

YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM / TEXT ONLY VERSION

# Compassion and Ngapa William Cooper

**Conducted by Nigel Westlake**

**Performed by Lior, Dr Lou Bennett AM and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra**

**Dates:** 9 Mar 2024

**Venue:** Festival Theatre

**Duration:** 1hr 45mins, incl. interval

*Ngapa William Cooper was commissioned by UKARIA with support from Ulrike Klein AO and the Adelaide Festival as part of Finding Our Voice, which was supported by Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund, an Australian Government initiative. Symphonic realisation commissioned by the Australian Youth Orchestra.*

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## THIS DIGITAL PROGRAM INCLUDES

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# Credits

## Conducted by

Nigel Westlake

## Performed by

Lior

Dr Lou Bennett AM

## Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

### Violins

Cameron Hill\*\* (Acting

Concertmaster)

Holly Piccoli\* (Acting Associate

Concertmaster)

Gillian Braithwaite\* (Acting

Principal 1st Violin)

Alison Heike\*\* (Principal 2nd Violin)

Lachlan Bramble ~ (Associate

Principal 2nd Violin)

Janet Anderson

Ann Axelby

Erna Berberyan

Minas Berberyan

Gillian Braithwaite

Julia Brittain

Hilary Bruer

Elizabeth Collins

Jane Collins

Danielle Jaquillard

Zsuzsa Leon

Alexis Milton

Michael Milton

Ambra Nesa

Julie Newman

Liam Osborne

Emma Perkins

Alexander Permezel

Alison Rayner

Niki Vasilakis

### Violas

Justin Julian\*\*

David Wicks~ (Guest Associate)

Martin Alexander

Lesley Cockram

Linda Garrett

Anna Hansen

Natalie Maegraith

Rosi McGowran

Michael Robertson

### Cellos

Rachel Johnston\*\* (Guest  
Principal)

Gemma Phillips~ (Acting Associate)

Joseph Freer

Sherrilyn Handley

Hamish Jamieson

Shuhei Lawson

David Sharp

Cameron Waters

### Double Basses

David Schilling\*\*

Belinda Kendall-Smith~ (Acting  
Associate)

Jacky Chang

Harley Gray

Aurora Henrich

Gustavo Quintino

### Flute + Alto Flute

Kate Proctor\*\* (Guest Principal)

### Piccolo + Alto Flute

Julia Grenfell\*

### Oboe

Joshua Oates\*\*

### Cor Anglais

Peter Duggan\*

### Clarinet + E Flat Clarinet

Darren Skelton\*\* (Acting Principal)

### Bass Clarinet + Contra Bass

Clarinet

Mitchell Berick\*

### Bassoons

Mark Gaydon\*\*

Leah Stephenson

### Contra Bassoon

Leah Stephenson\*

### Horns

Adrian Uren\*\*

Sarah Barrett~

Emma Gregan

Philip Paine\*

Timothy Skelly

### Trumpets

#### David Khafagi\*\*

Martin Phillipson~

Gregory Frick

### Trombones

Colin Prichard\*\*

Ian Denbigh

### Bass Trombone

Amanda Tillett\*

### Tuba

Stanley McDonald\*

### Timpani

Andrew Penrose\*

### Percussion

Steven Peterka\*\*

Sami Butler~

Jamie Adam

Amanda Grigg

Max Ziliotto

### Harp

Carolyn Burgess\* (Guest Principal)

### Piano/Celeste

Katrina Reynolds\* (Guest Principal)

\*\* denotes Section Principal

~ denotes Associate Principal

\* denotes Principal Player

# Compassion

by Lior and Nigel Westlake

Lior, vocal solo

Nigel Westlake, conductor

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

## Program

Sim Shalom – *Grant Peace*

Eize Hu Chacham? – *Who is Wise?*

La Yu'minu – *Until You Love Your Brother*

Inna Rifqa – *The Beauty Within*

Al Takshu L'vavchem – *Don't Harden Your Hearts*

Ma Wadani Ahadun – *Until the End of Time*

Avinu Malkeinu – *Hymn of Compassion*

*Compassion* draws from the rich worlds of Islam and Judaism to present a collection of profound and poetic messages surrounding the idea of compassion between human beings.

The texts are largely a collection of poems, proverbs and songs that give us an insight into such wisdom. Their similarities are immense and their universality is undeniable.

Far from the misguided commentaries that have so often steered humanity away from the true enactment of compassion, these texts affirm that attaining a greater sense of compassion is an ultimate goal, and letting it guide our actions is the ultimate wisdom.

Texts and notes for the songs in this work are included in the digital show program. Access the digital show program via the QR code on the cover or at [adelaidefestival.com.au/cnwc](http://adelaidefestival.com.au/cnwc)

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## The Genesis of *Compassion*

by Nigel Westlake

The catalyst for *Compassion* can be traced to a single watershed moment – the occurrence of my first Lior concert. It was the winter of 2009 in the tiny rural village of St Albans, NSW, the occasion being the inaugural fund raising event for the "Smugglers of Light", a foundation formed by our family in memory of my son Eli.

At dusk, as the winter mist settled upon the forgotten valley (as it is sometimes known), quietly nestled between the towering ridges of Hawkesbury river sandstone, Lior began to weave his magic upon the crowd, many of whom had travelled long distances to join us for the weekend music festival.

It was a poignant occasion that had been planned to coincide with the 12 month anniversary of Eli's death. The music held a very special meaning for our friends and family, many of whom were still grappling with the tragic loss that had befallen us the previous year.

Lior's music had been introduced to me several years earlier by my son Joel, and had quickly become absorbed into the family playlist, underscoring many happy times and celebratory moments. As it happened, *Autumn Flow*, the album that rocketed Lior to prominence in 2005, was among the last music I shared with my son Eli the week before his death, thereby forever imbuing these sweet songs with a very unique and deeply personal significance for me.

A fortuitous family connection with a dear friend had facilitated a personal introduction and Lior had graciously accepted our request to perform for the foundation.

It was one of those special nights that people talk about for years afterwards and also featured some wonderful performances from the Grigoryan Brothers and the Goldner String Quartet.

Lior concluded the proceedings with one of his best known songs, "This Old Love". As he was brought back on stage for the encore, little did I realise that his final offering for the night would hold the germ of an idea that would become the catalyst for a life-changing and enriching journey.

Coaxing us gently into another world, as if possessed by unseen forces, and without accompaniment, Lior began to embrace the plaintive and heartfelt strains of the ancient Hebrew hymn of compassion "Avinu Malkeinu".

In stark contrast to what had preceded, here was another side to Lior's artistry, his keening and emotionally charged voice allowing us an intimate glimpse into the rich vein of middle eastern heritage that is his birthright.

The power and spirituality of the song struck a deep resonance amongst the crowd, all of whom were captivated in spellbound rapture.

For my own part, I had just experienced a small taste of a tantalising and exotic soundworld and I was overcome by a strange yearning to be a part of it.

Following the concert, I suggested to Lior that I take a solo vocal recording of his performance and create a symphonic arrangement around it. Neither of us were sure where this might lead, but I had a hunch it was at least worth a shot.

Weaving my orchestration around Lior's voice was a little like writing a movie score, the vocal part an intractable dramatic narrative, the orchestral accompaniment a fluid underscore replete with abundant possibilities.

We could both sense potential in the finished idea and it seemed a natural progression to expand the material into a song cycle for voice and orchestra.

In passing, I casually mentioned our plan to Peter Czornyj (director of artistic planning, Sydney Symphony Orchestra) and he suggested the orchestra would be interested in bringing the idea to fruition through a commission. We set to work.

Just as our first attempt "Avinu Malkeinu" had begun life as a solo vocal, we now followed a similar pattern for the rest of the composition process. Using the concept of compassion as a common theme, Lior proposed the texts be sourced from a combination of Hebrew and Arabic writings.

In the context of a troubled and divisive history, the drawing together of these common threads of Judaism and Islam struck me as a bold and courageous strategy, and a perfect fit for Lior's middle eastern ancestry and family history.

Through painstaking research, he managed to unearth a wonderful collection of ancient proverbs, writings and poetry. For each text he devised a vocal part which he sent me as a solo recording, sometimes embodying the germ of a melodic fragment and at other times as a complete series of mellifluous phrases.

Many of the songs sounded for all the world like ancient chants exhumed from a long lost tomb somewhere on the shores of the Red Sea, yet the melodies were very much alive and fresh, full of richness, vibrancy and spontaneity.

It was inspiring to hear Lior working outside his comfort zone, experimenting with new vocal timbres and using his extraordinary three-octave vocal range to great effect.

Every few weeks, we would get together to review progress and examine the overall form of each piece.

Given our dissimilar experiences in music, I couldn't believe how we seemed to be on the same wave

length, striving toward a common goal, critical of the same issues and agreeing on the ideas that seemed to work.

Some of the songs evolved over a period of months, others over days, but what has emerged is a true collaboration, and music that neither of us could ever have written on our own.

*Compassion* inhabits a vast array of emotions and colours, at times pulsating and riotous, at others reflective and textural, and draws upon the myriad of influences the two

of us have been able to bring to the table from our incredibly diverse backgrounds.

With the utmost respect, we have tried to imbue these ancient texts with a contemporary interpretation, adhering to the purity of a single voice and orchestra. Although the songs are all sung in their original language, there are no conscious references to traditional Hebrew or Arabic musical forms, melodies or scales (with the exception for "Avinu Malkeinu", which is based on a traditional melody).

The support of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in bringing this project to the stage has been absolutely extraordinary.

Lior and I are profoundly grateful to Peter Czornyj and the orchestral management for their enthusiasm and encouragement.

Seeing this piece come together over has been a major highlight in my career. It is my hope that this music might offer its listeners the space and opportunity to reflect upon the qualities of that most noble of human sentiments, the good stuff that enriches our lives with meaning, insight, depth and intrinsic worth: the virtue of compassion.

# Two Worlds in Common

by Lior Attar

The research that eventually led me to the texts threaded through *Compassion* took me far and wide, from conversations with religious leaders and linguists, to regular consultations with my good friend Waleed Aly, who took me through the finer details of Arabic pronunciation and the subtleties of the Arabic texts.

Being a fluent Hebrew speaker, I initially thought that singing some of the texts in Arabic would feel foreign and disingenuous. Yet to my surprise, many of the words I encountered were common to both languages. It became clear in learning these texts that these two languages shared a deep and common source. Just as experience often validates the existence of a well-worn cliché, it is difficult to escape the analogy of two brothers starting from a common source and branching out to gather their own rich experience and identity to become what we now know as modern Hebrew and Arabic.

In time, I would also come to learn not only of the similarities in language, but in the very essence of the messages embodied throughout these proverbs and poems. What began with a feeling of trepidation as to whether Nigel Westlake and I could sincerely encapsulate the artistic concept and vision we shared for this undertaking, has ended with a full embrace and a somewhat unexpected sense of renewed optimism.

It may seem strange in the context of this work, yet neither Nigel nor I consider ourselves religious people. We do, however, share a firm belief that much of the beauty and wisdom found within so many works of art and philosophy attributed to a certain religion need not lie exclusive to those who subscribe to its faith, nor only to those who seek a connection with God through directional prayer. They have so much to offer to those who might accept them without bias or judgement.

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## Compassion Texts

### Sim Shalom – *Grant Peace*

**Sim Shalom**

**Chen vachessed v'rachamim**

**Aleinu ve'al kol am**

**V'imru Amen**

**Sim Shalom**

**Aleinu ve'al kol am**

**Tova u'vracha**

**Ahavat chesed u'tzdaka u'vracha verachamim**

**Vecha'im veshalom**

**Barchenu Avinu**

**Kulanu k'echad**

More than any of the texts used in *Compassion*, "Sim Shalom" demonstrates that a literal translation is often inadequate in conveying the depth and richness of these texts. An example can be found in one of the stanzas relating to the vital virtues of character – "chesed, tzedakah, u'vracha', v'rachamim", - "charity, integrity and compassion".

The word 'rachamim' can be quite simply translated as 'compassion'. When uncovered however, this word has far richer and deeper meaning, being a derivation of the Hebrew word for 'womb'. More importantly, a closely related word of the same origin - 'Rachaman', which can be translated as 'the Compassionate One'

– is one of the three names for God in the Jewish religion.

Interestingly, the origin, meaning and use of 'Rachaman' is almost identical between the two worlds of Judaism and Islam. Such is the centrality and esteem these two religions place on the virtue of compassion, that it is in fact one of the names given to God.

### Eize Hu Chacham? – *Who is Wise?*

Eize Hu Chacham?

Halomed mikol adam

Eize hu gibor shebagiborim

Mi she'ose soneh ohavo

Al tehi baz lechol adam

U'maflig lechol davar

She'ein adam she'ein lo sha'ah

Ve'ein davar she'ein lo makom

Dabru emet ish et re'ehu

Emet u'mishpat shalom

Shiftu b'sha'areichem

Eile hadvarim asher ta'asu

"Eize Hu Chacham" is a collection of ethical and moral statements of the Sages taken from "Pirkei Avot" (Ethics of our Fathers). "Pirkei Avot" is a section of the

*Mishna*, one of the fundamental works of the Jewish Oral Law.

"Who is wise? One who learns from every man."

*Ben Zoma, Pirkei Avot 4:1*

"Who is a hero? One who turns an enemy into a friend."

*Avot d'Rabbi Natan, Chapter 23: True Heroism*

"Do not scorn any person, and do not discount any thing. For there is no one who has not their hour, and no thing that has not its place."

*Ben Azzai, Pirkei Avot 4:3*

## **La Yu'minu – Until You Love Your Brother**

**La yu'minu**

**Ahadukum hatta yuhibbu li akhihi**

**Ma yuhibbu li nafsihi**

**Al rahimuna yarhamuhum**

**Ar rahman urhamu**

**Man fil arda yarhamakum**

**Man fis samaa**

"None of you will have faith until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."

*Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 1 : #12*

Reporter – Hadhrat Anas (r)

"Those who are merciful will be granted mercy from the Most Merciful; be merciful to those on the earth and those in the heavens will have mercy on you."

*Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Book of Righteousness, No. 1924, Sahih*

Reporter - Abdullah ibn Amr

A Hadith is a report of something the Prophet Muhammad said or did. Hundreds of thousands of these reports have been gathered together in the Hadith collections that form the basis of so much Islamic thought and teaching.

This piece, titled "La Yu'minu" is a melding of two central hadiths. These two proverbs relay a simple yet universal truth, the closest approximation of the first being that of 'the golden rule' - 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' - while the second speaks of what some of us might otherwise call 'karma'.

## **Inna Rifqa – The Beauty Within**

**Inna rrifqa la yakunu fi shay**

**Illa zanahu wa la yunza'u min shay illa shanahu**

Hadith 6767, Sahih Muslim

Reporter - A'isha

"Compassion does not enter into anything without beautifying it, and is not removed from anything without making it ugly."

For several hundred years, the narrations of the Prophet were passed down via word of mouth. As time

passed, and the chain of narration grew, it became more difficult to be certain of the authenticity of a hadith, and hence a rigorous science of examining the authenticity of hadiths grew.

Such was the importance placed on the science of verifying the credibility of Hadith, that it grew to become a complex academic field and for many, a lifetime's dedication and pursuit. The most authentic collection of Hadith is widely recognized as those based on the study of Imam al-Bukhari.

There is a famous story highlighting the level of Imam al-Bukhari's rigorous approach. Upon one of his journeys to seek out and examine the character of those involved in the chain of narration, al-Bukhari noticed one such person gesturing to his horse to come over to him by tricking him that there was food when in fact there was not. Al-Bukhari cited this act of trickery towards the animal as behavior not worth of trustworthiness, and hence the chain of narration to which this man was involved in was thereby deemed inauthentic.

## **Al Takshu L'vavchem – Don't Harden Your Hearts**

**Al takshu l'vavachem**

**Limnot yameinu ken hoda venavi l'vav chochma**

**Vekhi yagur itcha ger, be'artzechem lo tonu oto**

**K'eizrach mikem yihiyeh lachem hager hagar itchem.**

**Ve'ahavta lo kamocho ki gerim ha'item**

**Don't harden your hearts**

"Teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom."

*Tehilim – Book of Psalms 90:12*

"And if a stranger is among you in your land, you shall not do him wrong."

*Leviticus 19:33*

"The stranger that is among you, shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for you once were also strangers."

*Leviticus 19:34*

There is a beautiful quote by The Dalai Lama: "There are no strangers, only friends you haven't yet met."

"Fear makes strangers of people who would be friends." – Shirley Maclaine.

## **Ma Wadani Ahadun – Until the End of Time**

**Ma Wadani ahadun illa bathaltu lahu**

**Ssafwal mawadati minni akhiral abadi**

**Wala qalani wa in kana almasi'u bina**

**Illa da'awtu lahu rahmanu bil rushdi**

**Wala tumintu ala sirrin fabuhtu bihi**

**Wala madattu illa li ghayr aljameel yadi**

*None ever showed me compassion  
Except that I showed them compassion until the end  
of time*

*And if someone were to show me harshness  
I would pray to the most merciful to give him wisdom*

“Ma Wadani Ahadun” is a poem written by Ali Ibn Abi Talib, a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad and the fourth Caliph after the Prophet some 1400 years ago. Widely known for his calm wisdom and use of reason in place of hot-headedness, Ali is a universally revered figure in the Muslim world: a man through whom both the Sunni and Shi’ite traditions pass, whose strong character of kindness and compassion inspires people across sectarian divides.

### **Avinu Malkeinu – Hymn of Compassion**

**Avinu Malkeinu chanenu v’aneinu ki ein banu  
ma’asim**

**Aseh imanu tzedakah vachessed ve’hoshi’enu**

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## **About *Ngapa William Cooper***

### **Program Note**

by Sarah Gory

*Ngapa William Cooper* is the culmination of years of thinking, writing and creating, alone and together. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns slowed the process of creation, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It allowed ideas to percolate slowly and the collaborative elements to come together organically. Lyrically and musically, *Ngapa William Cooper* is textural and layered — a reflection of the story that it weaves. Thematically, *Ngapa William Cooper* is a continuation of Lior and Nigel’s acclaimed *Compassion* collaboration and yet at the same time it stands on its own, greater than the sum of its parts.

Above all, *Ngapa William Cooper* is a testament to Yorta Yorta activist Uncle William Cooper, and the importance of continuing his legacy of resistance, solidarity and empathy.

While the histories of Indigenous Australians and Jews are divergent and unique, they share common elements. Both peoples have been subject to genocide, displaced from their lands, marginalised and persecuted. Both have also shown great resistance, proudly continuing their culture through stories, learning, song and family, often in the face of great odds. *Ngapa William Cooper* is a reminder that our voices raised together are powerful instruments, in more ways than one.

I have vivid memories of hearing “Avinu Malkeinu” emanating out of synagogues in my childhood. The prayer is recited on Yom Kippur – The Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish year. What initially drew me to the prayer was its haunting melody, yet it was only later in life when I learnt of its meaning and universal resonance, that I felt drawn to perform it. One such performance later came to be the very seed of this project, as Nigel and I entertained the notion of orchestrating this beautiful ancient melody which I had only ever previously performed a cappella.

The text of “Avinu Malkeinu” houses a beautiful link between not only compassion and wisdom, but that of freedom. It highlights the notion of compassion being the path to liberation, a concept that has always stayed with me.

### **Kristallnacht**

On the night of 9 November 1938, civilians and Nazi authorities ransacked and destroyed Jewish homes, shops and synagogues across Germany and Austria. This series of coordinated pogroms became known as *Kristallnacht*, ‘Night of Broken Glass’ — named so for the shattered windows that littered the streets the next morning. *Kristallnacht* marked the escalation of anti-Jewish violence in Nazi Germany, and the beginning of the end for European Jewry.

*Kristallnacht* made front page news around the world.

### **The Silence**

Two days after the events of *Kristallnacht*, on 11 November 1938 (also known as Remembrance Day in Australia, for soldiers who have died in combat), William Cooper opened the newspaper in his Footscray home, perhaps hoping to remember his son. Private Daniel Cooper was killed in Belgium during World War I, fighting for a country and commonwealth that continued to deny him the most basic of human rights, citizenship.

Instead, what William Cooper found were accounts of the violence in the streets of Berlin and Vienna, stories of Jews being rounded up, taken away. And what he saw in the days and weeks that followed was the world turning its back on the Jewish people.

## The Protest

In the face of this silence, a group of Aboriginal men and women known as the Australian Aborigines' League convened a meeting on Kulin Nation Country. During this meeting, a resolution was passed condemning the actions of the Nazi Government and protesting the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany. On 6 December 1938, less than one month after *Kristallnacht*, the Australian Aborigines' League — led by their secretary, William Cooper — dressed in their Sunday best and marched from Cooper's home in Footscray across the Maribyrnong River to the Nazi German Consulate in the heart of Melbourne city to deliver a formal petition condemning the persecution of Germany's Jews and calling for it to end.

In 1938, Aboriginal people across Australia continued to be persecuted and dispossessed, denied citizenship and basic human rights on their own land. Yet, in the face of all odds, the members of the Australian Aborigines' League refused to stay silent, raising their voices in solidarity with a group of people distant in culture and geography: 'We are a very small minority, and we are a poor people, but in extending our sympathy to the Jewish people we assure them of

our support in every way.'

William Cooper and his comrades were denied entry by the Nazi German consul, who refused to receive their petition.

## Uncle William Cooper

William Cooper was a Yorta Yorta activist, political campaigner and one of the most important figures in twentieth century Australian history.

Throughout his life, William Cooper wielded 'the spear of the pen' to great effect and impact. In his many letters and petitions, written to politicians and representatives of the crown, we hear a voice ahead of its time. Cooper called for equal rights for Aboriginal people while asserting the uniqueness of their culture and claim to land. He fought stridently for all Aboriginal people to be free of persecution and, despite that never being realised in his lifetime, in his final years he still saw fit to stand in solidarity with the Jewish people across the seas.

Cooper's legacy of determined struggle and enormous empathy remains as pertinent today as ever.

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# Ngapa William Cooper Texts

## The News

I opened up the newspaper  
Twenty years to the day  
The war had ended  
The war that took my son away  
Twenty long years since he laid his life down  
Now he is buried under northern stars  
Whose stories I do not know

He had no land  
And he had no rights  
From a nation who made no distinction  
Who it sent off to fight

But there was no mention of my Daniel anywhere  
And in my sorrow  
In the depth of my despair  
Something strange yet familiar  
Struck me and took hold of me  
A wave of darkness  
Gathering from across the sea

And I read  
The night of broken glass  
Bodies crouched in terror  
Streets of blood and crystal shards  
And I read

Skulls smashed  
Synagogues burned to the ground  
They say flames were still shooting into the sky at dawn

It does not matter you have done no wrong  
It only matters to whom you were born  
And I knew there was only one way the blade could fall  
For I see it happen to my people

## The Silence

I return to the news every day  
A silence I've learned all too well  
Silence

I traded places  
With a young man bleeding  
On the streets of broken glass  
And though he was half a world away

I could see him in my reflection  
Clear as day  
And I knew I was a ghost if I let him fade away  
I return to the news every day  
A silence I've learned all too well  
It grows

If all backs are turned



If all eyes look away  
There will be no way to know we are sinking  
There will be no way to know we are gone

## **Yakapna (Family)**

For my family  
I speak so we can live freely  
So we can speak our language  
Perform our ceremony

For my family  
I work so they can rest upon the land  
So they never have to hold guns in hand  
To meet another man's demands

My strength is my gentleness  
Love will quell hate  
My strength is my resilience  
Do not harden your heart

## **The Meeting**

My dear friends  
Thank you for joining me today  
A heavy shadow has befallen me

Brothers and sisters  
It has come to my attention  
Of the gravest persecution  
Taking its place in the heart  
of Europe

*"Like the Jewish people, our people have suffered much cruelty, exploitation and misunderstanding as a minority at the hands of another people. We are a small minority and we are a poor people, but we must assure them of our support in every way."*

*"The Nazi government has a consulate here on our land*

*Let us go there and make our protest known*

*Our pen is our spear*

*Let us have the courage to use it*

*For resistance is the refusal to yield to silence."*

Can you believe  
That there are those who say  
That there is nothing left to do  
But smooth the pillow of a dying race  
About the first people  
So we will be the first to speak up  
We will be the last to be silent

## **The Protest**

Our words are sacred  
Our words are strong  
They will outlive us when we are gone

Dressed in their Sunday best  
Underneath the scorching southern sun

From the Maribyrnong to the Yarra they marched  
From the banks of the river  
To the heart of the city  
Marching down the boulevards

Straight into the smoke  
People's gaze bearing down  
William's aging frame  
Heavy with justice on his back

Letter in hand  
To these faceless arches of power  
Towering above those unwelcome  
Those unwanted

*"On behalf of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia, we wish to have it registered and on record that we protest wholeheartedly at the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government in Germany. We implore that you would make it known to your government and its military leaders that this cruel persecution of their fellow citizens must be brought to an end"*

Our words are sacred  
Our words are strong  
They will outlive us when we are gone

It does not matter what message you bring  
It only matters to whom you were born

Dark is the heart that closes its doors

## **At the End of my Days**

At the end of my days  
I want to know I spoke up  
when I saw wrong  
At the end of my days  
There'll be no doubt I stood up for what was right  
And that courage led the way  
To the end of my days

At the end of my days  
My conscience will have been my guide  
To see the world through different eyes  
I will have crossed the divide

Like a river red gum tree  
My roots will hold me up in shifting sands  
And point me towards the sun  
Though some will try and break me  
And ignorance may try to erase me  
They will not weaken my resolve  
For my bearings are true and strong

At the end of my days  
I want to know I spoke up when I saw wrong  
At the end of my days  
There'll be no doubt I stood up for what was right  
I will be proud of my name  
At the end of my days

# Program Note

By Dr Lou Bennett

Yorta Yorta is the name of the language of the Yorta Yorta Nation including 10 tribes. My tribe is Walithica, which means we are the people from the meeting of the three rivers: dungala (Murray), gaiyla, (Goulburn) and yakoa (Campaspe). The town name Echuca derives from our Tribe's name.

Uncle William Cooper was my Grannie Ada's brother. Their mother, my Nanny Kitty, has been found in numerous historical documents sharing our language. Now, as her great, great, great granddaughter, it is with great honour I share some Yorta Yorta with you.

In each section, you will hear Yorta Yorta. I have used the language sparingly and my translations here will be based in story and poetic form, as direct translations become misleading and taken out of context. The creative practice of call and response between Yorta Yorta and English has been used to further another level of understanding.

Like many First Nations languages, the words can be multiple in meaning. When the Europeans wrote our languages in lexicons and word lists, there was a disruption to this multiple value, often rendering our languages to one meaning. Using the language artistically gives the opportunity to place multiple meanings back into the language.

*A special acknowledgement to Yorta Yorta Elder damangalya (Dr Wayne Atkinson) for his cultural knowledge and for narrating Uncle William's letters*

## Exile/Call to Ancestors

Calling the Ancestors into our space before a gathering or ceremony is an old tradition and one shared by many. Here I share with Lior a prayer to dhama yenbena (Old people), dhama mulana (Old spirit) and garra (now).

## The News

The term dhoma is used in multiple ways from dearest love to feeling sorry for someone who is less fortunate. I use it as a term for a loved one, Uncle William and Aunty Agnes' son Daniel.

### Wanhal nyinyi guwiga?

Where is my son?

### Wanhal nyinyi guwiga?

Where is my son?

### Dhoma nyinyi yalka, dhoma nyinyi yalka

My dear child, my dear child

### Dhoma nyinyi yalka, dhoma nyinyi yalka

My dear child, my dear child

## The Silence

The term ganbina is also multiple in meaning. It could mean get up, rise, grow, even fly. It's vital that our languages are not taken as literally as the English language.

### Gukul gukul

Silence, silence

### Gukul

silence

### Ganbina...

Rise...

### Gakana...

Comes...

### Ganbina...

Rise...

### Gakana...

Comes...

### Ganbina-n, gabina-n ganbina-n...

It rises, rises, rises...

## Yakapna (Family)

Yakapna (yercupna) means family. I believe Uncle William's strength was his family. We are taught at a very early age that we are all connected, and it takes a strong spirit and heart to remain loving. This is one of the most important teachings of my Old People.

Chorus:

### nyinyi dungadja gowola

My big kindness

### dhomi gow-it

love overtakes

### bida marreda

hatred

### nyinyi dungadja gowola

My big kindness

### dhomadhoma-nga

I love you

### ngalnyan-uk yamutj

goodness

### gathana manma mathi ngangwurra

don't make a bad heart

## The Protest

There are times when I sing, I can feel my Ancestors voices surge in me and my voice changes from sweetness to assertion, from young to old.

Lior sings, "Dark is the heart, the heart, that closes its door". I chose to be creative and to find words that I could hear my Old People speaking.

### **Djimunuk birrama djimunuk birrama**

Coward, go away, coward go away

### **Djimun mathimatj ngangwurra**

Cowardly cruel heart

## At The End Of My Days

We believe that death is not the end; it is a rebirthing, a transitioning of the spirit. We still grieve, we cry for the loss of our loved ones, however, we know in our hearts that life force is eternal.

### **Oooh dhama yenbena, dhama yenbena**

Oh Ancestor

### **Oooh ganbina mulana, ganbina mulana**

Fly spirit

### **Oooh nyuwanda dama yenbena-ruk danu, danu**

We cry, cry for you Ancestor

### **birra-ma yanyabak dhama yenbena-l muma, birrama birrama garra...**

Go away walk with the Old Ones now...

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# Biographies

## **NIGEL WESTLAKE**

Nigel Westlake's career, spanning almost 5 decades, began as a clarinettist.

His concert works and movie scores have received many awards including the 2022 APRA Distinguished Services to the Australian Screen, 2 Aria awards, 15 APRA/AGSC awards, the Paul Lowin Orchestral Prize (2x) & the Gold Medal at the New York International Radio Festival.

Nigel holds an honorary Doctorate in Music, awarded by the University of New South Wales in 2012. He has conducted all the major symphony orchestras in Australia & made his US conducting debut in 2016 at the Lincoln Centre with the New York Philharmonic and European debut with the RTE Symphony in Dublin in 2018.

## **LIOR**

Lior is one of Australia's most treasured singer-songwriters renowned for his beautiful voice and songs that radiate truth and sincerity. He burst on to the Australian music scene in 2005 with his debut album, Autumn Flow, and has subsequently released seven albums to date.

He has toured extensively both in Australia and internationally and is a multi-ARIA award-winner as well as the recipient of numerous other awards acknowledging the respect held for him across several arts platforms.

In 2014, Lior collaborated with Nigel Westlake on Compassion, a symphonic song cycle for voice and orchestra based on ancient texts in both Hebrew and

Arabic centred around the wisdom of compassion. It has been performed with all major Australian orchestras.

## **DR LOU BENNETT AM**

Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung, Dr Lou Bennett AM is a former member of the internationally acclaimed trio Tiddas (1990-2000). A prolific songwriter/composer, she penned some of the group's signature songs. In 2006, she was a co-founder of the iconic Black Arm Band.

Lou's work stretches over a vast area within the arts industry including her various roles as Performer, Songwriter, Musical and Artistic Director, Composer, Actor, Soundscape and Music Designer, Educator and Board member (Chair of the Australia Centre at the University of Melbourne; Board Member for RISING). She completed her PhD by project at RMIT Melbourne in October 2015.

Lou uses her own languages of Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung, extending to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages that can be retrieved, reclaimed and regenerated through songs, stories and performances.

## **SARAH GORY**

Sarah Gory is a writer, editor and scholar. Her award-winning creative non-fiction has been widely published in journals and magazines, as well as in museum catalogues, book chapters and various places online. Sarah teaches writing at Melbourne University and RMIT, and lives on unceded Kulin Nation Country with her family.