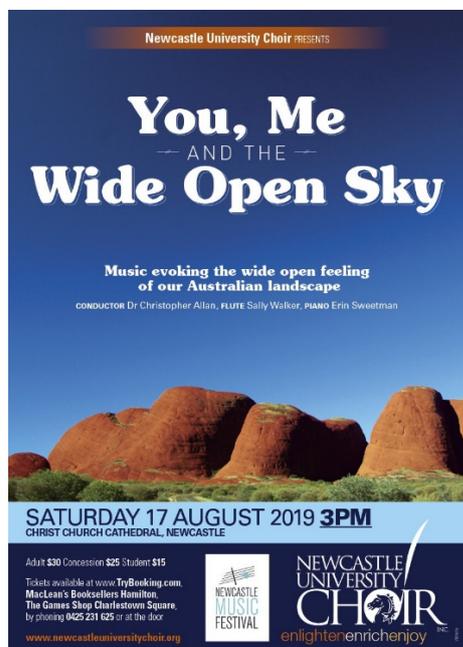




# Cacophony

Issue 61, August 2019



On Saturday afternoon, 17 August 2019 at 3:00 pm the Newcastle University Choir (NUC) will perform *You, Me and the Wide Open Sky*, at Christchurch Cathedral. The entire focus of the concert is modern Australian choral music, featuring a range of Australian composers. The focus is music evoking the wide open feeling of our Australian landscape.

Conducted by Dr Christopher Allan, the Newcastle University Choir will be supported by pianist Erin Sweetman. Sally Walker, a well-known local flautist, will add an instrumental component to the concert. This concert is part of the Newcastle Music Festival.

Tickets are \$30 adult, \$25 Concession, \$15 Student, and can be obtained from [www.TryBooking.com](http://www.TryBooking.com); MacLean's Booksellers, Hamilton; The Games Shop Charlestown Square, by phoning 0425231625, or at the door. Below are some highlights from the concert.

This is the first all Australian program that the Newcastle University Choir has presented for some time. In the last twenty years or so, there has been a proliferation of new choral works by young Australian composers which have captured a feeling of the landscape of our country. The program is designed to present a selection of these evocative and exciting works.

Dan Walker is a singer as well as a composer and conductor who contributes solidly to choral repertoire with many new compositions, often being commissioned by groups such as Gondwana Voices. Dan has a gift for both melody writing and for interesting piano accompaniments as you will hear in the three works of his we will perform. Dan agreed to allow us to use the title of one of the works - *You, me and the wide open sky* - as the title for our concert, and he willingly agreed. It's fitting, therefore, that we open the concert with this beautiful piece. We will soon follow with two more songs by Dan, *Phonograph* for two sopranos and altos and *Orestias* for SATB forces.

*Orestias* was an ancient Greek settlement near the border of modern-day Turkey. The song text refers to the legend of Icarus, son of Daedalus, who flew on wings made of feathers held together by wax. He flies higher 'where the gods hear me!' to where he reaches the 'roof of the world'. *Phonograph* is a beautiful description of the joys of the old-style record player. After a slightly discordant start, we hear a nostalgic tune and then, eventually, the 'sticking' of a few bars as the record hits a scratch.

Iain Grandage is a West Australian based composer who is currently the director of the Perth Festival. We perform two works, firstly his *3 Australian Bush Songs*. These are wonderfully evocative of both the 'space' of Australia and descriptive of bird songs, sunrise and sunset. His imaginative use of colour and chord spacing gives us a real sense of the wide-open spaces, the harshness of the Australian sun and the beauty of the red sunset. The bird song speaks for itself. Later in the program we will perform his setting of the fantastic poem by Edward Lear - *The Owl and the Pussycat*. He uses a very virtuoso piano accompaniment which begins in a quasi-impressionistic style. Listen out for the tango as the Owl and Pussycat dance.

Juliana Kay's short piece *Songs No Longer Sung* is slightly different in tone from the others we will present today. She draws on the text found in many hundreds of songs associated with a backdrop of hunger, death and despair. The song, however, gives us a real sense of hope and survival.

A few years ago, for our 40th Anniversary, we commissioned a work from a prominent Australian composer. Elena Kats-Chernin accepted our commission. One of the long-time members of the choir, Zeny Giles, provided a short poem she wrote about the magic that occurs as the choir discovers the wonder and joy in a piece of music as it comes together in rehearsal. The poem excited Elena's creative spirit and our new work *Magic Voices* is the result. We are thrilled that Zeny was able to provide the words to this work and equally thrilled that Elena was able to write it for us. We hope you enjoy it.



*Elena Kats-Chernin at a performance of her new opera Whitely, at the Opera House.*

Michael Atherton's short work for two soprano and alto voices *Shall We Dream* shows the effective nature of imitation in vocal writing. One tune is given in imitation firstly in two parts, and then three, the simple tune becoming more complicated as more parts are added.

One of the pieces that we've enjoyed learning (despite its complexity!) is Matthew Orlovich's evocative work *Tides of Ocean*. Depicting the Southern Ocean and the appearance of the Southern Cross as a ship approaches Australia it is an ultimately joyous and rhythmical work complete with wave noises and the splashing of fish as they leap out of the ocean.

We conclude our part of the program with a 'new version' of *Waltzing Matilda* by Australian composer, arranger and singer Ruth McCall. Ruth combines a number of elements: A chant like melody set to indigenous words in common usage\* (names of plants, places and trees) evoking the original inhabitants of this land, fragments of the two well-known tunes of *Waltzing Matilda* plus a some new music of her own. The result is an exciting and rhythmically complex work of great fun and intensity.

*Written by Dr Christopher Allan*

*Howard Bridgman, Editor*