



**HAMER
SINGERS**

**Jonathan Grieves-Smith
Artistic Director**

the tenderness of silent minds

**St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne
Sunday 25 November 2018, 3.30pm**

HAMER SINGERS was established in 2017 with Jonathan Grieves-Smith as Artistic Director. Jonathan's international reputation, visionary artistic planning and musical insight attracted a deeply committed body of singers with decades of performance experience. This potent partnership has carved a prominent niche in Melbourne's rich choral landscape.



Photo: Kirsty Argyle

JONATHAN GRIEVES-SMITH is internationally renowned for compelling performances and rigorous artistic leadership. He is Artistic Director of Hallelujah Junction, Australia's professional choir, and of the Hamer Singers, and has held the titles of Chorus Master to the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Director of Music at Trinity College, the University of Melbourne, Music Director of Brighton Festival Chorus, the Hallé Choir, and the Huddersfield Choral Society.

Acclaimed as an outstanding conductor of music from the Baroque and Classical periods, he is also a passionate advocate for new music, commissioning and premiering such composers as Brett Dean, David Lang, James MacMillan, Gavin Bryars, Gabriel Jackson, Arvo Pärt, John Tavener, Alfred Schnittke and Lou Harrison. He has conducted the BBC Singers, Orchestre National de Lille, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Coro dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Europa Cantat, and Flemish Federation of Young Choirs.

In concerts and recordings in major festivals with the world's leading orchestras, he has collaborated intensively with conductors, including Sir Simon Rattle, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Sir Roger Norrington, Pierre Boulez, Stephen Layton, Sir Andrew Davis, Mark Wigglesworth, and Valery Gergiev.

In establishing the Hamer Singers, we acknowledge our collective debt and homage to the Hamer family's longstanding dedication and legacy to music and the arts in Melbourne.

This concert is being held on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations, and we wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. We would also like to pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.

Program

Orlando Gibbons	Drop, drop slow tears
William Walton	A Litany
Jóhann Jóhannsson	*Odi et Amo
David Bednall	*Three Songs of Remembrance – 1914 IV: The Dead
John Tavener	Funeral Ikos
Gerard McBurney	*Nunc Dimitis
James MacMillan	Data est mihi omnis potestas
Rudolf Mauersberger	Wie liegt die Stadt so wüst
Josef Gabriel Rheinberger	Mass in E-flat – Agnus Dei
James MacMillan	A Child's Prayer
Arvo Pärt	Da pacem Domine
Gustav Mahler (arr. Clytus Gottwald)	Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

* Australian premieres

Introduction

"I held a Council at 10.45 to declare war with Germany. It is a terrible catastrophe but it is not our fault. An enormous crowd collected outside the Palace; we went on to the balcony both before and after dinner. When they heard that war had been declared, the excitement increased and May and I with David [the Prince of Wales], went on to the balcony; the cheering was terrific. Please God it may soon be over and that he will protect dear Bertie's life [George VI, serving with the Royal Navy]. Bed at 12.00"

George V, diary, August 4 1914

Program notes

Drop, drop slow tears – Orlando Gibbons

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) was a choirboy at King's College, Cambridge, a graduate of the University, and was appointed Gentleman of the Chapel Royal by James 1 in 1615, a position he held until his death. He was considered by his English contemporaries to be 'one of the rarest musicians and organists of his time'. It was Vaughan Williams who united Gibbons' hymn-tune (Song 46, published in 1623) with a text by fellow King's College student, the poet and priest Phineas Fletcher (1580-1650). The words tell of the 'sinful woman', Mary Magdalene, who, repenting before Jesus, washed his feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair.

Drop, drop slow tears,
And bathe those beauteous feet
Which brought from heav'n
The news and Prince of Peace.

Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercies to entreat
To cry for vengeance
Sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let his eye see sin,
But through my tears.

A Litany – William Walton

William Walton (1902-1983) was born into a musical family and attended the local school in the mill-town of Oldham in England's northwest. In 1912, his father saw a notice for voice trials at the famed Christ Church Cathedral School in Oxford, and applied on behalf of William. The future of this English composer almost foundered when mother and son missed their train because William's father had spent the fare at the local pub. Fortunately, money was borrowed from a greengrocer and, while late in arriving in Oxford, William successfully auditioned and enjoyed four years as chorister in a city far removed from his upbringing. His concert music—symphonies, concerti, the wonderful *Belshazzar's Feast* and *Façade*—accounted for much of his success, but he also wrote sacred works, including *A Litany*, it too a setting of Phineas Fletcher's 'Drop, drop slow tears'. The first version of *A Litany*, remarkable for having been composed when Walton was 15, was written for upper voices. This was followed by two versions for upper and lower voices, the latter in E minor, a deeply touching response to the poignant text.

Drop, drop slow tears,
And bathe those beauteous feet
Which brought from heav'n
The news and Prince of Peace.

Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercies to entreat
To cry for vengeance
Sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let his eye see sin,
But through my tears.

Odi et Amo – Jóhann Jóhannsson

Jóhann Jóhannsson was born in Reykjavik in 1969, and died suddenly in Berlin earlier this year. His death has led to an upsurge of interest in his music written for theatre, dance, television, installations and films. *Odi et Amo* is from *Englabörn*, Jóhannsson's incidental music for a stage play by Hávar Sigurjónsson, and was originally written for computer voice and string quartet. He later rearranged it for the renowned Copenhagen-based vocal ensemble Theatre of Voices and their director Paul Hillier, with whom he enjoyed a close relationship. The poem, its statement, question and answer, are by Catullus (84-c.54 BC), written for his mistress Lesbia. Jóhannsson takes them, and in music of hypnotic simplicity, sends them out to the world, with singers chanting the text in Russian, Icelandic, Brazilian Portuguese, Romanian, Korean, Turkish and Hindi.

*Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris?
Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*

I hate and I love. Perhaps you ask why I do this?
I do not know, but I feel it happen and I am torn apart.

1914 IV: The Dead – David Bednall

David Bednall (b.1979) was Organ Scholar at Queen's College, Oxford, and Gloucester Cathedral, and Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral. He is currently a Teaching Fellow and Organist at the University of Bristol, Sub-Organist at Bristol Cathedral, and Director of the University Singers. He wrote *Three Songs of Remembrance* (of which *The Dead* is the first movement) for Sospiri and their conductor, Christopher Watson, Director of Music at Trinity College, University of Melbourne. David writes:

"I selected poems that had an immediate impact on first reading. They share some common themes—death (naturally) and the natural world as a symbol of hope and renewal, or continuing indifference. Most importantly they have a natural eloquence and beauty, and I have tried to be as simple as possible in my musical setting; the words are the paramount consideration. The glowing radiance of Rupert Brooke's *The Dead*, taken from his set of sonnets *1914*, demanded a simple, almost entirely homophonic setting with gentle luminous dissonance highlighting the many beautiful images of the text. The coda in particular has a transcendent glow, and the key of D major (one which I associate with great luminosity) seemed to provide the necessary warmth."

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friendied;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.

There are waters blown by changing winds to
laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

Funeral Ikos – John Tavener

Sir John Tavener (1944-2013) is especially known for his extensive output of religious works inspired by his Orthodox faith. The first performance of *Funeral Ikos* was given by the Tallis Scholars in 1981, and sets words from the Greek Orthodox funeral sentences for the burial of priests, translated by Isabel Hapgood (1851-1928). Austere, simple and beautiful, the lower, upper and *tutti* voices take turns to chant this statement of mortal decay and heavenly reward, each verse ending with the same *Alleluia*.

Why these bitter words of the dying, O brethren, which they utter as they go hence? I am parted from my brethren. All my friends do I abandon and go hence. But whither I go, that understand I not, neither what shall become of me yonder; Only God who hath summoned me knoweth. But make commemoration of me with the song: Alleluia!

But whither now go the souls? How dwell they now together there? This mystery have I desired to learn; but none can impart aright. Do they call to mind their own people, as we do them? Or have they forgotten all those who mourn them and make the song: Alleluia!

We go forth on the path eternal, and as condemned, with downcast faces, present ourselves before the only God eternal. Where then is comeliness? Where then is wealth? Where then is the glory of this world? There shall none of these things aid us, but only to say off the psalm: Alleluia!

If thou hast shown mercy unto man, O man, that same mercy shall be shown thee there; and if on an orphan thou hast shown compassion, the same shall there deliver thee from want. If in this life the naked thou hast clothed, the same shall give thee shelter there, and sing the psalm: Alleluia!

Youth and the beauty of the body fade at the hour of death, and the tongue then burneth fiercely, and the parched throat is inflamed. The beauty of the eyes is quenched then, the comeliness of the face all altered, the shapeliness of the neck destroyed; and the other parts have become numb, nor often say: Alleluia!

With ecstasy are we inflamed if we but hear that there is light eternal yonder; that there is Paradise, wherein every soul of Righteous Ones rejoiceth. Let us all, also, enter into Christ, that all we may cry aloud thus unto God: Alleluia!

Nunc Dimitis – Gerard McBurney

Born in Cambridge in 1954, Gerard McBurney studied music in London with Richard Rodney Bennett and Susan Bradshaw, before spending two years in the mid-1980s as a post-graduate at the Moscow Conservatory. His music since then has often reflected his Russian and Soviet experiences, including a setting of Pushkin for counter-tenor and string quartet; a ballet inspired by Dostoyevsky; and 'Letter to Paradise', to words by the Leningrad Absurdist Daniil Kharms, for bass-baritone and symphony orchestra.

"My mother introduced me to choral music. She loved singing, church choirs, oratorios, rounds and canons in the car ('Ah Poor Bird', 'My Dame has a Lame Tame Crane' and the rest), madrigals and Morley's two-part canzonets. When she was dying, early in 2002, together we carefully planned her funeral to take place in her favourite church, St Bene't's, Cambridge, with its sandy-coloured Anglo-Saxon tower constructed around a thousand years ago. And we asked the choir from Corpus Christi College next door to take part. And so, in the very last days of her life, I wrote this 'Nunc Dimitis' for them to sing. I wrote it in a style I thought she might like. And I based it on the musical notes of her initials: A F E C. It's a very pretty chord!"

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Data est mihi omnes potestas – James MacMillan

MacMillan comes from Cumnock, Ayrshire, a rural and mining area, where his father was a carpenter and joiner. He attended St John's RC Primary School and Cumnock Academy, and played the trumpet in mining bands and in the Ayrshire Schools Orchestra. At Edinburgh University, he acquired a love of traditional Scottish-Irish music, played by groups such as the Chieftains and the Whistlebinkies, with whom he played the penny whistle, and derived a passion for Scottish ceilidh and the keening Celtic chant known as pibroch, which he often employs in his music. To this day, he is a fervent fan of Celtic Football Club. For many years he was choirmaster at St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church in Maryhill, Glasgow, composing liturgical music imbued with strong faith and a deep understanding of the workings of choirs and voices. Many of his motets were first performed in this church and were later gifted to the University of Strathclyde, where the collection became known as the Strathclyde Motets. Underpinning the language of these motets is MacMillan's understanding of his musical lineage—the great Renaissance composers can readily be heard in the structures and textures—but he embroiders and articulates the lines with the catches and turns of Scottish folk music: "From an early age I've shared the view that music is the most spiritual of the arts, and—both historically and culturally—is vitally connected to religious experience. To me, that seems a very natural coupling."

*Data est mihi omnis potestas in caelo et in terra,
alleluia*

*Euntes, docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos
in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti,
alleluia.*

All power has been given to me in heaven and
on earth, alleluia

Go forth and teach all nations, baptising them in
the name of the Father and of the Son and of
the Holy Spirit, alleluia

*Communion Motet for Ascension Day
Matthew 28: 18, 19*

Wie liegt die Stadt so wüst – Rudolf Mauersberger

From 1930 to his death, Rudolf Mauersberger (1889-1971) was director of Dresden's renowned Kreuzchor, his brother Erhard director of 'Bach's' Thomanerchor in Leipzig. In February 1945, American and British bombers targeted Dresden with 3,900 tons of high-explosive bombs and incendiary devices. The bombing, and ensuing firestorm, destroyed the city centre, and killed close to 25,000 people; amongst these casualties were 11 boy choristers of the Kreuzchor. Mauersberger wrote his response five weeks later, the week of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, carefully selecting verses from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, originally written to describe God's destruction of Jerusalem, and here finding a poignant new context in Dresden.

*Wie liegt die Stadt so wüst, die voll Volks war.
Alle ihre Tore stehen öde.
Wie liegen die Steine des Heiligtums
vorn auf allen Gassen zerstreut.
Er hat ein Feuer aus der Höhe in meine Gebeine
gesandt
und es lassen walten.*

How lonely sits the city that was full
of people!
All her gates are desolate.
How the stones of her sanctuary lie
Scattered at the head of every street.
He sent fire from on high;
into my bones he made it descend.

*Ist das die Stadt, von der man sagt,
sie sei die allerschönste,
der sich das ganze Land freuet?*

Is this the city which was called
the most beautiful, that in which
the whole land rejoices?

*Sie hätte nicht gedacht,
daß es ihr zuletzt so gehen würde;
sie ist ja zu greulich heruntergestoßen
und hat dazu niemand, der sie tröstet.*

She had not thought
that this would be her final end;
therefore her fall is terrible,
and she has no-one to comfort her.

*Darum ist unser Herz betrübt,
und unsere Augen sind finster geworden.
Warum willst du unser so gar vergessen
und uns lebenslang so gar verlassen?*

This is why our heart has become sick,
These things have caused our eyes to grow dim.
Why do you forget us forever,
why do you so long forsake us?

*Bringe uns, Herr, wieder zu dir,
daß wir wieder heimkommen.
Erneue unsre Tage wie vor alters.
Herr, sieh an mein Elend,
ach Herr, sieh an mein Elend!"*

Bring us, O Lord, back to you,
that we come home again!
Renew our days as of old.
O Lord, behold my affliction!

Mass in E-Flat: Agnus Dei – Josef Gabriel Rheinberger

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (1839-1901) was a precocious talent, organist of his local church aged 7, and a student at the Munich Conservatorium five years later. He graduated aged 15, and began teaching piano and composition. When the Conservatorium was dissolved, he was appointed Hofkapellmeister by 'mad' King Ludwig II of Bavaria, before returning to the new (and present) Munich Conservatorium as Royal Professor, numbering among his pupils Richard Strauss and Wilhelm Furtwangler. Rheinberger was a prolific composer much influenced by Brahms, Schumann and Bach, and his Mass in E-flat Major Opus 109 for double choir, dedicated to Pope Leo XIII, pays homage to the idea of the *coro spezzati* (spaced choirs) Gabrieli and Monteverdi employed in the antiphonal galleries of St Mark's Basilica, Venice.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, misere nobis
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem

Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy on us
Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

A Child's Prayer – James MacMillan

At Dunblane Primary School near Stirling in Scotland on Wednesday 13th March 1996, 16 primary school children and one teacher were killed, and many more injured, in what was the deadliest mass shooting in British history. James MacMillan's response, dedicated to those who died, was this small motet first performed in Westminster Abbey the following July. It opens with dark, earth-bound, pulsing chords before two trebles or sopranos slowly wind the opening lines of this prayer upwards towards heaven and an acclamation by all singers of the words 'joy and love'. Even in the face of this violence and pain, God's love is there. The work ends poignantly, quietly, with the solo voices.

Welcome,
Jesu, deep in my soul forever stay,
Joy and love my heart are filling
On this glad Communion Day.

Soloists: Iris Ferwerda & Camilla Gorman

Da Pacem Domine – Arvo Pärt

Catalan conductor and viol player, Jordi Savall (b. 1941) commissioned Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) to write a work for a peace concert in July 2004. Two days after the 2004 train bombings in Madrid, Pärt began composition of one of his most intense works, a tribute to the lives lost, a work that continues to be performed annually in Madrid in memory of the dead. The altos sing a line of Gregorian chant (the *cantus firmus*) echoed by parallel movement (*organum*) in the basses; the melodies of sopranos and tenors are fragmented by rests into individual notes or short phrases. This leads to a surprisingly stern, monumental soundscape conductor Paul Hillier has described as “a near harmonic stasis in which each pitch is carefully placed in position like stones in a Zen garden.”

*Da pacem Domine, in diebus nostris
Quia non est alius
Qui pugnet pro nobis
Nisi tu Deus noster.*

Grant peace, Lord, in our time
for there is none else
who would fight for us
If not you, our God.

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen – Gustav Mahler

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) spent the summer of 1901 in the villa he had built at Maiernigg, on the shores of the Wörthersee in southern Austria. A refuge from the stresses of the month of conducting in Vienna, it was in a special hut in the woods, 200 yards up the hill from the house, that he composed five settings of poems by Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866). The third of these Rückert Lieder, *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* (I am lost to the world), evokes the exquisite peace and silence of the creative artist when he removes himself from the world—as Lindsay Kemp says, “just what a composing hut is for”. Originally composed as an orchestral song, it was arranged in 1982 for 16-part vocal ensemble by German conductor and composer Clytus Gottwald (b. 1925).

*Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei gestorben!
Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält,
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt.
Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!
Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied!*

I am lost to the world
With which I used to waste much time;
It has for so long known nothing of me,
It may well believe that I am dead.
Nor am I at all concerned
If it should think that I am dead.
Nor can I deny it,
For truly I am dead to the world.
I am dead to the world's tumult
And rest in a quiet realm!
I live alone in my heaven,
In my love, in my song!

Program notes: Jonathan Grieves-Smith and Jillian Graham, 2018

Singers

Sopranos

Helena Balazs
Eva Butcher
Veryan Croggon
Anne Cunningham
Samantha Davies
Iris Ferwerda
Catherine Folley
Camilla Gorman
Penny Huggett
Judith McFarlane
Ruth McIntosh
Lynne Muir
Natalie Reid
Jemima Sim
Eloise Verbeek
Ros West
Beth Ylvisaker

Altos

Catherine Bickell
Kate Bramley
Jane Brodie
Elize Brozgul
Alexandra Chubaty
Kerry Frankland
Jillian Graham
Ros Harbison
Christina McCowan
Kerry Roulston
Rose Saunders
Libby Timcke

Tenors

Kent Borchard
Lachlan Brown
Ed Chan
Nicholas Christie
Freddie Grieves-Smith
Michael Mobach
Sam Rowe
Stephen Wood
Tim Wright

Basses

Maurice Amor
Kevin Barrell
John Howard
Symon Kohut
Gary Levy
Tim March
Edward Ounapuu
Matthew Toulmin

Language Assistance:

German: Tim Wright, Camilla Gorman
Hindi: Kellie Flanagan, Rakesh Naraparaju
Icelandic: Inga Árnadóttir
Korean: Rebecca Piesse
Portuguese: Luis Nunes
Romanian: Antoanela Safca, Carolina Rotaru
Russian: Nicholas Cowall
Turkish: Neriman Kara, Ayfer Kocak

Odi et Amo Chanters:

Brazilian Portuguese: Ed Chan
Hindi: Tim March
Icelandic: Elize Brozgul
Korean: Catherine Bickell
Romanian: Beth Ylvisaker
Russian: Eloise Verbeek
Turkish: Stephen Wood

Front of House Volunteers:

Claire Weeden
Nina Dubecki

Photographer:

Greg Barrett

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HAMER SINGERS

Thank you for joining us for our concert, and for your support.
For further information, please email hamersingers@gmail.com,
or visit our website: hamersingers.com.au

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