

The **Singer of the Year** competition for 2019 was the 27th time the competition had been held and, on this occasion, it was a ladies only final. During the past 27 years we have seen our finalists grace opera and musical theatre stages around the world, and we are proud to have been a part of their journey.

This year's concert program kicked off in stirring fashion with the choir's rendition of a medley of songs from *Man of la Mancha*. This was followed by a song, relatively new to our repertoire, *The Water Is Wide*, and the bracket finished with the upbeat spiritual *Every Time I Hear the Spirit*.



L to R: Dorcas Lim, Chloe Harris, David Ashton-Smith, Kimberley Colman

The choir then exited the stage to allow the competitors to sing their chosen operatic arias. They then returned for their second bracket which began with the *Gershwin Showcase* which included excerpts from 12 of Gershwin's greatest hits, followed by *New York, New York*, and *Homeward Bound* – another song which is new to our repertoire and, to end the first half, the stirring **Anthem** from the musical *Chess*.

Following the interval, the audience were well and truly awakened by the choir's rousing rendition of Wagner's *Prayer* from *Lohengrin* followed in complete contrast by the sad story of lost love *Myfanwy*. Another song in the language of heaven, *Deus Saluti* to the beautiful tune Llef was followed by the New Zealand lullaby *Hine e Hine*. The finalists then sang their second song from musical theatre.

While the adjudicators, **Margaret Arnold** and our own Music Director **David Ashton-Smith**, conferred we were all entertained by the **Australian Youth Band Woodwind Ensemble**.

**Margaret Arnold** announced that the winner on the night was **Chloe Harris** who was presented with the trophy and a cheque for \$5,000 by our president **David Field**. The runners up were presented with their certificates and a cheque for \$1,000. Bouquets of flowers were then presented to all finalists, the adjudicator and **Phillipa Safey** the official, and very talented, accompanist.

To bring the wonderful evening to a close, the choir returned to the stage to sing another of the songs new to our repertoire – *My Dearest Dear* by Ivor Novello and finished with the rousing hymn *Morte Christe*. The applause at the end of the night was testament to a wonderful evening's entertainment.

## Recent Choir Engagements

The choir is often asked to perform at public ceremonies often for a bracket of only a few songs and, while it requires a major effort to coordinate a choir of our size, we are keen to oblige when we can.

Such was the case with our appearance at MECWAcare's opening of their new Jubilee House facility in Northcote Avenue, Caulfield on 3rd July, which coincided with their 60th anniversary. The opening ceremony was performed by the governor Hon. Linda Dessau AC. The choir's contribution was three songs, chosen by MECWAcare - *Sing Rhondda*, *New York, New York* and *You Raise Me Up*, all of which seemed to go down well with the guests and attendees. Her honour, the governor enjoyed the performance and graciously agreed to be photographed with the choir.



## Upcoming concert

### Arden Crescent Concert Series

Uniting Church, 21 Arden Crescent, Rosanna  
Sunday 8 September at 2:00 pm

Over the past 24 Years the Arden Street Concert committee has organized over 200 concerts, both Classical and Popular as well as helping to promote several recitals and special music presentations and have raised \$99,000 for charities in that time.

Our guest artist for this concert is the lovely Kate Amos, who won the choir's Singer of the Year competition in 2016. Kate has sung in this venue before, but



this will be our choir's first visit to this lovely little church, and we are looking forward to the opportunity to sing for a new audience.

Tickets are available by calling 03 9457 2595. Seats are limited so book early.

## Senior Citizens Concert

(sponsored by Tuckers Funeral and Bereavement Services)

### St Mary of the Angels Basilica

Yarra Street, Geelong

Friday 4 October at 2:30 p.m.

The choir is delighted to be giving our 17th consecutive concert for Seniors Week in Geelong under the stewardship of the Tuckers organization.

We enjoy singing in this magnificent old church and we love the audiences who tend to fill it for our concerts.



Our guest artist for this concert will be a young classically trained soprano Amelia Wawrzon, who was one of our Singer of the Year entrants.



This will be her first outing with the choir, but we are fairly sure it won't be the last.

## Remembrance Day at the Shrine 2019

Possibly following on from our "Till they all come Home" concert to celebrate the end of WW1 at the Town Hall last year, the choir has accepted an invitation to perform as part of the 10:00 a.m. service at the Shrine on November 11th, 2019.

This will be a special occasion since it is the 100th year in which the remembrance service has been held.

The choir will sing a short bracket of songs including the evocative "Lest we forget" written by Mike Sammes which we sang for the first time at the Town Hall.

## Choir Chorister Profile - Brian Evans – Bass



I was drawn into the choir by the strangest of happenings! At the time, in January 1997, I was installing a Management and Quality Assurance system for CMG Electric Motors. An essential part of this process is the interviewing of all senior members plus the training of these staff members both "White and blue collar". I hasten to add

it's like trying to catch tadpoles they are so slippery. After 2 weeks I had interviewed all of the senior staff except for the State Sales Director, one Dorian Turner, who was always in and out and somewhere else! Their receptionist advised me one day that Dorian was in and suggested I move fast, and I did and caught him in his office before he slipped out again. The response as I went to his office and opened the door was most unexpected to say the least! For Dorian suddenly stood up, and said to me quite briskly, "How would you like to join a Welsh Choir?", and before I realised it, I had agreed to do so! That was on Monday and he told me to turn up at the Tintern Girls High School hall in Ringwood East on the following Wednesday at 6:45pm and make myself known to the Musical Director. A quick audition and I was in!

A few months after joining, the choir toured South Africa! We endeavoured to learn some African songs to sing as an expression of courtesy. The songs, Senzenina, Shosholoza and Mangoane Mpulele were in the languages of Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho and we tried our best to learn them before departure. Our efforts were well rewarded for everywhere we went and sang these songs, amazed Africans came from everywhere to see, hear and enjoy this strange group of "whities" singing in their tongues. They invariably sang other African songs back to us. This was most moving and emotional, and tears were seen on both sides.

I was born in Aberdare, NSW in the green Hunter valley. My father and mother were both from the Newcastle-on-Tyne area of the UK. My grandfather was from Ellislie, Wales, and he had journeyed to Newcastle-on-Tyne to fit-out the joinery of a new church and the priest's living quarters. He was a journeyman carpenter. But sadly, he left his wife and children, so dad left school and went down the mines at the age of 10 to help his mother with income to feed and clothe her large family. At age 16 Dad left England and came to Australia, and in return for the cheap fare system, he had to work for 2 years in a job allocated to him by the authorities. He was fortunate enough to be allocated an apprenticeship for carpentry and building with the State Electricity Authority, and this involved work as an apprentice carpenter and builder on the construction of Yallourn No 1 Power Station.

He travelled to Cessnock, a small mining town in the Hunter Valley of NSW to respond to an advertisement for carpenters to "sink" and line the shaft for the new coal

mine at Elrington. A mine, they claimed, would be the most modern and well equipped in the world! He was employed but soon became aware of the large discrepancy of his wage as a carpenter to that which could be earned by a miner! So, he joined the mining workers with a “mate” and spent, the next 28 years mining coal. Back “home” in Newcastle UK the coal seams were often only 18 to 24 inches (360mm to 610mm) high and manual mining meant lying on one’s side to pick at the seam! What an amazing surprise he got when he first saw the 21 to 24 ft high coal seams at Elrington! One blast and “drop” of coal was enough to need a week’s work to load the skips at the rate of 20 tons a day! His just reward was a higher wage!

As a kid I went down the pit a few times with Dad, and I didn’t like it!

I started work as a trainee with John Lysaght Pty Ltd, a division of BHP. Every trainee and apprentice served 3 or 4 months in every department of the manufacturing plant and administrative section, giving them a very well rounded, practical and useful training and grounding of the operation and management of a company.

Although I worked in engineering at Lysaght, I didn’t like the constraints of the job and I soon took up selling and marketing responsibilities after my move to Sydney.

I had joined the North Stockton Surf Life Saving Club, competing in the junior and senior boat crews as well, as participating in surf races. At age 12, I was the Minute Secretary of the club, at age 15 I was the Secretary and Club Captain at 21.

The workload from the surf life-saving activities was a very large and important part of my life. When I relocated to Sydney to take up a new job in the Aluminium industry, I joined Warriewood Surf Life Saving Club on the North Shore of Sydney, and enjoyed the benefits of Sydney clubs

I left Lysaght to join the G.E.Crane-owned Aluminium company, Crane Copper and Aluminium Pty Ltd, as Assistant to the General Sales Manager, with Australia as my responsibility!

A few years later, Cookson Sheet Metal Products Pty Ltd (CSMD), of Bishops Waltham, Hants, UK, approached me to join their company, with the challenge of establishing a separate company to exploit world-wide, their patented products and machines, as well as to significantly expand the sales of product in the UK.

Anne, I and the children moved to England and settled into a house in Fareham, a town about 15 minutes south of Winchester. Cookson was in the midst of developing a new and exciting product. The product was the tear-top can lid with a ring-pull opener.

I travelled the world marketing and selling manufacturing, production and sales licences to companies in South Africa,

Spain, Jamaica, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the USA.

Anne and I returned to Australia with the kids after completing this task. We sought out and purchased a house in Doncaster East, where we still live. To outline my employment history since returning home in 2001 would take as many words as I have already used! Suffice to say that I was gainfully employed in marketing and management roles for companies that are associated with the Aluminium and Building Industries.

## The Choir’s Welsh Music Heritage

In our last two newsletters we introduced you to one of the composers whose music we perform - Joseph Parry and his rags to riches adventure. In this final chapter we complete his life story.

In 1881, the Parry family left Aberystwyth for Swansea, where Parry became the organist at Ebenezer Chapel and was head of a musical college he founded. When he was offered a chair at Cardiff University in 1888, Parry and his family moved to the nearby town of Penarth. He lectured and taught at the university and was known as “Y Doctor Mawr” (“The Great Doctor”). Parry also accepted a position as the organist at Christ Church Congregational Church in Penarth.

**Personal life** In 1859, Parry and his family became citizens of the United States; he was equally proud of being a Welshman and a United States citizen. In 1861, Parry married Jane Thomas in Danville, USA. She was the daughter of Welsh immigrants and the sister of Gomer Thomas, who published many of Parry’s early compositions. The couple had three sons and two daughters. The older children were born when the family was still living in Danville, Pennsylvania, only Parry’s youngest child was born in Wales. Two of Parry’s three sons died after the family moved to Penarth. Parry’s youngest son, William, died in 1892; his oldest son, Joseph Haydn, died two years later. While all of Parry’s children are said to have had musical talent, only Joseph Haydn, followed in his father’s footsteps as a composer and teacher.

Later in 1894, Parry and his wife hoped a trip to the US would help ease some of the sadness over the deaths of their two sons. Parry had last visited the United States on a vocal concert tour in 1880. Although the Parrys would be visiting family, Joseph believed he should be available to the public during the visit since many people in the US had helped him financially when he was studying music in England.

Parry asked an old friend to notify the Welsh community



in the United States that he would be visiting and would adjudicate at eisteddfodau, lecture or lead Cymanfaeodd Canu if desired. Parry and his family visited many cities and towns in the eastern US and were warmly received wherever they went. He kept friends in Wales advised of his travels through letters to The Western Mail which were printed by the newspaper. Parry's last journey to the United States in 1898 included a visit to Salt Lake City, where he adjudicated at the third Salt Lake eisteddfod which was held in the Mormon Tabernacle.

His last major work, an opera entitled The Maid of Cefn Ydfa, premiered at the Grand Theatre in Cardiff in late December 1902.

About two weeks before his death, Parry became suddenly ill. The medical condition was serious enough to warrant surgery. Parry, who had planned a tour of Australia and the US for 1904, lay in his sick bed when The Maid of Cefn Ydfa was signed for performances by three opera companies; he was never able to be told of the good news. Parry died at his Penarth home on 17 February 1903. His last composition was written during his final illness - a tribute to his wife, Jane, entitled Dear Wife.



At least 7,000 people from all parts of the country gathered in Penarth for the funeral of Joseph Parry. They lined the route from Parry's home to Christ Church, where the family worshipped and to the churchyard at St Augustine's. His family and friends were joined by officials from the city of Cardiff, faculty and students from Cardiff University, representatives from the National Eisteddfod and many members of various choirs throughout Wales. Ministers of various denominations were also part of those gathered to pay respects to Parry. He was buried on the north side of St Augustine's Churchyard, Penarth. Parry's monument is a marble column topped by a lyre with seven strings, with the strings representing the members of Parry's family. Two of the seven strings of the lyre are broken to represent the deaths of his two sons, who died before Parry.

## Would you like to join the choir?

Are you a singer with another choir, a bathroom vocalizer or someone who simply wants to learn to sing with the best team in the business?

We are always on the lookout for new members, whether experienced choristers wanting a new challenge or young (or not so young), inexperienced singers who would benefit from the coaching and direction of our professional music team and the mentoring of our established choristers.

Our web-based learning aids enable newcomers and established choristers to come up to speed with new and existing material very quickly.

Whatever your level of musical competence, you will experience a sympathetic conductor and accompanist, a great rehearsal environment and a group of friendly, dedicated and talented choristers. Many of our members had no formal musical training prior to joining, but the choir has helped them to read and interpret our music scores. We all work hard, enjoy what we do, strive to help the choir achieve new heights and enjoy doing it.

Our concerts often take us around the state and overseas as well as to some of the most prestigious concert halls in Melbourne

If you simply want to see and hear the choir rehearsing, please come along to our rehearsal rooms at Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Ave, Ringwood. Visitors are always welcome and if you come on the first Wednesday in the month, we'll even offer you a sandwich or a cake. You'll appreciate how a four-part harmony, male voice arrangement is developed to the polished state you see on stage. Having an audience tends to keep our choristers in check, without inhibiting the fun and banter, which is part of every rehearsal!

Rehearsals are held every Wednesday (excepting school holidays) and run from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. when the choir is updated by the choir president about upcoming events and related choir matters.

We especially welcome younger members, although potential members of any age are always encouraged to come for an audition.

If you are interested give **Gwyn Harper (0419 562 353)**, or any choir member, a call and we will be pleased to introduce you to an irreverent but highly motivated group of guys who love the company of their fellow choristers and enjoy the challenge of singing in 4-part harmony.

## Would you like to hire the choir?

Anyone who attended our concerts at major venues such as the Melbourne Recital Centre, Ulumbarra Theatre Bendigo and the Melbourne Town Hall, would be aware that the choir has the skills, capability and contacts to produce and run high quality major events. In addition, the choir is available for community, corporate and sporting events, dinners, anniversaries, weddings etc. So, if you require anything from a short rousing opening for a conference (say) to a full two-hour concert, with guest artists (if required), please contact **Colin Brown (0409 188 109)**, or any committee member to discuss your needs. Please bear in mind that we're talking about a choir of up to 60 voices plus a professional accompanist and music director, so we provide great value for money.



### Communication

The choir is quite an expensive organization to run and we receive no government assistance. While we are an amateur choir, we employ a professional music director and accompanist which enables the choir to project a professional stage image. We depend primarily on ticket sales to our concerts for most of our income, so your patronage is essential to our survival and growth. Please feel free to copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends or relatives and if you would like us to add them to our distribution list, so they get the copy direct, then let us know their email address or they can subscribe via our website – www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au

Email is the preferred way of communication with our supporters, so send us an email and we'll add you into our database and include you in all future communications. We treat all information provided as confidential and subscribers can opt out at any time.

Feedback is very important to us. Please write and let us know what you think of our performances, introduce us to your friends and tell us what you would like us to perform at forthcoming events.

### Would you like to sponsor the choir?

The choir is always seeking sponsors in particular for the annual funding of our famous Singer of the Year (SOTY) Concert which we report in this issue.

This prestigious event, which has been running for 27 years and is open to singers under the age of 35, draws competitors from all parts of the state (and indeed sometimes interstate)

The number of winners and runners-up of this competition who have gone on to make careers on concert and opera stages worldwide is testament to the significance of the event. In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the finalists, the choir provides opportunities for them to perform as guest artists in our concerts during the year.

All sponsors are acknowledged in our programs and publicity material and there is also be the opportunity to be involved in the presentation ceremony on the night and during the elimination heats.

If you would like to be associated with this wonderful event or any of our other prestigious concerts or simply wish to have your name or product associated with the choir, please contact any member of the choir's committee and we will be delighted to work with you to get the best value out of your sponsorship.

### Laughter is the best medicine

Here's a joke or two to keep you going.

#### Scottish obituary

A Scottish woman goes to the local newspaper office to see that the obituary for her recently deceased husband is published. The editor informs her that there is a charge of one pound per word.

She pauses, reflects, and then she says, "Well then, let it read: Fred Brown died."

Amused at the woman's thrift, the editor tells her that there is a seven-word minimum for all obituaries. She thinks it over and, in a few seconds says, "In that case, let it read: "Fred Brown died ... golf clubs for Sale"

#### Talking Dog

A guy is driving in Dublin when he sees a sign in front of a house: "\*Talking Dog for Sale\*"

He rings the bell and the owner tells him the dog is in the backyard. The guy goes into the backyard and sees a Labrador sitting there.

"You talk?" he asks. "Yes," the Lab replies. "So, what's the story?"

The Lab looks up and says: "Well, I discovered that I could talk when I was pretty young. I wanted to help the government, so I told the Garda about my gift, and in no time at all they had me jetting from country to country, sitting in rooms with spies and world leaders, because no one figured a dog would be eavesdropping.

I was one of their most valuable spies for eight years running. But the jetting around really tired me out, and I knew I wasn't getting any younger, so I decided to settle down.

I signed up for a job at the airport to do some undercover security wandering near suspicious characters and listening in. I uncovered some incredible dealings and was awarded a batch of medals. I got married, had a load of puppies, and now I'm just retired."

The guy is amazed. He goes back in and asks the owner what he wants for the dog.

"Ten euros," the man says.

"Ten euros? This dog is amazing. Why on earth are you selling him so cheaply?"

"Because he's a bloody liar. He never did any of that stuff.

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