**Kō Āhau Anake *(I Am Alone)***

The inspiration for this song cycle came in 2020 when Leon Gray stumbled on the waiata, *Whakapukepuke Ai, Auē.* The stunningly sad words sung by someone grieving for a passed loved one immediately struck him, replete with beautiful marine and native plant imagery.

“There was so much scope for word-painting in the style of Lieder, chanson or British art-song, but its greatest magic was of course, its Te Reo – not simply because of the sheer imagery, but also the natural beauty of the vowels that make Te Reo beautiful.”

Having worked with dozens of classical singers as a pianist over the years, Gray knew the power and drama that a beautifully delivered, emotionally connected performance of Lieder can possess. He wanted to develop something similar in Te Reo.

“Many, many, many of the young singers I worked with went off to Europe, UK, America to pursue their careers, but so, so many wished they had Te Reo art-songs to take with them, that would appeal to international audiences.

“I wanted to write something beautiful and well-crafted with, I hope, an international appeal that makes Te Reo more accessible to the wider world. It still surprises me that outside of the South Pacific, folk in the Northern Hemisphere have never experienced hearing Te Reo, and its Pasifika language cousins.

“When I taught ‘Māhunga Pakihiwi’ to kids in Scottish primaries, or used Te Reo commands during class-time, they had NEVER heard anything like it, and loved it!”

Eventually, Gray found that the historical owners of *Whakapukepuke Ai, Auē* were Wairarapa Moana, with text by their tūpuna wahine, Hine Paewai. They had also put up a YouTube video of Mihi Namana singing the original tune.

“It is so exciting,” said Charmaine Kawana of Wairarapa Moana, “I am related to both aunty Mihi and aunty Hine Paewai (deceased) and feel privileged to consider and accept your request to showcase this amazing waiata.”

Gray set the text to new music in 2020, and eventually the work found its way to Rotorua mezzo-soprano, Elisha Fa'i-So'oialo. After excited discussions, she and Gray made a loose plan to record it some time when things weren’t so busy.

“Actually, it was Elisha who suggested it be extended to a song-cycle,” says Gray.

“It was such a powerful text, it seemed right to frame it with additional pieces to really explore the character. Grief is such a complex emotion and there are so many facets to explore poetically and musically.”

The remaining three texts were developed in collaboration with Tauranga Kaumatua, Buddy Mikaere, who took no time to agree to help. When the opportunity came up to present the pieces at the MENZA 2023 conference, Gray and Fa'i-So'oialo jumped at it.

“Thanks to Kat Daniela, we’re looking forward to sharing a kind of waiata-toi that we hope our audience will really respond to; perhaps, inspiring other Aotearoa New Zealand composers to embrace writing more music in this style.”

1. **Kō Āhau Anake** (text developed with the assistance of Buddy Mikaere)

The first piece is restless, as if someone has received bad news and is stunned silent. The singer reflects on the numbness and the coldness they are feeling – like disbelief, rising to dramatic realisation in the last third of the piece.

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| Kō āhau anake, he rākau kōwhai,  engari kāore i kōwhai hei utu,  Kāore ōku tae anei, he kapua,  i te rangi e ngunguru nei  e tātari ana ki te tangi  Engari kāore e taea,  he makariri rawa  kāore he ua, ka hukarere noa iho  ka heke.  Kō āhau anake, he rakāu kōwhai,  engari kaore i kowhai hei utu,  hina, te tae o te ua,  hina, te tae o nga kapua,  hina, te tae o te maunga kau,  Kō āhau anake. | *I am alone, a kowhai tree,*  *but not yellow, instead,*  *I have no colours, like a cloud,*  *in the thunderous sky*  *waiting to cry.*  *But it is not possible,*  *it is too cold;*  *there is no rain, only snow,*  *falling.*  *I am alone, a kowhai tree,*  *but not yellow, instead,*  *grey, the colour of rain,*  *grey, the colour of clouds,*  *grey, the colour of the empty mountain.*  *I am alone.* |

1. **Mēnā I Hoki Mai Koe** (text developed with the assistance of Buddy Mikaere)

The second piece is about the warmth that life with the passed one would be like if they could come back. As the singer dreams of their loved one returning, the energy in their vision leads to excitement, ever tinged with melancholy. Word-painting in the piano line is used throughout, highlighting the flying bees, the long roots growing, and the cool air and storms.

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| Mēnā i hoki mai koe.  Kia pēhea te reka e kia tātou hua mātai.  To tātou aroha, rite ōna kikokiko reka,  E rere i rōtō i te rangi,  I runga i ngā tuarā o nga pi.  Mēnā i hoki mai koe.  Mēnā i hoki mai koe.  Kia pēhea te roroa ka tupu to tātou kahikatea.  To mātou whare, ki te pakiaka hōhonu,  Ka karanga mai ki to mātou  whānau i tāwhiti,  i nga wā katoa.  Mēnā i hoki mai koe.  Kō a mātou kupu whakaari, ka tūtuki tonu,  te tipu i te hau makariri,  āwhā me nga wā uaua.  Mēnā i hoki mai koe.  Mēnā… Mēnā… | *If you came back*  *How delicious would be our ripe fruit.*  *Our love, like its sweet flesh,*  *Flying in the sky,*  *On the backs of the bees.*  *If you came back.*  *If you came back,*  *How tall will our kahikatea grow.*  *Our house, with deep roots,*  *Would call to*  *our family from far away,*  *always*  *If you came back.*  *Our promises, always fulfilled,*  *growing in cool air,*  *storms and hard times.*  *If you came back.*  *If… If…* |

1. **Ha Aha Āhau?** (text developed with the assistance of Buddy Mikaere)

In the third piece, the singer tries to console themselves by thinking why they *didn’t* always love the passed one. Written in a jovial way, in both the vocal and piano lines, there is word-painting again when talking about the wandering tales that ruined other people’s stories, and were annoying like a sandfly. But, despite their joking, the singer can only think like this for a brief time before feeling the sadness return at the end.

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| He aha āhau i aroha ai ki a koe?  Kōrero tonu koe roa rawa  Te kōpikopiko pēnei i te rātā,  Te karapoti i nga kōrero  te tipu i rōtō i nga rākau pai ake.  He aha āhau i aroha ai ki a koe?  Hanga e koe ngenge katoa.  Hōhā, ka rite ki te namu,  I tīmata koe, te kōrero,  E hiahia ana ki te hīkoi o nga tāngata katoa  Anō, he aha āhau i aroha ai ki a koe?  Kāhore āhau e mōhio,  he aha ahau ka tangi ai ki a koe? | *Why do I love you?*  *You always talk too long*  *Wandering like the rata,*  *Surrounding the tales*  *growing within better trees.*  *Why do I love you?*  *You make everyone tired.*  *Annoying, like a sandfly,*  *When you start talking,*  *Everyone wants to walk away.*  *Again, why did I love you?*  *I don't know,*  *why should I weep over you***?** |

1. **Whakapukepuke Ai, Auē!** (Hine Paewai text used with the kind permission of Wairarapa Moana)

In the final, dramatic piece, the singer sits alone, confronted and unable to escape her loss. She weeps alone, lamenting that now she can only see her love in dreams, where she wishes now to spend her days. Throughout the lamenting sound of the singer’s semitone comes and goes, loud, soft, like the waves of grief. Challenging runs and figures echo the falling and shaking in the text, before a final sobbing cry ends the work.

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| Whakapukepuke ai, auē!  Te roimata i āku kamo,  He rite ki te ngaru  Whati mai i waho...e.  Taku tāranga āke  I te taha o te rātā,  Ka titiro atu ki te ākau roa...e.  Kō te rite i āku kamo  Ki te pua kōrari;  Ka pupuhi te hau,  Ka maringi te wai...e!  Ko te rite i āhau  Ki te rau o te wīwī, e wiwiri nei  He nui nō te aroha...e.  He aroha tāku hoa  I huri ai ki te moe,  Hei hari atu  Ki raro Rēinga e te tau...e! | *Up the hill, I am... (sigh)*  *The tears upon my eyelids,*  *Like a wave,*  *breaking outside (sigh).*  *Here I am sitting*  *alongside the rata.*  *I am looking away to the long shore (sigh).*  *My weeping eyes are like*  *the fresh flowers falling,*  *the wind blowing,*  *the waters flowing (sigh).*  *I am like the leaves*  *and the reeds: trembling.*  *Great was the love, (sigh),*  *I had for my companion*  *That changed, and [now] in dreams,*  *I spend my days*  *In the afterlife [with you], sigh!* |

**Elisha Fa’i-So’oialo**

**A person smiling at camera

Description automatically generated**Currently residing in Rotorua, Elisha enjoys a busy and fulfilling career working with young budding talents as a music and pasifika arts studies teacher at Rotorua Boys’ High School, performer,a choir director of various community choirs and the Artistic Director of Opera In The Pā. Previous to this, Elisha worked in the tertiary sector as a Music tutor at the Waiariki Institute of Technology, and, as a private singing teacher from her home studio.

Elisha was a member of the New Zealand Secondary Students’ Choir under the directorship of Elise Bradley, and the New Zealand Youth Choir under the directorship of Professor Karen Grylls.

Elisha holds a Bachelor of Music and Post-Graduate Diploma of Music (Distinction) from the University of Auckland, a Master of Music (First Class Honours) from the University of Waikato and a Graduate Diploma in Teaching from the Bethlehem Institute of Technology. Elisha is a recipient of numerous awards and achievements which include the Ministry of Education Kupe Leadership scholarship for teaching, the Dame Malvina Major Scholarship and the Creative New Zealand Iosefa Enari Memorial Scholarship. Competition successes include being a Lexus Song Quest semi-finalist, winner of the Maori Song Aria Competition and third place in the New Zealand Aria competition.

Some of Elisha’s performance experiences include working with NBR New Zealand Opera, Operatunity, Bach Musica NZ, Auckland Opera Studio, Auckland Arts Festival, Wellington Arts Festival, the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, the Bay of Plenty Symphony Orchestra, Choral Societies throughout New Zealand, The Dame Malvina Major Foundation, Opera In The Pā, The Rotorua Lakeside, The University of Auckland, The University of Waikato, The University of Otago, The University of the South Pacific (Fiji and Samoa), Motone Productions (Rarotonga), P&O Cruises (Australasia) and Princess Cruises (Australasia).

A person in a black shirt

Description automatically generated**Leon Gray**

Originally from Stratford, Taranaki, Leon began his professional performance career at age 15, working as a gigging musician around the region. He won the Roland Composition Competition while at high school, and went onto to receive the highest score for Bursary music in New Zealand, before heading to Auckland to further his studies, completing his Bachelor of Music, Diploma in Teaching, Postgraduate diploma in Business & Administration, and Postgraduate diploma in Education.

As well as academic music, Leon has been employed as a musical director since age 18, and has now stacked up over 40 productions around New Zealand and Scotland. Highlights over the years have included *Into The Woods, Phantom of the Opera, The Producers, Beauty and the Beast* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie.* Leon furthered his studies, going onto complete Master of Music, and Master of Education degrees, while working as a journalist for APN, and then as a course writer for Practical Education Instutute, E-Blended Learning Solutions and Bay of Plenty Polytechnic. After beginning his private music studio in 2014, Leon created the ATOM approach to music literacy, and the APLOM approach for practical music-making for which he has received a FASS Scholarship from the University of Waikato. He has published articles for Music Education New Zealand Aotearoa, and the National Associated for Gifted Education (UK) and has been a guest speaker and mentor for the Institute of Registered Music Teachers NZ, Sing Out and Big Sing.

As well as ongoing commitments with Tauranga Civic Choir, Tauranga Performing Arts Competitions, and Rotorua Aria, Leon has been a featured guest pianist for a wide range of organisations, including Opus Orchestra, Auckland Children’s Theatre Academy, BOP Music School, BOP Symphonia, New Zealand Jazz Festival, Gincredible, Tauranga Garden and Art Festival and touring productions of Annie and The Sound of Music. When not performing he dedicates himself to composition, and has received composition commissions from Tauranga City, and Stratford District Council as well as a number of private organisations. He is passionate about increasing the international appeal of New Zealand contemporary music, and also the development of repertoire in Te Reo that will appeal to a global audience.