

 MAINSTAGE

# Burden of Truth

THE  
SONG  
CO.



**MELBOURNE**

**FRI 21 MAY 7.30PM**

St Michael's Uniting Church  
Melbourne

**SAT 22 MAY 3PM**

Trinity College Chapel  
Parkville

**SYDNEY**

**FRI 28 MAY 7PM**

Cell Block Theatre  
National Art School, Darlinghurst

**SAT 29 MAY 3PM**

Cell Block Theatre  
National Art School, Darlinghurst

**CANBERRA**

**THU 10 JUN 7PM**

Albert Hall  
100 Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla

# The Song Company

The Song Company belongs to a land whose first peoples have always used songlines and vocal music to pass knowledge and culture from one generation to another. We acknowledge and respect those traditions and are honoured to work together with Indigenous creative artists as part of our artistic mission. As Australia's national professional vocal ensemble, The Song Company is unique in its stylistic diversity with repertoire spanning the 9th century to today, and is led by Artistic Director, international composer and conductor, Antony Pitts.

The Song Company is at the forefront of both early music performance and contemporary vocal music through an extensive commissioning program and cross-artform collaborations with artists of the highest calibre from around the world.

The Song Company comprises seven Principal Artists, as well as Guest Artists from across the country who are established soloists and musical leaders in their own right, with a wider collective of Associate Artists made up of familiar and emerging voices. At its heart is a consort of early-career Ensemble Artists, mentored by Associate Artistic Director, Francis Greep.

Together we are reshaping the professional vocal landscape in Australia for today and the next generation.

## PRINCIPAL ARTISTS

Amy Moore	Soprano
Chloe Lankshear	Soprano
Roberta Diamond	Soprano
Jessica O'Donoghue	Mezzo soprano
Dan Walker	Tenor
Koen van Stade	Tenor
Thomas Flint	Bass

## BOARD

Michael Tidball, Chair
Antony Pitts
Elizabeth Grey
Louise Guy
Matthew Hindson
Robert Bryden

## 2021 ENSEMBLE ARTISTS

Janine Harris	Mezzo soprano
Ethan Taylor	Tenor
Hayden Barrington	Baritone

## THE SONG COMPANY TEAM

Antony Pitts	Artistic Director
Francis Greep	General Manager & Associate Artistic Director
Eva Frey	Marketing & Development Manager
Sarah Elise Thompson	Production Manager
Jane Diamond	Bookkeeper



The Song Company is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and the NSW Government through Create NSW

The Song Company acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and we pay our respect to the Elders both past and present

The Song Company Pty Ltd trading as The Song Company is a non-profit organisation registered as a company of limited guarantee ABN 27 001 577 377

# The Oriana Chorale

Founded in 1977 by Roger Wellman, the Oriana Chorale is an auditioned group of professional and amateur musicians who are dedicated to quality performance of a diverse selection of choral music.

Oriana's mission is enriching the cultural life of Canberra with choral music projects of the highest standard, both *a cappella* and with instrumental accompaniment, when it is called for. The Chorale repertoire ranges from Schütz, Tallis and Byrd, to Rachmaninov, Pärt, Whitacre, and contemporary Australian composers.

Directed by Dan Walker, the Chorale presents three major concerts each year, often with associate artists, and is a regular participant in the Canberra International Music Festival as well as a collaborator of prominent vocal ensembles such as The Song Company and The Tallis Scholars. In addition, Oriana takes part in a range of activities across the ACT and surrounding region, including a long-standing tradition of contributing to the festivities at the ANU University House dinners. Members of the community have the opportunity to join the Chorale for its annual choral workshops.

Oriana's plans for 2021 include a cross-disciplinary programme called **Text/ure** in May, **Burden of Truth** with The Song Company in June, a concert of French music in August, **Two Worlds** in November/December, and another workshop.

# Burden of Truth

## The Song Company

Antony Pitts, Artistic Director

in collaboration with

## The Oriana Chorale

Dan Walker, Artistic Director

Thursday 10 June, Albert Hall, Yarralumla

## PROGRAM

James M. Black  
(1856–1938)

***His Love Never Failed Me Yet***

Robert Wylkynson  
(fl.1500)

Melody of ***Jesus autem transiens***

William Byrd  
(c.1539/1543–1623)

***Ave verum corpus***

Gavin Bryars  
(b. 1943)

***Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet***  
(a cappella version – World Première)

Antony Pitts  
(b. 1969)  
after Robert Wylkynson

***Transiens***  
(World Première)

## The Song Company

Roberta Diamond, Chloe Lankshear, Amy Moore, Sopranos  
Janine Harris, Alexandria Stavers Siegers, Altos  
Koen van Stade, Ethan Taylor, Dan Walker, Tenors  
Hayden Barrington, Bass

## Artist Biographies

[https://the.song.company/  
burden-of-truth-tour-artists](https://the.song.company/burden-of-truth-tour-artists)

## Members of The SongCo Chorale

Emma Warburton, Alto  
Brendan Macrae, Jesse van Proctor, Basses

## The Oriana Chorale

Katie Deakin-Sharpe, Danielle Hewitt, Andrea Holland,  
Rene Simpfendorfer, Janelle Weissman, Enrica Wong, Sopranos  
Jess Aan, Joanna Adamson, Hanna Antonova, Emma Clutterham,  
Cecile Michels, Mary Molan, Sarah Sutcliffe, Sally Tregellas-Wodzinska, Altos  
Ian Biggs, Cody Christopher, Colin Matheson, Matthew Teh, Tenors  
Andrew Barley, Martin Bonsey, Geoffrey Brennan, Nick Bulleid,  
Roger Hillman, Nick Horn, Oliver Raymond, Andrew Woods, Basses

## Antony Pitts, Director

*To respect our performers, please turn off all mobile devices. If you are using a device to read the program online, please make sure it is in silent mode.*

## Burden of Truth

The word “burden” has a number of meanings alongside the most common idea of a “load” or “weight”: less well-known is that of “refrain” or “chorus”, particularly in Mediaeval and Renaissance music. All the music in this program is built around the idea of a refrain that repeats, whether just once, as at the end of Byrd’s 4-part miracle of polyphony, *Ave verum corpus*, or after every verse, as in James Milton Black’s hymn (of which we are singing only the first verse). In Robert Wylkynson’s extraordinary canon from the Eton Choirbook, a nine-note fragment of plainchant “Jesus autem transiens” underpins his entire setting of the Apostles’ Creed: we’ll hear the entire melody by itself first, and later the expanded thirteen-part canon in Part Two of *Transiens* where the nine-note chant is repeated throughout. In Gavin Bryars’s *Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, it is the fragment of a recording of an old man singing a half-remembered hymn which is repeated as if endlessly, while thirty-two voice parts weave an ever-changing halo of harmonies around him.

In both polychoral pieces at the heart of **Burden of Truth**, each lasting almost 25 minutes, there is also the sense of weightiness – of a large-scale musical structure bearing the load of the central ideas in the words. As Pilate said, “what is truth?” For the old man singing “Jesus’ Blood...” it was a simple fact that sustained him through the darkest of times. For Wylkynson it was the twelve doctrinal sections of the Apostles’ Creed touching on past, present, and future realities. For us, the power of choral music, as developed and practised over many centuries by countless millions of human beings, enables us to transcend present uncertainties and to create unity in harmony as we sing together. Both *Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet* and *Transiens* bear their textual burdens with an implicit joy in this opportunity to make music together – a joy that is both visceral and exhilarating. The Song Company is especially delighted to be collaborating with fellow-singers and partner ensembles as we bring this music to audiences in Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra. We hope you are moved by this concert performance and will take the opportunity to listen again to these two large-scale works on our **Burden of Truth** album, available both digitally and on vinyl.

## Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet (1971)

In 1971 a friend, Alan Power, was making a film about people living rough in London, around Waterloo station and Elephant and Castle. While filming he made a number of tape recordings, some synchronised with the film, others not, and he eventually gave me those tapes that he no longer needed, and which were to be discarded. For some reason, and I still don't know why, I listened to them all. These homeless people talked about their lives and would sometimes break into drunken song. But one man, who didn't drink, sang a short fragment of religious song – "Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet" – which I didn't recognise. (I discovered much later that it was almost certainly improvised).

I was struck by his singing, which was very touching, in tune and musical, and happened to be in tune with my piano. I made a loop from his singing, and wrote a simple accompaniment and arranged this for a small ensemble with a simple, gradually evolving orchestration. Over the years I have made many different versions ranging from just a few players to full orchestra and chorus. The accompaniment, however, does not seek to draw attention to itself but forms a support to the old man's voice, respecting its dignified humanity and simple faith. It remains, in spite of his situation, an understated testimony to his optimistic spirit. Although I have heard this musical fragment many thousands of times through performing the piece over so many years, I am still moved by his singing.

The first recording, produced by Brian Eno in 1975, achieved a kind of cult status in spite of its low-key distribution. A second recording, in 1993, which included a contribution by Tom Waits had a wider success, getting to No.1 in record charts in many parts of the world. The most recent version was recorded live at Café Oto, London, in 2019 by my own ensemble, including my four children.

Now, fifty years since I first heard the old man's voice, I have made a new version for unaccompanied voices for The Song Company, drawing on my long experience of working with the finest choirs in the world. Although it retains the essential simplicity and directness of other versions it actually achieves this by a much greater attention to detail, and involves a more subtle approach, such as fragmentation of the text as well as Graingeresque techniques like humming and whistling.

I first worked with The Song Company in Canberra in 2013 and again in Adelaide in 2015, where they premièred five madrigals specially commissioned for them. Having completed the a cappella *Jesus' Blood* project, I wrote five more madrigals last summer during lockdown to complete my Sixth Book of Madrigals, which is dedicated to them.

- Gavin Bryars

## Transiens (2020)

The Song Company, as Australia's national vocal ensemble, is able to pursue major projects over a number of years with the same core of virtuosic and versatile performers, drawing on expertise and resources from our musical colleagues around the world. Sometimes that's brand-new music, sometimes it's very old indeed. In the case of *Transiens*, it's both.

In 2019 we continued a journey exploring original musical manuscript notation with the support of the University of Oxford's Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music, by standing around a central music stand to read from a facsimile of the magnificent Eton Choirbook, compiled in the first few years of the 16th century. The final index-page of the Eton Choirbook manuscript has an extra piece added by Robert Wylkynson who was in charge of the choir at Eton from 1500 to 1515. In his canonic setting of the Apostles' Creed for 13 voices the names of the Apostles are inscribed above successive phrases, and the nine-note opening chant *Jesus autem transiens* (which means "But Jesus passing through them") passes from one voice to another, as each of the twelve Apostles takes up the story of the Creed. Those nine notes build up a harmonic sequence of three chords, each used three times.

Fast forward from Eton College half a millennium ago to January 2020 and a road trip from Uluru, at the heart of the Australian continent, to Kakadu and the Darwinian coast, during which I was working on a version of Wylkynson's canon for more-or-less double the vocal forces and lasting more than three times as long. What in Wylkynson's original fits onto half a page of music has expanded in my version, simply called *Transiens*, to a seventy-page score with 25 staves to a page. However, almost the entirety\* of *Transiens* is composed using canonic and other contrapuntal devices that derive all their material from that half-page, and so, in that in sense, it is a non-linear fractal interpretation of the original canon.

*Transiens* is a triptych – that is, in three Parts or sections, like a mediaeval altarpiece such as the van Eyck brothers' *Het Lam Gods* – and is scored for 25 voice-parts (six sopranos, six altos, six tenors, six basses, plus a central cantus firmus) with a total duration of almost 25 minutes. In *Transiens*, the 13 voices of the original canon are joined by another 12 voices, making 25 in total (i.e. 1 + 24), and taking inspiration from the scene in the Book of Revelation of 24 elders singing a "new song" around the throne of the Lamb.

The central Part (of the three Parts) is an ethereal arrangement of the original canon, while the outer two Parts focus on the 12 phrases from the Creed (some longer, some shorter) and treat each as a mini-canon by itself, interspersed by echos of the complete original and new superimpositions and reflections of the underlying 9-note theme.

- Antony Pitts

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\*The only additional material is a direct quotation of the hymn fragment sung by the old man in *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, for which *Transiens* was written as a companion piece for the album and live concert performances by The Song Company and partner ensembles.

# Texts & Translations

## His Love Never Failed Me Yet

I have walked on the mountain of gladness and joy,  
And His goodness I ne'er can forget;  
I have walked in the valley of sorrow and tears,  
But His love never failed me yet.

*Never failed me yet, never failed me yet,  
His love never failed me yet;  
Wheresoe'er I go, this one thing I know,  
His love never failed me yet.*

## Ave verum corpus

Ave verum corpus,  
Natum de Maria virgine;  
Vere passum immolatum  
In crucis pro homine.  
Cuius latus perforatum  
Unda fluxit sanguine.  
Esto nobis praegustatum  
In mortis examine.  
*O dulcis, o pie,  
O Jesu Fili Mariae,  
Miserere mei.  
Amen.*

Hail, true Body,  
Born of the Virgin Mary;  
Who has truly suffered, sacrificed  
On the Cross for mankind.  
Whose side was pierced,  
Whence flowed [water and] blood.  
Be a foretaste for us  
In the trial of death.  
*O sweet, o holy,  
O Jesus, Son of Mary,  
Have mercy on me.  
Amen.*

## Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet

*Jesus' blood never failed me yet,  
never failed me yet,  
Jesus' blood never failed me yet.  
This one thing I know for He loves me so.*

## Transiens

*Jesus autem transiens*

*[Petrus]*

Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem,  
Creatorem celi et terre.

*[Andreas]*

Et in Ihesum Cristum, Filium eius unicum,  
Dominum nostrum,

*[Jacobus]*

Qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto,  
natus ex Maria Virgine,

*[Johannes]*

passus sub Pontio Pilato,  
crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus,

*[Thomas]*

descendit ad inferna,  
tercia die resurrexit a mortuis,

*[Jacobus minor]*

ascendit ad celos,  
sedet ad dexteram  
Dei Patris omnipotentis,

*[Philippus]*

inde venturus est  
iudicare vivos et mortuos.

*[Bartolomeus]*

Credo in Spiritum Sanctum,

*[Mattheus]*

sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam,  
sanctorum communionem,

*[Simon]*

remissionem peccatorum,

*[Judas Thaddeus]*

carnis resurrectionem,

*[Matthias]*

et vitam eternam. Amen.

*But Jesus passing through the midst of them...*

*[Peter]*

I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth:

*[Andrew]*

And in Jesus Christ His only Son  
our Lord,

*[James]*

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
Born of the Virgin Mary,

*[John]*

Suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
Was crucified, dead, and buried;

*[Thomas]*

He descended into hell [Hades];  
the third day He rose again from the dead;

*[James the less]*

He ascended into heaven,  
And sitteth on the right hand of  
God the Father Almighty;

*[Philip]*

From thence He shall come to  
judge the quick and the dead.

*[Bartholomew]*

I believe in the Holy Ghost;

*[Matthew]*

The Holy Catholic Church;  
The communion of saints;

*[Simon]*

The forgiveness of sins;

*[Judas Thaddeus]*

The resurrection of the body;

*[Matthias]*

And the life everlasting. Amen.

# Always Unexpected



**The Song Company in 2020 and 2021** Top: *Circle of Virtue* (Pip Dracakis, Jessica O'Donoghue); *Messiah Part 1* (Stephanie Dillon, Dan Walker, Hayden Barrington)  
Lower: *Esperar, Sentir, Morir* (Roberta Diamond, Hannah Lane; 2021 Ensemble Artists in *Dances of Passion* (Ethan Taylor, Hayden Barrington, Janine Harris)

## Your Company



**“Demonstrated the excellence, precision and mastery of all singers involved.”**

Limelight , March 2020

The Song Company is Australia's only national professional vocal ensemble. Our artists are leaders in their fields – singing, teaching, composing and conducting in their home towns across the country.

When we come together to perform, the warmth and clarity of our sound is unmistakable.

## Expect the Unexpected



**“This is the country's pre-eminent choir and a-cappella ensemble”**

Daily Review , March 2020

The Song Company performs the widest range of repertoire of any ensemble in Australia. When you attend a performance by The Song Company, you are trusting us to present an incredible range of music, much of which you may not be familiar with.

And if we are performing a piece that you do know, you can always expect that it will be done in a new way – based both on scholarship and performance practice of the highest calibre, as well as creative and often radical reinvention and of course, excellent singing from the incredible vocal artists that make up our ensemble.

## Investing in the Next Generation



**“A fantastic cathartic experience”**

Limelight , March 2020

The Song Company's Ensemble Artist Program is the country's only early career professional development program for aspiring classical and ensemble singers. Only 18 months old, the program is already drawing praise for the calibre of the artists involved in the programs curated especially for them.

**We are immensely grateful to those who have made financial contributions and therefore play an integral role in the creative life of The Song Company.**

**Find out more here:**

<https://the.song.company/supporters>

# Always Moving



Above: 16th Century Polyphony at St Mary's Cathedral Crypt with The Song Company

## From Pen to Stage

★★★★★

**“Celestial sounds.”**

Limelight, April 2021

Support the entire ecosystem of composers and performers when you donate to The Song Company. The Song Company's proud tradition of commissioning and new work creation continues in 2021 with our three MainStage productions built on substantial new works and commissions:

**Burden of Truth** in May and June sees the presentation of two new major large-scale works in three cities: *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, Gavin Bryars iconic reflection on homelessness and hope, and *Transiens*, a 25-part motet by TSC Artistic Director Antony Pitts, based on the extraordinary canon from the Eton Choirbook.

**Arms of Love** in August will feature a major new work, *I pray the sea*, by Australian composer Chris Williams intertwined with one of the marvels of the baroque period, *Membra Jesu Nostri*, by Buxtehude. Throw away any expectations you may have about the old and the new – this project promises to be one of the most exciting and original fusion of chamber music, dance by Karul Projects and incredible vocalism.

**Songs From The Heart** is a significant new project scheduled for October, entirely curated by two important Indigenous voices in Australian composition, Sonya Holowell and Elizabeth Sheppard. Elizabeth and Sonya are creating an original vocal response to The Uluru Statement for a seven-voice ensemble.

## Always Moving

**“A thoroughly enthralling experience  
with superb singing throughout”**

ClassikON, December 2020

The Song Company performs the widest range of repertoire of any ensemble in the country. The power of the human voice, the magic of singing in harmony, the moment when individual lines come together in a single chord – this is The Song Company.

Lose yourself in the intricacies of 16th-century polyphony.

Marvel as a multi-voice work unfolds layer by layer.

Feel the connection between light and hope; darkness and despair; optimism after sacrifice.

Leave the everyday world behind when you experience your national vocal ensemble.

**Great art is supported by people who love great art. Our ambitious and innovative programming would not exist without our audiences and our donors.**

**Make a tax-deductible donation today**

**[the.songcompany.com.au/eofy-2021](https://www.songcompany.com.au/eofy-2021)**

The Song Company

# BURDEN OF TRUTH

GAVIN BRYARS

Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet  
*a cappella* World Première

ANTONY PITTS

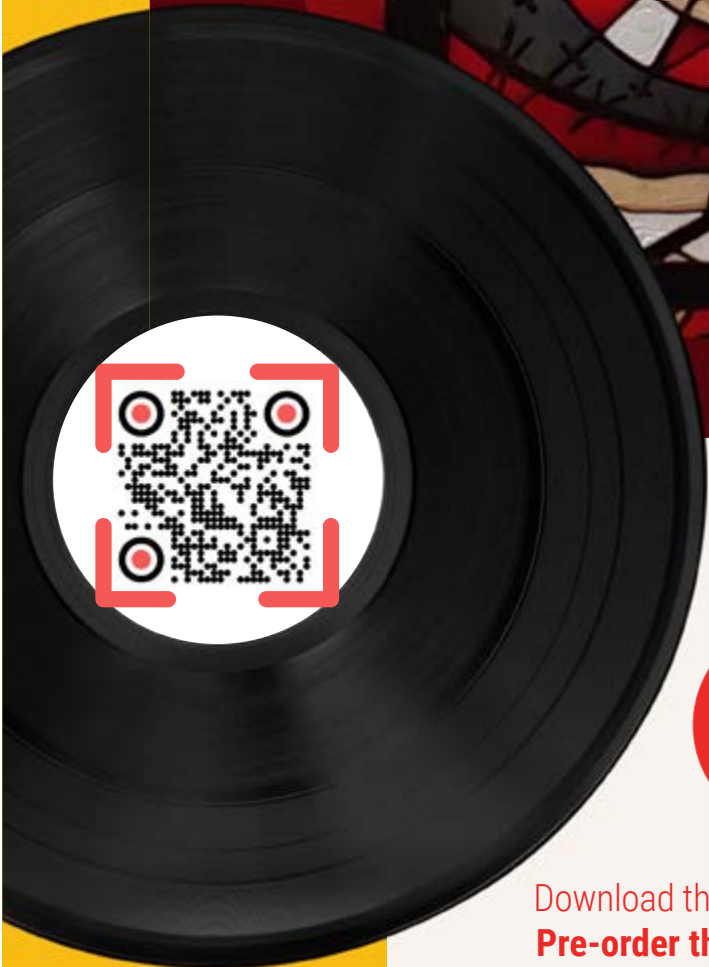
after Robert Wylkynson

Transiens  
World Première

download today!



THE  
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**Pre-order the Vinyl today!**

 **bandcamp**

<https://thesongcompany.bandcamp.com>