

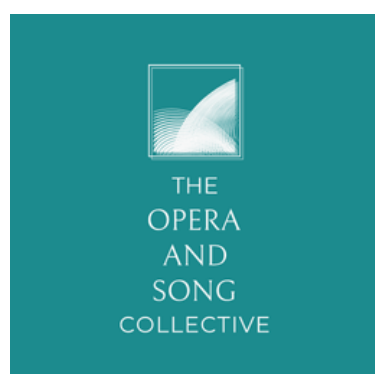
The Opera and Song Collective
presents

Songs from the Winter Palace



SONGS AND ARIAS BY BORODIN, GLINKA,
RACHMANINOFF, RIMSKY-KORSAKOV & TCHAIKOVSKY

Pitt Street Uniting Church
264 Pitt St Sydney
Saturday 2.30 pm 1 June



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 song and excerpts of remarkable musical stage works that less commonly grace Australia platforms, including some by our own nation's composers.

We strive always in our programmes to present less commonly heard works or perform well-loved song and operatic excerpts in uncommon ways.

TOSC receives no third party funding for its activities and is supported by the artists and assistants, in addition to relying on its audience to cover essential costs such as venue hire, artist honorariums and publicity.

We thank you for being part of our audience for the recital today and hope that you will join us again.

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

Sopranos: Jillian Halleron, Natalia Melnik, Alya Meyer,
Kerry Nicholson, Anna Tafani,

Mezzos: Lisa Munckton, Sandra Oldis, Agnes Sarkis,
Jill Sullivan

Tenors: Hongxin jiang, Kent McIntosh

Basses: David Hearnden, Lucas Tamayo,

Piano: Claire Howard Race

MC: Matt Gaskin

Programme curated by Jill Sullivan



THE
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COLLECTIVE

On winning the Polar Music Prize 2024, renowned Finnish conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen made the iconic statement, "when times are difficult, great music is needed."

Certainly, times are difficult now with wars, natural disasters and financial stressors across many countries, so now more than ever we need great music and we need to make it where and when we can. Music is a force that heals and brings us together. Great music also elevates.

Today we present some of the finest vocal works written by composers of Russian national origin, music that is not frequently performed in Australia and even less so in the past two years.

The Russian classical compositional tradition really began with Mikhail Glinka, on whose 220th birthday we present 'Songs from the Winter Palace'. His music has a distinctive 'flavour' that we recognise as Russian. From wealthy origins, he was able to travel extensively through Europe, making connections with composers such as the French, Berlioz, Irish, John Field, and Italians, Donizetti and Bellini. He became convinced it was his mission to portray Russian life in opera and returned to Russia where he infused his music with folk melody and rhythm. His influence on artistic thought and younger composers was such that classical music in Russia developed its own identity which we hear today in the song and operatic excerpts of all our composers. The West has become quite familiar with the ballet and orchestral music of Tchaikovsky and the piano music of Rachmaninov and the music of Borodin has reached us largely through its use in the musical, Kismet. What is less often heard though, are the works of Balakirev, the songs of Glinka and Rachmaninov and the operas of Rimsky-Korsakoff with their fairy-tale themes and distinctive melodic shaping.

The Opera and Song Collective wishes to enrich the lives of our performers and bring to our audience, music that entertains and enlightens. Today we bring you 'Songs from the Winter Palace' a culmination of a three month long journey of discovery of Russian language and its classical vocal tradition for TOSC.

We wish to thank Natalia Melnik and Russian for Singers for her assistance and guidance in creating this programme.

Programme

Borodin	Fly Away	<i>Prince Igor</i>	Full Ensemble
Rimsky-Korsakoff	The Rose has Charmed the Nightingale		Natalia
Balakirev	Oh Never Sing to me Again		Lisa
Glinka	The Lark		Anna
	Barcarolle		Agnes and David
	The North Star		Ensemble
Tchaikovsky	My Genius, my Angel, my Friend.		Jill
Rachmaninoff	Lilacs		Jillian
	How Fair the Spot		Alya
	Scene by the Cradle	<i>Aleko</i>	Natalia
Tchaikovsky	Tatyana and Olga Duet	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Natalia & Jill
	Lensky's Aria	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Hongxin

Interval

Scriabin	Etude Op 8 No 2 and Prelude Op 15 no 4, andantino Prelude Op 15 no 3, allegro assai		David
Rimsky-Korsakoff	Volkova's Lullaby	<i>Sadko</i>	Jillian
	Song of the Indian Guest	<i>Sadko</i>	Kent
	Song of the Viking Guest	<i>Sadko</i>	Lucas
Rimsky-Korsakoff	Mother's Spring Aria	<i>Snowmaiden</i>	Jill
	Snowmaiden's Aria	<i>Snowmaiden</i>	Natalia
	Third Song of Lel	<i>Snowmaiden</i>	Agnes
	Snowmaiden's Death Scene	<i>Snowmaiden</i>	Kerry
Glinka	Do not Tempt Me		Agnes & Hongxin
Tchaikovsky	Night		Full Ensemble



On behalf of Pitt Street Uniting Church, we pay recognition to the traditional inhabitants of the land on which we are meeting, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation – we acknowledge Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging and pay respect to them and their heritage.



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The Opera and Song Collective wish to thank Sandra Oldis for unfailing support and administrative work including Program preparation; and Clarissa Chaloner and Kate Escobar for Front of House assistance.

Borodin - Polovtsian Dances
Fly Away On The Wings Of The
Wind - *Prince Igor*

Fly away on the wings of the wind
To our Motherland, our native song,
To the place where we used to sing
you freely,
To the place where we used to live
in liberty.
There, under the hot skies the air is
full of leisure,
And mountains slumber among the
clouds,
Listening to the murmur of the sea.
The Sun shines so brightly there,
Pouring the light over our native
mountains,
And roses bloom in the valleys,
And nightingales sing in the green
woods.
There you, our song, can be free,
Fly away to that land!



Rimsky-Korsakoff
The Rose and the Nightingale

The Nightingale is enchanted by
the Rose
And is singing for her day and
night;
But the Rose keeps listening
without an answer...
Just like that a singer with his lyre
Sings for a young maiden;
But the lovely maiden doesn't
know,
For whom he sings and what
makes his songs so sorrowful.

Balakirev - Oh do not sing
Text by A. Pushkin

Oh, do not sing to me, my beauty,
The songs of sorrowful Georgia
They remind me of another life and
a distant shore.
Alas! They remind me, those cruel
songs of yours, of the plains,
the night, and in the moonlight
the face of a poor distant maiden.
That ghost, dear and fatal
I forget when I see you.
But when you sing
I imagine her there before me again.

Glinka - The Lark

There is a song ringing between
the sky and the ground,

Like an endless flow it streams
louder and louder.

One cannot see this singer of the
fields,

Where the resonant lark sings so
loudly,

Flying high above his darling
girlfriend.

The wind carries a song without
knowing who it is for...

The one for whom it is will
understand and know who has
sent it.

Pour out, my song, the song of a
sweet hope,

Someone will remember me and
spare a secret sigh

Glinka - Barcarolle

The blue ones have fallen asleep
Today, like yesterday.

Oh, distant waves,

How long will it be? Until
morning?

In the darkness of night we have
The excitement of love
Our eyes drown with tears,
Fire burns in our blood.

And the wide oar flourished
With a splash,

And the cherished window
Quietly sung open.

And the sufferer does not give,
Rest to you, waves;

Full of hope and desire,
Love sings all night.

The blue ones have fallen asleep
Today, like yesterday.

Oh, distant waves,

How long will it be? Until morning?

Glinka - The North Star (The Wedding Song)

In a tower lives a bride

Who sheds a tear for her distant
groom.

He is far and will not soon return.

When he does return it will be
spring,

And the sun of joy will rise

Tchaikovsky - My Genius, my Angel, my Friend

Are you not here, as a light
shadow,
My genius, my angel, my friend,
Are you not talking to me softly,
And quietly circling around me?

You gift me with a timid
inspiration,
And heal my sweet ailment,
You gift me with a tender dream,
My genius, my angel, my friend!

Rachmaninoff - The Lilacs

In the morning, at the dawn,
I shall walk on the dewy grass to
breathe in the fresh morning air and
I'll walk into the fragrant shade,
where the bushes of lilacs are
growing thick,
to search for my happiness.

There is only one happiness in life
that I'm destined to find,
and its home is in the bushes of the
lilacs, on its green branches,
on its fragrant tassels,
that is where my poor happiness
blooms.

Rachmaninoff - How fair this spot

How fair is the spot
How fair this spot...
Just look, there in the distance
The river is ablaze;
The meadows are like a radiant carpet,
And the clouds are white.
There is nobody here...
here silence reigns...
Here I am alone with God.
And the flowers, and the old pine tree,
And you, my dream!...

Rachmaninoff - Zemfira's aria (Scene by the cradle) - *Aleko*

Old Husband, fearsome husband,
You can cut me or burn me;
I am firm and fear neither knife nor fire.
I hate you and despise you;
I'm in love with another man, I'm dying
for this love!
You don't like it? I don't care!
I am singing this song for myself.
He is fresher than spring,
Hotter than a summer day;
How young and brave he is!
How much he loves me!
Did you get the meaning of my song?
It is your right to be angry.
I am singing this song about you.
How I caressed him in the silence of the
night,
How we laughed at your grey hair then.

**"Tchaikovsky - Tatyana & Olga
Duet - *Eugene Onegin***

Have you ever heard at night time
the voice of the singer of love,
the singer of his sorrow?
When the fields were quiet in the
morning hour, have you heard the
sad and simple sound of a pipe?
Have you ever heard it?
Have you ever spared a sigh
listening to the soft voice of the
singer of love,
the singer of his sorrow?
When you saw a young man
wandering in the forest, catching the
glance of his eyes with no more fire
in them?
Have you ever spared a sigh?"

**Tchaikovsky - Lensky's Aria
*Eugene Onegin***

Where have you gone,
o golden days of my spring?
What does the day coming
has in store for me?
It escapes my eyes, it is hidden!
Shall I fall to the deadly arrow,
or will it pass by?

All for better,
there is a pre-determined time
For life and for sleep
Blessed is a day of simple tasks
And blessed is the day of troubles.
Will the day beam shine in the
morning
And the bright day shall reign
And I, well, will I, perhaps, will
descend into mysterious darkness of
my fatal tomb?
And the memory of a strange poet
will fall into the Abyss
The world shall forget me,
but you, you, Olga!
Tell me, will you, the maiden of
beauty, come to shed a tear
Over the early urn
And think "he loved me,
he was devoted to me
The gloomy dawn of a troubled life!"
Ah Olga, I did love you,
To you alone I was devoted
The gloomy dawn of my troubled life
Yes Olga, I did love you!

My wonderful friend, my dear friend,
Come, for I am your husband, etc.

Where have you gone,
O golden days of my spring?

Rimsky-Korsakoff-
Volkhova's Lullaby - *Sadko*

Sleep walked along the shore,
Slumber walked along the field.

Sleep looked for Slumber,
asking him:

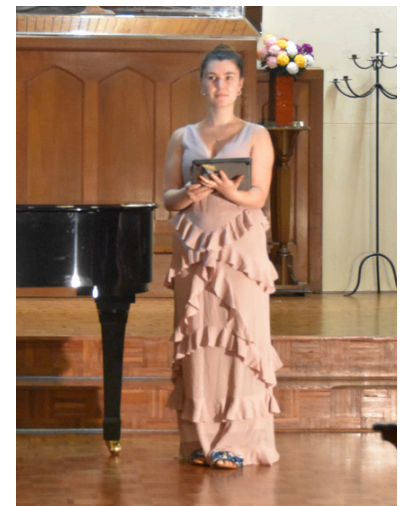
where is Sadko sleeping,
that good merchant youth?
Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye

My Sadko sleeps in the field,
on the green shore in
embroidered battle garb,
in the green reeds.

My tender caress lull him.
Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye

Grow, my reed,
my embroidered battle garb.
Do not quiver, green and silken
grass.

My maiden heart has been
captivated by his song.



Rimsky-Korsakoff
The Song of the Indian Guest -
Countless Diamonds - *Sadko*

You cannot count the number of
diamonds in the stone caves!

You cannot count the pearls in
the meridian sea:

These are the wonders of faraway
India!

A glorious ruby can be found on
the warm sea.

On this ruby there is a Phoenix,
a bird with the visage of a maiden!

This bird sings songs of paradise,
opens its feathers, covers the sea.

He who hears this song forgets all
else!

You cannot count the number of
diamonds in the stone caves!

You cannot count the pearls in
the meridian sea:

These are the wonders of faraway
India!

Rimsky-Korsakoff - *Sadko*

Song of the Viking Guest -

O formidable cliffs...

The waves terribly break up with the roaring on the rocks and, turning with the white foam, run back.

But firmly the grey cliffs endure the waves' rush standing over the sea.

From those rocks stone at us, Varangians, the bones are, From the sea waves in us, the blood-ore went.

And the thoughts are secret from the fog, We born at the sea will die at the sea. The swords are sharp, the arrows are sharp against the Varangians. They cause death without missing the enemy.

The people of the midnight countries are brave.

Great is their One God, sullen is the sea.

Rimsky-Korsakoff - *Snowmaiden*

Mother Spring's Aria

In the appointed hour, in the usual order, I appear to the land of the Berendeys; but the grim land greets its Spring without joy, coldly!

The playful brooks are held in strong shackles,

the woods stand silent under snow; under the snow the paws of the fir-trees are bent.

The moon burns like fire and the stars sparkle with intensified brilliance...

everything is only light and cold brilliance, and there is no warmth!

It is very different in the valleys of the southern countries,

the happy lands past the warm seas.

From the meadows blooming there, from the myrtle woods,

from the acacia flowers, come rushing aromas of roses,

steam rises from the cultivated

gardens! The lazy shining of the

opaque moon tenderly slips across the slim poplars and the minaret towers.

But still, I love midnight countries;

I like to awaken mighty nature from sleep, and call from the depths of the

earth the mysterious might which

brings unpretentious bounty of life.

I like to warm up for joys of love the grim countries of nonchalant peoples:

I like to decorate their groves and bushes with colourful carpets of grass

for feasts and games!

**Rimsky-Korsakoff - *Snow Maiden*
Snow Maiden's Aria**

To go berry picking with girlfriends,
to reply to their cheerful calling:

A oo, a-oo!

To dance in circles and with the
maidens,

To repeat after Lel', the chorus of
spring songs. "Oh, Darling Lel'!"

This is what your Snow Maiden
wants most,

For without songs life holds no joy
for her.

Allow me to go, Father!

When during cold Winter

You return to the depths of the
forest

At nightfall, I shall comfort you by
singing a song

With the accompaniment of a
snowstorm,

I shall sing a joyful song,

I'll choose one of Lel's and will
learn it in no time. Ah, Father!

To go berry picking with girlfriends,

To dance in circles and with the
maidens,

To repeat after Lel', the chorus of
spring songs. "Oh, Darling Lel'!"

This is what your Snow Maiden
wants most, for without songs life
holds no joy for her, no joy!

**Rimsky-Korsakoff - *Snowmaiden*
The Third Sing of Lel'**

Storm cloud was making
arrangements with thunder: you,
thunder, rattle and I will pour some
rain, let's drizzle the earth with a
Spring rain.

Then the flowers will rejoice, the
maidens will go out for berry
picking, and the lads will follow
them.

Lel' my, Lel' my
Lyoli, lyoli, Lel'

In the grove all the maidens have
spread around, some went into the
bushes, and some into the tree
forest, and they picked the berries
calling

"A - OO" to each other.

Suddenly, one maiden went missing.

All the other maidens started to cry:
perhaps a wolf had eaten her?

Lel' my, lel' my
Lyoli, lyoli, Lel'

Then the girls met a stranger, a
stranger elderly man, and he said:
Stupid girls, are you out of your
minds? What's the point for you to
call "A-OO" to her, what's the joy
for her to reply? You'd better search
around in the bushes.

Lel' my, Lel' my
Lyoli, Lyoli, Lel'

Rimsky-Korsakoff - *Snowmaiden*

Snowmaiden's Death Scene

Oh, great Tsar!

Ask me a hundred times and I will
answer a hundred times;

I love him.

It was pale morning when I revealed
my love to the one chosen by my
soul and rushed into his arms.

But what is happening to me?
Is it bliss or death? What a delight!

What languorous feelings!

Oh, mother spring! Oh, mother
spring, thankyou for the joy,
thankyou for the sweet gift of love!
What languishing bliss is flowing in
me!

Oh, Lel' I can hear your enchanting
songs are in my ears;
a fire in my eyes, in my heart,
in my blood, in all of me.

I am in love and I am melting from
the sweet feelings of love;
farewell, all my dear girlfriends,
farewell, my dear groom!
Farewell! My dear! Oh, my dear,
I am yours!

My last glance of you, my dear!
My last glance of you, my dear!

Chorus:

Oh unheard of – a wonderful
miracle

She melts under the sun like
spring snow melts and is no
longer a snow maiden.

Glinka - O do not tempt me

O do not tempt me without reason:
Affection lost cannot return.

How foreign to the broken-hearted
Are all the charms of bygone days!
I can no longer trust thy promise;
I have no longer faith in love;
And cannot suffer once again
To be deceived by phantom
visions.

Do not augment my anguish mute;
Say not a word of former gladness.
And, kindly friend,

O do not trouble
A convalescent's dreaming rest.
I sleep: how sweet to me oblivion:
Forgotten all my youthful dreams!
Within my soul is naught but
turmoil,
And love shall wake no more for
thee.

Tchaikovsky - Night

Oh, what a night! What vastness!
The stars are shooting sparks in
the sky.

Everything is already silent;
Only in the distance, the brook
Is mysteriously babbling.

Everything is asleep;
Peace descends into my heart
As a welcome guest.

Oh, night hour,
send me a blessed sleep!

My tired soul tasted rest again!
Oh, night hour, give me oblivion
And send me, and send me
blessed sleep!

Oh, what a night and what
vastness!

How bright is the night!





Hongxin Jiang



Alya Meyer



David Hearnden



Kerry Nicholson



Anna Tafani



Natalia Melnik



Agnes Sarkis



Jill Sullivan



Jillian Halleron



Lucas Tamayo



Lisa Monckton



Kent McIntosh



Matt Gaskin



Claire Howard Race



Sandra Oldis



Matt Gaskin has recently come home to Sydney after 12 years living in Canada. Whilst he was there, he obtained a Bachelor of Music from the University of Toronto, majoring in composition, and a Masters of Music in Opera Performance from the

University of British Columbia, where he studied with J. Patrick Raftery. Roles performed there include Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Nika Magadoff in Menotti's *The Consul*, and Herzog von Urbino in Johann Strauss' *Eine Nacht in Venedig*. During his studies he took part in the masterclass and *Singer Behind the Song* series with Ben Heppner, performed the tenor solo for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the UBC Symphony Orchestra, as well as concert tours as soloist with the UBC Opera Ensemble to Czech Republic, China, and Christmas concerts with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

Matt has also performed the role of Tito in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* at the Centre for Opera Studies in Italy, and Tamino in *The Czech Republic* for the European Music Academy in Teplice, and Summer Opera Lyric Theatre in Toronto, Canada. Professional chorus and choral work include the Vancouver Opera Company, Vancouver Chamber Choir and the Elmer Iseler Singers of Toronto.





Scottish-born Soprano **Jillian Halleron** is a graduate from the prestigious Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

After graduating, Jillian joined the West Australian Opera (WAO) chorus, played “The Witch” in the Award-Winning Fringe Festival Show Maisie and regularly contributed in projects with Freeze Frame Opera (FFO) both on stage and off stage.

In 2019 she first moved to Sydney to join Pacific Opera’s (PO) Young Artist Program. Highlights include featuring as a soloist with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra and being in the chorus for the audio recording of George Palmer’s Opera Cloudstreet. She also performed for Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of New South Wales and other distinguished guests at Government House.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, Jillian returned to Perth and was grateful for the opportunities offered to her, especially during a time of uncertainty for the arts community. One project she is particular proud of, was co-founding Couch Opera Live, an online concert platform which aimed to support and raise money for young artists.

Jillian became a Wesfarmer Arts Young Artist and Bendat Scholar with West Australian Opera in both 2022 and 2023. Highlights include featuring as a soloist in WAO’s reimagination of Bach’s Easter Oratorio with accompanying commissioned work by Lachlan Skipworth, playing “the Maid” in WAO’s production of Tosca, touring with WAO’s Act Belong Commit Sing Out Loud education workshops, and covering several different roles including Micaela in WAO’s production of Carmen for Perth Festival.

In 2024 Jillian relocated back to Sydney to continue on her singing journey.



Born and raised in Brisbane, **David Hearnden** is an amateur musician when not working his day job as a software engineer.

David discovered a passion for music at an early age. He began piano lessons at the age of 5, completed his AMusA at the age of 12, and performed Prokofiev's

Piano Concerto No.1 when he was 17. Today, he focuses on works of Scriabin, Chopin, and Godowsky.

David began choral singing aged 10 in Brisbane's St John's Cathedral choir. He continued choral singing for many years as a young adult in the world-renowned choir The Australian Voices (TAV), performing the music of contemporary Australian composers and touring throughout Europe and Asia. His time with TAV included winning First Prize in multiple categories of the Choir of the World Competition in 2001.



Hongxin Jiang was born in China, completing his music degree at ShenYang Conservatory of Music before singing with the Opera Centre in his province for almost five years before moving to Sydney in 2005. Shortly after his arrival he commenced vocal

studies with Arax Mansourian. Consequently, he has made two trips to Armenia to perform in celebratory concerts for the famous composer Tigran Mansouryan's 75th birthday in 2014 and in 2017 to honour the career spanning over 50 years of internationally acclaimed opera singer Arax Mansourian.

Since 2014 Hongxin has frequently sung with the Opera Australia Chorus appearing in approximately 20 productions including Madam Butterfly, La Boheme, Turandot, Tosca, Otello, Aida, Attila, Ernani, La Traviata, Il Trovatore, Il Barbiere Siviglia, Le Nozze di Figaro, Maria Stuarda, La Juive, Mefistofele, Lohengrin, Gotterdammerung, Carmen, Le contes d'Hoffnam, and most recently La Gioconda. Hongxin has also sung with the Chinese Musicians Association.

Hongxin debuted with TOSC in Better Angels in 2023.



Born in Auckland, **Kent McIntosh** began his professional musical life as a full time French Horn player in the RNZ Navy Band. He began singing at age 19 focusing initially on choral music, most notably with the prestigious NZ Youth Choir. Kent studied music in NZ, Sydney and Canberra, where he graduated M.Mus in 2001 and won the Kornfeld full Scholarship.

Roles include Tamino and Monostatos: The Magic Flute, title role: Albert Herring, Quint: The Turn of the Screw, Don Basilio: The Marriage of Figaro (Canberra) Servant/Chauffeur: Capriccio, Registrar: Madama Butterfly (Opera Australia). He has sung as soloist in Oratorio on approximately seventy occasions. Highlights include Messiah, Israel in Egypt, St John Passion (Evangelist and tenor soloist), Monteverdi Vespers, Bach B minor Mass, CPE Bach and JS Bach Magnificats, Carmina Burana, Elijah, The Creation, Puccini's Gloria and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. He has performed in concert with both Opera Australia and the Canberra Symphony Orchestra.

Kent has given over thirty song recitals in total, performing either in a solo capacity, or with his chamber group 'the Tasman Soloists'. His 2007 recital with pianist Andrew Greene was nominated by Canberra music critics as one of the annual top 10 performances of classical music in the ACT. Kent has been broadcast twice live on ABC Classic FM, most recently in the Britten Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings on 'Sunday Live'. Kent has performed with the Opera Australia chorus on over 3000 occasions at the Sydney Opera House, Arts Centre Melbourne or the Queensland Performing Arts Centre.



Natalia Melnik was born in Moscow, Russia and moved to Sydney in 2013.

At the age of five, she started her musical education at a primary music school. At thirteen, she was

granted a place in a children's concert choir "Cantilena", and two years later became the choir soloist, performing in numerous concerts and touring in Russia and Europe. Later, Natalia continued her studies at Valentina Levko's Center of Vocal Art in Moscow. Natalia is currently conducting her doctorate research at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Her research aims to make Russian vocal music more accessible for non-Russian-speaking singers. Natalia worked as a Russian lyric diction coach with AIM, the Sydney Conservatorium Choir, the Sydney Art Song Society and numerous individual singers. Natalia is the founder of the "Russian For Singers" project that helps hundreds of classical singers from around the world explore Russian vocal music.

Natalia sings in numerous recitals throughout the year, specialising in coloratura arias as well as Russian music. In December 2016, Natalia performed with the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra in their Christmas concert. In 2017-2019, Natalia sang the roles of Valeria in the production of Alessandro Scarlatti's opera "La Caduta De' Decemviri", Marcella in "Boheme a piacere", Princess Tamara in the play "Demon", the title role of Clara Schumann in the "Happy Birthday, Clara!" concert program. During 2021-2023, Natalia created and performed a number of concert programs, including "Love Songs" (2021), "Made in Heaven" (2022) and "Rejoice!" (2023). Natalia's recordings are available on Spotify, Apple Music and other streaming platforms.



Alya Meyer is a Ukrainian-born and Sydney-based first soprano who's journey in music began at an early age in Ukraine, inspired by her mother's career as a country singer.

This early exposure to music led her to join the Ukrainian children's choir 'Shchedryk', with whom, for the next ten years, she had the privilege of performing in esteemed venues across Europe, including the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Beethovenhalle in Bonn, The Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory and performing a solo feature at the Vatican for Pope Benedict XVI.

Upon relocating to Sydney at 21, Alya continued to pursue musical endeavours, achieving the AMEB 8th grade in Classical Voice and a Certificate of Performance. Over the years, Alya has collaborated with many different organisations to create and perform music. Alya performed in multiple productions with the Manly Musical Society, the Sydney Philharmonic Choir and a contemporary opera company, The House That Dan Built. Additionally, being involved in the development and recording of cinematic soundtracks for short films and being a lead singer in a symphonic metal band have further enhanced her skills and versatility as a singer and performer.

Beyond her musical pursuits, Alya holds a Master's degree in Creative Music Therapy and works as a music therapist with NDIS clients in the eastern suburbs. As a devoted mother to her two primary school children, Alya does her best to keep up with their sporting schedules and aspire to raise them in a musical household.



Lisa Munckton returned to singing after many years pursuing a career in finance, traveling, and focusing on her family. Before pausing her vocal studies, Lisa studied voice

through the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music and later at the University of Queensland. Her early years saw her perform as a soloist in Tasmania with local orchestras in works ranging from Handel's Messiah through to new works by young Australian composers. In Queensland, Lisa also enjoyed working in the chorus of the Lyric Opera of Queensland before commencing her travels overseas.

Lisa's love of opera developed early, and over the years she has performed roles in amateur opera and light opera companies. These roles include: Cio-Cio-San (Madame Butterfly), Diana (Orpheus in the Underworld), Sister Genevieve (Suor Angelica), Yum Yum and Pitti Sing (The Mikado), and Casilda (The Gondoliers).

In Sydney Lisa has enjoyed performing as a soloist in various opera and art song concerts. These include concerts at the Mosman Art Gallery, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and St Stephens Church in Sydney. Lisa has recently discovered an affinity with mezzo roles and is excited to be exploring the coloratura mezzo and zwischenfach repertoire. But the other discovery she has made has been the Russian repertoire, of both opera and art song. Lisa is delighted to be able to introduce audiences to some of the beautiful Russian works for voice so seldom performed in Australia.



Kerry Nicholson recently performed Gerhilde in Ride of the Valkyries with the Willoughby Symphony Choir and Orchestra's Villains and Valkyries Concert, in collaboration with the Wagner Society and Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith. Chorus work includes Opera Australia,

Cantillation, and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed with Rockdale Opera, Opera Lirica, North Sydney Opera and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Roles performed include Santuzza, Violetta, Konstanza, Pamina and Königin der Nacht, Lucia di Lammermoor, Donna Anna, Rosalinda, Gertrude Hansel and Gretel, Dido, and Celia La Fedelta Premiata.

Kerry has appeared as soprano soloist with the Strathfield Symphony, Willoughby Symphony, Manly-Warringah Choir and Symphony, Cantares choir and Sydney Conservatorium. Concerts included Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Mass in C, Bach's Magnificat, St John Passion, C.P.E Bach's Magnificat, Handel's Messiah, Dixit Dominus, Mozart's Requiem, Faure Requiem and Schubert's Mass in G.

Kerry has been a winner of the Australian National Operatic Aria, which enabled her to travel to Italy and Austria to perform the roles Konstanze and Rosalinda. She was a finalist several times for the Opera Foundation Australia Awards, a 'Telstra Wholesale Young Artist' with Pacific Opera and gave a live recital broadcast for the Young Artist Competition on 2MBS FM, with Sharolyn Kimmorley.

Kerry holds degrees in Vocal Performance, Opera (Sydney Conservatorium of Music), Secondary School Teaching and Geosciences (UOW).

Alongside performing, Kerry teaches voice at the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music, classroom teaching in Sutherland Shire high schools, playing tennis, ballet, and driving her children to their activities.



Sandra Oldis completed her Bachelor of Music Degree at Melbourne University before undertaking post graduate studies in Opera at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Sandra is proud to have been a long term member of the Opera Australia Chorus where she also performed roles such as the Chorus Soloist/Cretan Woman *Idomeneo*, Lady Artist *Lulu*, Mistress of the Novices and Second Lay Sister *Suor Angelica*, Antonia's Mother *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Aunt/Off-stage voice *Jenufa*, German Mother *Death in Venice*; Maid *My Fair Lady*. In addition, she covered many roles including Mother Marie in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Mrs Sedley in *Peter Grimes*, Mrs Herring in *Albert Herring*, The Mother in *Hansel and Gretel*, Grimgerde in *Die Walküre* and many others.

Roles for other companies include the Title Role *The Medium*, Miss Pinkerton *The Old Maid and the Thief*, La Ciesca *Gianni Schicchi* ; Marcellina *The Marriage of Figaro*, Sally in *A Hand of Bridge*. Concert Engagements include soloist in Mahler Second and Third Symphonies, Bach St Matthew Passion, Durufle Requiem, Handel Messiah, Saul and Dixit Dominus, Mozart Litanae Lauratanae, Pergolesi Stabat Mater, Vivaldi Gloria, and a wide range of recital repertoire with highlights being Wagner Wesendonck Lieder, Mahler Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, and Schumann Frauenliebe und Leben.

Sandra acts as the Executive Assistant for The Opera and Song Collective looking after many of the administrative tasks required to present concerts such as today's and so helping to enable upcoming and established singers to follow their dreams.



Agnes Sarkis was born in Iran to an Armenian family, and holds an Advanced Diploma of Opera from Sydney Conservatorium and Graduate Diploma in Music (Opera).

Roles she performed at the Sydney Conservatorium include Daisy Bates in Daisy Bates in Ooldea, L'Opinion Publique in Orphee aux Enfers, Balkis in

La Rencontre Imprevue, Dinah in Trouble in Tahiti, Syron in King Arthur, La Sour Ainee in Les Malheurs d'Orphee, Frau Reich in Die Lustigen Weiber Von, Madama Rosa in I Campanello di Notte, Andronico in Tamerlano, Mrs Herring in Albert Herring, and Marianna in Il Signor Bruschino.

She won the Joan Carden Award in 2012 and The Sydney Eisteddfod opera scholarship in 2014. Agnes was also awarded the Italian Opera Foundation Scholarship in 2018, she spent 3 months in Italy working with singing teachers Floriana Longo and Claudio Sgura in Ferrara and Bologna.

She started her work with Opera Australia as a member of the chorus in the operas like Carmen, Madama Butterfly, Faust, King Roger, Pearlfishers, La Bohème and Cav/Pag.

Her career as an Opera Australia principal singer started in 2015 with the role of The Third Lady in the National Tour of The Magic Flute and continued with Suzuki in Madama Butterfly, Modestina in I Viaggio a Reims, Olga in The Merry Widow, Mercedes in Carmen, Carmen in Carmen National Tour, Cherubino in The Marriage of Figaro, Flora in La Traviata, Nicklausse in The Tales of Hoffmann and Siegrune in Die Walküre of The Ring Cycle.

Her concert repertoire includes The Best of Gilbert and Sullivan, Great Opera Hits at Sydney Opera House as well as performing in HSBC Opera in the Gardens, Opera Australia's Opera Gala at Uluru and The New Year's Eve Gala at the Opera house.



Jill Sullivan has performed throughout Australia in opera and concert. She has performed with Opera Australia since 2016, prior to that performing with the State companies in Queensland, and in Western Australia where she was a resident mezzo-soprano performing main stage roles and in children's operas and concerts.

In 2023 Jill covered the role of Rossweisse in *Die Walküre* for Opera Australia and in July this year travels to Germany where she was awarded a place in the Dramatic Voices Programme to perform the role of Erste Magd and cover the role of Klytemnestra in 'Elektra' and perform in the associated Lieder Festival.

While resident in Perth Jill 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 founded The Opera and Song Collective in 2021 in response to the impositions on artists of Covid lockdowns and continues to foster the careers of colleagues and younger singers alike.

Jill studied piano in Hobart, later studying singing with Barbara Sambell in Melbourne then Molly McGurk in Perth and holds an Honours degree in Arts (Opera Studies) from the University of Manchester. She also holds a Bachelor in Medicine, University of Tasmania and Licentiate Diploma of Music (Singing) AMEB.



Anna Tafani is an exciting young soprano, originally from Albania, where she started her classical vocal training at the age of 15. She is a graduate of the Queensland Conservatorium,

where she was also awarded the Joyce Campbell Scholarship for overseas studies under the tutelage of Shelli Hulcombe.

In 2022, Anna joined the studio program of Berlin Opera Academy in Germany, thoroughly studying the role of Pamina. In that same year, she was also selected as a young artist in Kosovo, at the Rame Lahaj International Festival, which she is looking forward to being part of again this July.

During her Masters' studies at the Conservatorium, she debuted the role of Countess in Mozart's 'The Marriage of Figaro' and portrayed the role of Phyllis in a brand-new production of Iolanthe by Gilbert and Sullivan, directed by the critically acclaimed opera director Stuart Maunder. Anna has actively taken part in the Conservatorium's opera productions since 2019, and was part of Mahler's 8th Symphony's chorus performed at Queensland Performing Arts Centre under the baton of maestro Johannes Fritzsch. Recently she performed in one of Voxalis Opera's concert series where she was critiqued as a fearless emerging artist with an impressive range.

Anna Tafani has a continuous drive to establish herself as a professional opera singer and is currently preparing the role of Gilda with her professors Glenn Winslade and Sharolyn Kimmorley, as one of the selected artists at Vienna Opera Academy in August 2024.



Colombian Bass **Lucas Tamayo Blandon** graduated from the Conservatorium of the University of Antioquia, where he completed his Bachelor of Music and Teaching with an emphasis in Operatic Voice.

To much acclaim, in 2007 Lucas made his operatic debut as Fiorello in the Barber of Seville. Since, he has represented such notable roles as Sarastro / The Little Magic flute; Huberto / La Serva Padrona; Bartolo and Antonio / Le Nozze di Figaro; Zuniga / Carmen; Doctor Grenvil / La Traviata; and, Alidoro / La Cenerentola as well as other roles.

Lucas has been under the guidance of esteemed directors such as Dante Ranieri, Guillermo Brizzio, Francisco Rettig, Alessandro Vitiello, Miquel Ortega, Guerassim Voronkov. Winner of the second place in the international singing competition, University EAFIT Medellín, Colombia in 2016, Lucas has been invited as the special guest at lyrical galas at the National Level.





Claire Howard Race obtained her Bachelor of Music with First Class Honours in Piano Performance with teacher Colin Spiers, and was awarded the University Medal from Newcastle Conservatorium, NSW. She continued her postgraduate piano accompaniment studies at the Canberra School of Music and then the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama

in Glasgow, 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, studying accompaniment with Malcolm Martineau and Iain Ledingham.

She has performed to acclaim in song recitals with artists including Deborah Humble, Mariana Hong (Hye Seoung Kwon) and Ghillian Sullivan. From 2017 to 2021 she held the position of Assistant Chorus Master and Principal Rehearsal Pianist for Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, and in 2021 performed in the two pianos and percussion arrangement of Carmina Burana. Performances have included Ola Gjeilo's Luminous Night of the Soul for the Sydney Festival, and the Sydney premiere of Eric Whitacre's The Sacred Veil at Sydney Opera House, together with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, cellist Julian Smiles & conducted by the composer.

Her pianism has been described as “an exceptional display” (Limelight Review), “truly superb playing” (Deborah Humble) and “beautiful music making” (Simon Keenleyside). Claire has recorded for ABC Classic playing music by Australian composer Paul Smith and has recently been appointed as College Accompanist to Pymble Ladies' College, Sydney. Upcoming performances include an English Song recital with British baritone Roderick Williams at the 2024 Newcastle Music Festival.

Upcoming concerts

The Opera and Song Collective presents

Chanson d'après-midi

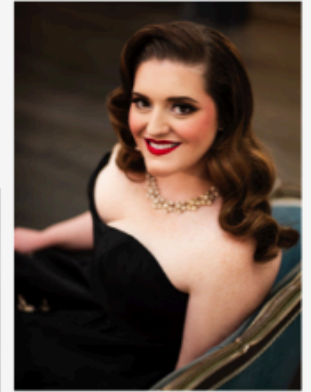
July 7th at 3:00pm

Mosman Art Gallery

Art Gallery Way, Mosman



Kylie Bailey



Bronwyn Douglass



Benjamin Caukwell



Alan Hicks



For additional information about upcoming TOSC events
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