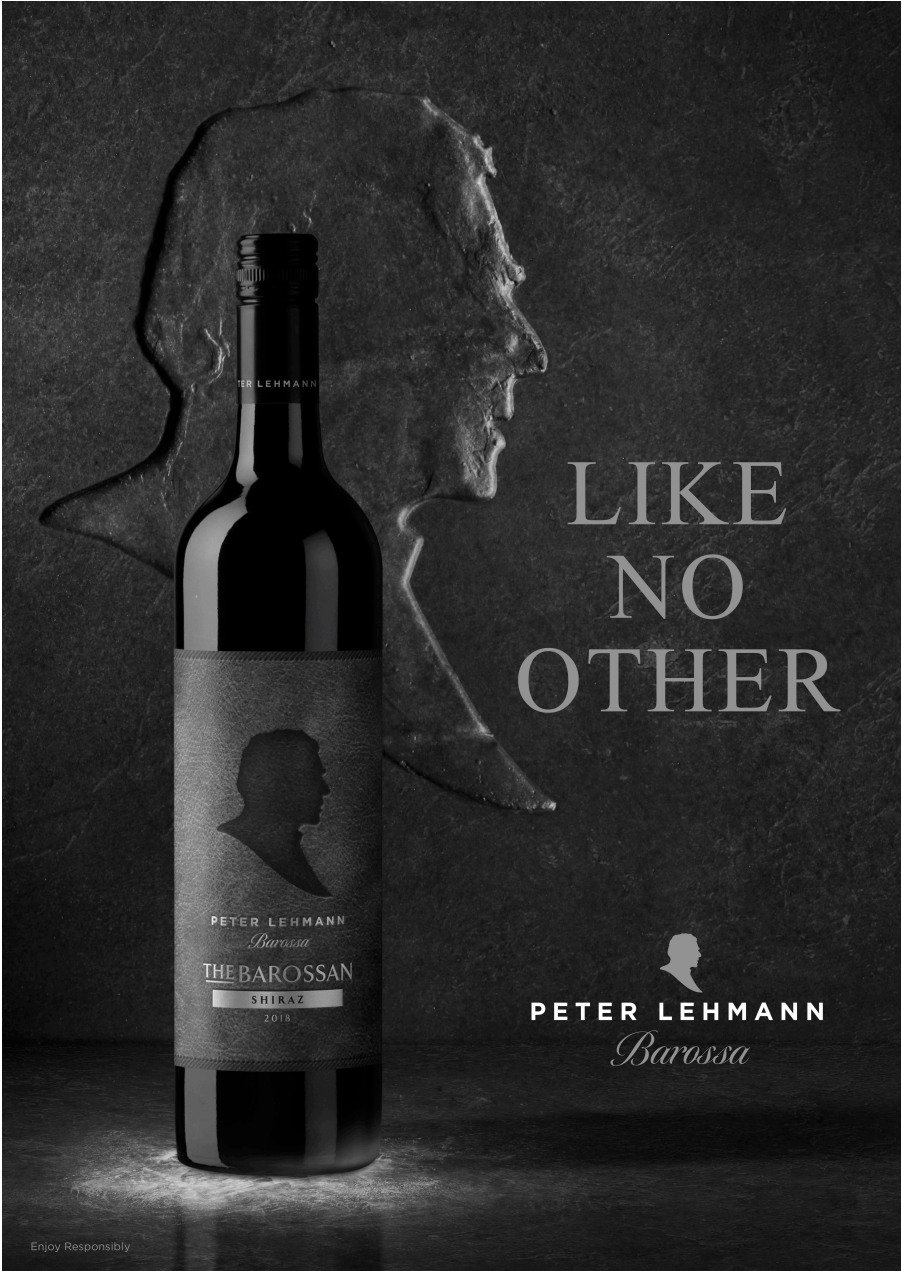
The miner rapes the heart of earth
With his violent spade
Stealing, bottling her black blood
For the sake of greedy trade.
On his metal throne of destruction,
He labours away with a will,
Piling the mountainous minerals high
With giant tool and iron drill.

In his greedy lust for power,
He destroys old nature's will.
For the sake of the filthy dollar,
He dirties the nest he builds.
Well he knows that violence
Of his destructive kind
Will be violently written
Upon the sands of time.

But time is running out
And time is close at hand,
For the Dreamtime folk are massing
To defend their timeless land.

[Come gentle black man
Show your strength;]
Time to take a stand.
Make the violent miner feel
Your violent love of land.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920–1993)



Enjoy Responsibly

**UPCOMING EVENTS
WITH
SYDNEY CHAMBER CHOIR**

Saturday 18 December 2021

Album Launch

David Yardley: *The Lost Codex of Avalon*

Come and hear The Song Company and the Sydney Chamber Choir perform a selection of beautiful neo-medieval compositions from this new album by David Yardley, intermingled with discussion of the works by the composer.

Where: The Song Company Studio
Wharf 4/5, 15 Hickson Rd, Dawes Point

When: 4pm

Tickets (including a copy of the album): \$40
See davidyardleymusic.com/store for more information and to book tickets.

Saturday 12 February 2022

World Premiere

Kate Reid: *Solander: A Song Cycle*

Join us for the first performance of a new song cycle based on the life of the Swedish botanist, Daniel Solander, who accompanied James Cook on his first Pacific voyage. Also featuring John Gaden (narrator) and Claire Edwardes (percussion)

Where: The Governors Centre
558 Cleveland St, Moore Park

When: 7.30pm

Tickets: \$75 (plus booking fee). See sydneychamberchoir.org for more information and to book tickets.

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