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Charles Brooks

THE KING'S SINGERS & VOICES NEW ZEALAND

CHAMBER CHOIR



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FESTIVAL**

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2018

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THE KING'S SINGERS & VOICES NEW ZEALAND CHAMBER CHOIR

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► Sat 10 March ► Michael Fowler Centre ► 1hr 30mins [incl. interval]

A message from the New Zealand Festival

Nau mai haere mai ki Te Taurima o Aotearoa. This Festival we invite you to join us on an epic journey through art. We celebrate the stories of great moments in human history, alongside the most intricate mysteries of our hearts and minds. For three weeks, let the voices of artists from around the world take you on the most affirming exploration of life.

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Shelagh Magadza
Artistic Director

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EVENT PROGRAMMES
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THE KING'S SINGERS

Patrick Dunachie countertenor

Timothy Wayne-Wright countertenor

Julian Gregory tenor

Christopher Bruerton baritone

Christopher Gabbitas baritone

Jonathan Howard bass



Patrick Dunachie



Timothy Wayne-Wright



Julian Gregory



Christopher Bruerton



Christopher Gabbitas



Jonathan Howard

The King's Singers appear courtesy of John Cristian Productions.

VOICES NEW ZEALAND CHAMBER CHOIR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Karen Grylls

SOPRANOS

Rachel Alexander

Celia Aspey Gordon

Pepe Becker

Shona McIntyre-Bull

Jane McKinlay

Fiona Wilson

ALTOS

Helen Acheson

Christine Argyle

Morag Atchison

Andrea Cochrane

Grace Neale

Jessica Wells

TENORS

Phillip Collins

Lachlan Craig

Philip Roderick

Benjamin Tan

Jack Timings

Ken Trass

BASSES

James Butler

Gregory Camp

Matthew Drake

Nicholas Forbes

Rowan Johnston

Isaac Stone

Advisor [Artistic]

Robert Wiremu

Vocal Consultant

Catrin Johnsson

Chief Executive

Arne Herrmann

Operations Manager

Emma Billings

Voices New Zealand receives core funding from Creative New Zealand and New Zealand Community Trust. This project is supported by Pub Charity.



Charles Brooks



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Image: Mats Bäcker

PROGRAMME

Celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2018, The King's Singers are engaging the finest choirs across the globe to chart their journey through their music – a breathtaking repertoire that has evolved to become one of the most diverse and compelling imaginable. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir.

An alchemy of ancient and modern, serious and light-hearted, expected and unexpected, this programme features premieres by some of the great contemporary choral composers of our day, alongside masters of the Renaissance and Romantic eras.

THE FAMILY

Henry Ley The Prayer of King Henry VI

Bob Chilcott We Are^{‡§}

THE JOY OF THE RENAISSANCE

Ludwig Senfl Das G'läut zu Speyer

Orlandus Lassus Dessus le marché d'Arras

THE PHILOSOPHER

Eric Whitacre The Stolen Child[‡]

THE BEAUTY OF THE ROMANTIC ERA

Camille Saint-Saëns Romance du soir

Franz Schubert Die Nacht

THE FORCE OF NATURE

Leonie Holmes This Watershed Time
[World Premiere] ^{‡§}

THE ROMANCE OF FOLKSONG

Trad. [arr. Goff Richards] Lamorna

Trad. [arr. Bob Chilcott] I Bought Me a Cat

THE EXPLORER

Bob Chilcott High Flight[‡]

INTERVAL

THE VISIONARY

Nico Muhly To Stand in this House^{‡§}

THE PARTY BAG

Classic audience favourites and brand new surprises in their signature close-harmony style from the lighter side of The King's Singers' repertoire

[‡] Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir will join The King's Singers to perform these pieces.

[§] These pieces were commissioned for The King's Singers' 50th anniversary.

A NOTE FROM THE KING'S SINGERS

50th Anniversary Year 2018

Preparing for this anniversary year has felt a little bit like preparing for a wedding – you spend a huge amount of time and headspace working on every last detail of programming, recording, the events themselves, and then the big day arrives and it goes past in a flash! That was certainly the case at our two UK celebration concerts in January, one in London and the other in Cambridge. We welcomed many of the former members to these concerts – there have been only 26 members in total since 1968 – and both days were a joyful celebration of what has made The King's Singers so special over the decades.

During 2018, it was always going to be an impossible task to fit in touring slots for every territory the group has ever visited, so several years ago we sat down and discussed where our focus should be. Europe and North America were continents we knew would feature heavily during the year, and further afield the group wanted to return to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and various Asian territories. We managed South Africa during 2017 and, thankfully, everything else has been placed into 2018 due to the skill and efforts of our global team of management and agencies.

New Zealand in particular holds a special place in our hearts: for Chris B it is his homeland, Tim has married a Kiwi, and it was my second home as my parents lived for some 15 years in Hamilton. To be able to join with Voices NZ to celebrate their 20th birthday, during our own 50th anniversary year is a real treat for us, and we send to them our heartfelt congratulations on reaching this milestone. Many of us also have family and close friends in Australia, so it was natural that we should champion a return to the Antipodes.

We're often asked how we choose repertoire for our recordings and concerts and, for 2018, this was even more of a delicate task than usual! The note in our anniversary album sums it up: we aimed to present a recording that reflected both the rich history and exciting present of The King's Singers, re-recording some old favourites whilst introducing new classical and pop repertoire that would fit perfectly into our library. The concert programmes for our anniversary performances are substantially taken from the recording repertoire, providing an experience where audiences can enjoy the current group singing the same music both live and on recording during the year. Creating the artwork was especially good fun! Bringing in former King's Singers countertenor Nigel Short was an inspired move, as his knowledge of our repertoire and performance style meant that he was perfectly placed to bring out the best sound possible. Recording it naturally, with no tracking or other post-production tricks, was also a great move: for a long time many of our fans have asked us to release an album which resembles our live experience as closely as possible, and this is it.

A year like this is an experience like no other. To be part of The King's Singers during this anniversary "GOLD" year is not something a singer can plan; there is a huge amount of luck and timing. All we can do is grasp it with both hands, enjoy the ride, and give the best possible performances across the world to honour the legacy of our predecessors and spread the message of acappella singing wherever we go!

Christopher Gabbitas

"To be able to join with Voices NZ to celebrate their 20th birthday, during our own 50th anniversary year is a real treat for us"





Charles Brooks

A NOTE FROM VOICES NEW ZEALAND CHAMBER CHOIR

20th Anniversary Year 2018

It is a wonderful achievement to be now in our 20th year. I'm not sure any of us whose bright idea it was in 1998 to form a national, professional-level chamber choir thought that we would be celebrating our 20th year in such style: performing with The King's Singers, recording and performing with the Auckland Philharmonia and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and touring internationally to England, Germany, France and Spain. Well, we are! And congratulations, King's Singers, on your 50th anniversary year and your outstanding performances around the world. We are very proud of our Antipodean connections and very much look forward to singing together in this special year.

As for Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir, the inspiration initially came from singers who had sung in national youth choirs and who wanted to continue the opportunity at a national, professional level. I had already made some personal, professional decisions that would create the time necessary to work with such an ensemble. After directing the Auckland Dorian Choir for 15 years, a change was necessary. Thanks to Jacqui Simpson and some enthusiastic singers, we launched Voices NZ in March 1998 in time to debut as part of the New Zealand International Arts Festival. In quick succession, there was a June performance of Bach's *Johannes Passion* in the Bach Festival with the New Zealand Chamber Orchestra, concerts in Spain and first prizes from the Tolosa Choral Competition in October.

Much of our performing has come as a result of collaborations with national and international organisations, festivals, orchestras and with inspiration and invitation from our musical colleagues. We treasure our relations with the New Zealand Festival and the Auckland Arts Festival (thank you, Shelagh and Carla van Zon). We've sung for Howard Shore, Jan Pascal Tortelier, James Macmillan, Jane Glover, Nicholas McGeegan, Simon Carrington and Vladimir Ashkenazy, to name a few. Local collaborations have seen us performing with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Brian Law, Uwe Grodd, Marc Taddei and Tecwyn Evans.

Recording, too, has played a significant part in our profile. Highlights include premier recordings of Vanhal and Hummel with the Aradia Ensemble for Naxos, the Tui award-winning disc *Spirit of the Land*, *Voices of Aotearoa* and most recently, Ross Harris's *Requiem for the Fallen* with the New Zealand String Quartet.

Those who sing in the choir are passionate about their art, they give of themselves in time and spirit, beyond all expectations. It is a privilege to work with these inspiring singers as we develop our own art and share musical skills with other singers in our communities and schools through

workshops and joint performances. The Aorere College Choir Residency in 2007 was one of the most memorable.

Also memorable was the 2011 Music New Zealand Tour, *Voices of Aotearoa*, with taonga pūoro artist Horomona Horo. This tour gave us the opportunity for seminal performances in the development of the choir; who we are and why we sing. We proved to ourselves that we could convincingly sing Purcell and waiata in the same programme. And as the Artistic Director and Conductor of this national choir, I have always valued and welcomed the opportunity to commission and perform works from our New Zealand composers. This was a very special programme, which also made its way to the World Symposium of Choral Music in Patagonia and Argentina later the same year.

In our 20th year, our collective aspiration remains: to sing at the highest level, to encourage our composers to write about things that matter, and to share the music and the singing, which has the power to change our lives for the better. Enjoy the programme!

Karen Grylls ONZM
Artistic Director

A RESOUNDING CHORAL TRADITION

BY GREGORY CAMP

Choral music has played a central role in the international success of Aotearoa New Zealand's music. Since Professor Peter Godfrey and subsequently Dr Guy Jansen began building up our choirs a few decades ago, choral music has increasingly become one of New Zealand's most important musical exports. Today, few could argue that one of the most central figures in choral music in this country is Dr Karen Grylls. In her roles as Artistic Director of Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir since its founding in 1998, Conductor of the New Zealand Youth Choir from 1989 to 2011, and staff member of the University of Auckland since 1985, Karen has been central not "only" as a conductor, but also as a teacher and as a supporter of new music. Many of the conductors of New Zealand's most successful secondary school and community choirs are her former conducting students, and many alumni of the National Youth Choir have gone on to major international careers [The King's Singers' Christopher Bruerton, who is performing tonight, among them]. Works she or her choirs commissioned from New Zealand composers such as Eve de Castro-Robinson, Leonie Holmes, Gillian Whitehead and David Hamilton have been performed all over the world.

Voices NZ was recognised as one of the world's leading choirs right after its founding at the 1998 International Choral Competition in Tolosa, Spain. One hallmark of choirs at this level is that they have an identifiable sound, a sound that remains roughly the same in spite of individual singers coming and going. Usually this sound comes down to the conductor. What is the Karen Grylls sound? If we were to get technical, we could say it's rooted in the English cathedral choir tradition [learned from Peter Godfrey] with superstrata of North American sound production and a Scandinavian aesthetic affinity, all built on a deeper foundation of Kiwi knowhow and

daring-do. But no matter how it is described, it is a sound that is immediately recognisable. How is it that a non-singing figure in front of a choir can shape the sound in such an identifiable way? How can even different iterations of Voices NZ sound like the same choir over time? It starts with the ears, specifically with voice matching. To an outsider, the process of voice matching looks like some sort of arcane ritual. Singers might sing a short phrase, such as the opening of "God save the Queen", over and over again as they are placed beside other singers in various combinations. "George and Jim clash; try putting George on the other side of Fred." "No, Fred needs to be next to Sam." "Well, try the Fred-Sam core between George and Jim." "God save our..." "Yes, that's it! The section came alive!" While most people wouldn't immediately hear the difference, the trained ears of an excellent conductor know that such minute changes of placing can have major effects on the final sound of the choir, and experts like Karen Grylls and her team can imagine from hearing individuals how they will contribute to the full choral sound. You can bet that any choir with a gorgeously blended sound is the product of long voice-matching sessions before the music has even been extensively rehearsed.

Once the choristers are sitting in the optimal position, it is time to work on the repertoire at hand. Vowel tuning lies at the centre of the process of bringing music from the score to the concert hall in a pleasing way. There is a scientific explanation for this: different vowels [of which English has about 24] all produce different overtones. If the whole choir is not singing the same vowel, the overtones clash with each other and can give the impression of being out of tune. Tuning a piano, with three strings for each note, takes quite a long time; imagine how much more work is involved in tuning 24 singers!





Another important feature of Voices NZ rehearsals that leads to the Grylls sound is storytelling. Never are sounds allowed to be merely beautiful; they also need to be invested with dramatic and narrative intent. Having a clear story in mind helps the singers to present something that goes beyond the score, and a lot of rehearsal time is given over to deciding on the story to be told in a particular piece. For example, rehearsing Bob Chilcott's "We Are" for this performance included consideration of poet Maya Angelou's history: to be able to tell this story effectively the choir needed to know where the text came from.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, teamwork is central to Karen's approach. Karen relies upon trusted artistic advisors to help shape the sound, her rehearsals are not one-woman shows but rather offer a model of collaboration. Vocal coaches Catrin Johnsson and Robert Wiremu provide innumerable insights into everything from vowel production to storytelling, and CEO Arne Herrmann and Operations Manager Emma Billings ensure a smooth process. A successful choir can only really work with excellent skills both on the rostra and behind the scenes: all contribute to what an audience hears in a performance.

This ethos of teamwork extends to the choir members themselves. Most come with previous experience of working with Karen, either in the University of Auckland Chamber Choir, the National Youth Choir, or both. This leads to a shared approach to music-making and also a great deal of investment among the choir in the process of producing the best sounds possible. World-class choirs like Voices NZ work on the assumption that its members know how to read music at sight. When a full concert needs to be

prepared with only two days of rehearsal, there is no time to waste on note-bashing. Especially difficult pieces or new ones without existing performance histories are sent to the choir in advance, but busy schedules all around mean that most members will not have had much time to learn the music beforehand. Mistakes can be made in rehearsal [they are a natural part of the learning process], but only once: a singer who cannot fix a mistake quickly is unlikely to be asked back. While speed is of the essence in rehearsal, years of patient musical study are required before a singer can get to that place. Technique lies at the heart of all successful music-making, and that goes for the conductor as well as the singers. Karen has a natural gift for visual communication, backed up by a desire to keep learning about the technical aspects of music. In this, she serves as a model for those who sing with her, emphasising that we should all strive to never stop learning and reminding us that we all [including the audience] have important roles to play in the creation of the music.

Good choirs do not happen by chance or by magic. They need a conductor's guiding vision to transform a large group of individuals into the entity called a choir, they need new music to perform, they need a unified conception of sound, they need to be founded on good technique, and they need to successfully pass on their music to audiences of all types. We are lucky here in our long white cloud to have all of these traits embodied in the person of Karen Grylls.

Gregory Camp is a Lecturer in Musicology at the University of Auckland School of Music, where he also serves as Director of Postgraduate Studies and Artistic Director of the Wallace Opera Training Programme. He is also a member of Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir.

THE KING'S SINGERS

The King's Singers were officially born on 1 May 1968, when six recently-graduated choral scholars from King's College, Cambridge, gave a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the Southbank in London. This group had formed in Cambridge and had been singing together for some years in a range of line-ups under a different name, but this big London debut was the launchpad for the five-decade-long career of The King's Singers we know now. Their vocal make-up was [by chance] two countertenors, a tenor, two baritones and a bass, and the group has never wavered from this formation since.

As former members of King's College Choir [Cambridge], traditional choral repertoire pulsed through the veins of these founding King's Singers, and it has never left the group's performances. But what really distinguished The King's Singers in the early years was their musical versatility. They were a weekly fixture on prime-time television, celebrating popular music never usually touched by choral ensembles, and their

unique British charm, combined with their musical craft, captured audiences' hearts the world over. The group has consistently been welcomed on the world's great stages throughout its history – from London's Royal Albert Hall to the Sydney Opera House, New York's Carnegie Hall, Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw – as well as being ambassadors for musical excellence across the globe. To this day, they still prize the precision of their craft and musical diversity is among their most cherished trademarks.

The King's Singers have accumulated many glowing reviews from the world's great musical publications, two Grammy® Awards, an Emmy® Award, and place in *Gramophone* magazine's inaugural Hall of Fame: not to mention some of the other fantastic – and wacky – awards bestowed upon them over the course of their 50-year history. One of the keys to the group's success has been the slow turnover of its members. Including the current six singers, there have only been 26 King's Singers since 1968, which has allowed the techniques that guide every aspect of the group's music-making to be inherited and refined without getting lost through a rapid change of line-up.



The group's ongoing commitment to enriching the world of music has led to numerous wonderful collaborations with all kinds of extraordinary musicians. In their early years, the group's sound was informed by the work of arrangers like Gordon Langford, Daryl Runswick and Goff Richards, many of whom had worked extensively with brass bands. Writing for voices with this specific experience helped to develop the blended "close-harmony" sound that has become a hallmark for so many King's Singers performances and recordings since. In more recent times, individual King's Singers such as Philip Lawson and Bob Chilcott have written music prolifically from within the group. This music sits alongside a panoply of commissioned works by many of the supreme composers of our times – including Sir John Tavener, György Ligeti, Toru Takemitsu, John Rutter, Luciano Berio, Nico Muhly and Eric Whitacre. The group's mission has always been to expand its repertoire not just for itself, but for ensembles and choirs of all kinds around the world, with much of their commissioned repertoire and

their arrangements in print through the publisher Hal Leonard. In fact, more than two million items from their King's Singers collection have been shared with their customers worldwide.

This ongoing commitment to spreading great music incorporates a lot of teaching, both on tour and at home. The group has always led workshops across the world as they travel, and week-long residential courses now also take an important place in the annual calendar, when the six King's Singers work with groups and individuals on the techniques of ensemble singing that have governed how they make music to this day.

The world may have changed a lot in the 50 years since the original King's Singers came together, but today's group is still charged with the same lifeblood – one that wants to radiate the joy that singing brings us every day, and that is as determined as ever to give joy to audiences with virtuosity and vision for an exciting musical future.

VOICES NEW ZEALAND CHAMBER CHOIR

Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir, with Artistic Director Dr Karen Grylls, made its debut at the 1998 New Zealand International Arts Festival and later that year won awards at the Tolosa International Choral Competition in Spain.

As a nationally selected choir of the highest calibre, Voices NZ is a chamber choir that is flexible in size, and capable of performing a wide repertoire. Many of the singers are alumni of the New Zealand National Youth Choir.

With its distinct New Zealand sound, performing music from Aotearoa New Zealand and infusing the qualities of its Pacific origins into the classic choral repertoire, Voices NZ has established

itself as the country's premier national and professional choir. It regularly performs at arts festivals around the country, collaborates with orchestras, Chamber Music New Zealand, Taonga Puoro and other artists across creative genres, and also tours internationally. Its critically acclaimed recordings include *Spirit of the Land* and *Voice of the Soul*.

Recent projects include appearances with Jack Body's *Passio*, Tippett's *A Child of our Time* and Britten's *War Requiem* [all Auckland Arts Festival], Ross Harris's *Requiem for the Fallen* [also New Zealand Festival and Dunedin Arts Festival] and a gala concert with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa for the 2016 New Zealand Festival in Wellington.

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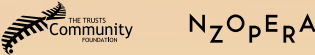
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