



SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRETT WEYMARK OAM

VERDI'S
REQUIEM

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs
dedicates this performance
to the memory of
Christopher Rogers
(1931–2023)

Chorister 1963–2006
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SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS

ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR BRETT WEYMARK OAM

VERDI'S REQUIEM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON and MATTHEW DOYLE

Tarimi Nulay – Long time living here[†]

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Messa da Requiem

Brett Weymark conductor

Maija Kovalevska soprano

Deborah Humble mezzo-soprano

Diego Torre tenor

David Greco bass

Festival Chorus

Sydney Philharmonia Orchestra

Fiona Ziegler concertmaster

Saturday 20 May 2023 at 2pm
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

[†] Commissioned for 100 Minutes of New Australian Music 2020

The performance will run for approximately
1 hour and 30 minutes, without interval.

Pre-concert talk by Ross Hayes at 1:15pm in the
Northern Foyer, supported by 2MBS Fine Music.

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Welcome

Verdi's Requiem is one of the great musical works. It was written by an artistic giant at the height of his creative powers, and it commemorates a great Italian figure. But, above all, it's a work that never fails to move the heart and soul. From deep expressions of grief to the catastrophic visions of fear and judgement, there are few who don't connect in some way with the uncertainty of death as presented by Verdi.

But there's so much more to this music. I think of the madrigal-like setting of the *Sanctus* with merry angels singing to each other across the vast expanse. Or the chant-inspired soprano and alto melody of the *Agnus Dei* – so simple and yet perilous in its execution. There's the vision of light perpetual in the transcendent *Lux aeterna*, giving the impression that Verdi has invented the first film score. And, in perhaps the work's greatest moment, the last movement where a lone voice, the soprano, begs to be spared on that final day. Verdi writes music of such vulnerability and desperation that we can't help but empathise with her plight, or our own. Finally, this work is a vocal contest for any performer – a high-wire marathon.



PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

Recently, on leaving a rehearsal with our Festival Chorus, it struck me that a life spent conducting Verdi's Requiem would not be too bad a career. It's a work that, ironically, constantly nourishes and, each time you return to it, reveals more.

It feels wrong to say "enjoy the performance". Instead, I invite you to sit back, open up, and allow yourself to be enveloped in the vision Verdi has left for us: one of sheer terror but also of great hope.

Brett Weymark OAM
Artistic and Music Director

In 2023, Brett Weymark celebrates 20 years as Artistic and Music Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. The 2023 season reflects highlights of his distinguished career and the strengths of the choirs he leads.

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, upon whose Country we rehearse, sing and work, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. Our voices bring to life the songs of many cultures and countries, from across the ages, in a spirit of sharing, learning and understanding. The ancient customs and cultures of this land inspire us to create harmony – in music and in our society.

A Memorial for the Ages

In setting out to honour ‘the only great Italian left after Rossini’, Verdi created a Requiem Mass of universal and lasting appeal.

The Requiem is the solemn mass for the dead, heard in Roman Catholic churches in commemoration of the faithful who have died, at funeral services, and on anniversaries of the deaths of particular persons. Its name comes from the opening words, ‘Grant them eternal rest, O Lord’. The dominant tone of the texts added, in the Requiem, to the Ordinary of the mass is solemn and meditative, prayerful and visionary, as befits the subject of death and eternal life. But in the Sequence, the stanzas of the medieval poem *Dies irae* (Day of Wrath), there is a picturesque and dramatic vision, a literary counterpart of the ‘Doom’ paintings hung in churches as reminders of the Day of Judgement. These words offer wonderful opportunities for dramatic musical composition. Requiem music has ranged from sombre and contemplative (Victoria, Fauré) to dramatic and representational (Berlioz). Verdi’s Requiem encompasses both aspects, the dramatic predominating, and the *Dies irae* is the core of his work.

Verdi and the Church

But why did Verdi write a Requiem at all? By 1874 he was a world-famous opera composer, fresh from writing *Aida*, with masterpieces such as *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* and *La traviata* behind him. He had written

nothing for the church since his earliest youth. Furthermore, Verdi’s attitude to the Church and indeed to the Christian religion made him an unlikely composer of church music. He was strongly anti-clerical, an attitude he shared with many fellow Italian nationalists during the struggles of the Risorgimento against Austrian rule. The Church by and large supported the status quo. Verdi’s own hostility to the priesthood and its social and political role was reinforced by memories of the hard grind of his boyhood employment as a church organist, and by the local clergy’s disapproval of his de facto relationship with Giuseppina Strepponi (whom he eventually married, in 1859). Verdi’s Christian belief was at best far from orthodox, to the exasperation of Giuseppina, who wrote at the time of the Requiem:

The brigand permits himself to be, I won’t say an atheist, but certainly very little of a believer, and that with an obstinacy and calm that make one want to beat him.

His Requiem’s sincerity and deep feeling suggest that Verdi, in his art, fully empathised with religious emotions and aspirations, without believing in the Church’s teachings. Inspired by contemplation of Christian texts about death, Verdi’s music achieves a universally compelling expression.

Verdi and Manzoni

Verdi was moved to compose his Requiem by the death of Alessandro Manzoni on 22 May 1873. Manzoni, author of the vast historical novel *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed), was Italy's greatest writer of the Risorgimento – the unification of Italy. Verdi wrote: 'Now all is over, and with him ends the purest, holiest title to our fame.' Verdi vowed at Manzoni's graveside to commemorate his hero in a great musical work, and wrote to the mayor of Milan offering to compose a Requiem Mass for the anniversary of Manzoni's death. He was as good as his word, and the Requiem was first performed in the Church of San Marco in Milan on 22 May 1874.

Verdi's starting point was a reworking of a *Libera me*, his part in the 1869 project of a Requiem Mass by leading Italian composers to commemorate the death of Rossini. Verdi considered Manzoni and Rossini the two glories of Italy. The Rossini project was completed but never performed, but, in memory of Manzoni, 'the only great Italian left after Rossini', Verdi gloriously fulfilled what he had begun.

The Music of the Requiem

The language of the theatre was Verdi's musical idiom. In the Requiem, he uses it, not to dramatise conflicting characters as in an opera, but to convey the unity of spirit in prayer. There are dramatic surprises and contrasts, and melodic richness, but Verdi has also learnt from church music of the past. His choral writing, in particular, has a variety his operatic choruses hardly lead one to expect. The melody, while recalling Verdi's operas, occasionally blends with church plainsong.

There has been controversy, especially in Northern European countries (and their



Detail from Francesco Hayez's portrait of Alessandro Manzoni (1841)

cultural offshoots) whether Verdi's style is appropriate for a religious work: is it too theatrical, too operatic? Some musicians have sneered at 'Verdi's greatest opera'; the general public, however, have flocked to hear the work whenever it is performed. Since this Requiem was not intended for liturgical use, the controversy seems pointless, and Verdi's wife Giuseppina has said the last word:

They talk a lot about the more or less religious spirit of Mozart, Cherubini and others. I say that a man like Verdi must write like Verdi, that is, according to his own way of feeling and interpreting his text. The religious spirit and way it is given expression must bear the stamp of its period and its author's personality. I would deny the authorship of a Mass by Verdi that was modelled upon the manner of A, B or C.

No.1 Requiem [Introit and Kyrie]

*Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion,
et tibi reddetur votum in
Jerusalem:
exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.*

*Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison.*

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
and let everlasting light shine upon them.
To thee, O God, praise is meet in Zion,
and prayer shall go up to thee in
Jerusalem.
Give ear to my supplication,
unto thee shall all flesh come.
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Muted cellos are heard first, playing alone: a descending phrase answered by chorus 'as if somebody were leaning over a crypt from which could be heard whispered voices asking for rest'. String instruments have the tune while the chorus declaims in a monotone. *Te decet hymnus* is a forthright unaccompanied chant for chorus. Each of the solo voices in turn takes up the *Kyrie*, one of the greatest moments in all Verdi.

No.2 Dies irae [Sequence]

*Dies irae, dies illa
Solvat saeculum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.
Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando iudex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!*

The day of wrath, that day
shall dissolve the world in ashes,
as witnesseth David and the Sibyl.
What trembling shall there be
when the judge shall come
who shall thresh out all thoroughly!

Verdi's musical portrayal of these words could hardly be more vivid: startling, powerful and appropriately naïve. The world collapses and dissolves in downward rushes of the strings. Then mankind trembles, *sotto voce*, in broken rhythms. This section returns later in the Sequence – a reminder of the Day of Judgement, and to knit the long movement together.

*Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulcra regionum,
Coget omnes ante thronum.*

The trumpet, scattering a wondrous sound
through the tombs of all lands,
shall drive all unto the throne.

Verdi's use of trumpets, near and far, sounding the Last Trump is primarily a musical rather than a pictorial effect – the distant answering trumpets heighten the tension and vary the sound of this excitingly cumulative passage.

*Mors stupebit et natura
Cum resurget creatura,
Judicanti responsura.*

Death and nature shall be astounded
when creation shall rise again
to answer the judge.

Note the stupefying combination, in this bass solo, of bass drum with skin slackened and pizzicato (plucked) double bass.

Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
Unde mundus judicetur.
(Dies irae.)

Judex ergo cum sedebit,
Quidquid latet apparebit,
Nil inultum remanebit.

Dies irae, dies illa...

A written book shall be brought forth
in which shall be contained all
for which the world shall be judged.
(The day of wrath.)

And therefore when the judge shall sit,
whatsoever is hidden shall be manifest:
and nothing shall remain unavenged.

The day of wrath, that day...

After this solo for mezzo-soprano, the orchestra flares up and the chorus bursts out with the latter part of the opening *Dies irae*.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Cum vix justus sit securus?

What shall I say in my misery?
Whom shall I ask to be my advocate,
when scarcely the righteous may be
without fear?

A solo bassoon provides a flowing bass line to this trio.

Rex tremendae majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.

King of awful majesty,
who freely saves the redeemed:
save me, O fount of pity.

A thundering address to the Deity, then each soloist in turn sings the fervent phrase 'Salva me, fons pietatis', and this builds to an emotional climax.

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuae viae
Ne me perdas illa die.
Quaerens me, sedisti lassus,
Redemisti crucem passus:
Tantus labor non sit cassus.
Juste judex ultionis,
Donum fac remissionis
Ante diem rationis.

Remember, merciful Jesus,
that I am the reason for thy journey,
do not destroy me on that day.
Seeking me didst thou sit weary,
thou didst redeem me, suffering the Cross:
let not such labour have been in vain.
O just judge of vengeance,
give the gift of redemption
before the day of reckoning.

In this duet for soprano and mezzo-soprano, the rhythmic figure in the woodwind echoes the *Salva me* of the preceding movement.

Ingemisco tamquam reus:
Culpa rubet vultus meus:
Supplicanti parce Deus.

I groan as one guilty;
my face blushes at my sin.
Spare the supplicant, O God.

A recitative-like passage for tenor solo, leading to a lyrical movement...

Qui Mariam absolvisti,
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.
Preces meae non sunt dignae,
Sed tu bonus fac benigne,
Ne perenni cremer igne.
Inter oves locum praesta
Et ab haedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.

The solo oboe in this tenor solo suggests the pastoral scene, with sheep, goats and shepherd's pipe.

Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis,
Voca me cum benedictis.
Oro supplex et acclinis,
Cor contritum quasi cinis,
Gere curam mei finis.
Dies irae, dies illa...

The stress in this bass solo is firmly on prayer and self-abasement. The voice seems to be closing in E minor, but Verdi resolves the chord in G minor (the key of the *Dies irae* as a whole) and the opening outburst is resumed, dying away into B flat minor, a 'dark' key.

Lacrimosa dies illa,
Qua resurget ex favilla,
Judicandus homo reus.
Huic ergo parce Deus.
Pie Jesu Domine,
Dona eis requiem. Amen.

The *Lacrimosa* is set to a wonderful slowly swinging melody. The *Amen* comes with a subtle and unexpected surprise: a chord of G major is imposed on the gloomy B flat minor tonality 'like sunlight suddenly gleaming through a tearful sky'.

No.3 Offertory

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae,
libera animas omnium fidelium
defunctorum de poenis inferni,
et de profundo lacu:
libera eas de ore leonis,
ne absorbeat eas Tartarus,
ne cadant in obscurum:
sed signifer sanctus Michael

Thou who didst absolve Mary
and hear the prayer of the thief,
hast given me hope too.
My prayers are not worthy,
but thou, who art good, show mercy,
lest I burn in everlasting fire.
Give me a place among the sheep,
and separate me from the goats,
setting me on the right hand.

When the damned are confounded
and consigned to sharp flames,
call me with the blessed.
I pray, kneeling in supplication,
heart as contrite as ashes,
take thou my ending into thy care.
The day of wrath, that day...

That day is one of weeping
on which shall rise again from the ashes
the guilty man, to be judged.
Therefore spare this one, O God.
Merciful Lord Jesus:
Grant them rest. Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory,
deliver the souls of all the departed faithful
from the torments of hell,
and from the deep pit;
deliver them from the mouth of the lion;
that Hell may not swallow them up,
and that they may not fall into darkness.
But may the holy standard-bearer Michael

*repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam.
Quam olim Abrahae promisisti
et semini ejus.*

*Hostias et preces tibi, Domine,
laudis offerimus:
tu suscipe pro animabus illis,
quarum hodie memoriam facimus:
fac eas, Domine,
de morte transire ad vitam.*

bring them into the holy light;
which thou didst promise of old to
Abraham and his seed.

We offer unto thee, O Lord,
sacrifices and prayers of praise;
do thou receive them on behalf of those
souls whom we commemorate this day.
Make them, O Lord,
to cross over from death to life.

Note especially, in this movement for the quartet of soloists, the great moment when appears the Archangel Michael, bearer of light, in a long-held soprano note. Verdi's 'Quam olim Abrahae' is unconventional: most composers have treated these words fugally.

No.4 Sanctus

*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth!
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.*

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of
the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

After trumpet calls the chorus, divided into two choirs, sings the whole *Sanctus*, *Pleni*, *Benedictus* and *Hosanna* in one unbroken double fugue. This is perhaps the most unexpected part of Verdi's Requiem and his opera audiences must have been surprised to find him writing a fugue, albeit a joyous, dance-like one.

No.5 Agnus Dei

*Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem;
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem sempiternam.*

Lamb of God,
that takest away the sins of the world:
grant them rest.
Lamb of God,
that takest away the sins of the world:
grant them rest.
Lamb of God,
that takest away the sins of the world:
grant them eternal rest.

The setting of the *Agnus Dei* is also strikingly original. Soprano and mezzo-soprano sing unaccompanied, an octave apart, the opening petition of the threefold prayer, which is repeated, still unharmonised, by choir and orchestra. The two soloists begin the second petition in the minor, to a harmonised accompaniment, the chorus repeating it – but in the major. The soloists' singing of the third petition follows the same pattern, beautifully accompanied by three flutes.

No.6 Lux aeterna

*Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.*

*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

*Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.*

Let everlasting light shine on them,
O Lord, with thy saints for ever:
for thou art merciful.
Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
and let everlasting light shine upon them
with thy saints for ever;
for thou art merciful.

The variety of moods Verdi gives the prayer for eternal rest reveal his range of invention and emotion. *Lux aeterna* takes its tone from the words ‘quia pius es’ – the mercy and loving kindness of God, and the vision of the bliss of the saints in heaven are conveyed in the easeful warmth of the trio, delicately, even ethereally scored. There are subtle reminders, too, of the sternness of the prayer for the dead.

No.7 Libera me

*Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda:*

quando coeli movendi sunt et terra.

*Dum veneris iudicare
saeculum per ignem.*

*Tremens factus sum ego
et timeo,*

*dum discussio venerit
atque ventura ira.*

Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra.

*Dies irae, dies illa,
calamitatis et miseriae,*

dies magna et amara valde.

*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death
in that awful day
when heaven and earth shall be moved:
when thou shalt come to judge
the world by fire.
I am seized with trembling
and I fear the time
when the trial shall approach,
and the wrath to come;
when heaven and earth shall be moved.
A day of wrath, that day
of calamity and woe,
a great day and bitter indeed.
Rest eternal grant them, O Lord, and
may light perpetual shine upon them.

The *Libera me* brings back the dramatic note into the Requiem: declamatory phrases for the soprano, then the *Dies irae* breaks back in, with metrically different words and an even more impressive diminuendo than before. Next comes the most moving stroke: the singing of the descending phrases that begin the Requiem, previously for orchestra alone. The soprano soloist carries the melody, subtly extended.

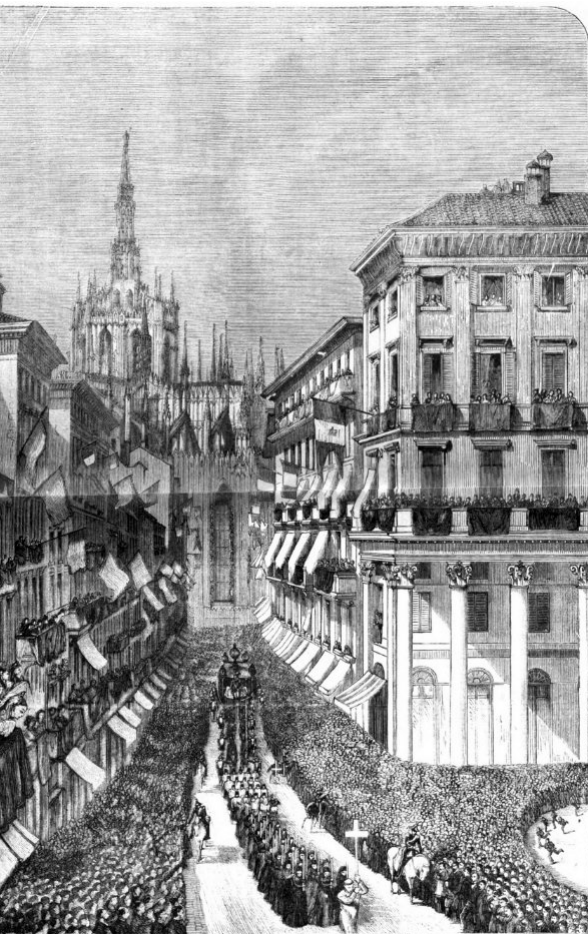
It is hard to believe Verdi conceived this marvellous recapitulation before composing the rest of the Requiem. Its great effect comes having heard the whole work. More likely Verdi intended to use the *Libera me* he'd composed for the Rossini

Engraving of Manzoni's funeral procession,
published in *Illustrazione popolare* (1873)



Requiem, found it unsatisfactory and revised it to this great effect. The quick fugue that follows has been regretted by some critics, who wish the Requiem ended with the soaring ending of the prayer. But the conclusion is very telling – the soprano re-entering in large phrases (with an augmentation of the fugue theme) then the muttered, fearful prayer for deliverance, and the C major chord from the orchestra seeming to affirm that the prayer is granted.

David Garrett © 1997/2023



GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813–1901) is easily the most important Italian composer of the 19th century, as well as one of the greatest of all opera composers. When he composed his Requiem in 1874 to commemorate the death of Alessandro Manzoni, Verdi was already world-famous for operas such as *Rigoletto*, *La traviata*, *Aida* and *Il trovatore*. His keen melodic sense and an unerring instinct for character and drama led him to move beyond the conventions of bel canto opera, insisting that music serve the words and the drama, and of his nearly 30 operas, many are repertoire staples today.

As man and musician, Verdi became a symbol of Italy's struggle for independence, and 'Va pensiero', the Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from his opera *Nabucco*, became a virtual national anthem; it was in turn sung by mourners as Verdi's own funeral cortège passed through the streets of Milan.

Following the Europe-wide success of his *Messa da Requiem*, Verdi appeared to have retired from composition. But he was to surprise the world, after many years, with two operas based on Shakespeare: *Otello*, composed the year after this portrait by Boldini, then *Falstaff*, premiered when he was 80 years old.

DETAIL FROM GIOVANNI BOLDINI'S 1886 PORTRAIT OF VERDI (CASA DI RIPOSO PER MUSICISTI, MILAN)

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About the Artists



PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

Brett Weymark conductor

One of Australia's foremost choral conductors, Brett Weymark OAM is celebrating his 20th season with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. Appointed Artistic and Music Director in 2003, he has conducted the Choirs throughout Australia as well as internationally. He has also conducted the Sydney, Adelaide, Queensland, West Australian and Tasmanian symphony orchestras, Orchestra of the Antipodes, Sydney Youth Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Hong Kong Philharmonic, as well as productions for WAAPA, Pacific Opera and OzOpera, and he has performed with Opera Australia, Pinchgut Opera, Australian Chamber Orchestra, The Song Company and Musica Viva.

He studied singing and conducting at the University of Sydney and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, continuing his conducting studies with Simon Halsey, Vance George, Daniel Barenboim and John Eliot Gardiner, amongst others.

His repertoire at SPC has included Bach's Passions and Christmas Oratorio, the Mozart, Verdi, Duruflé and Fauré requiems, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. He champions Australian composers, and has premiered works by Matthew Hindson, Elena Kats-Chernin, John Peterson, Daniel Walker, Rosalind Page, Peter Sculthorpe, Andrew Schultz and Ross Edwards. In 2011 he premiered his own work *Brighton to Bondi* with the Festival Chorus. He has also conducted musical theatre programs including Bernstein's *Candide*, which won

multiple BroadwayWorld Sydney awards. Under his direction, SPC received a Helpmann Award for *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, directed by Peter Sellars, and was nominated for a Limelight Award for Purcell's *King Arthur*.

He was chorus master for the Adelaide Festival productions of *Saul* (2017), *Hamlet* (2018) and *Requiem* (2020), and he has prepared choirs for Charles Mackerras, Zubin Mehta, Edo de Waart, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Simon Rattle. He has recorded for the ABC and conducted film scores for *Happy Feet*, *Mad Max Fury Road* and *Australia*.

Recent conducting highlights include *Sweeney Todd* (West Australian Opera), *Jandamarra* by Paul Stanhope and Steve Hawke (SSO), Michael Tippett's *A Child Of Our Time* (Adelaide Festival) and *Carousel* (State Opera South Australia).

In 2001 he was awarded an Australian Centenary Medal and in 2021 the Medal of the Order of Australia.

Brett Weymark is passionate about singing and the role music plays in both the wellbeing of individuals and the health and vitality of a community's culture. He believes music can transform lives and should be accessible to all.



Maija Kovalevska soprano

Maija Kovalevska is a Latvian soprano who studied for many years under Mirella Freni. Most recently, she has sung Mimì (*La bohème*) in Sydney, Melbourne and for Semperoper Dresden, Maddalena (*Andrea Chénier*) and the title role in *Tosca* for the Sigulda Festival, Verdi's Requiem in London and Melbourne, and Mahler's Fourth Symphony in Canada. Other recent appearances include Alice Ford in *Falstaff* at Hamburg State Opera, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

She made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Mimì, later returning as Euridice in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*; her Wiener Staatsoper debut was as Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, followed by appearances as Mimì, Micaela in *Carmen*, the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Violetta in *La traviata* and Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra*. She has sung Micaela and Mimì for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and Liù (in a new production of *Turandot*) at La Scala Milan, as well as Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* for Semperoper Dresden, and her performance as Teresa in *Benvenuto Cellini* at the Salzburg Festival was filmed for commercial release. In December she will sing Gutrune in Opera Australia's production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.



Deborah Humble mezzo-soprano

Mezzo-soprano Deborah Humble is one of Australia's most successful international artists. As a principal with Hamburg State Opera, she sang Zenobia (*Radamisto*), Page (*Salome*), Bradamante (*Alcina*), Olga (*Eugene Onegin*), Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) and Erda and Waltraute in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

Her international engagements include appearances with the Edinburgh Festival, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Salzburg Easter Festival, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Singapore Lyric Opera, Seattle Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Stuttgart Philharmonic, Hamburg Philharmonic and the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris – performing works as diverse as Handel's *Messiah* and Verdi's Requiem.

Most recently, she has appeared in Strauss's *Elektra* and Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher* in Hamburg; *Das Rheingold*, *Siegfried* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Hong Kong; *Siegfried* in Boston; Mahler's Eighth Symphony in Singapore; *Tristan und Isolde* in Mexico City; *Der fliegende Holländer* in Lille; *Peter Grimes* for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra; and Gloria Bruni's Symphony No.1 (*Ringparabel*) in Minsk. Last year, she sang Clytemnestra in *Elektra* for Victorian Opera and appeared as a soloist with the Sydney, Queensland and New Zealand symphony orchestras. This year, she sings Fricka and Waltraute in Opera Australia's production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Clairon in *Capriccio* for Victorian Opera.



Diego Torre tenor

Born in Mexico City, Diego Torre was a Domingo-Thornton Young Artist at Los Angeles Opera, where he made his company debut as Don José in performances of *Carmen*. A leading tenor at Opera Australia for many years, his most celebrated roles include Radames (*Aida*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Canio (*Pagliacci*), Calaf (*Turandot*), Cavaradossi (*Tosca*), Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Gustavus (*Un ballo in maschera*), the Duke (*Rigoletto*), Rodolfo (*Luisa Miller*), Gabriele Adorno (*Simon Boccanegra*), and the title role in *Don Carlo*.

For Opera Australia in 2021 and 2022, he sang Cavaradossi, Don José (*Carmen*), Foresto (*Attila*), Faust (*Mefistofele*), Eléazar (*La Juive*) and the title role in *Ernani*; he also appeared as soloist with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. In 2023, he returns to OA as Radames and Pinkerton.

Recent international engagements have included Dick Johnson (*La fanciulla del West*) in Mexico City, Canio for Grand Théâtre de Genève, and Calaf and Manrico (*Il trovatore*) for Teatro Regio di Torino. He sang Calaf in Oslo, Cavaradossi in China and Saarbrücken, Corrado (*Il corsaro*) in Parma, and Turiddu, Canio and Cavaradossi in Genoa.

In June he returns to Sydney Philharmonia Choirs for Mahler's Eighth Symphony.



David Greco baritone

Internationally regarded for his interpretations of Schubert Lieder and the works of J.S. Bach, baritone David Greco has sung on some of the finest stages across Europe and has appeared as a principal in opera festivals such as Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Glyndebourne.

He regularly appears with leading Australian ensembles such as Pinchgut Opera, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Western Australia symphony orchestras. He has appeared as a principal artist with Opera Australia, and his performances as Seneca in Pinchgut's *Coronation of Poppea* and Momus in *Platée* received critical acclaim.

He has an impressive catalogue of solo recordings and is an active researcher into the historical performance practice of 19th-century vocal music, recently receiving his doctorate from Melbourne University. This led to the first Australian recordings, with fortepianist Erin Helyard, of historically informed performances of Schubert's song cycles *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* (ABC Classic), the latter receiving an ARIA nomination for Best Classical Album (2020). They will record Schubert's *Schwanengesang* later this year.

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Elizabeth Scott Associate Music Director

Tim Cunniffe Assistant Chorus Master and Principal Rehearsal Pianist

Blade Fuller Rehearsal Conductor

Estelle Roche, Daniel Guo, Stephen Walter Rehearsal Pianists

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Ines Benavente-
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Phillip Belling
Anthony Cheshire
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Paul Collins

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John Death
Andrew Falson
Graham Georgeson
John Golding
Warren Gough
Paul Goyen
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Matthew Bruce

Adrian Bendt

Samantha Boston

Angela Cassar

Elizabeth Greenhalgh

Brigitte Holden

Tracy Lynch

James Tarbotton

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Suzanne Chaplin

Evelyn Cirevski

Denisa Smeu Kirileanu

Narine Melconian

Michele Payne

Mateja Primorac

Isabel Tzorbatzaki

VIOLAS

James Eccles

Phoebe Gilbert

Tara Hashambhoy

Darius Kaperonis

Suzie Kim

Georgie Price

Anne Sweeney

Bold = Principal

CELLOS

Anthea Cottee

James Beck

Pierre Emery

Anita Gluyas

Trish McMeekin

Rosemary Quin

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Mark Harris

Julia Magri

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OBOES

Matthew Bubb

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Andrew Doyle

Alisha Coward

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Victoria Grant

Tiger Chou

Jamie Dodd

FRENCH HORNS

Robert Johnson

James McCrow

Milen Boubbov *Principal 3rd*

Gergely Maleusz

TRUMPETS

Fletcher Cox

Matthew Carter

Dominic Longhurst

Simon Sweeney

OFFSTAGE TRUMPETS

Sophie Spencer

Kendal Cuneo

Bruce Hellmers

Freya McGrath

TROMBONES

Nigel Crocker

Ros Jorgensen

Justin Kearin *Principal Bass*

TUBA

James Barrow

TIMPANI

Chiron Meller

PERCUSSION

Richard Gleeson



PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs presents the art of choral singing at the highest standard, and develops the talents of those with a passion for singing, in Sydney and beyond. Founded in 1920, it has become Australia's finest choral organisation and is a Resident Company of the Sydney Opera House.

Led by Artistic and Music Director Brett Weymark OAM and Associate Music Director Dr Elizabeth Scott, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs comprises three auditioned and three community choirs that perform repertoire from choral classics to musical theatre and commissions by Australian composers. SPC presents its own annual concert season as well as collaborating with leading conductors, soloists and orchestras in Australia and overseas. In 2002, SPC was the first Australian choir to sing at the BBC Proms (Mahler's Symphony No.8 under Sir Simon Rattle), returning again in 2010 to celebrate its 90th anniversary. The Choirs perform in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's season every year, as they have done for more than 80 years. SPC also presents community singing events throughout the year – Chorus Oz (the annual Big Sing), Big Heart Sing at the Sydney Opera House and choral workshops throughout Sydney and NSW.

2020 was Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' centenary and saw the realisation of the 100 Minutes of New Australian Music project, featuring commissioned works by composers including Elena Kats-Chernin, Deborah Cheetham Fraillon and Brett Dean. In 2022 the Choirs took part in the reopening of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall, performing Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and in 2023, Brett Weymark celebrates his 20th anniversary as Artistic Director.

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