

The background of the poster is a photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in a dark, starry night sky. The aurora appears as vibrant, flowing bands of green and yellow light. In the foreground, there are large, jagged icebergs or chunks of ice, some of which are illuminated from below, casting a warm, orange glow. The overall scene is serene and majestic.

Sunday 14 September, 4pm
Ashfield Town Hall

AURORA

Northern Songs Under Southern Skies

A black silhouette of a crowd of people, representing an audience, positioned at the bottom of the poster.

ESPRESSOCHORUS.COM.AU

PROGRAM

Skaista Mana Tēvu Zeme Latvian folk song

Staralfur Sigur Rós

Ubi Caritas Ola Gjielo

Solveig's Sang Edvard Grieg, soloist Lana Kains

Look Up the Sky is Glowing Ella Macens

Thank You for the Music Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson

Harbour Light Nick Wales, Acacia Quartet

Krāc Jūrmalas Priedes Jāzeps Mediņš

Pacel Galvu, baltā māte Raimonds Pauls, soloist Lana Kains

Priedes Valters Kaminskis

Tautas Acis Raimonds Pauls, soloist Tom Mačēns

Laid Iekšāi Saiminiece, Folk song, Aldis Sils arr

Precious Colours Alice Chance, Acacia Quartet

Da Pacem Domine Arvo Pärt

Aicinājums Ēriks Ešenvalds

Thousand Winds Aija Draguns

Skaista Mana Tēvu Zeme reprise

Soloist: Lana Kains

Conductor: Aija Draguns

Leichhardt Espresso Chorus

Sydney Latvian Male Choir

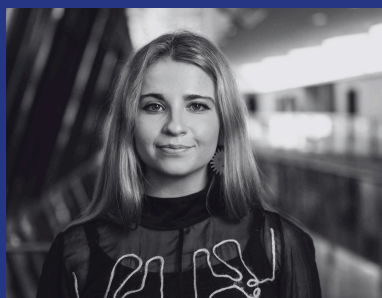
Acacia Quartet

Accompanist: Catherine McKay

Welcome to AURORA, a celebration of music from icy Nordic soundscapes, to rich Baltic folksong. Featuring two choirs, a string quartet and soprano soloist, we'll share northern songs from the atmospheric worlds of Ola Gjeilo, Sigur Rós, Ēriks Ešenvalds, and Arvo Pärt - even the iconic ABBA! LEC values new music and celebrates home grown-composers. I wanted to share music from my own Latvian heritage, with music from our own Australian-Latvian composer Ella Macens, as well as the world premiere of a piece I composed in memory of my father. I am proud excited to present this collaborative concert with music that transcends borders and speaks to our souls.

Aija Draguns, Artistic Director

ARTISTS



AIIJA DRAGUNS, Conductor

Aija Draguns (b. 1999) is a Sydney-based emerging composer and conductor. Her compositions draw inspiration from the folk and choral traditions of her Latvian heritage. 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. She is an active composer in the Australian choral scene, in 2025 working closely with Oriana Chorale, The Australian Voices, and Sydney Chamber Choir. In addition to teaching music theory at the University of Sydney, Aija is an emerging orchestral and choral conductor. She currently trains with mentor Benjamin Northey as part of Australian Conducting Academy, working with the state orchestras across the country - most recently MSO, QSO, SSO, and TSO. Aija recently premiered and conducted her new opera *In Cosmic Utero* at NIDA's Parade Theatre, which has since been nominated for an APRA AMCOS Art Music Award.



LANA KAINS, Soprano

Latvian-Australian soprano Lana Kains has displayed great versatility in her career so far, singing a variety of musical works from early Baroque to new compositions. From her start as a young singer in Darwin, where she performed as a soloist in the Darwin Carols by Candlelight and in the premiere of *WindRose* by Cathy Applegate with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, Lana has continued on to sing with some of Australia's most highly regarded companies including Opera Australia, Pinchgut Opera, Cantillation and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.



ACACIA QUARTET

Forming in 2010, Acacia Quartet are one of Australia's most respected string ensembles. Having recorded twelve albums, Acacia is known for presenting versatile and inventive programs which prominently feature Australia's leading composers. Nominated for an APRA-AMCOS Art Music 'Award for Excellence' (2013), and Aria Music Awards 'Best Classical Album', twice (2013 and 2020), Acacia are renowned recording artists with their recordings regularly featured on radio around the world. Locally, Acacia's engagements include the Sydney Opera House, City Recital Hall Sydney, Melbourne Recital Hall, as well as extensive touring through regional NSW and Victoria. Internationally, Acacia had their international debut in Vancouver, Canada at the Roundhouse in June 2016 and have followed up with performances in Europe.

CHOIRS

LEICHHARDT ESPRESSO CHORUS



The Leichhardt Espresso Chorus is a non-auditioned community choir of over 80 singers. Founded in 1998 by Michelle Leonard OAM, 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. It presents the annual Carols on Norton concert outdoors in Pioneers Park. For its 21st Birthday the choir commissioned Australia's leading composers to reimagine Handel's famous *Messiah* and presented *Messiah Reimagined* at City Recital Hall in 2018. In 2024, the choir welcomed its new Artistic Director, composer and conductor Aija Draguns. Under Aija's leadership the choir has performed *Sound of Light*, *Carols on Norton* and *Fables and Faith*.

We encourage new members, in particular tenors and basses! Read more about us at www.espressochorus.com.au or @leichhardtespressochoorus on facebook and instagram

SOPRANO: Catherine De Lorenzo, Claire Humphreys, Elisabeth Burke, Ellie Teunissen, Janet Coppin, Lliane Clarke, Maureen Stevens, Michelle Perini, Shae Fleming, Suzanne Blythin, Suzanne Pierce, Tara Roberts. **ALTO:** Alexis Armytage, Alison Jaworski, Barbara Taylor, Bridget Mabbutt, Bronwyn Vost, Chloe Hardwick-Jones, Christine Walters, Corinne Mesana, Debby Cramer, Diane McCombe, Georgie Cropper, Glenda Stone, Jane Robinson, Judy Bedard, Julie Montague, Kate Wade, Katy Gould, Lesley Dawes, Linda Trevor, Linda Wills, Lisa Maffina, Magali Wardle, Marjan McKeough, Roberta Kwan. **TENOR:** Chris Migocki, David Bernard, Tim Cheung, Lawrence Wright, Mike Dunkley. **BASS:** Jonathan Maddox, Jim Fleming, Martyn Morrison-Greet, Paul Heath, Richard Goodman, Robin Mead, Stu Annels.

LATVIAN MALE CHOIR



Established in 1956, the Sydney Latvian Male Choir is the oldest existing Latvian male choir working continuously outside of Latvia. With a proud tradition spanning nearly seven decades, the choir preserves and celebrates the rich heritage of Latvian choral music through performances of traditional folk songs and the revered "golden" repertoire of classical Latvian composers. The choir plays a vital role in the cultural life of the Australian Latvian community, regularly performing at Australian Latvian Cultural Festivals around the country, staging annual concerts, and contributing to significant secular and religious events within the Sydney Latvian society. Currently comprised of 28 members aged between 15 and 88, the choir includes six family groups of grandfathers, fathers, sons, brothers, and uncles - a testament to its deeply rooted intergenerational tradition. Their shared passion for Latvian music and unwavering national pride are evident in their enthusiastic participation and long-standing commitment to regular rehearsals and performances. The Sydney Latvian Male Choir continues to stand as a living expression of cultural continuity, unity, and pride-carrying forward the sounds and spirit of Latvia through song.