

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CHOIR

Soprano

Diana Bridgman, Joanna Davies, Sherri-Lee Evans, Kerry Fagan, Joy Fitness, Caroline Hill, Melanie Hunt, Barbara Kelso, Georgi Laney, Liz Langford, Josephine Maher, Rosalind Manley, Christine McIntosh, Daphne Princehorn, Jean Somerville-Rabbitt, Penelope Spencer, Christine Starling, Nola Wallace, Penny Warrall, Nicola Watts.

Alto

Jane Bellemore, Catherine Brown, Judy Buchhorn, Sandra Christie, Penelope Cummins, Roslyn Evans, Ann Harben, Joan Hatton, Thea van der Hollander, Christine Lucas, Sue McBurney, Francoise McDonald, Trudy Mills-Evers, Patricia Moore, Ruth Newman, Elizabeth O'Keeffe, Elaine Perry, Barbara Royle, Maureen Ryan, Lyn Schlaeger, Rhonda Sessions, Jan Spencer, Kim Sutherland, Carolyn Syme, Sarah Turner, Asiya Verachia, Wendy White, Sophia Wooldridge.

Tenor

Howard Bridgman, Paul Bevan, Jack Christie, Sheila Keane, Richard Kearney, Jim MacDougall, Dan Wheeler.

Bass

Trevor Burndred, Tom Davison, John Mills, Ross Newman, Chris Page, John Rostas, Bruce Rowland, Ronald Watts, Robert White, Geoff Whitfield, John Woods.

Thanks

The presentation of a major choral work such as Brahms's Requiem is a significant undertaking. We are grateful to all those who have volunteered their time to make this performance possible and thank the organisations that support the choir in material ways, such as the University of Newcastle and Christ Church Cathedral. The Choir would not be able to stage concerts without this assistance. If you are interested in supporting the choir through sponsorship or donations please contact the President, Ruth Newman on 02 4944 7010.



presents

A German Requiem

By

Johannes Brahms

Conductor

Dr Christopher Allan

Soprano

Petah Cavallaro

Baritone

David Greco

Piano

**Erin Sweetman
Claire Howard Race**

**Christ Church Cathedral Newcastle
2.30pm Saturday 4th September 2022**

CONDUCTOR'S NOTES

I was lucky enough to sing in a performance of Ein Deutes Requiem some years ago with the professional chamber choir Cantillation and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy. I have vivid memories of the performance, the power of the music and the sheer excitement and pathos it shows. In London in 2018, I heard a performance with the piano four-hands accompaniment we are presenting this afternoon and was entranced. With piano accompaniment it becomes a 'do-able' work, one the University Choir could tackle. Unlike the majority of Requiem settings by western composers who generally set the Catholic Mass for the Dead, Brahms instead chose words that resonated with him, drawn from Holy Scriptures, that are intended to comfort the people that are mourning the death of a loved one. There is no mention of judgement or the day or reckoning that we find say in the Requiem of Mozart. Brahms chose the words from the Lutheran bible - written in German rather than Latin - which is why the work is entitled 'A German Requiem'. Composed between 1865 and 1868 perhaps as a tribute to the death of his mother, the work consists of 7 movements. Scored for Baritone and Soprano solo, Brahms, however, gives the majority of the musical material to the Choir. The most famous of all the movements is number 4, *Wie Lieblich Sind Deine Wohnungen (How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place)*, entirely sung by the choir, which comes from Psalm 84:2. Often performed in isolation, the movement shows the beautiful melodic writing for which the composer is famous.

Brahms was a 'traditionalist' who revered the works of J.S. Bach and Beethoven. Throughout the Requiem we find strong influences of this lineage of composition. Brahms uses chorale like sections with interesting harmonic configurations as well as strict fugal writing so reminiscent of Bach and Beethoven. Listen out, for example, for the exciting fugue in movement 3 at the words 'Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand' (The souls of the righteous are in God's hands). A four-part Bach-like fugue heard throughout the vocal parts is accompanied by a deep low 'D' pedal note (a note that sounds continuously) which adds further complexity to the already exciting fugal layers above. Later in movement 6, Brahms returns to the fugue form at the words 'Herr, du bist würdig zu nehmen Preis und Ehre un Kraft' (Lord, you are worthy to receive glory, honour and power). This time the fugue is much more reminiscent of Beethoven. The fugue subject is short and clear with an exciting shorter note counter subject. Each of the movements is, within itself, a complete 'work' consisting of various sections that are contrasting in nature. Movements 3 and 6 have extensive solos for the Baritone interspersed with choral moments (and both culminating in the fugues). The contrast is movement 5, the only movement which features the solo soprano. This is a movement of enormous beauty with a meandering, soaring solo line based over a chorale-like tune heard in the choir. The soprano sings about those people that are left behind following the death of a loved one. We feel great sorrow but have the promise of being reunited, for that we can rejoice and take comfort. Brahms uses a chorale (hymn) tune sung by the choir to provide a central basis over which the expressive solo line and constantly moving accompaniment can centre.

Throughout the work we hear examples of the rich harmonic language of which Brahms was a master. He uses many applied dominant chords to shift the harmonic focus and to enrich the complexity of the harmony. As well, he has a habit of combining duple rhythms (groups of two) with triple rhythms (groups of three). This form of rhythmic complexity is found in many of his compositions and is a 'trademark'. The work is challenging to sing and to present in the original language. Choristers have tackled the difficulties admirably and rehearsals have been both hard work and fun. The choir has been preparing this performance on and off over the last couple of years during the pandemic lockdowns. At times when we could not sing together we rehearsed over Zoom and, when we were allowed to sing in a group, we had prepared the work up to around a month before we were to present a performance in 2021, postponed due to a further wave of the pandemic. It's therefore doubly wonderful for us to be able to rehearse and present this marvellous work.

Dr Christopher Allan

THE NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CHOIR

The Newcastle University Choir (NUC) has been a major musical force in Newcastle since 1977. Founded by the late Ulric Berstein, the choir has an enviable reputation for mounting performances of major works in the choral canon. Currently with over 100 members, NUC is a non-auditioned choir and comprises members of the community from all walks of life, as well university staff and students.

NUC seeks to give people an opportunity to make music together and to enjoy working towards a common goal. The Choir has presented the Requiems of Mozart, Faure, Durufle and Goodall, large scale masses by Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart and major choral works such as Britten's *War Requiem* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, the *St Matthew Passion* of J S Bach, Haydn's *Creation*, and Handel's *Messiah*. We also include concerts of Jazz, Gospel and a cappella works. We generally perform in venues such as the University of Newcastle Great Hall, The Conservatorium's Harold Lobb Hall and Christ Church Cathedral.

NUC concerts create opportunities for performers and audiences to enjoy a musical experience beyond that commonly available in this community on this scale, and at this level of complexity. We are committed to encouraging and supporting young and emerging soloists and musicians, giving them opportunities to perform in major artistic works and to work with recognised high calibre professionals.

The choir enjoys working with other local musical groups and has collaborated with the Newcastle Cathedral Choir, the Waratah Girls Choir, Newcastle Chamber Choir, and the Christ Church Camerata. The choir is currently directed by Dr Christopher Allan.



Erin Sweetman

As soloist and accompanist, Erin has toured Nationally and Internationally. She performed in the Newcastle Music Festival 2016 - 2022, and the Newcastle Art Gallery Concert series. Since 2012, Erin has accompanied the Hunter Singers, and has accompanied the choir at International choral festivals and performances, including the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and the World Choir Games in Cincinnati. Erin accompanied the Hunter Singers for their Classic FM Live recital.



In 2016, Erin attended the Music Director Intensive at Goodspeed Opera House in New York. Erin has recorded an album with cellist Anthea Scott-Mitchell, Into the Silence.

In 2021, Erin performed in the 1:1 concert series that was held in Newcastle and Maitland (MRAG). This was an international response and fundraiser to help support musicians that had been impacted due to loss of income following the Covid-19 pandemic. Erin also performed in the musical CHESS at the Civic Theatre in February, 2021.

Most recently, Erin performed for the Newcastle Writers Festival and took to the stage with author Julia Baird and cellist Anthea Scott-Mitchell.

Erin performed as soloist for recitals in the Maitland Heritage Festival in 2021 and 2022, and recently performed with Susan Collins in the Newcastle Music Festival. Later this year, Erin plans to record another album with Anthea Scott-Mitchell. Erin is currently a member of staff at St Francis Xavier's College, Hamilton.

Claire Howard Race

Claire obtained First Class Honours and the University Medal from Newcastle Conservatorium, NSW, before continuing her postgraduate piano accompaniment studies at the Canberra School of Music and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow with John Thwaites, where she was awarded the Broadwood Junior Piano Accompanist Fellowship. She subsequently earned a Master of Music in Performance and Research with Distinction from the Royal Academy of Music, London, where she studied with Malcolm Martineau and Iain Ledingham. Claire has performed song recitals with, among others, Deborah Humble, Hye Seoung Kwon and Ghillian Sullivan. Her pianism has been described as "an exceptional display" (Limelight Review), "truly superb playing" (Deborah Humble) and "beautiful music making, timing and texture and patience" (Simon Keenleyside).



From 2017-2021 she held the position of Assistant Chorus Master and Principal Rehearsal Pianist for the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. In 2021, pre-COVID, she performed in the Grafton Chamber Music Festival with the Sirius Chamber Ensemble and in the premiere performances of the opera, Chop Chef, by Australian composer Paul Smith, with the Blush Opera Company. In 2022, Claire has performed Ola Gjeilo's Dark Night of the Soul and Luminous Night of the Soul at the Sydney Festival and is engaged to perform The Sacred Veil at the Sydney Opera House with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, conducted by the composer, Eric Whitacre.

CONCERT PROGRAM

J.S. Bach 3 Chorales

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|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. From Cantata 140 (Wachet Auf) | 'Gloria sei dir gesungen' |
| 2. From 'St John Passion' | 'O grosse Lieb' |
| 3. From Cantata 78 (Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben) | 'Jesu bleibet meine Freude' |

Petah Cavallaro (acc. Erin Sweetman)

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| 1. Von Ewige Liebe | Johannes Brahms |
| 2. Widmung | Robert Schumann |

Piano Duo: Erin Sweetman, Claire Howard Race

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| Hungarian Dance no 5. | Johannes Brahms |
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David Greco (acc. Claire Howard Race)

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| 1. O wüsst' ich doch den Weg zurück | Johannes Brahms |
| 2. Vergebliches Ständchen | Johannes Brahms |

INTERVAL

EIN DEUTCHES REQUIEM

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|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Selig sind, die da Leid tragen | Blessed are they that mourn | Choir |
| 2. Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras | For all flesh is as grass | Choir |
| 3. Herr, lehre doch mich | Lord, teach me | Baritone & Choir |
| 4. Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen | How lovely are thy dwelling places | Choir |
| 5. Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit | You now have sorrow | Soprano & Choir |
| 6. Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt | For here we have no abiding place | Baritone & Choir |
| 7. Selig sind die Toten, die in dem Herrn sterben | Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord | Choir |

DR CHRISTOPHER ALLAN

Chris retired as senior lecturer in Voice at the University of Newcastle, NSW in 2017 where he worked with singers and lectured in academic music courses for 22 years. He is well known as a baritone soloist with many choral institutions such as Sydney Philharmonia Choir, Newcastle University Choir, Willoughby Choir and Coro Innominata. Chris appeared as guest artist with The Song Company for many years in concert and radio broadcasts and appeared with Opera Australia as understudy and chorus member. He also toured extensively for Musica Viva with the Song Company and the early music ensemble Sounds Baroque.



Chris continues to perform and in recent years (pre-pandemic) presented recitals for the Newcastle Music Festival and in 2021 sang with Pinchgut Opera in their acclaimed production of *Platée*. He recently performed the Baritone solos in the Faure *Requiem* and in David Banney's new *Mass for Peace* for the 2022 Newcastle Music Festival. 2021 saw him return to the stage in a different genre as the Soviet KGB agent Molokov in the Very Popular Theatre Company's production of *Chess*. Chris held the post of Artistic and Musical Director of the Newcastle University Choir from 1999-2004 and was reappointed to the position of Musical Director from 2011. With the University Choir he has directed performances of major works of the choral literature including the JS Bach *Magnificat*, John Rutter's *Magnificat*, Vittoria's *Requiem* and Haydn's *Mass in Time of War* and Mozart's *Requiem*. In late 2013 the Choir's first commercial CD (*Encore*) was released. In 2016 the Choir, under Chris' direction, performed Bach's *St Matthew Passion* to an enthusiastic audience. The 40th Anniversary of the Choir (2017) saw a performance of Haydn's *Creation*. 2022 heralded the return of the Choir to the stage after two long years of no concerts where they presented a very warmly received performance of Handel's *Messiah* to a packed Newcastle City Hall. Chris is also an accomplished pianist and accompanist and has appeared on many occasions with performers such as Sally Walker (Flute) and in recital with his daughter, soprano Miriam Allan. He continues to appear as an accompanist, most recently in the Opera Cocktails event for the 2022 Newcastle Music Festival.

In 2011 Chris successfully completed his doctoral thesis looking at the use of modal voice as a catalyst in encouraging a classical vocal sound in developing singers. He has presented papers on aspects of vocal technique and singing teaching at international and local conferences and enjoys facilitating workshop sessions with choral groups focusing on all aspects of performance. He has presented workshops on vocal technique as well as workshops with a combination of voice and somatic body work with Feldenkrais Practitioner and wife Georgi Laney. His abiding interest in how we use ourselves while performing led to a commencement of a training program of the Feldenkrais Method in 2019 and Chris graduated as a Feldenkrais Practitioner in July 2022.

Petah Cavallaro

Petah Cavallaro is a professional opera singer with over fifteen years of study and experience in operatic and concert repertoire. She is currently a Principal Young Artist with Opera Australia. Originally from regional Queensland, she has performed in Australia, Italy, Denmark and China and is the recipient of a 2019 Churchill Fellowship. She holds a degree in Advanced Performance from the Queensland Conservatorium.



In 2021 Petah made her debut performances as onstage at the Sydney Opera House, as soloist in Opera Australia's Great Opera Hits concert series. For Opera Australia she has covered the title role in Verdi's *Aida*, Puccini's *Turandot* and *Leonora* in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*.

Recently returned from studying in New York, London, Italy and Denmark, Petah has worked with coaches from Opera di Firenze, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, The Metropolitan Opera and Operaen. While in

Italy she performed as a soloist at Villa Miani, overlooking Vatican City in Rome, and was chosen from thousands of applicants to perform in the finals of the Accademia del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

In 2021 her debut European album as soloist for Stradivarius Milano Dischi with Trio Cavallaro was released globally. The album features arrangements of arias and songs by Handel, Weber and Strauss. She made her European debut in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2019 with Trio Cavallaro.

As a current Churchill Fellow, Petah will travel internationally in 2022, to pursue excellence in opera performance and develop relationships with cultures where opera thrives. Based at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Petah will travel throughout Europe and the USA to work with experts in other countries. Petah's Churchill Fellowship also focuses on bringing opera and classical music knowledge to Australians in regional and remote areas.

In December 2018 Petah performed the role of Echo with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, conducted by Simone Young. As a soloist she has performed with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in the Music on Sundays concert series *Mighty Imperial Russia* and *Music from Stage and Screen*, and as soprano soloist in Mozart's *Requiem*. She has performed with The 7 Sopranos, both in Australia and touring internationally to China.

Having grown up in a remote part of Australia, Petah has a strong commitment to providing high quality concerts and music education to young people growing up in regional areas. She frequently tours to regional Australia, giving concerts, lessons and master classes, focussed on providing fun, inclusive and educational experiences.

Petah has studied at the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School and holds a Bachelor of Music from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. She is a recipient of the Margareta Elkins award (Dame Joan Sutherland Vocal Competition).

David Greco, baritone

Internationally regarded for his interpretations of Schubert Lieder and the works of J.S. Bach, baritone David Greco has sung on some of the finest stages across Europe and has appeared as a principal in opera festivals such as Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Glyndebourne. In 2014 he was the first Australian appointed to a position with the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Vatican.



He regularly appears with leading Australian ensembles such as Pinchgut Opera, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia and, most recently, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in their Helpmann Awardwinning concerts of Bach's cantata, *Ich habe genug*. As a principal artist with Opera Australia, he appeared in *The Eighth Wonder* and *The Love for Three Oranges*, and his appearances as Seneca in Pinchgut's *Coronation of Poppea* and *Momus* in *Platée* received critical acclaim.

His impressive catalogue of solo recordings includes *Poems of Love and War*, featuring arias by New Zealand composer Jack Body (Naxos), and his first recital album, presenting music by Bach (Brilliant Classics).

David Greco is an active researcher into the historical performance practice of 19th-century vocal music and recently received his doctorate from Melbourne University. This led to the first Australian recordings of historically informed performances of Schubert's song cycles *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* (ABC Classic), the latter receiving an ARIA nomination for Best Classical Album (2020).