

RIVER CITY VOICES

Annual Report

2022





RIVER CITY VOICES LTD

T 0409 776 577
E manager@rivercityvoices.org.au
W www.rivercityvoices.org.au

Facebook River City Voices
Instagram @rivercityvoices

ABN 79 627 858 315

BOARD

Chair

Catherine Dolle-Samuel

Director | Founder

Inara Molinari

Directors

Schon G Condon, RFD
Piroozi Desai-Keane, OAM, JP
Robert Love, AM (from September)
William Soper, FCA (UK)
Raquel Tracy (retired August)

MANAGEMENT

Artistic Director

Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith

General Manager

Inara Molinari

Accountant

William Soper, FCA (UK)

ARTISTIC STAFF

Principal Conductor

Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith

Repetiteur

Su Choung

Casual Conductors

Joanna Brooke
Dr Philip Eames
Peter Ellis
Natalie Gooneratne

Casual Pianists

Jane Andino
Callum Tolhurst-Close
Dr Philip Eames
Maggie Pang

CHORISTERS

SOPRANO

Jennifer Baker
Catriona Champion
Josephine Chan
Maria Costello
Tamara Craig
Susan Forss-Clarke
Hadassa Gitau
Lyn Higgs
Wendy Hopley
Deborah Howitt
Iona Mathias
Nicole Senior
Karla Stewart-Sykes
Ingrid Turner
Lynn Taye
Naomi von Senff
Klara de Wit

ALTO

Mel Bester
Grace Bondoc
Clare Brown
Catherine Dolle-Samuel
Sarah El-Khansa
Sally Glass
Danica Gluvakov
Jane Jamieson
Laima Karklins
Roshi Melvin
Nancy Nicholls
Rina Pinto
Hiroko Uchihara
Helen Yiu
Fiona Yue

TENOR

Richard Heagren-Gibbs
Ian Jenson
Joshua Lenehan
Prony Melvin
Gabriel Newman
Spencer Thew

BASS

Steve Barnett
Don Church
Philip Gerber
Ivars Karklins
Geoff Kerr
Kristofer Morgan
TiMI Thomas
Michael West
Dominic Wong

Cover photo:
Songs of Destiny, Riverside Theatres
22 May, 2022
Credit: Grant Leslie

Report Prepared: Inara Molinari



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ABOUT River City Voices

Western Sydney. Choral. Excellence



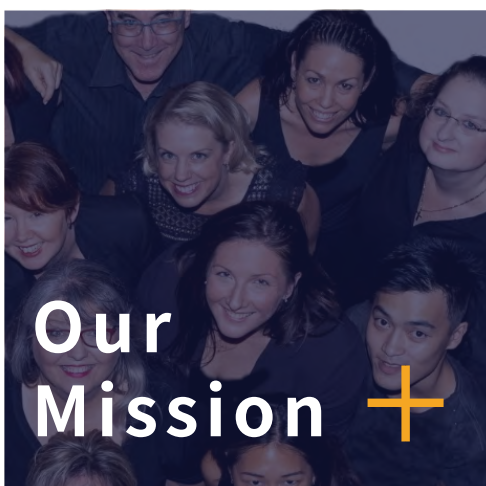
What the World Needs
The Granville Centre
11 September, 2022
Photo: Grant Leslie

"From the day I had my successful memorable audition on a hot steaming day to receiving the call to join up, I cannot express enough my gratefulness and appreciation of what RCV has given me! RCV has become a major part of my life. Even though COVID kept us apart at times, I got my confidence and joy back from singing and am making some good friends. I might be a quieter person who says very little, but you're all heroes and heroines in my heart! "

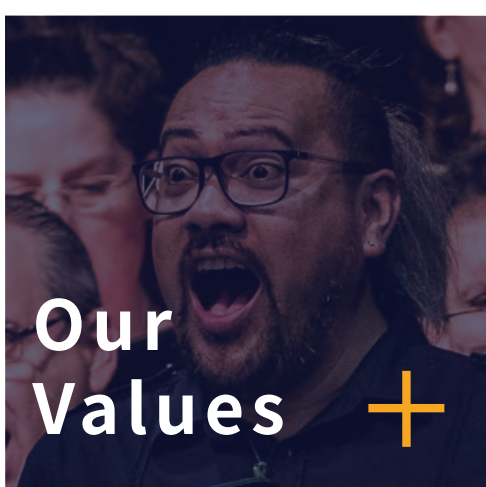
Chorister, joined 2021



To become a permanent, vibrant and relevant player in the artistic and cultural landscape of western Sydney.



To meet community demand for cultural organisations and performance events that expand horizons closer to home.



- Diversity - we champion equal opportunities for our artists and audience
- Excellence - we create learning environments in which people can excel
- Community - we build our own and contribute to others'
- Synergy - we flourish through collaboration
- Integrity - we act ethically, transparently and consistently

When River City Voices was established in 2018, there was no professionally administered and artistically led symphonic choir in Parramatta. Our first operational year in 2019, thanks to initial funding from Create NSW, was an outstanding success. This was in large part due to our new chorister recruits who had more than matched our original call out for people who "are passionate and committed vocalists who love to be challenged and who strive for excellence."

Navigating the havoc, cancellations and constant changes wreaked by COVID throughout 2020/21, revealed additional attributes of our singers - adaptable, generous and resilient (traits significantly tested again throughout 2022 with the ever present waves of COVID and influenza!).

The loyalty displayed by choristers throughout this time meant that not only did we return with pre-COVID numbers but in fact, the choir grew in size from 32 singers at the end of 2019, to 46 in 2022.

As we emerged from the pandemic in to 2022, with expectations to pick up artistically where we had left off in 2019, River City Voices staff and singers embraced with determination and gusto every opportunity that presented itself exemplifying another recruitment aim, namely, a willingness and ability "to meet the demands of whatever choral works are thrown their way, sometimes in a hurry!".

And whilst River City Voices distinguishes itself as a professional organisation of excellence, we are also proud to be gaining a reputation for our positive, collaborative culture that has created a genuine community of caring, supportive and diverse individuals, linked together by their love of singing.

With only two fully productive years under its belt, River City Voices has already curated and participated in a wealth of activities and performances, engaging over 2000 artists, workshop participants and audience goers.

From festivals and large-scale concerts, to corporate and government gigs, with this year adding featured spots in two unexpected nationally broadcast television appearances - a product commercial and an airing on ABC's ArtWorks - RCV's list of performance achievements ever grows.

In developing our concert themes, *Luscious*, *Brave* and *Local*, the choir aims to deliver blockbuster classic choral favourites and lesser known musically delicious works to western Sydney audiences, as well as give voice to the stories and music of talented local and Australia-wide composers and artists.

CHAIR'S REPORT

"River City Voices has gone from strength to strength in 2022 despite the challenges that continue in delivering commercially and artistically viable performances during an ongoing pandemic."

Our initial performance for 2022 *Songs of Destiny* demonstrated our collaborative approach (thank you Willoughby Symphony and Willoughby Symphony Choir) and commitment to premiering new works with the first ever performance of Troy Russell's evocative and heart wrenching *The Chant* and Elizabeth Sheppard's awakening and re-birth in *Gandangarragal: Blue Mountains Dreaming*.

This performance was quickly followed by River City Voices headlining the first Blackheath Choral Festival in three years, and the immense joy of premiering our 'What the World Needs' program at Granville Centre together with the artists from Arts and Cultural Exchange's Club Weld program, featured on ABC's *Art Works* program in October.

From diverse artistic collaborations to commercial collaborations, partnering with Catch.com.au in its national ad campaign - getting colder, colder, then warmer, warmer, the singers of River City Voices have traversed these experiences with professionalism, enthusiasm and aplomb. We also represented Western Sydney at *From The Steps* celebrating 50 years of the Sydney Opera House with an engaging blend of non-traditional and audience favourites music – and it is always a good sign when the tour leads stop and engage to support you!

Finally, RCV presented what we think is an Australian, if not world, first – *Slam Messiah* with artists from WestWords presenting spoken word poetry to mesmerise, challenge and engage this most famous work from the choral canon to new audiences. River City Voices extended its reach through several Christmas performances in Parramatta's CBD to wrap up the year.

What has become clear in 2022 is how supportive, kind and daring River City Voices choristers are. There is a lot of 'can do' attitude, flexibility to challenges and changes, openness to entirely non-traditional choral experiences, and support and care for each other. As both a chorister and Chair, and veteran of many different choirs, River City Voices is really like no other choir in the most genuinely positive, ambitious and innovative way.

Our Board expanded in 2022, with Piroozi Desai and Robert Love contributing their enormous expertise and insight, and we farewelled Raquel Tracy. I would like to thank each for their generously contributing their time and expertise to our organisation.

River City Voices would not be possible without the tireless commitment and energy of our Artistic Director, Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith and our General Manager, Inara Molinari. Thank you also to our expanded team of conductors and pianists listed in this report!

It is testament to their vision for Western Sydney, and Parramatta's flagship symphonic choir that River City Voices continues to go from strength to strength and deliver choral music collaborations and performances that are in, of, and for Western Sydney - showing how the artistic culture of Western Sydney contributes so much to the Sydney, NSW, and Australian artistic landscape.

The continued support of new and engaged audiences at performances or through generous donations means the world to a new choir and on behalf of the Board, Artistic Director and choristers - thank you.

CATHERINE DOLLE-SAMUEL
Chair and Chorister Representative



Catherine Dolle-Samuel,
Songs of Destiny, Riverside Theatres
22 May, 2022

Photo: Grant Leslie

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

"River City Voices' first full year of performances since the pandemic's beginning (and only the choir's second since it began) exceeded our expectations in terms of reach and scope."

Our amazing singers were straight back on the concert hall platform singing two extremely demanding German Romantic works, Brahms' 'Gesang der Parzen' and 'Schicksalslied'. These rarely-heard pieces demand a full symphony orchestra, so we were incredibly lucky to partner with the Willoughby Symphony, widely regarded as Australia's top community orchestra. For both the orchestra and its resident chorus, the Willoughby Symphony Choir, collaboration with another choir is not unusual; for it to repeat its performances in Parramatta was an innovation. This is a testament to the excellence of River City Voices, as well as the increasing importance of Western Sydney and its cultural offerings. As Willoughby Symphony's Associate Conductor, it was a personal and professional milestone for me that these two organisations collaborated so joyously, and with such a high standard.

The Parramatta 'Songs of Destiny' performances also saw the world premiere of the two works River City Voices commissioned, with support from JBS&G, from First Peoples Composers Elizabeth Sheppard and Troy Russell. Sheppard and Russell's music, and their introduction of it, was met with rapt attention by our audience. And although we did not fill the theatre at Parramatta Riverside, we were told that we were one of the bestselling shows that the theatre had had in those difficult times, quite an achievement for a classical music performance.

Sheppard and Russell's works were reprised to great acclaim at Blackheath Choral Festival. This was the first festival back since Covid, and also saw River City Voices' inaugural participation. As Festival Choir Director, it was another personal and professional joy for me to have River City Voices open the Saturday night concert, and then provide the backbone of the Festival Chorus. We had agreed on a program of Australian music, and as a result, with the support of Festival Director Christine Wheeler, we introduced both the Festival Chorus singers and the festival's audience to works from River City Voices' repertoire, including Elizabeth Sheppard's 'Gandangarragal', and Blue Mountains local Jerrah Patston.

We met Patston as part of our collaboration with A.C.E. and its program for neurodivergent musicians, Club Weld. 2022 saw the fruition of both our recording project and concert come together. Mastering the recording with ARIA-nominated Sound Artist Chris Hamer-Smith was a learning experience for us as we brought together several hundred tracks' worth of individual recordings, recorded either solo or in very small groups during Covid. The resulting album, 'What The World Needs', has more immediacy than some of the highly-produced choral recordings so prevalent today. The honesty and vibrancy of both the songwriters and choir make this a really unique collaboration.

The 'What The World Needs' performance at the Granville Centre in September was declared by many of the audience members I met to be a profoundly moving and uplifting experience. Clare Brown, the songwriter whose composition became the signature song for both the concert and the album title, is now a regular member of River City Voices.

Brown's piece received a repeat performance on the Sydney Opera House Forecourt in the dusk series 'From The Steps', launching the Sydney Opera House's 50th birthday celebrations. This rich a cappella program, for which we invited other Western Sydney singers to ensure our massed voices carried around the magnificent forecourt, included Alice Chance's 'Audience Choir', an opportunity for the audience (and their mobile phones) to participate in contemporary Australian a cappella choral music! Again, the feedback testified to our success, both in the quality of the singing, and the choice of repertoire.



Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
What the World Needs, The Granville Centre
8 September, 2022
Photo: Grant Leslie

2022 finished with our second chance to participate in Sydney Philharmonia Choir’s biennial performance of Handel’s ‘Messiah’. Again, for a number of choristers, this was their first opportunity to sing on the Concert Hall platform of the Sydney Opera House. It will come as no surprise that a massed choral performance such as this was a happy hunting ground for Covid, influenza A, and other bugs, which threatened to derail our premiere of Slam Messiah’ the following week. ‘Slam Messiah’, in collaboration with WestWords, was designed to introduce Western Sydney audiences who might not attend traditional choral performances to this masterwork and Australian choral Christmas tradition, in a way that was contemporary, relevant, and allowed for real-time comment on the issues of our day: three performance poets responded with their own work to select sections of the libretto. We had a difficult decision to make over whether to continue with the performance having lost almost half our singers, but proceeded with augmenting singers from a number of local choirs. While musically the performance did not reach the heights it would have if we had been full strength, again the audience response justified the risk we took in attempting to broaden the appeal of this beloved work to new audiences. Many first-timers attended, and those Messiah ‘tragics’ who also attended said that it helped them to view the work in an entirely new light.

Along with the excitement and challenges of preparing for our first (but not to be our last) TV commercial, 2022 was a mammoth year of which the choir should be very proud.

My thanks to Inara Molinari, Catherine Dolle-Samuel and the entire River City Voices board for enabling us to push boundaries and continue to grow. I would also like to thank my partner in crime, Su Choung, and all of the other artistic staff and collaborators who helped get us through the year in such fine style.

Dr SARAH PENICKA-SMITH
Artistic Director & Principal Conductor

2022 SNAPSHOT



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS



Songs of Destiny
Riverside Theatres, Parramatta
22 May 2022
Photo: Grant Leslie



SONGS OF DESTINY

Collaborators

Willoughby Symphony
Willoughby Symphony Choir

Key Artists

Conductor Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
Pianist Dr Philip Eames
WS Concertmaster/Soloist Maria Lindsay
WSC Chorus Master Peter Ellis
Repetiteur Su Choung

Composers

Johannes Brahms
Emma Greenhill
Alla Pavlova
Troy Russell
Andrew Schultz
Elizabeth Sheppard

Funding

Create NSW 2020 Annual Organisation grant
JBS&G, commissioning two new choral works



SONGS OF DESTINY - Luscious 22 May 2022 | Riverside Theatres

"A striking work, [Troy Russell's *The Chant*]...the choir performed their mournful heart breaking calls and gripping crowd scenes in this tragedy with real feeling for the storytelling...
a wonderful artistic collaboration between the ensembles, composers (four of whom were present in the audience) and artists...and for the final Brahms...two works, one lush and soulful, the other brutal and despairing...chorus and orchestra portray[ed] both the divinity of the Gods and the suffering of humanity, under the expert baton of Penicka-Smith...with energy and accuracy."

ClassikOn Review, Pepe Newton, May 2022

After two years enduring program cancellations, on again/off again online Zoom, all weather outdoor, small group indoor, sectional, and finally face-to-face rehearsals, it was with a mix of excitement and trepidation that River City Voices embarked on its "near normal" 2022 season. And what a way to restart!

Although the choir has grown in number since the end of 2019, it is not yet large enough to tackle major choral works by Brahms, and with depleted reserves due to COVID-19, had insufficient resources to mount such an ambitious program on its own.

As Assistant Conductor for the Willoughby Symphony, RCV's Artistic Director Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith, was able to forge a collaboration that enabled RCV choristers to sing in Willoughby Symphony's Songs of Destiny program at The Concourse, Chatswood, and the Symphony Choir to join RCV for its version of Songs of Destiny the following weekend at Riverside Theatres.

River City Voices' program was unique in featuring the choir on its own for the first time since August 2019, singing the long-awaited world premiere performances of two new choral works. These stunning works by Indigenous composers Troy Russell (*The Chant*) and Elizabeth Sheppard (*Gandangarragal: Blue Mountains Dreaming*), both graduates of the Ngarra-burria: First Peoples Composers Program, were commissioned in May 2019 with support from environmental consultants JBS&G. Planned for performance in 2020, the first drafts could only be workshopped with only 5 singers in November 2020 (between COVID outbreaks). A planned performance in 2021 was postponed, and we collectively held our breaths for the May '22 performance as choristers and staff were still succumbing to COVID in larger than expected numbers, requiring singers to keep masking up for rehearsals.

Although tickets sales were very slow, a new sales trend post COVID, we managed to secure the largest audience for Riverside Theatres Main stage since COVID and larger than our sold-out *Messiah* in December 2019.

2

World Premiere
Performances in
Parramatta

354

Post COVID
audience
members

5

Living
composers
featured

Read the
Program*



150

Artists, musicians,
arts workers &
community singers
engaged

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS - Local

11 Sept 2022 | Granville Centre

This incredible one-of-a kind performance was the culmination of River City Voices' 2020/2021 City of Parramatta funded recording project previously reported - **Welded Voices**. This project was a veritable lifeline throughout the COVID years, one that brought to life a fantastic collaboration with Parramatta's Arts and Cultural Exchange and its ground-breaking Club Weld program. You can read about the EP release and launch on Page 15.

Jerrah Patston and Sam Worrada headlined the first half of the concert performing songs from his extensive CD releases, with the second part featuring the live performance of album songs for the very first time with Club Weld singer/songwriters, performing alongside the choir - also a new experience.

The project also captured the imagination of the ABC's Art Works program who filmed and produced a story featuring Club Weld, attending and filming one of RCV's rehearsals with artists Sienna Acquaro, Nina Gotsis



Singer/songwriter Nina Gotsis takes a bow with RCV's Sarah Penicka-Smith
Photo Credit: Grant Leslie



Collaborators

Club Weld
Arts and Cultural Exchange, Parramatta

Key Artists

Conductor Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
Keyboard | Rehearsal Pianist Dr Philip Eames
Lead CW Facilitator | Guitar Sam Worrada
CW Facilitator | Singer/Songwriter Pasko Schravemade
CW Singer/songwriters Sienna Acquaro
Clare Brown
Nina Gotsis
Charbel Nehme
Jerrah Patston
Jonathan Yung

Funding

RCV donors through its Australian Cultural Fund 2021 crowdfunding campaign

6

Original new choral arrangements performed for the first time

6

Australian neurodivergent singer/songwriters featured

1

National television broadcast ABC Art Works

54

Artists, musicians, arts workers & community singers engaged



Singer/songwriter Sienna Acquaro
Photo Credit: Grant Leslie





Dress Rehearsal, 15 December, 2022
Slam Messiah, Riverside Theatres
Performance poet, Paris Rosemont
Photo Credit: Lyndal Irons



Collaborators
WestWords

Key Artists
Conductor Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
Assistant Chorus Masters
Dr Philip Eames Peter Ellis
Rehearsal Pianists
Dr Philip Eames Callum Tolhurst-Close
Jane Andino
Soprano Sarah Cherlin
Tenor Damien Noyce
Bass Warwick Fyfe
Violins Sagar Nagaraj | Suraj Nagaraj
Viola Jonathan Karanikas
Cello Nazli Sendurgut
Oboe Frank Giraldo
Organ Samuel Giddy

Poets
Alasdair David Carter
J. Marahuyo
Paris Rosemont

Funding
Self-funded



SLAM MESSIAH - Brave

16 December 2022 | Riverside Theatres

"A bold approach that was refreshing to see and made for an intriguing show.
Finding its footing in the new and old, building a unique and rare platform for a poetic art form inextricably linked to western Sydney, alongside a beloved masterwork, certainly marks River City Voices as a group to watch out for."

Limelight Review, Maddy Briggs, 18 December 2022

As 2022 drew to a close, no-one would have imagined that COVID-19 and a new Influenza strain would simultaneously rear their heads such that, with only one week to go until River City Voices' final performance, more than a dozen choristers were off sick and cancellation loomed large.

Fortunately, singers from across RCV's choral network came on board and they quite literally saved the show!

Handel's *Messiah* originated from a complex tapestry of politics, belief, and social justice; its story spanning centuries and people. So, according to RCV's Artistic Director and conceiver of Slam Messiah, Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith, what better way to share its universal message to modern audiences than through the interpretive lens of dynamic young slam poets? "Handel was a very theatrical composer who loved a good story. We offered this new version not because we think the music is missing something, but because we wanted to offer new audiences a way in to one of the greatest choral works ever written."

Along with a shortened iteration, Sarah re-scored the work for chamber orchestra, including a real twist, replacing the much loved trumpets with oboe, played by Frank Giraldo, who "stunned in his solo sections"!

Huge thanks to community choristers:
Natalie Gooneratne, Nathalie O'Toole, Elsa Rapon
Ann Adams, Jan Shaw, Libby Sorrel, Priscilla Yuen
Rob Foster, Rowen Fox, Ken Goth, Chris Lu, Mark Nelson, Ben Thurley
Jose Augusto, Tim Kaye, Ben Waters

1

World Premiere
new iteration of
The Messiah in
Parramatta

310

Mid wave COVID
audience
members

6

New poems
created
in response to the
Messiah texts



Read the
Program*

70

Artists, musicians,
arts workers &
community singers
engaged

EXTRA PROJECTS & GIGS



WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

EP Launch

11 June 2022 | Parramatta

When River City Voices successfully received a Creative Economy Grant late 2020 from City of Parramatta Council for its collaborative project **Welded Voices**, little did anyone realise what a veritable lifeline this project would be.

The aim of the grant was to provide local organisations with financial and project support to weather the devastating economic impacts of COVID-19 in 2020 and re-emerge in 2021.

But as COVID-19 restrictions continued into 2021, with indeed a 4 month lockdown in Sydney, RCV's recording project, although extended beyond its original timeline, clearly demonstrated how well it could adapt to the prevailing circumstances whilst providing purpose and engagement for RCV staff, artists and choristers.

At the end of 2021, after online, small group and outdoor rehearsals, choristers finally made it into the recording studio of collaborator Arts & Cultural Exchange in Parramatta. In the recording booth was Aria-nominated producer extraordinaire, Chris Hamer-Smith and Sarah Penicka-Smith conducting through the recording booth window so the two to a room restriction could be maintained ! A mammoth 270 tracks (43 choristers two at a time) were recorded just before Christmas with additional recording sessions early in 2022 for choristers who had missed out due to COVID.

The tracks were then expertly edited, and then mixed with Club Weld singer/songwriters' vocals , over the next few months, with mastered versions shared with the Club Weld musicians for their final input and sign-off. The end result being a one-of-a-kind EP.

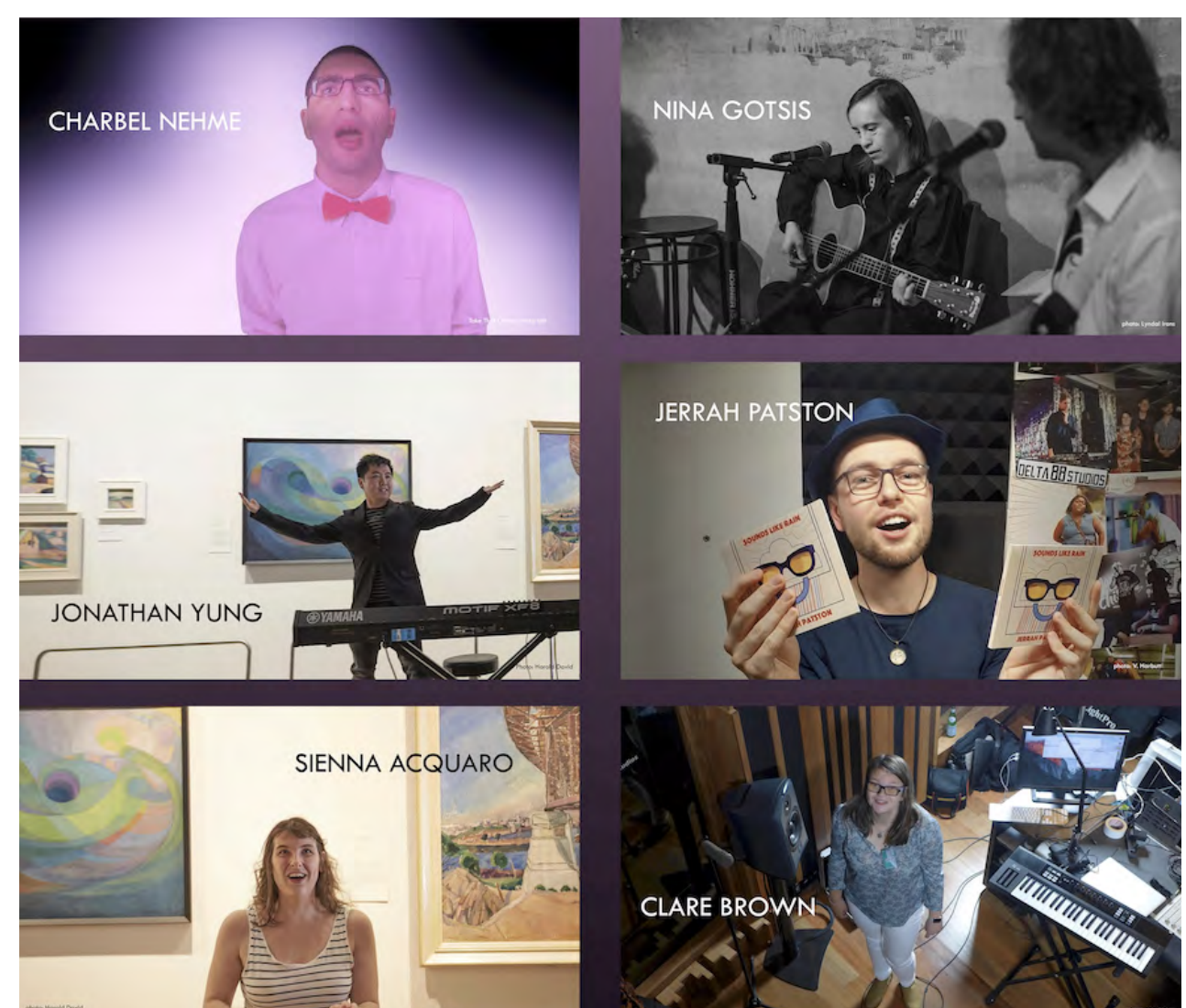
Through ACE's arrangements with the ABC, a digital EP was created and licensed, necessitating album cover designs and thumbnail images (see below).

Because of the lockdown, some Club Weld musicians never met the choir in person. A listening party to launch the digital EP was hosted by A.C.E on 11 June to give choristers and musicians the chance to hear the finished songs for the first time. It was an emotionally moving night!

The hard copy albums were ready for sale at the What the World Needs Live concert on 11 September.

The EP is available for purchase [via Bandcamp](#) with all proceeds supporting Club Weld and RCV.

Right: Featured Club Weld Singer/Songwriters
Below Left: CD cover design, Nina Gotsis, with layout by Robert O'Farrell
Below Right: Bandcamp EP thumbnail design by Leon Kaplan



BLACKHEATH CHOIR FESTIVAL

27/28 August 2022 | Blackheath

Artists

Conductor Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
Pianist Su Choung
River City Voices

River City Voices choristers joined 46 choirs from across Sydney for the long-awaited post-COVID festival return. We were also thrilled to host a joint rehearsal in Cloister Hall for singers joining the massed Festival Choir, this year conducted by RCV's Sarah Penicka-Smith in an all Australian program she curated.

Reprising songs commissioned from Australian composers Troy Russell (The Chant), Elizabeth Sheppard (Gandangarragal), and Club Weld singer/songwriter Clare Brown's beautiful work What the World Needs, River City Voices performed in the Saturday evening concert, and again in the Festival Choir Sunday Finale performance.

The Festival gave RCV choristers not only an opportunity to hear a range of different choirs and repertoire, but a chance to indulge in a weekend social getaway together!



BECAUSE.CROCS

August 2022 | Catch.com.au advertisement

When Artistic Director Sarah Penicka-Smith received an email about a possible advertisement appearance totally out of the blue, little did River City Voices choristers know what was ahead!! RCV, in this instance "the Croc Choir", was eventually selected to appear in Catch.com.au's quirky new national advertising campaign *Because*. As Marketing Director for Catch, Peita Golden said: "Engaging local talent such as River City Voices ensures the entire campaign is a true representation of the Aussie public".

Not only did choristers get to experience first-hand behind-the-scenes processes and personnel of the advertising industry's, but this project also ticked RCV's mission to engage in unexpected collaborations, shake some of the stereotypes about what a choir is, who sings in a choir and what they can do, as well as showcase our choristers' talents to a national audience !

In a feature article by Dallas Sherringham run in the Parramatta Times, chorister Belinda Huang had this to say: "We really embraced the chance to try something new and had a lot of fun doing it together. River City Voices is all about different people coming together to make music in an inclusive, collaborative way and I think it's amazing that we had this opportunity to have our voices out there and represent western Sydney on national television. Plus it's a bit of an in-joke now - we "croc-shuffle" on and off stage !"

The advertisement aired on 9 September on Channel 9 during the Eels game! It will run nationally for 12 months.



FROM THE STEPS - VOICES AT DUSK

27 October | Monumental Steps | Sydney Opera House

Many thanks for the opportunity to sing with you on The Steps. You are all so welcoming and friendly as well as being disciplined and musically challenging.
The choice of songs was inspiring."

Community Participant.

Curated by Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Artistic Director Brett Weymark OAM, this free program performed on the Monumental Steps opened the year-long Sydney Opera House's 50th birthday celebrations.

One of only 11 participating choirs from across Sydney performing over the 10 nights, River City Voices presented a 30 minute program featuring Australian composers, Clare Brown, Alice Chance (an audience participatory piece using mobile phones), Gordon Hamilton, Michael Kennedy, Andrew Schultz and Lisa Young, plus a well-known encore for fun - Cyndi Lauper's Time After Time.

Being an outdoor concert with no amplification, no wind protection and performed *a capella*, we were advised to gather a larger choir in order to amplify our voices. This provided RCV with a wonderful opportunity to invite talented community singers from across western Sydney to join in this once-in-a-lifetime experience, many of whom had previously participated in RCV workshops and the recent Blackheath Choir Festival, plus a few former choristers!

It had been a rather stormy week, with a few downpours on the day, but miraculously the wind dropped, the clouds cleared, and it was a brilliant evening for the 100 strong choir and audience alike!

Artists

Conductor Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith

River City Voices

Singers joining RCV for this event:

Ethar Al-Tamimi | Georgina Andrews | Diana van Breda | Joanna Brooke | Annie Burbank | Jan Donaldson | Veronica Esgin | Jenna Fae
Jenny Fisk | Angela Foster | Cheryl Fowler | Mely Galacio | Rita Gitto | Margaret Grove | Ghidaa Hattab | Deb Howell | Rebecca Huang
Jennifer Indsto | Sakiko Komatsu | Kaori Kukla | Fiona Lakos | Carmel Lemke | Ghada Lazar | Frances Louise | Ban Matti | Melva Macusi
Catherine Murcutt | Dhany Parker | Tin Soe | Libby Sorrell | Lucy Surtandi | Tonya Symons | Yana Taylor | Kerry Tongue
Bernadette Velasco | Elena Villacorta Cortez | Sarah Wielgosz | Ellen Wu | Bei Xu | Asmaa Yousif
Clive Arasaratnam-Smith | Gary Brewer | Michael Crozier | Jonathan Fowler | Jet Galacio | Bashar Hanna | Stephen Hawkins
Brian Julien | Joseph Lee | Amisone Lele | Sean McLoughlin | Peter Nguyen | Jacob Wielgosz





From The Steps-Voices at Dusk
Monumental Steps, Sydney Opera House
27 October 2022
Photo Credit: Belinda Dipola

HOLROYD REMEMBERS

11 November 2022 | Riverside Theatres

River City Voices choristers were invited to join Holroyd Brass Band for its concert Holroyd Remembers- Songs of the Great War.

A small group of singers had fun rehearsing in their May's Hill Band Hall - a room full of brass at full bore is something to behold and hear!

The concert in the Lennox Theatre was well received and it was great to connect with a local, talented arts organisation of such long-standing.



THE MESSIAH

8-11 December 2022 | Sydney Opera House



River City Voices choristers were once again invited to join Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Symphony Chorus for its performances of The Messiah in the recently refurbished Concert Hall. Together with the Christmas Choir, Vox and Chamber Singers the Hall resounded with around 500 voices and numerous standing ovations!

CORPORATE CAROLS

River City Voices was approached by management of the GPT Group to provide some Christmas cheer for its business tenants at 32 Smith Street and 60 Station Street in Parramatta in the week before Christmas.

A small group of singers entertained workers and tested out the foyer acoustics which were pretty good!

A festive way to end an incredibly busy and varied year of performing.



OUTREACH

FREE SINGING WORKSHOP

23 April 2022 | Cloister Hall, Parramatta

This was the first in person public workshop run by River City Voices since 2019.

Led by Sarah Penicka-Smith, participants received top tips for improving vocal quality as well as the opportunity to have a good old-fashioned sing together!

Interested participants were invited to audition for the choir following the workshop. Ten participants auditioned with six new choristers offered permanent positions.



ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

A combination of continuing COVID uncertainty and the need to eke out financial reserves has meant that this program continues to be on hold. Nevertheless, there were a number of opportunities for RCV to engage previous program participants, including Joanna Brooke leading the rehearsal below..



DEVELOPMENT REPORT

"One of the "virtues" of COVID-19 program cancellations was that time could be diverted to consolidating governance and development aspects of the organisation. With a full calendar of artistic activities back for 2022, time was once again stretched in this area but nevertheless advances made!"



Photo: Grant Leslie

The year began with successfully acquitting the City of Parramatta Creative Economy grant (Welded Voices project), and later, the Create NSW Organisational Grant obtained back in 2020. This grant, originally used to fund a part-time Development Manager, was varied no less than three times to accommodate the vagaries of COVID-19 during 2020/21. Funds were diverted across a range of activities, the final one being the May concert, Songs of Destiny.

A comprehensive application supported by Council and local organisations was submitted in October 2021 to the Federal government's post-COVID funding initiative R.I.S.E. This application sought funding for RCV's envisaged Global Voices Festival to run in September 2022. Parramatta currently has no regular festival that specifically celebrates and showcases the voice in all its different genres. RCV sought to kickstart a festival with the hope that it would gradually grow into a major event engaging local and international artists.

Notification of the outcome was delayed until March this year partly because grant rounds including RCV's, were unexpectedly merged, which meant that 700+ applicants across Australia sought \$290 million of which only \$20 million was available. So not unsurprisingly, RCV was not successful.

Following that outcome, an application for \$20K was submitted for a City of Parramatta Community Grants Creative Leveraging Grant for one of the events planned for the festival - Super Critical Mass Parramatta, a large scale community participatory music making event in one of Parramatta's most historic locations, Parramatta Gaol. Set to take place in September, it has been postponed until March 2023 due to the key artist's change in availability. Conditions of this grant require that RCV contribute 50% towards the project and so additional sponsorship will be sought.

In 2021, RCV ran its third successful crowdfunding campaign and raised sufficient funds to support the live performance of the recorded works from the Welded Voices project (RCV's second performance in 2022). The Board decided to "take a break" in 2022 from online campaigns conscious of member/donor fatigue and fall-out from two years of COVID, instead focusing attention on new sponsors and encouraging company members to promote box office sales for our first complete artistic season since 2019. Nevertheless, RCV did make a general appeal for donations raising an incredible \$ 20K throughout the year to support 2023 operational and artistic expenses. RCV is particularly grateful to long-term supporters Ann Hordern and Seth Molinari for their incredibly generous donations at the end of 2022.

RCV also received an unexpected commercial engagement from advertising agency Sunday Gravy for Catch.com.au that earned \$11K for the organisation. Connecting with local organisations is also key to development. To that end RCV executive is building a relationship with Western Sydney University, continues its membership of Parramatta Chamber of Commerce and Western Sydney Arts Alliance, and maintains a collegiate relationship with local politicians, arts organisations (including the new Western Sydney Philharmonic) and City of Parramatta Council, as well as seeking new ones with local businesses.

And as we started the year, we finish the year working on another grant application! This one a Create NSW Organisational Grant focused on supporting RCV's continued growth through planned capacity building activities in 23/24 and a succession strategy to transition the various roles currently undertaken by the General Manager's various volunteer roles into separate roles with paid personnel. Thank you for your continued support in helping to build what we believe is a truly inclusive, bold and unique arts organisation that proudly showcases the best of western Sydney talent !

INARA MOLINARI
Director & General Manager

DIRECTORS' SUMMARY

This summary includes both profiles of the Directors and comments on the prime features of River City Voices Ltd activities over the **12 months** to 31 December 2022.

DIRECTORS

The names of the board directors at any time during this period are:

CATHERINE DOLLE-SAMUEL

Chair

Catherine has diverse experience as a resilience and HRM professional as well as working as an academic in management and ethics. Coupled with experience working globally in a range of sectors, her significant exposure to and engagement with Board-level decisionmaking, enables her to consider strategy and operational issues. As a thought leader in the business continuity community, Catherine has engaged globally with sector colleagues to share knowledge and experiences.

She holds a Masters in Commerce (Organisation & Management), and an Honours degree majoring in Australian history and in the past five years, Catherine has volunteered her skills for the Business Continuity Institute, City of Parramatta's Historical Advisory Committee and local school Parents & Friends Associations.

Catherine was a founding member and key contributor of the choir VOX and is passionate about the artistic and cultural possibilities for the Western Sydney Region. Catherine is also a founding chorister.

SCHON G CONDON RFD

Director

Managing Principal of the Condon Advisory Group, Schon has a career spanning over 40 years in Accounting focusing on Financial, Operational, Sustainability and Management advice to help businesses during times of growth, stabilisation and difficulty. He is well recognised within the profession as a leading advisor and media spokesperson.

His professional role has seen him in numerous leadership and command roles including President of the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce, Chair of CPA Public Practice Committee, Chairman Hawkesbury Business Connection and President of the Royal Australian Artillery Association of NSW Inc.

Schon holds a Bachelor of Business Degree from the University of Technology Sydney and a Graduate Diploma in Management from the University of Canberra. He is a fellow of the Chartered Accountants ANZ, Institute of Public Accountants, CPA Australia, and former member of the State and National Public Practice committees, Taxation Institute of Australia, Foundation Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and Member of the Association of Independent Insolvency Practitioners.

In addition, Schon is a Commissioned Officer in the Australian Army and has maintained an active Army Reserve career, including being a former Commanding Officer of 23rd Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

PIROOZI DESAI-KEANE, OAM, JP

Director

After 40 years involvement, Piroozi retired from her leadership position as CEO with Sydney Eisteddfod but will retain her involvement with the Company as their Artistic Advisor in 2022. She is delighted to join the Executive Team of River City Voices and is looking forward to her involvement whilst also volunteering for other arts organisations, viz. Opera Australia and the Sydney Festival.

A woman of warm personality, Piroozi is passionate about the performing arts. Essentially a people's person, she speaks five languages and describes herself as a born organiser.

She is proud of the Australian citizenship that she adopted in 1984, takes her responsibilities very seriously and serves the community as a Justice of the Peace.

She enjoyed her work with the Sydney Eisteddfod and has many contacts within music and performing arts industries in Sydney and around Australia. She is proud of the emerging singers, dancers, musicians and actors that she has watched rise from the Sydney Eisteddfod platform over the years, follows their careers closely and is always one of the first to congratulate them when they enjoy new triumphs.

She lives in Sydney's eastern suburbs and is married to fourth generation Australian-born classical guitarist Christopher Keane - Conductor, Composer/Arranger.

ROBERT LOVE, AM

Director

Robert Love graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of NSW (majoring in drama). His first professional jobs were as trainee director for the Old Tote and Australian Theatre for Young People. In 1976 he founded Toe Truck Theatre, a theatre in education company, for which he acted, directed and managed for the next five years. Then followed short stints with the contemporary music Seymour Group and as a lecturer at James Cook University.

Senior management/leadership roles followed at the Seymour Centre, the New Nimrod Theatre, State Theatre Company of SA, Sydney Theatre Company and Fox Studios. Robert took up his position as Director of Riverside Theatres in late 2000 expanding its performance program to include festivals and annual seasons of theatre, dance and opera, a schools and family program, an arts and disability program, and music and cinema series. He facilitated Sydney, national and international performers and organisations in extending their programs to Parramatta. Over recent years he has advocated for the redevelopment and renewal of Riverside. He added the National Theatre of Parramatta as a local production house to the Riverside family in 2015. In August 2020 after 20 years at Riverside he stepped down as its Director to undertake projects through Love Stages continuing to promote the importance of performance in our community.

INARA MOLINARI

Founder, Director/Secretary

Inara has nearly thirty years’ experience in the performing arts and community sectors as a professional singer, administrator and manager. Her connection with the arts scene in western Sydney began over twenty years ago, when she established “Opera West” in Wentworthville, a weekly course for aspiring opera and music theatre singers.

After returning from the USA in 2000, Inara founded “The Tall Poppeas”, Sydney’s only female baroque vocal ensemble that delivered innovative programs and staged productions for festivals and curated programs throughout Sydney and interstate for ten years. Inara later co-founded Ondine Productions producing the Australian premiere performance of Francesca Caccini’s “La liberazione di Ruggiero dall’isola d’Alcina” (1625), which was short-listed for an ArtsHub award, and the premiere early music version of Philip Glass’s Akhnaten complete with infused perfume created in New York specially for the performance!

Inara has been a strong community advocate and volunteer in both the Cumberland and Parramatta LGA’s, representing the community during the Council Administration period following mergers, and also as a member of Cumberland’s Arts Advisory Committee.

Inara holds a Bachelor of Arts/Law from The University of Sydney, a Bachelor of Nursing from Australian Catholic University, and a Diploma in Opera from Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

WILLIAM SOPER FCA (UK)

Treasurer

Bill’s 40 year career as a chartered accountant in both the UK and Australia, has taken him from the accounting profession through to various consulting companies - both medium and large sized with between 30 and 1,500 employees.

His roles ranged from operational management through to Finance Director, and during his career his employers have included Price Waterhouse (now PWC), Dames & Moore, URS Australia (now Aecom) and ERM.

Although semi-retired, Bill continues to work in a voluntary capacity and included within these roles he has been Finance Director of Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA) Australia’s peak body for seniors and technology. He is currently President of the Computer Pals for Seniors group in Turramurra.

A keen cyclist, Bill managed a charity bike ride for a former colleague, and took up his greatest challenge yet, cycling from Melbourne to Sydney as part of the “Peleton Events Ultimate Challenge”, raising significant funds for three different charities.

RAQUEL TRACY

Director

Raquel has an extensive career in strategic communications, media and engagement across diverse industries, including higher education (UAC, ACU, University of Notre Dame), infrastructure (Ventia), and utilities (Sydney Water).

As a business advisor to senior management, she identifies and evaluates risks and provides expert counsel on how to build, leverage and protect brand reputation. She has worked for corporate, not-for-profit and government organisations and has first-hand experience in getting a start-up off the ground, having co-founded the design and communications studio, Creative Itch, in 2005.

Raquel holds a Bachelor of Design in Visual Communication (First Class Honours) from Western Sydney University and a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from the University of Technology Sydney.

Raquel is passionate about the arts and is a keen advocate for diverse forms of cultural expression in Western Sydney.

MEETINGS OF DIRECTORS

There were seven (7) directors' meetings in 2022.

Director	Number eligible to attend	Number attended
Schon Condon	7	6
Catherine Dolle-Samuel	7	7
Piroozi Desai-Keane, OAM	7	7
Robert Love, AM	2	2
Inara Molinari	7	7
William Soper	7	7
Raquel Tracy	5	4

DIRECTORS' BENEFITS

No Director of the company has, since the end of the previous financial period, received or become entitled to receive a benefit by reason of a contract made by the company with the Director or with a firm of which they are a member, or with a company in which they have substantial financial interest, other than directors’ remuneration disclosed in the financial notes.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The principal activity of the company during the financial period was to enrich Australian culture by facilitating the public performance of choral works.

2022 saw a resumption of annual curated program activities with some unexpected commercial and external engagements which contributed significantly to the organisation's artistic achievements and financial earnings.

A comparison of 2022 to 2021 activities in light of changing regulations around COVID-19 is shown below:

2022	Rehearsals - 34 face to face - indoors, full choir - 0 Zoom only	2021	Rehearsals - 2 face to face - outdoors/Zoom, split choir - 9 face to face - indoors, split choir - 15 face to face - indoors, full choir - 13 Zoom only
	Performances - 3 (RCV curated event)		Performances - 0 (RCV curated event)
	Performances - 8 (External engagement)		Performances - 1 (External engagement)
	RCV Virtual events - 0		RCV Virtual events - 1
	RCV Workshop - 1		RCV Workshop - 0
	Recording Sessions - 1		Recording Sessions - 11
	Commercial/Corporate engagements- 2		Commercial/Corporate engagements- 0

OPERATING RESULTS

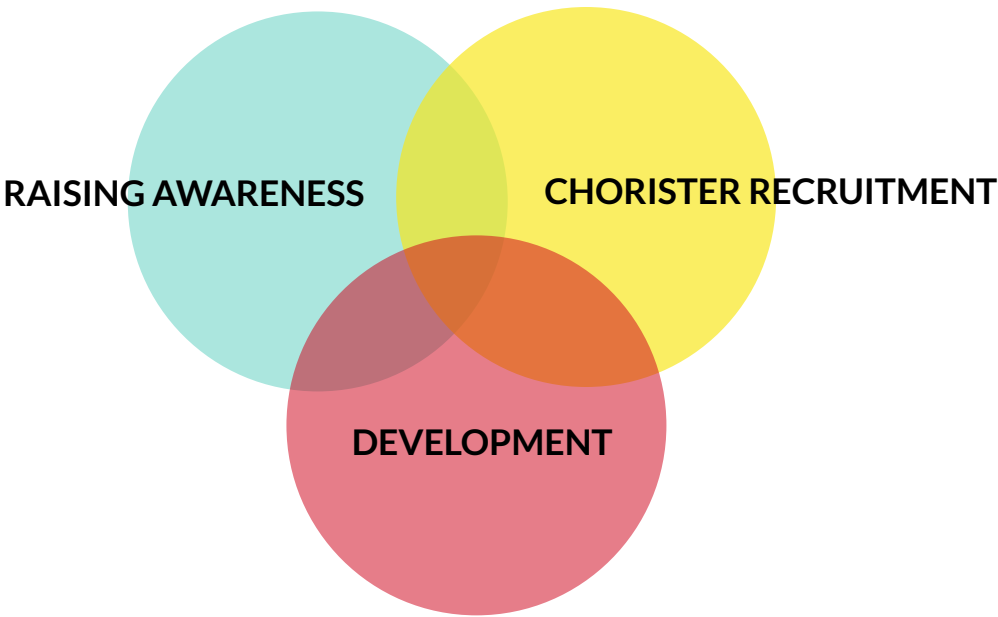
Activities for the 12 month period ending December 2022 resulted in a profit of \$11,790. Operating revenue for the financial year to 31 December 2022 was \$92,939.00 representing a 270% increase in operating revenue compared with the end of 2021.

STRATEGIC GOALS - 2018 - 2022

1. Raising awareness of the company's existence.
Commencing the year with a large collaborative program at Riverside Theatres, ensured that River City Voices heralded its return post-COVID in a significant and wide-reaching way. The momentum was maintained throughout the year with performances taking place in Parramatta and beyond, including at the Sydney Opera House, Blackheath Choir Festival, and of course on national television. Whilst we did not attain the \$3.3K Facebook post reach high received for last year's Open Rehearsal video, RCV did average a 1.5K reach across 10 separate Facebook posts for a variety of RCV activities throughout the year.

2. Chorister Recruitment
2022 began with a total of 41 singers, a few singers less than the beginning of 2021. With post-workshop auditions, chorister numbers peaked to 51, the largest cohort to date.

3. Development
RCV's General Manager resumed the role of Development Manager in 2022. Refer to the report on page 21.



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Nil significant changes.

LIKELY DEVELOPMENTS/ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

Whilst a full calendar of events was delivered in 2022, COVID-19 continued to exert its influence on rehearsals and performances with large scale chorister absences due to illness. Audiences have not consistently returned to pre-COVID numbers across all RCV curated events, and a new trend of last minute purchases, makes it difficult to manage ROI decisions and risks.

MEMBERS' GUARANTEE

The company is incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 and is a company limited by guarantee. If the company is wound up the constitution states that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the entity. At the end of 2022 the number of members was 6.

BASIS OF PREPARATION

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis.

No provision for income tax has been raised, as the company is exempt from income tax under Division 50 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

The directors have determined that the company is not a reporting entity because there are no users who are dependent on its general purpose financial reports. The company is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the mandatory Australian Accounting Standards applicable to entities reporting under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and the significant accounting policies disclosed below, which the directors have determined are appropriate to meet the needs of members. The company was registered with the ACNC on 31 July 2018.



STATEMENT OF PROFIT & LOSS

Period ending 31 December 2022

REVENUE	NOTE	Dec 2022 \$	Dec 2021 \$
Grants	1(a)	29,794	11,483
Sponsorship, fundraising and philanthropic		13,141	17,251
Ticket and registration sales		20,450	0
Chorister Contributions		8,735	5,240
Performance Fees		15,800	0
Merchandise		1,335	0
Bank interest		430	43
Sundry		2,495	22
TOTAL REVENUE		92,939	34,039
EXPENDITURE	NOTE	Dec 2022 \$	Dec 2021 \$
Artistic Contractor Fees		56,081	30,998
Administration contractor fees		0	8,975
Marketing		1,689	1,095
Production Costs (includes venue hire)		16,331	6,231
Administration		3,430	2,313
Equipment		59	410
Depreciation		1,287	195
Sundry		1,822	0
TOTAL EXPENSES		81,149	50,217
NET PROFIT/ (LOSS)		11,790	(16,178)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Period ending 31 December 2022

	NOTE	Dec 2022 \$	Dec 2021 \$
Cash on Hand		87,654	71,131
Non-Current Assets - Equipment	1(b) ; 2	10,145	11,432
TOTAL ASSETS		97,799	82,563
CURRENT LIABILITIES	NOTE	Dec 2022 \$	2021 \$
Accounts payable and deferred revenue	1(c) ; 3	34,200	30,754
TOTAL LIABILITIES		34,200	30,754
NET ASSETS		63,599	51,809
TOTAL EQUITY		63,599	51,809

NOTES

1(a). Non reciprocal grant revenue is recognised in profit and loss when the entity obtains control of the grant and it is probable that the economic benefits gained from the grant will flow to the entity and the amount of the grant can be measured reliably.

(b). All assets acquired including property, plant, equipment, and tangibles other than goodwill are initially recorded at their cost of and at the date of acquisition, being the fair value of teh consideration provided plus incidental costs directly attributable to the acquisition.

(c). Accounts payable and other payables represent the liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the company during the reporting period which remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amounts usually paid within 30 days of the recognition of the liability.

2. Property, plant and equipment

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Plant and equipment		
Cost		
Opening balance	11,627	0
Disposals	0	0
Additions	0	11,627
Closing	11,627	11,627
Depreciation		
Opening balance	195	0
Depreciation on disposals	-	0
Expense	1,287	195
Closing	1,482	195
Written down value end of year	10,145	11,432

3. Accounts payable and other payables

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Current		
Trade creditors and accruals	1,000	960
Grants and fees in advance	30,200	29,794
Provision for expected expenses	3,000	0
	34,200	30,754



River City Voices

RIVER CITY VOICES LTD

ABN: 79 627 858 315

manager@rivercityvoices.org.au

www.rivercityvoices.org.au