

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 87 December 2024



Pen-blwydd hapus yn ddeugain oed!

What a way to celebrate 40 years of singing, fellowship and camaraderie. The choir's 40th anniversary dinner was held on 16th November 2024 and with over a hundred current and past choristers and their partners present, was a memorable and heart-warming occasion.



Cyril Jones at the podium

From the opening welcome - "*Pen-blwydd hapus yn ddeugain oed*" which translated says "*Happy 40th anniversary*", sung on video by our choir patron *Alwyn Humphreys*, (dressed in black tie for the occasion, from his home in Cardiff, Wales), to the video of highlights of the choir's performances and trips over the last forty years, this was an evening to enjoy.

Former secretary Cyril Jones' moving verbal presentation of his own memories of the start of the choir and in particular the extraordinary events which occurred during our trip to South Africa in 1997 (just after Nelson Mandela had come into power), continued the experience.



Music directors - Ray Kitto, Lucas de Jong, Doug Heywood, David Ashton-Smith and interviewer Richard Bolt

After an excellent repast, three of our previous music directors David Ashton-Smith, Lucas de Jong (complete with a moon boot for his broken ankle) and Doug Heywood, plus deputy conductor Ray Kitto were invited, by vice president - Richard Bolt, to recall their favourite occasions with the choir during their tenure.

This turned out to be an illuminating and, at times, emotional look back at important events in the life of the choir.

Following the awarding of certificates for years of service, recognition of existing life members and, of course, the traditional raffle for the baskets of Christmas goodies, the current choir members assembled, under the baton of our new conductor - Mitch Meyer, to bring the formal proceedings to an appropriate

end by performing three acapella numbers - *Nant y mynydd*, *My Lord what a morning* and *Eli Jenkins prayer*.

However, the singing for the evening was not over as Lucas de Jong led the call and response of one of the songs which has been closely identified with our choir - *Senzenina*. With all the current and past choristers joining in, the sound just about raised the roof.

It was a great way to end a wonderful evening. Here's to the next 40 years.

Christmas Concerts

Noson Lawen

St Alfred's Church

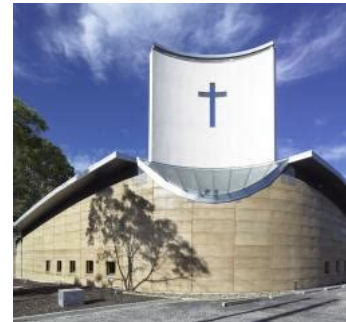
Blackburn

2:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Heulen Cynfal and Roy Best have been rehearsing with the choir for our Christmas concert at the beautiful St Alfred's Church in Blackburn on Saturday 30th November.

Since this newsletter will go to press before the concert, the report on the performance will be given in the December edition.

It promises to be a great afternoon's entertainment.



St Alfred's Church, Blackburn



Nadolig Llawn
A Christmas Concert
with the
Melbourne Welsh Male Choir
guest artists including
Roy Best - Tenor
and
Heulen Cynfal - Soprano
Conducted by Mitch Meyer
Accompanied by Simon Walters
MC Bill Spawton
Choir Patrons: Dr Alwyn Humphreys MBE & David Ashton-Smith OAM
Sponsors: Bendigo Bank, The Welsh Church, Robert Selzer Foundation

St Alfred's Church
107 Springfield Rd,
Blackburn North VIC 3130
Saturday November 30th 2024 at 2:00 pm
Tickets \$45 adult, \$40 concession, \$35 group (6+)
\$15 student
<https://melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets/> or use QR code

Christmas in Wonthaggi Concert



Wonthaggi Union Community Arts Centre

96 Graham Street.

Wonthaggi 3995.

Saturday Dec 7th, 2024.

2:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Following a successful first visit to the Community Arts Centre last year, the choir is returning to Wonthaggi this year for our ***Christmas in Wonthaggi Concert***.

In addition to our repertoire of seasonal carols, the performance will include solo items from some of our talented choristers.

Afternoon tea (held during interval) is included with your booking.

Audience feed-back – continued

For those readers who have been following the email trail relating to the background to one of the choir's most recent Welsh songs - *Anfonaf Angel* and its composer Robat Arwyn, you will be aware that Robat had a commission (as mentioned in the emails) to write a number of songs for Kingswood College in Melbourne.

He recently came to Melbourne and conducted the College choir in some of his works at St Peter's Eastern Hill, East Melbourne on the 26th of November. He also demonstrated his ability as pianist, singer and raconteur.

Several of our Melbourne Welsh choir members attended the evening performance and met with him afterwards.

(In another remarkable coincidence, Cyril Jones, our former choir secretary (see photo above), who was born in Anglesey and is a former TV producer and journalist, on reading our last newsletter informed us that "*Hywel Gwynfryn (the lyricist for Anfonaf Angel) once interviewed Dad on his radio show and, many years ago, I rescued his son when he got stranded in Melbourne!*".

It really is a small world.



A New Carol for the repertoire

The Choir's latest Christmas carol *There is faint Music* is a gentle evocative song with music by Dan Forrest and words by Nancy Buckley.



Dr. Dan Forrest is an acclaimed and prolific writer of works for choirs. Dan's music spans a wide spectrum of genres and difficulty, ranging from extended major works for chorus and orchestra and significant concert choral repertoire to more accessible works for church and community choirs, as well as instrumental works ranging from wind ensemble pieces to solo instrumental sonatas.

When asked "What inspired you to become a composer", Dan replied "I was a pianist in college (my bachelor's and master's degrees are both in piano performance). But it was halfway through my master's that I started getting tired of the piano, partly because there are so many pianists out there, and partly because pianists have to work so hard to sustain and shape lines. You strike the key, the tone sounds, and then it dies. Meanwhile, I was completely infatuated with recordings of choral music, and I heard what choirs could do, musically - they could truly sustain tone, or even crescendo one note without repeating it or doing tremolo. I had done some composing and arranging for piano, but it was when I got excited about choirs that I really started composing.

We are very glad that he did.

The words of this beautiful carol are given below:

There is faint music

There is faint music in the night,
And pale wings fanned by silver flight;
A frosty hill with tender glow
Of countless stars that shine on snow.

A shelter from the winter storm,
A straw-lined manger, safe and warm,
And Mary crooning lullabies,
To hush her Baby's sleepy sighs.

Her eyes are rapt upon His Face,
Unheeded here is time and space;
Her heart is filled with blinding joy,
For God's own Son--her Baby boy!

Would you like to join our choir?

Life is never dull for members of the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir with so much fabulous music to sing and interesting concert venues to perform in, so why not join us.

Whether you've been involved in music all your life, sing in another choir, or only sing in the shower, just come along to our rehearsals at Maroondah Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood and join in the fun and the stimulating learning process, that being a part of the *Melbourne Welsh Male Choir* is all about. We guarantee you'll be happy you did!

The choir is open to men and boys of all ages from 18 to 88 of any nationality, colour or ethnicity.

Our current and past members include people with Scots, English, Irish, New Zealand, Dutch, French, German, Egyptian, Latvian, South African, Tongan, Samoan, American (e.g. our current Music Director) and Australian ancestry.

So, provided you pass a relatively simple audition, you will be made most welcome.

While our musical heritage is Welsh and we aim to have Welsh songs as roughly a quarter of our concert repertoire (not necessarily all in the Welsh language), we are fundamentally a multicultural choir with less than half of us having any direct Welsh ancestry.

We have an excellent rehearsal facility at Maroondah Federation Estate, with a grand piano, comfortable seats, good acoustics and facilities for tea and coffee at the interval.

In addition, we have possibly the best music director and accompanist combination in Melbourne.

Mitch Meyer, our new Music Director, has a background in music and management. He is an accomplished soloist as well as being the previous conductor of several choirs in Queensland.

Mitch is ably assisted by our talented accompanist, *Simon Walters*, who is himself a music director of a ladies choir and is a professional arranger of some note. Simon is also a talented vocalist as was seen at our recent Mooroolbark concert.

We have mentors for each vocal section, who look after all new members, to ensure they are introduced to other choristers and are properly equipped with the relevant music scores. They oversee new members for the duration of their probationary period, help with pitch or pronunciation, where appropriate and answer any questions, new members might have.

There is a break for tea or coffee during rehearsals, which gives everyone the opportunity to mix and mingle.

On the first Wednesday in the month, one of the sections provides the choristers and our visitors with a light supper.

Car parking is plentiful and free, while the Ringwood railway station is a 5-minute walk away.

If you contact us via the phone numbers or email addresses shown in this newsletter, we will respond promptly and arrange for your introduction to the choir. Otherwise, just come along on a Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m., introduce yourself and you will be made most welcome.

Once you decide to join, we will provide you with access to our web-based learning facilities, which enable you to practice your individual vocal part at home.

This makes the process of getting up to speed with the Choir's repertoire very much easier.

We also have Welsh language sessions, given by some of the Welsh speaking members of the choir, to help new and existing choristers, in the pronunciation and translation of the words of the beautiful Welsh songs in our repertoire. In addition, our music director occasionally gives a music class prior to rehearsal for interested choristers to expand their knowledge and understanding of music theory and the essentials of reading music.

Following a few rehearsals and a formal audition, you could be wearing a choir uniform and singing in one of our concerts within weeks and possibly joining us on our next tour.

Would you like to hire the choir?

Anyone who has attended our concerts at major venues such as Melbourne Recital Centre, Hamer Hall, Melbourne Town Hall, Ulumbarra Theatre Bendigo, or at smaller venues such as our venue for our SOTY Concert - the James Tatoulis Auditorium at MLC, will be aware that the choir has the skills and ability to produce and run high quality major music events.

So, if you are an organization or an individual requiring anything from a short rousing opening to a conference or entertainment at a formal dinner (say), to a full two-hour concert, together with quality guest artists and an orchestra or band (if required), then please call **David Field (0418 175 584)** or any committee member to discuss how we can tailor a performance to meet your unique needs.

The choir is available for community, corporate and sporting events, dinners, anniversaries, weddings etc., at most times in the year.

Bear in mind that we're talking about a choir of 40 to 50 voices plus a professional music director and accompanist (with a portable electric piano, where required).

We have an eclectic repertoire, a wonderful sound and provide great value for money.

Would you like to sponsor the Choir

The choir is a not-for-profit organisation and we rely solely on revenue from concerts, membership fees, sponsorship and donations for our continuing operation.

Our audiences tend to be predominantly middle to older-aged citizens. Hence sponsors with products to market to this demographic e.g., those in retail, hospitality, investment, insurance, real estate, retirement homes etc., might find investing in the choir very worthwhile.

Alternatively, if you have a product or service which you believe might appeal to our audiences, then please contact us and we will be delighted to promote your company, product or service through our concerts, media and marketing materials.

If you would like to support the choir via a donation, please contact any member of the committee. The choir is a registered charitable body and all donations are acknowledged and are tax deductible.

Newsletter Feedback

Feedback is important to us, so please let us know what you think about the choir, our newsletters, and our recent performances, whether live or on video.

In particular, we welcome your feedback on our recent *YouTube* videos.

We are always seeking to increase our patronage and hence we are happy for you copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends and relatives.

If you would like us to add them to our distribution list, so they get their copy directly, by email, from the choir, simply let us know their email address.

Alternatively, they can subscribe directly to the newsletter via our website:

www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au or via our Facebook page.

We treat all information provided as confidential and subscribers can opt out at any time.

Email is our preferred way of communication with our friends and supporters, so please send us an email and we'll respond promptly to whatever queries you may have. Alternately, if you want to speak with the newsletter author (Gwyn) about any of the content, feel free to contact him on 0419 562 353.

Laughter is the best medicine

A woman tells her boyfriend to share his worries

"When we get married, I want to share all your worries and troubles and lighten your burden," a young woman said to her boyfriend.

"That's very kind of you, darling," her boyfriend replied. "But I don't have any worries or troubles."

"Well, that's because we aren't married yet."

Rugby Legends

JPR Williams the legendary Wales and Lions fullback was interviewed about the current state of Welsh rugby. “How do you think your triple crown winning team would have fared against the current Welsh team?” he was asked.

“I think we’d win by about 6 points” JPR said.

“Only that small a margin,” said the interviewer.

“Well, we’re all in our seventies now” replied JPR

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