

## *Time for change...*

As the old year of 2015 ended, so did the tenure of our Musical Director - Lucas de Jong, who resigned after 8 years in the role.

Lucas was a talented conductor, musician and baritone soloist whose contribution to the development of the choir's sound over the period of his reign as MD was significant.

He led us in our most recent overseas tour to the Salzburg festival in Austria in 2014 and was also instrumental in the Melbourne Welsh participating in the MCAA festivals in 2012 in Melbourne and 2014 in Canberra.



His energy and work commitment was immense and, in addition to his work in front of the choir at rehearsal and in concerts, he generated sectional parts for all the new pieces of music. This enabled new members to come up to speed quickly and allowed the less

accomplished and slower learning members to practise their parts while listening to Lucas' voice on their home computer.

His computer expertise also enabled the choir to establish its Facebook page.

In his time with the choir, Lucas developed a respect for the Welsh part of our repertoire and learned the correct pronunciation of the language, which, for someone with a Dutch/Australian background was quite an achievement.

Lucas goes out on a high, with the Choir's highly acclaimed performance with Teddy Tahu Rhodes, at the Recital Centre, probably being the outstanding achievement under his baton.

Our history shows that the tenure of our Music Directors has averaged 6+ years so we look forward to another long-term relationship with our next MD.

The choir will be inviting applications for the Music Director's position shortly, but, in the interim, we are pleased to announce that David Ashton-Smith has agreed to fill the role until the end of March while we

go about the task of finding a permanent new Music Director.



David, as many of you will know is the adjudicator for the Choir's Singer of the Year competition, but in addition to this he is a highly credentialed pianist, as well as a choral and orchestral conductor with his own mixed voice choir - the Ashton-Smith Singers, he also

conducts the Australian Pops Orchestra.

David will conduct us for our upcoming St David's Day celebration concert on the 27<sup>th</sup> February at 7:00 p.m. at the Karralyka Centre in Ringwood

## *A welcome return...*



Roy Best, our guest artist for the St David's Day concert is an old friend of the choir and we performed on the same program only recently in a Morning Melodies concert at the Dandenong Performing Arts Centre in December.

Roy established his singing career in spectacular fashion after successfully competing in ABC television's Operatunity Oz.

He performed the role of the Duke in Opera Australia's Rigoletto at the Sydney Opera House and was rewarded with a standing ovation from a packed house and a television audience of over one million viewers.

He recently appeared in the principal role of Stephen Donovan in the world premiere of Morgan's Run by Colleen McCullough, music by Sydney composer Gavin Lockley.

Listen to Roy's opening line in "We'll keep a welcome" in our upcoming concert and you could be forgiven for thinking he was Welsh!

Tickets for the St David's Day concert are going quickly so log on to our website and purchase yours online or contact our ticket secretary on 9870 8891.

<http://www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets>

## 2016 Gymanfa Ganu

For those of you who want a second helping of Welsh culture, there is no better place than St Michael's Church in Collins Street on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February at 3:00 pm for a Gymanfa Ganu organized by the Welsh Church of Melbourne.

St Michael's is used because the Welsh Church can only hold around 150 people and could not accommodate the members of the 4 Welsh choirs (the Melbourne, Victorian, Australian Welsh male choirs and the Geelong ladies choir) as well as the congregation.

This year (as outlined in our last newsletter), there is host of guests from Wales. Rhys Meirion, Ffion Haf Jones and a Welsh choir – Excelsis, will perform.

The guest conductor/moderator will be Rob Nicholls who led the Côr Meibion Taf choir to success in two National Eisteddfods.

With this array of talent there is no better place to be on a Sunday afternoon!

Entrance is free but get there early if you want good seats.

## More success for our Singer of the Year contest finalists

Continuing our tales of the successes of our Singer of the Year competition winners, this time it is Jeremy Kleeman, our winner in 2014, who will be appearing in the exciting new Chamber opera "Voyage to the Moon"



Bass-baritone Jeremy Kleeman is one of Australia's most exciting emerging opera talents. He will perform the role of the Magus (the wise magician) – alongside seasoned opera professionals Emma Matthews and Sally-Anne Russell (another of our SOTY winners) – in "Voyage to the Moon", a new pasticcio opera

produced, in collaboration, by Victorian Opera, Musica Viva and the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, 1100–1800 (CHE).

Playwright Michael Gow and Victorian Opera will launch baroque music out of this world with "Voyage to the Moon", a new chamber opera opening Musica Viva's 2016 program next February.

The surreal story of a man's cosmic odyssey to retrieve his friend's sanity draws on Vivaldi's proto sci-fi opera of 1727, *Orlando Furioso*.

Gow sculpted the libretto to a pastiche of 18th century pieces by Handel, Vivaldi and more in collaboration with the late American baroque scholar, Alan Curtis.

## The Choir's Repertoire

Most of those people attending the choir's first concert of the year – St David's Day Celebration at Karralyka on Feb 27<sup>th</sup> will be totally unaware of the enormous commitment of the choir over the years in putting together programs which they hope will enthral the majority of people in the audience.

While this specific concert has a Welsh theme, the choir has in its repertoire 284 songs which it has rehearsed over the years, ranging from pop music to songs from the musical theatre, folksongs and spirituals to operatic choruses and classical pieces.

This is separate from the repertoire of 34 songs sung in Welsh and another 13 "Welsh" songs sung in English e.g. *We'll keep a welcome* and *David of the white rock* – both of which will feature in our St. David's Day concert.

If in addition to this you add in the 36 Christmas carols, which we have sung over the life of the choir you will appreciate the task of our librarian in maintaining the more than 360 music scores available to choristers.

Fortunately for the choristers, we tend to limit our annual repertoire to around 70 items but for those people who might wish to hire the choir for a concert or special occasion we will undoubtedly have songs within our overall repertoire, which will meet your needs, or which can be brought up to concert standard fairly quickly.

For those contemplating joining the choir, you can rest assured that the task of learning the current repertoire is made much easier with the computer based learning

aids, which the choir provides, in addition to the support of the various mentors and choir members within our “band of brothers”.

The joy that comes from being part of a resounding *Amen* or the gentle four-part harmony of something like *Danny Boy*, makes the effort all worthwhile.

## Australia Day

The choir maintained its tradition of celebrating Australia Day with a truly Aussie barbeque. This year the event took place at the home of one of our baritones Geoff Heyme. The cricket match was won by the Choir “Aussies” defeating the Choir “Welshies” to retrieve the coveted cup which they lost last year.



We were delighted that our harpist for the St David’s Day concert - Cath Connelly accepted our invitation to be our guest at the barbeque and she brought her Celtic harp with her and, of course, we asked her to play. Based

on what we heard, the audience at Karralyka are in for a treat.

## Upcoming Events

Saturday, 27 February 7:00pm  
St David's Day Concert

Sunday, 28 February 3:00pm  
Gymanfa Ganu

Sunday, 3 April 2:00pm  
Choir concert in Traralgon

Tuesday, 10 May 2016 11:00am  
Morning Music Concert (at Karralyka Theatre)

Sunday, 5 June 2016 2:00pm  
Choir concert in Wyndham

Sunday, 4 September 2016 2:00pm  
Singer of the Year Concert

For more information on these concerts visit our webpage:

[www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/concerts](http://www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/concerts)

## CHOIR DIRECTORY

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**THIS NEWSLETTER:** The production of this newsletter is a joint effort. Contributions of all kinds are sought from members to keep the newsletter varied and interesting. We also welcome contributions from our supporters.

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