

The **Adelaide Philharmonia Chorus** will give the South Australian premiere of Handel's *Belshazzar*, conducted by Graham Abbott, at Elder Hall on Saturday 11th November 2017.

Belshazzar is one of Handel's least known but most exciting, colourful and dramatically unified oratorios. A powerful study in decadence and political vicissitudes, it weaves the familiar story (in the Book of Daniel) of the siege and fall of Babylon with the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and historical accounts by Herodotus and Xenophon.

Like Handel's masterpiece *Messiah*, which was written three years earlier, *Belshazzar* offers dramatic recitatives, serene melodies, arias of grave beauty, moments of hushed reflection and thrilling choruses. One of the most distinctive features of the piece is the great contrast in tone between the music for the choruses of Jews, Babylonians and Persians. The Babylonians are characterised in catchy dance rhythms as happy pleasure-seekers, drunk or sober. The Jews by contrast are given music that is elaborately worked, with an underlying gravitas even in joy. The Persians are characterised by music of military splendour and power.

Belshazzar is notable also for its characterisation through music of the leading roles, especially the magnificent and tragic figure of the Queen Mother Nitocris, despairing over the decadent and hedonistic behaviour of her son.

Unlike Handel oratorios that typically end with a jubilant chorus of triumph, the conclusion of *Belshazzar* is more restrained. A lilting minuet 'Tell it out among the heathen' and the final duet and chorus 'I will magnify thee' are a fitting end to a dramatic masterpiece that reveres the virtues of peace, liberty and harmony between nations.

Graham Abbott, in fulfilling a long-held dream to conduct this work, continues to inspire Chorus and audiences through the magnificent music of Handel.

A chamber orchestra led by Carolyn Lam will accompany the Chorus.

Soloists in this performance are Adelaidians, either returning from interstate or overseas, or now resident. Husband and wife, Robert and Kate Macfarlane, perform the roles of mother (Nitocris) and son (Belshazzar).

Robert Macfarlane – Belshazzar

Praised for his 'blissful, clarion top' and 'remarkable capacity for mastering works that would daunt most singers', tenor Robert Macfarlane has performed in venues such as the Sydney Opera House, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Thomaskirche Leipzig, AlteOper Frankfurt, Chapelle Royale Versailles and the Opera National de Lyon in repertoire spanning from the late renaissance to the present day. He is an active performer on the Opera stage, and was a pupil of the great German tenor Peter Schreier.

Kate Macfarlane – Nitocris

Coloratura soprano Kate Macfarlane specialises in Baroque and Contemporary Classical Music. During her recent residence in Germany, Kate sang the world premiere season of Anno Schreier's *PrinzessinimEis* for Theater Aachen. 2017 will see Kate performing Haydn's *Theresienmesse* with Unitatemelos in Münster, Germany, and debut her one-woman Baroque Cabaret entitled *La Virtuosissima Cantatrice* in Adelaide.

Sally-Anne Russell – Cyrus

A graduate of the University of Adelaide with a Bachelor of Music Performance, and former member of the Victoria State Opera Young Artist Program, Sally-Anne is one of Australia's finest mezzo-sopranos. She has been nominated for both Young Australian of the Year and Young Achiever of the Year (Arts).

Matthew Rutty – Daniel

Matthew Rutty, countertenor, is a regular soloist with many of Adelaide's leading choirs and ensembles. He has sung several Handel oratorio roles for Adelaide Philharmonia Chorus, including Handel's *Messiah* (2015) and *Israel in Egypt* (2014).

Jeremy Tatchell – Gobrius

New Zealand born Jeremy Tatchell made his debut for State Opera SA (SOSA) in 2011 and was made a young & emerging artist through the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation Opera Program in 2014 and 2015. He has achieved extensive performance experience in opera, oratorio, concert and recital and is much sought after as a soloist and as a freelance artist. Now based in Adelaide, Jeremy has featured prominently in SOSA's 2017 season, performing in roles in *Cavalleria Rusticana / I Pagliacci*, *La Vida Breve*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *Don Pasquale*.