



Saturday 25 June 2022 at 3pm & 7.30pm  
The Neilson, ACO Pier 2/3

Sydney Chamber Choir acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we rehearse and perform. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

## Innocence & Experience

Sydney Chamber Choir

Jess Ciampa *percussion*

Joshua Hill *percussion*

Liam Green *organ*

Sam Allchurch *conductor*



Sydney Chamber Choir's 2022 season is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.



This concert is supported by the City of Sydney.

*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 propra* 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



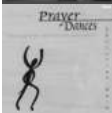
### **Clare Maclean: Choral Music**

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

1. **Minga Bagan / Mother Earth** (2021) Brenda Gifford  
born 1965; Australia
2. **Ave Maria...virgo serena** (before 1484) Josquin des Prez  
c.1450/55–1521; Flanders
3. **memory pieces** (1995) Stephen Adams  
prelude  
i. born 1963; Australia
4. **Absalon, fili mi** (c.1516–22) Pierre de la Rue  
c.1452–1518; Flanders
5. **Yúya Karrabúra (Fire is Burning)** (2018) Dan Walker  
born 1978; Australia
6. **When the World Closes Its Eyes** (2022) Ella Macens  
WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE born 1991; Australia  
Naomi Crellin *alto solo*, Wei Jiang and Megan Cronin *soprano solos*

## Interval

7. **Alma redemptoris mater** (c.1450) Jean de Ockeghem  
c.1410–1497; Flanders
8. **Wonga Vine** (2021 rev. 2022) Joseph Twist  
from *An Australian Song Cycle* born 1982; Australia  
Megan Cronin *soprano solo*
9. **Sicut lilium** (c.1505) Antoine Brumel  
c.1460–1512/13; France
10. **Let Them All Come** (2018) Josephine Gibson  
born 1994; Australia
11. **Flos florum** (c.1435) Guillaume Dufay  
Megan Cronin and Josie Ryan *sopranos* 1397–1474; Flanders  
Alison Lockhart and Natalie Shea *altos*  
Murray-Luke Peard and Richard Sanchez *tenors*
12. **Flower Songs** (1987) Ross Edwards  
II. Tranquillo born 1943; Australia  
I. Ecstatico

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### Sam Allchurch *conductor and Artistic Director*

Pedro Greig



Sam Allchurch took up his appointment as Artistic Director of the Sydney Chamber Choir at the beginning of 2019. Since then, he has directed the choir in a wide range of concerts and collaborations, including Handel's *Messiah* in 2020, *Cycles* for the 2021 Sydney Festival and the premiere of Joseph Twist's *An Australian Song Cycle*.

His programs champion the music of Australian composers such as Paul Stanhope, Joseph Twist, Clare Maclean, Brenda Gifford and Brooke Shelley. In 2022, he will conduct the premiere of new works by Ella Macens and Brooke Shelley and make a studio recording of Paul Stanhope's Requiem with the Sydney Chamber Choir. In 2019, Sam conducted the choir in Holcombe Waller's *Requiem Mass: A Queer Divine Rite*, presented as part of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras arts festival.

Sam is the Director of Music at Christ Church St Laurence, where he conducts the choir which dates back to 1845. This choir sings music of the Anglican choral tradition within the services offered each week at the historic church, including High Mass and Evensong every Sunday and for festivals of the church's year. He is also Associate Artistic Director at Gondwana Choirs, where he works closely with Lyn Williams AM and played a key role in presenting the Gondwana World Choral Festival in 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 Stephen Layton were supported by a scholarship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

### **Jess Ciampa** *percussion*



Nick Gilbert

Jess Ciampa began his musical life as a trumpeter, changing to percussion halfway through a Bachelor of Music Education degree at the NSW Conservatorium in 1984. He is a multi instrumentalist, at home in a variety of styles of music, from orchestral through to jazz, latin and commercial. He has performed with all the major Sydney orchestras, as well as ensembles such as Synergy Percussion, Taikoz and touring with the Sydney Dance Company. For many years he was a member of the triple Aria Award-winning group Monsieur Camembert, and he plays bass or kit regularly with world music group Marsala.

For several years Jess toured extensively in Europe with The Spaghetti Western Orchestra, a Melbourne quintet who performed theatrical interpretations of the music of Morricone. Highlights include return seasons at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London and a performance as part of the 2011 Proms in The Royal Albert Hall. For the past 31 years Jess has performed with several groups as part of the Musica Viva in Schools program.

### **Joshua Hill** *percussion*



Joshua Hill completed his undergraduate and postgraduate study at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He has also studied Korean Traditional Music at the National Gugak Centre in Seoul.

Joshua is a core member of Australia's premier percussion ensemble Synergy Percussion and has also performed and recorded with many of Australia's orchestras and ensembles including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Canberra Symphony, Ensemble Offspring, Sinfonia Australis, Australian Baroque Brass, Taikoz, NSW Police Band and the Australian Air Force Air Command Band. Joshua has also been involved in many recordings for anime, computer games and feature film soundtracks.

## **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 the Australian Haydn Ensemble, 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 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**

Kristen Butchatsky  
Louisa Coussens  
Megan Cronin  
Amanda Durham  
Josephine Gibson  
Wei Jiang  
Josie Ryan  
Rose Trevelyan

**Tenors**

Rob Hughes  
Michael Iglesias  
Malcolm O'Brien  
Christopher Othen  
Murray-Luke Peard  
Richard Sanchez

**Altos**

Bronwyn Cleworth  
Naomi Crellin  
Alison Keene  
Vicki Kourkoumelis  
Alison Lockhart  
Sarah Penn  
Natalie Shea

**Basses**

David Cervi  
Wei-Ju Chang  
Christopher Matthies  
Sébastien Maury  
Ed Suttle  
Jesse van Proctor  
Evan Wels

Pedro Greig



## WELCOME

The concept for this program is borrowed from a masterwork of the poet William Blake, the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. While the structure of the collection might initially suggest that life is dichotomous – either innocence or experience, either love or hate, either good or evil – spending time with the poems suggests that more often than not, it's a case of 'both, and' rather than 'either, or'. This concept provided a useful way to explore two of the pillars of Sydney Chamber Choir's musical identity: music of Franco-Flemish High Renaissance and contemporary Australian composition.

From its foundation in 1975, the choir and their musical director Nicholas Routley introduced Sydney audiences to the music of Josquin des Prez, Ockeghem and other composers working in places like Antwerp and Lille in the sixteenth century. Through Nicholas' scholarship and leadership, audiences began to enjoy this revived sound world.

At the same time, Sydney Chamber Choir committed itself to new music – supporting Australian composers to push the boundaries of choral writing. Today we will hear the premiere of Ella Macens's *When the World Closes Its Eyes*, commissioned especially for this program through the support of some of our generous donors. This concert is a celebration of composers, but also of those who support composers, enabling us to chart new territory.

Every piece of music which is new, either to performer or listener, represents a moment of innocence. This requires some courage, ambition and an openness to new experiences, something important for us as a society. Every piece of music which we have sung or heard before is, perhaps obviously, part of our own experience, and revisiting it allows us to deepen our relationship with it. Our concert charts this spectrum. Pairing the old with the new allows us to appreciate both better – as in life, so often 'both, and' is more rewarding than 'either, or'.

**Sam Allchurch**  
*Artistic Director*



## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### 1. BRENDA GIFFORD **Minga Bagan / Mother Earth**

Brenda Gifford is a Yuin woman, originally from Wreck Bay on the South Coast of NSW. A composer and classically trained saxophonist, pianist and teacher, she has twenty years of extensive experience as a musician. A First Nations person, her culture is the basis of her arts practice.

She studied composition at ANU and is currently a participant in the Sydney Conservatorium of Music's Composing Women program. She has been commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Canberra International Music Festival and the Four Winds Festival, and is Resident Composer with Ensemble Offspring. Her ARIA-nominated album *Music for the Dreaming* is available on the ABC Classic label.

Brenda was a member of the band Mixed Relations with Bart Willoughby from No Fixed Address. She has toured extensively around Australia and internationally to Native American communities and the Pacific Islands. She worked with Kev Carmody on his album *Eulogy (for a black person)*, playing saxophone on the track 'Blood Red Rose'. She has also conducted over 100 interviews and oral histories with Aboriginal musicians and has curated notes and blogs.

*Minga Bagan / Mother Earth* was commissioned by Sydney Chamber Choir, as a musical Acknowledgment of Country.

*The composer writes:*

*Minga Bagan / Mother Earth* is a celebration of Earth. We only have one Earth. The idea is that all of us have a role in looking after her: from the ranger who looks after country as part of his cultural practice, to everyone who recycles.

*Minga Bagan* means Mother Earth in the Dhurga language of my people.

*Brenda Gifford © 2021*

Minga bagan  
Take care of Mother Earth  
Djamaga ngad jung  
Good water

## 2. JOSQUIN DES PREZ *Ave Maria...virgo serena*

The music of Josquin des Prez is in many ways the reason that the Sydney Chamber Choir exists today. When founding musical director Nicholas Routley arrived in Australia from Cambridge in 1975, he, like most of the English-speaking musical establishment – steeped in the musical traditions of the Anglican church, which only came into existence a few years after Josquin’s death – had never even heard the composer’s name. But on discovering a trove of Josquin’s music in Sydney University’s Fisher Library, he was quick to share it with his newly formed choir, and it was love at first hearing. Singers and director alike were keen to explore as much of Josquin’s music as they could get their hands on, and share it with the world.

Details of Josquin’s life are sketchy but he seems to have been born near the town of Condé-sur-l’Escaut, on the border between modern-day France and Belgium, in the early 1450s. He began his musical career as a choirboy; by 1477 he was a singer in the court chapel in Aix-en-Provence, in the south of France, and he went on to work at Milan Cathedral, in the Sistine Chapel (where his name has been discovered as graffiti carved into one of the walls) and as *maestro di cappella* of the ducal chapel in Ferrara. In 1504, fleeing an outbreak of plague, he moved back to Condé-sur-l’Escaut, where he lived and worked until his death in 1521.

*Ave Maria...virgo serena* first appears in a Sydney Chamber Choir program in 1976, and was a regular feature in concerts through to the early 1980s, and again in the mid 1990s.

The motet begins with the same words as the standard ‘Ave Maria’ (Hail Mary) prayer but after just six words of that, it changes into a hymn in five verses, each celebrating one of the five feasts of the Virgin Mary: the Conception, Nativity, Annunciation, Purification and Assumption.

Dating from the early 1480s, the motet reveals Josquin’s early mastery of the techniques of imitation. From the simple repeated phrase (based on a plainchant *Ave Maria* melody) that opens the motet, each entry overlapping the next as it is passed down the choir from sopranos to basses (representing the angel Gabriel’s descent to earth to greet the Virgin Mary), to the finely balanced play of duets between the upper and lower voices, to a rich dance-like triple time in which the tenors shadow the rest of the choir just one beat apart (possibly symbolising the closeness of the child within his mother’s

womb), Josquin uses imitation to structure and shape the piece, moving it ever forwards. Only in the very last bars does the music come to rest, as the four voices come together in a simple chordal texture, creating a moment of transcendent tranquillity.

Ave Maria, gratia plena:  
Dominus tecum, Virgo serena.

*Hail Mary, full of grace:  
the Lord is with you, serene Virgin.*

Ave cuius conceptio,  
Solemni plena gaudio,  
Caelestia, terrestria  
Nova replet laetitia.

*Hail, you whose conception,  
full of solemn joy,  
fills the heavens and the earth  
with new happiness.*

Ave cuius nativitas  
Nostra fuit solemnitas  
Ut lucifer lux oriens  
Verum solem praeveniens.

*Hail, you whose nativity  
was our solemnity  
and a rising light like a bright torch  
heralded the true sun.*

Ave pia humilitas,  
Sine viro foecunditas,  
Cuius annunciatio  
Nostra fuit salvatio.

*Hail blessed humility,  
made fruitful without man,  
whose annunciation  
was our salvation.*

Ave vera virginitas,  
Immaculata castitas,  
Cuius purificatio  
Nostra fuit purgatio.

*Hail true virginity,  
spotless chastity,  
whose purification  
was our cleansing.*

Ave praeclara omnibus  
Angelicis virtutibus  
Cuius fuit assumptio  
Nostra glorificatio.

*Hail, foremost among all  
angelic virtues,  
whose assumption  
glorified us.*

O Mater Dei,  
Memento mei. Amen.

*O Mother of God,  
remember me. Amen.*

### 3. STEPHEN ADAMS **memory pieces: excerpts**

Stephen Adams lives in Sydney where he works as Producer, Australian Music Unit for radio station ABC Classic. His music is influenced by his performing experience in choral music, rock, improvisation and contemporary music theatre, as well as his language studies, extensive cross-cultural teaching experience, and activities as a radio, web and music producer. He studied composition with Peter Sculthorpe at the University of Sydney and with Richard Vella at Queensland University of Technology.

His religious heritage and experiences of literature and other art forms have been fertile sources for musical ideas; likewise, what he describes as the experience of 'tactile synaesthesia' which fuels his approach to improvisation. Voice and breath play a large part in his musical imagination, mining the creative tension between delivering meanings and the ecstatic possibilities of vocalising. Textual quotations from music, literature and the media, and more recently field recordings, have functioned as alchemical ingredients for the magical dissolving of the fault-lines in experience.

His works range through incidental music, songs, chamber music, collaborative 'improvisations', digital works and electronica, a 70-minute a cappella 'opera' *Sydney Dreaming Theatre* and the multi-speaker, digital/vocal 'score' for *The Audience and Other Psychopaths*, a theatrical collaboration with Nigel Kellaway's The Opera Project and writer Amanda Stewart.

Recent projects include several chamber works combining acoustic instruments with field recordings, group and solo improvisations working with voice, flute, field recording material and lo-fi sound diffusion, and sonic interpretations of the writings of his partner Jen Craig and other authors for *Little Fictions* at the 2019 Newcastle and Sydney Writers Festivals and Sydney City Libraries' Late Night Library series.

*memory pieces*, a setting of poetry by Ania Walwicz, was commissioned by Sydney Chamber Choir and premiered in 1995; today's performances present just the opening prelude and the first of the work's three movements. The Choir has also commissioned two other works from Stephen: *Spin* in 2005 and *Afterwards* in 2014.

*Adapted from material on the  
Australian Music Centre website*

*The composer writes:*

*memory pieces* is very much a personal exploration of memory using the associations and interconnections of Walwicz's text. The composer hopes this reading and the following 'explanation' will not detract from the text's ambiguities and the possibility of a wide range of interpretive responses to both the words and the music.

The first movement presents four buildings – obelisk, bank, doctor's office and library – as windows to the past, and the process of their being torn down, whether physically or through the overlappings and

disintegration of memories. (The subsequent movements explore memory as an act of summoning and as invention or ‘reconstruction’ of the past, and ways of coping with painful early memories that refuse to be forgotten, through acts of playfulness such as the act of writing.)

obelisk obelisk in the park the obelisk the statue to unknown soldier  
that i remember the obelisk the park flower beds flowers and hedge  
the hedge and the obelisk now the granite steps the bank very near  
the building of the bank delicate lots of windows rococo that’s where  
i walk now in what i remember now the square bank building very  
light with huge windows the painted building now with twirls  
painted in rue mouffetard the hotel of hope now the street winding  
up the office of the doctor in a flat small rooms and low ceilings  
parquet built in the fifties the modern building the desk covered in  
leather the little desk and little office everything very small and the  
little doctor very dapper with a tiny moustache calling me madame  
bonjour madame then the library where i sleep now a roll out bed  
the sheet you step into a sleeping bag there’s a rug a tiny table the  
bookshelves all around everywhere a window onto onto a building  
being torn down with picks by hand not to upset the past the past  
being torn down slowly by hand not to upset every day a bit at a  
time one day at a time

*Ania Walwicz (1951–2020)*

#### 4. PIERRE DE LA RUE **Absalon, fili mi**

Pierre de la Rue was a contemporary of Josquin and, like Josquin, born in the Low Countries, what is now Belgium and northern France. *Absalon, fili mi* was until relatively recently attributed to Josquin; it is still not completely certain who composed it, but de la Rue appears the most likely candidate.

The Latin text takes the lament of King David over the death of his son Absalom and intensifies it with other biblical expressions of grief. It begins with the words of King David himself, as reported in the Old Testament: ‘When David heard that Absalom was slain, he went up to his chamber over the gate, and wept, and thus he said: O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!’

Absalom, as it happened, had raised an army against his father; David had commanded his captains to ‘deal gently with the young man’ should they come face to face with him on the battlefield, but

one of them, finding Absalom caught by his long hair in an oak tree, had taken the opportunity to kill the rebel. So instead of facing a wayward, hostile but humbled son, ripe for a soul-searching reconciliation, David is confronted with the harsh reality that his beloved son is gone forever.

The line *Non vivam ultra* ('Let me live no more') echoes the words of Job, who, after his loved ones have been killed, his wealth stripped away and his health destroyed, exclaims: 'I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit...I despise my life; I would not live for ever' (Job 7:16). The last line of the text recalls Jacob's words when he is shown the blood-stained coat of his son Joseph: 'I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning' (Genesis 37:35).

Absalon fili mi,  
quis det ut moriar pro te?

*2 Samuel 18:33*

*O Absalom my son,  
would God I had died in your place.*

Non vivam ultra,  
sed descendam in infernum plorans.

*Let me live no longer,  
but rather descend into hell weeping.*

## 5. DAN WALKER **Yúya Karrabúra**

Composer, conductor and performer Dan Walker has had works commissioned by the Sydney Symphony, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Gondwana Choirs and Halcyon. As a performer, Dan is a member of numerous professional vocal ensembles, including Luminescence Chamber Singers, The Consort of Melbourne, Cantillation, Pinchgut Opera and The Song Company. He was a founding member of early music ensemble The Parsons Affayre and sang as a member of Sydney Chamber Choir from 2002 to 2007.

He is a keenly sought-after conductor, appearing as chorus-master for Canberra Choral Society, the Sydney and Melbourne Symphony Choruses, and is Artistic Director of Oriana Chorale, as well as Canberra Community Chorale.

*Yúya Karrabúra* was commissioned for Sydney Chamber Choir by Ed and Jane Suttle in 2018. This was the Choir's second commission from Dan; the first was *To a Child*, in 2008.

*About the work:*

Alice Eather was a unique and inspiring person.

An incredible woman whose story connects with all of us and resonates deep in the bedrock of this country.

Alice's mother was a Gunibidji woman from Maningrida in Arnhem Land; her father, a direct descendant of a convict on the 1788 Second Fleet.

Strong, intelligent, thoughtful, fearless, poetic and political, Alice was a teacher at the Maningrida school and fought for her mother's country under threat from mining exploration. She lived her life between two worlds. Two worlds which, over a period of well over 200 years, have never truly understood each other. In many ways, one world has never really made the attempt to understand the other.

And so there's Alice, living between Brisbane and Maningrida, speaking English and Ndjebanna. To use her words, 'A split life, split skin, split tongue, split kin'. Alice devoted an enormous amount of energy, love and activism in trying to inspire change and bring together these two cultures.

Such was her magnetic appeal and personality, she was seen as a beacon of connection that inspired so many people across the continent... A powerful leader and living proof of what could be achieved.

Alice was also a person who struggled deeply. Despite some of the best treatment available, she suffered chronic depression for close to ten years. In 2017 she quietly slipped away to the solitude of her high-set home in the NT community of Maningrida and ended her life. She was 28 years old.

In Alice's poem she explains the dichotomy of her life and this country, and her vision and hopes for the future.

The poem is titled *Yúya Karrabúra* ('Fire Is Burning').

We'd like to share some of her words here so we can all keep the fire burning.

*Ed Suttle © 2018*

I wear a ship on my wrist  
That shows my blood came from convicts on the Second Fleet,  
My father's forefathers came  
Whipped, beaten, bound in chains.  
The dark tone in my skin,  
The brown in my eyes,  
Sunset to sunrise,  
My Wúrnal mother's side,  
My Kikka, who grew up in a dugout canoe,  
In her womb is where my consciousness grew,  
Yúya Karrabúra.  
I walk between these two worlds,  
A split life, split skin, split tongue, split kin,  
Every day these worlds collide,  
And I'm living and breathing this story of black and white.  
Sitting in the middle of this collision,  
My mission is to bring two divided worlds  
To sit beside this fire and listen.  
Through this skin I know where I belong,  
It is both my centre and my division.  
Yúya Karrabúra.  
Now I welcome you to sit beside my fire,  
I'm allowing you to digest my confusion,  
I will not point my finger and blame,  
We've got to keep this fire burning  
With ash on our feet and coal in our hands.  
Teach barrarodjibba, them young ones, how to live side by side,  
For tomorrow when the sun rises, and our fires have all gone quiet,  
They will be the ones to reignite it.

– *Excerpt from Yúya Karrabúra, by Alice Eather*

## 6. ELLA MACENS **When the World Closes Its Eyes**

WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCES

*Commissioned by Sydney Chamber Choir with financial assistance from Deirdre and Peter Bridgwood, Maria O'Donnell and Paul O'Donnell.*

Sydney-based Ella Macens is a fast-emerging composer with a passion for choral, orchestral and chamber music writing. Capturing qualities from both popular and classical music styles as well as that of her Latvian heritage, Ella's music is becoming well-known in Australia and beyond.



Ensembles and organisations that have commissioned, premiered or performed her work include the Sydney and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, Sydney Youth Orchestra, the Flinders, Goldner and Strelitzia String Quartets, The Song Company, Gondwana National Choirs, Sydney Children's Choir, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, West Australian Young Voices, Young Adelaide Voices, Leichhardt Espresso Chorus, Canberra International Music Festival, Sydney Festival and the National Carillon Association of Australia, as well as the State Choir Latvija, the Jazeps Vitols Latvian Academy of Music Chamber Choir and the Latvian vocal ensembles Pernigēle and Anima.

Ella has completed a Bachelor of Music (Composition) with first class honours at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney, and is currently studying for a Master of Music (Composition) degree under the guidance of Matthew Hindson AM.

The composer's musical voice is heavily influenced by her Latvian heritage. Growing up in a rich and colourful Latvian community has led her to be continuously surrounded by instrumental folk music, Baltic choral music and traditional dance. These elements have unsurprisingly woven their way in to Ella's compositional style. In 2017 she received an award from the World Federation of Free Latvians (PBLA) to honour her dedication to her cultural heritage.

*The composer writes:*

*When the World Closes Its Eyes* reflects on the vulnerability of the world as both human beings and nature strive to be heard in their suffering and call for help and compassion.

The work speaks to the challenges of not being heard, not feeling seen, and being limited in one's expression. In a world with such immense turmoil and uncertainty, the work speaks to the dangers of looking the other way in times of need.

We are reminded to continuously lead with grace and compassion, to stay warm and bright in the world's darkest times, and to always lend a hand to those in need.

The final moment draws inspiration from the traditions surrounding the Latvian folk song *Pūt Vējiņi*. The song became a surrogate Latvian national anthem in the Soviet days when the regular anthem was banned. It became an informal expression of Latvian nationalism and a means of protest against the Soviet oppression of

Latvian culture. When the use of the Latvian language posed a threat to the Latvian people, the humming of *Pūt Vējiņi* enabled a sense of communication, safety, connection and belonging for the Latvian people.

To this day, *Pūt Vējiņi* is sung at the conclusion of many Latvian celebrations and ceremonies, and the final verse is always hummed. With this in mind, the hummed finale of *When the World Closes Its Eyes* is intended to elicit the same sentiment as *Pūt Vējiņi*.

A moment of connection, of invisible embrace, of togetherness through song.

*Ella Macens © 2022*

Sometimes it feels the world closes its eyes and pretends not to see,  
There can be kindness and love, and extreme generosity between you and me.

Sometimes it feels the world chooses not to hear me speak,  
Sometimes it feels the world closes its eyes on me.

Not to hear, not to see,  
Not to feel, not to speak.

Sometimes it feels the world closes its eyes and pretends not to see,  
There are people in need and nature is suffering, so what will it be?  
Sometimes it feels the world chooses not to hear them weep,  
Sometimes it feels the world closes its eyes on me.

Not to hear, not to see,  
Not to feel, not to speak.

They tear us down,  
They push us far,  
They try to silence the questions that we have been asking.  
Sometimes it feels the world closes its eyes.

Gently, I feel a shaking,  
The world is aching, can you hear the voices breaking?  
What will you say?

Gently, the Earth is shaking,  
Her spirit is aching,  
Can you hear the voices calling?  
The children are asking,  
What will you say?

Look to your brothers,  
Look to your sisters and call them,  
Carry them home.  
Give them your protection,  
Offer grace and compassion,  
Carry them home.

Look to your brothers and sisters,  
Give them your hand, let them carry you home for we know  
This path can be lonely,  
Look to the midnight sky.

Look to your brothers and sisters / Sometimes it feels the world closes  
its eyes  
Give them your hand, let them carry you home / and pretends not to  
see,  
There's kindness and love and warmth that blankets the night.

Sometimes it feels the world closes its eyes.  
We must stay warm and bright.  
Warm and bright.

© *Ella Macens*

## 7. JEAN DE OCKEGHEM **Alma redemptoris mater**

Ockeghem was one of the most remarkable musical figures of the Renaissance. Born in what is now Belgium around 1425, he is of the generation before Josquin des Prez who, though he may not have been his pupil, was his profound admirer. While still in his 20s he was appointed to the French court as a singer. In 1459, he became Treasurer of the Abbey of St Martin, a very well-paid post which he held under three successive kings until his death in 1497.

The secure patronage of one of the wealthiest courts in Europe seems to have conferred upon him a freedom rare among artists in any age: to write what and when he wanted. He wrote little, but each mass that he produced is radically different in style or construction from every other. Like Beethoven and Stravinsky, he would deliberately create a new language for each important piece and use it in that piece exclusively and exhaustively. This makes it difficult to identify an 'Ockeghem style', unless it is a certain seamlessness created by the continual postponement or avoidance of cadences.

Ockeghem's mastery of counterpoint, sensitive handling of four-part vocal texture, and expressive bass lines (he was famous for his own fine bass voice) provided a model for an entire generation of composers across Europe. Among his most intricate creations are the *Missa Cuiusvis toni*, designed to be performable in any of the available modes, and the *Missa Prolationum*, constructed entirely in canon with each part in a different time signature, and with the canon in each section built on a different interval – the different voices starting on the same pitch in the first section, then a tone apart, then a third apart and so on all the way through to canon at the octave.

Unlike Josquin, whose style relies heavily on the principle of imitation, passing phrases from voice to voice in a continuously overlapping series of entries, Ockeghem's style of imitation involves tiny fragments, melodic or rhythmic motifs often only two or three notes long, creating a gradually evolving soundscape articulated by familiar melodic shapes.

*Alma Redemptoris mater* is based on the plainsong melody of the antiphon of the same name; the melody, sometimes unadorned, sometimes reworked into a new melodic line, is heard in the alto line. Above it, Ockeghem has added a soprano part in an unusually high range, the two lines up to an octave and a fifth apart in places, though singing at the same pitch at others. The four strands of the polyphony are equal partners, matched in speed and virtuosity, yet all are subordinate to the total effect of the interplay among the voices.

*Nicholas Routley*

*Alma Redemptoris Mater,*  
quae per via coeli porta manes,  
et stella maris succurre cadenti  
surgere qui curat populo.  
Tu quae genuisti, natura mirante,  
tuum sanctum Genitorem:  
Virgo prius ac posterius,  
Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud Ave  
peccatorum miserere.

*Gracious Mother of the Redeemer,*  
you who stand at the gate of heaven,  
star of the sea, help the fallen people  
who struggle to rise.  
You who, while nature marvelled,  
gave birth to your holy Father:  
Virgin before and after, who received  
the greeting from the mouth of  
Gabriel, have mercy on sinners.

## 8. JOE TWIST **Wonga Vine** from *An Australian Song Cycle*

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. Joe has worked for decades as a professional chorister in premier church choirs in Australia and the USA.

He 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. Joe's works appear on numerous commercial recordings including his own album *Dancing with Somebody*.

*An Australian Song Cycle*, commissioned with the generous support of the Maury family and premiered in 2021, is the third work commissioned from Joe Twist by Sydney Chamber Choir, following the Bach-inspired *Vor Singet* in 2011 and *Ubi caritas* in 2015.

*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. *Wonga Vine*, a setting of Judith Wright's poem of the same name, is the third song in the cycle, its sinuous chromatic lines evoking the plant's long, twisting, twining branches. For this concert, the original piano accompaniment has been reworked for vibraphone.

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)*

## 9. ANTOINE BRUMEL **Sicut lilium**

Just a few years younger than Josquin des Prez, the French composer Antoine Brumel was, during his lifetime, arguably more highly regarded than Josquin. After working in Chartres, Geneva, and Notre Dame in Paris, his last major post was in Ferrara – the same *maestro di cappella* position that Josquin had abandoned two years earlier when plague threatened the city.

Brumel's mass settings in particular were held up for praise by the theorists of the day, but in this concert he is represented by his exquisite miniature motet *Sicut lilium*. The text comes from the Song of Songs, an extended and at times quite explicit love poem from the Old Testament, traditionally interpreted by the Christian church as an allegory of God's love for his people, or as a hymn in praise of the beauty of the Virgin Mary. Certainly the beauty of Brumel's setting is utterly breathtaking.

Sicut lilium inter spinas  
sic anima mea inter filias.

*Like a lily among thorns,  
so is my darling among the maidens.*

*Song of Songs 2: 2*

## 10. JOSEPHINE GIBSON **Let Them All Come**

Josephine Gibson is a composer, writer, and musician based in Sydney. She has had work performed by Sydney Chamber Choir, Sydney Youth Orchestras, Moorambilla Voices and Gondwana Choirs. Between 2014 and 2018, she has composed and acted as Music Director for 11 different productions, ranging from Sydney University Revues to independent theatre productions with Smoking Gum Theatre and Montague Basement, to a number of shows for the Sydney University Dramatic Society.

In 2016, she completed her Honours degree in Composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, under the tutelage of Paul Stanhope. June 2019 saw the world premiere of *Pánta Kremáména*, an extensive work for choir and chamber orchestra performed by Leichhardt Espresso Chorus at St James King St. She has been composer in residence with the Flame Tree Project, a new Illawarra-based children's choir, since 2019, and with Moorambilla Voices since 2016, which has involved four works premiered at the annual Moorambilla Festival, the performance of her work *Guya* at the 2018

TEDxSydney conference, and the inclusion of her music on three albums, most notably the eponymous track from *Yindyamarra* (2017). As a music director, she has worked for a wide variety of theatre productions, comedy revues, and ensembles, including the Sydney University Dramatic Society's 125th Anniversary production of *Agamemnon* (2015), and independent theatre productions with Smoking Gum Theatre and Montague Basement.

As a chorister, she has toured internationally with Gondwana Chorale, appeared as a guest artist with Luminescence Chamber Singers, The Song Company, and Cantillation, and performs regularly with Sydney Chamber Choir.

*Let Them All Come*, premiered in 2018, is the second Sydney Chamber Choir commission from Josephine Gibson; the first was *Ait angelus* in 2016.

*The composer writes:*

*Let Them All Come* sets an excerpt of the Walkley Award-winning poem by First Dog On The Moon. Despite the tongue-in-cheek twist, it is a piece of great frustration giving way to great sadness, which reflects the composer's own views on the inhuman treatment of asylum seekers on our borders. The hope is that the performance of this work begets thought and compassion from whatever audience it reaches.

*Josephine Gibson © 2018*

let them all come  
let them all come and ruin our way of life  
let them overrun our greed and our sorrow  
let them fill our streets with their undrowned children  
and trample our tenuous grasping spirits with their tired dusty feet  
terrible dusty feet that have been who knows where  
let them  
let them bring their strange ways and their bad ideas  
we'll be right

*© First Dog On The Moon*



## 11. GUILLAUME DUFAY **Flos florum**

We have heard from two of the great Franco-Flemish masters, Josquin and Ockeghem; the third (actually the first, taken chronologically) was Guillaume Dufay. He was the undisputed leading composer of his age, but his music had relatively little impact on the generations that followed, which were responding to a much faster pace of change, and tended to see Dufay's music as a thing of the past. That's not to suggest that his music was in any way stagnant: it's more that his success in blending the new with the old left his music somewhat isolated when the new began to pull away from the old in the years after his death.

Dufay wrote both sacred and secular music – masses and motets (including the monumental *Nuper rosarum florum*) on the one hand, and love songs on the other. In the cantilena *Flos florum* we find an example of a sacred work nudging up against his more secular musical language: the texture in the two lower voices is quite spare, but the extraordinarily florid soprano line requires virtuosic vocal flexibility and control.

Flos florum,  
fons hortorum,  
regina polorum,

*O flower of flowers,  
fountain of gardens,  
queen of the heavens,*

spes veniæ,  
lux letitiæ,  
medicina dolorum,

*hope of forgiveness,  
light of joy,  
remedy for sorrows,*

virga recens  
et virgo decens,  
tu forma bonorum:

*fresh green branch  
and seemly virgin,  
thou model of goodness:*

parce reis  
et opem fer eis  
pro pace piorum,

*spare the guilty  
and bring them a reward  
in the peace of the righteous.*

pasce tuos,  
succure tuis,  
miserere tuorum.

*Feed your flock,  
help your people,  
have mercy on your own.*

## 12. ROSS EDWARDS *Flower Songs*

Ross Edwards draws much of his inspiration from the sounds of nature, especially the ‘mysterious polyphony of the insect chorus in the Australian bush’.

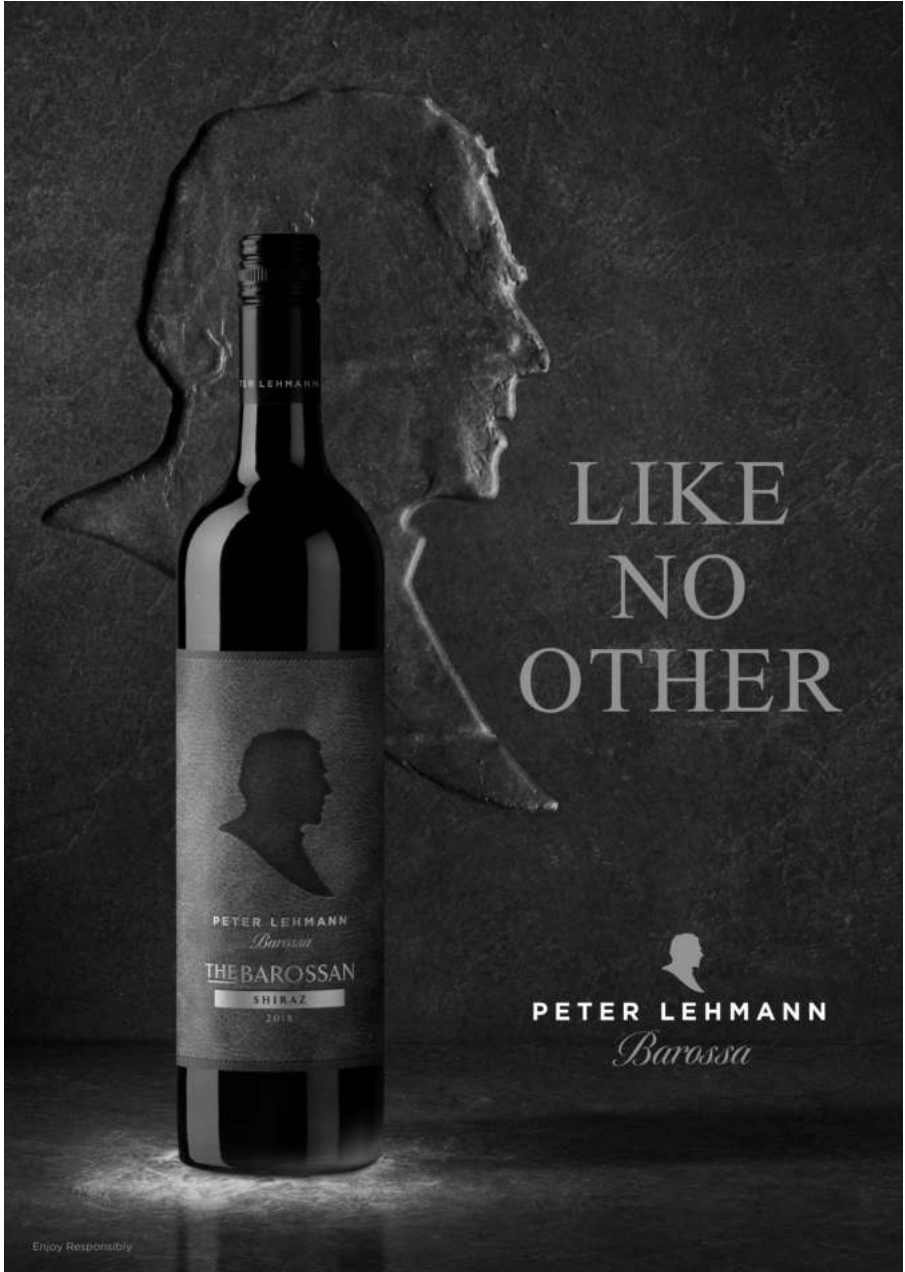
This was a discovery made during a period of stylistic re-evaluation in the mid 1970s when he found himself increasingly disillusioned with the Western art music tradition and unable to compose: ‘During this time my only serious listening was done sitting in the bush, listening more carefully than most of us get a chance to do to the natural sounds... It helped me come to terms with the fact that all of the world’s music must have originated in some way from the sounds of nature... And later, when I started writing again, it was especially the insect patterns and rhythms I’d heard that helped me.’

Those patterns – repetitive yet constantly changing, almost but never exactly symmetrical – distilled into a series of austere quiet, contemplative works in the late 70s. Around 1980, recognising his ‘inability to work solely on a disembodied spiritual plane’, Ross responded to an ‘impulse to leap in a new direction and compose exuberant dance music’. The first of these new works was a piece for voice and cello titled *Maninya I*; the word ‘maninya’ comes from the nonsense text supplied by the composer, and has since come to be used by Edwards to refer to a whole genre of his music: ‘dance/chant’ pieces, hypnotic in their use of repetitive patterns centred on drones, but also up-beat, energetic and physical, almost skipping in their playful tweaking of the rhythm.

*Flower Songs* is a maninya for choir and percussion. The text is a string of botanical names for wildflowers from central eastern Australia: *Boronia*, *Baeckea virgata* (Twiggy Heath-Myrtle), *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* (Blueberry Ash), *Alphitonia excelsa* (Red Ash), *Micromyrtus ciliata* (Fringed Heath Myrtle) and *Dillwynia retorta* (Heathy Parrot Pea). (Jonathan Mills has described Ross’s attitude to word setting as ‘averse to texts that are philosophical, dramatic or descriptive’ and interested only in texts that allow him to invoke ‘some kind of timeless spirituality in setting them to music’.)

For today’s performances, we are reversing the original order of the movements, starting with the hazy and dream-like second movement and finishing with the vigorous and ecstatic first movement.

*Unless otherwise indicated, program notes by Natalie Shea*



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