

MEDIA RELEASE

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Victoria's homeless community to receive free tickets to ACU's Big Sing for a Big Cause

Melbourne-based composer Dr Kathleen McGuire will mark the 10th anniversary of her acclaimed choral work *Street Requiem* with a new community music project, ACU's Big Sing for a Big Cause.

The project will raise funds for people struggling to find secure accommodation and free tickets will be given to organisations that support Victoria's homeless community.

Since its world premiere in Melbourne in 2014, the critically acclaimed *Street Requiem* has been performed more than 30 times worldwide by 6,000 people, raising more than \$250,000 for charities supporting people who experience homelessness.

Informed by the traditional Catholic Latin Mass for the dead, *Street Requiem*, by McGuire and fellow composers Andy Payne and Jonathan Welch, is a response to rising levels of poverty and violence on the streets.

Big Sing for a Big Cause will feature two concerts, one in Melbourne at St Patrick's Cathedral and the second at the brand-new Performing Arts Centre at St Patrick's College, Ballarat.

World-class Indigenous artist Jess Hitchcock will perform as a guest soloist at the Melbourne concert.

The program will also premiere new music composed by McGuire and Payne to give a voice to people living on the street, asking "What will you say when they carry me away?", which includes a rap component addressing street violence.

The full performance will feature a massed choir and orchestra with students and staff from Australian Catholic University, where McGuire is a senior lecturer in Music Education. The ACU Choir will be joined by secondary school students and singers from the wider community, including members of a choir from Auckland, New Zealand.

"I am thrilled to commemorate the 10th anniversary of *Street Requiem* with some of my own students and colleagues from ACU, and honoured guests from Victoria and New Zealand, to stand up for the lives of people who have tragically died on our streets," McGuire said.

"*Street Requiem* is a composition remarkably close to my heart, as someone who has conducted choirs and community music projects with people experiencing homelessness in Australia and the United States of America, and sadly, having witnessed students experiencing their own housing crises.

"As a Music Educator, I believe in the power of community music-making to enact social justice, impact hearts and minds, and change lives."

ACU student's family housed homeless family and friend

ACU Creative Arts student Alia McBride is one of 40 students and staff from ACU lending their voices to the choir.

Alia's family home has become a safe haven for people experiencing homelessness.

During the 2020 Melbourne lockdown, Alia discovered one of her high school friends had been kicked out of their family home. Her family agreed to house her temporarily, with Alia opting to sleep on a mattress in her sister's room.

"We grew to love her as another sister but her time with us was not without its struggles. Navigating VCE, Centrelink, friendships and relationships was extremely difficult on her," she said.

Alia has also witnessed the desperation of her maternal grandparents, after they fled a dangerous family situation in their home in New Zealand last year. They now housesit across Victoria and live with Alia's family in between jobs.

Alia has invited her formerly homeless friend, who is now in secure housing and a talented singer, to perform in *Street Requiem* with the ACU Choir on August 24.

"I am so grateful to be at a university that values the support of issues such as the housing crisis and poverty," Alia said.

"I believe we have the unique opportunity, with advancements in global communication, to spread the word to people who otherwise would never considered such issues. I am immensely proud to be a part of that process at ACU."

The final-year university student said *Street Requiem* was more than a concert performance.

"Street Requiem is hard to describe in words other than 'moving'," she said.

"There is sorrow, hope, anger, and contemplation.

"After the first rehearsal, I listened to recordings of the work multiple times driving home at night. I felt validated in my despair and frustration about homelessness but encouraged to see the possibility of change at my own hands."

Proceeds from the performances in Melbourne and Ballarat will go towards ACU's Urgent Financial Hardship Grant, and Peplow House Crisis Accommodation Support in Ballarat, a service of CatholicCare Victoria.

Tickets to ACU's Big Sing for a Big Cause *Street Requiem* 10th Anniversary Concert are now available [here](#).

Dr Kathleen McGuire is available for interview.

ACU's Big Sing for a Big Cause featuring *Street Requiem's* 10th Anniversary Concerts

Ballarat

When: Saturday 24 August 2024 - 3PM

Where: Performing Arts Centre, St Patrick's College, Ballarat

Melbourne

When: Sunday 25 August 2024 – 4PM

Where: St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne East