



ARMS OF *Love*

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THE SONG COMPANY

The Song Company is Australia's leading vocal ensemble, presenting music from all times and places. Since its beginnings in 1984, it has captivated Australian and international audiences with exquisite performances of vocal work ranging from the 10th century to contemporary compositions. Every project The Song Company undertakes is underwritten by its unwavering commitment to excellence and to the transcendent and transformative beauty of the human voice.

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2022 Artists

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Dan Walker, Koen van Stade, *tenors*
Thomas Flint, *bass*

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Gerard Willems, Hylton Mowday, Neville Williams Boney

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Alexander Caldwell, Alexander Gorbatov, David Lee, William Varga, *tenors*
Lincoln Law, Brendan McRae, Jesse van Proctor, *basses*

ENSEMBLE ARTIST

Elias Wilson

Arms of Love Artists



Amy Moore



Brianna Louwen



Stephanie Dillon



Robert Macfarlane



Thomas Flint



Neville Williams Boney



Hylton Mowday



Jenny Eriksson



Antony Pitts



Chris Williams

The Song Company is assisted by 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 past, present and emerging

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ARMS OF LOVE

Buxtehude's monumental meditation on suffering and the human body reimaged with contemporary Indigenous choreography from Karul Projects, and a major new Australian work from Chris Williams, setting words by Behrouz Boochani.

James Theatre, Dungog NSW, 24 August

Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle NSW, 25 August

Cell Block Theatre, Darlinghurst NSW, 26 August (Digital Broadcast via Australian Digital Concert Hall)

The Neilson, Dawes Point NSW, 27 August

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre NSW, Casula, 28 August

Wollongong Art Gallery, Wollongong NSW, 1 September

Ainslie Arts Centre, Ainslie ACT, 2 September

Abbotsford Convent, Abbotsford VIC, 4 September

PROGRAM

Membra Jesu nostri patientis sanctissima

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

1. Ad Pedes
2. Ad Genua
3. Ad Manus
4. Ad Latus
5. Ad Pectus
6. Ad Cor
7. Ad Faciem

interwoven with

I pray the sea

Chris Williams (b. 1986)

1. The edge of water
 2. On the surface of water
 3. Entering water
 4. Above water
 5. Home
- (World Première performances)

THE SONG COMPANY

Amy Moore, soprano

Brianna Louwen, soprano

Stephanie Dillon, mezzo-soprano

Robert Macfarlane, tenor

Thomas Flint, bass

Neville Williams Boney, dancer

Hylton Mowday (We Love Jam), saxophones

Jenny Eriksson (The Marais Project), electric viola da gamba

Antony Pitts, Rhodes keyboard & musical director

Robert Macfarlane, director

Thomas E.S. Kelly (Karul Projects) & Neville Williams Boney, choreography

All excerpts from *No Friend But the Mountains* are used by kind permission of the author, Behrouz Boochani. Excerpt from *The Answer* by Bei Dao used with permission of New Directions Publishing. Excerpt from Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad translated by Sholeh Wolpé, used with kind permission from The University of Arkansas Press. Excerpt from *Handful of Salt* by Kajal Ahmad, translated by Alana Marie Levinson-LaBrosse, used with permission. Dramaturgy and translation by Pierce Wilcox. Sample of 'By the air' recorded at SongCo LAB 2021 by Alice Dawson-Damer & Emma Warburton.

Support for Arms of Love



This project supported by a Contemporary Music Touring Grant from the Australia Council from the Arts

Funding for *I pray the sea* was made possible by the **SILo Collective**. Thank you for supporting the creation of new Australian work: Jennifer Arnold, Andrew Blanckensee, Anna Cerneaz, Charles Davidson, Greg Dickson, Cathy Gray, John & Irene Garran, Louise Guy, Pamela & Neil Hardie, Wendy & Andrew Hobbs, Leta Keens, Penny Le Couteur, Geoffrey Stearn, Merry & Robert Pearson, Rosemary Swift, Kay Vernon, Christopher Whitehead & Peter Wilson. Participation of **Karul Projects** made possible by the generosity of Meredith Brooks

PROGRAM NOTES

The Song Company's 2022 Season, **Higher Ground**, lifts the spirit with exceptional ensemble singing by Australia's elite chamber vocal ensemble across a range of smaller- and larger-scale vocal music with a particular highlight on sacred polyphony from the 16th to 19th centuries. Seeking refuge by moving ever higher is an instinct deep within the human psyche; we discover shelter and meaning in the exquisite and intricate works of the polyphonic masters of the Renaissance, and as loved and imitated by later generations of composers up until our own day. The tradition of learning from our elders was embodied by the 20-year-old Johann Sebastian Bach, who disappeared from his day job for some four months, walking some 400 kilometres to listen to and perhaps study with Dietrich Buxtehude – as Bach succinctly explained on his return, in order “to comprehend one thing and another about his art”.

Arms of Love pits the great humanist setting of the Passion story, Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu nostri**, against Australian composer Chris Williams's *I pray the sea*, a setting of Beyrouz Boochani's haunting documentation from Manus Island in *No Friend But the Mountains*, to illuminate the notion of what it is to be a refugee. Regardless of whether someone has fled a war-torn country and seeks a chance at a better life, or is torn away from their own country through colonisation or industrialisation, the systematic dehumanisation of the refugee in our society has far-reaching implications for the ethical and moral 'heart' of the country. Our First Nations people continue to be refugees on their own land, further and further removed from traditions, culture and authentic sense of self. This negation of humanity and stripping of dignity begins a vicious circle, exacerbating 'otherness' and making dehumanisation more tolerable. Indeed, Jesus Christ, western history's most famous political prisoner, was **Feet, Knees, Hands, Side, Chest, Heart, and Face** much like anyone else, and **Arms of Love** seeks not so much to tell a story about refugees as to paint a series of visual reminders of our shared humanity, and what happens when we take that away from someone.

As ever, it is a privilege to be reuniting with Thomas E.S. Kelly's contemporary Indigenous dance company Karul Projects and newly partnering with dancer Neville Williams Boney in this musical pageant of light and movement. *I pray the sea* was commissioned with funding from the Silo Collective, and Williams's flotilla of musical fragments gradually makes its appearance, interleaving with and affecting Buxtehude's intimate cycle of seven cantatas on the physical and spiritual aspects of the Crucifixion – a bit like the tide making its inroads onto land. And like the fluid border between land and sea, the resulting contrasts and connections chart a musical journey unique to **Arms of Love**. The Song Company's Principal and Guest Artists are joined by a “shipwrecked” continuo made up of saxophonist Hylton Mowday from We Love Jam, The Marais Project's Jenny Eriksson on electric viola da gamba, and Artistic Director Antony Pitts on a classic Rhodes keyboard.

*The full title of Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu nostri patientis sanctissima* means “The most holy limbs of our suffering Jesus”

Robert Macfarlane & Antony Pitts

Composer's Note

Boochani's most extraordinary ability is to make the imaginative from the unimaginable and what strikes me most about his book *No Friend But the Mountains* is that, on the one hand, it is a completely singular work, the product of the most exceptional genesis, and on the other, expresses vital universal themes of suffering, love, loss, and the complex notion of home. At once, it seems to stand apart from, and be a central pillar to rich and diverse literary traditions. *I pray the sea* takes up those themes, and traces them, seeking resonance and reflection across a wide variety of texts to accompany Boochani's powerful words.

Chris Williams

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

I AD PEDES

Sonata

Concerto Ecce super montes pedes evangelizantis et annunciantis pacem

Aria Clavos pedum, plagas duras, et tam graves impressuras circumplector cum affectu, tuo pavens in aspectu, tuorum memor vulnere

Aria Salve mundi salutare, salve, salve Jesu care! Cruci tuae me aptare vellem vere, tu scis quare, da mihi tui copiam.

Aria Dulcis Jesu, pie Deus, ad te clamo licet reus, praebe mihi te benignum, ne repellas me indignum de tuis sanctis pedibus.

Concerto (da capo: Ecce super montes)

Concerto Salve mundi salutare, salve Jesu care! Cruci tuae me aptare vellem vere, tu scis quare, da mihi tui copiam.

II AD GENUA

Sonata

Concerto Ad ubera portabimini, et super genua blandientur vobis.

Aria Salve Jesu, rex sanctorum, spes votiva peccatorum, crucis ligno tanquam reus, pendens homo verus Deus, caducis nutans genibus.

Aria Quid sum tibi responsurus, actu vilis corde durus? Quid rependam amatori, qui elegit pro me mori, ne dupla morte morerer.

Aria Ut te quaeram mente pura, sit haec mea prima cura, non est labor et gravabor, sed sanabor et mundabor, cum te complexus fuero.

Concerto (da capo: Ad ubera portabimini)

III AD MANUA

Sonata

Concerto Quid sunt plagae istae in medio manuum tuarum?

Aria Salve Jesu, pastor bone, fatigatus in agone, qui per lignum es distractus et ad lignum es compactus expansis sanctis manibus.

Aria Manus sanctae, vos amplector, et gemendo condelector, grates ago plagis tantis, clavis duris guttis sanctis dans lacrymas cum oculis.

Aria In cruore tuo lotum me commendo tibi totum, tuae sanctae manus istae me defendant, Jesu Christe, extremis in periculis.

Concerto (da capo: Quid sunt plagae istae)

TO THE FEET (after Nahum 1:15)

Sonata

Concerto Look! there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace!

Aria The nails in the feet, the serious wounds, and such grievous marks with affection I embrace them, trembling at the sight of You, remembering Your wounds.

Aria Hail, Saviour of the world, hail, hail, dear Jesus! On Your cross would I hang, truly, You know why. Give me Your strength.

Aria Sweet Jesus, merciful God, I cry to You, though guilty, Show me Your grace, do not turn me away as unworthy from Your holy feet.

Concerto (da capo: Look! there on the mountains...)

Concerto Hail, Saviour of the world, hail, hail, dear Jesus! On Your cross would I hang, truly, You know why. Give me Your strength.

TO THE KNEES (after Isaiah 66:12)

Sonata

Concerto You will be nursed at the hip and cuddled on the knee.

Aria Hail Jesus, king of the saints, hope of the prayers of sinners, like a guilty one on the wood of the cross, hanging there as a man, yet true God, bending on failing knees!

Aria What answer shall I give You, as I am vile in deed, hard of heart? How shall I repay Your love, who chose to die for me that I might not undergo the second death?

Aria To seek You with a pure mind, may that be my first care, It is neither laborious nor heavy: but I shall be healed and cleansed, when I embrace You.

Concerto (da capo: You will be nursed...)

TO THE HANDS (after Zechariah 13:6)

Sonata

Concerto What are these wounds within Your hands?

Aria Hail, Jesus, good shepherd, worn out in agony, who, tormented by the wood [of the cross] and nailed to the wood by Your holy outstretched hands.

Aria Sacred hands, I embrace you, though lamenting, I delight in you, I give thanks for such terrible wounds, the hard nails, the holy drops of blood, shedding tears with kisses.

Aria Washed in Your blood I commit myself wholly to You; may these holy hands of Yours protect me, Jesus Christ, in the last hour of danger.

Concerto (da capo: What are these wounds...)

I pray the sea

[We thought prophets came from the desert, we didn't know they arrive by sea.]

1. The edge of water

Boochani: ...the air is full of the cries of children, the sound of mothers... ..we can see only (the) stars above. ...trust the sky, the fixed stars,

Various: by the edge of water, gather flowers of grief, leave earth behind.

CONTINUED...

IV AD LATUS

Sonata

Concerto Surge, amica mea, speciosa mea, et veni, columba mea in foraminibus petrae, in caverna maceriae.

Aria Salve latus salvatoris, in quo latet mel dulcoris, in quo patet vis amoris, ex quo scatet fons cruoris, qui corda lavat sordida.

Aria Ecce tibi appropinquo, parce, Jesu, si delinquo, verecunda quidem fronte, ad te tamen veni sponte scrutari tua vulnera.

Aria Hora mortis meus flatus intret Jesu, tuum latus, hinc expirans in te vadat, ne hunc leo trux invadat, sed apud te permaneat.

Concerto (da capo: Surge amica mea)

Aeschylus: we placed our broken feet [ecce salve pedes] in ocean and walked until waves lapped at our neck and we came to you.

Boochani: We have arrived at the ocean They wait on the shore... (gather flowers of grief, leave earth behind)

2. On the surface of water

Rumi: ... In the ocean are many bright strands and many dark strands like veins ...
Your hidden self is blood in those, those veins that are lute strings that make ocean music ...

V AD PECTUS

Sonata

Concerto Sicut modo geniti infantes rationabiles, et sine dolo concupiscite, ut in eo crescatis in salutem. Si tamen gustatis, quoniam dulcis est Dominus.

Aria Pectus mihi confer mundum, ardens, pium, gemebundum, voluntatem abnegatam, tibi semper conformatam, juncta virtutum copia.

Aria Salve, salus mea, Deus, Jesu dulcis, amor meus, salve, pectus reverendum, cum tremore contingendum, amoris domicilium.

Aria Ave, verum templum Dei, precor miserere mei, tu totius arca boni, fac electis me apponi, vas dives Deus omnium.

Concerto (da capo: Sicut modo geniti)

.... not the sad edge of surf, but the sound of no shore.

Kabgani (Boochani): Everything you need to understand... is... in the ocean.

Boochani: In the depths of darkness/ On the verge of losing (all) hope/ Deep down inside/ A tiny light/ (About the size of) a speck/ (Like) a distant star/ (Is spotted on) the horizon...

Luther: schrei ich zu dir [I cry to you]

Boochani: ...the haunting music of the waves ... Waves of a foreign ocean. The sovereignty of the waves ... the sanctuary of the sea.

Boochani: I drown... **Farrokhzad:** I want to reach...

VI AD COR

Sonata

Concerto Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea, sponsa, vulnerasti cor meum.

Aria Summi regis cor, aveto, te saluto corde laeto, te complecti me delectat et hoc meum cor affectat, ut ad te loquar, animes.

Aria Per medullam cordis mei, peccatoris atque rei, tuus amor transferatur, quo cor tuum rapiatur languens amoris vulnere.

TO THE SIDES (after Song of Songs [Song of Solomon] 2:13-14)

Sonata

Concerto Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the crevices of the cliff.

Aria Hail, side of the Saviour, hidden in which is honey of sweetness, revealed in which is the power of love, gushing forth from which is the spring of blood that washes the loathsome hearts.

Aria See! I approach You; pardon, Jesus, if I fall into sin, with reverent countenance and free will I come to You to survey Your wounds.

Aria In the hour of death, may my soul enter Your side, Jesus, passing away from here may it go into You, so that it may not be attacked by the terrible lion, but remain always with You.

Concerto (da capo: Arise, my love,...)

TO THE BREAST (after 1 Peter 2:2-3)

Sonata

Concerto Like newborn infants, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow up into salvation, for so you have tasted how gracious the Lord is.

Aria Give me a clean breast, ardent, pious, sighing, a will that is denied, rather always conforming to You, with an abundance of virtues.

Aria Hail, my salvation, God, sweet Jesus, my beloved, hail, revered breast, to be touched with trembling, dwelling-place of love.

Aria Hail, true temple of God, I pray, have mercy on me, You, the ark of all that is good, appoint me among the chosen, precious vessel, God of all.

Concerto (da capo: Like newborn infants...)

TO THE HEART (after Song of Songs [Song of Solomon] 4: 9)

Sonata

...the heart of the earth. I drown...

Concerto You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, You have ravished my heart.

Aria Heart of the highest king, I greet You, I salute You with a joyful heart, it delights me to embrace You, and my heart desires this: that You move me to speak to You.

Aria Into the core of my heart, that of a sinner and guilty one, may Your love be conveyed, by which Your heart was seized, languishing from the wound of love.

Aria Viva cordis voce clamo, dulce cor, te namque amo,
ad cor meum inclinare, ut se possit applicare
devoto tibi pectore.

Concerto (da capo: Vulnerasti cor meum)

Aria With the living voice of my heart I cry, sweet heart, for I love You,
may You incline to my heart, that it may commit itself to you
in the breast devoted to You.

Concerto (da capo: You have ravished my heart...)

3. Entering water (A dream)

Farrokhzad: I want to reach the heart of the earth. [I drown] My love lies there,
(a place where seedlings turn green and roots meet one another and creation continues) [I drown]

Boochani: ... mountains transform into waves/ There is a sea/ No, (it is) an ocean/ There is water everywhere/
We are confronted by the sky/ We are confronted by water/ In the middle of the ocean is a small, vivid, green and bountiful island/
(Encircled by dangerous waves/) There are little children on that island/ They are terrified/
The waves beat ... Life comes and goes/ Death comes and goes/

Farrokhzad: ... my body is a temporary form

Boochani: My mother is present/ ... within the waves?

Heraclitus: You can't go home again.

Boochani: She is smiling ...

Heraclitus: Your childhood is lost.

Boochani: She is weeping Why is my mother dancing?/ Why is she crying and dancing?/

Where is this place? The ocean has performed its sacrifice/

Only the cry of birds remains; they know (what is going on around them).

(A memory) The Blue Eyed Boy:... confessed his fear of the ocean; his older brother's life had been taken by the raging river ...
His brother dives deep into the water; like a heavy stone dropping into the river, his body pierces the water.

The Blue Eyed Boy is incapable of grabbing his brother's hand.

He can only cry and cry; he cries for hours hoping his brother will surface. But he is gone.

Jeremiah (31:15): Vox in Rama audita est, Ploratus et ululatus... [A voice is heard in Rama, Weeping and lamenting]

Boochani: The sound of the dhol persuades the river Water Waves Sea Ocean to give back a waterlogged corpse

4. Above water ('trust the sky')

Bei Dao: See how the gilded sky is covered With the drifting twisted shadows of the dead.

Various: Arion sang, at the prow, playing his lyre. He hurled himself into the sea - Apollo set him in the sky.

Boochani: ...trust the sky

Ahmad: I walk the sky.

5. Home (Behold, upon the mountains)

Boochani: Where have I come from? From the land of rivers, the land of waterfalls,
the land of ancient chants, the land of mountains. I've breathed in the ether up there.

Ahmad: I carry The ball of earth In this small, heavy Head of mine.

Synesius: Let earth and upper air be at peace. Let the sea be still, let air be still.

Be still, ye gusts of winds; be stilled, onslaughts of waves, ...

Let silence hold the caverns of the universe, (while these sacred hymns are offered up)

Boochani: Where have I come from? I'm a child of the mountains.

Various: I'm a child of the river I'm a child of the ocean

I'm a child at the edge of water... A child at the border

VII AD FACIEM

Sonata

Concerto Illustra faciem tuam super servum tuum,
salvum me fac in misericordia tua.

Aria Salve, caput cruentatum, totum spinis coronatum,
conquassatum, vulneratum, arundine verberatum facie sputis illita.

Aria Dum me mori est necesse, noli mihi tunc deesse,
in tremenda mortis hora veni, Jesu, absque mora,
tuere me et libera.

Aria Cum me jubes emigrare, Jesu care, tunc appare,
o amator amplexende, temet ipsum tunc ostende
in cruce salutifera.

Concerto Amen

TO THE FACE (after Psalm 31:16)

Sonata

Concerto Let Your face shine upon Your servant,
save me in Your loving-kindness.

Aria Hail, bloodied head, all crowned with thorns,
beaten, wounded, struck with a cane, the face soiled and spat on.

Aria If then I must die, do not be far from me,
in the anxious hour of death come, Jesus, without delay,
protect me and set me free!

Aria When You command me to leave, dear Jesus, then appear,
O lover to be embraced, then show Yourself
on the cross that brings salvation.

Concerto Amen

Shakespeare: Whither would you go? What country ... should give you harbour?
Would you be pleased to find a nation... that would not ...afford you an abode on Earth. What country, friends, is this?

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