

**ADELAIDE  
FESTIVAL** **AF**  
28 Feb - 15 Mar 2020

# 150 Psalms

**An extraordinary convergence of  
music, thought and imagery**



## A Note from the Artistic Directors

**NEIL ARMFIELD AO and RACHEL HEALY**

This project, as profound as it is impressive, first came to our attention in its New York iteration as part of the Lincoln Centre's 2017 White Light Festival. The brainchild of Netherlands Chamber Choir's brilliant and warm-hearted Managing Director Tido Visser, it had premiered in Utrecht and was due for a final outing in Brussels. Apart from the brilliance of the elevator pitch: "2 days, 150 psalms, 150 composers, 12 concerts, debate and reflection - a monument to one thousand years of choral music" we were exhilarated by the way it seemed to light up the city with focused listening and fierce discussion.

More than a series of really beautiful concerts (by four superb choral ensembles, three international and one local) it was the interweaving of current social and political events that awakened audiences, travelling from venue to venue to experience the dry leaves of one of humanity's oldest books springing to vivid green life.

And while New York City is perhaps a special case in terms of its collective knowledge of the *Sefer Tehillim* (The Book of Psalms), here was something special that could conceivably circle the world ad infinitum, picking up not only newly commissioned compositions in every country as it goes but also new cultural perspectives and dialogues.

Adelaide had to have it, and now 150 Psalms is here. We are thrilled to include four new psalm settings commissioned from Australian composers Elena Kats-Chernin, Cathy Milliken, Kate Moore and New Zealander Clare Maclean. Performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir and The Song Company these works are supported by the Festival's commissioning circle.

Listen, read, talk afterwards or choose to be quiet, and please schedule a spare hour to visit the photographic exhibition of the work by superb Australian photojournalists that accompanies this wonderful event.

# 150 Psalms

## 1 A Mirror For Today's Society

Sat 29 Feb, 12pm  
St Peter's Cathedral

### NETHERLANDS CHAMBER CHOIR

**Conductor** Peter Dijkstra

**Organ** Anthony Hunt

**Psalm settings by** J S Bach, Mohammed Fairouz, Hassler, Helen Bowater, Schütz, da Viadana, Asola, Wesley, Michel van der Aa, Bo Hansson & Monteverdi

**Speaker** Rebecca Huntley

## 2 Trust

Sat 29 Feb, 3pm  
St Peter's Cathedral

### THE NORWEGIAN SOLOISTS' CHOIR

**Conductor** Grete Pedersen

**Organ** Lars Notto Birkeland

**Psalm settings by** Telemann, Elgar, Nicola LeFanu, Gabrieli, Grandi, Gastorius, Beethoven, Rachmaninov, Nanino, Charpentier & Pachelbel

**Speaker** Bernard Collaery

## 3 Safety

Sat 29 Feb, 6pm  
St Peter's Cathedral

### THE TALLIS SCHOLARS

**Conductor** Peter Phillips

**Organ** Lars Notto Birkeland

**Psalm settings by** Massaino, Ravenscroft, di Lasso, Franck, Howells, Leopolda, Croce, Paul Schoenfield, Gesualdo, Horologius, Othmayr & Nielsen

**Speaker** Mireille Juchau

## 4 Justice

Sat 29 Feb, 9pm  
St Peter's Cathedral

### THE SONG COMPANY

**Conductor** Antony Pitts

**Organ** Anthony Hunt

**Psalm settings by** Clare Maclean\*, Cathy Milliken\*, Bruckner, de l'Estocart, Creccquillon, Homilius, Gombert, Ned Rorem, David Lang & Delalande

**Speaker** Professor Danielle Celermajer

Presenting Partner

**THE AUSTRALIAN\***

Supported by Amnesty International.

\*Commissioned works generously supported by the Commissioning Circle

# 150 Psalms

## 5 Abandonment

Sun 1 Mar, 11am  
Adelaide Hebrew Congregation

### THE NORWEGIAN SOLOISTS' CHOIR

**Conductor** Grete Pedersen  
**Organ** Lars Notto Birkeland  
**Psalm settings by** Zad Moulataka, Blow, de Mantua, Krzysztof Penderecki, Brownson, Per Nørgård, Olsson, Marenzio & Johann Schein  
**Speaker** Kavita Puri

## 6 Gratitude

Sun 1 Mar, 2pm  
Adelaide Hebrew Congregation

### THE TALLIS SCHOLARS

**Conductor** Peter Phillips  
**Organ** Lars Notto Birkeland  
**Psalm settings by** Merulo, Luis de Victoria, Haydn, Gibbons, de Monte, Pedersøn, Wesley, Mouton, Guerrero, Rossi, Schubert, Nico Muhly & de la Rue  
**Speaker** Robyn Archer (TBC)

## 7 Powerlessness

Sun 1 Mar, 5pm  
Adelaide Hebrew Congregation

### THE SONG COMPANY

**Conductor** Antony Pitts  
**Organ** Anthony Hunt  
**Psalm settings by** Ockeghem, Everet fl., Parsons, Ives, Regnard, Rameau, Britten, d'India, Buel, Lasso, Sven-David Sandström, Knyvett & Prez  
**Speaker** Nam Le

## 8 Suffering

Sun 1 Mar, 8pm  
St Francis Xavier Cathedral

### NETHERLANDS CHAMBER CHOIR

**Conductor** Peter Dijkstra  
**Organ** Anthony Hunt  
**Psalm settings by** Mendelssohn, Jambe de Fer, Kate Moore\*, Berger, Albéniz, Nicolai, Elena Kats-Chernin\*, Sermisy, Huygens, Porta, Becker & Parry  
**Speaker** Tim Costello

## 9 Leadership

Mon 2 Mar, 1pm  
Pilgrim Uniting Church

### THE SONG COMPANY

**Conductor** Antony Pitts  
**Organ** Anthony Hunt  
**Psalm settings by** Arne, Valls, William Knight, Wert, Draeseke, Byrd, Praetorius, James MacMillan, Rolle, Scarabelli, Boyce, White  
**Speaker** John Hewson

## 10 Path of Life

Mon 2 Mar, 8pm  
St Francis Xavier Cathedral

### THE NORWEGIAN SOLOISTS' CHOIR

**Conductor** Grete Pedersen  
**Organ** Lars Notto Birkeland  
**Psalm settings by** Valen, Arvo Pärt, Palestrina, Old-Scottish tune from Three Organ Voluntaries, Davies, Isaac, Brahms, Biber, Morales, Evelin Seppar, Ingvar Lidholm, Mundy, Bouzignac, Richafort & Karin Rehnquist  
**Speaker** Tony Birch

## 11 Power and Oppression

Tue 3 Mar, 1pm  
Pilgrim Uniting Church

### THE TALLIS SCHOLARS

**Conductor** Peter Phillips  
**Organ** Lars Notto Birkeland  
**Psalm settings by** Hemmel, Sweelinck, LeJeune, Handel, Gabrieli, Arnoni, Vecchi, Gavin Bryars, Dijk & Scheidt  
**Speaker** Christopher Clark

## 12 Celebration of Life

Tue 3 Mar, 8pm  
Adelaide Town Hall

### NETHERLANDS CHAMBER CHOIR with THE TALLIS SCHOLARS, THE NORWEGIAN SOLOISTS' CHOIR, THE SONG COMPANY

**Conductor** Peter Dijkstra  
**Organ** Anthony Hunt  
**Psalm settings by** Hammerschmidt, Shaw, Cozzolani, Costantini, Banchieri, Urmas Sisask, Kodály, Nees, Purcell, Gallus, Giovannelli, Tollius, Isidora Žebeljan, Gretchaninov, Poulenc & Thomas Tallis' *Spem in alium*  
**Speaker** Kerry O'Brien



ABC Classic will record this concert for delayed broadcast on Sat 14 Mar at 1pm. Or to stream it online visit [abc.net.au/classic](http://abc.net.au/classic)



Photo: Wiebreg Krakau

## 150 Psalms: An Introduction Tido Visser

A well-known singer once said: "If clarinetists botch a high note, they look at their instruments with loathing. Where am I supposed to look if I don't reach a high note?" Criticise a singer's voice and you're criticising their deepest self. This tells us something essential about singing, about the human voice: how vulnerable it is, how directly connected it is to our very being, and also how defenceless. At the same time it is that vulnerability, that intimacy, that makes singing magical. The magic actually increases when voices combine, when people seek each other out to sing together.

Three years ago I went to the Waalse Kerk in Amsterdam to view a small exhibition about the psalms. The Netherlands Chamber Choir was rehearsing in the church, sending the soothing sounds of a psalm setting by Benjamin Britten high up into the rafters. I read about the monastery which once stood next to the church, and how the monks there used to recite all 150 psalms in the

course of a day. When that proved to be too much work (how wonderfully practical they were then!) they instead took to reciting the psalms in the course of a week.

How appropriate, I thought. Here I am reading about the psalms, and the choir is singing a psalm by Britten. Appropriate, but not coincidental, I also realised. Place a choir in a church, and there's a very good chance that you'll hear a psalm setting. It could hardly be otherwise, I thought to myself, since more than half the total choral repertoire is based on psalm texts. Virtually every composer from the past 1,000 years has set a psalm text to music. Perform 150 psalms, by 150 composers – you'd be creating an altar to choral music. An idea was born.

In all honesty I didn't know much about the psalms. I could remember the boards on the pillars of my grandma's Protestant church, and how they displayed strange mathematical sums: 137:4 or 119:34. I later understood that they represented psalms and their verses. The arrangements that were used there were unfathomable. As the child of two musicians, I considered myself musical, but I managed time and again to go off the rails when I tried to sing the melodies along with the rest of the congregation. The texts, in what to me seemed archaic Dutch, didn't appeal to the nine-year-old me at all. It was not until now, so many years later, that I really examined the background of the psalms in depth.

And it was as if a new world opened up for me. The texts – some as many as 3,000 years old – came across to me as if they were written yesterday. They were about me. About my own hope, about my wife's joy, my children's comfort, my friend's sadness. But even more than that, they dealt with what fills the newspapers: the White House, Red Square, Brussels or Syria. They described the disappointed voter, the refugee's fear, the oligarch's greed, the leader's tyranny. If the psalms contained such a degree of topicality, had we not

learned anything in the past three millennia? Have we systematically disregarded the wise lessons found in the psalms, or are we simply not capable of extracting from them those lessons that could arm us against a world that is changing at a murderous pace?

That the psalms have inspired countless composers to write beautiful music – that much I already knew, (with the exception of the composer of those psalms in my grandma's church; I hope I'm not offending anyone, but music remains a matter of taste). But then I let it sink in: Bach, Mozart, Bruckner, Tallis, Palestrina, Josquin, Rachmaninov – they all set psalm texts to music. And if we were to ask contemporary composers to make a contribution to The Psalms Experience, we would be further developing the concept that psalms are not only a source of wise lessons in life, but also still a source of inspiration.

One thing was certain: singing 150 psalms by 150 composers from 1,000 years of choral music would not be confined to the creation of an altar to choral music. This involved more. This involved our essence, our soul, our being. How appropriate that the psalm texts deal with exactly that, and that the human singing voice evokes exactly that. Singing and psalm text – it's about us, mankind on a quest. To our delight, this topicality was reason enough for the Utrecht Early Music Festival to commit, at a very early stage, to what was then not much more than an idea.

The logistics of this project then turned out to involve advanced mathematics. Theologian Gerard Swüste divided the psalms into twelve splendid themes, which we wished to associate with twelve concerts of an hour each. In his introduction, musicologist Leo Samama tells us about the choice of psalm settings, and what kind of challenges this presented him with. We wanted to focus on the voice, so we chose *a cappella* settings to be performed by four choirs, preferably from regions where choral singing plays a prominent role. To

keep us firmly in the here and now, it was clear we should allow space for debate and reflection.

And thus, art and society come together in The Psalms Project. First in Utrecht, then in New York City at the invitation of the Lincoln Center, in the Klarafestival in Brussels, and now in Adelaide. Each of these cities have their own problems, their own challenges. If the psalms are indeed a mirror for society, then in these locations the reflection will be of a different reality, in the inspiring context of cities which house the United Nations in one case and the European Parliament in the other. I still vividly remember the phone call from Jane Moss, artistic director of the Lincoln Center, only one week after the election of Donald Trump. She recognised the connecting power of singing together and the humanity of the psalm texts, and now felt the need for this connection to ring through even the very smallest veins of her city. That's the magic of choral singing; it connects us, it unifies us. And if there is one thing we need in this world, it's precisely that.

### TIDO VISSER

*Tido Visser is Managing Director of the Netherlands Chamber Choir and creator of 150 Psalms.*



Photo: FoppeSchut

Netherlands Chamber Choir

## The Psalms as Man's Cry from the Heart

Gerard Swüste

Our world is constantly changing. But sometimes it seems as if not that much is changing in people's hearts. Throughout the ages these hearts have harboured feelings of gladness, sadness, love, hate, uncertainty and trust. Songs about these feelings remain relevant, however old they may be. After all, the Psalms are still sung, even though they are at least two thousand and sometimes three thousand years old. They can be heard every day in abbeys and on Sundays in churches, and people read them at home over breakfast or at supper time. Not everyone loves the Psalms. Christians in particular, who have been taught to love their enemies, are often disturbed by the feelings of hate found in the Psalms. And yet these are feelings everyone has now and then, as is the desire for revenge. Not that we actually carry it out,

but the emotion is there all the same. The Psalms also express this emotion, as well as describing rejoicing and being glad. The Bible is considered to be the word of God. The Book of Psalms can best be described as the word of man directed towards God. And then it seems you can say anything to the Living God. As Psalm 139 says: God has long been aware of your innermost feelings, so express them – pour your heart out!

Most psalms are directed towards God, who, according to Exodus 3:14, revealed himself to Moses as YHWH: I-am-who-I-am, I am present, I see, I answer, I liberate. For the Israelites, liberation from slavery in Egypt, but also for anyone who has cried out for liberation, right up to the present day. No image exists of 'I-am-who-I-am' and the name is rather vague: YHWH. Out of respect we don't speak these letters, but stammer something like 'The One', 'Ever-present', 'Living God'. This Living God is in stark contrast to all the gods of whom images *do* exist, who glitter and gleam, whom you can see and touch. In the Bible these are the idols. They stir up feelings of 'me first'

and a craving for possessions and power. The Living God is on the side of the poor, the refugee, the widow and the orphan. He says: look after these people. And there is trust that He will liberate them, even if sometimes grave doubts also arise: Where are you, God? How long, O Lord? Because reality sometimes barely allows man to believe in visions.

We don't know exactly how the Book of Psalms came to exist. Around 250 B.C. an editor or group of editors gave the collection its present form. Why this order and number (150) was chosen is not entirely clear. But here's a tip for the devotee: when studying a psalm, it's always a good idea to look at the psalms that precede and succeed it. There's often a surprise in store.

The editors subdivided the collection into five books, so the Bible contains five books of Moses (the Torah) and five books of David (the Psalms). With all this at your fingertips, you're ready to tackle life! David definitely didn't write all the psalms himself, and it's even possible he wrote none of them. Just as Moses didn't write the Torah either. But naming Moses and David as their creators does lend authority to both. The Torah, totally in the spirit of the great prophet Moses, the Psalms, totally in the spirit of the great King David.

Psalms do not appear only in the Bible. In the Middle East, during the pre-Christian era, it was a common literary genre. It is poetry with a distinctive rhythm and with many examples of parallelism and chiasmus. Thoughts are expressed twice in slightly different words, or sometimes with opposite meanings. It's as if the poet really wants us to let it sink in. Reading the Psalms is almost always a matter of marking time – you are virtually forced not to hurry.

The Book of Psalms undoubtedly contains a number of very ancient songs. We may assume that they did not all originate in Israel. In Psalm 19, for example, the daily triumphal progress of the sun is described. Many are convinced that this song comes originally from Egypt. Some songs were imported from Babylon and Assyria, and the name Baal was replaced by YHWH. Psalms were added to,

shortened, amalgamated or divided. But around 250 B.C. the Book took on its present form.

Theologian Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) was responsible for some pioneering work in which he identified different genres within the Book of Psalms: Laments, Songs of Thanksgiving, Hymns, Royal Psalms, Songs of Pilgrimage etc. This produced an overview of the 150 poems, but it is also misleading. Psalms 88 and 89 are utterly down-hearted and Psalm 150 is pure rejoicing and celestial singing. But all the other psalms are multi-coloured. A good example is Psalm 13, the perfect archetype of the so-called lament. Psalm 13 consists of three short sections: lament – prayer – trust. It is therefore not only a lament, but also a prayer, and also a song by means of which you sing yourself into a state of trust. It is precisely this nuance that is essential to the psalms. Feelings are expressed honestly. But they are also dealt with. You are taken by the hand, as it were, to enable you to move through your complaint into a state of peace and trust. Is that the end of the complaint? No, of course not. You'll need to read or sing Psalm 13 a few more times before that happens. The psalm is not a magic spell, but it remains very close to your feelings and tries to point you in the right direction.

The very first word in the Book of Psalms is 'happy', Psalm 1:1. Psalm 1 is about the Torah, which guides people through life. Throughout the Bible we often find that 'water' represents the 'Torah': we cannot live without water, as we cannot live without the Torah. In Psalm 1, someone who carries the Torah day and night in their heart is compared to a tree with roots near flowing water: with both feet firmly rooted in the Torah, absolutely on the right path. What does this Torah entail according to the Psalms? Psalm 1 says nothing on the subject. Psalm 119, the longest psalm with its 176 verses, and a monument to the Torah, also says nothing substantive about it. But the opening verses of Psalm 119 even contain the word 'happy' twice. So evidently that's what it's all about. That people become happy. The psalms state that you should not become obsessed by people who lead random lives, usually at the expense of others.

You will become happy if you act justly, make peace, care for the weak. Like the whole Bible, it is somewhat contrary. Naturally, people want security, enough money and good health.

The Scriptures say: look after people. If you do that, you will be happy. The Psalms are thinking long-term: don't be obsessed by 'show-offs' or 'braggarts'. Yes, now it looks like fun, but in the long term this is not the path to happiness.

The Psalms want to sing you into a state of happiness. By telling the living God what occupies you. It is not a matter of laws making life difficult, or confronting people with a moral dilemma, or saying that you're just not doing well enough for the God who is all-seeing. Psalms sing of happiness. But with both eyes firmly fixed on reality, as openly and honestly as possible.

Evil people, enemies, disloyal friends – these are often described scathingly in the Psalms. Because they really are good for nothing, because they destroy things, because they live only for themselves, because they shake the world to its foundations. Again and again the Psalms speak of the fight against these people. But it is not only a fight against others. The Psalms also hold a mirror to your face. Sometimes it's a case of singing to yourself.

Twelve concerts, twelve themes. These are not of course the *only* themes which feature in the psalms, but they do reflect two major strands in the Book of Psalms. In the first place, history plays a large role. History tells us not only what once happened, but is also a lesson; it signposts the way through life, for everyone, also for kings and for anyone who bears responsibility. History tells us how things should happen in society, and thus is not so much a backward look at earlier times, but much more a hopeful view of the future, sometimes almost a vision.

In addition, the feelings of individual people play a major role. Despair, trust, complaint, thanks, sadness, joy. With these themes there is also nearly always an element of hope, sometimes against your intuition and better judgment. Psalms are songs that unfold the future, a hopeful future, in which justice will be done, where there will be peace and everyone

will have a safe place to live. For us in today's world, the Psalms are not only songs in which we can recognize ourselves. We also sing out the message that there is perspective, that we believe in the future (or at least try to).

Two final practical points:

Traditionally the Masoretic text of the Psalms has been deemed to be the original Hebrew text. Around the second century B.C. Jews in Alexandria translated the Bible into Greek, the Septuagint. In the Book of Psalms from this version, Psalms 9 and 10 are amalgamated and other psalms are either amalgamated or divided. The total number of psalms remains 150, but from Psalm 10 onwards the numbering is different. St Jerome's Latin translation, the Vulgate (around 400 A.D.), adopted the numbering used in the Septuagint. For centuries this Vulgate was the official Bible translation in the Roman Catholic Church. These days the numbering of the Masoretic text is almost always applied. However, especially with Latin psalm texts, it's always a good idea to check exactly which psalm is which.

Some of the psalm compositions conclude with the so-called Small Doxology: 'Glory be to the Father...' In abbeys this is sung at the end of every psalm. A few psalms are supplemented by 'May they rest in peace...' These compositions were designed to be performed at funerals.

### GERARD SWÜSTE

*Gerard Swüste is a theologian. His translations of the psalms were published in Dutch. For 150 Psalms, he divided the psalms into twelve chapters or central themes, and advised on theological matters.*

## Notes on the Programme

### Leo Samama

*150 Psalms* is a unique project. For several millennia a fascination already existed for the 150 Psalms of David as a source of the human dimension in a biblical context largely determined by a god and his prophets, by patriarchs, kings and generals. In the 150 psalms man is searching for his 'condition humaine', his right to exist, his country and culture, guided by his faith and his doubts, bemoaning his fate and dancing with joy in better times and under better circumstances. The psalms are about him and belong to him. His interlocutor is usually his fellow-man, but often also his god and sometimes his king or leader. But he, that man on a quest, leads the conversation. We can sympathize with him and feel for him.

The many perspectives of the psalms, however, require a clear story line. To this purpose, theologian Gerard Swüste divided them into twelve chapters or central themes (A Mirror for Today's Society, Leadership, Suffering, Trust, etc.) To each of these themes are assigned those psalms which together supply a story line. We expressly chose not to present the psalms in numerical order from 1 to 150. This decision led to the twelve narrative programmes, which were then completed with the appropriate psalms themselves.

This last task appeared initially to be a 'simple' one. After all, how hard could it be to find settings of the oh-so beloved psalms? Psalms were being sung long before our era and have found a place in various cultures and are still sung throughout the world by religious communities; as chorales, hymns, in unison or polyphonically, unaccompanied or with organ, ensemble or orchestra; in their own right or as part of a larger work such as a cantata, Passion or oratorio. We're talking about many thousands of compositions...

We did, however, establish several necessary guidelines for our project. Firstly, it was clear to us from the start that it should above all involve a *cappella* settings, that is, entirely unaccompanied choral music. This is also reflected in our choice of the ensembles which presented the Psalms in its very first season in 2017, in Utrecht: The Tallis Scholars, The Norwegian Soloists' Choir, The Choir of Trinity Wall Street and Netherlands Chamber Choir. We also decided to allow organ accompaniments on occasion. Thus, from the start we resolutely disregarded psalm compositions with any other instruments but the organ, and with small or large ensembles, such as many by Schütz, Purcell, Telemann or Bach, or with large orchestra, including many by 19th and 20th-century composers (e.g. Mendelssohn's wonderful Psalm 42 or Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*). In a few cases we nonetheless chose arrangements of such repertoire, where available, or had them made for us.

Considerably more compelling was the basic principle which defined this project from the beginning: that these 150 psalms should also be linked to 150 composers, that is, one composer per psalm, or one psalm per composer. For months our daily motto (borrowed from William Faulkner) was 'Kill your darlings'. How wonderful would it be to focus all attention on the many incomparably beautiful psalm settings by Monteverdi, Sweelinck, Schütz, Purcell and many others, placed side by side? Several psalms by the same composer or several composers with the same psalm text? And how often did that one 'sublime' psalm by Lassus or Bach have to be excluded because other settings of theirs were necessary elsewhere? Luckily, we could draw on many complete psalters (such as those of Sweelinck, Schütz, Bach and more recently, the Dutch composer Jan van Dijk, or *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* by Thomas Ravenscroft from 1621 and *The Psalm-Singer's Amusement* by William Billings from 1781).

And how many beautiful things we came across precisely because of the aforementioned basic principle!

Nevertheless, the programming often also resembled a game of dominoes. Certain psalm texts were clearly less popular in certain periods than in others. In any case, some psalms have not been set that often, perhaps because the text was too often duplicated in other psalms. Or because, in light of the political, religious or social context of a certain era, the subject was less relevant. In times of adversity the penitential psalms were particularly favoured, and the French kings were very fond of psalms about monarchy (such as numbers 93 - 99 inclusive).

All this meant, for instance, that finding good polyphonic settings of Psalm 12 was not simple (It begins: *'Help, Lord, for loyalty is no more; good faith between man and man is over'*). Was the text considered not appealing enough, too abstract, certainly compared to Psalm 13, the first of the penitential psalms? Or simply too general, as Swüste remarks: *"'Liberate!' is the cry of distress in Psalm 12. Not 'liberate me', but 'liberate!': it concerns the whole world?"* A splendid polyphonic version by Cipriano de Rore was dropped because another psalm setting by this master was needed elsewhere.

The same goes for versions from the various complete psalters and from the diverse books with English 'chants'. And whenever specific composers needed to be shuffled around within and between programmes, to achieve the right musical balance, the right line-up or the right text variant, or simply because the best alternatives couldn't always be found, a single alteration could easily lead to a whole chain of adjustments.

Fortunately for this programmer, the search area is very sizeable: more than a thousand years of written down vocal music, and not only from Europe, even though the emphasis does lie there. And we

decided from the beginning to fill possible gaps with commissions. Thus we could choose from age-old single and multiple part hymns from the Russian Orthodox tradition, by way of Armenian and Arabic psalms, to the sometimes higgledy-piggledy North American settings from the late 18th century. From the luxurious and complex polyphonic psalms of the Italian, Franco-Flemish, Spanish and Portuguese Renaissance to modest, initially mainly homophonic, Lutheran and Calvinist settings. And from the unison settings as dictated by the Church of Rome to a number of new settings that have been written specially for this unique project, by Mohammed Fairouz, Helen Bowater, Michel van der Aa, Clare Maclean, Cathy Milliken, David Lang, Zad Moultaqa, Nico Muhly, Kate Moore, Elena Kats-Chernin, William Knight, Evelin Seppar, Caroline Shaw and Isidora Žebeljan. The resulting panorama is multi-coloured though certainly not complete or all-encompassing.

Through the ages and within specific traditions, the psalms and their polyphonic settings have had diverse functions. In the synagogue, certain psalms involved a kind of question and answer between the cantor and the congregation. Within the Church of Rome all music is primarily intended to be listened to, while in the Lutheran church it is to be sung, certainly when it is presented in the form of chorales with simple melodies. The Calvinists chose to perform the psalms at home or at work. Although the psalms are in the first instance independent texts for which autonomous settings have been written, they are frequently embedded in a broader context, such as a Mass or Requiem, and of course as chorales in cantatas, Passions and oratorios.

The texts of the psalms were by no means written in stone. The Hebrew psalms developed over a long period, but since the beginning of our era they have remained more or less unchanged. The subsequent translations and interpretations (which always go hand in hand, since a translation

is by its nature also an interpretation), provide us with a colourful variety of insights depending on religious origin, theological exegeses and social changes. Within the Anglican church, and more generally within the Anglo-Saxon world, it was customary in the 18th and 19th centuries to use poetic variants of the psalm texts.

The psalms have frequently been used not only as complete poems or hymns but just as often as store cupboards for meaningful, interesting or appropriate individual lines or verses. Not only the very long psalms, such as Psalm 89 and in particular Psalm 119, were cut up into numerous pieces for daily use. The short psalms have also always proved a useful source of individual verses, and not infrequently have composers or promoters been of the opinion that one or more lines from one psalm combined nicely with one or more lines from another.

While we were compiling the *150 Psalms* project it sometimes proved difficult to combine the 150 settings of the 150 psalms in a usable musical dramaturgy of twelve concerts, while also taking account of the wishes and capabilities of each of the choirs. Furthermore, one of the wishes of the collaborators involved in our project was to place the human dimension above the divine dimension, whereas the vast majority of composers, and certainly those from before 1800, regarded the divine dimension as the *nec plus ultra* for their psalm settings.

Both the Church of Rome and the Russian Orthodox Church have always felt the need to interpret Old Testament texts as precursors of the New Testament. As a

result, an old practice was often applied, namely the addition to a psalm of the small doxology: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, even though the last two do not belong in the psalms of King David. On one occasion Christ even plays a role in a psalm....So be it.

In conclusion, a brief remark about the fact that many composers from the 16th and 17th centuries who have been included in these twelve programmes are possibly less known to many people. I am reminded of the wonderful paintings from the 16th century, by masters totally unknown to me, that over the years I have seen hanging in many a museum. Every master, great or small, had a thorough command of a basic package of elementary techniques, such as perspective, the correct proportions, the *bella figura* and so on. Equipped with these techniques, they could tackle anything, every imaginable subject. The only thing that distinguishes one artist from another is his genius, the personality that enables him to transcend his technical skills. Neither Pontormo, nor Tintoretto or Titian deviated from their technical mastery, from what they had learned from their teachers. They did, however, add a whole lot to it! Possibly more than Jacopo Bassano or Guido Reni. This now also applies to the composers.

## LEO SAMAMA

*Leo Samama is a musicologist and composer, and was managing director of the Netherlands Chamber Choir between 2003 and 2010. He devised the musicological concept and program for 150 Psalms.*





Photo: FoppeSchut

## Netherlands Chamber Choir

For more than eighty years, the Netherlands Chamber Choir (Nederlands Kamerkoor) has enjoyed a place at the top of the international choral world. Since its beginning, the choir has been known for its adventurous and innovative programming. The choir has commissioned works by both well-known and emerging composers, and is continually searching for new concert formats and collaborations. This has resulted in concerts that appeal to a broad audience.

The Choir has been praised by critics in and outside the Netherlands: "fearless" and "highly rewarding", according to *The Times* (London, 2017) and *NRC Handelsblad* (Amsterdam, 2019): "amazing singing" and "highly relevant".

Inclusiveness and talent development play a vital role in the Choir's mission. The Netherlands has thousands of amateur choirs and numerous youth choirs. The Netherlands Chamber Choir provides coaching and workshops, and 'adopts' choirs to present in their own concerts. The Choir invests in artist development by offering traineeships to talented young singers, allowing them to create and develop new musical ideas and styles at the highest possible level.

Peter Dijkstra has been Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Chamber Choir since September 2015. Amongst his predecessors were such renowned conductors as Uwe Gronostay, Tõnu Kaljuste, Stephen Layton, Risto Joost and founder Felix de Nobel.

### Sopranos

Annet Lans  
Mónica Monteiro  
Lauren Armishaw  
Bobbie Blommestijn  
Cressida Sharp  
Maria Valdmaa

### Altos

Marleene Goldstein  
Fanny Alofs  
Maria Chiara Gallo  
Åsa Olsson  
Eline Welle  
Franske van der Wiel

### Tenors

Stefan Berghammer  
Alberto ter Doest  
William Knight  
Mattijs Hoogendijk  
Falco van Loon  
Endrik Üksvärav

### Basses

Gilad Nezer  
Jasper Schweppe  
Donald Bentvelsen  
Angus McPhee  
Robbert Muuse  
Hans Wijers

## Peter Dijkstra, conductor

Photo: Astrid Ackermann

Peter Dijkstra is one of today's most sought-after choral conductors. He studied at the conservatories of The Hague, Cologne and Stockholm and graduated summa cum laude. In 2003 he won first prize at the Eric Ericson Competition in Stockholm which launched his international career. Between 2005-2016 Peter Dijkstra was Artistic Director of the Bavarian Radio Choir in Munich, which he developed into a world-class ensemble. From 2007 to 2018 he was Music Director of the Swedish Radio Choir, and since 2019 has been their Conductor Laureate.

Since 2015, Peter Dijkstra has been Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Chamber Choir and in 2018 was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Choir. He is a regular guest with leading European choirs, including the RIAS Chamber Choir Berlin, Collegium Vocale Gent, the WDR and NDR Radio Choirs, the SWR Vokalensemble, BBC Singers and Danish National Choir.

He is a regular guest conductor with the symphony and radio orchestras of Bavaria, the Deutsches Symphonieorchester

Berlin, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Chamber Philharmonic of Bremen, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, The Residentie Orchestra and the Munich Chamber Orchestra, and early music ensembles including Concerto Vocale Cologne, Berlin Academy for Old Music and B'ROCK. Peter Dijkstra conducted the World Youth Choir on its African Tour in 2007 and is regularly invited to give masterclasses and he has initiated projects to promote choral singing and conducting. He is Professor of Choral Conducting at the Conservatorium of Cologne.

Peter Dijkstra is an honorary member of the Royal Swedish Music Academy and was awarded the Golden Violin 2013, an award to Dutch musicians who have achieved international renown, and with the Eugen Jochum Prize in 2014.

Netherlands Chamber Choir is supported by the Performing Arts Fund NL



Photo: Lars Erlend Tubaas Øymo

## The Norwegian Soloists' Choir

The Norwegian Soloists' Choir (Det Norske Solistkor) is an innovative young ensemble, steeped in Norway's rich history of choral music. As one of Europe's leading chamber choirs, they perform in Norway and internationally, in concert halls and churches, in caravans and in abandoned factories.

The Norwegian Soloists' Choir consists of specially selected, professional singers and the blend of their voices results in a highly distinctive choral sound.

Along with its celebrated artistic leader Grete Pedersen, the Choir is constantly developing. In 2018, the album *Bach: The*

*Motets* received the prestigious French prize "Diapason d'or de l'année". This was the third time the Choir has received this distinction.

The Choir's recording of *Meins Lebens Licht* was nominated for a Spellemann Award, often referred to as the Norwegian equivalent to a Grammy.

The Norwegian Soloists' Choir was recently named "Performers of the Year" by the Norwegian Society of Composers.

### Sopranos

Ingeborg Dalheim  
Marie Köberlein  
Magnhild Korsvik  
Ditte Marie Bræin  
Camilla Wiig Revholt  
Karen Heier Hovd

### Altos

Frida Lund-Larsen  
Mari Askvik  
Silje Vatne Heggem  
Cecilia Lund Tomter  
Eoin Conway  
Marit Sehl

### Tenors

Masashi Tsuji  
Håvard Gravdal  
Øystein Stensheim  
Paul Kirby  
Szymon Rudzki  
Ludvik Kjærnes

### Basses

Svein Korshamn  
Peder Arnt Kløvrud  
David McCune  
Olle Holmgren  
Jan Kuhar  
Haakon Hille Hustad



Photo: Bjørn Bertheussen

## Grete Pedersen, conductor

The Norwegian conductor Grete Pedersen is one of the most renowned conductors on the international choral scene. Since 1990 she has been Music Director of the Norwegian Soloists' Choir whose recordings have been awarded the 'Choc de la Musique' and the 'Prix d'Or' from Diapason. Their latest album, *The wind blows*, with music by Alfred Janson was chosen as 'Record of the year 2018' by *Gramophone* magazine.

Pedersen conducts work of diverse styles. Her contrasting concert programs are often radical in their repertoire mix. She has premiered many new works, often for choir and orchestra.

In great demand as a guest conductor, Grete Pedersen has worked with the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, Swedish Radio Choir, Netherlands Radio Choir, Netherlands Chamber Choir, Danish National Vocal Ensemble and Choir, Radio Choir of Berlin, MDR Leipzig Radio Choir, Chamber Choir Ireland, Pro Coro Canada, Tokyo Cantat, World Youth Choir, Freiburg Baroque

Orchester, Stavanger Symphony, Slovenian Philharmonic among others.

Grete Pedersen completed her postgraduate studies in conducting at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo and has studied choral conducting with Eric Ericson and orchestral conducting with Kenneth Kiesler. She is a professor of conducting at the Norwegian State Academy of Music and frequently gives masterclasses.

In November 2019, Grete Pedersen was appointed Knight 1st Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav for her outstanding achievements in the arts.



## The Song Company

Australia's leading professional vocal ensemble, The Song Company includes both experienced singers and young artists of the future. It is at the forefront of early music scholarship and the creation of new music in Australia with an extensive performance schedule, commissioning programme and frequent cross-cultural artform collaborations.

The Song Company belongs to a land whose first peoples have traditionally used songlines and vocal music to pass on their culture and knowledge from one generation to the next. Acknowledging and respecting these traditions, The Song Company is honoured to work with indigenous creative artists as part of its artistic mission.

Unique in its stylistic diversity, performing music from the 9th century to today, The Song Company is led by conductor and composer, Antony Pitts. Their extensive performance schedule includes collaborations with artists from around the world.

The Song Company includes established principals and guest artists from around Australia. With a consort of young ensemble artists mentored by Associate Artistic Director Francis Greep, and supplemented by a wider collective of Associate Artists, The Song Company is reshaping the professional vocal landscape in Australia.

### Sopranos

Chloe Lankshear  
Amy Moore  
Roberta Diamond

### Altos

Stephanie Dillon  
Janine Harris  
Maximillian Riebl

### Tenors

Dan Walker  
Ethan Taylor  
Koen van Stade

### Basses

Hayden Barrington  
Lucien Fisher  
Thomas Flint



## Antony Pitts, conductor

Photo: Nick Gilbert

Antony Pitts is a composer, conductor, producer and was a recipient of the Radio Academy BT Award, the Prix Italia and a Cannes Classical Award.

He was a Chapel Royal treble and Academic and Honorary Senior Scholar at New College, Oxford. He founded the British ensemble Tonus Peregrinus and was a Senior Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music. He became a Senior Producer at BBC Radio 3, made his Glastonbury Festival debut in 2014, and in 2016, he was appointed Artistic Director of The Song Company.

As a composer he has written music for Alexander Litvinenko, Cheltenham Festival, King's College London, New College Oxford, Radio Choir of Berlin, The Swingle Singers, and Westminster Cathedral. His music has been performed at Wigmore Hall, Royal Concertgebouw, Berlin Philharmonic Chamber Music Hall and Sydney Opera House.

His music has been recorded and released on Challenge Records, Delphian, Hyperion, Harmonia Mundi, Naxos, Novum, Signum, and Unknown Public.

In 2018 Sydney Philharmonia Choirs commissioned a 50-part motet from Antony Pitts called *XLX – Mente cordis sui* for Easter Saturday, 2019 at Sydney Opera House.



Photo: Nick Rutter

## The Tallis Scholars

The Tallis Scholars were founded in 1973 by their director, Peter Phillips. Through their recordings and concert performances, they have established themselves as the leading exponents of Renaissance sacred music throughout the world. Peter Phillips has worked with the ensemble to create the purity and clarity of sound which he feels best serve the Renaissance repertoire. It is the resulting beauty of sound for which The Tallis Scholars have become so widely renowned.

The Tallis Scholars perform in both sacred and secular venues, usually giving around 70 concerts each year across the globe. In 2013 the group celebrated their 40th anniversary with a World Tour performing 99 events in 80 venues in 16 countries. On 21 September 2015, the group gave their 2000th concert at St John's Smith Square in London.

Highlights in the 2018/19 season included performances at the Bremen and Utrecht Festivals and a world premiere of a new Nico Muhly piece at Miller Theatre, NY. Upcoming highlights include Ravenna Festival and Berlin Barocktage, Salzburg Festival and tours of Japan, in addition to their usual touring schedule around the USA, Europe and the UK. A recent highlight was a tour of Brazil.

Recordings by The Tallis Scholars have attracted many awards throughout the world. The latest recording of Josquin masses, *Missa Gaudeamus* and *Missa L'ami Baudichon*, was released in November 2018. This is the seventh of nine albums in The Tallis Scholars' project to record all of Josquin's masses before the composer's 500th Anniversary in 2021.

### Sopranos

Amy Haworth  
Emma Walshe  
Emily Atkinson  
Charlotte Ashley

### Altos

Caroline Trevor  
Alexander Chance

### Tenors

Steven Harrold  
Simon Wall

### Basses

Tim Scott Whiteley  
Rob Macdonald



Photo: Albert Roosenburg

## Peter Phillips, conductor

Peter Phillips has dedicated his career to the research and performance of Renaissance polyphony, and to the perfecting of choral sound. Having won a scholarship to Oxford in 1972, he gained experience as an undergraduate in conducting small vocal ensembles, already experimenting with the rarer parts of the repertoire. He founded The Tallis Scholars in 1973, with whom he has now appeared in over 2,250 concerts and made over 60 discs, encouraging interest in polyphony all over the world. As a result of this commitment, Peter Phillips and The Tallis Scholars have done more than any other group to establish the sacred vocal music of the Renaissance as one of the great repertoires of Western classical music.

Peter Phillips also conducts other specialist ensembles. He is currently working with the BBC Singers, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and the Chamber Choir of Namur. He is patron of the choirs of Merton College (Oxford), Sansara (London), El Leon de Oro (Spain), and of the Festivals of Portsmouth and Clifton; he also hosts the annual Tallis Scholars Summer Course in Avila (Spain). In 2014 he launched

the London International A Cappella Choir Competition in St John's Smith Square, attracting choirs from all over the world.

In addition to conducting, Peter Phillips is well-known as a writer. For 33 years he contributed a regular music column (as well as one, more briefly, on cricket) to *The Spectator*. In 1995 he became the owner and publisher of *The Musical Times*, the oldest continuously published music journal in the world. His first book, *English Sacred Music 1549-1649*, was published by Gimell in 1991, while his second, *What We Really Do*, appeared in 2013. During 2018 BBC Radio 3 broadcast his view of Renaissance polyphony, in a series of six hour-long programmes.

In 2005 Peter Phillips was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture, a decoration to honour individuals who have contributed to the understanding of French culture in the world. In 2008 Peter began an association with Merton College, Oxford, where he helped to found the chapel choir, and where he is a Bodley Fellow.



## Anthony Hunt, organ

Performing with  
Netherlands Chamber  
Choir and The Song  
Company

Australian pianist, organist and conductor Anthony Hunt was chorus master at Opera Australia from 2013 to 2019. In 2020 he returned to Adelaide with his family to commence as director of music at St Peter's Cathedral, and as Head of Music and Chorus Master at State Opera South Australia.

After completing an honours degree in both piano and organ performance at the Elder

Conservatorium, Anthony moved to London to study as a repetiteur in the specialist opera course at the Royal Academy of Music where he is now an associate.

In London, Anthony continued his organ playing, performing many concerts with various choral societies, regularly deputising at many cathedrals and parishes, and performing organ continuo with many ensembles, including for the Royal Academy of Music Kohn Foundation Bach Cantata series.

In Sydney, Anthony was deputy organist at St James' King Street, given recitals at St Andrew's Cathedral, and played continuo for many Opera Australia productions including *The Marriage of Figaro*, *La Calisto*, *Partenope* and *The Voyage to Reims*.

Anthony has been a participant in Symphony Australia's Conductor Development Program, and guest chorus master for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.



## Lars Notto Birkeland, organ

Performing with  
The Tallis Scholars  
and The Norwegian  
Soloists' Choir

Norwegian-born Lars Notto Birkeland is an experienced organist, pianist and conductor. He is based in Oslo where he has an extensive freelance career. He is the organist of Akershus Castle Church, Oslo, and teaches at the Norwegian Academy of Music and the Barratt Due Institute of Music.

Lars Notto Birkeland made his organ debut at Oslo Cathedral in 1998 and since then has had an active performing career as concert organist. He has appeared as soloist with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra in Poulenc's Organ concerto, Saint-Saëns's Organ symphony, and Franz Schmidt's *Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln*, and with a number of other Scandinavian symphony orchestras. He has worked with conductors

Mariss Jansons, Michel Plasson, Manfred Honeck, Marek Janowski, Rinaldo Alessandrini, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Herbert Böck and others.

He frequently gives recitals at festivals and venues in Norway and throughout Europe and often collaborates with outstanding ensembles such as The Norwegian Soloists' Choir. He has made a highly acclaimed CD recording of Jehan Alain's complete works for organ (Simax Classics, 2011), and in 2018 he released a CD with contemporary Norwegian music for organ, percussion and strings with the Norwegian Radio Orchestra.

From 1993 to 2005 he was Chorus Master and repetiteur/vocal coach at the Norwegian National Opera and has conducted several choirs, operas and concert projects. He was organist at Oslo's Fagerborg church from 2003 to 2015, where he where he instigated the purchase of the Church's new organ (Orgelbau Goll, 2007).

Lars Notto Birkeland studied organ at the Norwegian Academy of Music under Harald Herresthal and undertook private organ studies with Guy Bovet and Kåre Nordstoga, attending master classes with Marie-Claire Alain, Jon Laukvik, Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, Rudolf Lutz, Joris Verdin and Lionel Rogg.

## 150 Psalms: Exhibition Curated by Charissa Davies and Alan John

Can a set of 3000-year-old song lyrics speak to us? Irving Finkel of the British Museum has translated Mesopotamian script from several millennia before the psalms and in some of the earliest "correspondence" on record, there it is, as plain as day: irony, sarcasm and the equivalent phrase to our "the cheque's in the mail" (although actually that borders on ancient now). For all its sometimes alien context, this poetry is about humans like us dealing with war, corruption, incompetent leaders, catastrophes, the apparent unfairness or absence of the God with whom we thought we had a 'deal' (in this case the Davidic Covenant), and on a more personal level, grief, shame, being undermined by enemies, or uncertainty about how to be a good person. And, of course, those uncomplicated shouts of "Thank God" to which even atheists now regularly call upon.

This exhibition is curated and so is part of a filtering and selection process that extends back to when the Book of Psalms was collated. Jewish and Christian theologians have for centuries tried to find a pattern or hidden message in the way the songs are ordered, or at least a way of grouping them according to themes (which is what the 150 Psalms project has also attempted). The quotes you will read here are usually two verses of a much longer text and don't necessarily sum up what a particular psalm is "about". Psalm 110 (just one example of many) contains poetry as gentle as

*From the womb of the morning like dew your youth will come to you*

and as brutal as

*He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses,*

so, sifting out one and not the other could be seen as skewing the meaning.

When it comes to juxtaposing an image to a quote, things get more subjective still. Some parallels are stretched: in the lexicon of psalmic imagery, the natural world is often invoked, but almost always as a metaphor for the establishment, nurturing, flourishing or lamentable withering, of the kingdom of Israel. It doesn't make the words any less potent when applied to contemporary environmental issues, however. It was tempting, too, to only use the most "beautiful" photos-extraordinary shots of thunderclouds, land or seascapes- to invoke generalized feelings of awe and the smallness of us against all this glory and terror.

The emphasis on portraiture, and especially the focus on public figures, is potentially the most contentious aspect of the curation. Yes, there are a few flippant or ironic inclusions, but far from a continuation of the media's beloved "gotcha" principle, the exhibition's aims are more Shakespearean: his plays delve into the minds of kings and queens and princes and generals- those who have the power to make just or unjust decisions- and unearth all too human flaws in their god-like status. We have avoided staged or posed moments (unless they are themselves revealing) and taken advantage of the wonderful 'eye' of these photo-journalists, who can both capture the subtlest hints of insecurity, self-deception, conceitedness and the kind of big, raw emotion that we watch 'through parted fingers': feelings that we have been fortunate enough to have experienced in private- like Steve Smith's shame, despair and contrition- are for these figures viewed by millions.

Please enjoy an exhibition designed to provoke. To provoke thought, memories, the odd laugh, anger, sadness, joy and feelings of gratitude for being part of Creation.

### ALAN JOHN

*Alan John is a composer who has also works as a dramaturg and copy writer. In collaboration with Charissa Davies, Senior Exhibitions Curator at the Adelaide Festival Centre, he has selected quotations from each psalm and the accompanying photographs from the archive of presenting partner The Australian. Charissa has designed the presentation and Alan is responsible for all the editorial content.*

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