



THE STARS TURN



40th ANNIVERSARY PERFORMANCE TOUR
Newcastle | Wollongong
Canberra | Hobart

WELCOME FROM THE CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

40 years of The Song Company – what a way to kick off our first year as Co-Artistic Directors! As we planned the 2024 concert season, we were keenly aware of the significance of this exciting opportunity. How could we best pay tribute to such an incredible legacy and showcase the immense contribution this ensemble of vocal soloists has made to Australian music?

A quick visit to the Australian Music Centre’s website provides a glimpse. Just search ‘vocal ensemble’ and ‘sextet’! Building on the initiatives of previous Artistic Directors, we are proud to continue the company’s tradition of commissioning new works. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, private foundations, and government support, The Song Company has commissioned over 120 works in its 40-year history. While we can’t showcase the full body of works, this program offers a snapshot of the music from each decade.

In 2023, The Song Company transitioned to an artist-led structure. Each singer brings a wealth of experience and a touch of their own stardust to the music-making process. With shared leadership from the individual singers within our ensemble, or by one of our expert Guest Directors, the creative possibilities for The Song Company’s future programs are endless.

In the first half of the program, we wanted to highlight the amazing ‘stars’ of The Song Company’s rich 40-year history: the Artists who have lent their beautiful voices and incredible musicianship, the Artistic Directors and Guest Directors who have programmed so imaginatively, the composers whose works the company has brought into the Australian musical canon, the office staff who have tirelessly kept things running behind the scenes, the board and volunteers who have given their time and expertise, our donors, supporters, and you, our audience.

The second half is on a much larger scale than what we normally do. When Ross Edwards told us that his ambitious new work, *Vespers for Mother Earth*, was awaiting its first performance, it was an easy decision to feature this in our gala. This gave us a chance to include some of our musical friends from across the sector, including Ensemble Offspring (led by the indefatigable Claire Edwardes), Genevieve Lang, and of course, Roland Peelman.

Music ensembles are nothing without their audiences and supporters. In paying tribute to the tremendous creative output of the ensemble, we also extend our deep gratitude to the audiences who have journeyed with us over these incredible 40 years.

Jessica O’Donoghue and Amy Moore



THE SONG COMPANY



The Song Company is Australia’s leading professional vocal ensemble. Led by world-leading creative artists, the company has a proud tradition of fostering the careers of the nation’s most exciting vocal performers.

Since its beginnings in 1984 it has captivated audiences with exquisite performances of vocal work ranging from the 10th century to contemporary compositions. Every project The Song Company undertakes is underwritten by its unwavering commitment to excellence and to the transcendent and transformative beauty of the human voice.

2024 marks a significant milestone as the ensemble celebrates its 40th Anniversary with an unforgettable journey through the world of vocal ensemble music. Curated by Co-Artistic Directors Amy Moore and Jessica O’Donoghue, this season is dedicated to the exceptional singers of the ensemble and explores the profound connection between music and the natural world.

BOARD

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CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

Amy Moore & Jessica O’Donoghue

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2024 COMPANY

Susannah Lawergren, Amy Moore, Hannah Fraser,
Jessica O’Donoghue, Hayden Barrington, James Fox,
Louis Hurley, Andrew O’Connor, Timothy Reynolds

2024 EMERGING ARTISTS

Alexandra Amerides, Eliza Bennetts O’Connor,
Marjorie Butcher, Annika Hinrichs,
Alex Gorbатов, Jack Jordan, Bailey Montgomerie,
Anish Nair, Alex Owens

2024 GUEST DIRECTORS

Christie Anderson, Roland Peelman,
Andrew O’Connor, Jane Sheldon



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The Song Company is assisted by
the NSW Government through Create NSW

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The Song Company recognises and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the unceded land and waters on which we live, perform and work, and we pay our respect to Elders past and present. We honour the sharing of traditional stories that have been passed down by spoken word and song through generations

PROGRAM

The Stars Turn Friday 14 June Saturday 15 June Sunday 30 June Thursday 4 July	40th Anniversary Performance Tour Newcastle Conservatorium of Music* St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Wollongong* Wesley Music Centre, Canberra Ian Potter Recital Hall, Hobart^	Festival of Voices
Peter Sculthorpe	The Stars Turn	Arranged David Matthews 1970, arr. 2004
Andrew Ford	At Night on the Beach Sleep	from <i>Australian Aphorisms</i> . 2012/3
Stuart Greenbaum	A Cicada in the Blackbird's Beak	from <i>Upon the Dark Water</i> . 1991 Commissioned by The Song Company with assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts
Katy Abbott	Flying	2015. Commissioned by the family of Robert & Tania Black
Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen	Bats' Ultrasound	from <i>Four Madrigals from the Natural World</i> . 2001 Composed for The Song Company
Nigel Butterley	Nightfall	from <i>Paradise Unseen</i> . 2001 Composed for The Song Company
Andrew Ford	Hear the Bird of Day	from <i>Australian Aphorisms</i> . 2012/3 Commissioned by Penny Le Couteur & Greg Dickson
Elena Kats-Chernin	Mater	2000. Written for The Song Company
Sonya Holowell	Become Like Children	2022. Commissioned by The Song Company
Alice Chance	Untitled	2019. Commissioned by The Song Company
Ross Edwards	O Magnum Mysterium	from <i>Vespers for Mother Earth</i> . 2020 Commissioned by Judith Neilson World Première Performances
Angus Davison	Lime Song [2024]	Commissioned by Penny Le Couteur & Greg Dickson World Première Performance
Raffaele Marcellino	Memory	from <i>FishTale</i> . 1995 Commissioned by The Song Company with assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts
Martin Wesley-Smith	Who Stopped the Rain?	1990. Written for The Song Company

THE SONG COMPANY

Susannah Lawergren	Soprano
Amy Moore	Soprano
Jessica O'Donoghue	Mezzo-Soprano
Timothy Reynolds	Tenor
Hayden Barrington	Baritone
Andrew O'Connor	Bass-Baritone
Alex Gorbatov	Tenor
^Marjorie Butcher	Soprano*

PERFORMERS



Soprano **Susannah Lawergren** has sung with some of the foremost ensembles, composers and festivals in Australia, and is Principal Artist with the Song Company and Bach Akademie Australia. Her repertoire varies widely, recently singing Elena Kats-Chernin's *Wild Swans* in flying harness with Legs on the Wall, art songs with harpist Emily Granger at the inaugural Oberon Festival, solo Bach cantatas with Bach Akademie, and a new commission by Ross Edwards written for Susannah and pianist Bernadette Harvey for the 150th anniversary of the Art Gallery of NSW. Susannah will feature in the semi chorus in Opera Australia's upcoming production of Brett Dean's *Hamlet*.



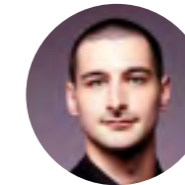
Amy Moore takes joy in a broad repertoire, both as a soloist and as ensemble singer. Career highlights include BBC Proms appearances, countless premieres with EXAUDI Vocal Ensemble, her time as a member of Edvard Grieg Kor in Norway, solo appearances with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, a recording of Messiaen's *Harawi*, and her solo debut with Pinchgut Opera in 2021. In 2022 Amy became Musical Director of Phoenix Choir in the Blue Mountains and founded CASTALIA Vocal Consort. For The Song Company, Amy directed *Songs Under the Southern Cross* in March 2023 was appointed Co-Artistic of The Song Company in July 2023.



Jessica O'Donoghue is a performer, composer and new music advocate. She was the recipient of a 2021 APRA/AMCOS Art Music award for 'Performance of the Year – Notated Composition', a Fellowship from AIM for 'Outstanding Achievements & Services to the Australian Music & Performing Arts Industry' and a 2021 'Women In Music Mentorship' from Australian Independent Records Association. Jessica appears regularly with Sydney Chamber Opera Company and venues and festivals such as Sydney Opera House, Carriageworks, Melbourne Recital Hall, City Recital Hall, Sydney Festival, and Vivid. In July 2023, Jessica was appointed Co-Artistic Director of The Song Company.



Timothy Reynolds has appeared with some of Australia's premier groups including Pinchgut Opera, MSO, Victorian Opera, Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. Specialising in early music, Timothy has worked with Ludovico's Band, the Adelaide Baroque Orchestra and frequently performs with St John's Southgate Bach Cantata program. As a contemporary music soloist, his performances include Brett Dean's *The Last Days of Socrates* and Elliot Carter's *What Next*. Internationally, Timothy performed with the Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam, Bach Akademie Stuttgart and understudied at Oper Stuttgart.



After honing his skills at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, **Hayden Barrington** discovered his love for consort singing, oratorios, and music education. He has worked the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Australian Brandenburg Choir, and as a soloist, he has performed across Greater Sydney and Canberra in numerous oratorios. Hayden is also a voice teacher and has inspired countless musicians through his work as a community choral director over the past eight years. Residing in Wollongong, he is the Choral Director of the WollCon Chamber Choir at the Wollongong Conservatorium, bringing his passion and expertise to establish a new era of choral excellence.



For more than a decade Perth-born **Andrew O'Connor** has maintained a busy freelance career encompassing opera, the concert platform, vocal chamber music, and the classroom. In 2024 Andrew makes important solo debuts with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (Handel's *Messiah*) and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (the world premiere of Katy Abbott's *Hidden Thoughts III: Stories of Awe*). Other projects include the entirety of Pinchgut Opera's 2024 Season; touring, recording, and creative development with AVÉ – Australian Vocal Ensemble; and numerous projects with Bach Akademie Australia, Salut! Baroque, Moorambilla Voices and more.

The Song Company's Emerging Artist Program offers professional development opportunities for the next generation of vocal talent. Emerging Artists understudy each singer in every project, gaining practical ensemble experience, musicianship, and technical skills through mentoring from the company's artists.

Understudying also ensures the company's resilience if artists are unable to rehearse or perform due to illness or other professional engagements. At the time of this program's printing, two Emerging Artists are scheduled to perform in **The Stars Turn**.

The Song Company Emerging Artist Program is generously supported by The Ian Potter Foundation.



Marjorie Butcher is a skilled artist and educator with a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from The University of Newcastle. A sought-after soprano soloist and ensemble singer, she has worked with The Song Company, Divisi Chamber Singers and Alta Collective. Trained at the VCA Actors Studio, Marjorie's teaching incorporates stage presence and performing techniques. As a choreographer and Alexander Technique practitioner, she promotes physical awareness for vocal freedom, nurturing confidence and creativity in young performers.



Alex Gorbatov is an emerging lyric tenor, vocal ensemble singer, and director specialising in very new and very old music. When not directing Divisi Chamber Singers, Alex sings with the Consort of Melbourne, Luminescence Chamber Singers, and The Song Company Emerging Artist program. Passionate about creating opportunities for young musicians, Alex regularly works with new composers and prioritizes young Australian talents. When not singing, they can be found at the harpsichord, coding, climbing, or fishing.

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

THE STARS TURN

Tony Morphett

The stars turn, the sun turns, the earth turns forever.
we throw our weight on the windless spars,
and little and steady it turns the stars,
and the suns turn, and the windlass turns, for ever.

The rope turns, the rope twines, the rope winds forever.
we weigh our lives while the hempen holds,
and little and steady it bears our souls,
as the stars twine, as the windlass winds, for ever.

The sea falls, the sea folds, the sea holds forever.
The earth's an island afloat in space,
and little and steady it turns its face,
and the sun burns, and the windlass turns for ever.

The sun grows, the moons grow, the stars blow forever.
The earth is rigged while the hempen holds,
the man is saved who can bear his soul to
the stars burn as the stars turn for ever.

AT NIGHT ON THE BEACH.

Judith Wright

At night on the beach
the galaxy looks like a grin

SLEEP

David McCooley

Sometimes sleep is a mansion;
Sometimes a hole you pull over yourself.

A CICADA IN THE BLACKBIRD'S BEAK

Ross Baglin

Based on a poem from Treasury Gardens

A spark of green spits and chirrs in the toed claw ;
The dipped spear clacks the tessellated shell,
The luculent green fans twirled,
The nerves cut, the netted wings wave
Unbidden circles, the clash of strings
Bewilders instinct, and the golden thighs
That rattled Summer nights are cracked,
Snap !
The flakes of flame smack in the scarlet beak.

The dismantling of a frail jewel
Will not be accounted in the published report
Of beauty's ravished accessories,
Beauty does not stir when hunger's march
Pounds sullen on.

FLYING

Michael Leunig

As a child I dreamed
that my bed could fly
and glide and swoop and hover
high over the countryside
I wished my bed could fly.

The bed we are born in.
The bed we embrace or pray in.
The bed we retreat to and heal in.
The bed we grow in and grow old in.
The bed in which we repent and change our minds.

The bed of dreams.
The bed we weep alone in.
The bed we sit next to or stand by,
and see our loved one die in.
The bed we die in.
The dear trusty bed we rise from which we rise.
And meet the glorious and dreadful new day.

BATS' ULTRASOUND

Les Murray

Sleeping-bagged in a duplex wing
with fleas, in rock-cleft or building
radar bats are darkness in miniature,
their whole face one tufty crinkled ear
with weak eyes, fine teeth bared to sing.

Few are vampires. None flit through the mirror.
Where they flutter at evening's a queer
tonal hunting zone above highest C.
Insect prey at the peak of our hearing
drone re to their detailing tee:

*ah, eyrie-ire, aero hour, eh?
O'er our ur-area (our era aye
ere your raw row) we air our array,
err, yaw, row wry – aura our orrery,
our errie ü our ray, our arrow.*

A rare ear, our *aery* Yahweh.

PARADISE UNSEEN.

Katherine Raine

Nightfall:
Brilliant the crescent moon
Under crag hangs low, pure
Light lingers green
Cold fading to indigo, stars'
Burning universe of cold fire.

HEAR THE BIRD OF THE DAY

David Campbell

Hear, the bird of the day
Stirs in his blue tree,
Fumbles for words to say
The things a bird might learn
From brooding half the night,
What's matter but a hard'ning of the light?

Hear the bird!
Out of this seed of song
Discoursing with the dark
Now in a clear tongue
Rises his lonely voice
And all the east is bright.

Mountain and brilliant bird,
The ram and the wren,
For each there is a word;
In ev'ry grain of sand
Stands a singer in white.

STABAT MATER

Text: 13th Century

Stabat mater dolorosa juxta
Crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendeat Filius.

Cuius animam gementem,
contristatam et dolentem
pertransivit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta,
mater Unigeniti!

Quae moerebat et dolebat,
pia Mater, dum videbat
nati poenas inclyti.

Quis est homo qui non fleret,
matrem Christi si videret
in tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari
Christi Matrem contemplari
dolentem cum Filio?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
vidit Jesum in tormentis,
et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem Natum
moriendo desolatum,
dum emisit spiritum.

Eja, Mater, fons amoris
me sentire vim doloris
fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
in amando Christum Deum
ut sibi complaceam.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
crucifixi fige plagas
cordi meo valide.

Tui Nati vulnerati,
tam dignati pro me pati,
poenas mecum divide.

Fac me tecum pie flere,
crucifixi condolere,
donec ego vixero.

Juxta Crucem tecum stare,
et me tibi sociare
in planctu desidero.

Virgo virginum praeclara,
mihi iam non sis amara,
fac me tecum plangere.

Through her heart, his sorrow sharing,
All his bitter anguish bearing,
now at length the sword has pass'd.

Oh, how sad and sore distress'd
Was that Mother highly blest
Of the sole-begotten One!

Christ above in torment hangs;
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelm'd in miseries so deep,
Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?

Bruis'd, derided, curs'd,
defil'd, she beheld her tender Child
All with bloody scourges rent;

For the sins of his own nation,
Saw Him hang in desolation,
Till His Spirit forth He sent.

O thou Mother! fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord:

Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ my Lord.

Holy Mother! pierce me through;
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified:

Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him who mourn'd for me,
All the days that I may live:

By the Cross with thee to stay;
There with thee to weep and pray;
Is all I ask of thee to give.

Virgin of all virgins blest!,
Listen to my fond request:
Let me share thy grief divine;

At the Cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last:

Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
passionis fac consortem,
et plagas recolare.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
fac me Cruce inebriari,
et cruore Filii.

Flammis ne urar succensus,
per te, Virgo, sim defensus
in die iudicii.

Christe, cum sit hinc exire,
da per Matrem me venire
ad palmam victoriae.

Quando corpus morietur, fac,
ut animae donetur
paradisi gloria.
Amen.

Let me, to my latest breath,
In my body bear the death
Of that dying Son of thine.

Wounded with his every wound,
steep my soul till it hath swoon'd,
In His very blood away;

Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,
lest in flames I burn and die,
In his awful Judgment day.

Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,
Be Thy Mother my defence,
Be Thy Cross my victory;

While my body here decays,
May my soul thy goodness praise,
Safe in Paradise with Thee.
Amen.

BECOME LIKE CHILDREN.

from The Uluru Statement from the Heart

Used with permission by the composer

Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates.
This cannot be because we have no love for them.
And our youth languish in detention in obscene number.
They should be our hope for the future.

They will walk in two worlds and their culture
will be a gift to their country.

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

Fred Watson

O magnum mysterium
between earth and stars
an unquiet sky
darkens our minds

the flash of creation
ancient beyond belief
red-shifted to black

we are alone
among quintillions
unique consciousness
heart of the matter
what is it all for
the answer is love
unfashionable god
alone makes sense
o magnum mysterium

LIME SONG **Angus Davison**

One time,
on a warm night,
in the garden of my home,
I met an owl.
It called,
and I replied,
and we spoke of unknown things.
I wonder, did it write a song about me?

It was a tiny thing.

One time,
on a still day,
near the crest of a mountain,
I heard an ant,

as its foot fell on dry grass.
I wonder, did it sense my silent breathing?
It was a tiny thing,
but it made me full.

One time,
on a hillside,
in a lake across the world,
a water beetle swam
among my friends and I.
The hill was strewn
with wildflowers and the
touch of icy water set me free.

It was a tiny thing,
but it made me full,
and I want it for you.

One time,
I hope one time,
you scratch the skin of a lime,
and that the perfume smells like a universe.
And that you feel such joy you could explode
into a
thousand points of light.
Which might be stars...
or eyes...
of a choir
of owls,
waiting,
in the warm night,
ready,
to sing.

Memory

DIE FORELLE

Christian Schubart

In einem Bächlein helle,
da schoss in frohe eil,
Die launische Forelle vorüber
wie ein Pfeil.

Ich stand an dem Gestade
und sah im süßer Ruh
Des muntern Fischleins Bade
im klarem Bächlein zu.

The Trout

Translated: Richard Wigmore

In a limpid brook
the capricious trout
in joyous haste
darted by like an arrow.

I stood on the bank
in blissful peace, watching
the lively fish swim
in the clear brook.

WHO STOPPED THE RAIN **Peter Wesley-Smith**

Who stopped the rain?

Tell me who stopped the rain coming down?

Falling from the sky
Oh why?
Middle of July
Rivers running dry

Trees are drying out
Dying in the drought
Waterholes are dry
Kookaburras cry

Curse the endless sun
Nothing can be done
Will it ever fall again?
The rain: Tell me it's falling

Yesterday a cloud
Hung there like a shroud
Now it's overcast
Will it rain at last?

40 YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN MUSIC

The 1970s were a transformative era for the arts in Australia, marked by the founding of the Australia Council for the Arts, the opening of the Sydney Opera House, and significant developments in the film industry. This vibrant period saw new musical initiatives, both commercial and classical, shaping the cultural landscape. One such initiative was the Leonine Consort, led by Charles Coleman, which showcased some of Australia's best young singers performing early and vocal chamber music from the 19th and 20th centuries.

In 1983, Peter Seymour, Artistic Director of the Sydney Philharmonia, invited Coleman to direct a new professional vocal ensemble within the Sydney Philharmonia. Auditions were held across Australia in early 1984, and from over 100 applicants, an initial octet was formed, featuring Margaret Schindler, Romola Tyrrell, Susan Gotts, Narelle Tapping, James Bonnefin, Adrian Brand, Martin Cooke, and Stephen Bennett.

The Song Company made its debut in July 1984 at the Rothbury Estate winery in the Hunter Valley. As the group toured the country, their ambitions grew, leading to independence from the Sydney Philharmonia. By July 1985, The Song Company Pty Ltd was established as a legal entity.

By the end of its first year, The Song Company had presented several challenging programs, collaborated with the contemporary ensemble Flederman, started commissioning composers, and launched a schools

The Song Company c. 1984
Back row: James Bonnefin, David Foley, Romola Tyrrell, Charles Coleman
Front row: Stephen Bennett, Narelle Tapping, Martin Cooke, Margaret Schindler



The Song Company 1993
From Left: Jo Burton, Matthew Glasgow, Brett Weymark,
Jane Edwards, Penny Sharpe, Clive Birch, Roland Peelman



touring program with Musica Viva in Schools. Notably, conductor David Porcelijn engaged the ensemble for performances at the 1986 Adelaide Festival. This marked a turning point, establishing The Song Company as a significant presence in the Australian music scene.

After Charles Coleman resigned due to ill health in 1988, the group transitioned to a sextet under John Grundy until Roland Peelman took over as Artistic Director in early 1990. Under Peelman's leadership, The Song Company built a reputation for its wide-ranging repertoire and expertise. Their focus on vocal consort music from the 16th and 17th centuries expanded to include medieval music and contemporary compositions.

The group celebrated its 10th anniversary with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, performing works by Bach, Fauré, and a virtuosic new work, *Ficta*, by Elliott Gyger. For their 20th anniversary, they premiered Andrew Schultz's *Song of Songs*, beginning a collaboration with indigenous artist William Barton. The 30th anniversary season featured a performance of Berio's *Laborintus II* at the Sydney Festival and the premiere of Gerard Brophy's *Mass for Voices and Didgeridoo*.

One of their stand-out projects of 2007 was a day-long exploration of John Cage's unique sound aesthetic, created in collaboration with Ensemble Offspring. This imaginative endeavour marked the 15th anniversary of Cage's death and celebrated his profound influence on subsequent generations of musicians and artists, offering audiences a truly revelatory concert experience.

In 2009, the company launched a biennial composer development program called MODART. MODART gave composers the opportunity to develop a piece under Peelman's guidance, take part in a fortnight-long workshop with the ensemble and end with public performances of their works.

For the company's 30th anniversary in 2014, the company featured a composite mass with each movement composed by different renowned artists: Graeme Koehne, Ross Edwards, Dan Walker, Stephen Cronin and Gerard Brophy.

Closing out 2015, The Song Company presented its final projects under the leadership of outgoing Artistic Director Roland Peelman, who was at the helm for an impressive 25 years. The *All-Leunig Song Almanac* featured 12 new songs by a different artist composer, setting texts by Michael Leunig. *Point Final* closed out the year with a program of music from Lassus to Martin Wesley-Smith.

In 2016, British composer and conductor Antony Pitts succeeded Roland Peelman as Artistic Director, bringing a new programming approach, often incorporating semi-staged elements, such as *True Love Story* (2018), featuring music of 14th Century composer and poet Guillaume de Marchaut, and *Mind Over Matter* (2019), an opera in one act written by Pitts.

The last major project undertaken by the company before the Covid-19 pandemic were four well-received appearances at the Adelaide Festival for its *150 Psalms* program with sister ensembles The Tallis Scholars from England; Netherlands Chamber Choir and the Norwegian Soloists' Choir. Throughout the remainder of 2020 and into 2021, despite the pandemic, the ensemble produced digital and live performances, including a semi-

Point Final 2014. Image: Peter Hislop
Susannah Lawergren, Richard Black, Roland Peelman,
Andrew O'Connor, Hannah Fraser, Mark Donnelly, Anna Fraser



Below: Recording *In Illo Tempore* at St Mary's Crypt 2018
From left: Andrew O'Connor, Susannah Lawergren, Richard Black
Hannah Fraser, Antony Pitts, Anna Fraser, Mark Donnelly



staged production of Hildegard of Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* and commissioned a setting of the Uluru Statement from the Heart from Indigenous composers Elizabeth Sheppard and Sonya Holowell, which was eventually performed in 2022.

Like many small-medium arts companies in Australia, The Song Company had often faced significant financial challenges. In 2019, the company went into voluntary administration but was able to continue operating with the help of an anonymous donor.

This, combined with the challenges of COVID-19 and the non-renewal of multi-year funding from the Australia Council for the Arts (now Creative Australia) led the Board to implement a new artistic and business model in 2022. As a result, Antony Pitts stepped down at the end of that year.

An interim period of shared artistic management between the board and a core group of singers proposed that much of the company's core repertoire could be performed without a conductor, which was showcased in the first project of 2023, *Song Under the Southern Cross*. Following on from the success of this approach, ensemble members Amy Moore and Jessica O'Donoghue were appointed Co-Artistic Directors in July 2023.

Moore and O'Donoghue bring a passion for vocal excellence and a desire for new collaborations, inviting guest directors chosen for their specific musical expertise. To date, these have included composer and conductor Jack Symonds, early-music conductor and tenor Christopher Watson, and contemporary music specialist and soprano Jane Sheldon.

In 2024, with multi-year funding from The Ian Potter Foundation, The Song Company launched its Emerging Artist Program. The program has attracted emerging talent from across Australia and is designed to build professional pathways through understudying, skill development and mentorship from the artists of The Song Company.

The influence of The Song Company on Australia's contemporary music scene is profound. One clear indicator is the impressive roster of singers who have performed with the company and continue to excel in concerts, opera, and recitals both nationally and internationally.

Equally significant is the impact on generations of composers. Over the past 40 years, The Song Company has commissioned and performed works by many composers, often giving them their first experience writing for the voice. In many ways, the company has pioneered Australian vocal ensemble music, contributing to the creation of a rich variety of unique styles and sounds that remain distinctly Australian.

As The Song Company celebrates its 40th anniversary, it continues to innovate and inspire, reflecting on a rich history while looking forward to a vibrant future.

Francis Greep
Executive Director

Sources:
[The Song Company program archive](#); [smh.com.au](#)
[australianmusiccentre.com.au](#); [musictrust.com.au](#)

BIOGRAPHIES & PROGRAM NOTES

Listed in chronological order of music composition dates



Peter Sculthorpe (1929-2014)

Peter Sculthorpe was born in Launceston, Tasmania, in 1929. Sculthorpe's catalogue consists of more than 350 works and, apart from juvenilia, a good part of it is regularly performed and recorded throughout the world. The composer wrote in most musical forms, and almost all his works are influenced by the social climate and physical characteristics of Australia. Sculthorpe had a deep love for his country and for its landscape, which he regarded as sacred. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island music and the gamelan music of Indonesia were significant influences upon his musical language. He was Emeritus Professor at the University of Sydney, where he began teaching in 1963.

The Stars Turn 1970, arr 1985

The Stars Turn is one of Sculthorpe's most well-known compositions, having arranged it (and had arranged by others) for multiple combinations of solo instruments, voice, orchestra, choir and, in the case today, for The Song Company. It was originally a song contained in the his concert piece *Sun Music* for rock band, female singer and orchestra. The title of the piece is derived from the fact that 1970 was the bicentenary of Cook's sighting of Australia and that the original purpose of his voyage was to observe the transit of Venus.



MARTIN WESLEY-SMITH (1945-2019)

Born in Adelaide, Martin Wesley-Smith taught composition and electronic music at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, where he founded and directed its Electronic Music Studio. He was a pioneer in Australia of audiovisual composition.

Wesley-Smith had eclectic tastes and interests, his output ranging from children's songs to environmental events. Political commentary through music was juxtaposed with exploring the life, work and ideas of Lewis Carroll. Wesley-Smith sang in and directed a seven-member *a cappella* group called the Thirsty Night Singers, based in Kangaroo Valley. In 2010 his music theatre piece *Boojum!* was produced by Chicago Opera Vanguard. Martin Wesley-Smith died on 26 September 2019, at his home in Kangaroo Valley, NSW.

Who Stopped the Rain? 1990

"When I first read, as a teenager, Rachel Carson's book *The Silent Spring*, I was naive enough to believe that the world would heed her urgent warnings and act immediately to stop poisoning our environment. But when, twenty years later, I started researching an idea for a piece based on an English folk-song I'd enjoyed as a child, I was shocked to find that the situation had deteriorated far beyond what Ms Carson had described. It became clear that the sparrow's bow and arrow was, in reality, a chemical that an uncle of mine, Brian Wesley-Smith, had campaigned against for years: DDT."



STUART GREENBAUM (b. 1966)

The Stuart Greenbaum sound has overt connections to jazz, pop and minimalism but is equally grounded in the Western art music tradition. He is the author of over 235 works including 26 sonatas, 8 string quartets, 5 piano trios, 7 concertos, 6 symphonies and 2 operas. In 2023 he signed a global publishing contract with Wise Music G. Schirmer Australia. Having studied composition with Broadstock and Conyngham at the University of Melbourne, Greenbaum now holds a position in the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music as Professor, having also served as Head of Composition from 2007 to 2023.

Upon the Dark Water 1991

Set to a text by Ross Baglin, *Upon the Dark Water* was commissioned by The Song Company with assistance from the Music Board of The Australia Council for the Arts. It is dedicated to Roland Peelman, who conducted the première at the Sydney Opera House on 18 July 1991. They subsequently released a studio recording of the work on Tall Poppies. The work has also been performed in the UK and the US.

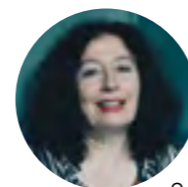


RAFFAELE MARCELLINO (b. 1964)

Raf Marcellino is an Australian composer born in Sydney. His initial musical studies at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music included teachers Richard Vella, Bozidar Kos, Richard Toop, Gillian Whitehead, Graham Hair and Martin Wesley-Smith. His musical output includes orchestral, chamber, and theatrical works supported through commissions and grants, both public and private. His music has been performed, recorded and broadcast in Australia and overseas by leading ensembles and solo artists. His most recent recording release is *L'arte di volare* for strings, recorded by the Janacek Philharmonic Ostrava.

FishTale 1995

FishTale was premièred by the Song Company and commissioned by Roland Peelman. *FishTale* is a five-movement work that references Schubert's *The Trout* and the concept of allegory. The fifth movement - *Memory* - has two predominant features (i) the microtonal slide and (ii) the inverted Schubert's melody. *Memory* is the musical equivalent of looking up through the water at the bottom of a running brook, and the five movements explore utterance from singing to speaking, voiced and unvoiced, noise and music; like a musical kaleidoscope looking back upon itself.

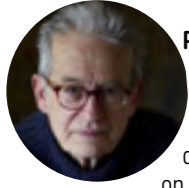


ELENA KATS-CHERNIN (b. 1957)

Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Elena Kats-Chernin AO is a Sydney based Australian composer. She created works in nearly every genre, for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, all major Australian Symphony Orchestras as well as for Komische Oper Berlin, Opera Australia and Philharmonie Luxembourg. She also wrote soundtracks to four feature-length silent films, most recent one being for large orchestra for a German film *Variete* (1929) premiered in September 2023 by the Belgian National Orchestra. Her music featured at the opening ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the 2003 Rugby World Cup and she received Ian Potter, Sidney Myer as well as Helpmann Awards among others. Her *Russian Rag* was used as Max's theme in the 2009 claymation *Mary and Max* by Oscar winning director Adam Elliot and she wrote a score for his yet to be released new film *Memoir of a Snail*. Her piece *Eliza Aria* served as a popular chart topping jingle for a UK bank from 2007 till 2013.

Mater 2000

"*Mater* was my second collaboration with the Song Company and Roland Peelman, after an earlier work *Gone with the Waltz*. *Mater* was written for their concert devoted to motherhood. I chose sections of the Latin text *Stabat Mater* which resonated with me and my then current situation of one of my sons falling seriously ill. Because of the anguish my family was going through, the air of despair flowed into the piece with its dark rhythmic chordal ostinato figure, yet this work also has lighter lyrical melodic moments."

**PELLE GUDMUNDSEN-HOLMGREEN [1932-2016]**

Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and was the son of the sculptor Jørgen Gudmundsen-Holmgreen. He studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, with Finn Høffding, Svend Westergaard, Bjørn Hjelmborg, and Vagn Holmboe (instrumentation), graduating in 1958. Amongst other works, he composed fourteen string quartets and a Concerto Grosso for string quartet and orchestra, written for the Kronos Quartet, which he referred to as "Vivaldi on Safari." He won the Nordic Council Music Prize in 1980 for his *Symfoni/Antifoni*.

Bats' Ultrasound 2001

"Four Madrigals to texts by the Australian poet Les Murray are composed of two songs written for The Song Company and two written for the Danish Radio Chamber Choir. The texts are pictures and situations from - or meditations over - the natural world. Murray's way of approaching this world is not in the least sentimental or nostalgic; the poems reveal a true being-out-there realism; so basically the approach is realistic, but the creating of form elevates the material to an abstract play, a daring and exuberant poetic language. These poems asked to be set to music. I gave up old idiosyncrasies regarding descriptive music, and surrendered to the madrigal, with its special so-called "madrigalisms", which entails also animal-imitations. You will hear this particularly in The Octave of Elephants." [Wise Music]

**ANDREW FORD [b.1957]**

Andrew Ford OAM is a composer, writer and broadcaster who has won awards in each of those capacities, including the Paul Lowin Prize for his song cycle *Learning to Howl*, a Green Room Award for his opera *Rembrandt's Wife* and the Albert H Maggs Prize for his large ensemble piece, *Rauha*. He has been composer-in-residence for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Australian National Academy of Music and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. In 2014 he was Poynter Fellow and visiting composer at Yale University, in 2015 visiting lecturer at the Shanghai Conservatory, and in 2018 HC Coombs Creative Arts Fellow at the Australian National University. Ford has written widely on all manner of music and published ten books. His eleventh, *The Shortest History of Music*, will be out from Black Inc. at the end of July. Andrew has written, presented and co-produced five radio series for the ABC and, since 1995, presented The Music Show each weekend on Radio National. He was awarded an OAM in the 2016 Queen's Birthday Honours.

Australian Aphorisms 2012-13

"For years, Roland Peelman would gently nag me to compose a setting of Les Murray, to go with all the others he'd commissioned. By Murray's final decade, he'd become the greatest poet working in English, but I found him hard to put to music. When I finally lighted on something, it was a very short poem - a single sentence - called *The Averted*, inevitably yielding an equally short piece. I felt it needed companion pieces and so over the next few years composed more settings of aphoristic words by other Australian poets. There are seven in all, to words by John Forbes, Judith Wright, David McCooy, Maria Takolander, Barbara Blackman and David Campbell, and performers are encouraged to mix and match."

**NIGEL BUTTERLEY [1935-2022]**

Nigel Butterley was considered one of the foremost Australian composers of his generation. With notable works for solo piano, four string quartets and other chamber music, Butterley's passion for poetry resulted in some remarkable choral writing. In the 1970s, enthusiasm for the poetry of Walt Whitman resulted in three works, including *Sometimes with One I Love*. A decade later settings of Emily Dickinson's verse comprise *There came a Wind like a Bugle* for vocal ensemble, while poems of Du Fu were used for two small choral works. The strongest influence since 1990 was the English poet and scholar Kathleen Raine. *Paradise Unseen*, written for The Song Company in 2001, is a setting of her poetry. After being a member of the music staff of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for some years, Butterley became lecturer in contemporary music at Newcastle Conservatorium in 1973, retiring in 1991.

Paradise Unseen 2001

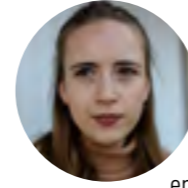
"In 1988 I found a small volume of poems by Kathleen Raine, and wanted to respond in music. My first setting of her poetry was an occasional piece written for The Song Company in 1992, of only one page long. A few years later Roland Peelman asked me to write some more Raine settings so as to make a more usable set. Kathleen Raine's poetry appeals to me for its neo-Platonic imagery, its concise and skillful structure, and for the fresh, sonorous use of words which are often quite simple and ordinary. It is also a privilege to be writing with the approval and encouragement of a great living poet. The première of Paradise Unseen occurred just two days after Dr Raine's 93rd birthday."

**KATY ABBOTT [b.1971]**

Dr Katy Abbott has a deep curiosity in understanding human nature and what drives us. This is reflected and embedded in her work. She possesses a remarkable ability to capture and convey the essence of various subjects through music which adeptly narrates stories, explores the intangible and captures fleeting moments. Her compositions have been performed, published and recorded around the world, brought to life by many leading ensembles and orchestras including Halcyon Ensemble, The Song Company, Syzygy Ensemble, Flinders Quartet, Ensemble Three, Ensemble Offspring and Sydney, Adelaide, Tasmanian and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras. Her works have been featured in many Australian and International music festivals.

Flying 2015

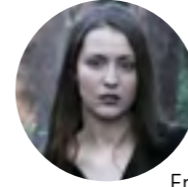
"This work was composed for the *All-Leunig Song Almanac* as part of The Song Company NSW Tour in 2015. In searching through Michael Leunig's text for suitable words to set, I came across a newspaper opinion article by Leunig for The Age in 2008 titled *Pillow Talk from the Dreamtime*. Although not poetry, the words are immensely singable and this piece, *Flying*, comes from a small amount of words and sentiment in this article. It is the idea of childhood daydreaming that resonates; the cosiness and safety of bed allows the imagination to soar and fly. This work is commissioned by the family of Robert and Tania Black; in memory of Dorrit Black, painter and printmaker."

**ALICE CHANCE [b. 1994]**

Alice Chance is a sought-after composer, conductor, singer, artist, arranger, writer and educator. She is a three-time finalist in the APRA AMC Art Music Awards in the category of Vocal/Choral work of the year, and was a recipient of funding from both Create NSW the Art Music Fund in 2021 for her work Heirloom with Rubiks Collective. Alice grew up on the lands of the Darug people and those of the Eora Nation in Sydney, Australia, where she has worked with many of the country's most dynamic ensembles including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Offspring, Gondwana Choirs, the Australian String Quartet, The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, and The Song Company.

Untitled 2019

Untitled was commissioned for the Song Company's *Nineteen to the Dozen* project in 2019. The piece explores the croaky world of vocal fry to find shimmering subtones below the normal range of the voice. The fragility of the sustained vocal fry reminds me of glitch and television static, two eerily comforting aesthetics. My hope for the piece is for it to be a moment of respite and curiosity, where lilting folk-like melodies are set alight by an alien sound that drifts in and out of resonance with them.

**SONYA HOLOWELL [b.1984]**

Sonya Holowell is a vocalist, composer, writer and educator of Dharawal and Inuit descent. Her work spans many contexts and forms, with improvisation as a primary mode towards emancipatory aims. Sonya's work as a vocalist and composer has been shown on numerous platforms including Sydney Festival, Adelaide Festival, Resonant Bodies Festival, Vivid, VOLUME, soundSCAPE, Soft Centre and Liveworks. She has collaborated with leading art music ensembles such as JACK Quartet, Ensemble Offspring, Decibel, and the Australian Art Orchestra; and has presented work at venues including Sydney Opera House, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Museum of Contemporary Art, Carriageworks, Institute of Modern Art, The Powerhouse Museum, MUMA and the National Gallery of Australia.

Become Like Children 2022

Originally commissioned for the Song Company's 2023 *Songs From The Heart* program, *Become Like Children* amplifies the powerful entreaty of the Uluru Statement From The Heart. Utilising various modes of composition and conceptual provocation, the work calls its performers to oscillate between adult strength and childhood vulnerability, balancing emphatic notated refrains and improvised 'playground' soundscapes.

**ROSS EDWARDS [b.1943]**

Ross Edwards has created a distinctive sound world, unmistakably his own and profoundly influenced by the natural environment, especially birdsong, the mysterious rhythms and drones of living organisms, as well as the philosophy of deep ecology. He has stated that his motivation, universal in that it is concerned with age-old mysteries surrounding humanity, is to reconnect music with elemental forces and to help restore its traditional association with ritual through dance and chant. This is reflected in his highly idiosyncratic language, deeply connected to its roots in Australia, whose cultural diversity it celebrates while drawing upon and integrating influences from diverse cultural sources..

O Magnum Mysterium 2024 - World Première

As I conceived my new work, *Vespers of Mother Earth* as a response to our present-day ecological crisis. Full of symbols of the day and night, ranging from the manifest to the subliminal, it may be seen as a swansong for humankind or the hope of a new beginning – the renewal of an eternal cycle which would restore the feminine (night) principle after an often devastating ascendancy of the masculine (day). In the final movement, darkness descends, Australia's Astronomer-at-Large, Professor Fred Watson, probes beyond rational and geopolitical in contemplation of the night sky. "Is it possible," he wonders, "that life is unique to our planet? Are we the only species capable of wondering what it all means?"

**ANGUS DAVISON [b.1993]**

Angus Davison composes music with 'considerable poignancy' (The Mercury) and 'a respect for sound in itself' (Cut Common). His recent works have explored topics such as the religious life of worms, thermonuclear fusion, and the true story of a bird that fell in love with a statue. In 2023, Angus' music represented Australia at the ISCM World New Music Days Festival in South Africa. He was the 2022-23 Layton Composer Fellow with the Australia Ensemble, and his *Trombone Concerto* was recently presented by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

Lime Song 2024 - World Première

A conversation with an owl, the sound of an ant's footstep ... these are treasured memories and the inspiration for *Lime Song*. We are always asked to care about big things, grand things. Rarely are we asked to lean in, squint, and open ourselves to the beauty of something small. In writing Lime Song, my aim was to draw attention, just for a moment, to tiny experiences that seemed to fill a universe. Lime Song was commissioned by Penny Le Couteur and Greg Dickson, kind and generous people I owe a debt of gratitude.

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We are auctioning 10 facsimiles from the handwritten score held by the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, of Vespers for Mother Earth by Ross Edwards.

Each manuscript is:

- an A3 unframed, printed on acid-free, archive-quality watermarked paper
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