Folksongs showcase wealth of singing talent at WAAPA

On Thursday 9 April at 7.30pm, the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts presents Folksongs, a concert of vocal chamber music performed by WAAPA’s best singers, and featuring elegiac works by Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, Samuel Barber, Arnold Cooke and the quirky delights of Luciano Berio’s ‘Folk Songs’.

Vocal chamber music has a history of being written by composers for their friends – and sometimes even themselves – to perform. Often a composer would dedicate a new work to a friend or colleague, or offer it as a gift for an occasion. Because of this personal element, the music is directly appealing and honest, as if the audience has been invited to join a performance in an intimate setting.

All of the music featured in Folksongs was composed with that social impulse in mind.

Benjamin Britten – who accompanied his own songs brilliantly – wrote all of his vocal compositions for his personal and musical partner, tenor Peter Pears. Vaughan Williams, who was a fine violinist and violist, composed his chamber music for specific performers. His settings of ‘On Wenlock Edge’ evoke the sombre beauty of the landscape on the English and Welsh border.

Samuel Barber, who had a beautiful baritone voice, set Matthew Arnold’s moving poem ‘Dover Beach’ to sing himself with string quartet for one of a series of NBC broadcasts. Pianist and cellist Arnold Cooke loved the poetry of William Blake, setting many to music. Folksongs will present three of Cooke’s songs, each given a lyrical, slightly magical setting.

Luciano Berio composed his ‘Folk Songs’ for his first wife, the charismatic and unconventional mezzo-soprano Cathy Berberian. Gathering songs from America, France, Italy and Eastern Europe, he added unique colours to them with his instrumental arrangement for harp, small ensemble and an array of percussion including car suspension springs!

“We have a number of really promising mezzo-sopranos at WAAPA and the Berio is an ideal showcase for them,” says musical director David Wickham. “Perhaps it’s their voice that does it, but they all share the same rich sense of humour and big character. It’s just as well, as the songs have an earthy passion that needs a generous performance."

Performance Information: Folksongs
Thursday 9 April at 7.30pm.
Music Auditorium, WAAPA, Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford St, Mt Lawley.
Tickets are $20 full/$15 concession. Bookings through WAAPA Box Office on 9370 6636.

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For further information or to discuss interview opportunities, please contact:
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