



# Cacophony

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On Sunday afternoon, 29 September 2024 at 2:00 pm, the Newcastle University Choir (NUC) will perform *You, Me and the Wide Open Sky 2*, at The Great Hall, University of Newcastle. The entire focus of the concert is modern Australian choral music, featuring four Australian composers. Much of the music evokes the Australian environment, especially the wide-open feeling of our Australian landscape and sky.

Conducted by Dr Christopher Allan, the Newcastle University Choir will be supported by pianist Erin Sweetman. Anthea Scott-Mitchell, a well-known local cellist, will add a further instrumental component to the concert.

Tickets are \$45 adult, \$40 Concession, \$35 Student, and can be obtained from [www.TryBooking.com](http://www.TryBooking.com) or by scanning the QR Code below.



In 2017 The Newcastle University Choir commissioned a work from prominent Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin for our 40th Anniversary. Elena was born in the Soviet Union. She migrated to Australia at age 14, and studied at Sydney Conservatorium of Music. She has composed music for a wide genre of classical performances, including movie scores. Her best-known work is the ballet *Wild Swans*, in 2003. She was awarded an Order of Australia (AO) in 2019 for her services to music.

One of the long-time members of the choir, Zeny Giles, wrote a short poem 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 the work *Magic Voices* is the result. Our choir is well acquainted with blending "motley voices" into the "beauty" and "tapestry" of choral works.



Elena Kats-Chernin Matthew Orlovich

Matthew Orlovich is a freelance composer based in Sydney. He has been composing choral and orchestral music since the early 1990s. He studied music at the University of Sydney. His choral works have been performed by a wide range of choirs, including the Song Company, The Choir of London, and the Gondwana Chorale.

Matthew Orlovich's evocative and complex work *Tides of Ocean*, musically describes returning south to Australia by ship. It is an ultimately joyous and rhythmical work complete with wave noises and the splashing of fish as they leap out of the ocean. The wonder of the appearance of the Southern Cross as the ship approaches Australia is the climax of the work.

Melbourne composer, conductor and performer Dan Walker is one of Australia's most in-demand choral specialists. His compositional output includes commissions for Gondwana Voices, the Birralee Blokes, the Nittany Valley Children's Choir of Pennsylvania, Halcyon ensemble and the Sydney Children's Choir. He has been composer-in-residence for the Moorambilla Festival and is often engaged to compose for ensembles both in Australia and abroad. His work, *Out There*, was a featured piece in the 2014 South Australian Primary Schools Choral Festival, where it was performed by some 14,000 young singers in numerous venues across the state.

Dan is also an active arranger and regularly produces work for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and record label ABC Classics. His work for television includes the iconic 2009 *I Still Call Australia Home* advertising campaign for Qantas.

As a performer, Dan is a member of Sydney-based Cantillation, Pinchgut Opera and the Consort of Melbourne. He is a keenly sought-after conductor, often appearing as chorusmaster for the Sydney Symphony, and was an associate conductor of Gondwana Choirs from 2006 - 2014. He is now musical director of the Melbourne group, 'Habeas Chorus', a choir for the Melbourne legal community.



*Dan Walker*

We are performing seven of Walker's works. *Resonance*, describes the feedback from a stately building, from its use by many feet walking the halls, "nurtured by many hearts". The "rough-hewn walls" could be, for example, a university building. When the researchers at CSIRO invented wireless data transfer, a choral tribute could not have been expected. Yet *Ether of Infinity* describes this amazing development musically, now of global importance. Wireless transmission of data and messages is critical for rapid communication and analysis.

Many of Walker's publications are linked to the atmospheric environment, providing a "mentally visual" picture. The title work of the concert, *You Me and the Wide Open Sky*, describes the vastness of the Australian continental interior (see painting below as an example). It describes the seeming endless blue sky over the red dust plains, and the "land of hopes and dreams" during settlement. The soaring of the wedge-tailed eagle reminds one of driving trips through the Hunter Valley, encountering massive flocks of birds with their cacophony of calls, with no human interruption.

*Orestias* suggests walking the trails of the Snowy Mountains in summer, climbing the heights toward "minarets of light" above which "colours paint the sky". His composition *High Flight* describes the joys

of flying in a light plane. "...dancing through the skies" and playing with "sun-split clouds", can be associated with pilots who just received their private licences. The *Vastness of an Uninterrupted Sky* expands further upward. We musically visit the goals of "lofty peaks", a "sacred mountain", and, "with God's charity", reaching the "distant spire of success".



*David Banney*

David Banney is the composer best known to Newcastle audiences. He is the conductor of Christ Church Camerata, and founding director of the Newcastle Music Festival. He is past winner of the ABC Young Conductor of the Year. For our concert he has composed *A Child's Prayer*, with words written by Marcelle Hoddle. Beginning with Alleluias, this work moves into praising the Lord. The main focus is the lovely tune reminding us to pray as "little people do", thank God for "strength, health, and clothes", and "think of your parents before they are gone".

It is rare that the Newcastle University Choir has the opportunity to present an all-Australian choral concert. Come and enjoy the wonderful music our home composers have written; a feast for the ears and eyes!

*Howard Bridgman, Editor*



*"Dawn at Uluru and Kata Tjuta National Park"  
by Kerrie Coles and used with permission.*