

To Chase the Stars

Presented by the Australian Boys Choral Institute

Five Days that Changed the World

Bob Chilcott

(England, b.1955)

Text by Charles Bennett

I. Friday 29 March 1455: The Invention of Printing

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

I saw them walking like footprints in the snow.
Saw them walking into houses all over the world.
Open the door of the eye and let them in.

I saw each letter like a person.
'Z' was lonely and 'E' was everyone's friend.
I watched them gather together into words.

I knew if I took the letters one by one,
Knew if I held them tight in forty-two lines,
They could speak to everyone everywhere.

In the beginning were footprints over the page.
The footprints of a fox who jumps
Into your eye and over the lazy dog.

II. Friday 1 August 1834: The Abolition of Slavery

Sometimes a piece of paper,
A piece of white paper,
Can set a person free.

Just a few words
Written in black ink
On white paper
Can set a nation free.

Sometimes one person,
One good person,
Can set a nation free.

Just a few words
On the open page
Of the human heart
Can set a people free.

Give me the good words.
Make me the right person.
Give me a piece of paper
To set me free.

Pure words
Written on my open heart.
Just a few words
Can set me free.

III. Monday 14 December 1903: The First Powered Flight

A thought can learn to fly if you give it wings.
I said to Orville, 'Perhaps.
Maybe if perhaps we might possibly try.'
And we did. And it was. Difficult.

Below us the ground was green and heavy with failure.
Ready to break our fall.
But a thought will fly sometimes if you give it wings.
I said to Wilbur, 'Why not?'

Most everything that could went wrong before.
But it pulled us up in the end.
We said to each other, 'Let's toss for who goes first.'
And we did. And it was. Glorious.

We carried it back to the top of Kill Devil Hill.
How many times? I forget.
But we did and it was and it is and there you have it.
Sometimes a dream will fly.

IV. Friday 28 September 1928: The Discovery of Penicillin

Green/blue, it was green/blue.
I happened upon it,
Stumbled across it.
It wasn't supposed to be there but there it was.
Sometimes you find what you're looking for
Where you never thought it would be.

Thrown away, nearly thrown away.
I clobbered the dishes, washed the pots.
I thought there was something wrong
But it turned out right.
Sometimes where you never thought it would be
There's what you've been looking for all along.

Holiday. Just back from holiday.
It was meant to be.
Serendipity.
What went wrong had gone as right as rain.
Sometimes what you're looking for will find you.
Sometimes what seems wrong was right all along.

Green/blue, it was green/blue.
I hope you find what you're looking for.
Hope what you're looking for finds you.

V. Wednesday 12 April 1961: The First Man in Space

I saw how beautiful our planet is,
Seventeen thousand miles an hour.
They thought I might go mad.
But I saw the face of God.

The son of a carpenter circling round the Earth.
I saw how beautiful our planet is.
April twelfth, nineteen sixty one.
Stars are the alphabet of God.

One hundred and eight minutes.
Can it be that you have come from outer space?
Well yes, and I've seen something beautiful.

Keep this beauty safe and let it grow.
Stars are the smile of God.
His face was the Earth looking back.

Five hundred and twenty people
Have seen how beautiful,
Beautiful it is.

Three Australian Bush Songs

Iain Grandage
(Australia, b.1970)

I. Dawn

Silence greets the glowing orb at dawn,
Lighting bush with misty innocence.
Dry, harsh, hard, dark, sparse.
This land that is lit by whisp'ring rays.

Fire and gold,
They dissolve the morning dew.
Waking the birds,
Shaking the shadows from their wings,
The day comes alive
With calls and cries
From bleary throats
Bringing life and harmony unto this land.

This dry, harsh, hard, dark land.
This land that is lit by whisp'ring rays of dawn.

II. Birds

Morning chorus,
Birds sing for us,
Welcome us in their own way
To this day.

Currawongs all sing their song
With kookaburras and cicadas.

Morning chorus,
Birds sing for us,

Welcome us in their own way
To this new day.

Through the day
They sing away,
A cooing, wooing under rays of sun.
Caressing,
Feeding, resting
In the shade of trees they hide from heat
Of day they sing away,
A-cooing, wooing under rays of sun.
Caressing, feeding, resting.

All these cries are part of our big
Bird-song chorus,
They sing for us,
Welcome us in their own way
To this day.

III. Sunset

Sunset
Sunset here
The image is furnace
Molten metal
The sky and glow
That sinks in the pool of the purple night.

Summer beckons,
The heat it threatens
To harm,
But the warmth of the day
Now sinks away
To sleepy stars.

Sunset here
The image is furnace
Molten metal
The sky and glow
That sinks in the pool of the purple night.

Easterly

Alan John

(Australia, b.1958)

Text by Frank McMahon

Windmills face the way it came from
Dust clouds stream from backs of tractors
Dried out thistles crackle in the paddocks.

Tussocks lean on empty fences
Pepper boughs sweep dirt in circles
Boxthorns whistle high on hillsides.

Wind-clouds glide through scoured out skylight.
Creek-beds whither.
Ibis hide.
Fennel bends.
Reeds blow dry.

Chaff-shed rafters shelter sparrows.
Fowls stay home.
Kelpies curl on folded wheat-bags.
Seed-pods blown
From thistles catch in cob-webs or
Collect in corners.
Harness swings on stable doors.

Generators sway and rattle.
Guy-wires strain.
Racing vanes spin light to read by.
Evening sounds creep in through curtains.
Locking chains send haunting noises round verandahs.
Smoke blows down in kitchen chimneys.

As it goes wind tops the tanks up.
Pump rods rumble.
Water flows.
Stock-troughs ripple.
Cannas grow.

Rollicum Rorum

from Earth and Air and Rain

Gerald Finzi

(England, b.1958)

Text by Thomas Hardy

When Lawyers strive to heal a breach,
And Parsons practise what they preach;
Then Boney he'll come pouncing down,
And march his men on London town!

Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lorum,
Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lay!

When Justices hold equal scales,
And Rogues are only found in jails;
Then Boney he'll come pouncing down,
And march his men on London town!

When Rich Men find their wealth a curse,
And fill therewith the Poor Man's purse;
Then Boney he'll come pouncing down,
And march his men on London town!

When Husbands with their Wives agree,
And Maids won't wed from modesty;
They Boney he'll come pouncing down
And march his men on London town!

Kia Hora Te Marino

David Hamilton
(New Zealand, b.1955)
Traditional Maori proverbs

Kia hora te marino,
Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana
Kia tere karohirohi
i mua, i to huarahi

May calm be spread around you,
May the sea glisten like greenstone,
May the shimmer of light
Dance across your path.

Ma to tatou Atua aroha
hei tiaki hei arahi
i a koutou a nga ra kei mua.

May our loving God
Care and guide you all
In the days ahead.

The Song and the Sigh

Matthew Orlovich
(Australia, b.1970)
Text by Henry Lawson

The creek went down with a broken song,
'Neath the she-oaks high;

The waters carried the song along,
And the oaks a-sigh.

The song and the sigh went winding by,
Went winding down;
Circling the foot of the mountain high,
And the hillside brown.

They were hushed in the swamp of the Dead Man's Crime,
Where the curlews cried;
But they reached the river the self-same time,
And there they died.

And the creek of life goes winding on,
Wandering by;
And bears for ever, its course upon,
A song and a sigh.

Poem About the Sun Slinking Off and Pinning Up a Notice

David Hamilton
(New Zealand, b.1955)
Text by Roger McGough

The sun hasn't got me fooled,
Not for a minute
Just when you're beginning to believe that
Grass is green
Skies are blue
Colour is king

Hey ding a-ding ding
Ding ding
Hey a-ding ding
And a host of golden et ceteras

Before you know where you are
He's slunk off somewhere
And pinned up a notice
Saying 'moon,'
Ding-a-ding.

Pokarekare Ana

Traditional

arr. Trevor Jones (Australia, b.1974)

Pokarekare ana
Nga wai o Rotorua,
Whiti atu koe hine
Marino ana e.

They are agitated,
The waters of Rotorua,
If you cross over, girl,
They will be calm.

E hine e
Hoki mai ra
Ka mate ahau
i te aroha e.

Oh girl,
Return to me,
I could die
Of love for you.

You, Me and the Wide Open Sky

Dan Walker

(Australia, b.1978)

Text by Dan Walker and Luke Byrne

Where the red dust stirs on the western wind,
And the river runs in flood,
Our towns were forged with sweat and tears,
With our father's father's blood,
At first you're hit with the emptiness,
Of the endless tracts of blue,
It's the land of hopes, dreams and memories,
It's the land of the chosen few.

Where wildflowers bloom after days of rain,
And the wedgetail eagle flies,
Where the sun sets over endless plains,
It's just you, me and the wide open sky.

Under wings of nimbus in orange dusk
We walk familiar tracks,
Of ironbark and brittle rust,
Of stone and spinifex.
As we turn our heads to the cloudless night,
With the Cross and the Milky Way,
It's the beating heart of the untamed bush,
It's the spark that becomes the flame.

Where wildflowers bloom after days of rain,
And the wedgetail eagle flies,
Where the sun sets over endless plains,
It's just you, me and the wide open sky.

The Wanderer

Dan Walker

(Australia, b.1978)

Indigenous words from Sydney dialect

Let me go where the wind will go,
Let it take me over southern shores,
I will ride on the ocean air,
I will travel across ice and foam,
Far from home.

And where no road will take you,
Where few have gone before,
It's far beyond the ice floe
Far below where my spirit calls.

Antarctic land!
Land of unearthly light,
Where pale horizon escapes eternal night.

Wumara, wumara, wara-wara.

Pemulwuy

Paul Jarman

(Australia, b.1971)

Indigenous words from Eora Language
via Eric Willmot

Woyan Cam ya. (Is the crow here?)
Yana da rising. (New moon rising)

When the night winds howl, the crow is flying.
When the moon appears, hear the raven call.
Where smoke is rising, the crow is waiting.
When the fires burn, hear the raven cry.

Where the Bidjigal roam, the crow is guarding.
When the spirits wail, hear the raven call.
Where the clans unite the crow is leading.
When Eora charge, hear the raven cry.

Pemulwuy, Pemulwuy!

Where the rum corps brawl, the crow is scathing.
When the convicts scream, hear the raven call.
Where farms are torched, the crow is blazing.
When the settlers flee, hear the raven cry.

They have come to take this land;
Something we will never understand,
Fighting for it seems so wrong,
We don't own the land, we just belong.

This is what we've known since the Dreamtime.
We have the right to believe
Eora, Dharug, Dharawal,
Don't ever give up hope.

Woyan Cam ya!
Hear the raven cry!