

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

March 2022 Newsletter No 54



For our first concert in 2022 we are looking forward to performing at one of our favourite venues, the comfortable and intimate James Tatoulis Auditorium at MLC in Barkers Road, Kew.

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

A Celebration of St David's Day

Music-Director David Ashton-Smith OAM
Accompanist Simon Walters

featuring special guest soloist
Samantha Hargreaves
2021 Singer of the Year Winner

2pm Saturday 23rd April
at The James Tatoulis Auditorium
Methodist Ladies College 207 Barkers Road, Kew

Tickets \$40 Concession \$35 Group of Six \$32 Children \$15
Available www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets/ or phone 0408 280 953

The choir is in excellent voice and we are determined to present our supporters with a veritable musical feast in celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the patron saint of Wales - St David.

We have been hard at work since we last performed, so expect some new songs as well as some old standards

With mixture of Welsh and English ballads, anthems and arias and a wonderful soloist in Samantha Hargreaves - our 2021 Singer of the Year - we are looking to raise the roof of this lovely venue.

We are keen to fill the venue which only holds 350 patrons (and there is not a bad seat in the house) so be quick and book your tickets.

Invite your friends and family - we guarantee they won't be disappointed and the bigger the audience the better the choir performs!

We are looking for volunteers to distribute

our brochures, so if you would like to help, please give us a call.

Tickets for the afternoon concert commencing at 2:00 p.m. are available via TryBooking or via the choir's website:

www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets or from any member of the choir.

The Choir's latest recording activities

Despite a level of uncertainty surrounding future concerts, the choir is continuing to refine and extend its repertoire and its marketing activities.

In order to promote the choir's capabilities via social media, we are planning to release some videos which we recently recorded at Wesley Church in Melbourne. Four songs were recorded during the session which will be released later this year on YouTube and Facebook and will of course be available via the choir's website.

The Wesley Uniting Church in Lonsdale Street was chosen for its acoustics and its insulation from street noise (a previous recording session at St Patrick's, many moons ago, was ruined by the noise from the trams passing outside the cathedral).



Inside Wesley Church

Be sure to watch for details of the release of this video as well as our upcoming concerts in our newsletters, website and Facebook page



*Wesley Church
Lonsdale St, Melbourne*

The background to another song from the Choir's repertoire

- *We'll keep a welcome*

One of the most well-known songs associated with Wales is "*We'll keep a welcome*", which will be featured in our upcoming concert in celebration of St David's Day.

The simple but evocative words were composed by a Welsh songwriter, entertainer and radio producer - **Mai Jones** (6 February 1899 – 7 May 1960).

Mai was born in Newport, Monmouthshire, the daughter of the local railway stationmaster.

Having won a scholarship to study music at the University of Wales, Cardiff, she went on to the Royal College of Music. Her early successes included being selected as one of the official accompanists for the National Eisteddfod of Wales at Pontypool in 1924.

Singing and playing both piano and accordion, she began to make a name for herself as an entertainer in London and broadcast on radio for the first time with Jack Payne's band.

During the 1920–30s, she also contributed the contralto voice to a well-known and often broadcast singing duo called *The Carroll Sisters*, with Elsie Eaves (soprano).

In 1941, she joined the BBC in Cardiff as a radio producer of light entertainment programmes, which included *Welsh Rarebit* and *Saturday Starlight*.

As part of the wartime Cardiff artistic and music community, Mai had known Idloes Owen, also a composer, arranger and conductor, who performed with the pre-war *Lyrian Singers*. Idloes went on to found the Welsh National Opera in 1943. He was instrumental in providing Mai with a musical score written originally by a fellow Lyrian performer, Thomas Morgan.

Mai then collaborated with lyricists Lyn Joshua and James Harper to create the now Welsh standard "*We'll Keep a Welcome*". The song had its début on 29 February 1940, with the BBC's resident 25-strong male voice choir, the *Lyrian Singers*, performing the new song. It was an overnight success.

Other successful songs written by Mai Jones included: "*Blackbirds*" (1924), "*Wondering If You Remember*" (1927), "*We'll Keep a Welcome*" (1940), "*Nos Da/Good night*" (1946) and "*Rhondda Rhapsody*" (1951).

In 1947, she married a singer, David Davies. She retired from the BBC in 1958 and died not long afterwards as a result of a head injury.

A plaque commemorating her was unveiled in 2010 at the couple's former home in St Marks Crescent, Newport. The words of her song are given below:

We'll Keep a Welcome

*Far away a voice is calling
Bells of memory chime
Come home again, come home again
They call through the oceans of time*

*We'll keep a welcome in the hillsides
We'll keep a welcome in the Vales
This land you knew will still be singing
When you come home again to Wales*

*This land of song will keep a welcome
And with a love that never fails
We'll kiss away each hour of hiraeth
When you come home again to Wales*

*We'll keep a welcome in the hillsides
We'll keep a welcome in the Vales
This land you knew will still be singing
When you come home again to Wales*

*This land of song will keep a welcome
And with a love that never fails
We'll kiss away each hour of hiraeth
When you come home again to Wales*

Chorister Choir Profile - Colin Bevan - Second tenor



Hello, I'm Colin Bevan and this is my story.

I was born in Liverpool England in 1949, with a younger brother born in 1951. My parents decided that Liverpool was not a good place to raise two boys and so the family migrated to Australia in 1955 (in one of the “luxury” cruise liners of the time!)

After disembarking at Port Adelaide, I was raised in South Australia's Adelaide Hills district. In every way this was a world away from life in Liverpool. I enjoyed the carefree life that many of us remember back in the 50s and 60s.

My family were conservative Seventh-day Adventists and this had a profound influence on my life and career. The other legacy from my parents was the love of singing. My mother sang soprano items at all the local community gatherings and sometimes she and my father sang duets, (he had a clear tenor voice).

On completion of my high schooling in 1966 I found employment with the AMP society in their budding IT department. In those days data was recorded on punched cards and the IT division was responsible for the massive task of processing, collating and printing out the data on a daily basis. I really enjoyed this but my conservative upbringing made me look for more.

In 1969 I went to the church's training college in NSW. I earned my BSc (Hons) degree and trained to be a science/mathematics teacher. The college had a respected chorale, to which I belonged, directed by Alan Thrift.

In 1973 I was appointed to teach at the church's school in Hawthorn in Melbourne - I'd never been to Melbourne before. I taught chemistry and mathematics for two years and was then appointed to teach at a mission school in New Britain.

The school was about 50 km south of Rabaul and extremely isolated. I developed a good rapport with my fellow staff members (expatriate and indigenous) and had a special two years there, teaching and supervising student work lines - 12 months with ground keeping and 12 months in the school store, which also served nationals from the local community.

After two years in New Britain, I returned to Melbourne where I happily taught senior mathematics and chemistry for the next 34 years. I had no desire to get involved in administration, having seen too many friends "burned" by this.

I married my present wife, Kerryn in 1989. I have no children of my own but am stepfather to her two children and grandfather to 5 great kids.

Musically, I was a member of Melbourne Chorale for some 10 years working with Val Pyers and Jonathon Grieves-Smith. For another 15 years I was a member of Advent Brass Band where I was partly successful at playing baritone horn and more successful at playing timpani but my great passion was always for choral music.

In 2018, I "saw the light" and returned to choral work. I had been invited some years earlier to a MWMC concert and I loved it. I was fascinated by the breadth of the repertoire and the fact that the members did not use music. So, I joined the choir and love it - but like all of us, I struggle with memorisation of all our great songs!

Kerryn and I love to travel, we have been on 7 cruises to places as far apart as Norway and Antarctica and hope to complete more when it is safe to do so. Hopefully we can combine our passions for travel and singing with future choir tours.

We also play bridge together. I play golf rather badly and we volunteer with Second Bite, collecting leftover food from Coles stores and delivering it to distribution centres.

I enjoy the companionship of the choir, especially the 2nd tenor section and I hope to continue to do so for many years to come.

Joining the choir

The choir is always keen to attract new members.

Singing is good for the mind and body and rehearsing the choir's songs during and after COVID lockdowns has been therapeutic. Ask any of our choristers!

While our heritage is Welsh and around 25% of our concert programs are Welsh songs (not necessarily all in the Welsh language), we are fundamentally a multicultural choir with probably only half of us having any Welsh heritage. The choir is open to people of any nationality and our current and past members have included people with Scots, English, Irish, New Zealand, Dutch, French, German, Egyptian, South African, Tongan, Samoan and Australian backgrounds. We even have a Kiwi as the current president!

The choir's online tools for learning the repertoire are excellent and our secretary and other Welsh speaking members provide special lessons at our rehearsal venue (and continued them via Zoom during lockdown), to assist choristers with the knowledge and pronunciation of our Welsh songs

Some of our members enjoy the choir so much that they travel significant distances (such as from Traralgon in the east or Bacchus Marsh in the north) to attend rehearsals, such is their enjoyment of the choir and its camaraderie.

Whether you've been involved in music all your life, or only sing in the shower, you are welcome to come along to any of our rehearsals at Maroondah Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood to see how the choir operates.

You will be made most welcome, whether you wish to sit within the body of the choir and sing with us, or simply listen and observe, alongside our other guests, until you are happy with the music and the environment.

Our rehearsal facility at Federation Estate is excellent, with comfortable seats, good acoustics and we have the best music director and accompanist combination in Melbourne.

The choir benefits from our Music Director, David Ashton-Smith's background as an opera singer and adjudicator, in coaching our voice development and projection, as well as his role in teaching us new songs. He is ably assisted by our accompanist, Simon Walters, himself a music director and arranger of some note, whose keen ear picks up any problems with pitch or timing.

Established section mentors look after all new and prospective members, to ensure they are properly introduced to other members of their section and are equipped with the relevant music scores. They will act as mentors for the duration of the probationary period and will answer any questions you might have.

There is a break for tea or coffee during rehearsals, which gives everyone the opportunity to chat to other choir members. On the first Wednesday in the month, one of the sections provides the choir and visitors with (a sometimes sumptuous) supper.

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

If you contact us on the phone numbers or email addresses shown in this newsletter, we will respond and arrange to meet you personally. Otherwise, just come along on a Wednesday evening, introduce yourself and you will be made very welcome.

Once you decide to join the choir, we will provide you with access to our web-based aids which assist in learning and practising the individual parts at home. This makes the process of getting up to speed with the Choir's repertoire so much easier.

We also have Welsh language sessions, as mentioned above given by some of the Welsh speaking members of the choir, to assist choristers with the pronunciation and understanding of the Welsh songs in our repertoire.

Following a number of rehearsal sessions and a formal audition, you could be singing in one of our concerts within weeks and possibly joining us on our next tour.

It has been a while since the Choir's last tour (which was to Cornwall and Wales) and we are currently planning our next tour, which, bearing in mind the continuing impact of COVID, is likely to be within Australia.

Hiring the choir

Anyone who has attended our concerts at major venues such as the Melbourne Recital Centre, Ulumbarra Theatre Bendigo, Hamer Hall and the Melbourne Town Hall, will be aware that the choir has the skills, capability and contacts to produce and run high quality major events.

The choir is available for community, corporate and sporting events, dinners, anniversaries, weddings etc., at most times in the year. So, if you are, or know of, an organization which might require anything from a short rousing opening to a conference (say) to a full two-hour concert, together with quality guest artists and an orchestra or band (if required), please contact **Gwyn Harper (0419 562 353)** or any committee member or simply complete the section below and return it to us and we will be pleased to work with you to produce an outstanding event.

Please bear in mind that we're talking about a choir of up to 50 voices plus a professional music director

and accompanist. We have an eclectic repertoire, a great sound and provide excellent entertainment and value for the money.

First Name*
Last Name*
Email*
Company*
Phone Number *
Approximate Date*
Venue
Event Description

Sponsoring the choir

As is the case with almost all other performing arts organisations, the choir's financial position over the past two years has been adversely impacted by the COVID pandemic. As a result, we need donors and sponsors more than ever.

If you would simply like to donate to the choir, please contact any member of the committee. We are a registered charitable body and all donations will be acknowledged and are tax deductible.

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 product in our concerts, marketing material and promotions.

Our audience ranges from the baby boomers to later generations in their 30's, 40's and 50's, so if your organisation has this demographic as a target market, then sponsoring the choir provides a unique and cost-effective way of getting your message across.

The choir is seeking donors and sponsors for the funding of the prizes for our prestigious *Singer of the Year (SOTY)* concert which, in 2022, we expect to be able to hold before a live audience. This event, which has been running for 29 years and is open to singers under the age of 35, draws competitors from all parts of the state and indeed interstate. Many of the winners and runners-up of this competition have gone on to make careers on concert and opera stages worldwide, which is testament to the quality and significance of this event.

As a result of COVID19 restrictions the last two SOTY competitions had to be adjudicated based on video performances and as mentioned above, interviews with the winners and examples of their performances are available via the choir's website or our Facebook page.

In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the finalists, the choir gives them an opportunity to perform as guest artists in our concerts during the year.

All sponsors are acknowledged in our programs and publicity material and are given the opportunity to be involved in the SOTY presentation ceremonies on the finals' night and in the elimination heats.

One of our videos produced and released during the COVID19 period was viewed by over 30,000 viewers and for the 2020 SOTY event, the videos of the final three competitors on YouTube had both local and international exposure. We expect the videos of 2021 SOTY event to have a similar impact.

The choir is able to perform at a sponsor's nominated site if required, as we have done in the past (e.g., the opening of a legal conference in the city, the Eureka Stockade anniversary in Ballarat, the opening of the Victorian State Library or even at a vehicle dealer's showroom in the suburbs).

If you would like to be associated SOTY 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.

Communicating with the Choir

Please feel free to copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends and relatives or if you would like us to add them to our distribution list, so they get their copy direct, 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 our subscribers can opt out at any time.

Email is our preferred way of communication with our supporters, so please send us an email and we'll respond promptly to whatever queries you may have.

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

Please introduce us to your friends and be sure to let us know what you would like to see us perform in our future concerts.

In times like these, laughter is still the best medicine.

Problems in translation

When NASA was preparing for the Apollo project, some of the training of the astronauts took place on a Navajo reservation.

One day, a Navajo elder and his son were herding sheep and came across the space crew. The old man, who spoke only Navajo, asked a question that his son translated. "What are these guys in the big suits doing?"

A member of the crew said they were practicing for their trip to the moon. The old man got all excited and asked if he could send a message to the moon with the astronauts. Recognizing a promotional opportunity, the NASA folks found a tape recorder.

After the old man recorded his message, they asked his son to translate it. He refused.

The NASA public relations people brought the tape to the reservation, where the rest of the tribe listened and laughed, but refused to translate the elder's message.

Finally, the NASA crew called in an official government translator. His translation of the old man's message was: "Watch out for these guys; they have come to steal your land."

Blonde Who Left Work Early

Three girls all worked in the same office with the same female boss.

Each day, they noticed the boss left work early. One day, the girls decided that, when the boss left, they would leave right behind her.

The brunette was thrilled to be home early. She did a little gardening, spent playtime with her son, and went to bed early.

The redhead was elated to be able to get in a quick workout at the spa before meeting a dinner date.

The blonde was happy to get home early and surprise her husband, but when she got to her bedroom, she heard a muffled noise from inside. Slowly and quietly, she cracked open the door and was mortified to see her husband in bed with her boss! Gently, she closed the door and crept out of her house.

The next day, at their coffee break, the brunette and redhead planned to leave early again, and they asked the blonde if she was going to go with them. "No way," the blonde exclaimed. "I almost got caught yesterday!!"

Funeral Costs

One day an old couple decided to go to Jerusalem for vacation.

A few days after they arrived, the wife died.

The man who worked at the local funeral home told the husband that he could pay \$150 to have her buried in Jerusalem or pay \$4,000 to have her body be shipped home and have her buried there.

The old man thought about it for a while and said, "I would rather pay \$4,000 to have her body shipped home than to pay \$150 to get her buried here".

The man who worked at the funeral home asked him why he wanted to pay \$4,000 instead of \$150.

The old man replied "2,000 years ago a man died and was buried here. Three days later he resurrected. I can't take the chance."

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