



RIVER CITY VOICES PRESENTS

# SONGS OF DESTINY

SUNDAY 22ND OF MAY 4:00 PM  
RIVERSIDE THEATRES, PARRAMATTA



*Program*

# WELCOME TO RIVER CITY VOICES



On behalf of River City Voices, I am delighted to welcome you to our performance of Songs of Destiny. Despite the many challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown at arts organisations, and choirs in particular, we are thrilled to be presenting this performance today. Since its inaugural season in 2019, River City Voices has continued to live up to its mission of bringing choral excellence to Western Sydney. When the pandemic interrupted our 2020/2021 Artistic Program plans, our wonderful Artistic Director, Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith, and General Manager, Inara Molinari, promptly evolved to incorporate rehearsal by Zoom, in small groups or outdoors (once allowed). River City Voices had commissioned Elizabeth Sheppard and Troy Russell in 2019 to create new works for us. The choir has been collaborating with these wonderful composers ever since. Early iterations have evolved, with chorister and composer alike engaging in the depth, meaning and emotion of these pieces. Thank you to JBS&G who supported the commissioning of these works. River City Voices is thrilled to finally premiere these pieces today.

This performance also marks the first occasion that River City Voices has been able to bring its unique skills to Riversides Theatres. Without the early and ongoing support of Riverside Theatres and Parramatta City Council, this would not be possible.

Our heartfelt thanks as well to the wonderful Willoughby Symphony and Willoughby Symphony Choir. Joining together to sing Brahms Schicksalslied (Songs of Destiny) and Gesang der Parzen (Song of the Fates) has not only added suitable gravitas for these times, but the collaboration, musically and socially, has brought resilience to our capacity to deliver this performance, and resounding success in bridging the bridge barrier!

I also take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the NSW Government and Create NSW for its ongoing support during COVID. Finally, thank you to our audience. After such a long hiatus and in continuing uncertain times, your attendance today fills all members of River City Voices and its Board, with pure joy. I hope you find today's performance as thrilling and moving as we do.

River City Voices is showing no sign of slowing down, with another big year planned for 2023; I welcome your ongoing support and engagement with any and all of the opportunities this exciting new choir offers.

*Catherine Dolle-Samuel*

Chair, Board of Directors

## BOARD

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Catherine Dolle-Samuel

### Director | Founder

Inara Molinari

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Piroozi Desai, OAM

William Soper, FCA (UK)

Raquel Tracy

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### Artistic Director

Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith

### General Manager

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William Soper, FCA (UK)

## ARTISTIC STAFF

### Principal Conductor

Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith

### Repetiteur

Su Choung

### Rehearsal Conductors

Dr Philip Eames

Joanna Brooke

### Rehearsal Pianists

Dr Philip Eames

## CHORISTERS

### SOPRANO

Jennifer Baker  
Josephine Chan  
Maria Costello  
Tamara Craig  
Susan Forss-Clarke  
Hadassa Gitau  
Wendy Hopley  
Deborah Howitt  
Naomi von Senff  
Nicole Senior  
Karla Stewart-Sykes  
Lynn Taye  
Ingrid Turner  
Klara de Wit

### ALTO

Grace Bondoc  
Catherine Dolle-Samuel  
Sarah El-Khansa  
Sally Glass  
Danica Gluvakov  
Belinda Huang  
Jane Jamieson  
Laima Karklins  
Roshi Melvin  
Nancy Nicholls  
Hiroko Uchihara  
Helen Yiu

### TENOR

Richard Heagren-Gibbs  
Ian Jenson  
Joshua Lenehan  
Prony Melvin  
Peter Nguyen  
Spencer Thew  
Ben Thurley

### BASS

Steve Barnett  
Don Church  
Philip Gerber  
Ivars Karklins  
Geoff Kerr  
James Mather  
TiMi Thomas  
Michael West  
Dominic Wong

# SONGS OF DESTINY

## CONDUCTOR

DR SARAH PENICKA-SMITH

Assistant Chorus Master

DR PHILIP EAMES

Rehearsal Pianist

SU CHOUNG

Willoughby Symphony Choir

PETER ELLIS

Chorus Master

WSC Rehearsal Pianist

KATHERINE DAY

## WILLOUGHBY SYMPHONY

Concertmaster

MARIA LINDSAY

LIDIA BARA | TESS DUFLOU | ARMINE GARGRTSYAN | HELEN O'SULLIVAN | HOEN ZHANG | Violin 1

ANGELA CASSAR\* | JOCO CUI | TANIA MA | ADAM McLAREN | SARAH ROSS | WEBER YEH | Violin 2

PEDDY LU\* | ROBYN BROOKFIELD | JONATHAN KARANIKAS | MARK THEIBEN | Viola

SARAH JAMESON\* | SARAH INGHAM | JENEAN LEE | NAZLI SENDERGUT | Cello

DANIEL DEAN\* | JEREMY FOX | Double Bass

KATRINA KELVIN\* | ADRIENNE HANSLOW | KATHERINE KEELER | Flute

JOSH NING\* | MIRIAM COONEY | Oboe SAM KELSON-GRAY\* | TINA MA | Clarinet

JOSHUA REYNOLDS\* | HARRY PRITCHARD | Bassoon

GRAHAM NICHOLS\* | SIMON JONES | ROBYN SMILES | ROBERT STONESTREET | French Horn

LARS MEHLAN\* | KOOMI | Trumpet

MATTHEW HARRISON\* | GREG BENNETT | ARTHUR JOHNSON | Trombone

ED DIEFES\* | Tuba

CHIRON MELLER\* | Timpani

THOMAS WALLER | BUDDY LOVETT | Percussion

## RIVER CITY VOICES

**Soprano**

Jennifer Baker | Josephine Chan | Maria Costello | Tamara Craig | Susan Forss-Clarke  
Hadassa Gitau | Wendy Hopley | Deborah Howitt | Naomi von Senff | Nicole Senior | Lynn Taye  
Ingrid Turner | Klara de Wit

**Alto**

Grace Bondoc | Catherine Dolle-Samuel | Sarah El-Khansa | Sally Glass | Danica Gluvakov  
Belinda Huang | Jane Jamieson | Laima Karklins | Roshi Melvin | Nancy Nicholls | Helen Yiu

**Tenor**

Richard Heagren-Gibbs | Ian Jenson | Joshua Lenehan | Prony Melvin | Spencer Thew

**Bass**

Steve Barnett | Don Church | Philip Gerber | Ivars Karklins | Geoff Kerr | James Mather  
TiMi Thomas | Dominic Wong

## Willoughby Symphony Choir

**Soprano:** Marion Berry | Shirley Corbett | Diane Cunningham | Eileen Gallery | Judy Gombos | Janet Halliday | Jenny Holmes | Emma Jones  
Margaret Orchard | Kate Pecar | Ros Read | Mei So | Helen Wakelin-King | Helen Waters

**Alto:** Kristin Blackwell | Edith Collingridge | Winsome Collingridge | Robin Deane-Butcher | Jen Finikin | Anna Frecker | MaryAnne Haines  
Margaret Harvey | Maria Hunter | Mardi Kent | Wendy Lindgren (Choir President) | Anne McIntyre | Joan Peev | Catherine Perkins | Judy Polgar  
Sue Schmidt | Marilyn Sleigh | Lynette Twig | Ruth West | Andi Zhang

**Tenor:** Darrall Cutting | Ken Goth | Rex Hoare | Chris Lu | Denis McIntyre | Lee Owens

**Bass:** Roger Blackwood | David Cook | Peter Cunningham | Peter Ellis | Nigel Griffiths | Ronnie Tong | Hilton Vickers

Although I grew up in a household of classical musicians,  
I'll admit I didn't play a lot of Johannes Brahms.

So when I found myself in Perth in 2015, selected for a master course on Brahms symphonies with Maestro Asher Fisch and the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, I had a lot to learn. By the end of the week, I came away broken-hearted for the prickly bear of a man whose self-doubt crept constantly into his beautifully crafted music.

In 2017 I was back in Perth, this time listening to rehearsals. Here I met two more of Brahms's pieces: *Schicksalslied* ('Song of Destiny') and *Gesang Der Parzen* ('Song of the Fates'). I was struck by the huge difference between the two pieces, one lush and soulful, the other brutal and despairing. Fate and destiny seemed to me like interchangeable concepts; was it different in German? How did Brahms come to write two such different works on the same theme?

Knowing Brahms' history, I hoped that *Schicksalslied* was from late in Brahms' life. It seemed more hopeful, redemptive. Could it suggest Brahms was moving towards some kind of inner peace? Sadly, it's the other way around. Brahms started work on *Schicksalslied* in 1868 and completed it in 1871; *Gesang der Parzen* is from 1882, only two years before he began his final, and darkest, symphony. Both pieces use poems taken from longer works: *Schicksalslied* from Friedrich Hölderlin's 1799 novel *Hyperion*, and *Gesang der Parzen* from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (1779). And although Brahms's musical treatment of the poems sounds so different, the message is actually the same: human fates are determined by the distant and disinterested whims of the immortals. We have no power, or control.

Hölderlin (1770-1843, a German poet and philosopher, had perhaps a harder life than Brahms, struggling with schizophrenia and rejected by his family. *Hyperion* is his best-known work. Its hero is caught between joining a revolution for democracy, and his ideal of uplifting everyone through spiritual education. Despondent at parting from his close friend Alabanda, Hyperion strangely consoles himself with a rather depressing 'song of fate', learnt in his 'innocent youth'. Hölderlin writes each line of verse with a deeper indent; the lines form a kind of ladder pointing downwards on the page, in the same way Brahms' music for the violent middle section of *Schicksalslied* descends in a flurry of notes.

Something similar happens in Goethe's play: Iphigenia, ordered to sacrifice her brother by her king, takes time out from her woes to reflect on a childhood song which 'oft our ancient nurse/ would sing to us'. This is the Parcae's song. Here, 'fate' is less a concept than a role, played by three female figures collectively known as the Fates in English, the Parcae in Latin, Moirai in Greek, and related to the Norns in Old Norse. Together, the Fates spin, measure and cut the thread of life, with some accounts lending them power even beyond those of the gods.

That Brahms read these two quite different works across the space of fifteen years, and honed in on the two poems they contain, suggests that it wasn't just the concept of fate that resonated with him; it was the sense of angry futility.

There is also anger in Troy Russell's powerful new work, *The Chant*. Yet surprisingly for a story most Australians remember for its violence, anger never dominates his music. Inspired by the true story of Jimmy Governor (1875-1901), provoked to murder by the racist treatment of himself and especially his family, Russell asks: what happened to Jimmy's mother? Who was she? How would she have felt? Her haunting call to her son floats through Russell's music in the soprano voices, while the other voices provide intense bursts of the other, less caring voices surrounding the young man.

While Russell's music creates space for people missing from their own story, Elizabeth Sheppard's gives the choir the responsibility of helping to create place after destruction. *Gandangarragal* is both a lament for the damage done to the Blue Mountains in the recent bushfires, and a song to call new life into being. Sheppard remembers what is lost and dreams what will grow, from *Bidjawang* the water dragon, to the lights of the glow-worms cave.

Australian composer Andrew Schultz's short piece, *Music is a Gentle Hammer*, is also music for change. River City Voices has been singing this work in rehearsal since the choir began. Its message and music allow us to tune into each other, and share a little of our creativity along the way.

Finally, in this program of music which looks forward, we include Emma Greenhill's composition *Korrowall*, and Alla Pavlova's *Monolog*. Born in Ukraine to Russian parents and now a resident of New York City, Pavlova was inspired as a young composer by poet Anna Akhmatova, who famously chose to remain in Soviet Russia under the Stalinist regime and use her work to bear witness to the events around her.

Brahms took three years to complete his *Schicksalslied*. After the troubled middle section describing the hustle of the human realm, he'd planned to repeat the lush and tranquil music of the opening. But this ending rung false; Brahms was stuck. He finally completed the work when conductor Hermann Levi suggested he repeat the opening music without the choir - and therefore, without words. Some commentators have suggested this gives the piece a more optimistic ending, and perhaps this was Brahms' intention. But it's also possible, given his love for texts highlighting the distance between human and God, that by removing the voices, Brahms pushes the heavenly realm even further from our reach and understanding - that sadly he saw no place for human voices in Heaven, just beautiful music.

From themes of destiny, fate, and using music to bear witness to the struggles of people and of country, today's music really invites us all to consider how we can share our voices in the name of truth and understanding. But it is also beautiful - so if what you need is an hour of respite, then we invite you to take it here with us.

© Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith

# PROGRAM

The concert runs for 70 minutes without interval

**EMMA GREENHILL (B.1995)**

**Korrowall**

**Winner of the 2022 Young Composer Award**

*Willoughby Symphony ^*

**ALLA PAVLOVA (B.1952)**

**Monolog**

*Maria Lindsay Violin  
Willoughby Symphony ^*

**TROY RUSSELL (B.1962 )**

**The Chant\***

*River City Voices  
Dr Philip Eames Piano*

**ELIZABETH SHEPPARD (B.1948)**

**Gandangarragal: Blue Mountains Dreaming\***

*River City Voices  
Dr Philip Eames Piano*

**ANDREW SCHULTZ (B.1960)**

**Music is a Gentle Hammer**

*River City Voices*

**JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)**

**Gesang der Parzen (Song of the Fates), Op.89**

*River City Voices  
Willoughby Symphony Choir  
Willoughby Symphony*

**JOHANNES BRAHMS**

**Schicksalslied (Song of Destiny), Op.54**

*River City Voices  
Willoughby Symphony Choir  
Willoughby Symphony*

\* World Premiere performance commissioned by River City Voices,  
with support from JBS&G, Environmental Consultants.

^ Willoughby Symphony and Willoughby Symphony Choir appear  
courtesy of Willoughby City Council

## ARTISTS

### **Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith** **Artistic Director & Principal Conductor, River City Voices** **Associate Conductor, Willoughby Symphony**



Versatile, perceptive, and a passionate advocate for music as a force for change, Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith is one of four artists with a socially-engaged practice selected for the inaugural CASE Incubator program. She has led River City Voices as Artistic Director since its inception in 2018. During this time she has conducted the choir's performances of Carmina Burana, Messiah, new arrangements of Japanese anime music for the Sydney Cherry Blossom Festival, a featured performance at ABC Radio's Sing Out Sydney, and recently completed new choral arrangements and recording sessions for a collaborative project that engaged neurodiverse musicians from Arts + Cultural Exchange's Club Weld program. She was recently appointed as Willoughby Symphony's Associate Conductor, conducting two acclaimed collaborations with Legs On The Wall.

Sarah's other positions include Head of Creative Arts at St Andrew's College, Principal Conductor with the Macquarie Singers & Macquarie Chamber Orchestra, and Artistic Director of Pacific Pride Choir. She also founded the Lifehouse Volunteer Orchestra, bringing music to patients and their families at the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

Sarah made her international debut in Dallas in 2018 through the Hart Institute for Women Conductors at The Dallas Opera. She has conducted a number of operas with Sydney companies, as well as guest conducting for various ensembles including Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Penrith Symphony Orchestra, Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra, and Sydney Youth Orchestra.

Sarah's current projects include libretto development for The Klein-Arkininstall Project, a new one-woman opera about living with OCD; Festival Choir Director for the Blackheath Choral Festival, and a recording/performance project with River City Voices and the neurodiverse musicians of Club Weld in Parramatta.

### **Maria Lindsay** **Violin + Concertmaster Willoughby Symphony**

Maria Lindsay has been the Concertmaster of Willoughby Symphony since 2018. Since graduating from Sydney Conservatorium of Music with High Distinction and Student of the Year, Maria has pursued an illustrious career as soloist, chamber musician, artistic director, concertmaster and teacher.

Maria's early career included positions with the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Symphony and Australian Chamber Orchestra. She is a member of the Australian World Orchestra and has toured extensively worldwide with all these orchestras.

As Guest Concertmaster Maria has worked with Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia, Sydney Opera House Orchestra, St Laurence Chamber Orchestra, North Sydney Symphony and many others.

Maria initiated the Blue Mountains Chamber Concerts and in 2012 the Lurline Recital Series. She was a founding member of the Apollo Trio, with whom she performed in Sydney and regional NSW for 6 years and recorded a CD of Australian piano trios. Other long-term chamber associations are the Lindsay Trio and a recital duo with Josephine Allan, piano. She has partnered with Daniel Rojas - piano (CD recorded in 2017), Claire Edwardes - percussion, Mark Walton - clarinet, Susan Blake - cello, Daniel Herscovich - piano, Catherine McCorkill - clarinet, Monika Kornel - harpsichord to name a few. A love of the tango genre recently found an outlet in the fiery dance ensemble Orquesta La Luna, which formed in 2016 with Maria as lead violin.

She is currently working on her first significant composition for solo violin and has performed contemporary chamber music with Klangforum Vienna, the Seymour Group Sydney, Alpha Ensemble and Ensemble Offspring. She includes baroque music in her programming, and has performed the entire Mystery Sonatas of Biber, a rarity due to the length and virtuosity of the work, as well as the 15 different scordatura tunings required. She has made broadcasts for the A.B.C. and 2MBS-FM and recorded the set works for the AMEB Violin Series 9.

Maria teaches at the Sydney Conservatorium and UNSW.



## Dr Philip Eames RCV Assistant Chorus Master + Piano



Hailing from Brisbane, Dr Philip Eames studied piano with Dr Max Olding, AM and Dr Stephen Savage at the Queensland Conservatorium. He then travelled overseas on scholarship for further study at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, before completing his doctorate in 2017 at the Sydney Conservatorium, on the choral music of Percy Grainger.

Philip has worked with choirs for well over a decade, initially as an accompanist before expanding into director roles. In 2019, Philip was selected as one of the inaugural assistant conductors of River City Voices, with the opportunity to serve as chorus master for Handel's *Messiah* and has enjoyed collaborating with them since. He is the musical director of Aqualuna Singers, and is frequently a guest conductor and accompanist for other choirs including the Macquarie Singers, Jubilate Singers, Willoughby Symphony Choir and Pyrmont Sings. Philip is also highly active as a composer, and choral music forms an important part of his output. His choral cycle "This Great Unrain" was selected as the winner of the 2020 Willgoss Choral Composition Prize.

## Su Choung RCV Repetiteur

Su Choung is a dynamic and engaging collaborative pianist based in western Sydney with interest and experience in a wide range of musical genres. She completed a Bachelor of Music (Performance) degree and a Graduate Diploma in Collaborative Piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, under the guidance of some of Australia's leading pianists; David Miller, Dr. Paul Rickard-Ford and Natalia Sheludiakova. Su was elected to represent the Conservatorium for the Estivo Chamber Music Festival in Verona, Italy, where she received tutelage as both a solo and collaborative pianist. In 2020, Su was the Music Director of highly acclaimed new opera *Love Burns: an Australian Opera* and in 2021 she was a repetiteur for Opera Australia's NSW Schools Tour. Su has also worked as the repetiteur for Flamingo Opera's debut double bill production of *Bastien und Bastienne* and *Apollo et Hyacinthus* and is a founding member of children's entertainment trio Avocado Smash! This year Su continues her training as a 2022 Young Artist, Melba Opera Trust, mentored by Sharolyn Kimmorley. Later this year she will be the repetiteur at Victorian Opera for *The Butterfly Lovers* and *A Christmas Carol*.



## Peter Ellis Chorus Master Willoughby Symphony Orchestra



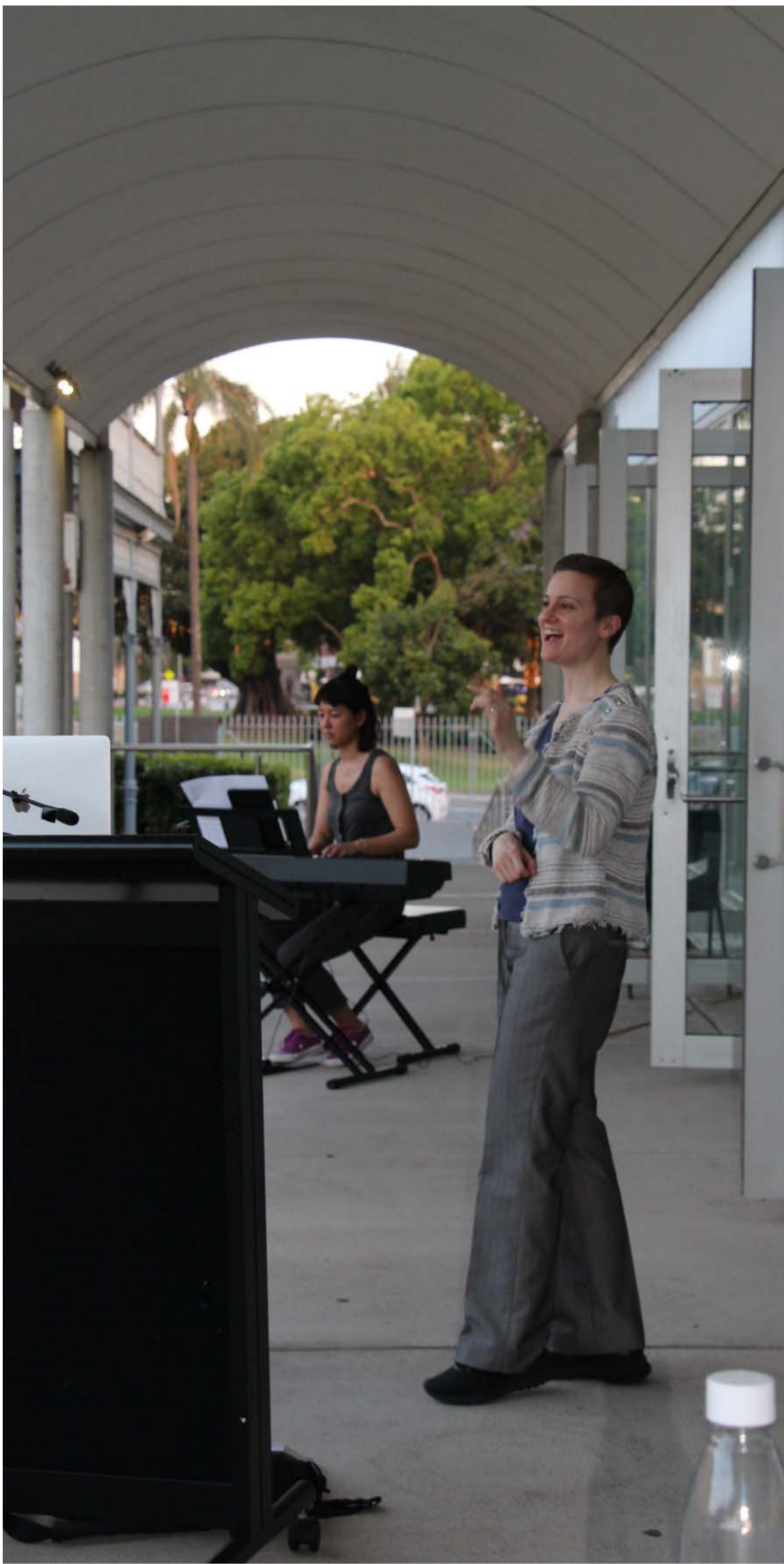
Peter Ellis is from Halifax, UK and has been resident in Australia for 20 years. Prior to emigration he read Music at the University of Birmingham and gained his PGCE from the University of London Institute of Education. He performed with the CBSO Chorus at the BBC Proms, on Gramophone award-winning recordings and on Channel 4 and Japanese television.

For ten years Peter has been Director of Choral Programs K-12 at Barker College, Sydney. As well as teaching and developing curriculum music he directs multiple choral and orchestral ensembles and has conducted Barker's choirs in Gallipoli, Istanbul, New York, Washington, Boston, Edinburgh, York, London, Cambridge, Villers-Bretonneux, Paris, Shanghai, Suzhou and Nanjing. He will be the music director for Barker's 2023 production of *Les Miserables*.

As Music Director of Willoughby Symphony Choir since 2015, he has conducted the choir with both the Willoughby and Ku-ring-gai orchestras in major works such as Goossens' arrangement of Handel's *Messiah*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Faure's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* and works by Vaughan-Williams, as well as several CDs. In 2022 he conducts Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Mozart's arrangement of *Messiah*.

Formerly on the music staff of St. James', King Street and St. Luke's Mosman, Peter still makes occasional appearances as an organist and continuo harpsichordist, in concerts at UNSW and for various institutions including St. Andrew's Cathedral. He has also guest directed Queensland Baroque and has appeared on several broadcasts and recordings with Australian Baroque Brass. He has also conducted performances with the Ku-Ring-Gai Philharmonic Orchestra, Macquarie University Singers and Newcastle University Choir.

Peter recently had a solo trombone work published in the examination booklet by the AMEB and has several choral works awaiting publication. Away from his musical work Peter is an avid runner, kayaker and is also undertaking practitioner training with Bodyminded Sydney Alexander Technique.



Above clockwise: Outdoor rehearsing in 2020; Troy Russell with 5 singers first Commission workshop Nov 2020; Outdoor rehearsing 2020; Elizabeth Sheppard first Commission workshop Nov 2020; Outdoor Carols in Parramatta Park; Online Zoom rehearsals; Snapshot of Virtual Choir release of Sure on This Shining Night, December 2020.





## Willoughby Symphony

Entering its 48th year, the extraordinary Willoughby Symphony has blossomed into an exceptional orchestra of international standard. The Willoughby Symphony is widely celebrated for captivating performances that showcase the orchestra's incredible virtuosity across the entire symphonic repertoire. It is renowned for an outstanding annual subscription series that encompasses beloved orchestral classics, innovative music presentation styles, for example, its recent Next Chapters collaboration with Legs on the Wall, and family oriented productions that engage and delight audiences of all ages.

The musicians bring artistic integrity and visceral excitement to their intoxicating performances, uniting in a shared vision of music and community. They are a tight-knit group with a rich and supportive culture, and their enthusiasm and passion for music is obvious in every concert.

Each year sees them build on the last, with the orchestra hosting Australia's most exciting emerging artists and composers, and pushing the boundaries of classical music. Not only do they present revelatory performances of the classics, they bring energy and flair to rock and pop music. They are also committed to making music inviting and accessible to all, with two children's concerts each year inspiring the next generation of musicians and music lovers.

The Willoughby Symphony has been led since 2001 by internationally celebrated orchestra icon and local legend chief conductor and artistic director, Dr Nicholas Milton AM. Renowned for his charismatic stage presence, powerful interpretations and compelling musical integrity, Dr Milton continues to attract international attention as one of the most outstanding conductors working today.

Formerly general music director and chief conductor of the State Opera House in Saarbrücken, Nicholas is currently chief conductor and artistic director of the Gottingen Symphony Orchestra, and chief conductor Klagenfurt State Opera House and Kärntner Sinfonieorchester, Austria. Despite a vibrant international schedule, the Grammy-nominated conductor remains passionately committed to the Willoughby Symphony.

Willoughby Symphony is proudly managed by Willoughby City Council.



## Willoughby Symphony Choir

Willoughby Symphony Choir (WSC) was established in 1973 and is recognised as a fine community choir. With a membership of 130, WSC performs in its own right and also as the symphonic choir for Willoughby Symphony. The choir's repertoire comprises mainly classical works: oratorios, masses and requiems, as well as operatic and symphonic music. The choir also performs in Willoughby community functions such as Carols in the Park and the Lighting of the Christmas Tree in Chatswood.

Recent WSC performances have included oratorios *The Creation and The Seasons* (Haydn), Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky*, Brahms's *Requiem*, Britten's *St Nicholas*, and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. This year the choir will perform Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (3 July) and Handel's *Messiah*.

Peter Ellis is WSC's Musical Director and has led the choir since 2015.

GALLERY



Above clockwise: Sam Worrad (Guitar), Jerrah Patston and Sarah Penicka-Smith, first joint rehearsal of *Rain is Falling*, Bankwest Stadium, May 2021; RCV Board members with City of Parramatta Councillor Patricia Prociv and then Director, Riverside Theatres, Robert Love OA; RCV with Sam and Jerrah on the field at Bankwest Stadium; Sarah in the recording booth at Arts+Information Exchange for What the World Needs sessions; rehearsing for Latvian Festival concert December 2021; Choristers Dominic and Huw in the booth.



Bankwest Stadium photos: Grant Leslie  
Booth photos: James Tracy

## PROGRAM NOTES

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)  
*Gesang der Parzen (Song of the Fates)*, Op.89

Johannes Brahms was inspired to write his final major choral work when he saw Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, a reworking of the Greek tragedy, in the Vienna Burgtheater. It was the stanzas from the play's fourth act known as the 'Song of the Fates' – in which Iphigenia reflects on the vengeance of the gods – that particularly appealed to the composer. He began work on setting those lines in the summer of 1882.

The dramatic opening immediately plunges the listener into a world where fickle gods determine the fate of individuals, generations and entire nations – Brahms uses contrabassoon and tuba to add menace and power to the orchestra's bass section. But the chorus enters quietly with the words: "the human race trembles before the gods!"

The text is a warning to those whom the gods uplift – should a dispute arise, the humans will be defiled and cast into darkness, while the gods continue to feast at golden tables.

As Goethe's poetry describes the gods turning their eyes "away from all races" and abandoning the grandchildren of "once-loved ancestors," Brahms does away with the relentless minor-key march, the timpani falls silent, and the chorus sings a shimmering, blissful melody.

"Just the appearance of the major key alone should soften the heart and moisten the eye of the innocent listener," Brahms wrote of this moment.

"Only then does humanity's whole misery get to him."

The work finishes with a haunting epilogue, "so sang the Fates," piccolo soaring wraith-like above the strings.

*Gesang der Parzen* premiered in Basel, Switzerland, in December 1882 and was published the following year. In his memoir, Brahms' friend Heinz von Beckerath recounts a performance of the work in January 1883, conducted by the composer, in which the audience greeted the work so enthusiastically he was forced to perform it again as an encore.

He recalls:

The ladies of the chorus had brought along flowers, which they now threw at Brahms amid great jubilation. This was not as harmless as intended, for the flowers were tied into flat bouquets with wire, as was then the custom, and Rudolf von Beckerath, who sat at the first desk, had to hold his arms over the head of Brahms to shield him. The repetition of the Parzenlied succeeded perhaps even more wonderfully than its first rendition.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)  
*Schicksalslied (Song of Destiny)*, Op.54

German composer and conductor Albert Dietrich recorded the moment of inspiration for this choral masterpiece by Johannes Brahms, written in the wake of his magnificent *Ein deutsches Requiem*.

Visiting a naval base at Wilhelmshaven in 1868, Brahms told his companions he had woken up early and discovered on a bookshelf a collection of poems by Friedrich Hölderlin, including 'Hyperion's Song of Destiny'. Deeply affected by the poem, "our friend, usually so cheery, was silent and serious on the journey," Dietrich recalls. "Later, as we rested by the sea after much walking about and looking at interesting sights, we discovered Brahms far removed from us, sitting on the beach and writing," Dietrich writes. "It was the first sketch for the Schicksalslied."

Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*, or the Hermit in Greece, published in 1797, takes the form of letters from the titular character Hyperion during a rebellion against Turkish rule in Greece. A poem from this novel, the 'Song of Destiny' that so entranced Brahms, is preoccupied with the distinction between the divinity of the gods and the suffering of humanity.

Brahms captures the divine in his resplendent setting of the opening lines (hear how the winds climb to the heavens before the chorus enters) which begin: "You wander above in the light, on soft ground, blessed immortals!" This depiction of the divine contrasts abruptly with the violent strings of the Allegro, ushered in by grim chords from the winds. We hear in the chorus and orchestra the suffering of the mortals "hurled like water" into the abyss.

While that is the grim conclusion of Hölderlin's poem, Brahms agonised over how he would conclude his own work, rewriting the ending several times and seeking advice from the likes of Clara Schumann and the conductor Hermann Levi, before the *Schicksalslied's* eventual premiere in 1871.

Brahms ultimately landed on a purely instrumental reprise of the opening's 'divine' music, transposed from the original E flat major to the new, distant key of C major, in a serene ending that offers a modicum of peace if not necessarily – as musicologists continue to debate – salvation.

© Angus McPherson 2022

## TRANSLATIONS

Fear the Gods, humankind!  
They hold rule in everlasting hands, and can use it how they like.  
Fear them doubly, the more you're raised up!  
On cliffs and clouds seats are prepared round golden tables.  
Whoever starts a fight, that guest will be pitched down,  
abused and dishonoured, into nocturnal deep,  
and wait in vain, bound in the dark, for a fair hearing.  
The Gods linger in unending feasts at golden tables.  
They stride from mountain to mountain,  
while from the maw of the deep steams the breath  
of smothered Titans,  
like the smell of a sacrifice, a faint cloud.  
The rulers turn their blessing eye from whole generations,  
and avoid seeing the once beloved, soft-speaking features of  
the ancestor  
in the grandson.  
So sang the fates:  
the banished one listen in nocturnal caves  
to the Old Ones' songs,  
thinks of his children and grandchildren,  
and shakes his head.

You wander above in the light upon soft ground, blessed  
guardian Spirits!  
The shining breath of the Gods stirs you lightly,  
like the artist's finger on holy strings.  
Without destiny, like the sleeping baby, the Heavenly Ones  
breathe;  
kept chastely in modest buds,  
their spirit blooms forever,  
and the blessed eyes watch with silent, eternal clarity.  
But to us is given no place to rest.  
They fade, they fall, the suffering people,  
blindly, from one hour to another,  
thrown like water from cliff to cliff,  
down into the unknown.

## COMPOSERS

### Emma Greenhill-Korrowall



Emma Greenhill is a Blue Mountains based composer, arranger and violinist. She completed a Bachelor of Music degree in composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2017, studying under Paul Stanhope.

Emma's music is characterised by the diverse musical landscapes she walks through every day, with strong reference to our Australian flora and fauna. Since graduating, Emma has won several national competitions including the Watermark Composition Prize and the APRA AMCOS MadeBy composition competition with her piece Regrowth. Her works have been included in both new AMEB Violin and Trombone series and she has been commissioned to compose new works by James Blackford – for a new album of Australian brass music – as well as through the commissioning project The ANAM Set; by Trinity Grammar School; by Karen Carey for the Symphony For Life foundation; and by film director Rhys Day for two short films, *Strange Country* and *The Eels*.

#### About the Music

This piece is written in dedication to the Blue Mountains' Korrowall or what is more commonly known as Mount Solitary. I would like to pay respect to this spectacular mountain's traditional custodians and rightful owners, the Gundungurra and Darug people. Last year, my partner and I climbed and camped on top of Korrowall/Mount Solitary. I was contemplating an orchestral piece at the time and thought I might encounter some bird calls to integrate into a new composition along the way. I was overwhelmed with incredible bird songs, the roaring sound of the wind over cliffs, the sheer vastness of the landscape and the mystical essence it holds. As I sat (wine in hand) watching birds dance and the sun set over an enormous valley, I felt strangely at peace with a sense that I was part of something much bigger and more important than myself – life!

I have somehow tried to replicate this feeling, the bird calls, the beauty and the terrifying enormity of the landscape, into this piece. I hope it conveys the importance of preserving our natural Australian landscape and these sacred places we are so fortunate to venture into.

### Troy Russell - The Chant

Troy John Russell is of the Biripai people of the Greater Manning area near Taree, and the Gamillaroi people of the North West Slopes and Plains. Troy's journey with music began at 11, when a neighbour offered to teach him the fundamentals of music, and Troy flourished. He found an old photograph of his father playing a banjo and learned that his family from Taree was a musical family - a great revelation that has been inspiring him for the last 40 years. In 2018 Troy was a member of the first year of the AMPlify Indigenous Composer Initiative headed by renowned Indigenous composer and ANU lecturer Dr Christopher Sainsbury. Since then he has been involved with Dr Sainsbury's Ngarra-Burria: First Nations Composers program leading to collaborations including in 2019 with Sydney Living Museums. *The Last Shot* written by Troy, a musical full of romance and chaos that explores the tribulations of his ancestor's stories, was presented for the 2022 Sydney Festival.

Troy is currently working at NAISDA where he teaches DanceFilm to the Developing Artists. He continues to write music in collaboration with his band GiiMusic and also plays guitar with Green Hand Band. *The Chant* is Troy's first SATB choral work.



#### About the Music

Jimmy Governor (1875 – 18 January 1901) was an Indigenous Australian who along with his brother Joe, became notorious across Australia for the murders in 1900 of four members of the Mawbey family and their woman boarder. Following what became known as the Breelong Massacre, the Governors were the last men in the State to be declared outlaws, and their escape resulted in Australia's largest manhunt with a £1,000 reward on offer for each.

At the time, Jimmy was employed by the Mawbeys to fence the expansion of their property and his wife Ethel Page was also working as a domestic servant. Jimmy had met 16-year-old Ethel at Gulgong after he resigned as a police tracker and married her when she was five months' pregnant with their child Sidney. Ethel was subjected to ongoing ridicule from the Mawbeys, since inter-racial marriages were not accepted, especially where the wife was white.

An indication is given by this newspaper article immediately after the murders: "[Jimmy Governor] only consented, it is said, to perform the [marriage] ceremony at the earnest solicitation of the girl's mother, who, for reasons which may be understood, wished to save her daughter's reputation. One naturally wonders what manner of woman the mother was who insisted on uniting her daughter for life to a low-bred savage aboriginal."

It must be remembered that women in this society were regarded as chattels and simultaneously the agents of patriarchal and colonial oppression, as well as its victims.

In reflecting on this incident, a voice that struck me as absent and unrecorded, is that of Jimmy's mother, Annie Fitzgerald. Born of an inter-racial marriage, she must have known all too well her son's desires to be treated fairly, to have some control over his family's destiny and to regain a sense of identity and place on country.

I have composed *The Chant* as her lament for a son that died too soon and the difficult times they lived in.

## COMPOSERS

### Elizabeth Sheppard- Gandangarragal



Elizabeth Sheppard's Indigenous music combines Noongar Indigenous and Scottish musical traditions with contemporary themes, in professionally scored instrumental and vocal compositions. Through lifelong immersion in Australian music, poetry and scholarship, Elizabeth enacts Reconciliation through articulate musical truth-telling infused with bicultural spirituality. She expresses her Christian faith through church music, poetry and gardening, in creative synchrony with Australian songlines. In 2017-2018 her *Kooranginy Spinning*, *Kaya Mary*, *Warangka Makialo*, *Wonthaggi*, *Burradowi* and *Mary Moorditj Ngaangk* premiered at Eora Aboriginal College and the ANU Music Studio, as heard on Stephen Adams' New Waves ABC podcast.

Elizabeth's recent music includes *Ngalak Noonook Balga*, *Djidar Dawn*, *Ngariny Burning Bush*, *Gathering Yams*, *Minninup Pool*, *ten Australian Christmas carols*, *The Reveille Mass*, *Untitled*, *Canticum ex Cordis Australiae* (a response to the Uluru Statement, commissioned by The Song Company) and *Gandangarral*, commissioned by River City Voices.

An Australian Aboriginal law, music and culture Diploma graduate of Eora and Tranby Aboriginal Colleges, and a Baccalaureate Arts/Theology/Philosophy graduate of Sydney University, Elizabeth began Postgraduate studies at ANU in 2020, receiving Interpretation Australia's National Award for Excellence for *Karlinkiri Hearth*. In 2021, continuing her research, she received the ANU Indigenous Music Scholarship. In 2021 Dr. Scott Davies commissioned and performed *Kalgoorli Silky Pear*, and Elizabeth sang *Ngalak Noonook Balga*, *Sovereign Country*, *Ngaala Maaman*, *Kaya Mary*, *Mary Moorditj Ngaangk*, and *Wonthaggi*, in CovidSafe concerts at Sydney Conservatorium, with Alan Hicks accompanying. At Christmas 2021 The Song Company streamed Elizabeth's Christmas anthem *Mary Gentle Mother* from Garrison Church, Sydney.

### About the Music

My piece *Gandangarragal: Blue Mountains Dreaming*, composed soon after the devastating bush fires of 2020, is one of many outcomes of a 2020 ANU AG RTP Postgraduate Indigenous Scholarship to study composition, that I was offered and accepted in late 2019. My intention in composing this music, was to comfort myself, my family, and my friends, and honour the places we love, as we were all extremely shocked by the massive loss of heritage, bushland habitat and animal life during the fires. I know the power of song, and I wanted to give myself, and other mourners, an opportunity to sing hope, life and beauty back into Gandangarragal (the Indigenous name of Gandangarra Country, the Blue Mountains, which is one of my ancestral countries). The poetic lyrics of the piece are entirely mine; they were written for, and read at, a Fellowship of Australian Writers' group convened by Lyn Leerson OAM, and set to music for River City Voices.

*Gandangarragal* is innovative, because it is notated Indigenous music, and unusual in that Indigenous words are included in the text, that I have authorised, as I have Gandangarra heritage. The song draws attention to two forms of rare Australian animal life - the Bidjawang (Water Dragon lizard), and glow worms - that are seldom found in songs. The piece is visual and symbolic - it opens with flowing water, ferny gullies and nesting magpie song in the treetops, then revisits the gorges, where the Water Dragon (Bidjawang) reigns from his rocky throne. As the sun sets, pinging semiquavers set against flowing melodies depict a glow worm cavern, butterflies flutter and settle in the dusk, and bellbirds fall silent by the billabong. This music is incurably, riskily romantic and hopeful - as we all must be, to recall new life into being, after a disaster.

### Andrew Schultz-Music is a Gentle Hammer



Composer Andrew Schultz was born in Australia and lives in Sydney. He studied at the Universities of Queensland, Pennsylvania and King's College London and has received numerous awards, prizes and fellowships. His music covers a broad range of chamber, orchestral and vocal works and has been performed and broadcast widely by leading musicians internationally.

He has held many commissions including from all the major Australian orchestras. Andrew has written a number of large scale works including three operas (*Black River*, *Going Into Shadows* and *The Children's Bach*) which have been presented live and on film around the world. Other major works include three symphonies, *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*, *Maali*, *Endling* and *Song of Songs*. Andrew has held residencies and academic posts in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, USA and the UK. He is Emeritus Professor of Music at UNSW and the Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University.

### About the Music

I composed the words and music in 1991 with the intention of creating a work that could be sung by groups of singers of almost any size and with almost any range of musical experience and background. The work is freely notated with the singers tracking their path through the slow moving and gentle notes of the music in an improvisatory and collaborative manner. Like all good improvisations a successful performance relies on both individual willingness and collective ability to contribute to an overall sound world. I think the words of the piece speak to the same idea of collaboration: 'music is a gentle hammer for breaking down walls'.

The piece is notated in free, long notes and is diatonic over a sustained low E flat that can be performed by any sustaining instrument or even sung by a low voice or voices. The slow vocal slides in the work contribute to a horizon of shimmering sound that can be enhanced by positioning the performers to take advantage of the varying acoustic possibilities of the performance space.

*Music is a gentle hammer* was originally published in a LaTrobe Uni Press anthology of music for improvisers edited by Jeff Pressing and have recently released the work again in their collection, *Out of Time*, edited by Diana Blom and Brett McKern.

**SAVE THE DATES****September** Thurs 8  
Sun 11

# What The World Needs

**ALBUM LAUNCH & CONCERTS**

Following the successful completion of the recording project *Welded Voices*, a collaboration between River City Voices and Arts + Cultural Exchange's Club Weld program, RCV is excited to bring these wonderful new arrangements of inspiring, catchy and heartfelt songs to a live audience!

Features songs by musicians Clare Brown, Jonathan Yung, Jerrah Patston, Sienna Acquaro, Nina Gotsis & Charbel Nehme.

*Welded Voices* was made possible with support from a City of Parramatta Creative Economy grant.

Have you subscribed to our E-news?

Go to [www.rivercityvoices.org.au](http://www.rivercityvoices.org.au) to be kept in the loop!

**DECEMBER** Friday 16

## **SLAM MESSIAH**

**Riverside Theatres**

A brave new reinterpretation of Handel's *Messiah* performed alongside local slam poets.

A first for Australia!

Stay tuned for more details



27  
August

You can also catch us  
at the Blackheath  
Choir Festival  
7pm

## RIVER CITY VOICES

River City Voices (RCV) is Parramatta's flagship, auditioned symphony choir. It was formed in 2018 by General Manager Inara Molinari to meet the community's desire for large-scale cultural events closer to home. Led by its exceptional Artistic Director Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith, the company's vision is to become a permanent and relevant organisation, renowned for its vocal excellence, surprising collaborative artistic programs, and events that reflect and engage its diverse community.

In its brief history, RCV has engaged over 2,000 artists, arts workers and community members through its public performances, development programs and workshops. Performances have included curated programs, festivals, corporate and government gigs, and collaborative community events, such as the Parramatta premiere "Come & Sing" featuring *Carmina Burana*; an interactive Japanese anime music program with TaikOz for the Sydney Cherry Blossom Festival; and a sold-out performance of Handel's *Messiah* at St Patrick's Cathedral alongside Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Orchestra. RCV has also been broadcast on ABC Local Radio following its feature performance at ABC Radio's Sing Out Sydney at the City Recital Hall in 2019.

Poised for further success in 2020, COVID-19 has seen the company swiftly demonstrate a nimble, adaptive response that despite program cancellations, has ensured the continued engagement of choristers, staff and community.

Highlights in the past two years include: virtual choir and recording releases via social platforms that have reached over 2.5K viewers; an open rehearsal at Bankwest Stadium and associated recording and production of an album - *What the World Needs* - featuring new choral arrangements of songs composed by neurodiverse musicians from project partner Arts + Cultural Exchange's (ACE) Club Weld program. This project was made possible with funding support from City of Parramatta Council. Check out the digital song releases in June!

RCV will feature at the Blackheath Choir Festival in August, perform songs from its new collaborative album *What the World Needs* in September, and finally present Handel's *Messiah* in a bravely envisaged "Slam" version in December.

**This performance of SONGS OF DESTINY would not have been possible without support from the following:**

**CREATE NSW ORGANISATIONAL GRANT**

**NSW GOVERNMENT COVID BUSINESS GRANT**

**COMMISSION SPONSOR  
JBS&G, Environmental Consultants**

**RIVERSIDE THEATRES, PARRAMATTA**  
A unit of City of Parramatta

**WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL**



### Special thanks also to the following individuals and organisations:

CONDON ADVISORY GROUP, RCV's Visionary Foundation Sponsor

ANDREW LAU, CEO of JBS&G for his genuine support of the new commissions

TROY RUSSELL AND ELIZABETH SHEPPARD for their wonderful music and knowledge, and for their patience and support

ANNETTE BROWN, former Willoughby Symphony Manager, WENDY LINDGREN, President Willoughby Symphony Choir and PETER ELLIS Chorus Master, Willoughby Symphony Choir and all the WONDERFUL musicians and choristers who joined RCV today

ISABELLA BROWN & DANIEL DEAN, Casual Orchestra Coordinators, Willoughby Symphony

MARIJANA JEVREMOV, the marketing and box office team, and SEAN CLARKE and team at RIVERSIDE THEATRES

MILI LEE and team at St Patricks Cathedral, Parramatta, RCV's rehearsal home

CHARLOTTE TOOSE CUTLER of CONTENT LAUNDRY for an awesome socials campaign

PEPE NEWTON of CLASSIKON, early supporters of RCV's events

MELANIE PENICKA-SMITH Director, Penicka-Smith Arts & Event Management



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