

CANDLELIGHT VOX PRESENTS

*From Darkness  
to Light*

7.30 pm Friday 12th October  
Trinity College Chapel



# Thoughts from the Podium

***A heaven full of stars over my head, white and topaz and misty red...***

***-Sara Teasdale (Stars)***

There is something magical about musical communication. On the rare occasions that you do get to “nail” ensemble awareness, it feels like surfing - dipping your hand into a wave, and connecting with the current that surges beneath you. Or, like lying on your back, gazing up into the heavens and drinking in the starlight - and seeing the fabric of the universe that lies beyond you.

As we grow in our technical facility as musicians, our ability to contact this underlying force and communicate it grows. In times during the academic semester when I've lost sight of *why* I study what I study, this music has grounded me and kept my passion alive. I hope the programming and musical choices we've made in *From Darkness to Light* allow you to drop into the current below you, and connect with the stars above you - at least for a little while.

Aidan makes the point that we exist in a period of polystylism, which is why having three artistic directors has worked well for us so far. Aidan, Hilary and I all have unique musical tastes, which has kept our programming fresh and diverse. I am drawn towards pieces that have their roots in diatonic harmony, dissonant tonal clusters treated as consonances, (it's a joke how much of a fan I am of two human voices singing a major second), and occasionally, the influence of minimalism. Aidan likes to explore works that have more complex harmonic movement, modal inflections, and serialist techniques. Hilary makes bold, colourful choices both in her programming and on the podium - you'll hear that in our “statement” piece *Temen Oblak*.

The world of contemporary choral music allows all three of us to make these decisions. I truly believe we're in a golden age of choral music at the moment - we have so many divine works to draw upon from by composers. Searching for new repertoire and reaching out to composers globally has become ridiculously accessible with YouTube and the internet. Performing works by living composers helps to keep the classical music scene fresh – there are always new sounds to explore and new heartstrings to pluck.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our mentor Pat Miller. This project simply wouldn't have happened without his guidance – Pat has assisted us in both conducting and rehearsal technique, and ensemble management skills. I'd also like to thank the Melbourne Conservatorium for making our project possible through funding our sheet music. The music will go on to be a part of the library – I hope many singers get good use out of it after us! Aidan, Lily and I are also supported by George Cox, Emily Singleton, and Stephanie Kate Morgan on committee. I owe these five a ginormous thank you for

the hours upon hours of work they have put into making this project possible – for the tears shed, and the joy shared.

I am so privileged to get to work with this beautiful group of musicians. Every single member of the choir has taken responsibility for their own learning into their hands, is determined to do their best, and is passionate about singing. Not only am I immensely proud of their growth musically, but also personally – it's been brilliant to see everyone's confidence and self-expression skyrocket this year. Choir – thank you, so, so much.

Our first concert next year, *Ascension*, will be around Easter-time. I will be conducting Paul Mealor's *Stabat Mater*, Aidan will be conducting Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, and Hilary will be conducting Ola Gjelio's *Sunrise Mass*. We'll be accompanied by a string orchestra comprised of members of a number of university groups. If you'd like to follow our movements, please do like our Facebook page or follow us on Instagram!

This program has been a complete joy to conduct from day one. The pieces we've chosen are utterly thrilling, and I hope you enjoy them tonight! Please do stick around to say hello afterwards!

Best,  
Grace Gallur  
Candlelight VOX General Manager

**We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we perform, and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.**

## About the Choir

Candlelight VOX is a 22-voice chamber choir based in Melbourne, Australia. We were founded by Grace Gallur and Aidan McGartland in 2017 for the purpose of performing works by living composers.

Candlelight VOX hopes to fill the gap in the Melbourne choral scene for “new music”. There is an array of stunning new compositions that barely get performed, in favour of programming the much-loved standard repertoire. We believe this is partly due to the negative connotations surrounding “new music” – the belief that it is inaccessible. This is simply not the case. Much of the choral music we explore is stylistically innovative, but more importantly, deeply moving.

Candlelight VOX is comprised of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music voice students, instrumentalists, and singers from the wider University of Melbourne.

# Program Notes

## **Voyager One (2018) – Amanda Cole, WORLD PREMIERE**

VOYAGER ONE 'sings' the stars as they rose and set over the Cape Canaveral Airforce Station on the 5th of September 1977, the time and place NASA's Voyager One Space Probe was launched. Marking the period of time it took the shuttle to leave Earth, the choral work contemplates the moment humanity launched its most ambitious scientific exploration into the vast expanses of space. Composed for 24 voices, VOYAGER ONE is an ethereal and meditative celebration of the cosmos, reflecting on the awe and wonder with which humanity has always regarded the stars.

*Program note by Amanda Cole*

## **Fiat Lux (2016) – Alice Chance (1994–)**

"Fiat Lux" translates to "let there be light". In this piece the Australian composer Alice Chance leads us from darkness into light, recounting the biblical story of the very beginning of the universe. Originally written for three voices, this work uses rich yet uncluttered harmony to evoke the simple but utterly pure beauty of light. The result is a tonality which leaves the feeling of potential and optimism. *Fiat Lux* is the first movement in *The Light Cycle*, which was a finalist for Vocal/Choral Work of the Year in the 2018 Art Music Awards.

*Program note by Amelia Sheppard*

## **Temen Oblak (2014) – Christopher Tin (1976–), text by Hristo Botev (1848–1876)**

*Temen Oblak* is a large choral work, originally for orchestra and all-female choir, from Christopher Tin's second classical-crossover album *The Drop That Contained the Sea*. The album is a cycle of ten different works, each in a different language, including a reconstructed proto-Indo-European language, and it explores linguistic inheritance and resonance. *Temen Oblak* is in Bulgarian, and it draws on Bulgaria's female folk and work song tradition, adapting a poem by the nineteenth-century Bulgarian poet and radical democratic socialist revolutionary, Hristo Botev.

*Program note by George Cox*

*Conducted by Hilary Ekins*

## **The Red Blaze is the Morning (2018) – George Cox (1997–), text by Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), WORLD PREMIERE**

George Cox studies a Bachelor of Arts (English & Philosophy) at the University of Melbourne. This short unaccompanied choral work reflects his interest in contemporary art music that is easy to sing and listen to, but that avoids conventional formal-harmonic structures. This piece, for example, indulges in a kind of 'melodic plurality' by avoiding the meaningful repetition of audible ideas. It is a setting of a text by nineteenth-century US poet Emily Dickinson, who, similarly, writes of the linear unfolding of the sun's passage, marked by a series of colours which never recur. The conclusion is the dissolution of difference in the silver of a star-filled sky.

*Conducted by George Cox*

## **Stars (2011) – Ēriks Ešenvalds (1977–), text by Sara Teasdale (1884–1933)**

*Alone in the night/On a dark hill/With pines around me/Spicy and still.* Esenvalds' setting of Teasdale's text captures the divine stillness and quiet we experience when stargazing. Originally scored for wine glasses, we are accompanied tonight by organ, which underlays the piece with flute-like, shimmering diatonic cluster chords. The piece alternates between a B minor and D major tonal centre, and the texture swells and quietens to reflect to reflect both the narrator's ecstasy and solitude. I certainly know that I am full of awe and melancholy when conducting this piece, and am aware of my small, yet connected, place in the universe. *And I know/That I am honoured to be/Witness/Of so much/Majesty.*

*Conducted by Grace Gallur*

***Nativitie* (2016) – Daniel Riley** (1992– ), text by John Donne (1572–1631)

Daniel Riley is a composer from Melbourne, and has just complete a Masters in Music (Composition) at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. He has previously studied with notable Australian composers, Carl Vine and Paul Stanhope. *Nativitie* was written for the Choir of Trinity College. The text is by John Donne, from his sonnet cycle on the narrative of Christ. The work has a notable of expressive dissonances and is a gentle barcarolle. *Soloists: Riley Brooks, Samantha Hargreaves*

*Conducted by Aidan McGartland*

***Song for Athene* (1997) – John Tavener** (1944–2013), text by Mother Tekla (1938– )

This minimalist choral work is John Tavener's best known work. It was written as a tribute to Athene Hariades, a friend of Tavener's tragically killed in an accident. The text incorporates lines from Shakespeare's Hamlet, with sections of the Orthodox funeral service.

*Conducted by Aidan McGartland*

***Seek Him That Maketh the Seven Stars* (1995) – Jonathan Dove** (1959– )

The text of this piece comes from Amos 5:8 and Psalm 139. Dove's setting of the verses capture the overwhelming joy and gratitude felt by the writer for He who "*turneth the shadow of death into the morning*". The vast array of colours in the organ capture this; the shining sextuplet motif illustrates the brightness of the stars, and the thundering blocked chords capture the immensity of the writer's devotion and the intensity of their connection to the Divine. For me, being inside this music is a "religious" experience - I feel as though I am swept up inside the power of the universe. If you can excuse the pun - we've truly pulled out all the stops for this piece!

*Conducted by Grace Gallur*

### ***Interval***

***Southern Star* (2004) – Christopher Willcock** (1947– ), text by Michael Leunig (1945– )

Christopher Willcock is Australian composer based in Melbourne who specialises in liturgical music. *Southern Star* is one of his most well known and loved works. It is a nine-movement advent work for choir and harp, and was inspired by Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols. The text is by acclaimed Melbourne poet and cartoonist, Michael Leunig. The movements are as follows:

1. Love is Born
2. Christmas – *soloist: Amanda Hargreaves*
3. Gratitude and Grief

4. The Holy Child – *soloist: Brianna Ekberg*
5. Gul Gul Dja Mardji
6. Hold the Baby Jesus
7. Southern Star – *soloist: Samantha Hargreaves*
8. What Did You Get?
9. Real and Right and True

*Program note by Aidan McGartland  
Conducted by Grace Gallur, Hilary Ekins, and Aidan McGartland*

**Conductors:** Grace Gallur, Aidan McGartland, Hilary Ekins, George Cox



**Sopranos:** Grace Gallur, Amanda Hargreaves, Brianna Ekberg, Emily Singleton, Lirica Fujimoto, Charlotte Waters, Samantha Hargreaves\*





**Altos:** Hilary Ekins, Tatjana Brandson, Vanessa D’Cruz, Lisha Ooi, Amelia Sheppard



**Tenors:** Jed Wheaton, Nyan Win, Mattie Richards, Riley Brooks, Alexander Gorbatov\*



**Bass:** Aidan McGartland, George Cox, Michael Ng, Tiernan Maclaren, Ned Dixon, Keelan Murphy



**Associate Artists:**

Organ: James Earl\*

Piano: Louis Nicoll,\* George Cox

\*denotes guest