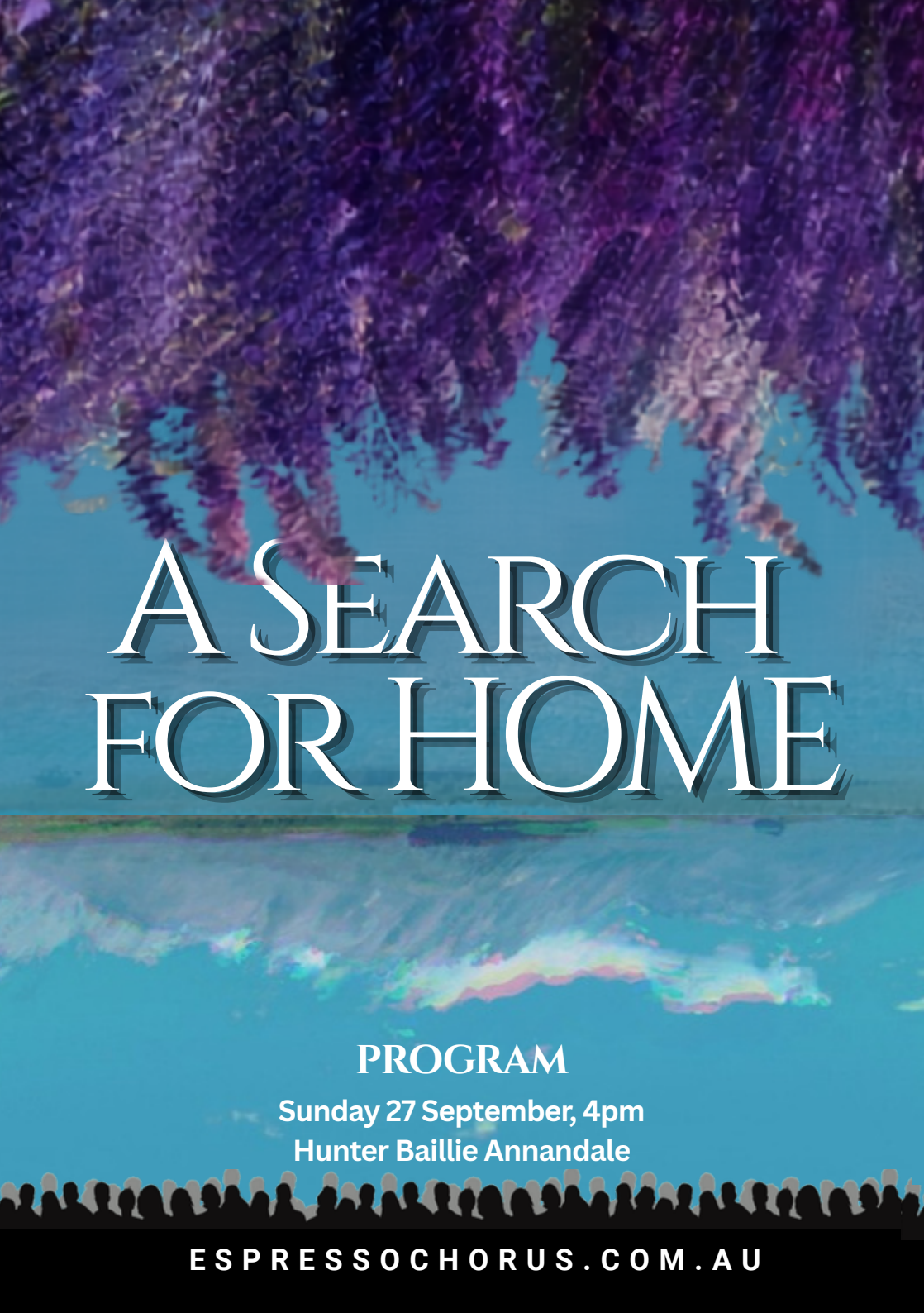




A SEARCH FOR HOME

PROGRAM

Sunday 27 September, 4pm

Hunter Baillie Annandale



ESPRESSOCHORUS.COM.AU



AMAZING GRACE Peter Hunt

A NEW SATISFACTION Stephan Koncz

SILENT NOON Vaughan Williams

A THOUSAND WINDS Aija Draguns

WALTZING MATILDA Acacia Quartet

LAST MIGRATION Kevin Barker

There is nothing quite like the power of human voices singing together to bring us closer. From the spiritual to the personal, from the landscape beneath our feet to the people we carry in our hearts, our concert today asks us to consider where - and with whom - do we truly belong?

The works explore life's journey through soul-searching, belonging, love, loss, renewal and hope. At the heart of the program is the world premiere of *Last Migration*, a new choral cantata commissioned by the LEC from Australian composer Kevin Barker. This expansive work explores the extraordinary migration of shorebirds from Siberia to Australia, their immense, cyclical passage across continents in search of food, safety and, ultimately, a place to return to. It becomes a powerful metaphor for our own search for belonging.

The work expresses a beautiful paradox: "Leaving home is returning home." The birds must leave the place they know, trusting an instinct that will ultimately lead them towards another home. Their journey becomes a meditation on separation, trust and the mysterious forces that draw us towards where we belong. But home is more than a physical place. It can be found in the people we love, in those we have lost, and in the memories we carry. *Aija Draguns, Artistic Director*

Footnote about the artwork. The photo was taken at Lake Tekapo, New Zealand, an area famous for the vibrant aqua-blue colour of its water and the beautiful, iconic purple flowers known as Russell lupins. Ironically, despite their beauty and their association with the New Zealand landscape, Russell lupins are an introduced species and are considered an environmental pest. Their presence adds another layer to the question of where, and how, we come to belong. Is home something we inherit, something we discover, or something we create?

LAST MIGRATION

Every year around 2 million birds fly over 10,000 km from their breeding grounds in Siberia and Alaska to Australia. The adults depart first, but the newly-fledged young spend a few extra weeks building up their body weight before they, too, at only 8 weeks old, set off on the mammoth trek. They often fly non-stop for days at a time, travelling thousands of kilometres without pause. Eventually they must land to rest and feed, to replenish their energy before resuming their arduous flight. Only a few months later they embark on the return journey, to breed again in the northern hemisphere, before the whole cycle begins anew.

Last Migration follows one bird as she makes her epic journey, trusting the inescapable pull of instinct that points her way across the trackless map of earth and sea, struggling against weather, predators, loss of vital habitat, and the sheer tyranny of distance.

While there is some strength in numbers, ultimately each bird is on their own. We can learn from them as we each travel our own journey – as one among the host, receiving support along the way, but needing to trust our own inner voice, to find purpose, strength, and tenacity within ourselves.

Kevin Barker

All lyrics by Kevin Barker except where marked * with Ben Barker

1. Skysong *

Summer's long, soft, nurturing breath
withers upon the cooling moors.
Autumn's song murmurs through tremulous grass,
singing of warmth on distant shores.

Quiet hours turn fretful and fleet,
fleeing before harsh Winter's gaze;
honey'd light growing brittle and thin,
fading from Summer's bright halcyon days.

Swelling winds remember their bitter teeth,
nipping at nascent, fledging wings.
And she knows her young must journey alone,
trusting the wilderness that quietly sings
a song they've never heard yet know by heart.

*Instinct echoes in hollow bones;
their longing follows its urgent tones;
the song surrounds a sudden, sparkling blur of wings
upon the edge of farewell, the wildsong fades...*

From afar the instinctual thread
captures her heart and pulls her on.
In her breast the compass quivers and stirs,
waking to nature's swelling seasonal song.

Leaving home is returning home,
one among a million wings,
yet in this host she makes the journey alone,
trusting the wilderness that faithfully sings
a song she's ever heard and knows by heart.

*Instinct echoes in hollow bones;
their longing follows its urgent tones;
the song surrounds a sudden, sparkling blur of
wings,
as one they fly!*

2. Flight

They fly the song that has no end,
in counterpoint with sky and season.
As they fly the heavens sing,
generous sky fills every wing.
Chasing clouds, caressing sky,
surfing currents carried high,
every soul embodies flight,
riding wind, embracing light.
Generous sky fills every wing,
as they fly the heavens sing.

3. Night

Pale and pure an eggshell moon,
scattering a wan diaphanous light,
barely brushed upon ethereal wings
in their pure flight.

Shining stars inlaid in black,
crystal notes arrayed across the night,
scattered choir of shimmering resonance,
ancient starlight.

Far below the cities lure,
captivating and obscurely bright,
errant paths misleading, insecure,
through the dark night.

4. Storm *

Borne on wings of instinct she drives through the
lashing rain, drawn on by a thread of life, a
heartbeat, a promise of forever more.

At last, on weary wings, she arrives safe at
journey's end, finding sanctuary, the promised
rest...

5. Arrival *

No haven, no sanctuary, the liquid life is gone,
diverted for another's need deemed greater than
her own. No rest here, no choice, she flies on to
further skies, the small spark of her life a speck
that disappears.

7. Further Skies *

Quiet hours ... swelling winds ...
Autumn's song singing of warmth on distant
shores.
Honey'd light growing brittle and thin,
fading from Summer's bright halcyon days.
In her breast the compass quivers and stirs,
waking to nature's swelling seasonal song.

Leaving home is returning home,
one among a million wings,
yet in this host they make the journey alone,
trusting the wilderness that faithfully sings
a song they've ever heard and know by
heart.

Instinct echoes in hollow bones;
their longing follows its urgent tones;
the song surrounds a sudden, sparkling blur
of wings, as one they fly!

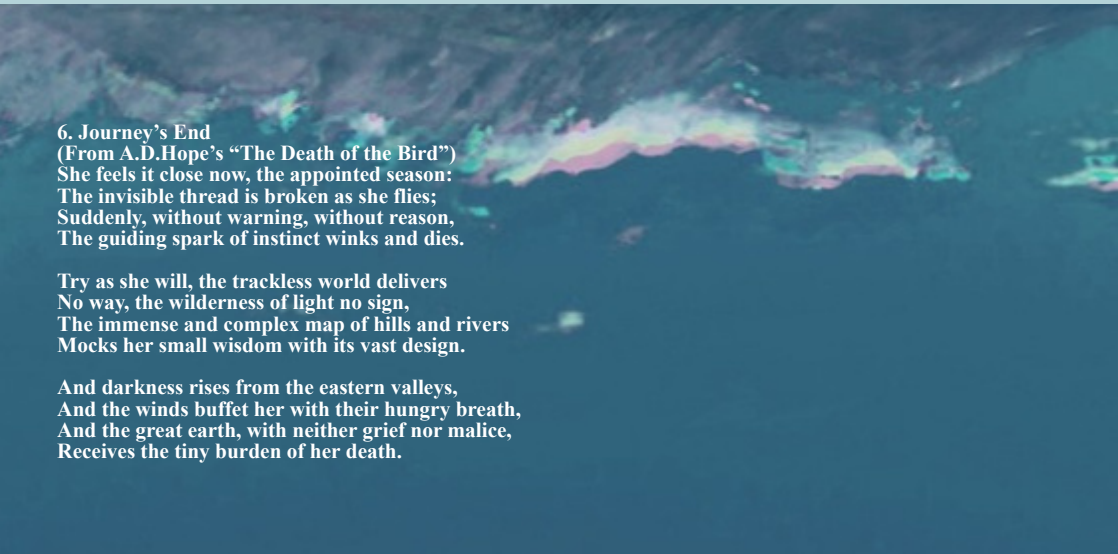
Every dusk entails the dawn,
every day the song reborn.
We all fly, we all belong.
Every life becomes the song,
every breath adds resonance,
every death a cadence,
every birth a melody,
earth's enduring rhapsody.
Every life becomes the song,
we all fly, we all belong,
we all fly.

6. Journey's End

(From A.D.Hope's "The Death of the Bird")
She feels it close now, the appointed season:
The invisible thread is broken as she flies;
Suddenly, without warning, without reason,
The guiding spark of instinct winks and dies.

Try as she will, the trackless world delivers
No way, the wilderness of light no sign,
The immense and complex map of hills and rivers
Mocks her small wisdom with its vast design.

And darkness rises from the eastern valleys,
And the winds buffet her with their hungry breath,
And the great earth, with neither grief nor malice,
Receives the tiny burden of her death.



KEVIN BARKER



Kevin Barker is an Australian composer who lives in the Blue Mountains. Following a career as a freelance jazz musician and composer/arranger, he now concentrates on composing contemporary art music. His early works were played by such jazz luminaries as Don Burrows, Phil Wilson, James Morrison, and the Australian Jazz Orchestra. Recently he has developed a love for choral music and art song, working with AVÉ (Australian Vocal Ensemble), Moorambilla Voices, Voces8, the Song Company, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellows, Cantillation, Leichhardt Espresso Chorus, and Bel A Cappella. Kevin is also in-demand as an arranger and orchestrator.

THE ACACIA QUARTET

Formed 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.



BENJAMIN BURTON



Ben has a passion for accompanying vocal and instrumental performances. In 2014, Ben did an internship with Opera Australia, and traveled on full scholarship to Munich, Germany as a repetiteur for the Bel Canto Summer Program. He studied Piano Performance with an accompaniment focus at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with David Miller and Bernadette Harvey. In 2012 and 2013 he won the Mollie Neale award for highest marks in accompaniment.

Highlights have included the ABC recording Ballads of a Pleasant Life with Peter Coleman-Wright and the Nexas Quartet, performing with Moorambilla Voices and recording Yarragaa, and recitals with Daniela Leska at Sydney Town Hall and the Polish Embassy. He often accompanies the LEC, including at the White Bay Power Station Sing Out Festival 2026. He is an accomplished educator and conductor, with extensive experience as a music tutor including at Reddam House.

AIJA DRAGUNS



Aija Draguns is an Australian-Latvian, Sydney-based composer and conductor whose work is inspired by her Latvian heritage, with a strong affinity for folk, choral, and operatic music. Aija holds a Bachelor of Music (Composition) and Honours from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, where she is currently completing her Master of Music (Composition) with Paul Stanhope. In 2025 Aija began training with the Australian Conducting Academy under the mentorship of Benjamin Northey and was recently awarded a 2026 conducting fellowship position with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In 2024 Aija conducted and premiered her new chamber opera, *In Cosmic Utero*, at NIDA's Parade Theatre, which was nominated for APRA Dramatic work of the year. Aija is also an active music educator, teaching music composition and aural theory at the Sydney Conservatorium.

LEICHHARDT ESPRESSO CHORUS

The Leichhardt Espresso Chorus is an award-winning, community choir of over 80 singers. Founded in 1998 by Michelle Leonard OAM, the choir welcomed its new Artistic Director, composer and conductor Aija Draguns in 2024. The LEC actively commissions and collaborates with leading and emerging Australian composers, conductors, ensembles and musicians. It has commissioned and performed world premieres and arrangements of over 100 new Australian works across NSW. The LEC welcomes all new members, with no audition required. Contact us via the website espressochorus.com.au to find out more.

Soprano: Ananda Hall, Annette Hagerman, Catherine De Lorenzo, Chavelly Espitia, Claire Humphreys, Elisabeth Burke, Jan MacKenzie, Jane Stevens-Hall, Linda Trevor, Lliane Clarke, Maureen Stevens, Michelle Perini, Shae Fleming, Suzanne Blythin, Tara Roberts. **Alto:** Barbara Taylor, Bridget Mabbutt, Bronwyn Vost, Caroline Pugh, Chloe Hardwick-Jones, Christine Walters, Debby Cramer, Diane McCombe, Diane Paul, Ella Teunissen, Glenda Stone, Jane Robinson, Jenny Kent, Julie Montague, Kate Wade, Lesley Dawes, Linda Wills, Lisa Maffina, Magali Wardle, Marina Guilmant, Marina Shine, Roberta Kwan, Susan McCarthy, Svetlana Kotevska, Therese Berrigan, Vivienne Nicoll-Hatton. **Tenor:** David Bernard, Helen Thompson, Judith Bonner, Mike Dunkley, Penny Lomax, Tim Cheung, Toby Smith. **Bass:** Adam Smith, Chris Robinson, Craig Marcombe, Jim Fleming, Jonathan Maddox, Mahinda Perera, Matt Donnelly, Paul Collett, Richard Goodman, Stu Annels, Tom Davies, Victor Voros.



The Leichhardt Espresso Chorus is a small arts organisation run by volunteers. Please consider a tax-deductible donation and help us to commission new music and support Australian musicians.

