

Dreambox Collective presents

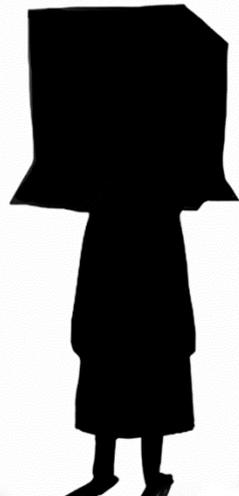
NIGHT LIGHT

Live Launch concerts

Sunday 22 November

11:00am and 2:00pm

Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre



Welcome from the Artistic Director

Welcome to this intimate Live Launch of *Nightlight* – the first live event we've been able to hold as a young collective finding its feet in its first year.

With the reduced number of performances and live creative work this year – which has no doubt impacted everyone present in myriad ways – it has been an intense time of introspection, and wanting to create something that reflected our sense of grief and loss. We also wanted to capture the hope we are all holding for the light at the end of the tunnel. *Nightlight* grew out of this desire to explore the journey we were all going through, together yet alone.

We are so glad to have you with us, and that we can share this space with you to celebrate the work we have created over the past seven months. We are also glad to be able to rediscover what it means to “play” in the deepest sense of the word:

“In rare moments of deep play, we can lay aside our sense of self, shed time’s continuum, ignore pain, and sit quietly in the absolute present, watching the world’s ordinary miracles... When it happens we experience a sense of revelation and gratitude. Nothing need be thought or said. There is a way of beholding that is a form of prayer.” Diane Ackermann

We hope that *Nightlight* starts conversations about not only mental health, but also the role of the arts in helping us process our traumas and collectively heal. Most importantly, we hope that you will continue the conversation beyond today, and turn the “*Nightlight*” on for someone else.

Chloe Chung

Dreambox Collective Artistic Director

Concert Program

We'll Be Back Shortly [world premiere]

Carlo Antonioli composer

Pavle Cajic piano

Welcome

Chloe Chung Dreambox Collective Artistic Director

Two Lockdown Preludes [world premiere]

In Memory –

Sky Prelude

Pavle Cajic piano/composer

Chloe Chung flute

Group Improvisation

Chloe Chung poetry

Pavle Cajic piano

Sandra Brand illustrations

Guest Video Presentation

Nick Brady from batyr

Nightlight [world premiere]

See page 8 for poetry

Sandra Brand illustrations

Chloe Chung poetry

Carlo Antonioli composer

Pavle Cajic piano

Following the concert, we invite you to join us on the balcony for light refreshments.

Profits from this project support the work of batyr, a for purpose preventative mental health organisation, created and driven by young people, for young people.

Notes on the Music

Late last year, when my good friend Chloe Chung asked me to join Dreambox Collective as a composer, I felt equal parts excitement and fear. I had not composed seriously in almost a decade and was in the company of several very well-established peers. It turned out the one thing that was able to restore a modicum of confidence was a global pandemic, which brought my main career of orchestral conducting to an abrupt halt, providing time to sit at the piano and experiment. My task was made easier by Chloe assigning me to an innovative project idea: a digital picture book with music. All of my stimulus had been served on a platter – her poetry and Sandra Brand’s incredible illustrations inspired a wealth of ideas which would otherwise have to be conjured through my own effort.

Because Chloe and Sandra’s works were produced independently as reactions to very different personal circumstances, it fell to me to find a “middle ground” narrative as a compromise between the two individual expressions. After a lengthy process of pairing each illustration with a poem (and slightly tweaking one or the other when they didn’t quite fit), I developed a “secret storyline” to act as a connecting thread. This illuminated opposing themes of day versus night, wonder versus doubt and past versus present. My music grew out of the connections in my storyline: the main dichotomies are represented by the contrasting keys of D-flat major and E minor while recurring motifs depicting squirming fish and incomplete heartbeats abound. As the project gradually formed into what is now *Nightlight*, it became clear that I wished to incorporate the poetry read aloud in the performance as a kind of spoken-word song cycle. This both constrained and enhanced the composition, forcing me to keep the piano part generally sparse and subdued while bringing forth a unique dialogue between pianist and poet.

Having finally got back into the rhythm of composing, and eager to do more, I suggested to Chloe that our Live Launch concerts could be rounded out with further music. I pitched a short energetic concert opener for our (incredibly talented and patient) pianist, Pavle Cajic. *We’ll Be Back Shortly* is a celebration of a return to live music after many months, unashamedly exuberant and boisterous – a deliberate counterpoint to the more reflective *Nightlight*. The middle section hints at a surreptitious, rapid “spread” which engulfs the world and brings it to silence. Yet, with continued and measured

perseverance, the music is able to return to the ways of old – as indeed we, gradually, are able to today.

Carlo Antonioli

Composer (*We'll Be Back Shortly* and *Nightlight*)

These two preludes were written during the major lockdown in Sydney. The first was written during a time when two people close to me were suffering from mental and physical health problems. It was a way for me to deal with my own emotional response to people close to me being unwell. Originally written for oboe, it explores the penetrating and visceral low range of the instrument – which on flute takes on a breathy, quivering quality. The music lives on the border of restrained grief, and emotional outpouring.

The second prelude offers a brighter world of feeling. When the pandemic started, many of our musician friends who were living overseas had to hastily return to Australia, and suddenly found themselves out of work and with no chance to play live music. So for this piece, I asked my old friend and flautist Toni Berg, who was in just such a position, to give me a little stimulus for a short flute prelude, which we recorded in isolation and premiered online. I am delighted to be performing it for a second time with Chloe.

For inspiration, Toni sent me her impressions of the Sydney sky as seen from the apartment in which she was self-isolating upon returning to Australia from the UK. In her words:

“[the isolation] has given me a lot of time to appreciate the slow resoluteness of the sky, and to notice the way the light gently folds from soft honey, to azure and pure and brilliant, to a garden of melting reds and purples, before the city lights break its retreat into darkness. Somehow the sky looks & feels different in Sydney. It's one of the few things that's always, always, always felt like home.”

I invite you to map out the journey of the changing sky onto the piece as it is being performed.

Pavle Cajic

Composer (*Two Lockdown Preludes*)

What is *Nightlight*?

Nightlight is a multimedia artwork – a picture book/audiobook hybrid fusing illustrations, poetry and music. An exploration of healing and growth in the face of adversity, it is a reminder to all of us that even at the bleakest of times, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel.

How *Nightlight* was born

Dreambox Collective illustrator, Sandra Brand, has faced an ongoing battle with anorexia, and nearly two years ago was hospitalised. As she was recovering, she found herself drawing a character night after night which kept her company as she tried to sleep. This figure embodied her struggle, but also her hopes and dreams to move onwards and heal. Independently, in mid-2019, Artistic Director Chloe Chung had been writing poems which were born out of transformational moments in her own life – coincidentally, also when she found it difficult to sleep.

When our concert series “What I Know About Love” was derailed by the coronavirus pandemic earlier this year, most of our projects transformed from live concerts into online events. However, some projects were deemed best to be left for later years. To fill the void, Chloe and Sandra formed a concept for a picture book which combined the illustrations with the poems, with an added musical layer. It was decided that the book would confront the issue of mental health, a subject which was not only related to the origin of the illustrations, but was particularly poignant during the April lockdown.

The development process

Joined by composer Carlo Antonioli and editor Natalie Saar, the team began work in late April. Due to the pandemic, almost all meetings were held over Zoom – Thursday evenings became a regular online meeting time, with only four live meetings held during the seven-month period. We firstly paired the illustrations and poems, then ordered each pairing into a cohesive and fulfilling arc. A major challenge arose when deciding on the best format for the project. Initially conceived of as a print book with accompanying audio, we then briefly considered an e-book and audiobook combination. Eventually, we realised the easiest way to maintain control of the contents, appearance and distribution was to host it on our Dreambox Collective website.



From here, the hard work of designing and constructing the website began. Two particularly protracted debates concerned the title and, of all things, the design of the buttons on the website. After some rigorous editing, Chloe hand wrote all of her poems to integrate with the illustrations. Carlo, Chloe and pianist Pavle Cajic spent three days at Free Energy Device Studios with recording engineer Richard Belkner, recording all eleven tracks of music and fine-tuning every detail before uploading this final puzzle piece to the website.

Explore the *Nightlight* website experience

Nightlight will be available to view on the Dreambox Collective website from Thursday 26 November at 8:00pm. As attendees of the Live Launch, you will be given free access to the website – keep an eye out in the next couple of days for an email with further details. We hope you will return often to relive the experience as we continue to add behind-the-scenes footage and other goodies, and that you spread the word with your friends.

thedreamboxcollective.com/nightlight

Nightlight Sessions

Can't get enough of *Nightlight*? Join us for one of our online Zoom launches (*Nightlight Sessions*) on an upcoming Wednesday evening – 25 November, 2 December or 9 December – at 8:00pm. Chloe will be reading the poems from her pyjama fortress while Sandra's evocative illustrations are displayed. They will also facilitate a gentle and co-creative "word jam" with the audience. As attendees of the Live Launch, we are excited to offer you highly discounted tickets at \$7 (normally valued at \$20) – enter the discount code NIGHTLIVE at the checkout when purchasing tickets here:

thedreamboxcollective.com/nightlight-launches

VIII Rose apple dew drop
 Falling sun
 sky
 leaf
 rain

We tumble together
 like weed falling from the sky
 echoing slumber droplets
 falling from her majesty's crown

Sooner or later we pass into the atmosphere
 Angels alight on beating wings
 Dragonflies sowing jewels onto mossed coral
 Bejewelled by love.

IX She looks back at me
 Frightened and burned
 Tinged with rage and sorrow

Lift me up to see the light again
 Sit with me
 Hold my hand
 Never let me go

Plant me in your heart
 A water chestnut will grow
 and become a floating nest

X Sunlight dapples the water
 Creamy peaks on an electric blue blanket
 My bedbug-bitten self drinks it in
 Thirsting, yearning, grief, joy.

Wishes for the biosphere to heal and heal and heal
 The wind curls in and around us
 Pulling us sideways and apart

Change is hugging us,
 harder than we'd like
 The one constant in this life
 This embrace

XI A canoe that hardly floats
 its holes are plugged by kindness
 drifting along with the tide
 towards islands of years and uncertain dreams

I paddled too hard one day and dropped an oar;
 continuing with one
 the journey became precious somehow,
 each new stroke a gift.

I pause, knowing the tide carries me forward
 effortlessly in any case –

Smiling, realising, I could swim all along.

