

Fables & Faith

Stories in the Shadows
Songs in the Light



Sunday 25 May, 4pm
Hunter Baillie Church

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Program

From Aija Draguns:

FABLES & FAITH—a concert celebrating humanity, hope, faith, and childlike wonder! In this unique performance, we intertwine the vibrant contemporary Australian sound with the timeless works of JS Bach.

The program explores diverse expressions of human faith—from belief in fantastical stories and fables, to deep self-reflection and self-belief, to transcendent divine faith. Whatever form it takes, faith and hope are central to the human condition.

Alice Chance's whimsical *Aesop's Fables Suite* has been re-imagined to feature tenor voice and saxophone and we are thrilled to feature outstanding Australian tenor Wesley Wu and saxophonist Alice Morgan in the concert today.

These new works are interwoven with selections by JS Bach, including his beloved *Jesu, meine Freude*, with a twist: the second iteration is a recomposed version. Listen closely—you might catch glimpses of the original.

The concert also features two exciting premieres: *Exchange* by Nicole Murphy, newly reimagined for solo saxophone, and *Shadows and Magpies*—a work I composed that, until now, had been shelved due to COVID. This piece explores themes of fear, faith, and trust, conveyed through the image of a magpie—a fear of mine!

I hope you enjoy this journey that blends nostalgia, wonder, and faith—where stories sing and imagination soars!

Artistic Director and Conductor

Aija Draguns

Saxophone

Alice Morgan

Tenor

Wesley WU

Accompanist

Catherine McKay

*Shadows and Magpies**

Aija Draguns

Jesu Meine Freude

JS Bach

Jesu Meine Freude

Aija Draguns

*Exchange**

Nicole Murphy

Cantata No. 61: excerpts Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland

JS Bach

The Aesop's Fables Suite

Alice Chance

Commissioned by the Leichhardt Espresso Chorus in 2013, Revised 2025

- I. The Boy and False Alarms
- II. The Lion and the Mouse
- III. The Dog and the Shadow
- IV. The Fox and the Raven
- V. The Star Gazer

*World premiere. Illustrations Paul Heppell.



The Artists



AIIA DRAGUNS is a Sydney-based emerging composer and conductor. Her compositions draw inspiration from her Latvian heritage, particularly the folk and choral traditions. She studied piano, saxophone, and singing before attending the Sydney Conservatorium of Music to pursue composition. Aija holds a Bachelor of Music and an Honours degree and is currently completing her Master's studies, specialising in language in vocal composition under Professor Paul Stanhope. Aija regularly conducts ensembles across Sydney, including the Leichhardt Espresso Chorus and the Sydney Latvian Male Choir—the longest-running Latvian male diaspora choir in the world. Aija was the Create NSW Conducting Fellow with the Sydney Youth Orchestras (2022–23), and continues to work and train with various community and tertiary ensembles around Sydney. This year, she has been selected for the 2025 Australian Conducting Academy with mentor Benjamin Northey, where she will train with the state orchestras across the country, most recently MSO and TSO. Most recently, she premiered and conducted her new opera *In Cosmic Utero* at NIDA's Parade Theatre, in collaboration with director Lindy Hulme. Aija also teaches music aural theory at the Sydney Conservatorium. For her, composing and conducting go hand-in-hand, offering unique insights into each artform—insights she hopes to share with her players, singers, and audiences.



ALICE CHANCE is a three-time finalist in the APRA AMC Art Music Awards in the category of Vocal/Choral work of the year, and was a recipient of funding from both Create NSW the Art Music Fund in 2021 for her work *Heirloom* with Rubiks Collective. Alice is also the vocal arranger and original music director of the musical *FANGIRLS*. You may have spotted her in the Netflix documentary *Wide Open Sky*, or heard her vocal arrangements in the Amazon Prime series *Deadloch*.

Alice grew up on the lands of the Darug people and those of the Eora Nation in Sydney, Australia, where she has worked with many of the country's most dynamic ensembles including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Offspring, Gondwana Choirs, Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir, Geribik Torres Strait Islanders Corporation, the Australian String Quartet, The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, The Enigma Quartet, The Acacia Quartet, The Song Company, Musica Viva, Ella Hooper (*Killing Heidi*), Moorambilla Voices, Sydney Youth Orchestras, Adelaide Chamber Singers, Luminescence Chamber Singers, Willoughby Symphony and the Barangaroo Delivery Authority.



WESLEY WU is completing his Master of Opera Performance degree under the tutelage of Maree Ryan AM. His roles include Knusperhexe (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Tempo (*Il Trionfo*), and Septimius (*Theodora*), with upcoming role as Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*). He has premiered contemporary operas in principal tenor roles, including *Nova* in *M.TH.R* and *Scout* in *The Lullaby*. As a soloist, Wesley has appeared in *Messiah* at Sydney Town Hall, *Nelson Mass*, *Petite Messe Solennelle*, *Beethoven's Symphony No. 9*, and *Carmina Burana*.



ALICE MORGAN is a Sydney/Eora-based saxophonist who enjoys a varied career of performative mediums within classical, jazz and contemporary genres. Alice has performed as Guest Principal Saxophone with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and will perform in several concerts across their 2025 season. Last year, Alice was Ensemble Offspring's Hatched Associate Artist where she performed in several concerts across their season. Alice is an Associate Artist of the Bowerbird Collective and Moorambilla Voices, has been a past nominee for the Freedman Fellowship Classical Awards. Alice also enjoys working as a producer and orchestral manager for Ensemble Apex. She is also employed as an Administration Officer and Casual Lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and has hosted several masterclasses at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

The Choir

The Leichhardt Espresso Chorus is a community choir of over 80 singers and welcomes all singers to join. Founded in 1998, the LEC actively commissions and collaborates with composers, conductors, ensembles and musicians and has performed world premieres and arrangements of over 100 new Australian works.

In 2024, the choir welcomed a new Artistic Director, composer and conductor Aija Draguns, who takes the baton from Founder Michelle Leonard OAM. Aija is completing a Masters at the Conservatorium of Music under Professor Paul Stanhope and has been selected for the 2025 Australian Conducting Academy with mentor Benjamin Northey.

We rely on the support of our business partners, friends and audiences to help us achieve our aims and we appreciate acts of philanthropy by our Patrons! You can support us by becoming a business partner or by making a donation of your time or money.

We welcome new members, in particular tenors and basses! Join us for our next concert in September or Carols on Norton in December. Find us at www.espressochorus.com.au or @leichhardtespressochoorus on facebook and instagram

SOPRANO: Annette Hagerman, Catherine De Lorenzo, Claire Humphreys, Elisabeth Burke, Ellie Teunissen, Imogen Coleman, Janet Coppin, Jeanne Kinnimont, Liane Clarke, Maureen Stevens, Michelle Perini, Penny Chapple, Shae Fleming, Tara Roberts. ALTO: Alexis Armytage, Alison Jaworski, Annie Mizon, Barbara Taylor, Bridget Mabbutt, Bronwyn Vost, Caroline Pugh, Cath Stevens, Chloe Hardwick-Jones, Corinne Mesana, Diane McCombe, Georgie Cropper, Glenda Stone, Jane Robinson, Judy Bedard, Julie Montague, Kate Wade, Katy Gould, Lesley Dawes, Linda Wills, Lisa Maffina, Magali Wardle, Marina Shine, Roberta Kwan, Therese Berrigan. TENOR: Chris Migocki, David Bernard, Martyn Morrison-Greet, Tim Cheung, Sequoia O'Brien. BASS: Adam Smith, Chris Robinson, Jonathan Maddox, Jim Fleming, Paul Heath, Richard Goodman, Stu Annels.



Thank you to the Committee Members and Volunteers: President Linda Trevor, Vice President Suzanne Pierce, Artistic Director Aija Draguns, Secretary Claire Humphreys, Treasurer Therese Berrigan, General Members Stu Annels, Elisabeth Burke, Paul Heath, Barbara Taylor, Linda Wills.

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