



Powerful world premiere at Australian Festival of Chamber Music to acknowledge traditional owners

A powerful world premiere will be performed on opening night of the 30th Australian Festival of Chamber Music (AFCM) in Townsville on 23 July this year - **Deborah Cheetham AO**, Yorta Yorta soprano, composer, educator and arts and cultural pioneer will perform her brand new work, *Nginda Ngarrini Bi Ngya*, in the language of the Wulgurukaba.

Ms Cheetham was last week presented with the 2020 JC Williamson Award[®] by Live Performance Australia for outstanding contribution to the Australian live entertainment and performing arts industry.

AFCM has commissioned Ms Cheetham to create this work in celebration of the event's 30th anniversary, to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which the Festival takes place, the Wulgurukaba people of Gurumbilbara.

Nginda Ngarrini Bi Ngya will be sung in the Wulgurukaba language and will be performed by Ms Cheetham (soprano) with **David Greco** (baritone) and the AFCM quartet-in-residence **Goldner String Quartet**.

Ms Cheetham said *Nginda Ngarrini Bi Ngya* translates to 'you have arrived'.

"Each and every day we draw strength from the country on which we live. On this continent, we celebrate the oldest and longest continuing music practice in the world. This piece written for and premiered by the Goldner Quartet, is a continuation of that practice. The Wulgurukaba translation of the text was provided by senior elder Aunty Virginia Wyles and I am deeply grateful for her guidance and wisdom," she said.

"I intend this work to be performed as an invitation for all who hear and for those who perform it. *Nginda Ngarrini Bi Ngya* speaks of our arrival as visitors to this place. It is an invitation to deepen our connection to the land by coming to know and understand the rich and beautiful culture of its first people."

This incredible performance will be part of the AFCM's opening night concert called PARADE, commencing at 8pm at the Townsville Civic Theatre on 23 July. Twenty-three musicians will perform in this evening of celebration.

The 30th AFCM will be held from 23 July to 1 August as a joyous 10-day celebration of music curated by Artistic Director, **Kathryn Stott**. Over 30 music-filled years, the AFCM has forged a stunning international reputation as one of the best chamber music celebrations in the world, and while 2021 presented its challenges, Kathryn Stott has created a program and an artistic line-up that can only be described as extraordinary.

Featuring 133 works, 112 composers, four world premieres and five Australian premieres the program stars more than 40 Australian musicians, 15 in their AFCM debut, as well as three ensembles including the Goldner String Quartet in their 25th anniversary year, and three local groups including the acclaimed Dancenorth.

ABOUT DEBORAH CHEETHAM AO

Deborah Cheetham AO, Yorta Yorta woman, soprano, composer and educator has been a leader and pioneer in the Australian arts landscape for more than 25 years. In the 2014 Queen's Birthday Honours List, Cheetham was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO), for 'distinguished service to the performing arts as an opera singer, composer and artistic director, to the development of Indigenous artists, and to innovation in performance'.

In 2009, she established Short Black Opera as a national not-for-profit opera company devoted to the development of Indigenous singers. The following year she produced the premiere of her first opera *Pecan Summer*. This landmark work was Australia's first Indigenous opera and has been a vehicle for the development of a new generation of Indigenous opera singers.

In March 2015 she was inducted into the Honour Roll of Women in Victoria and in April 2018 received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of South Australia for her pioneering work and achievements in music. In 2019 Deborah Cheetham received the Merlyn Myer Prize to create a new work for the Melbourne based ensemble Syzygy. She was named Limelight Magazine's Artist of the Year in 2019 and has been named the 2020 Composer-in-Residence for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Cheetham's list of commissions for major Australian ensembles continues to grow, including works for the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Australian String Quartet, West Australian Symphony Orchestra String Quartet, Rubiks Collective, Plexus Ensemble, Flinders Quartet and the Goldner Quartet.

FROM Nginda Ngarrini Bi Ngya...

Ngadha nya nya nginda ngarrini bi ngya

I see you have arrived

Andagu nginda ngahdi

Why have you come here today?

Mina nginda bija ngagi?

What do you hope to see?

Yalamaw Abu-ug yubu?

The beauty of the Creator's hand?

Mina nginda binangi?

What do you hope to hear?

Ya-ba-ra-nga ga-ye-ngga, ya-ba-ra-nga ngu-mbar?

The song of the land, the song of the people?

The work was funded by a grant from Arts Queensland's Queensland Arts Showcase Program Funding.

Australian Festival of Chamber Music

23 July to 1 August 2021 in Townsville, North Queensland

Festival tickets, concert passes and holiday packages on sale now

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