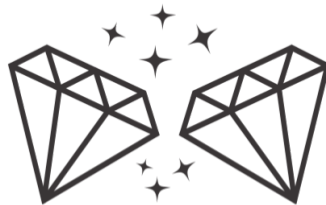
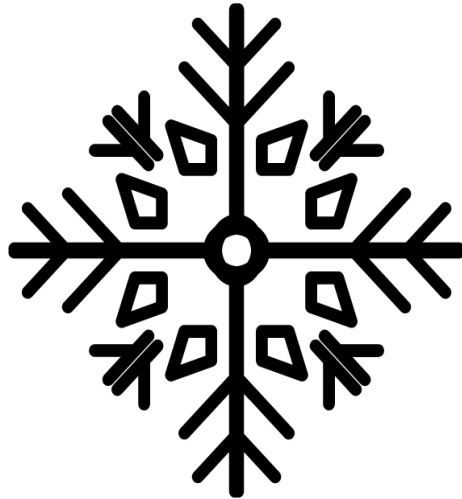


Diamonds in the Snow

Sounds of Scandinavia

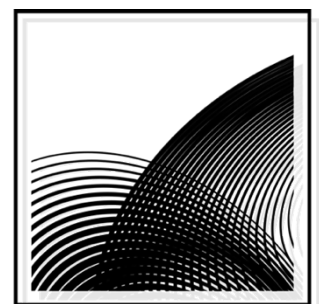
for voice, flute and piano



THE
OPERA
AND
SONG
COLLECTIVE



The Unitarian Church,
Darlinghurst
16 July 2023



The Opera and Song Collective

Artists passionate to bring fine music to you.

We aim to bring joy to our audiences and satisfaction to our artists through excellence in preparation, presentation and performance of Art Song and excerpts of remarkable musical stage works that less commonly grace Australia platforms. We strive to perform these less frequently heard works alongside the familiar, in accessible programmes that entertain. We were conceived in Lockdown, originally as a recording project to be performed in distinct short modules that were to be shared virtually. Then as live performance again became possible, we presented 'Into the Light', a concert featuring the works we had studied during our time in isolation. This included excerpts from 'Rusalka' (Dovřak), 'Iphigénie en Aulide' (Gluck) and 'Dead Man Walking' (Heggie), works that are infrequently, if ever, performed in Australia.

In February this year we presented 'Opera Queens', to acclaim. Here we focused our work on several historical and legendary Queens through the music of different composers. A modified version of the programme will be performed later this year in Brisbane.

We followed 'Queens' with 'If Music be the Food of Love' which we performed to a sell-out audience. Woven from the common thread of Shakespearean text, this programme spanned over 400 years of musical composition. The music began in the Baroque era, moved through French and English Art Song to Italian arias, witty musical theatre numbers and on to the contemporary. In this programme we were thrilled to include a delightful aria composed by one of our singers, Tristan Entwistle.

In "Diamonds in the Snow" we move to the folk-infused rhythms and harmonies of the North with its unique tonal palette in works by composers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland for voice, flute and piano.

I'm pretty proud of this programme. The repertoire ranges from popular Grieg piano solos to delightful Merikanto duets (likely known to all children in Finland), through to passionate, lyrical, haunting and patriotic songs by Sibelius, Kuula, Alenaes, Rangström and Nielsen. We are again pleased to include a piece by a performer, this time the wistful 'A Dream of Sweden,' composed by our flautist, Christine Draeger. Christine and Tonya will also perform instrumental music in the Romantic style by Elfrida Andrée and Amanda Meier whose music is being re-discovered of late. 'Diamonds in the Snow' also includes a stunning piece for soprano and flute, 'Changing Light' by recently deceased, ground breaking Finnish composer, Kaija Saariaho.

We hope you enjoy our programme and look forward to seeing you again.

Dr Jill Sullivan B. Med. Sc. MB. BS., Dip. Sports Med. L. Mus. A. (Singing) B.A.
Hons (Opera Studs) Manchester

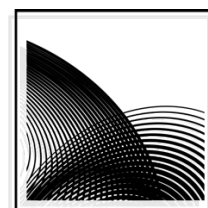
Soprano : Leah Thomas

Mezzo : Jill Sullivan

Flute : Christine Draeger

Pianist : Tonya Lemoh

Concept : Jill Sullivan



We acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of this land on which we perform and pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

Programme ~ Diamonds in the Snow

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)	Norway	
Langs ei Å Foraarsregn Killingdans		Leah
Gruss Zur Rosenzeit Jeg elsker dig		Jill
Amanda Maier (1853 - 1894)	Sweden	
Allegro ma non troppo from 6 pieces		Christine
Ture Rangström – (1884 – 1947)	Sweden	
Natt Afskedet Pan		Leah
Jean Sibelius (1865 – 1957)	Finland	
Kom nu hit Död De bagge rosorna Svatar rosor		Jill
Kaija Saariaho (1952-2023)	Finland	
Changing Light		Leah & Christine
Toivo Kuula (1883-1918)	Finland	
Aamulaulu Syystunnelma Ave Maria		Jill & Christine Jill
Oscar Merikanto (1868 – 1924)	Finland	
Oi, kiitos sa Luojani armollinen		Leah, Jill & Christine

Interval

Edvard Grieg

Gjætergut' (Shepherd Boy) Tonya
Ensom vandrer (Lonely wanderer)

Alfred Gammelsæter (1955 -) **Norway**

Hommage à Edvard Grieg Tonya
Gjætergut & Ensom vandrer

Carl Nielsen (1865 – 1931) **Denmark**

Underlige aftenluft
Solen er så rød mor Leah
Æbleblomst

Elfrida Andrée (1841-1929) **Sweden**

Larghetto from Tva Romanser Christine

Christine Draeger (1955 -) **Australia**

A Dream of Sweden Christine

Eyvind Alnaes (1872-1932) **Norway**

De hundrede violiner Jill
Februarmorgen ved Golfen

Jean Sibelius

Var det en dröm? Leah

Demanten på marssnön
Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte
Bollspelet vid Trianon
Vilse
Tanken Leah, Jill & Christine

Oscar Merikanto

Onnelliset (Aleksis Kivi) Leah, Jill & Christine

Leah Thomas has been a member of Opera Australia Chorus since 2005. Born in Sydney, her early musical career was in flute and the recorder family, with a full music scholarship through high school. The breath discipline of wind instruments led to an interest in singing and she graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium with a Bachelor of Music and Diploma of Opera.

In 2003 she won the Mietta Song Recital Award, awarded by Richard Bonyng, which allowed her to further her studies in Florence, Berlin and Copenhagen. She won the 2007 Audi German Operatic Award – whilst 7 ½ months pregnant! – but decided to pass the prizes of engagements in Cologne to the runner-up in the circumstances.

A highlight of her time with Opera Australia was a two-year secondment with OzOpera Touring, performing the title role in *La Traviata* from Hobart to Darwin, from Albany to a rainy amphitheatre performance in the Daintree. Other roles in her repertoire include Aida, Tosca, The Merry Widow, Sieglinde, Siegrune and 3rd Norn (*Ring Cycle*), Countess (*Marriage of Figaro*), First Lady (*Magic Flute*), Countess Ceprano (*Rigoletto*), Annina (*Traviata*), High Priestess (*Aida*), Anna Elenberg (*Whiteley*), Fata Morgana (*Love for 3 Oranges*) and the Witch (*Hansel and Gretel*).

She has performed in numerous oratorios by Handel, Bach, Mendelssohn and Vaughan-Williams, and concert series and gala events.

Her love of art song and languages is celebrated in a recital program with David Miller AM recorded for broadcast on ABC Classic FM's Young Performers Program.

Jill Sullivan has performed throughout Australia in opera and concert, recent performances including 'The Time of Roses' for Art Song Canberra with pianist, Donna Balson and for her own ensemble, The Opera and Art Song Collective. She has performed for Opera Queensland, West Australian Opera, recorded for Victoria State Opera and now sings on a casual basis in the chorus of Opera Australia. Roles include Flora, Second Lady, Mercédès, Cherubino, Saffi and Belinda and she looks forward to covering Rossweisse in Opera Australia's Brisbane Ring 2023, and performing the role of Baba in Menotti's *The Medium for Operantics* in October. Jill has also performed as alto soloist for major choral societies in WA and QLD and frequently returns to her home state Tasmania, to perform in her own shows at Epsom House most often with pianist, Simon Kenway.

While resident in Perth she co-founded the Lieder Society of WA, jointly ran a production company, Opera in Company that promoted young artists, directed choirs and was a pre-show presenter for WASO. In her commitment to the development of young performers, Jill led a group of 13 of her own students on a tour of European cities visiting Opera Houses, attending operas and concerts and while in Vienna, Geneva and Paris the students also undertook masterclasses with noted teachers Dr Annabella Redman and Gilles Denizot.

Jill thrives on curating programmes and collaborating with other artists to perform new and lesser known works alongside standard repertoire favourites.

Christine Draeger studied at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music and then with Zdenek Bruderhans at Adelaide University, graduating in 1979 with a Bachelor of Music (Hons).

She was a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra 1981-86, and has also worked with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. She has appeared as guest artist with Synergy, The Song Company, Perehelion, Sydney Bach Orchestra and Bourbaki Ensemble.

Christine has recorded three CDs of Australian flute music; Streeton's noon (1999), Eat Chocolate and Cry (2009) and Spirit of the Plains (2013). As well, she has made many studio recordings for ABC Radio and Fine Music (2MBS).

A specialist in contemporary techniques, Draeger was a member of Australia's leading contemporary music ensemble, Sonic Art Ensemble (formerly The Seymour Group) from 1982-2007. She has run workshops and master classes in contemporary techniques for ANU School of Music, Tasmanian Conservatorium and Sydney Conservatorium.

As a composer Draeger is mostly self-taught and identifies with the composer/performer tradition. She has written works for solo flute, flute and piano, flute and string orchestra, flute quartet and theatre pieces. In 1999 she won first prize in the Australian Flute Composition Competition for *Melusina's Dream*. She is a partner in *Fluteworthy*, a specialist flute music publisher.

Tonya Lemoh - Australian/Sierra-Leonean pianist Tonya Lemoh has made a career of championing forgotten composers. Labelled a "pianist archaeologist" by a leading critic, her concert appearances and recordings have consistently garnered critical acclaim.

A passionate advocate of Australian music, her doctoral research resulted in a world premiere recording of the complete piano works of Raymond Hanson. Awarded Editor's Choice in *Limelight* magazine, it received five stars. Tonya was the recipient of a Creative Fellowship Award from the National Library of Australia in 2022, where she pursued research into the musical legacy of Henry Handel Richardson.

A prize winner in international piano competitions, she has performed in solo and chamber recitals, international festivals and concerto performances in Australia, America and Europe. She has released numerous recordings as soloist and collaborative artist for international labels Chandos, Naxos, Dacapo, Danacord, most recently a disc of art songs by Henry Handel Richardson for Toccata classics. Tonya has been a guest on Australian and Danish radio/television as performer and interviewee, recently appearing on Andrew Ford's *The Music Show* for ABC Radio National. She is an experienced collaborative pianist and has performed in lieder and art song recitals in Australia, Europe and America.

She was a lecturer on the piano faculty of Copenhagen University for ten years, where some career highlights include winning the prestigious Danish Radio P2 prize for best solo recording of the year. She continues to enjoy teaching and performing as soloist and associate artist in Australia and Scandinavia.

Programme Notes

In *Diamonds in the Snow*, we present music that evokes and portrays the North. It is music inspired by snow, frozen lakes and mountains inhabited by trolls, birdlife and human love. It is music infused with folk tradition and respect for the natural world. It is music of light and dark, where in long winters, lake and sea turn to ice, yet where dancing waves of the Aurora ignite the winter sky. It is music where aural and visual senses merge and where national identities are expressed. Two towering giants, the Norwegian, Edvard Grieg and the prolific Finn, Jean Sibelius stand tall. Edvard Grieg contrasted light and dark tonalities while drawing on folk harmonies and rhythms to infuse his music with the Norwegian spirit. Although the violinist, organist, conductor and composer, Sibelius, is synonymous with Finland, he grew up in a Swedish speaking family and many of his vocal works were written to Swedish texts. A little less known by the wider public, is Carl Nielsen who is considered a national treasure in Denmark. His orchestral, instrumental and vocal works are characterised by melodic richness and harmonic vitality.

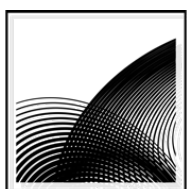
Rather than being supported by the court or aristocracy as in other parts of Europe, many of our composers worked as Church organists writing music for ordinary parishioners. In the music of Eyvind Alnaes we hear a devout yet proud Norwegian spirit, while the fierce Finnish separatist, Toivo Kuula also employing church modes strikes a reverential and sometimes mesmeric tone, all the while writing with a definite nationalist intent. Another Finnish organist, Oskar Merikanto wrote widely accessible works with sentimental harmonies. Previously obscured by standard history, works by female composers, Elfrida Andrée (organist) and Amanda Meier (violinist), each a distinguished Swedish musician, academic and composer in the Romantic tradition, are currently enjoying a welcome resurgence in popularity.

A new generation of Swedish composers includes Ture Rangström who introduced modernist elements into his compositions. Also a singing teacher, his output included three operas, songs and symphonic poems. We are also incredibly proud to be presenting 'Changing Light' by the Finnish composer, Kaija Saariaho. Only recently deceased, Saariaho was rated 17th between Brahms and Joseph Haydn, in the BBC Music Magazine's 50 all-time greatest composers.

Our only living composer is Christine Draeger, and we are honoured to hear her today performing her own touching work 'A Memory of Sweden' for flute and piano

Thank you.

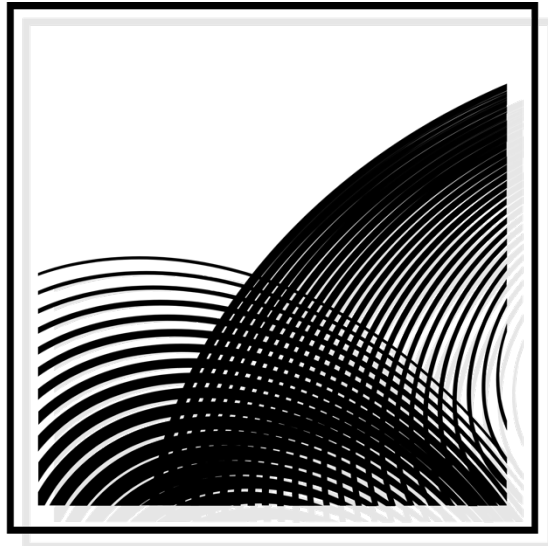
The Opera and Song Collective wishes to thank Sandra Oldis for tireless administrative work and tasty Tosca Diamonds, Christine Logan and Endangered Productions for collaborative support, Michael Spicer and The Unitarian Church, Vera Tchikina and Samanta Lestavel for front of house assistance, Nadia Cassidy for filming and photography and Timo Riihonen for Finnish language coaching.



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