



MEDIA RELEASE  
For immediate release  
Wednesday September 2, 2020

# Sydney Philharmonia Choirs + TEN ALPHAS

## Digital world premiere

# TIME AND PLACE



**7.30pm, Wednesday September 9, 2020**  
**Including the world premiere of**  
**Elena Kats-Chernin's *Human Waves***

On September 9, 1920, members of the newly formed Hurlstone Park Choral Society came together for their first performance at Randwick Hospital. This auspicious event would set them on the course to become Australia's leading choral performing arts company and a key player in establishing Sydney as an internationally renowned cultural centre.

To commemorate this historic moment, the now Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, has collaborated with acclaimed multi-award-winning content creators TEN ALPHAS, to produce a special digital concert, *Time and Place - Celebrating 100 years*.

Set to live stream via Facebook at 7.30pm Wednesday September 9, 2020, the 45-minute presentation will include the world premiere of a newly commissioned work from acclaimed Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin AO, *Human Waves*.

Kats-Chernin says *Human Waves* is one of the larger and more complex works that she has created in her composing career: a major composition for choir and orchestra reflecting on the rich legacy of Australia's migrant history.

"Sydney Philharmonia's Artistic Director Brett Weymark had a vision for a large work to be centred around the tapestry of our mixed community: an exploration and celebration of Australia's diversity and how the fusion of cultures and traditions has enriched our society and taught us tolerance, thoughtfulness and gratefulness."

"He came up with the title *Human Waves* which I loved from the beginning," she comments. "It can mean so many things: a warm wave of welcome; the waves of the ocean – bringing so many migrants by boat; the waves people make when they change society."

For *Human Waves* Kats-Chernin worked collaboratively with librettist Tamara-Anna Cislowska, exploring the stories of real-life migrants from different cultural backgrounds, their first impressions of Australia and unique experiences of our community.

Having migrated from Russia herself in the 1970s, Kats-Chernin says she vividly remembers arriving in Sydney, how amazed she was at the "unfamiliar sights, tastes, manner of speaking and rituals."

The tales they discovered are incorporated into the nine unique movements that make up the composition, capturing the affection, humour and wonder embedded in our collective Australian history.

"There are many components to a score for such a big choir and orchestra and we worked for many months on each movement: creating the orchestral colours, rhythms and textures needed to capture each story, and the characters' emotions," Kats-Chernin concludes.

Originally commissioned as part of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' centenary program, *Human Waves* should have been debuted live at *A Centenary Celebration*: a major concert presentation scheduled for June 2020. When Australia's live performing arts industry was shut down by the current pandemic, planning turned to the creation of a digital experience and enduring record to honour the Choirs' 100 years of music making and enable *Human Waves* to be shared with the global community.

For Sydney Philharmonia, creating a streamable digital production of this scale was new, yet required deep production experience. Bravely facing the creative and technical limitations brought by Covid-19, TEN ALPHAS Co-Founder and Creative Director Jess Milne set to work on an adapted scenario:

First a master track of *Human Waves* was recorded in studio. Featuring a pared-down choir and, in place of full orchestra, Elena Kats-Chernin and Tamara-Anna Cislowska on piano, with Jess Ciampi on percussion.

Then, an invitation was sent. Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' singers, along with past performers, were invited to be part of the world premiere *Human Waves* digital performance. An incredible 212 signed up, including singers in the US, London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Amsterdam, Finland, Switzerland, Greece and Beijing.

Over the following months the singers took part in 78 hours of live Zoom rehearsals for a *Human Waves* recording, led by the Choirs' music staff.

Next, the home videos. In studios, living rooms and bedrooms around the world, 212 choristers filmed themselves singing. 741 selfie videos were submitted for inclusion in the final sound mix and video presentation.

Finally, the editing. Over several intense days the TEN ALPHAS editing team reviewed, synced, animated and rendered every clip, ensuring all 212 singers were included, thus setting Elena Kats-Chernin's *Human Waves* apart as a ground-breaking digital creation and testament to Sydney Philharmonia's standing in the international music community.

The final video, *Time and Place - Celebrating 100 Years*, set to premiere on Facebook Wednesday 9 September 2020, will open with the digital premiere of an extract from Deborah Cheetham AO's *Tarimi nulay – Long time living here*.

This deeply moving work, sung in local Gadigal language, was also commissioned as part of Sydney Philharmonia's Centenary year celebrations, and first performed at their *Dawn Chorus* concert on the steps of the Sydney Opera House in January this year. A choral Acknowledgment of Country, featuring words by Matthew Doyle, the piece was commissioned to open all of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' concerts in 2020.

To enrich the world premiere performance of *Human Waves*, the work is interspersed with interviews with composer Elena Kats-Chernin and librettist Tamara-Anna Cislowska, in which they share many of the stories behind the music.

With carefully curated archival imagery and elegant animation, the video is also a beautifully assembled journey through Sydney Philharmonia's 100-year history.

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Artistic & Music Director Brett Weymark says, "'I am incredibly proud that, even in the midst of a pandemic, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs has produced something of real lasting joy and worth that not only honours our 100 years of music making but also shows us adapting to change and embracing whatever it takes to share passion with an audience."

"*Human Waves* was an idea I had around trying to explore the stories of those who had arrived on our shores post 1788, bringing their stories, culture and traditions and enriching the fabric of society for everyone. These are narratives that are rarely touched on in any art form let alone choral music.

"Having commissioned Elena many years ago I knew she would create a work with the right tone, that would be instantly popular with both audiences and choristers. Bringing in Tamara, who researched and wrote the beautiful libretto was a crown to these plans. To have them both in the studio performing the work they created is something I will remember for a very long time. *Human Waves* is an overwhelmingly positive piece, in a time when we are all looking for some light on the horizon," he finishes.

"It has been a great honour for TEN ALPHAS to work with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' team on *Time and Place*, the recording of *Human Waves*, and the upcoming launch event on September 9," said co-founder Nick Bolton. "Seeing Elena, Tamara, Jess, Brett and the singers perform *Human Waves* in the flesh at Trackdown was truly inspiring. These are talented artists at the top of their game. We wish the Choirs continued success for the next 100 years and beyond, for a long and fruitful future".

TEN ALPHAS have engaged live streaming experts Corrivium to deliver the live stream through Facebook. Grab a glass and join the celebration, 7.30pm, Wednesday September 9, 2020. Register for free at [facebook.com/events/342511960118028/](https://facebook.com/events/342511960118028/).

*Time and Place* has been made possible through the generous support of Sydney Philharmonia donors from the Centenary Circle.

Established in 1920 to celebrate and share the joy of singing, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs is celebrating 100 years of music making in 2020. [sydneyphilharmonia.com.au/](http://sydneyphilharmonia.com.au/)

Connect with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs at -

[facebook.com/sydneyphilharmonia](https://facebook.com/sydneyphilharmonia)

[youtube.com/user/SydneyPhilharmonia1](https://youtube.com/user/SydneyPhilharmonia1)

For further insights to Sydney Philharmonia's history, visit [sydneyphilharmonia.com.au/history/history/](http://sydneyphilharmonia.com.au/history/history/).

Ends/

## MEDIA CONTACT

For interviews and photo opportunities contact Julie Clark, Humankind Public Relations, [julie@humankindpr.com](mailto:julie@humankindpr.com) / +61 409 517 738.

A selection of high-resolution images are available for download at [dropbox.com/sh/gv9rbjp4qdu6q12/AAC5x1fHB9Nnlddq\\_X65v51va?dl=0](https://dropbox.com/sh/gv9rbjp4qdu6q12/AAC5x1fHB9Nnlddq_X65v51va?dl=0)

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## EVENT INFORMATION

### Time and Place

A Facebook premiere event

7.30pm, Wednesday 9 September 2020

### PROGRAM

Deborah CHEETHAM AO *Tarimi nulay – Long-time living here* (Extract – Digital world premiere)

Elena KATS-CHERNIN AO *Human Waves* (World premiere)

### ARTISTS

Brett Weymark *conductor*

Elena Kats-Chernin, *pianist*

Tamara-Anna Cislowska, *pianist*

Jess Ciampi, *percussion*

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

### TICKETS

A free digital event, register now at [facebook.com/events/342511960118028/](https://facebook.com/events/342511960118028/)

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## FILM CREDITS

### *Time and Place - Celebrating 100 Years*

By Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

A TEN ALPHAS Production

Creative concept, Brett Weymark, Elena Kats-Chernin AO, Tamara-Anna Cislowska

Music preparation, Brett Weymark, Elizabeth Scott, Claire Howard Race

Music Director, Brett Weymark

### *Tarimi Nulay* (extract)

Music, Deborah Cheetham AO

Words, Matthew Doyle

### *Human Waves*

Music, Elena Kats-Chernin AO

Words, Tamara-Anna Cislowska

Percussion, Jess Ciampi

Piano, Elena Kats-Chernin AO, Tamara-Anna Cislowska

Studio Choir, Jodie Boehme, Lucy Bruton, Nicholas Davison, Blade Fuller, Vesna Hatezic, Boghos Keleshian, Sebastian Lush, Atalya Masi, Amelia Myers, Rafi Owen, Elizabeth Scott, Rajah Selvarajah, Belinda Smith, Megan Solomon, Alex Walter

Virtual Choir, Festival Chorus, Symphony Chorus, VOX, Chamber Singers, SPC Alumni

Matthew Allchurch, Shelley Andrews, Leonie Armitage, Meaghan Backhouse, Julie Bangura, Julie Bartholomew, Ines

Benavente-Molina, Eva Berger, Sabena Bhadri, Georgina Bitcon, Katie Blake, Olga Bodrova, Jodie Boehme, Joshua Borja,

Jasmin Borsovszky, Megan Boundey, Lucy Bruton, Catherine Bryant, Nicollette Burr, Jacqueline Buswell, Alison Campbell, Lucy Cantrill, Edwin Carter, Olivier Chretien, Claire Christie, Howard Clark, Jim Clarke, Kate Clowes, Julian Coghlan, Isabel Colman, Paul Couvret, Nat Crane, Philip Crenigan, Melanie David, Collette Davies, Ian Davies, Nicholas Davison, Anne Dineen, Vanessa Downing, Bill Dowsley, Julie Dowsley, Erwin D'Souza, Claire Duffy, Diana Dunlop, Judy Dunstan, Gail Edinborough, Jenny Edwards, Lyndon Edwards, Nicki Elkin, Roderick Enriquez, Karina Falland, Joanna Fan, Jessica Farrell, Rebecca Fitzpatrick, Kate Foot, David Ford, Blade Fuller, Sophie Funston, Robyn Gilbert, Sarah Gilbert, Jo Goddard, Natalie Gooneratne, Kevin Gormley, Judith Gorry, Jane Greaves, Kathryn Green, Paul Green, Tony Green, Caroline Gude, Jenny Harnett, Sue Harris, Jenny Harry, Fiona Hart, Vesna Hatezic, Tom Hazell, Madeleine Hetherton, Jane Hogan, Marijke Hol, Jude Holdsworth, Alison Horan, Marianne Hulsbosch, Emma Hunt, Jamie Hunter, Louise Imray, Diana Jefferies, Annabel Jeffery, Miriam Jeffery, Fiona Joneshart, Beverley Jordan, Ciaran Joyce, Peng Ju, Julie Kalitis, Michael Kertesz, Janina Key, Pia Kostiainen, Marita Lacota, Penny Le Couteur, Gillian Lee, Selwyn Lemos, Yvette Leonard, Philip Liberatore, Maggie Lin, Joao Lourenco, Carolyn Lowry, Sebastian Lush, Stephanie Macindoe, Madi Maclean, Peter Macqueen, Rachel Maiden, Atalya Masi, Jolanta Masojada, Chris Masson, Donna McIntosh, Alya Meyer, Agnes Michelet, Eva Millares, Bernadette Mitchell, Robert Mitchell, Kate Moloney, Georgia Moore, Madi Moore, Dimitry Moraitis, Penelope Morris, Sari Munro, Finnian Murphy, Louise Nicholas, Jane Nieminska, Michael Nolan, Bernard O'Connor, Catherine O'Grady, Kelvin Olive, Timothy O'Reilly, Lindsey Paget-Cooke, James Paoloni, Dympna Paterson, Linda Peach, Janice Peak, Anna Pender, Joanne Perry, Judith Pickering, Therese Pinson, Janie Pocklington, Peter Poole, Daniel Rae, Elsa Rapon, Kathryn Richardson, Georgia Rivers, Andrew Rodger, Penelope Rodger, Max Rodie, Lara Rogerson-Wood, Coralee Rose, Jolanda Rotteveel, Allison Rowlands, Susannah Russell, Yukiko Saeda, Debbie Scholem, Christoph Scholz, Marlyn Sciberras, Johanna Segall, Rajah Selvarajah, Maite Serra, Amelia Shaw, Meg Shaw, Belinda Smith, Megan Solomon, Rhonda Stapleton, Russell Stapleton, Martin Stebbings, Henry Stoke, Vivienne Strong, Alan Taylor, Jean Taylor, Katherine Thompson, Ben Thurley, Lina Trouch, Sheila van Holst Pellekaan, Junia Vaz de Melo, Angela Veerhuis, Jessica Veliscek Carolan, Laura Wade, Michael Walpole, Alex Walter, Joanna Warren, Ben Waters, George Watkins, Bruce Watson, Sara Watts, Jeanette Webb, Nick Whiley, Margaretha Wienekamp, Robert Williams, Sarah Williams, Prue Winkler, Claudia Winters, Emily Winton, Susan Wittenoom, Isaac Wong, Marianna Wong, Catrin Wood, Jonathan Wood, Nikki Woolley, Lachlan Wrenford, Noriko Yamanaka, Bridget Yasukawa, Tachi Yasukawa, Ben Yi, Geoff Young, Ruth Young, Priscilla Yuen, Angeline Zaghoul, Ken Zhang, Julia Zwirko

Soprano solo Tong Yun Gai, Elizabeth Scott

Language coaches, Trang Thai Nguyen, Quinn On (Vietnamese), Marianna Wong, Isaac Wong (Cantonese), Olga Bodrova (Russian)

### **Crew**

Executive Producers, Nick Bolton, Jess Milne

Producer, Nick Bolton

Director, Jess Milne

Director of Photography, Jess Milne

Camera Operator, Matty Scott Chow

Camera Operator, Drew Howell

Lighting Designer, Veronique Benett

Lighting hire, Ian Garrard, Intense Lighting

Production Assistant, Reynold Cole

Photography, Reynold Cole

Head of Post-Production, Jess Milne

Senior Editor, Adrian Powers

Editor, Angus Woodiwiss

Junior Editor, Matt Wright

Graphics, Jess Milne

Live streaming, Steve Jones, Jan Ellis at Corrivium

Archival imagery, Mark Robinson, Reynold Cole

### **Trackdown**

General Manager, Elaine Beckett

Studio Technicians, Liam Moses, Rose Mackenzie-Peterson

### **Sydney Philharmonia Choirs**

Artistic & Music Director, Brett Weymark  
Music Director, VOX, Elizabeth Scott  
Assistant Chorus Master and Principal Rehearsal Pianist, Claire Howard Race  
General Manager, Hannah Mason  
Artistic Operations Manager, Mark Robinson  
Choirs Manager, Eva Tilley  
Sales & Marketing Manager, Georgie Gonczi  
PR, Julie Clark, Humankind PR  
Philanthropy Manager, Fleur Griffiths  
Orchestra Coordinator, Susan Gandy  
Finance Manager, John Leibmann

### **With thanks to**

Centenary Circle donors for the funding of this project  
Deborah Cheetham AO  
The Eid Family  
Christine Eid  
Museums Victoria  
Dr Moya McFadzean  
Toula Marra  
Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Board of Directors

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### **ABOUT SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS**

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs is Australia's leading choral organisation, recognised around the world for its contribution to Sydney's vibrant artistic and cultural identity. They are a key partner on numerous major productions, events and initiatives, collaborating with the world's leading conductors and Australia's foremost performing arts companies. Sydney Philharmonia Choirs has been the choir of choice for Sydney Symphony Orchestra since 1936 and is a Resident Company at Sydney Opera House. Their annual concert season gives voice to the great choral masterworks, alongside selected contemporary compositions. Their commissioning program demonstrates a longstanding commitment to showcase Australian creative expertise and provides a world-class platform for the premiere of new choral music. Founded in 1920, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs is the largest choral organisation in Australia, with more than 1,500 singers across six choirs. In 2020, the organisation celebrates its Centenary with an inspirational program incorporating 13 new commissions highlighting contemporary Australian composers. <http://sydneyphilharmonia.com.au/>

### **ABOUT TEN ALPHAS**

TEN ALPHAS is a content production company based in Sydney and Wollongong, telling stories through moving image and beautiful design. Focused on stories that touch the heart and impact society, we create documentary, branded, social, TVC's, theatre and film for ourselves and for our clients. Co-founders Jess Milne and Nick Bolton also teach at the national film school AFTRS, and are proud to be NSW Government Creative Industry Business Advisors, through Creative plus Business, whilst Nick sits on the board of Screen Illawarra.

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### **ARTIST BIOS**

#### **Brett Weymark**, *Artistic/ Music Director, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs*

Brett Weymark is recognised as one of the foremost choral conductors in Australia, having conducted widely around Australia and internationally, and prepared choruses for such noted international conductors as Sir Charles Mackerras, Zubin Mehta, Edo de Waart, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Charles Dutoit and Sir Simon Rattle. As Music Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs since 2003, Brett has conducted the choirs in many and varied genres. He has recorded widely for the ABC with artists such as Cantillation, Sara Macliver and Teddy Tahu Rhodes. He has also conducted a wide range of film scores from *Happy*



*Feet to Australia*. In 2001 Brett was awarded an Australian Centenary Medal, for service to Australian society and the advancement of music.

**Elena Kats-Chernin, *Composer, pianist***

Elena Kats-Chernin is one of the most cosmopolitan composers working today, having reached millions of listeners worldwide through her prolific catalogue of works for theatre, ballet, orchestra, and chamber ensemble. Her dramatically vivid music communicates a mixture of light-heartedness and heavy melancholy, combining strong rhythmic figures with elements of cabaret, tango, ragtime, and klezmer. One of Australia's leading composers, Elena Kats-Chernin has created works in nearly every genre. Among her many commissions are pieces for Ensemble Modern, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Adelaide, Tasmanian and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, Present Music, City of London Sinfonia, Swedish Chamber Orchestra and the North Carolina Symphony. Elena Kats-Chernin was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in January 2019 "for distinguished service to the performing arts, particularly to music, as an orchestral, operatic and chamber music composer"

**Tamara-Anna Cislowska, *Librettist, pianist***

Tamara-Anna Cislowska is one of Australia's most acclaimed, ARIA award-winning pianists, performing and recording in Australia and internationally to critical and public acclaim. Earning international prizes in London, Italy and Greece such as the Rovere d'Oro, and touring Japan and the USA as cultural ambassador for Australia, Tamara's accolades include ABC Young Performer of the Year, the Freedman Fellowship, an Art Music Award for 'Performance of the Year' (ACT) and the 2015 ARIA award for 'Best Classical Album'. Frequent guest of orchestras and festivals worldwide, Tamara has performed as soloist with the London Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, and all major Australasian symphony orchestras with conductors such as Matthias Bamert, Edo de Waart, Asher Fisch, Johannes Fritzsche, Karina Kanellakis and Alondra de la Parra. Recent soloist engagements include with Sydney, Tasmanian, Queensland and Canberra Symphony Orchestras, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, and Sydney Youth Orchestra including concerti by Gorecki, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov and the world premiere of Elena Kats-Chernin's piano concerto, *Lebewohl* – with her performance of this last earning a 2019 Art Music Award nomination for 'Orchestral Work of the Year'. Recent concert and tour engagements include as live pianist in CIRCA's acclaimed *En Masse* for Brisbane Festival, and the Lincoln Center's White Light Festival (USA); recording and touring with Australian Chamber Orchestra's *Mountain* for Sydney Film Festival, and the Barbican (UK); as Music Director for composer Elena Kats-Chernin's Birthday Bash concert presented by City Recital Hall (Sydney); Dark MOFO, performing Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* in Port Arthur, and as invited panel member for the Australian Women in Music Awards 2019. 2020 opened with sold-out Sydney Festival Midday Salon concerts at Sydney Town Hall, along with solo and four hands recitals with Elena Kats-Chernin and the world premiere of 'Human Waves' for massed choir and orchestra with music by Kats-Chernin and libretto by Cislowska, for Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' Centenary Celebration. Among a handful of livestreamed concerts, Cislowska is also due to perform as soloist, Kats-Chernin's *Lebewohl* piano concerto with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Jurowski as part of the orchestra's *Vision 2020* festival. With five ARIA no.1 albums, most recently 'Into Silence' recorded with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, and 'Unsent Love Letters: meditations on Erik Satie', available on Deutsche Grammophon outside Australia, Tamara also presents 'Duet' for ABC Classic FM and edits for Boosey & Hawkes (Berlin).

**Deborah Cheetham, *Composer***

Deborah Cheetham, 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, Deborah Cheetham 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 onto 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 the music. In 2019 Deborah Cheetham received the Merlyn Myer Prize to create a new work for the Melbourne based ensemble Syzygy. Cheetham's commissions for major Australian ensembles continues to grow, including works for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Australia String Quartet, West Australian Symphony Orchestra String Quartet, Rubiks Collective, Plexus Ensemble, Flinders Quartet and the Goldner Quartet.