WASO Chorus Sings
Northern Lights

Fri 31 May 8.30pm
Denmark Civic Centre, Denmark

ARVO PART Magnificat
OLA GJEILO Tota pulchra es
OLA GJEILO Northern Lights
OLA GJEILO Ubi caritas
ARVO PART Da pacem Domine
TOMAS LUIS DE VICTORIA O magnum mysterium
MORTEN LAURIDSEN O magnum mysterium
ERIKS ESENVALDS Only in sleep

Christopher van Tuinen
conductor

Bonnie de la Hunty
soprano

WASO CHORUS

SOPRANO
Evie Anderson
Valerie Bannan
Anna Börner
Alinta Carroll
Penelope Colgan
Clara Connor
Charmaine de Witt
Ceridwen Dumergue
Bronwyn Elliott
Sue Hingston
Michelle John
Jane Royle
Lucy Sheppard
Sarah Shneier
Gosia Slawomirski
Carol Unkovich
Alicia Walter
Margo Warburton

ALTO
Marian Agombar
Patsy Brown
Sue Coleson
Jeanette Collins
Catherine Dunn

Jenny Fay
Susanna Fleck
Dianne Graves
Kate Lewis
Lynne Naylor
Deborah Pearson
Deborah Piesse
Fiona Robson
Neb Ryland
Moira Westmore
Jacquie Wright

TENOR
David Collings
Allan Griffiths
Guy Hooper
Jay Reso

Chris Ryland
Simon Taylor
Arthur Tideswell
Stephen Turley

BASS
Justin Audcent
Bertel Bulten
Ken Gasmier
Andrew Lynch
Tony Marrion
Patrick Melling
Peter Ormond
Jim Rhoads
Steve Sherwood

The West Australian Symphony Orchestra respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Elders of the Indigenous Nations across Western Australia on whose Lands we work.
An abiding image from the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union is of crowds of people in the Baltic countries, singing at the barricades. And singing, not rugby-chanting, in an enviable choral tradition that extends across northern Europe.

With the fall of Communism, the West for the first time became aware of many composers from countries in the Soviet sphere. Estonian composer Arvo Pärt had at first toed the official ‘socialist-realist’ line, but experimented with contemporary Western musical language during the 1960s; his Credo of 1968 earned him official disfavour for its frankly Christian expression and ‘decadent’ compositional techniques. In response to a crisis both religious and artistic, Pärt wrote very little between then and the mid-1970s when he produced a group of works which established his individual voice and international reputation. These works coincide with his formal reception into the Orthodox Church.

Pärt left Estonia in 1980 and has made his home in Berlin since. The Magnificat dates from 1989 and is dedicated to Christian Grube and the Staats- und Domchor Berlin, the city’s oldest musical organisation, based at the Cathedral. The text is Mary’s response, in the gospel, to the angel Gabriel’s announcement that she is to bear the child Jesus. The simple lines that begin it overlap, creating gentle dissonance in what sounds like a large space. Pärt's music is restrained in manner, but not without drama, as the text praises God's generosity and might.

Norwegian-born composer Ola Gjeilo has lived in the USA since 2001, where he studied at the Juilliard School in New York. Gjeilo’s unaccompanied choral works are frequently based in the Latin hymnody of Catholic liturgy. Tota pulchra es, composed in 2009, sets a fourth century hymn to the Virgin that is traditionally sung during the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Gjeilo introduces the text in the soprano and alto voices, answered by the tenors and basses, before embarking on a rich, largely homophonic texture. As the prayer unfolds, Gjeilo deploys smaller ensembles from within the six-part texture, but creates a satisfying climax where Mary is described as the glory of Jerusalem.

In March 2004 coordinated terrorist bombs killed 193 and injured some 2,000 people in commuter trains in Madrid. Pärt was commissioned by early-music great Jordi Savall to compose a work for a peace concert, and the resulting Da pacem Domine has been performed there annually in commemoration. This prayer for peace is based on texts from three Hebrew sources (Kings, Chronicles and Psalms). Pärt, again, creates a deceptively simple texture, though the overlapping of long notes separated by rests in the different voices adds to the sense of a gentle pealing of bells.

O magnum mysterium is, of course, associated with Christmas, with the charming (if non-Biblical) image of the animals in the stable, seeing the newborn Christ. US composer Morten Lauridsen’s setting is characteristically serene and slow-moving but building to a beautiful ecstatic response to the mystery of the Incarnation. One of the best-known Renaissance settings of the same text is by Tomás Luis de Victoria, the Spanish composer whose setting dates from 1572. Victoria weaves a hushed counterpoint to embody the mystery, but breaks into a dance-like rhythm for the joyful final alleluias.

Latvian composer (and chorister) Ēriks Ešenvalds composed Only in Sleep in 2010 for the University of Louisville Collegiate Chorale and Cardinal Singers. It sets a poem by US lyric poet Sara Teasdale (1884-1933) in which sleep provides an escape from the ravages of time. Ešenvalds responds with a floating solo line over regular phrases, inflected with subtle harmonic changes, that offer a comforting, hypnotic feel.

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