



messiah
reimagined
@handel

LEC 21st Birthday Concert 2019

21st

11.10.19



Artistic Director Michelle Leonard OAM

Under the influence of a superb Sydney summer holiday with surf, mangoes and a suntan I decided to reimagine the most famous choral work of all time - Messiah - for one of Sydney's most iconic choirs - the Leichhardt Espresso Chorus - for our 21st Birthday at the magnificent City Recital Hall!! Surely that would give our audience, musicians and choristers something to sing about! What a unique opportunity to once again draw upon the creative genius of the composers who I have been privileged to work with over the years to together create something collectively greater than ourselves - something that speaks directly to our times, our concerns, our hopes and to the way we want our world to be... and so it began.

I could NEVER have imagined how profoundly beautiful and energising these works would be for us all - and what wonderful musical gems would flood my inbox week by week - as we embarked on this rather ambitious program. The generosity of the composers, their thoughtful reimagining, the enthusiasm of the choristers to learn an entire program of new works and their ongoing support for this reimagining has left me yet again feeling incredibly grateful that such a community of people exists. People who believe in creative risk taking, who wish to support the creation of new Australian work, and the idea of leaving a birthday gift that will be performed again and again is incredibly gratifying. This whole process has truly encapsulated what the LEC has stood for the last 21 years - a brave heart and an incredible generosity of spirit. In the Spirit of Yinjamarra we are slowly and with respect creating a world worth living in. Bravo and happy birthday LEC. You have wholeheartedly supported the creation of something extraordinary for us all. May the celebrations last long into the night!!

1. Yinjamarra - Edwards
Tyalgum Mantras
 2. Awake My Soul - Chan
Symphony
 3. Thy Peace Be Like a River - Chan
Comfort Ye
 4. Every Valley - Chance
Ev'ry Valley Shall Be Exalted
 5. For the Glory of the World - Lambert
For The glory of the Lord
 6. But Who May Abide Our Passion for Plastic? - Hansen
But Who May Abide?
 7. Behold, a Virgin Shall Conceive
Recitative
 8. Ave Maria - Basden
A Virgin Shall Conceive
 9. Siúil A Rún - Byrne
 10. Sea Chronicles 2 - Stanhope
Oh Thou That Tellest Good Tidings To Zion
 11. Vidit Lucem Magnum - Gibson
The People That Walked In Darkness
 12. The Gift - Whitwell
For Unto Us A Child Is Born
 13. Daybreak - Kats Chernin
Pjffa
 14. There Were Kids Pretending to Be Adults - Hansen
There Were Shepherds
 15. The Word Is Peace - Walker
Glory To God
 16. Our Sorrows - Howes
Surely He hath borne our griefs
 17. His Yoke Is Easy - Elsley
 18. He Was Despised - Barker
 19. All We Like Sheep - Benedict
 20. He Trusted in Rupert - Hansen
He Trusted In God
- Interval
21. Lift up Your Heads - Howes
 22. Do Not Be Discouraged - Markerink
Their Sound Is Gone Out
 23. Hallelujah Chorus - Barker
 24. Within - Pathos
I Know My Redeemer Liveth
 25. Since by Man Came Death - Burton
 26. The Trumpet Shall Sound - Masden
 27. Darkness Cannot Drive Out Darkness - Walker
Worthy Is The Lamb
 28. Before The Throne - Brophy
Amen



Yinjamarra Music by Ross Edwards

I think one of music's great blessings to humanity is its capacity to still the unquiet mind, suspend the linear passage of time and promote the intuitive "night" mode of consciousness which invites present-centred contemplation. In our tense and turbulent times, the need to restore contemplative music to mainstream listening is being recognised even in the Western concert hall.

rossedwards.com

Awake My Soul Music by Lyle Chan

*Read! Behold, the Word of God,
Who taught by the pen,
The Word of God the world knew not.
Behold, the Angel!
Read! Behold, the Word of Truth,
That came by the pen,
The Word of Truth the world knew not.*

*Awake, my soul,
Rejoice, my heart,
No longer droop!
I am as calm as a summer morning,
The sun, the moon, the stars gives light,
As they roll upon their wings.*

*The faithful shall rise,
The pure heart will rise,
The virtuous shall rise,
Their light shall shine,
The faithful with pure heart,
Shall rise to heaven.*

In the angel Gabriel's first vision to Muhammad, the prophet is instructed to read, because God teaches by the pen. The revelations eventually become the Qur'an. This is the beginning of Islam. I am a lover of books and writing, and such a tale is exhilarating to me: that revelation is literary. It's a wondrous story

I've known my entire life, because I was born in a Muslim country and lived there my first twelve years. To have words where there were no words before - this is the perfect allegory for the transformation of the instrumental Overture of Messiah into a 'Sinfony for Voices'.

The so-called Abrahamic religions have more in common than they don't. Christians don't generally know, for instance, that Muslims regard Isaiah as a prophet, the same Isaiah whose words are in Messiah's 'Comfort Ye, My People'. The irony of our global conflict on religious lines is that it is between people who share so much.

Another Abrahamic religion with truly beautiful writing is the Latter Day Saints movement. Regardless of their faith, well-read people everywhere regard the Bible as great literature, and so too it is with other books of faith, including the Qur'an and Mormon scriptures that I have allowed to be my inspiration for new texts alongside the original King James Bible in Messiah. My guiding principle is to not alter any of Handel and Jennens, but to increase depth by layering.

Out of the deepest respect for Muslims and Mormons, of course I do not quote the scriptures, but I fashion mine after their inspiration to convey the joyous meaning.

Thy Peace Be Like A River

Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her Iniquity is pardoned.

*Thy peace be as a river,
Thy virtues be as waves upon the sea.
On earth and in yourselves,
There are signs of Truth.
Do you see them?
Do you see the signs of Heaven?*

lylechan.com





Every Valley Music by Alice Chance

*Every valley shall be exalted
And every mountain and hill caressed,
none missed
The crooked cherished
And rough places kissed*

*Every facet, vice or asset, shall be exalted
And every effort, if true, shall be
received gratefully
The battle to be good
Itself a victory*

The Ev'ry Valley movement from Handel's Messiah, beloved by Tenors the world over, has inspired my composition Every Valley. The original is famous for its overt word-painting. The music leaps and plummets as led by the contours of the landscape it describes. Ostentatious, dexterous melismas inspire awe at the power and the glory of God. Many performers of this work seem to exude a desire for this audience awe to be directed at their own power and glory instead.

I have created a poetic and musical response to this movement. The original biblical text uses 'exalted' in its archaic literal meaning: 'raised up'. The verses speak of how God will eventually smooth out the Earth. A common misinterpretation is that 'exalted' means 'praised' in this context, implying that all of God's landscape should be praised. I have used this misconception as a springboard into a poetic and musical ode to accepting and loving things as they are. I am seeking to honour the diverse landscapes of human bodies, as well as the efforts of their occupants.

alicechance.com

For the Glory of the World Music by Benjamin Lambert

And the Glory of the World
Seeing the divine in nature is, well, quite natural and it felt right to reimagine this work as an 'Ode to the World'. I largely harmonically departed from the original whilst keeping many of the melodic, rhythmic and contrapuntal elements. Lyrically, I mostly kept faithful to Handel's set text, in form and style. In the denouement I quoted various astronauts and cosmonauts, including Karl Sagan and Chris Hadfield. From their unique perspective they give us pertinent reminders of just how interconnected and fragile our home is.

Original Text:
*And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it
For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:5)*

Re-imagined:
*And the Glory of the World shall be revealed,
in Earth, Sea and Sky
Let the eyes of the people be opened*

*On this pale blue dot, in a thick, black sea of majesty;
so fragile. Giver of all life. Choking on apathy.*

Benjamin Lambert (BMus, Distinction) enjoys an active life as a conductor, composer and orchestrator. He is the Conductor and Artistic Director of the recently formed Newcastle Chamber Choir (2019). Under his direction the choir won all nine Open Choir/Championship categories in the 2019 Sydney Eisteddfod and 2019 Canberra National Eisteddfod.



But Who May Abide Our Passion for Plastic?

There Were Kids Pretending to Be Adults

He Trusted in Rupert

Music by Tim Hansen

I have a confession to make... I don't really know Handel's Messiah that well. At all, in fact. I know, it's crazy. It's like someone saying they've never seen Star Wars. It's just one of those cultural phenomena that slipped through the cracks when I was growing up. And studying music. And being a music professional. I suppose now I'm 40 I don't really have any excuse. So, I'm excited that my first encounter with it is a chance to totally reimagine bits and pieces of it.

And I have another weird confession to make... I'm writing these program notes before I've even had a chance to write a single dot. I have no idea exactly what it is I'm going to do. I do, however, have two very crucial bits of information that mean I know whatever it is I come up with will be awesome.

First, Michelle has told me all about this project, and it is pretty cool. I know enough about Handel's Messiah to know that it was a total game changer when it first hit the charts back in the C18th, and that it remains to this day beloved around the world as being a truly beautiful piece of music. So, to take something as powerful as this and reimagine it for contemporary audiences takes guts. You have to really grab a project like this by the horns or else the sheer cultural momentum of the centuries of history behind the piece will mow you down and you'll look like an idiot. So, my theory is, if I'm going to reimagine something like Handel's Messiah, I'm not going to mess around.



The other piece of crucial information is that I'm writing for one of Australia's most technically brilliant singers, Anna Fraser. I mean, she can sing pretty much anything. She performed Berio's Sequenza for voice like it was a nursery rhyme. It was a snack for her. I'm not going to write anything as gnarly as that, but it's really nice to know that whatever I do end up writing, she will absolutely kill it. Now I've done my program notes, you'll need to excuse me. I have to start composing.

Tim Hansen is a performer, composer, theatre-maker and teaching artist. He is currently is Composer in Residence at Santa Sabina College, a tutor at Australian Theatre for Young People and an associate artist with Milk Crate Theatre. He was recently music director for "Schapelle Schapelle" a musical about Schapelle Corby. He also performs cabaret, because why not.

timhansen.com.au

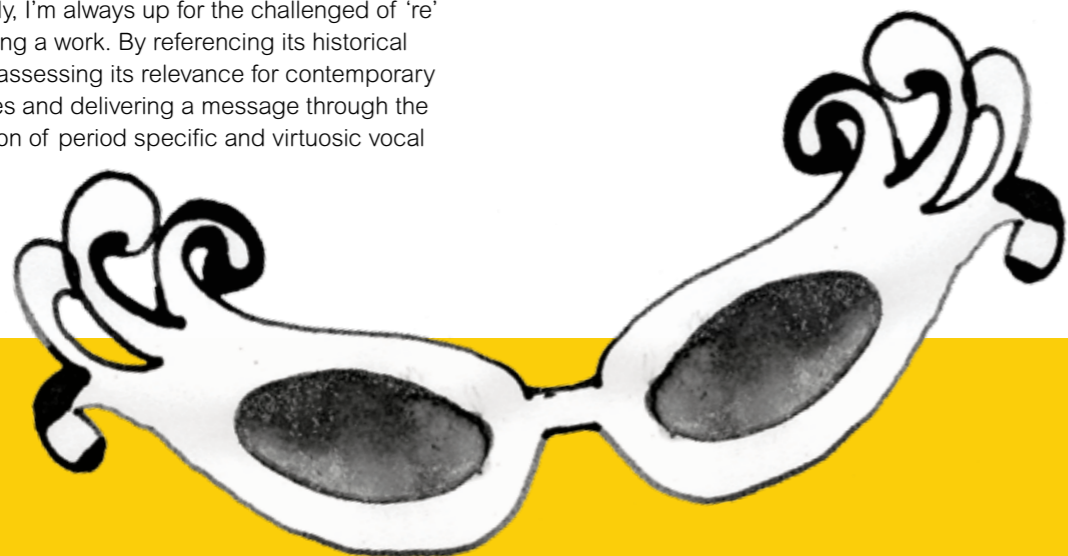




Anna Fraser – soloist

How best to describe oneself - a chanteuse or even a genre junkie when asked to be part of a program entitled Messiah: Reimagined. Does an historically informed, classically trained singer expect to be preparing oratorio arias with the intent to supremely execute Baroque affections with poise and dramatic flair for an educated audience who know a piece virtually inside out?! Or is this a chance to musically explore contemporary social and environmental issues from a completely different angle which Handel himself was most definitely affiliating with in his time? The grand nature of the musical form alone is telling of Handel's desire to present monumental issues to the masses through his own genre defying forms and he most certainly achieved this!

Personally, I'm always up for the challenged of 're' interpreting a work. By referencing its historical context, assessing its relevance for contemporary audiences and delivering a message through the exploration of period specific and virtuosic vocal



techniques, it is one's musical duty to enhance the musical opportunity to deliver a uniquely beautiful, emotionally moving and provocatively engaging message to even the most intimate (or over saturated) of audiences. And the genre in which to achieve this? Recitative reimagined as cabaret sprechstimme; arias a reinterpretation of Brechtian ballad? Anything is possible (and welcomed) for this chanteuse!

And my partner in crime – composer Tim Hansen.

Anna Fraser has gained a reputation as a versatile soprano specialising predominantly in the interpretation of early and contemporary repertoire. Anna is a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and New England Conservatory (Boston) and furthered her studies in the Britten-Pears Young Artist Program featuring as a soloist at the Aldeburgh Festival (UK) under the direction of Richard Egarr and the late Antony Rolfe-Johnson. As a core ensemble member of the Song Company for over a decade, Anna has had the pleasure of performing in a myriad of traditional and exploratory programming expertly demonstrating the versatility and virtuosity of a cappella singing. Equally at home as a dramatist on the stage presenting opera and historically informed chamber music, Anna is a strong exponent of music education, particularly with Moorambilla Voices.



Siúil a Rún Music by Luke Byrne

In 2018 I was the musical director for The Harp in the South with Sydney Theatre Company and I have had Siúil a Rún haunting my every waking hour ever since. In this setting of "Messiah Reimagined" I have linked it to "the people that walked in darkness", in this case my distant Irish relatives who were brutally oppressed in their homeland, only to be cast over to the other side of the world to be brutalised by the same people.

In addition, I think of it as a foil to the idealised Mary, "meek and mild", of the Ave Maria, set here by David Basden. I am most privileged to have it sung today by the excellent choir from Meriden School with its conductor Jodie Spooner-Ryan.

*I wish I was on yonder hill,
'Tis there I'd sit and cry my fill,
Until every tear would turn a mill,
and may you go'
Is go dté tú mo'mhúirnin slán. (And my you go safely, my love.)*

*Siúil, siúil, siúil a rún, (Go, go, go, my love)
Siúil go sochair agus siúil go ciúin. (Go quietly and go peacefully)
Siúil go doras agus éalaigh liom. (Go to the door and fly with me)
and may you go'
Is go dté tú mo'mhúirnin slán. (And my you go safely, my love.)*

*I'll sell my rock, I'll sell my reel,
I'll sell my only spinning wheel,
To buy my love a sword of steel.
Is go dté tú mo'mhúirnin slán. (etc.)*

*I'll dye my petticoats, I'll dye them red,
And 'round the world I'll beg my bread,
Until my parents shall wish me dead.
Is go dté tú mo'mhúirnin slán. (etc.)*

*I wish, I wish, I wish in vain,
I wish I had my heart again,
And vainly think I'd not complain.
Is go dté tú mo'mhúirnin slán. (etc.)*

gondwana.com

Ave Maria Music by David Basden

*Ave Maria, Gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei ora pronobis
peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen*

In Messiah the central person often overlooked in the story is this young woman called Mary. Her grace, poise and acceptance of a truly unusual situation has framed so very much of what we know women throughout the ages to be capable of. Women in times of war, census, drought and natural disasters still somehow find the inner strength to do the impossible. This work encapsulates that calm focus - and somehow that transcendent joy we all feel when a new life comes into the world.

Australianmusiccentre.com.au





Sea Chronicles 2 Music by Paul Stanhope

Sea Chronicles has been reimagined as a solo for Soprano sax and chamber strings as a response to the text set for Alto soloist in the original.

“ oh thou that tellest good tidings to zion - get thee up unto the high mountain, lift up thy voice, with strength, lift it up and be not afraid, shine for thy light is come, arise for thy light is come and the glory of the lord is risen upon thee”

Here in this work we feel the emergent joy and “ lift” in the rhythmically buoyant accompaniment as it virtually skips up into the high mountain only to rest with the same strength and truth as it started - in a state of stasis and calm. This work’s inclusion serves as timely reminder that those who have a vision of what the world should and indeed could be need to tell it from the highest peak.

paulstanhope.com

Vidit Lucem Magnum Music by Josephine Gibson

For darkness shall cover the earth, and sorrow the troubled seas

But lift up your eyes; your loved ones come to you-

As one, we chart the voyage home.

Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris vidit lucem

magnam

(the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light)

Vidit lucem magnum takes its title from the Book of Isaiah in the Latin Vulgate bible, translated as ‘they [the people] have seen a great light.’ The text itself is adapted from various passages of Isaiah, cobbled together and reworked into a small biblical vignette.

In Isaiah, the ‘people in darkness’ refers to the various nations under the Assyrian empire, while the ‘great light’ they look to refers to the King Hezekiah, who would represent a return to Judean rule. To early Christians, the book of Isaiah held many parallels with Jesus Christ who, as a manifestation of the kingdom of God, inspired hope that the same kingdom would one day become a reality. For Charles Jenner’s original libretto for the Messiah, these became more than parallels, working directly into the theological lineage of Christ.

Common to all these interpretations is the unrelenting prevalence of hope amidst great sorrow. Reframing the text to include the imagery of boats on troubled seas is a deliberate evocation of the plight of asylum seekers held off-shore. Although purporting to speak on behalf of their hopes and fears rings hollow, the ‘great light’ I believe overcomes most of the darkness of today is the love between people - between children and parents, between friends, between siblings, between partners.

As to how this relates to the music, I’ve used two elements of Handel’s ‘The People That Walked In Darkness’ as a homage to the original. The first is a quotation of the original Bb minor theme, leading into my opening Bb minor melody; the second is a prolonged section in unison octaves between the strings and vocal parts. The rest of the work is just extrapolating musical lines from contemplating Isaiah’s poetry of hope and darkness.

Moorambilla.com



The Gift Music and text by Sally Whitwell

*Barefoot in grass
The beetles and twigs,
Fistfuls of flora in my bare hands
Spinning through space
Imperceptible orbit, constantly moving,
unbearably still.*

*The meadow slopes toward the water
Reflections on the glassy deep of the universe
above us where I know your soul it sleeps*

*Far beyond and yet so close
I reach out to touch your star
And you’re standing here beside me
whilst you’re watching from afar
For unto us this gift is given
The wonder of this blue-green sphere, the
shining dome above is bursting
With light and colour, year after year.*

“I want people to feel like they will get a better understanding of their place in the wider universe... how precious life is - how fragile the earth is - and how wondrous the gift of human kindness is... that enormity of the night sky - and that feeling of knowing you are somehow connected to everyone and everything but not”. Michelle Leonard

As composition briefs go, this one was unusually poetic. It’s exactly the kind of thing I want to hear in a brief because it provides the actual inspiration for the thing she wants me to write. Most briefs will give you little more than a general idea of the topic, the instrumentation and voicing, and a description of the skill level of the ensemble. They don’t give you colourful

prose musing on the meaning of our existence. But Michelle’s did.

The text came pouring out of my head pretty fast, initially as a kind of exercise in word association. Soon, however, a theme emerged of its own accord, that of the transience of our physical existence as humans on earth being just one phase of our existence across time and space. Our lives seem so big to us, so important, until we put ourselves in this bigger context and realise we are just an infinitesimal speck in an infinite universe.

Part of the brief was also to respond to a movement from Handel’s Messiah, in my case the chorus For Unto Us A Child is Born. You’ll certainly recognise when I’ve quoted some of the themes, particularly in the saxophones. At other times, the reference is a bit more subtle!

I dedicate The Gift to my dear friend Emma, and to the memory of her late husband Jeff.

sillywhatwell.weebly.com

Daybreak Music by Elena Kats Chernin

This new work was written after a few laughs, and coffees on Elena’s piano at the conclusion of another project for Moorambilla Choirs. It draws its inspiration from the instrumental Pifa in the original Messiah - quoting some of the ascending melodic lines and overall feel in the saxophones while joyously celebrating the start of a new day an. Humorously Elena has quoted that rather infamous “black note knuckle tune” loved by beginner pianists everywhere ... listen out for it! Every day a new beginning, a new opportunity.

boosey.com



The Word is Peace

Music by Dan Walker
Text by Maya Angelou

*In our joy, we think we hear a whisper
At first too soft.
Then only half heard,
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
We hear a sweetness,
The word is Peace.
It is louder now, it is louder, louder than the explosion
of bombs.
We, Angels and Mortals, Look Heaven-ward and
speak the word aloud.
Peace.
We look at our world and speak the word aloud.*

For me, the chorus 'Glory to God in the highest' presents an interesting juxtaposition of several key themes, both theologically and musically. As a listener, we have already been made aware of the events leading up to this moment; shepherds abiding in the fields, tending their sheep, whereupon a messenger of God appears, announcing the arrival of Christ. This moment is captured musically by a distinctly pastoral approach. What is perhaps most unexpected is the contrast between the messenger and the message itself: Immediately after the announcement of Jesus' birth, Luke describes the angel being joined by "a multitude of the heavenly host" (2:13). The word 'host' here literally means 'army'; God has not only appeared in this passage but is arrayed for battle. The great irony is that the Lord of armies has arrived not to bring a message of war, but of peace.

In my reimagining of this movement, I have maintained the pastoral-nature of Handel's original, even making direct musical reference. The text I have chosen also plays to the juxtaposition of Luke's account of God's message: That the word of peace, while often at first merely an almost inaudible groundswell, ultimately resonates far louder than the cacophony of war and destruction.

Darkness Cannot Drive Out Darkness

Music by Dan Walker
Text by Martin Luther King Junior

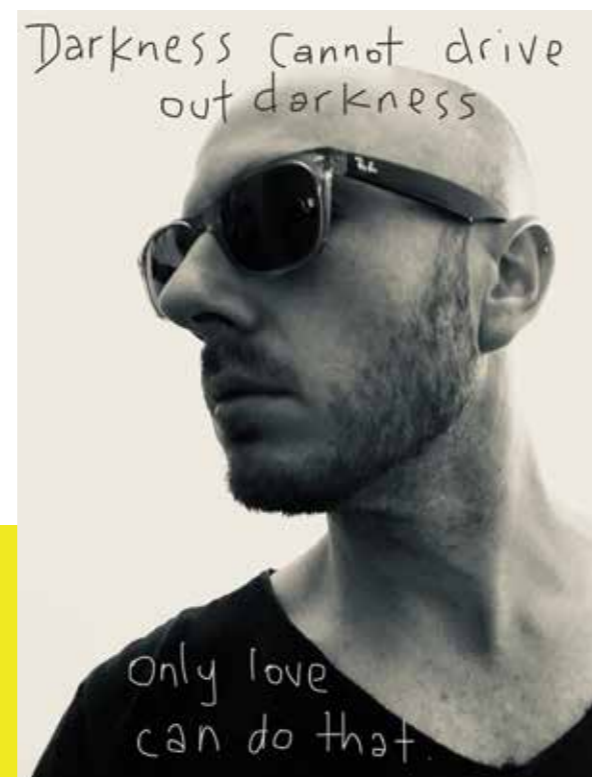
"Who can reveal to us the destiny of the world; who can unfold, for us, the meaning of history?" This

is essentially the premise of Revelations 5:11-14, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain'. There is a hidden dichotomy to God; if Jesus comes as a conquering hero, he also comes as victim.

There are many such 'martyrs' through history with which this resonates, but perhaps most recently none more than Martin Luther King Jr. For this reimagined work, I have chosen to take a selection of MLK's most iconic and relevant quotes; words that echo the questions posed by the Revelations verse. Martin Luther King knew, that his fight for equality and recognition was not one he would see through in his own lifetime, but through charity and compassion that day could perhaps arrive that much sooner.

Musically I wanted to make reference to the structure of Handel's original, with contrasting declamatory chords from the choir and ascending, almost defiant instrumental passages, followed by more lilting polyphonic vocal writing. The movement ends with the refrain of one of MLK's most memorable quotes: 'The time is always right to do what is right.'. The promise of revelation is not the proclamation of an easy victory – that his people will not suffer and endure pain. Rather, it is a great proclamation of 'nevertheless'. "Nevertheless", he says, "my Kingdom shall come and my will be done".

danwalkercomposer.com



Our Sorrows

Music and Text by
Andrew Howes

When considering the movements 'He was despised' and 'Surely He hath borne our griefs,' both of which address Christ as the saviour of humanity, I couldn't help but ask myself the question - where does our salvation truly come from? My unequivocal answer to that question is us and, more to the point, it only takes compassion to unlock our desire to help those in need. Like many Australians, I am appalled by the treatment of Asylum seekers on our shores and elsewhere, and although the same sort of tribalism and xenophobia is woven throughout the old testament, the new testament, and the Handel/Jennens Messiah, invites us to help those who are suffering. To reflect the two movements I was inspired by, my work *Our Sorrows* is in two parts - one asks the question, the other seeks an answer.

The musical language draws a lot from Baroque ornamentation and from harmonic figurations such as the *passus durisculus*, a Latin term from the Baroque period connoting difficulty or sadness through the use of a descending chromatic line. The beginning of both my piece and Handel's 'He was despised' draws from baroque court fanfares. Where he uses strings, I have used saxophones to give the piece a more mournful tone. Dotted rhythms are used in imitation of the Handel also, which in his music relates to the French performance practice of his day, notes *inégales*, music that often is associated with royalty.

It's a strange thing trying to translate Baroque intentions into a modern piece - on the one hand, these ornaments and musical ideas were capable in their day of conveying the grandeur and sadness of Handel's intention, but likewise, we can't possibly understand them the same way that his audience did, because we have such a wildly different experience of life. I have tried to draw some things from the Handel that, to my mind, remain relatable, but especially in the second part of my piece, I have tried to bring in some of the modern rhythmic and harmonic language that classical music audiences recognise today, perhaps in reflection of the idea that our problems are always forward-facing, that we have come far from the way we once were, yet still have far to go.

Andrew has recently graduated from the Manhattan School of Music, having completed his Master of Music (Composition). He studied under Susan Botti, and also studied with Alison Kay and Simon Holt whilst completing his Bachelor of Music at the Royal College of Music in London, where he was



the recipient of the Clifton Parker award. He has composed for a wide variety of ensembles, including the Sydney Symphony, the Kasba Trio, Moorambilla Voices, the Song Company, and the Enigma Quartet. His longstanding association with Moorambilla Voices includes the role of composer in residence for their APRA award-winning 10th and 11th seasons.

andrewhowescomposer.com

Lift up your heads

Music by Andrew Howes

*Look for the stone, up to the stars
On Guringai land
Run seven sisters
Climb the gates of the stars
Long legs stretch black towards the sky
Outrun the fire
Burn yourselves onto the night sky
Become Pleiades
Run, emu sister
Embrace the fire
From the southern cross, to the milky way
Embrace the fire
Become the great Emu in the sky
In the sky, above the Guringai stone
The black between stars gaze down to earth
Lift up your heads
To remember our time
And the oldest wisdom*





Leichhardt Espresso Chorus - Messiah Reimagined

Soprano: Daisy Andrews, Melinda Beck, Suzanne Berkeley, Polly Bernard, Wilhelmina Brown, Elisabeth Burke, Meg Callander, Louise Cantrill, Penny Chapple, Liane Clarke, Mieke Cohen, Janet Coppin, Catherine De Lorenzo, Maria De Sousa, Sarah Dunn, Shae Fleming, Kathy Green, Margaret Grove, Annette Hagerman, Lisa Henderson Claire Humphreys, Gwyn Jones, Jeanne Kinnimont, Margo Moore, Patricia Pearse, Gill Pennington, Michelle Perini, Suzanne Pierce, Michelle Rollins, Emi So, Pat Veenendaal, Bo Xu

Alto: Helen Bailey-Cooke, Pamela Batters, Judy Bedard, Therese Berrigan, Lesley Carnus, Verena Clemencic-Jones, Raewyn Connell, Georgie Cropper, Lesley Dawes, Sophie Fickler, Dianne Gallagher, Chloe Hardwick-Jones, Lisa Hansford, Jenny Hislop, Jurate Janavicius, Alison Jaworski, Helen Kerr-Roubicek, Anne Kricker, Lisa Maffina, Susan McCarthy, Corinne Mesana, Julie Millard, Julie Montague, Cynthia Moore, Bronwyn Neal, Pepe Newton, Diane Paul, Miriam Poole, Caroline Pugh, Lea Riley, Jane Robinson, Kathleen Routh,

Barbara Rysenbry, Marina Shine, Louise Silburn, Glenda Stone, Kate Wade, Christine Walters, Lindie Ward, Magali Wardle, Linda Wills, Janet Wills, Crista Wocadlo

Tenor: David Allen, Rod Bartrop, Tim Cheung, Rhys Hardwick-Jones, Damien Kuan, Geordie Marsh, Marcus Thomson

Bass: Stu Annels, Kevin Barker, Graeme Bartlett, Paul Collett, Mike Dunkley, David Ferguson, Richard Goodman, David Harvey, Chris Masson, Tobias Ng, Adam Smith, Tim Smyth, Andrew Sweeney, Warwick Van Ede

LEC committee: Susan McCarthy - President, Michelle Leonard - Artistic Director and Vice President, Melinda Beck - Secretary, Mike Dunkley - Treasurer. General members: Georgie Cropper - Librarian, Bronwyn Neal - Membership, Kathy Green - Fundraising, Adam Smith, Tim Smyth.





His Yoke Is Easy Music by Owen Elsley

*His yoke is easy, her burden light
So rest they find together, together the day is bright
No yoke or burden can turn the day to night.*

His yoke is easy, in its traditional setting, speaks of coming to Jesus to find relief from the heavy burdens of one's life; this re-imagining, however, takes a more humanist approach. Using the original text, quoting the Gospel of Matthew, as both a basis and a point of

departure, His yoke is easy, Her burden light explores the ease and lightness that comes from togetherness; that though there are times of darkness and heavy burdens to bear, "together the day is bright". After opening with a slightly laborious, lumbering instrumental interlude, the music moves towards treading more gently on the earth, hinting even at skipping by setting text in five with an arching vocal melody. The opening motif returns, this time sung by the choir and with a more positive angle, before settling on a gentle, contented joyfulness.

oj.elsley@gmail.com

All We Like Sheep Music by Roman Benedict

This movement is a moment of levity and delight in the middle of the emotional and spiritual intensity of The Messiah. Even while singing in very serious cathedral performances, I remember finding so many things to laugh at and enjoy in this music. I wanted to bring out that feeling of all being in on the joke together: the music is so joyful and the words so deadpan that I decided to rework Handel's material to reflect the ways that choirs everywhere have to avoid making themselves laugh as they find themselves singing beautiful music with accidentally silly words.

Romanbenedict.com



Do Not Be Discouraged Music by Joscelyn Markerink

*Do not be discouraged that all things break
For even the bones of broken trees endure
-framing the walls of home
For even the bones of broken trees endure into
all lands
And their words unto the ends of the world
Their sound is gone out into all lands*

Their sound will go out is a recontextualisation of Handel's movement by the same name from the Messiah. The work was written for Double SSAA Chorus (specifically Leichhardt Espresso Chorus and Meriden Treble Choir) and Piano accompaniment. The original libretto read: "Their sound will go out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the earth". This text shone through to me, as it provides a refreshing point within the grandeur of the Messiah where the focus shifts from God and onto the power of humankind. For this reason, I chose to centre the piece around the tenacity and grit that women generate through their alliance.

The first half of the work features a still, but grounded, lullaby, opening with the text: "do not be discouraged that all things break". The choirs softly echo the sentiment, and remind each other that even the broken bones of a tree are able to live again within beautiful structures. The second half then bursts forward with the addition of the piano into an uplifting recontextualisation of Handel's original melody – an exemplar of the sentiment presented in the first half. The choirs call out in canon to each other, finally arriving at a homogenous exclamation.

Throughout this piece, the female voice remains affirmative, strong and compassionate. Strong women have been a great inspiration for me in all areas of my life, and this piece aims to gloriously celebrate "their sound".

Josmarkerink.com





He Was Despised Music by Kevin Barker

Nothing I say here could match the text of this piece, which is so powerful in its simplicity and raw honesty. The words are those of Behrouz Buchani, written from Manus Island where he is imprisoned by us, persecuted by us, despised by us for having the temerity to come to us seeking help and refuge. The music is built on two major chords, a semitone apart, which elicit melodic fragments that move with uncertainty, and harmonies that collapse into each other without conclusion. There can be no direction or goal, no resolution, only movement without progress, and hopelessness. At the end the choir is moved to ask in an almost hymn-like way "why have you forsaken me?".

*My God, prison is so horrific
Prison is so oppressive
Prison is so merciless
I am disintegrated and dismembered
The moaning could even be the sound of
Clouds tearing apart
My decrepit past fragmented and scattered
This is the way it feels to me
No longer integral
Unable to become whole once again
Exactly like the intensity of wrath and power
Manifested by thunder and lightning strikes in
springtime
I must confess that I don't know who I am
Or what I will become
Perhaps deep wounds and scars
Struck down from the clouds and heavens
With higher voltage than thunder and lightning*

*The coconut trees however offer their hair up to
the zephyr
They quiver
They are also frightened
My god, why have you forsaken me?*

Behrouz Boochani is an Iranian-Kurdish journalist, human rights defender, poet and film producer. Incarcerated on Manus Island since 2013, he tapped out his 426 page memoir No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Island on a mobile phone via WhatsApp. It was translated from Persian by his friend Omid Tofighian. In January 2019 Boochani won the Victorian Prize for Literature and the Victorian Premier's Prize for Nonfiction.

Hallelujah Chorus Music by Kevin Barker

Kevin Barker is a Sydney-born composer who has had a diverse career in music as both composer and performer. He writes in a wide range of idioms from contemporary classical through jazz and popular music, and has written for such artists as Cantillation, Moorambilla Voices, Metropolitan Orchestra, Occidental Strings, Leichhardt Espresso Chorus, Three's Company Opera, the SOQ, Australian Jazz Orchestra, Don Burrows and James Morrison. He is currently taking a Master of Music degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, studying with Paul Stanhope.

This is a shadow of the Hallelujah Chorus, containing many nods to, and borrowings from, Handel's original. It is an exclamation of joy, rejoicing in the wonder of a Kingdom of Love — love is love, and love is all. And if we can act with love and compassion always — as individuals, as a community, as a nation, as a world — then Hallelujah!

*Hallelujah, sing hallelujah!
Love will reign for ever more
For love is love, and love is all
Bring peace and joy to all the world
Hallelujah!*



Within Music by Anastasia Pahos

Man's soul understands that it comes from a Maker, a Creator, a Love, and that that is man's true redeeming quality. Nature has long been referred to as a 'mother', and the female voices in Within bring that connection to light. Vowel sounds and fictional language, as compared to formal text, serve to highlight the non-verbal language of the natural world around us...and the innate sense of knowledge within it. The text borrowed from Handel's Messiah Part III Scene I gives a more literate representation of that underlying message of faith in and awareness of a living God.

I invite you to immerse yourself in the aural depictions of natural life reflecting and rippling amidst a deep conviction of stillness. Of freedom.

anastasiapahos.com



Since by Man Came Death Music by Ben Burton

The wonderful thing about music is that the slightest change of rhythm, accent, harmony, or phrasing, can transport the listener hundreds of years through time. And so, I've kept Handel's essential structure, and his motivic material, while changing things up enough to bring the piece firmly into the 21st century. I've used Jennens' text, and added some of my own words around it. In keeping with a long tradition of respectfully re-organising Handel's masterwork, I have absolutely no intention of improvement.

Handel seems to have been largely concerned with opera, and as such, had a flair for the dramatic - his ability to turn emotion so quickly from deep sorrow to pure joy is something I greatly admire. I've tried to keep that aspect of this movement, while mixing in a good dose of Aussie humour.

The biblical text still seems poignant today, even in an increasingly secular society. For me, it boils down to this; we all contribute to humanity's self-destruction,

and only we can save ourselves. On the other hand, should we even bother?

'It's a near miracle that nuclear war has so far been avoided' Noam Chomsky

'Besides, there is nothing wrong with the planet. Nothing wrong with the planet. The planet is fine. The people are f****d.' George Carlin

Since by Man came death, the power;

and the ability, to descend us into madness

By Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead;

the wherewithal, the strength of mind, to stand and not give up the fight.

For as in Adam all die

Since by man-made death

The mounting responsibility will

descend us into madness

Even so in Christ shall all be made alive

We are the love, we are the peace, we are the love,

We are belief.

Moorambilla.com



The Trumpet Shall Sound Music by James Madsen

Michelle's brief initially seemed quite simple; take the movement from Handel's Messiah called the trumpet shall sound and create your own version. "Make it your own style", she suggested. "Oh and there's no trumpet...just saxophones." So the famous words from the gospels have changed to "the saxes shall sound". No problem there. God almighty won't mind too much. Trumpet/saxophone. Both are shiny. But as a composer I rarely think about my own style. Composing this 'reimagined' work I realised that I do have a sense of my 'own' style these days and draw upon certain stylistic characteristics. I wanted to keep Handel's melody the same as a tribute to such beautiful phrasing and shape for the men's chorus, and there is just one melodic note slightly different, with some added harmony towards the end. The harmony, however, supporting his melody draws upon my style of chords, sometimes built on open fifths or using extended open chords. Another preferred rhythmic technique I use is to incorporate time signatures that allow for changing groupings within the beat, in twos and threes, using the pulsing rhythmic feel of 8/8. And for the listeners I always hope they enjoy the sounds they hear, from the lush harmonies, the lively rhythms as well as the lyrical flow of Handel's classic melody brought into the future with a slight modern twist.

Jamesmadsen.com





Before the Throne Music by Gerard Brophy

On a sparkling morning earlier this year, Jill and I found ourselves in New Jolfa, the Armenian quarter in Isfahan. I had long wanted to visit this area for two reasons. Firstly, it was an outpost of Armenian culture in an ostensibly hostile environment, (I was wrong about that as since the time of Shah Abbas, Armenians have enjoyed a privileged status in Iran) and secondly it was the ancestral home of my dear friend Violet Smith of Calcutta. In fact, not long after the Armenian exodus from Turkey in 1915, Violet's grandmother had walked from Isfahan to Dhaka, in what is now Bangladesh, carrying her mother on her back for most of the way.

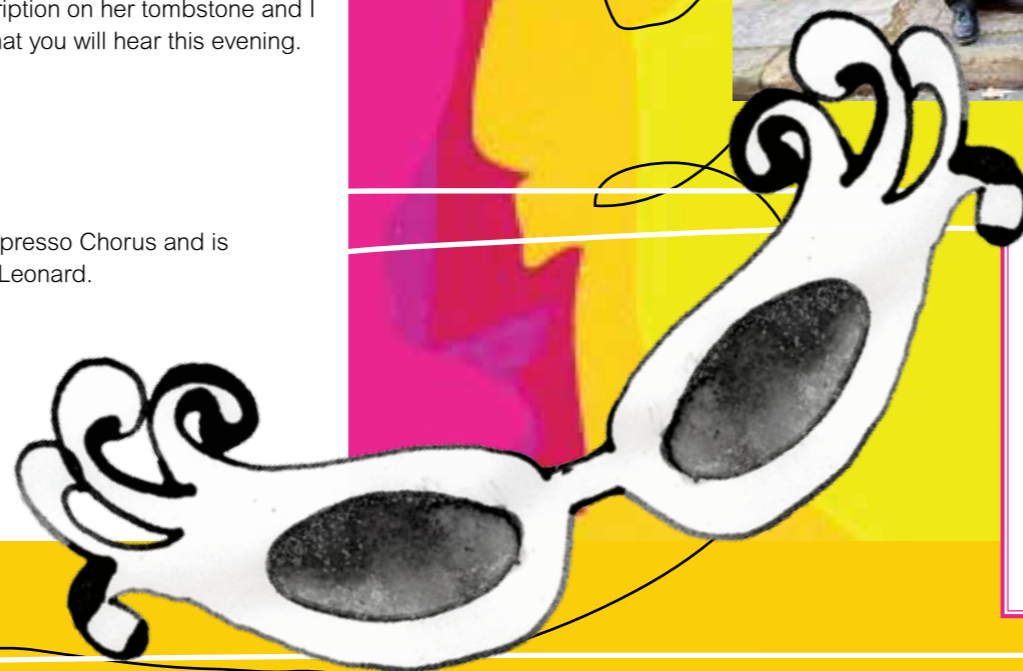
The glittering centerpiece of New Jolfa is the monumental Holy Saviour Cathedral complex. The interior of the cathedral is simply breathtaking and is a gorgeous riot of finely wrought floral motifs, sumptuous frescoes and gilt carvings surrounded by a wainscot of Persian tile-work. Adjoining this is a genocide museum, a sober testament to its victims that provokes a roller-coaster ride of conflicting emotions.

Clustered around the church, one finds a number of tombstones set into the marble flagstones. I usually make a beeline for these cemeteries in the hope of finding relatives of my Armenian friends. On this occasion I didn't find any, though one tombstone did catch my eye. It was the grave of an infant of tender age. The innocence of this brief life seemed to be perfectly encapsulated in the poignant inscription on her tombstone and I wanted to incorporate these tender words into the piece that you will hear this evening.

*Before the throne,
Washed and made white,
By the blood of the Lamb*

Before the throne was commissioned by the Leichhardt Espresso Chorus and is dedicated with much love and affection to Rene and Mick Leonard.

gerardbrophy.com.au



Messiah Reimagined Chamber Orchestra

Violin: Madeleine Easton, Kat Lukey,
Julia Russoniello

Viola: Andrew Jezek, Nicole Forsyth

Cello: Rowena Crouch, Jack Ward

Double Bass: Kirsty McCahon

Piano: Ben Burton

Percussion: Josh Hill

Continuum Sax:

Christina Leonard: (soprano saxophone)

James Nightingale: (alto saxophone)

Martin Kay: (tenor saxophone)

Nick Russoniello: (baritone saxophone)



Michelle Leonard OAM

Is the founder, Artistic Director and conductor of the Leichhardt Espresso Chorus and the nationally awarded Moorambilla Voices. She is widely sought after as a choral clinician and appears regularly as a guest speaker, adjudicator and workshop facilitator. Michelle was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for Services to the Community and Performing Arts in 2017, in 2018 the Sydney University Alumni of the Year Award for Services to the Arts and presented her first Sydney TEDx talk. In 2019 she was named in the top 100 most influential women in Australia in the Australian Financial Review.

LEC's Desiderata: finding the whole from fragments

*Go placidly amid the noise and haste
...silence*

Speak your truth quietly, clearly

Be gentle on yourself, listen to others

*Even the dull and ignorant have their story, be gentle
with others*

*Avoid comparisons, your spirit may become vain and
bitter*

Be. Gently. Be yourself

Enjoy your achievements, your labours.

*Do not feign affection, love
Love is as perennial as the grass, the trees, the stars.*

*Dark imaginings, vexations
Fears born of fatigue and loneliness.*

*Be gentle with yourself.
Little one, you have a right to be here
The universe is unfolding, as it should.*

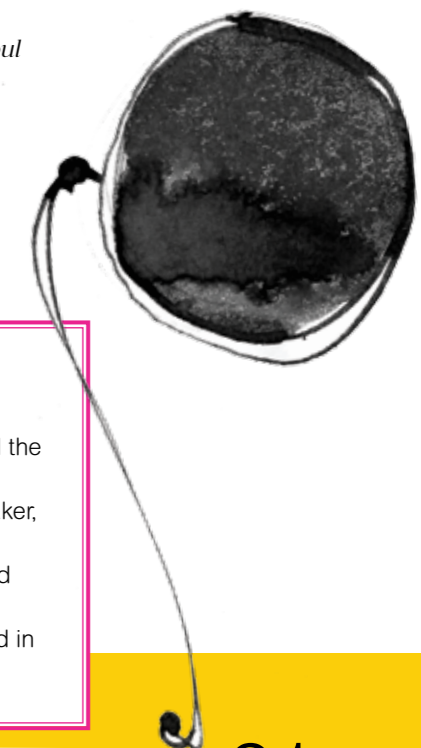
Surrender gracefully gentle one.

*Be at peace with Sophia, whatever you conceive Her
to be.*

Keep peace with your soul

*Find the Gentle within.
Be....*

Elisabeth Burke



Australian Works Commissioned by LEC

2019

11 October: Various Messiah Reimagined additions
9 June: Josie Gibson - Panta Kremamena - All things Suspended (6 movements)

2018

10 June: Various Messiah Reimagined

2017

30 April: Dan Walker - Waiting for the Night (Depeche Mode), I Feel Loved (Depeche Mode), Staralfur (Sigur Ros). Ella Macens - Look Up The Sky is Glowing
1 October: Alice Chance Fiat Lux - the Light Cycle (8 movements)
17 December: Dan Walker - Hallelujah (Cohen), Kevin Barker - I Carry Your Heart, Ruth McCall - Summer Christmas Fiona Loader - Pie Jesu Lullaby

2016

23 October: Andrew Howes - Callan Park Suite (5 movements)
Kezia Yap - Green Mosaic
18 December: Paul Stanhope - People Look East

2015

28 June: Dan Walker - Last Verses (5 movements)
Owen Elsley - On Love (4 movements)
20 December: Andrew Howes - Christmastide Pavane James Madsen - Sotto la Stella Fiona Loader - Christmas in Sydney William Yaxley - There is no Rose

2014

22 March: Alice Chance - Coalescence
14 June: Sally Whitwell - This Paradise Now Suite - (6 movements) Anastasia Pahos - The Sseucle - (3 movements) Alice Chance - Conjured - characters Tom Knapp - Food for Thought
12 October: Dan Walker - Mass of Deliverance (5 movements)
21 December: Andrew Howes - Silent Night, Glassy Night
Owen Elsley - That's Why I Really Like Christmas

2013

14 April: Gerard Brophy - Magnificat Suite (3 movements)
29 June Alice Chance - Aesop's Fables

Suite (5 movements), David Basden - Rococco Preludes: Have more than thou showest Times glory Fortune's goodnight To See A World
Tom Knapp - Lonesome George

1 December: Anastasia Pahos - A Byzantine Carol
Alice Chance - Prayer for Harmony

2012

23 June: David Basden - An Die Musik, Eternity, Stand Up and Look At Me
Dan Walker - Were All the Stars to Disappear and Die, Reckless (David Reyne), Fields of Gold (Sting)
Sally Whitwell - Breath of Kindness
21 September: Ben Van Tienan - How Can I Keep from Singing?
23 December: Alice Chance - Three Kings, Christmas Harmony

2011

26 June: Dan Walker - Lines in the Sand - (3 movements) David Basden - How Many Miles to Babylon
18 December: Billy McCarthy - Carols on Norton 10th Anniversary - Blues
Christina Leonard - O Come All Ye Faithful (Trad) Luke Byrne - O Come, O Come, Emmanuel - (Trad) - Hark the Herald Angels Sing (Trad) - Six White Boomers (Rolf Harris)

2010

27 March: Luke Byrne - Such Country Suite (5 movements)
David Basden - The Birds, Andrew Schultz - Simplify, simplify Gerard Brophy - Moorambilla Dawn David Basden - Processional Ave Maria

2009

2 March: Luke Byrne - Immortal Beloved
Sally Whitwell - She Walks in Beauty, The Song of the Wandering Aengus
5 July: Luke Byrne - Salmos de Santiago
26 September: Luke Byrne - Back in My Day
Elena Kats-Chernin - Baiaime's Ngunnhu suite (6 movements)
20 December: Dan Walker - What Can You See?

2008

5 April: Dan Walker - Seven Deadly Sins suite (7 movements)
21 December: Billy McCarthy I - Love

Christmas

Sally Whitwell - Lute Book Lullaby, Hodie Christus Natus Est.

2007

5 April: Dan Walker - Weep No More (David Childs)
25 Aug: Christopher Gordon - You Dead Kings Rising, Marco Creazzo - Beyond the ...Sea, Meredith Hope - Deep Waters Rising
16 December: Billie McCarthy - Almost Christmas Day

2006

17 December: Billie McCarthy - Billie's song
Marco Creazzo - The First Christmas

2005

17 September: Dan Walker - Coutts crossing
Michelle Leonard - Across the Plains * (Arr: Marco Creazzo) - Bellambi (Matthew Doyle) - Drought/Paint Up (Matthew Doyle) - Michelle Leonard & Marco Creazzo - Sailing in the boat (Trad.) - Din Din Din (Trad) Paul Jarman - Ride the Spirit
23 September: Paul Jarman - Narrabri

2004

4 July: Marco Creazzo - Ave Maria
12 Sept: Joe Accario - Volo del Palazzo
Marco Creazzo - Ride On (Christy Moore)

2003

14 September: Christina Mimmochi - Silence is the Rock
27 September: Dan Walker - Freshwater suite (4 movements)
21 December: Marco Creazzo - Away in a Manger - Carol of the Drum - Christmas Day - Ding Dong Merrily on High - Gabriel's Message - God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen - Good King Wenceslas - Huon Christmas Carol - Mary's Boy Child - Noel Nouvelet - Once in Royal David's City - Silent Night - Star Carol- The Silver Stars
We Three Kings of Orient Are

2002

15 Sept Paul Jarman - Outback suite (5 movements)
Grand Total to date well over 200!

Thank You

Our performance tonight and the commissioning of new Australian compositions is only possible through the generosity, commitment and passion of our supporters. We are self-funded and forever excited, grateful and humbled by the support we receive.

Holding Redlich \$3500 for the Program and 1st Violin played by Madeleine Easton.
Dr Tim Smyth, Health Sector Law \$3000 for the overall performance.
Greg Dickson and Penny Le Couteur \$2000 for the Tim Hansen commissions sung by Anna Fraser.

Crista Wocadlo \$1000 for Piano played by Ben Burton.
In memoriam Mary Salkeld \$1000 for Double Bass played by Kirsty McCahon.
Robinson family \$1000 for Viola played by Andrew Jezek
In memoriam Roy Giles \$1000 for Soprano Saxophone played by Christina Leonard.
In memoriam Patricia Williams \$1000 for Cello played by Rowena Crouch.
All members past and present of the Leichhardt Espresso Chorus who have donated time, paid fees and raised money for commissioning new work!
And finally, to all of YOU - our wonderful audience who have a ticket to tonight's performance!

Our Commissioning Fund

We hope you enjoyed the new Australian world premieres you heard in this concert today. The Leichhardt Espresso Chorus is proud of its extensive program of commissioning Australian compositions over the past 21 years, made possible only by donations and fundraising efforts of the choristers. If you would like to commission a work for the choir, or donate to our commissioning fund, your contribution will be tax deductible. We appreciate every contribution no matter how large or small! Please don't hesitate to contact Michelle Leonard, music@espressochorus.com.au to discuss your contribution, or donate on our website at www.espressochorus.com.au

History of the Leichhardt Espresso Chorus

Leichhardt Espresso Chorus is a community choir of over 80 singers and we are celebrating our 21st Birthday this year. Founded in 1998 by Artistic Director Michelle Leonard OAM, the Chorus includes a chamber choir, Ristretto, the Inner West Children's Choir and is currently accompanied by pianist Benjamin Burton. The LEC is non-auditioned and invites all singers to join each year.

Under Michelle Leonard, the hallmark of the choir has been an active and extensive annual program of commissions, partnerships and collaborations with composers, ensembles and musicians. The Chorus has commissioned, co-commissioned and performed world premieres and arrangements of nearly 200 choral works since 1998. Recent commissions include the world premiere of Andrew Howes Callan Park in 2016 with The Song Company which was also performed at Classics at Callan Park. The choir performed the world premiere of Fiat Lux by Alice Chance with The Song Company at St James Church in 2017, and in 2019 Josie Gibson's Panta Kremamena. The Chorus congratulated its Artistic Director for the Order of Australia Medal for services to performing arts and music in 2017, was nominated in the APRA/AMCOS Art Music Awards in 2015 for its commission and performance

with Sydney Brass of Dan Walker's Mass of Deliverance, was the NSW runner up at the 2006 ABC Choir of the Year Competition, and the inaugural winner of the Music Council of Australia National Music in Communities Award. LEC has commissioned new Australian Christmas carols for the past 15 years for the annual Carols on Norton outdoor concert it co-produces with the Inner West Council featuring prominent Sydney orchestral musicians. The choir was acknowledged as a major arts partner in the former Leichhardt Council's Strategic Arts Policy. Major choral works performed include four Handel oratorios: Messiah in 2008 and again in 2012, Israel in Egypt in 2015, Saul in 2016, Solomon in 2017 and Carmina Burana at Carriage works, Vivaldi's Gloria in 2014 at Hunter Baillie Memorial Church.

The Chorus welcomes collaborations with artists and communities and was the choir in residence from 2005-2015 for the Moorambilla Voices Gala Concerts and Festival, appearing in two movies about Moorambilla Voices: Outback Choir and Wide Open Sky. It appeared in the Sydney Festival at Sydney Opera House with Lost and Found Company in STOMP in 2007, and the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Sydney in 2010, with Song Company and William Barton for Massive in 2015, with the Willoughby Symphony Chorus in 2017 for Christmas Carols. The LEC's chamber choir, Ristretto, performs regularly for the City of Sydney at Christmas, in 2013 performed Howls of the House with Song Company in Canberra and Sydney under Roland Peelman, performed in 2016 at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra as part of Heather Swann's Nervous project, Rossini's Petite Messe Solonelle in 2016, and in 2017 Dark Night of the Soul in Melbourne and Sydney with Melbourne-based Choristry under Artistic Director Dan Walker.

Please join us after the concert in the City Recital Hall foyer for our 21st Birthday celebration, with jazz band Human Laser Experiment

LEICHHARDT ESPRESSO CHORUS



Coming up...
Carols on Norton
Sunday 22 December
Pioneers Memorial Park 7:00pm
to find out more

www.espressochorus.com.au



Concert photography: Jasmin Kooper
www.jazzy.photography.com.au