

# Beneath the Stars

PRESENTED BY POLYPHONIC VOICES

IN THE MELBOURNE PLANETARIUM ON FRIDAY 6TH MAY 2016

## Tonight's Music

### Gloria

Jan Sandström (Sweden, b.1954)

### Water Night

Eric Whitacre (USA, b.1970)

### Sleep

Eric Whitacre (USA, b.1970)

### Abendlied

Josef Rheinberger (Germany, 1839-1901)

### Northern Lights

Ēriks Ešvalds (Latvia, b.1977)

### Videntes stellam Magi

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (Italy, 1525-1594)

### Song for Athene

John Tavener (England, 1944-2013)

### The Spheres

Ola Gjeilo (Norway/USA, b.1978)

### Only in Sleep

Ēriks Ešvalds (Latvia, b.1977)

### Stars

Ēriks Ešvalds (Latvia, b.1977)

### Space Oddity

David Bowie (England, 1947-2016)

(transcribed & re-scored by Kristy Biber)

*Approximate performance duration: 70 minutes*

*Videntes stellam Magi* is an Epiphany Responsory for two 4-part choirs by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. It tells the story of the three wise men following the star to the holy child.

John Tavener wrote *Song for Athene* in 1993 as a tribute to a friend of that name who was killed in a cycling accident. The piece later became famous when it was sung at the funeral service for Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997. The lyrics are adapted from the funeral service of the Eastern Orthodox Church and from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and are set as a repeating motif over a drone octave F in the bass.

*The Spheres* by Ola Gjeilo is an a cappella arrangement of the Kyrie eleison from his mass for choir and string orchestra called *Sunrise*. It explores dense, layered chords but never strays from its home key of c-sharp minor.

*Only in Sleep* and *Stars* are settings by Ēriks Ešvalds of poems by the American lyric poet Sara Teasdale. *Only in Sleep*, with solo soprano, reflects on long-lost childhood memories that only return in sleep. *Stars* speaks in awe of the permanence of the starry heavens and features tuned glasses of water to supplement the shifting choral harmonies.

Our astronomical program concludes with a tribute to the late David Bowie in an arrangement of his song *Space Oddity* by the male a cappella ensemble The Whiffenpoofs of Yale, adapted for Polyphonic Voices by our own Kristy Biber.

Notes courtesy of Michael Strasser.

## Program Notes

Our program features music inspired by the heavens and by night time. Jan Sandström's *Gloria* sets shifting harmonies of the choir against ecstatic soprano and tenor solos.

Eric Whitacre's *Water Night* uses a translation of a poem by the Mexican poet Octavio Paz. It is an early piece, written while Whitacre was at college. He said that the music 'sounded in the air' as he read the poem and he wrote it down in about 45 minutes.

In 1999 Whitacre set a poem by Robert Frost without permission and so could not publish it. He asked his friend Charles Anthony Silvestri to write a poem to fit the music, and *Sleep* is the result.

Continuing the evening theme, *Abendlied* is a setting of part of Luke 24:29 by Josef Rheinberger in 6 parts and is reminiscent of Brahms: "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

Ēriks Ešvalds is a prolific Latvian composer of choral music. *Northern Lights* begins and ends with a Latvian folksong about Kāvi, the mythological manifestations of aurora borealis (Northern Lights) with solo voice:

"Whenever at night, far in the north I saw the kāvi soldiers (Northern Lights) having their battle, I was afraid, perhaps they might bring a war to my land, too."

The middle section sets evocative writings of the Arctic explorers Charles Francis Hall and Fridtjof Nansen when they encountered the Northern Lights. The use of tuned, water-filled glasses adds to the atmosphere created by the vocal harmonies.

# Beneath the Stars

## Tonight's Performers

### Soprano

Leonie Axford  
Kristy Biber  
Hannah Hornsby  
Megan Nelson  
Claire Patti  
Amanda Powell

### Alto

Gabrielle Aescht  
Elizabeth Chong  
Stephanie Firth  
Miranda Gronow  
Doug Porteous  
Ian Travers

### Tenor

Justin Burns  
William Cuninghame  
William Darbyshire  
William Lennie

### Bass

Thomas Baldwin  
Steven Hodgson  
Christian Smith  
Tim Matthews Staindl  
Michael Strasser  
Stephen Treloar

### Percussion

Erica Rasmussen

### Projection Artist

Dr Tanya Hill

### Conductor & Artistic Director

Michael Fulcher

Michael Fulcher is currently Director of Music at Christ Church, South Yarra and President of the National Council of the Australian National Choral Association (ANCA). Prior to moving to Melbourne in June 2013, Michael held positions at St John's Cathedral Brisbane, the University of Queensland, English National Opera and St Paul's Cathedral in Wellington, NZ. Michael completed his BMus in Organ Performance in Brisbane, after which he undertook further extensive training and employment in Australia and in Europe as an organist, an orchestral conductor, an opera repetiteur, and a vocal coach.

Polyphonic Voices is a Melbourne-based chamber choir formed in 2013 under the artistic direction of Michael Fulcher, and since its inception has become renowned for its polished, innovative and engaging performances in non-traditional concert venues, often combined with multi-media elements. The choir prides itself on presenting a wide variety of music – both accompanied and unaccompanied – from the classical choral tradition, but also arrangements of music from jazz, pop, folk and other alternative genres. Polyphonic Voices' collaborations have included the Hilltop Hoods, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and various local ensembles, freelance musicians and visual artists.

Visit our website for full biographies.

## CABARET

A magical afternoon & evening of entertainment inside the Melba Spiegeltent in Collingwood - Saturday 30th July, 3pm & 7:30pm. Also features the launch of our debut CD, *Poles Apart*.

## UPCOMING CONCERTS

See our website for more information

## REQUIEM

A combined performance by Polyphonic Voices & the Adelaide Chamber Singers of Fauré's Requiem. St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne - Saturday 12th November, 7:30pm. Additional performances in Bendigo & Adelaide.

## Sponsor a Score

The aim of this initiative is to encourage supporters to sponsor the purchase of a set of musical scores for a piece to be performed in an upcoming concert, support which is key to Polyphonic Voices' continued performance of awe-inspiring choral music. Our thanks go to Alan & Julie Chong, Thomas Bland, Doug Porteous, and Meg Nelson for their generous contributions towards some of the music performed tonight. If you are interested in sponsoring a score, please email us at [contactpolyphonicvoices@gmail.com](mailto:contactpolyphonicvoices@gmail.com) or speak to one of our singers. *Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.*

## Our thanks to the following:

Staff at Sacred Heart Cathedral and the Melbourne Planetarium; Christ Church South Yarra; our loyal and generous Patrons; and those who have sponsored scores used in tonight's performance.

## Friends of Polyphonic Voices

Want to take your support of Polyphonic Voices to the next level? Become a Friend of PV today! For only \$50, your 'friendship' will get you access to two exclusive pre concert events, a private CD launch party with the choir, and two complimentary tickets to either the Melbourne or Bendigo performance of "Requiem" in November. For more information or to sign up, visit the "Support Us" section of our website or send us an email.

## Join our Mailing List

Visit [www.polyphonicvoices.com/contact-us](http://www.polyphonicvoices.com/contact-us) and fill in your contact details to be the first to hear about our upcoming concerts, special events, and exciting news!



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