

## *Changes in the choir*

With the start of the new choir year, which, for us, follows our AGM in March, we have a new president, a new music director and a pleasing number of new and returning chorists.

### **President - Paul Gawthorn**

At the Choir's Annual General Meeting, Paul Gawthorn was elected unopposed as our new president.

Paul, a member of the bass section, was the choir's former treasurer and hence is totally familiar with the challenges facing the choir. A big man, he will need all his experience and skill to fill the boots which outgoing president Mike Lyons left. Mike remains on the committee and will be handling the choir's proposed trip to Cornwall in April 2017, among other things.

Paul has a background in IT management, which will serve us well in this new age of digital media. He gained experience in singing in four-part harmony as a member of the Victorian Welsh Male Choir many years ago, prior to joining us in 2008.

Born in Melbourne and educated at Scotch College he is a keen Collingwood supporter.

Introduced to singing at school he performed in amateur theatre with Loyola and Darebin Players (with whom he played the butler in *My Fair Lady*).

Both Paul and his partner Kerrie are keen photographers and are responsible for many of the shots in our newsletters

### **Music Director David Ashton-Smith**

In our last newsletter we stated that David Ashton-Smith had agreed to conduct us until the end of March while we searched for a new Music Director. We are now pleased to advise that David has accepted our offer to become our full-time Music Director.

While he will continue to conduct his own mixed choir - the Ashton-Smith Singers and execute his commitments with the Australian Pops Orchestra, he has found space in his busy schedule to rehearse and conduct us in concerts.

The increase in the number of potential new members and the return of some older members, is testament to David's reputation in the musical world and the quality of his musical direction



David studied singing in Melbourne for a period of 10 years before going to London in 1971 where he sang principal roles with The English National Opera Co.

David returned to Australia in late 1979 and since then has maintained a varied and high profile music performing career. His choir the Ashton Smith Singers of Australia has been in existence for 35 years and performs regularly with the APO. The choir has also contributed to several Australian films and last year sang in the Melbourne concert with Andrea Bocelli.

David was Managing Director of the Australian Pops Orchestra during 2005-9 mounting major concerts at the Sydney Opera House and at Hamer Hall at the Victorian Arts Centre as well as major corporate events at Crown Palladium and the Sofitel Collins St. David teaches singing and is a sought after vocal adjudicator. David is closely associated with 'Australian Music Events' and puts together the orchestra for 'Opera in the Alps' and 'Opera in the Market' each year.

### **New member - Kevin Seerup**

Kevin is one of our new baritones and is already a soloist with the choir having performed "This is the moment" from the musical *Jekyll and Hyde* at our recent Morning Music concert at the Karralyka theatre, Ringwood.

This is his story to date:

"I was born in Wellington, New Zealand on 18th August 1956. I found a couple of ways to skip levels and finished secondary college at age 16. I then started work at the Reserve Bank of NZ and also started a Mathematics degree part-time.

In 1975 I decided to do the usual Kiwi thing of travelling to Australia and on to Europe and then back to NZ. Whilst in Australia I got the opportunity to become a Computer Programmer and have been a Software Developer ever since without returning to NZ to work - I finally got to Europe in 1995. I have had my own software development business since 1985.

From a musical point of view, I have had singing lessons off and on since 1975 and sang with a community choir for a number of years before getting into musical theatre in the role of the Grinch in *Seussical* in 2005.

I have done *Annie* (twice - once as President Roosevelt), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *White Christmas*, *The King and I*, *Oliver* (as Bill Sykes), and *Rockin' Robin* (as The Sorcerer). In July 2011 I played the lead role of Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha* and in 2012 I played Joseph's father Jacob in *Joseph* and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.

*cont.*



My partner, Heather and I have been together nearly 5 years, after getting together during production of Man Of La Mancha (Heather was the choreographer) and we have 6 children (4 adults) between us.

Outside of working and the choir, we run regularly with the Hash House Harriers, I still play tennis with my 14 year old, son whom I will continue to beat (at tennis) whilst I still can, and we regularly go to our Ski Lodge at Mt Baw Baw.

I have recently joined the Baritone section of the choir and we are both looking forward to the Cornwall trip next year.”

*Three friends married women from different parts of the world. The first married a Greek girl and told her that she was to do the dishes and cleaning. It took a couple of days, but on the third day he came home to see a clean house.*

*The second man married a Thai girl and gave her the same orders, to do all the cleaning and cooking. The first day he didn't see any results but by the third his house was clean and dinner was on the table.*

*The third man married a Welsh girl. He ordered her to keep the house clean, dishes washed, lawn mowed and dinner ready for 6pm.*

*For the first two days he didn't see anything, but by the third day, some of the swelling had gone down and he could see a little out of his left eye.*

## Our Performances

### St David's Day Celebration - Karralyka

The choir's annual St David's Day Celebration concert was held at the Karralyka Theatre on February 27th with our guest artists - tenor Roy Best and Celtic harpist Kath Connelly. The choir was a bit apprehensive prior to the performance under a new conductor but they need not have worried, the choir got a standing ovation at the end of the evening.

### Gymanfa Ganu – St Michael's Church, Collins Street

Once again our choir contributed to the Gymanfa Ganu organised by the Welsh Church. This year's event held on Sunday February 28th was conducted by guest conductor Rob Nicholls (his fourth visit to Australia for the event). It featured two guest artists from Wales in tenor Rhys Meirion and contralto Ffion Haf Jones, in addition to representatives of all four Welsh Choirs in Victoria (Australian, Victorian and Melbourne Welsh choirs plus the Geelong Ladies choir). A new choir Excelsis

led by Australian Welsh Music Director - Tom Buchanan, also contributed their own items as well as being part of the massed choir in the balcony.

With such an array of talent it was not surprising that the church was packed. The hymns and anthems raised the roof and a very good time was had by all.

### Joint Concert with City of Traralgon Brass band

In early April, the choir travelled to Traralgon for a Sunday afternoon concert with the famed City of Traralgon Brass Band, who had recently returned from a highly successful "Tour of Remembrance" in the UK and France.

The choir were a little apprehensive when the early ticket sales were low but on the day a full house heard a wonderful variety of uplifting music from both band and choir. In the absence of our new Director of Music - who was in India - Ray Kitto took over the baton, as he has done many times in the past. Ieuan Thomas took over the role of Master of Ceremonies and his quick Welsh wit and easy interaction with the audience made for a relaxed environment. Bill Spawton added some additional Welsh flavour with some of Dylan Thomas' poetry.

The band's contribution was awesome and at the end of the concert the audience gave us a standing ovation. Such was the success of the event that we are already planning another joint concert with the band in 2017 following our return from the UK.

### Morning Music at Karralyka

Earlier this month, the choir performed a one-hour concert sponsored by Maroondah Council. The show featured well-loved songs from musical theatre. With no interval, the choir was given a rest between brackets by musical interludes provided by Kevin Seerup (*see previous page*) and our pianist Simon Walters' jazz improvisation based on a Scott Joplin theme. From the applause and the volume of CD sales, the audience obviously enjoyed our performance despite the early start and the inclement weather.



*Morning Melodies at Karralyka 10th May*



## Our Recruitment Campaign

Despite the influx of new and returning choristers over the past few months we are actively seeking younger members to bolster our ranks. To this end we have created the poster below aimed at the sporting teams in the area. The poster features one of our younger tenors together with the choir's logo and tie featuring the Celtic rings and the Welsh dragon on a "field of gold".

The choir's vocal and breathing exercises are very complementary to any athlete's training regime and our rehearsals and concerts are unlikely to clash with games or training. We have a few "coodabeens" in our ranks so anyone who joins will feel completely at home.

If you have a relative or friend who might be interested in joining or would like a copy of the poster to place in their club, please make contact with any member of the committee.



## Sponsorship

The choir is actively seeking sponsors for our Singer of the Year Concert. This is a wonderful event to be associated with and features the best of all worlds from a sponsor's viewpoint. The competitors are the cream of the young performing talent in Victoria, and often interstate, while the audience is a mix of friends of the choir, friends of the choristers and our regular audience members.

Major Sponsors will be featured in programmes, choir newsletters and our website (including our Facebook page). Sponsors are also provided with premium seating for their guests at the concert and may also be invited to present prizes.

## Upcoming Events

Saturday 18th June 7.30 pm  
Concert with the Maroondah Salvation Army Band  
45/53 Wantirna Rd, Ringwood

Sunday, 3rd July 2016 2:00 p.m.  
Choir concert in Wyndham Performing Arts Centre  
Werribee

A brief appearance at  
Celebrating Cultural Diversity  
7:00 pm Saturday 9 July  
894 Springvale Road, Braeside (LDS church)

August 21st  
Monash Sing for Kids concert

August 28th  
With Australian Youth Band  
Methodist Ladies College

Sunday, 4th September 2016 7:00 p.m.  
Singer of the Year Concert Venue TBA

October 7th  
Tuckers Seniors Concert  
St Mary's Basilica, Geelong

October 11th  
Maroondah Seniors week

October 23rd  
Joint Concert with Frankston Ladies Choir  
at Kingston Performing Arts Centre

For more information on these concerts visit  
[www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/concerts](http://www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/concerts)

The choir is available for promotional events and has in the past been featured in TV commercials for example as the backing chorus for a Tetleys Tea advertisement, provided dinner entertainment for a conference at the World Trade Centre and also for a dinner at the opening of the renovated State library.

Please contact our marketing team, or any committee member to discuss these opportunities.

## Contacts

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