

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

February 2020 Newsletter No 33



Come to our concert and help support the Fireys

The choir has a proud history of supporting charities particularly in disaster relief situations, such as the time when we performed in Bairnsdale following their flood disaster in 2012. As a choir, we were personally impacted by the Black Saturday fires in 2009, when we lost one of our choristers and his wife in the fires at Kinglake.

Hence as part of our response to the devastation caused by the fires which have ravaged Southern Australia the choir will be donating part of the profits from its upcoming *Welsh Celebration*

*A Welsh Celebration for
St David's Day*



for St David's Day Concert to the CFA Volunteer Welfare Appeal.

This concert is shaping up to be a wonderful event celebrating everything which is great in Welsh and Australian choral culture with stirring Welsh songs and choruses, beautiful solos and duets from our celebrated Welsh import *Erfyl Tomos Jones* and our two young talented female singers *Chloe Harris* (mezzo soprano) and *Amelia Wawrzon* (soprano). In addition, there will be welsh cakes and other delights for you to sample and enjoy at the interval. This Saturday afternoon concert will be held at the wonderfully intimate James Tatoulis auditorium, which is the same place we performed when Jane Highfield (of the Guildhall School of Music in London) commented on our choir's "unique ability to engage and hold an audience" - a quality which we have striven to maintain and enhance since.

Incidentally, our experience of singing at such an acoustically satisfying venue provided the motivation to the use this hall to record the majority of the choral songs which appear on our earlier "Senzenina" recording.

Our newly released recording *World in Union*, which features some of the songs which will be performed live at the concert, will be on sale at the venue.



MELBOURNE WELSH MALE CHOIR

David Ashton-Smith OAM
CONDUCTOR



Erfyl Tomos Jones
INTERNATIONAL GUEST ARTIST
2019 Blue Riband Winner
at the Welsh National Eisteddfod

Simon Walters
ACCOMPANIST



Chloe Harris
MEZZO
Runner Up Sun Aria 2019



Amelia Wawrzon
SOPRANO
Finalist 2019 Singer of The Year

SATURDAY,
FEB 29TH, 2020
3:00 PM

THE JAMES TATOULIS AUDITORIUM
METHODIST LADIES COLLEGE
207 BARKERS ROAD, KEW

Adult \$38 | Group (6 or more) \$32 | Children (under 15) \$15

www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets

9800 3889

Australia Day Celebrations

As is traditional within our choir, members and their partners came together to celebrate Australia Day with good food, good wine (or beer) and fiercely contested cricket and “nest the wombat” games at the Lilydale home of one of our baritones - Geoff Heyme and his wife Jill.

Singing on the day was restricted to a single rendition of *Advance Australia Fair* which was sung (in four-part harmony - of course) around the flagpole, proudly flying the Australian colours.

The weather was fine, the company was great and after a close and exciting match, the cricket trophy was handed over to the “Australian Born” team captain - Geoff Heyme by the “Welsh Exiles” captain - Bill Spawton.

The wombat tossing event for the ladies was a closely fought game which went to four elimination rounds before Christine Andrews was declared the winner and was presented with an edible trophy of a box of local free-range eggs.

Note that no live wombats were used in this competition!

Upcoming choir events



Karralyka's 40th Toe Tapping Birthday Celebration

**Karralyka Theatre, Mines Road, Ringwood East. 3134
14th (and now 15th) April 2020 at 10:30 a.m.**

The choir will be performing for Maroondah Council's *Toe Tapping Tuesdays* at our “local” Karralyka Centre venue, as part of their 40th anniversary celebrations. In this instance the performance will take place in the function rooms at the Karralyka Centre, where patrons will not only get musical but edible treats as well. Our guest artist will be the lovely soprano Kate Amos.

Note that the response from the public to this concert has been so overwhelming that Maroondah Council have advised us the whole show will be repeated, treats and all, on the following Wednesday morning.

For tickets please phone the Karralyka Centre on 9870 2888

2020 St David's Day Gymanfa Ganu

St Michael's Uniting Church, Corner of Collins and Russell Street, Sunday,
March 1 at 3:00 p.m.

Those friends of the choir who have not attended a Gymanfa Ganu in Melbourne, have really missed a wonderful free afternoon of Welsh entertainment.

Organised by the Melbourne Welsh Church, the event is held at St Michael's Church on the corner of Collins and Russell Streets, since the Welsh Church itself is too small for the usual audience numbers. Members of all four Welsh choirs in Victoria, the Australia Welsh, Victorian Welsh, Geelong Ladies Choir and of course the Melbourne Welsh (and possibly some of the newer choirs), will be in the balcony (nearer to heaven) to lead the hymn singing and also to perform some special joint choral items.

Our soloist at MLC, baritone *Erfyl Tomos Jones* (Machynlleth, the 2019 Blue Riband winner at the National Eisteddfod of Wales), together with husband and wife team *Eleri and Aled Edwards* (Cilycwm, both previous Blue Riband winners) and the popular Welsh conductor, *Dilwyn Price* (Old Colwyn), have all been invited to Melbourne by the Welsh Church and will perform in the 2020 Gymanfa Ganu. *Dilwyn* is a retired teacher with a distinguished career in musical education in North Wales. He is a chapel organist, conductor of Côr Alaw in Colwyn Bay and last year was invited to lead the Welsh Society's Gymanfa in Taranaki, New Zealand. The event will be introduced, as usual, by the pastor of the Welsh Church, the inimitable *Siôn Gough Hughes*, who will hand over to *Dilwyn* to conduct the Gymanfa Ganu. What a wonderful afternoon it should be. Entry is free, so come along and discover all that is so wonderful about the Welsh choral culture, you won't be disappointed.

New Choir Chorister Profile – Michael Brandon – second tenor

Michael lives in Croydon North and already has a connection to the choir - Bill Spawton is married to his sister Christine. Indeed, he is one of five siblings, and his parents, Margaret and



John, live in Beechworth. They are both approaching 90 years old and will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary next August, which is quite an achievement!

Michael has recently retired from full time work as a construction manager for a builder based in Bayswater North and he has started his own business doing building maintenance and repairs a few days a week. But construction is his third career, having also worked as commercial photographer in his 20's and then as a pastry cook and restaurateur in his 30's and 40's, so if he knows you are coming around, he really can bake a cake!

Michael confesses to not having a musical background, but he does have an interest in a wide variety of music, and he loves to sing along. He grew up in the 60's and 70's and he still enjoys the rock and roll and popular music of his youth. At home, when he was young, his parents would play quite a variety of music: Sinatra [Frank and Nancy], Shirley Bassey, Herb Alpert, Peter

Dawson, the marches of John Philip Souza, Vera Lynn, Richard Tauber, Josef Locke, Charles Boyer and the pop music of the era. He has been a big fan of music of the 1920s and 30s, since he was young and he is a particular fan of Paul Robeson who, of course, had a close connection with Wales. Interestingly he does have an ancestor who was an actor, impresario and producer around the turn of last century, his great grandfather.

Michael admits to being a bit of a recovering workaholic and he doesn't really have any hobbies, although he does love his motorbike! But now that he has ceased full time work and has a lot more time on his hands, he can no longer rebuff Bill's entreaties to come and give the choir a go; it has taken quite a few years of gentle badgering! He's glad he did succumb because he's found it to be a great experience so far.

Michael does have some Welsh Heritage through his great great grandmother on his mother's side and Cornish heritage on his father's side.

The passing of two former choir members

In the last month, the choir was informed of the passing of two of its recent choir members - Ian Eckersley and Alistair Webster.

Vale Ian Eckersley

The choir was saddened to learn of the death of Ian Eckersley, who joined the choir in 2018 as a probationary member. Unfortunately, Ian suffered with poor health over the latter part of last year. Ian passed away following complications following surgery, surrounded by his family, with the music of the Melbourne Welsh choir playing in the background. Members of the choir attended Ian's funeral to sing his spirit home.

Vale Alistair Webster



Alistair was one of the longer serving members of the choir having been a member for 20 years. A former nurse and a soccer referee, he was part of the medical team within the choir. With his strong Scottish accent Alistair was a most vociferous contributor on any topic under the sun. He was noticeably quieter when singing in the bass section. Alistair toured with the choir on some of its overseas trips and notably, brought his wife and daughter along on the choir's trip to Wales and England, when we sang at the Royal Albert Hall. The choir was well represented at Alistair's funeral and sang *Gwahoddiad*, one of his favourite hymns.

Would you like to join the choir?

We are always on the lookout for new members, whether experienced choristers wanting a new challenge, or young (and 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.

If you are concerned about singing in Welsh, well don't worry! We have a Welsh language class just prior to rehearsal, to introduce newcomers (and experienced choristers) into the pronunciation and meaning of the songs which we sing in Welsh.

Whatever your level of musical competence, you will experience a highly experienced and sympathetic conductor, a professional 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 and strive to help the choir achieve new heights. Our concerts often take us around the country 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 some 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 enjoy the company of their fellow choristers and love the challenge of singing in 4-part harmony.

Communication

Although we are an amateur choir, we employ a professional music director and accompanist, who are instrumental in ensuring the choir to presents a highly professional image. This, together with the infrastructure expenses e.g. rehearsal rooms, website, music scores etc., makes the choir quite an expensive organisation to run (and we receive no external grants).

We depend primarily on hire of the choir for events, plus ticket sales to our own concerts and sales of our CDs for the majority 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. If you would like us to add them to our distribution list, so they get their copy direct, then please let us know their email address.

Alternatively, they can subscribe via our website: ***www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au***

Email is the preferred way to make contact 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 our subscribers can opt out at any time.

We value your feedback, so please write and let us know what you think of our performances, introduce us to your friends and tell us where and what you would like to see us perform in future concerts.

Would you like to hire the choir?

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 can provide an incredible value for money.

Would you like to sponsor the choir?

The Choir has a number of sponsors, to whom we are very grateful, but we always need more. If you have a product or service which you believe might appeal to our audiences or simply wish to be associated with the choir, then contact us and we will be delighted to feature you in our marketing material and promotions.

Potential sponsors may be interested in supporting our prestigious *Singer of the Year (SOTY)* concert. This 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 quality and significance of the event. In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the finalists, the choir provides them with opportunities 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 the opportunity to be involved in the presentation ceremony on the night, as well as during the during the elimination heats.

If you would like to be associated with this wonderful event or indeed any of our other prestigious concerts, 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

Painting the Porch

A young man wanting to earn some extra money decided to hire himself out as a handy man and started canvassing a nearby well-to-do neighbourhood. He went to the front door of the first house and asked the owner if he had any odd jobs for him to do

"Well, I guess I could use somebody to paint my porch," the owner said. "How much will you charge me?"

The man quickly responded: "How about \$50?"

The owner agreed and told him that the paint and everything he would need were in the garage. The man's wife, hearing the conversation, said to her husband: "Does he realise that our porch goes all the way around the house?"

The husband shrugged and went off on his way. A short time later, the man came to the door to collect his money.

"You're finished already?" the husband asked.

“Yes,” the man replied, “and I had paint left over, so I gave it two coats.” Impressed, the owner reached into his pocket for the \$50 and handed it to him.

“And by the way,” the man added, “it’s not a Porch, it’s a Lexus.”

Overheard at a wedding

One little boy to another “How many wives can a man have?”

The other answered seriously, “Sixteen of course, four better, four worse, four richer, four poorer”.

Driving problem

As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang.

Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, “Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on Interstate 280. Please be careful!” “It's not just one car,” said Herman. “It's hundreds of them!”

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