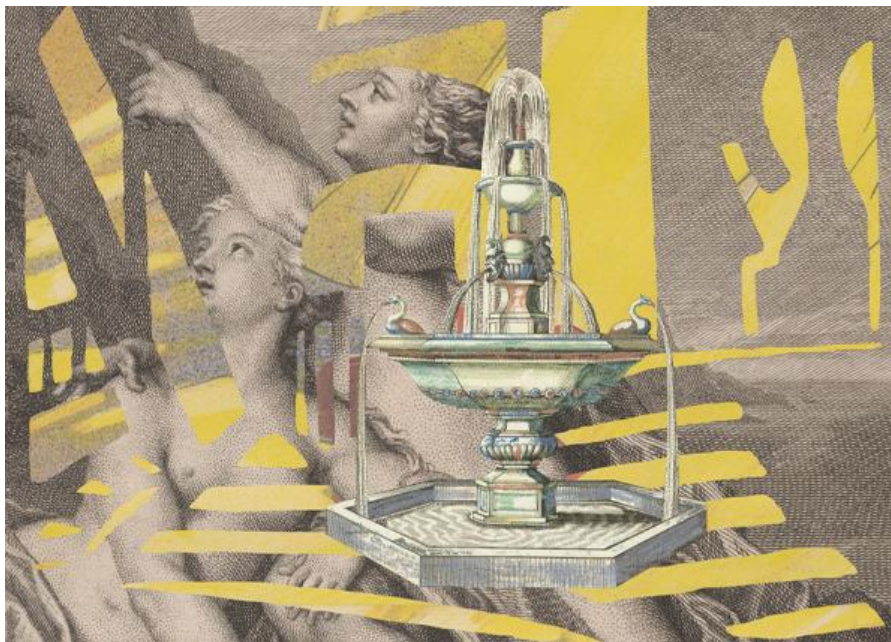


Acis & Galatea



Genesis Baroque presents

ACIS & GALATEA

George Frideric Handel

Director **Robert Macfarlane**

Artistic Director **Jennifer Kirsner**

CAST

Galatea **Karen Fitz-Gibbon**

Acis **Robert Macfarlane**

Polyphemus **Nicholas Dinopoulos**

THE CONSORT OF MELBOURNE

Director	Steven Hodgson
Soprano	Katherine Norman Amelia Jones (*Coridon)
Alto	Renée Heron Elizabeth Chong
Tenor	Leighton Triplow (*Damon) Ben Owen
Bass	Lucien Fischer Steven Hodgson

** In the original 1718 version of Handel's opera, the role of the shepherd Damon was split into two roles, Damon and Coridon; an aspect that we have adopted for tonight's performance for practical purposes.*

GENESIS BAROQUE

Concertmaster	Stephen Freeman
Harpsichord	Donald Nicolson
Violin	Meg Cohen Cameron Jamieson Jennifer Kirsner
Violin/Viola	Katie Yap
Cello	Edwina Cordingley
Bassoon	Simon Rickard
Violone	Miranda Hill
Theorbo/Guitar	Samantha Cohen
Recorder	Ruth Wilkinson Hannah Pullar
Oboe	Jessica Foot Andrew Angus

Lighting and Stage Production **Millie Levakis-Lucas**

Operations Manager **Freya Miller**

Digital Collage/Graphic Design **Gracia and Louise**

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I've known and loved *Acis and Galatea* for a long time. My first exposure to it as a student singer was hearing the *Acis* arias sung on a recital disc from the 50's by one of my favourite tenors, Leopold Simoneau, and I've been lucky enough to sing *Acis* several times throughout my life. It is, however, a bit of a curate's egg in terms of its possibility for staging. Not quite an opera (it's been variously termed a serenata, a masque or a pastorale), *Acis and Galatea's* central scene involving the 'monster' Polyphemus and our two protagonists nevertheless calls out for a dramatic staging, certainly more than an oratorio-style performance with musical scores in hand. Yet the work's proportions make it unsuited to most traditional opera companies. So, what to do?

When Jennifer first approached me about a 'semi-staged' *Acis and Galatea*, I immediately started envisaging plausible scenarios for a hybrid performance, where the chorus would have access to their scores and yet still remain part of the drama, while the principal singers would sing from memory. I went back to Book 13 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from which the story of *Acis*, *Galatea* and *Polyphemus* is based, and was struck by the obvious verbal traditions implicit in that epic text – these were clearly words to be recited or sung and passed down in this way. I was also struck by what these words might have taught their intended audiences, what morals they were intended to enforce, and what memories they were meant to inspire.

This reading of the source material is what led me to set *Acis and Galatea* principally in a school. Instead of woodnymphs, *Acis* and *Galatea* are students skipping class to meet for a rendezvous that has both romantic and environmental implications. *Polyphemus* is the quintessential outcast kid, who uses violence as his sole means of getting a reaction from his fellow students. The chorus, school students and their teacher, are both interacting in the drama as it happens, and studying it as a 'subject' much as a class might study and discuss Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or, indeed Handel's *Acis and Galatea*.

And just as one can remember something, so can we misremember. The memories from our youth are particularly hazy and subject to the coping mechanisms of a developing mind. What If there is no monster, and simply the result of a trauma so great the invention of a fantastical creature was necessary as a coping mechanism?

Robert Macfarlane

Director

ABOUT THE OPERA

Acis and Galatea, often touted as the greatest pastoral opera ever written, has variously been described as a masque, a serenata, a pastoral opera, and an oratorio, reflecting its chequered history and revisions by Handel over more than 30 years and its unconventional forms.

Handel initially composed the work in 1718 for James Brydges, Earl of Carnarvon, who built the stately home 'Cannons' in Middlesex, where he employed musicians for his chapel and entertainment. Based on John Dryden's (1717) translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the work tells the story of the love between the mortal Acis and sea nymph Galatea, and the monstrous cyclops Polyphemus, who kills Acis with a rock in jealous rage, after which Galatea transforms Acis' blood into the sparkling waters of a river so they may remain together for eternity. The myth was popular at the time, and Handel had already written an Italian cantata based upon it, *Acis, Galatea e Polifemo*, ten years prior. With a libretto by the poet John Gay (possibly with minor input from Gay's contemporaries), Handel's Cannons version was scored for only five voices – soprano, three tenors, and a bass – with solo lines for each instrumentalist.

In 1732, composer Thomas Arne (of *Rule, Britannia!* fame) presented an unauthorised performance of the work in London. Infuriated, Handel set to work to rewrite the opera as an amalgam of his Cannons version, his earlier cantata, *Acis, Galatea e Polifemo*, and various of his other Italian cantatas. The result, a serenata melding Italian and English-text arias sung by a line-up of Italian superstar singers, was a public triumph that overshadowed the unauthorised Arne production, as intended; however, this odd fusion composed for public success rather than artistic merit, and Handel revisited the work yet again in 1739. This is the version presented tonight, a pastoral opera in two acts. Sung entirely in English, it is almost identical to his Cannon's version, but includes a separate chorus of shepherds and nymphs in addition to the three soloists, and an additional chorus, 'Happy We', ending the first Act. This 1739 version was hugely popular and has been performed regularly to the current day. While many purists place the 1718 version as the pinnacle of Handel's incarnations of the work, the addition of the chorus in 1739 allows for

rich and poignant reflection on the plot in the style of a Greek chorus, harking back to its mythological origins.

The opera opens with the joyous, bucolic *Sinfonia*, setting the scene for the shepherds and nymphs enjoying pastoral delights in 'The Pleasures of the Plains'. The first Act of the work focuses on the idyllic love between the water nymph, Galatea, and the shepherd, Acis. Galatea sings to the birds to 'hush', to cease their song, as it excites her yearning and passion for Acis in his absence. Acis then sings of his impetuous search for Galatea; in response, the shepherd Coridon counsels Acis to quell his fervour and return to his flock. Ignoring Coridon's words, Acis and Galatea continue their search for one another, tortured by each other's absence. They finally reunite at the end of the first Act, rejoicing with 'Happy We', which is echoed by the chorus.

But all does not stay joyous. The second Act opens with the prescient chorus forewarning of the lovers' doom and the imminent arrival of Polyphemus, the monstrous cyclops ('Wretched Lovers'). Polyphemus then explodes onto the scene in an enraged, lustful whirlwind, pursuing Galatea, who rebuffs his lascivious advances, causing Polyphemus to taunt her rejections ('Cease to Beauty to be Suing'). Acis, fired up by Polyphemus' 'hideous love', courageously defends his own love of Galatea and their protection by the 'god of love', once again dismissing wise words of warning and care (this time from the shepherd, Damon).

Acis and Galatea continue to declare their love for one another ('The Flocks Shall Leave the Mountain') but are interrupted by the furiously jealous Polyphemus, who kills Acis in his rage, with one final dying plea from Acis as he bleeds.

The chorus mourns, while reminding Galatea of her divine powers with which she can heal her grief. Galatea then uses her powers to transform Acis into the waters of an eternal fountain (rather than the river described in *Metamorphoses*). Finally, the chorus sings a tender and gentle minuet to Galatea, reflecting on Acis and Galatea's love murmuring for eternity through the flowing fountain.

LIBRETTO

PART I

1 – Sinfonia

2 – Chorus

CHORUS

Oh, the pleasure of the plains!
Happy nymphs and happy swains,
Harmless, merry, free and gay,
Dance and sport the hours away.
For us the zephyr blows,
For us distills the dew,
For us unfolds the rose,
And flow'rs display their hue.
For us the winters rain,
For us the summers shine,
Spring swells for us the grain,
And autumn bleeds the wine.
Oh, the pleasure ... (*da capo*)

3 – Accompagnato

GALATEA

Ye verdant plains and woody mountains,
Purling streams and bubbling fountains,
Ye painted glories of the field,
Vain are the pleasures which ye yield;
Too thin the shadow of the grove,
Too faint the gales, to cool my love.

4 – Air

GALATEA

Hush, ye pretty warbling quire!
Your thrilling strains
Awake my pains,
And kindle fierce desire.
Cease your song, and take your flight,
Bring back my Acis to my sight!
Hush ... (*da capo*)

5 – Air

ACIS

Where shall I seek the charming fair?
Direct the way, kind genius of the mountains!
O tell me, if you saw my dear!
Seeks she the grove, or bathes in crystal fountains?
Where ... (*da capo*)

6 – Recitative

CORIDON

Stay, shepherd, stay!
See, how thy flocks in yonder valley stray!
What means this melancholy air?
No more thy tuneful pipe we hear.

7 – Air

CORIDON

Shepherd, what art thou pursuing?
Heedless running to thy ruin;
Share our joy, our pleasure share,
Leave thy passion till tomorrow,
Let the day be free from sorrow,
Free from love, and free from care!
Shepherd ... (*da capo*)

8 – Recitative

ACIS

Lo, here my love, turn, Galatea, hither turn thy eyes!
See, at thy feet the longing Acis lies.

9 – Air

ACIS

Love in her eyes sits playing,
And sheds delicious death;
Love on her lips is straying,
And warbling in her breath!
Love on her breast sits panting
And swells with soft desire;
No grace, no charm is wanting,

To set the heart on fire.
Love in her eyes ... (*da capo*)

10 - Recitative

GALATEA

Oh, didst thou know the pains of absent love,
Acis would ne'er from Galatea rove.

11 - Air

GALATEA

As when the dove
Laments her love,
All on the naked spray;
When he returns,
No more she mourns,
But loves the live-long day.
Billing, cooing,
Panting, wooing,
Melting murmurs fill the grove,
Melting murmurs, lasting love.
As when ... (*da capo*)

12 - Duet

GALATEA, ACIS

Happy we!

What joys I feel!

What charms I see!

Of all youths/nymphs thou dearest boy/brightest fair!

Thou all my bliss, thou all my joy!

Happy ... (*da capo*)

13 – Chorus

Happy we!

What joys I feel!

What charms I see!

Happy we!

PART II

14 - Chorus

CHORUS

Wretched lovers! Fate has past
This sad decree: no joy shall last.
Wretched lovers, quit your dream!
Behold the monster Polypheme!
See what ample strides he takes!
The mountain nods, the forest shakes;
The waves run frighten'd to the shores:
Hark, how the thund'ring giant roars!

15 - Accompagnato

POLYPHEMUS

I rage — I melt — I burn!
The feeble god has stabb'd me to the heart.
Thou trusty pine,
Prop of my godlike steps, I lay thee by!
Bring me a hundred reeds of decent growth
To make a pipe for my capacious mouth;
In soft enchanting accents let me breathe
Sweet Galatea's beauty, and my love.

16 - Air

POLYPHEMUS

O ruddier than the cherry,
O sweeter than the berry,
O nymph more bright
Than moonshine night,
Like kidlings blithe and merry.
Ripe as the melting cluster,
No lily has such lustre;
Yet hard to tame
As raging flame,
And fierce as storms that bluster!
O ruddier ... (*da capo*)

17 - Recitative

POLYPHEMUS

Whither, fairest, art thou running,
Still my warm embraces shunning?

GALATEA

The lion calls not to his prey,
Nor bids the wolf the lambkin stay.

POLYPHEMUS

Thee, Polyphemus, great as Jove,
Calls to empire and to love,
To his palace in the rock,
To his dairy, to his flock,
To the grape of purple hue,
To the plum of glossy blue,
Wildings, which expecting stand,
Proud to be gather'd by thy hand.

GALATEA

Of infant limbs to make my food,
And swill full draughts of human blood!
Go, monster, bid some other guest!
I loathe the host, I loathe the feast.

18 - Air

POLYPHEMUS

Cease to beauty to be suing,
Ever whining love disdainning.
Let the brave their aims pursuing,
Still be conqu'ring not complaining.
Cease ... (*da capo*)

19 - Recitative

ACIS

His hideous love provokes my rage.
Weak as I am, I must engage!
Inspir'd with thy victorious charms,
The god of love will lend his arms.

20 - Air

ACIS

Love sounds th'alarm,
And fear is a-flying!
When beauty's the prize,
What mortal fears dying?
In defence of my treasure,
I'd bleed at each vein;
Without her no pleasure,
For life is a pain.
Love sounds ... (*da capo*)

21 - Air

DAMON

Consider, fond shepherd,
How fleeting's the pleasure,
That flatters our hopes
In pursuit of the fair!
The joys that attend it,
By moments we measure,
But life is too little
To measure our care.
Consider ... (*da capo*)

22 - Recitative

GALATEA

Cease, oh cease, thou gentle youth,
Trust my constancy and truth,
Trust my truth and pow'rs above,
The pow'rs propitious still to love!

23 - Trio

GALATEA, ACIS

The flocks shall leave the mountains,
The woods the turtle dove,
The nymphs forsake the fountains,
Ere I forsake my love!

POLYPHEMUS

Torture! fury! rage! despair!

I cannot, cannot bear!

GALATEA, ACIS

Not show'rs to larks so pleasing,

Nor sunshine to the bee,

Not sleep to toil so easing,

As these dear smiles to me.

POLYPHEMUS

Fly swift, thou massy ruin, fly!

Die, presumptuous Acis, die!

24 - Accompagnato

ACIS

Help, Galatea! Help, ye parent gods!

And take me dying to your deep abodes.

25 - Chorus

CHORUS

Mourn, all ye muses! Weep, all ye swains!

Tune, tune your reeds to doleful strains!

Groans, cries and howlings fill the neighb'ring shore:

Ah, the gentle Acis is no more!

26 - Solo & Chorus

GALATEA

Must I my Acis still bemoan,

Inglorious crush'd beneath that stone?

CHORUS

Cease, Galatea, cease to grieve!

Bewail not whom thou canst relieve.

GALATEA

Must the lovely charming youth

Die for his constancy and truth?

CHORUS

Cease, Galatea, cease to grieve!

Bewail not whom thou canst relieve;

Call forth thy pow'r, employ thy art,

The goddess soon can heal thy smart.

GALATEA

Say what comfort can you find?

For dark despair o'erclouds my mind.

CHORUS

To kindred gods the youth return,^{[L] [SEP]}
Through verdant plains to roll his urn.

27 - Recitative

GALATEA

'Tis done! Thus I exert my pow'r divine;
Be thou immortal, though thou art not mine!

28 - Air

GALATEA

Heart, the seat of soft delight,
Be thou now a fountain bright!
Purple be no more thy blood,
Glide thou like a crystal flood.
Rock, thy hollow womb disclose!
The bubbling fountain, lo! it flows;
Through the plains he joys to rove,
Murm'ring still his gentle love.

29 - Chorus

CHORUS

Galatea, dry thy tears,
Acis now a god appears!
See how he rears him from his bed,
See the wreath that binds his head.
Hail! thou gentle murm'ring stream,
Shepherds' pleasure, muses' theme!
Through the plains still joy to rove,
Murm'ring still thy gentle love.

CAST AND CREATIVES

Robert Macfarlane is a multi award-winning Tenor, Stage Director and Singer/Songwriter. Recent solo appearances include the Adelaide Festival, Sydney and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, State Opera of SA and Melbourne Opera in works encompassing Monteverdi, Handel, Wagner, Britten, and significant 21st century composers Lembit Beecher and John Haddock. His directorial debut was made with the revolutionary



Lieder/Circus synthesis 'More Guilty than the Poet' in 2018 for the Adelaide Festival Centre and he stage directed both Dances of Passion and Arms of Love for the Song Company in 2021. 2022 includes returns to some of his most beloved repertoire: Haydn's Creation in Adelaide, the Evangelist (Bach's St. John Passion) in Geelong, and Schubert's Winterreise with pianist Nicholas Young, as well as directing his dramatisation of Buxtehude's Membra Jesu Nostri 'Arms of Love' for The Song Company and Karul Projects. He also undertakes his biggest Operatic Role to date, Mime in Wagner's Siegfried, for Melbourne Opera. His original album 'Catastrophically Ourselves', including the riotous surprise hit single 'My Opera Career's Over', was released in March this year and has already been lauded by the International Songwriting Competition, Limelight Magazine and released internationally by Aldora Britain Records, hitting #1 on their independent UK charts. A second album and tour are planned for 2022. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Robert has worked in the Emergency Departments of Sunshine and Footscray Public Hospitals, and has become a passionate advocate for the multi-cultural communities of Melbourne's western suburbs. He expects to complete his Masters in Public Health (Global Health Leadership) in 2023 at Victoria University.

Photo credit Craig Latham

Karen Fitz-Gibbon graduated with First Class Honours from the ANU School of Music and then from the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria where she studied with Ms Barbara Bonney.



In concert, Karen has appeared as a soloist with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Canberra Choral Society, Oriana Chorale, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Darwin Symphony Orchestra and UC Chorale, for which she won a Canberra Critics Circle Award.

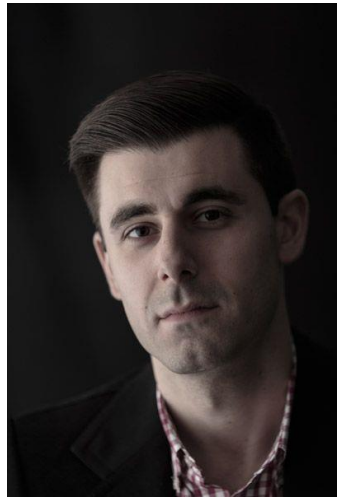
On the stage, Karen has sung the roles of Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Abigail (*Grimm and the Blue Crown Owl*), Coridon (*Acis & Galatea*) and Kelly in the Australian premiere of *Black Water* at the Adelaide Fringe Festival before touring it in Australia, Malaysia and Singapore. Karen completed a national tour with Co-Opera as Susanna in their production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, subsequently touring to Germany, Austria and Switzerland. She has performed the role of Aurora (*La Morte D'Orfeo*) with The Harp Consort in St Petersburg, Russia, and Belinda (*Dido & Aeneas*) for Mopoke Theatre Productions. Recently Karen performed Tatyana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* in South Australia, NSW and Victoria, and has given recitals for Peninsula Summer Music Festival, Picton Classics, Resonance Concert Series and the Lyrebird Society in Melbourne. In 2019 she sang an entire program in Icelandic for Elephant In The Room Productions' acclaimed 'Midnight Sun' series.

Karen has given several art song recitals for ArtSong Canberra and the National Library of Australia. She has recorded two solo recitals for ABC Classic FM, and was a featured artist on their 'Saturday Afternoon Concert' program. She regularly appears with baroque instrumental duo Ensemble 642. In 2014 she was a finalist in the Mietta Song Competition.

Photo credit Jimmy Walsh Photography

Nicholas Dinopoulos studied singing at the University of Melbourne under Merlyn Quaife AM and furthered his training as a studio artist of Gertrude Opera. He maintains a busy performance schedule consisting of various concert, recital and operatic engagements, most notably as a core member of Songmakers Australia.

He has appeared as a guest soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, Bach Musica NZ, Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, Australian Haydn Ensemble, Ludovico's Band, Latitude 37, Victorian Opera (Melbourne) and Pinchgut Opera (Sydney).



He is frequently heard in national live-to-air broadcasts on ABC Classic & 3MBS FM, and his performances have been recorded by both the Chandos and Pinchgut Live labels. He has also given the world premiere performances of several significant new works from among the rising generation of Australian composers.

As a conductor and educator, he has prepared both choral-symphonic and chamber choral works as a guest chorus-master for leading Australian organisations and currently holds positions at The University of Melbourne (Music Director, Melbourne Conservatorium Chamber Choir) and the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music (Sessional Voice Teacher). He has also been Music Director of the Monash University Singers, and resident vocal consultant to the National Youth Choir of Australia for four consecutive seasons from 2015-2018.

A specialist in the field of changing voice and young men's singing, he has also served on the staff of the Australian Boys Choral Institute since 2007. He is only the fifth Artistic Director appointed in the Choir's 82-year history. [www.nickdinopoulos.com]

Photo credit James Lauritz

The Consort of Melbourne is an elite vocal ensemble that champions both historic and contemporary repertoire, comprising a core membership of eight of Melbourne's finest chamber singers under the artistic direction of Steven Hodgson.

Typically performing *a capella* (unaccompanied) with one singer per part, The Consort of Melbourne brings 1000 years

of vocal music to life with an intimacy and verve that leaves audiences spellbound. Their concert programmes include celebrated masterpieces heard alongside rarely-heard musical gems, exploring the full expressive potential of the human voice.

The Consort is an extremely versatile ensemble and, although they usually appear as an octet, they have performed at smaller venues and functions as a vocal quartet and at larger venues as a choir of up to 30 singers. The Consort has presented a regular concert series at Melbourne Recital Centre for many years, and has also been invited to collaborate with groups such as the Rolling Stones, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Australian Youth Orchestra, Melbourne Youth Orchestra, the Song Company, La Compañía and Spiritualized.

Since its establishment in 2008, The Consort of Melbourne has continued to engage the concert-going public with fresh and exciting performances in a wide range of genres. It has featured on ABC Classic FM on many occasions, including a broadcast of works by Percy Grainger and also Claudio Monteverdi's famous Vespers of 1610.

Photo credit Ian Laidlaw



Genesis Baroque is a Melbourne-based period chamber orchestra founded by Artistic Director and violinist, Jennifer Kirsner, and directed by baroque violinist Lucinda Moon. The ensemble comprises some of Australia's



finest historically-informed performers, and aims to explore the spontaneity, imagination, and richness of music from the 17th and 18th centuries through its intimate concerts in Melbourne and regional performances across Victoria.

Genesis Baroque collaborates with performers and other artists based locally, interstate and overseas, and has a particular focus on providing a platform for local and expatriate Australian musicians. The ensemble released its critically-acclaimed first studio album of Arcangelo Corelli's Concerti Grossi Opus 6 via ABC Classic in August 2020, debuting as the highest selling Australian album on the ARIA classical album charts.

Photo credit The Shot Photography

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Julian Burnside AO, QC

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