

“molti verranno da oriente e da occidente...”

“vor veni mulți de la răsărit și de la apus...”

“many will come from east and west...”

The Astra Choir (Australia) OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2014 MUSICAL DIRECTOR JOHN McCAUGHEY in Italia & România

CHIESA DI SAN STAE, Venezia

Wednesday, 5th November at 16:00

MUSEO DI SANTA CATERINA, Treviso

Saturday 8 November at 20:45

The **Astra Choir** travels from Australia to Italy and Romania over 3 weeks in October and November 2014. The 35 singers bring with them a special repertoire of choral music, from East and West, North and South – a large mosaic of both contemporary and earlier pieces, which will be performed across 8 different concerts in the Veneto and Friuli regions, and in the Romanian capital.

As one of Australia's engines of contemporary music, the **Astra Choir** from Melbourne is constantly exploring new musical territory. Each Astra concert is designed as a spatial and temporal journey, exploring a particular terrain between new works and those from other times and places. The Astra Choir has special relationships with composers in many countries beyond Australia. At the heart of the concert programs in Venice, Treviso, Camino al Tagliamento and Bucharest are recent works from the three regions of the globe – Australasia, Italy, Romania – now transported into each other's space and introduced into each other's cultures.

The contemporary composers from the three countries are of different generations, from students to established figures, older by a half-century or more. In Venice the Conservatorium and the composition class of Maestro **Riccardo Vaglini** is an incubator of new ideas and talents. In Bucharest the Rector of the National University of Music is also the country's leading composer, **Dan Dediu**. The Astra Choir has performed world premieres of his choral music from the 1990s, and his monumental *Stabat mater* is a central work of the tour, joined by older and younger composers from the rich choral traditions of his country.

Music from Italy, Romania and Australasia has different kinds of sound, which reflect different ways of “hearing the world”, based on local culture and historical experience. The concerts extend to earlier composers with wider perspectives of history and geography. Composers' travels take many forms. **Heinrich Schütz** came to Venice 4 centuries ago for several years of study with Giovanni Gabrieli. **Arnold Schoenberg** turned to ancient Chinese poetry for his first 12-tone choral piece. The New Zealand composer **Jack Body** is inspired by Russian *scotchny* chant for a Hebrew setting of the Psalm “By the rivers of Babylon”. The Chinese-Australian **Julian Yu** re-imagines a woodwind Bagatelle in Transylvanian style by György Ligeti, creating a choral scene with a Chinese poem.

Beyond musical composition itself lies the more open terrain of improvisation. The **Astra Improvising Choir** performs in each concert, moving throughout the space of the auditorium. They introduce ‘sonic objects’ from distant worlds - Javanese song, Australian rainforest, Romanian harmony, Balinese *kecak* chant.

TRAVEL KALEIDOSCOPES

New choral music from Italy, Romania and Australia, with older works including Schütz and Schoenberg, Gesualdo and Verdi, Leibowitz and Eisler.

The **Astra Choir** conducted by **John McCaughey**

Catrina Seiffert (soprano) Jerzy Kozłowski (bass)

Kim Bastin, Joy Lee, Peter Dumsday (piano e organo)

The **Astra Improvising Choir** directed by **Joan Pollock**



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