

Gertrude Opera Presents

*Yarra Valley
Opera Festival*



GO YVOF Art Series
#7/8 *Kate Kelly*
Jess Reddi-Coronell

Kate Kelly

7pm - Saturday October 24, 2020

Kate Kelly

By Merrill Findlay and Ross James Carey

Kate Kelly

Emily Burke - soprano

'Bricky' Foster

Andrew Moran - baritone

Quong Lee

Michael Lapiña

Director - Linda Thompson

Music Director - Patrick Burns

Editor - Greta Nash

Sound Design - Fergus Nash

Violin - Thibauld Pavlovic-Hobba (Flinders Quartet)

Cello - Zoe Knighton (Flinders Quartet)

Clarinet - Brendan Toohey

Accordion* - Patrick Burns

Ensemble

Daniel Felton

Tash Atkins

Lana Lowry

Cinematographer TAS - Anna Cadden

Cinematographer VIC - Tiana Koutsis

Cinematographer NSW - Eهران Edwards

Production Management - Matthew Nash

Kate Kelly premiered as a song cycle in a concert performance at the inaugural Kalari-Lachlan River Arts Festival at Forbes, NSW in 2011

Kate Kelly

Produced under stage 4 lockdown in Melbourne, with artists and cinematographers in NSW, VIC and TAS.

Singers don't just 'tell' stories. They live them. The stories they sing are personal - bringing their emotional range to words and music to make characters come alive. They may sing of historical figures who feel regret, fear, shame, love and loss - the context is different - but we are all more alike than different. In this 'isolation' treatment of Kate Kelly, our singers' own worlds drift in and out of the world of real people of the past. Voices we see coming from a singer, voices in their heads, in our heads, serve as a reminder for us all to feel, acknowledge, learn and grow from the messages of voices from the past, and present.

Libretto by Merrill Findlay

Bricky's Sorry Song

BRICKY

I'm now too old to mount a horse
Too old to raise my fist
Though not too old to raise my glass
Or boast at the pub 'bout my youth
As a drinker, a fighter, a horseman
No-one could beat me then
Except for she who's still haunting me
As a ghost from the Forbes Lagoon

Kate me darlin', what would I do,
If you was 'ere with me now?
What could I say, what could I do
To make you love me again?

She could have done better than me, I know
Could have married my brother instead
Artie was sober and straight and in love
But Kate loved horses more than we men
The only time I saw her happy
Was breaking in colts at South Park
Whispering sweet nothings into their ears

Till they did whatever she asked
So what did I, a jealous man, do?
I forbade her from riding again
She disobeyed me, of course
So I lashed out again
And I hit her ...

Kate me darlin', what would I do
If you was 'ere with me now?
What could I say, what could I do
To make you love me again?

I bashed the woman I cherished
Even when she was with child
Hit her and shouted abuse at her
And even the police couldn't stop me
Because it wasn't against the law
But Kate, she never let me forget
What a mean mongrel I was
She even tried to kick me out
So what did I, a jealous man, do?
I raised my hand and hit her
Knocked her to the floor

Kate me darlin', what would I do
If you was 'ere with me now?
What could I say, what could I do
To make you love me again?

So I got a job at Big Burrawang
Horse tailer for Tom Edols and Co
Feeding and watering the horses at dusk
Bringing them back to the camp at dawn
The station was 300,000 acres then
The biggest shearing shed in the world
I lived in the barracks with the single men
And we drank and fought and whored
On pay day I'd ride thirty miles into Forbes
Leave some cash for Kate and the kids
And yes, it's true
I was with her the night before the day she left
But ... I. Did. Not. Kill. Her ...
Though Brigit, the wife of my brother Ernie
Swears black and blue that I did
You drove here to her death, Brigit says
Instead of giving her support
You raised your fist and hit her
Hit her. Hit her
Now hang your head in shame

Kate me darlin', what would do
If you was 'ere with me now?

What could I say, what could I do
To make you love me again?

Now I'm too old to mount a horse
Too old to argue and fight
A lonely old bloke, a bush battler
If there's one thing I've learned
In all my years
It's that blokes like me are fools
We've bashed, burned, shot and polluted
Chopped down everything in our way
And if I had my life all over again
I wouldn't live it in the same way
But at least I know now what I'd do
If me darlin' Kate was still 'here with me

I'd say I'm sorry, forgive me, help me please
And show me how to change

What could I do, what could I say
To make you love me again?
I'm sorry, forgive me, help me please
And show me how to change

I'm sorry, forgive me, help me please
And show me how to change

Ghosts of Glenrowan

KATE

I'm galloping, galloping 'long the Lachlan
Trying to escape my past
But the flames, the flames, the memories
Are burning me, overwhelmingly
No matter where I go
Or how fast

I'm galloping, galloping 'long the Lachlan
Trying to escape my past
But the flames, the flames, the memories
Are burning me, overwhelmingly
Overwhelmingly
Are burning burning me
No matter where I go
Or how fast

[spoken]

Those charcoal stumps on the old pub floor
They can't be Steve and Dan
And the body tied to the Benalla door

It's not my friend Ah Joe

[sung]

Nor the young man swinging from the gallows
He's not my brother Ned ...

Yet the memories keep flashing inside of me
Hauntingly, accusingly
They must be true like people say
I wish they'd just go away

So I'm galloping, galloping 'long the Lachlan
Trying to flee the horror
The flames, the flames, the memories
Are burning me, overwhelmingly
No matter where I go
Nor how fast

When Fitzpatrick knocked on the door that night
He said it was to arrest Dan
But it was me he was really after
Everything else was libel and lies
My mum never hit him
Like he said she did
And Ned never fired a shot
All they did was demand of him
That he do the right thing by me
A matter of family honour, Ned said
Though he could never say that to a judge

But what could I do?

[spoken]

I was only fourteen at the time
So I'm galloping, galloping 'long the Lachlan
[sung]

Trying to forgive myself

But the flames, the flames, the memories
Are burning me, overwhelmingly

Mum went to jail with the baby
All because of Fitzpatrick's lies
Ned and Dan became wanted men
Hiding out in the Wombat Hills
My younger brother Jim was already inside
For a couple of horses he sold

Which left Maggie and me and little Grace
Back home at Eleven Mile Creek
To feed the stock, milk the cows
Churn the butter,
Look after the kids

And supply the boys as well
With ammunition, food and news

So I'm galloping, galloping 'long the Lachlan
Trying to forget who I am
But the flames, the flames, the memories
Are burning me, overwhelmingly
Overwhelmingly
Overwhelmingly
Overwhelmingly

No matter where I go
Or how fast

Yet the memories keep flashing inside of me
Hauntingly, accusingly
They must be true like people say
They must be true like people say
I just wish they'd go away

Forbes is nice but I feel so alone
Few even know my real name
I'm afraid that if I told them the truth
They'd all think badly of me
Hugh McDougall from Warroo
The Smiths of Cadow
The Luthjes, Gunns and Prows
Have been so good to me
And my in-laws, the Fosters, are kind

But I miss the comfort of my own family
Especially Maggie, Dan and Ned
I need them now so desperately
Especially when my husband's in town
If my brothers knew they'd shoot him
As for my mother, all she'd probably say is
[spoken]
You silly girl, I told you so

The Harvest Moon In Spring

QUONG LEE
When the Harvest Moon hangs low over old Guangzhou
When last sheaf of rice has been threshed
It's Zhong Qiu Jie on the Zhujiang Delta
Time to celebrate what we've reaped

When the Harvest Moon hangs low over old Guangzhou
When last sheaf of rice has been threshed
It's Zhong Qiu Jie on the Zhujiang Delta

Time to celebrate what we've reaped

With mooncakes and coloured lanterns
And prayers to Moon Mother Chang'e
But here the year's all upside down
The Harvest Moon rises in Spring
Yet I still hang the Zhong Qiu lanterns
And bake mooncakes for my friends
Like that young Mrs Foster up the street
Who thanked me in Cantonese
Do jeh, do jeh saai, she'd say
Neih sihk jo faahn meih a?
A friend Ah Joe taught her, she told me once
Though she rarely spoke of her past
I'd always give her kiddies sweets
Whenever they came into my shop
Young Freddie and the little girls
I'd tell them stories from old Guangzhou

With moon cakes and coloured lanterns
And prayers to the Moon Mother Chang'e

When the Harvest Moon hangs low over old Guangzhou
When last sheaf of rice has been threshed
It's Zhong Qiu Jie on the Zhujiang Delta
Time to celebrate what we've reaped

Tell them stories from old Guangzhou
About the Moon Lady and her jade rabbit
Look for them, Freddie,
Next time moon was full
You can see the jade rabbit with his mortar then
Pounding his magic medicine
The elixir of eternal life

[spoken]

Can Mummy have some 'lixir too?
Young Freddie asked one day
Because she has been feeling very sad
What could I tell the boy?
That the rabbit was just a legend?

[sung]

But I wish I'd listened better now
Because by next full moon
His mummy had disappeared

[spoken]

His mummy had disappeared.

[sung]

Mr Sullivan found her body in the billabong
Behind Ah Toy's garden near the old stone bridge

Constable Garstang brought it into town
To Mrs Ryan's Hotel across the road
We locals kept vigil on my veranda
And gossiped while we waited for news
Some thought it was suicide
Or she slipped and fell
While others assumed foul play
Her husband's a prime suspect they said
A brute when he's drunk
Though she covers her bruises up well
We thought the coroner would answer our questions
About who, how, why, where and when
But his findings were inconclusive
Not enough evidence

The truth no longer matters
For Mrs Foster and her friends
Not since she's tasted the moon rabbit's medicine
She has become immortal, a legend, a myth

So when the Harvest Moon hangs low on the Lachlan
When it's time to celebrate what we've reaped
I hang the red lanterns on my veranda
Bake mooncakes for my friends

And remember that young Mrs Foster
What was it she'd always say?

Do jeh, do jeh saai

So when the Harvest Moon hangs low on the Lachlan
Time to celebrate what we've reaped
So when the Harvest Moon hangs low on the Lachlan
Time to celebrate
Neih sihk jo faahn meih a?

Poor Irish and Wiradjuri

KATE

I see her on the river bank
I see her down the street
Ellen Googoolin
Yellow Belly Woman

ENSEMBLE

I see her on the river bank
I see her down the street
Ellen Googoolin
Yellow Belly Woman

KATE

Who reminds me of Ellen my mum
Not because they look the same
Poor Irish and Wiradjuri
It's s more to do with attitude

ENSEMBLE

Poor Irish and Wiradjuri
It's s more to do with attitude

KATE

They're Warrior Women, these Ellens
Fighting against the odds

ENSEMBLE

I see her on the river bank
I see her down the street
Ellen Googoolin
Yellow Belly Woman

KATE

They drink and swear and misbehave
Have troubles with the law
Not so much for what they do
More for who they are

ENSEMBLE

Poor Irish and Wiradjuri

Poor Irish and Wiradjuri

KATE & ENSEMBLE

Poor Irish and Wiradjuri

KATE

One's been here since time began
Since thousands of grandmothers ago
The other sailed across the sea
From Baile Meánach, Éirinn
A little girl with a big family
One tells me ancient tales
Which all begin right here
Baime, Kurikuta and Wawi

The other tales from far away
Saint Pádraig, Brigit and Colum Cille
Aes sídhe, Cú Chulainn, and Temair na Ri

So many different legends
Yet some almost the same
'Bout things you know in your heart are true
Yet no-one else can see

Like bugeeyn, bunyips and spirit people
Banshees, fairies and leprechauns

Poor Irish and Wiradjuri
Poor Irish and Wiradjuri

[Spoken]
But the stories of these Ellens
That I like most of all
Are about freedom, justice and [sung] liberty
[spoken]
Heroes fighting for our destiny
Like Pemulwuy

ENSEMBLE Pemulwuy
In 1788
Wolfe Tone and the United Irish
1798
Wolfe Tone
Windradyne and his clansfolk
1824
Windradyne

KATE
[spoken]
Dan O'Connell, the Emancipator
And, of course, our own Cú Chulainn
My brother Ned
And his Republic of East Gippland
Poor Irish and Wiradjuri

ENSEMBLE Cú Chulainn - Ah.....

These are the stories they told me
The Yellow Belly Woman
And Ellen my Mum
Two Warrior Women
Fighting against the odds
Who drink and swear and misbehave
Have troubles with the law
Not so much for what they do
More for who they are
Poor Irish and Wiradjuri

I heard the banshee cry

KATE
Last night I heard the banshee cry
Wailing on the wind
A message from the Otherworld
That someone soon will die

Alone after midnight
No moon in the sky
Pacing the floor with my baby
Trying to feed her, hush her, settle her down

A branch knocking on the window
Something scraping, scratching 'cross the roof

Then a strange, unearthly kind of sound
From somewhere near the lagoon

A weeping, wailing, sobbing

Like the stories my grandmother told
It sounded to me like a banshee cry ...
Or was it a fox or curlew?

I think I heard the banshee cry
Wailing on the wind
A message from the Otherworld
That someone soon will die.

The flickering flame of the candle
Coals glowing red in the grate
I sat in the chair by the fireplace
Holding my baby in my arms
Shivering, shaking, I didn't dare move
Remembering my grandmother's warning
Don't ever look into a banshee's eyes, my girl

[ALL WHISPERED]
Else she'll drag you down to a bog

KATE
And drown you ...

I think I heard the banshee cry
Wailing on the wind
A message from the Otherworld
Who was it for?
Was it me?

I closed my eyes so I couldn't look
I really don't want to drown
Though there are days, I admit
When all I want to do is die
Others when I wouldn't be dead for quids
Like today, when Susan, my neighbour, and I
Took the kids for a walk to Chinaman's Bridge
Mr Quong Lee was sitting on his veranda
He gave us moon cakes and sugarplum sweets
Grannie Foster was in her garden next door

She gave us roses for our hats
Ah Toy was planting his cabbages
In his patch down by the bridge
He pulled fresh carrots for the kids to eat!
Then we walked by the lagoon back home
Freddie skimming stones across the water

The little girls chasing the ducks

And yet I heard the banshee cry
Wailing on the wind
A message from the Otherworld
Who was it for ...?

And yet I heard the Banshee
[spoken]
Such everyday ordinary is lovely to me
After some of the places I've lived
[sung]
Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide
I was famous back then
People even paid to see me ride
Wrote stories for the Argus and Bulletin
That were almost always lies
But there's nothing in a big city
For a country girl who can't read or write
I'm much better off with my children
And everyday ordinary in Forbes

And yet I think I heard the banshee cry
And yet I think I heard the Banshee cry
Wailing wailing
Wailing on the wind

But bugger the banshee on a day like today
She can keen and wail all she likes
I'm not ready yet for the Otherside
I'm staying here to grow old and wise

ALL

But bugger the banshee on a day like today
She can keen and wail all she likes
I'm not ready yet for the Otherside
I'm staying here to grow old and wise

KATE

To tell wild stories to my grandkids
About that other life I led
The great-grandparents from Ireland
Their famous great uncles and aunts
Maggie, Dan, Jim and Ned
Who shared my life in that Other Place

Our farm on Eleven Mile Creek

ALL

But bugger the banshee on a day like today
She can kee and wail all she likes
I'm not ready yet for the Otherside
I'm staying here to grow old and wise

KATE

To tell wild stories to my grandkids
About that other life I led
The great-grandparents from Ireland
Their famous great uncles and aunts

ALL

But bugger the banshee on a day like today
She can kee and wail all she likes
I'm not ready yet for the
Otherside
I'm staying here

KATE

And yet I heard the banshee cry
Wailing on the wind

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With many thanks:

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**virtual*