

# Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 59 August 2022

## Back in harness

Our concert at **Mooroolbark** was the start of a fairly busy period for the choir and what an excellent start it was.

The morning was chill but the hall and the audience were as warm as ever and a full house gave the choir a terrific welcome for the 11:00 a.m. concert. COVID had taken a toll on the choir numbers but this did not appear to impact it's quality or volume.

We used the occasion to introduce a number of relatively new songs to the repertoire - *Ysbryd y Nos* (Spirit of the night), *Hiraeth* (Longing - a traditional ballad beloved of Welsh choirs around the globe) and *Mansions of the Lord* (from the Mel Gibson film "We were Soldiers"). All were well received by our enthusiastic morning audience.

While the choir sat down to gather their breath between brackets, the audience were treated to solos by our master of the keyboard Simon Walters who played an impromptu keyboard version of Dave Brubeck's *Take Five* interspersed with elements of the theme from *Neighbours* - as a topical tribute to the ending of that long running soap opera.



*Our master of the keyboards  
- Simon Walters*

In another break, our Music Director showed us his language skills as well as his vocal mastery in wowing the audience with a rendition, in French, of the wonderful ballad - *Les Feuilles Mortes* (Autumn leaves).

In the final break, our folk balladeer and first tenor - Raymond Crooke entertained us with an Eric Bogle song - *Now I'm easy* and then invited choir and audience to join him in the chorus of the well know sea shanty - *Bound for Botany Bay*.

*The World in Union* provided a fitting ending to a wonderful morning's concert and the standing ovation at the end of the concert said it all. We look forward to returning to Mooroolbark for our traditional Christmas concert later in the year.



*Balladeer - Raymond Crooke*

## Upcoming concerts

**Rosanna Uniting Church - 2:30 p.m. Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

**21 Arden Crescent, Rosanna**

Rosanna Uniting Church, Arden Crescent, each year from 1995 until 2020 hosted up to ten concerts, planned and presented by the Concert Committee - 216 in all - vocal, instrumental, 'classical' and 'popular', mainly on Sunday afternoons. They have also supported a range of local charities and overseas relief work. Since 1995 over \$100,000 has been donated from the proceeds of these musical afternoons and evenings.



*Amelia Wawrzon*

In spite of the immense disruption caused by COVID, when only the first of eight planned concerts in 2020 could take place, and just two concerts in 2021, this year, 2022, has seen two very enjoyable musical afternoons at Rosanna so far, and the third one coming up very soon, is the return of the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir on Sunday August 14.

The choir loves singing at this unique, friendly venue and this performance will be a very special occasion, as we bid farewell and bon voyage to our wonderful soprano soloist (and SOTY finalist) **Amelia**

**Wawrzon** who is heading off to the Royal Academy of Music in London.

It will be a fun afternoon with lots of audience participation. The church has limited seating so please book early to avoid disappointment. To book please contact the Church on 03 9457 2595.



**Legends of Brass - 2:00 p.m. Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Ivanhoe Centre, 275 Upper Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe 3079**

Bookings via Trybooking or via the choir website [www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au](http://www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au)



**LEGENDS OF BRASS**

**A SPECTACULAR  
LAST NIGHT OF THE  
PROMS**

Proudly Sponsored by  
**Banyule**

**The Centre Ivanhoe  
275 Upper Heidelberg Road  
2.00pm SUNDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 18, 2022**

**Featuring**  
**The Legends of Brass with  
Melbourne Welsh Male Choir  
Old Scotch Pipes & Drums**

**Tickets \$30 [Legendsofbrass.com.au](http://Legendsofbrass.com.au)  
or call David m: 0484 312 311 t: 9497 3637**

Our most popular show of the year. Come along and have a ball as you sing, wave flags and stomp your way through this fabulous afternoon concert.

Our performance in the *Last Night of the Proms* concert as guests of the Legends of Brass (also featuring the Old Scotch Pipes and Drums) at the beautiful Art Deco, **Ivanhoe Centre**, is scheduled for Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> September. This nostalgic event is often a sell-out, so be sure to book, via the Choir's website as soon as the ticket sales are announced.

Come along to enjoy an afternoon of flag waving and singing-a-long to your favourite tunes from the British Isles.

**Tuckers Geelong - 2:00 p.m. Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**St Mary of the Angels Basilica, 136-148, Yarra Street, Geelong 3022**

A fortnight after the Proms, we will be singing in the majestic, gothic, **St Mary's Basilica in Geelong** for our traditional annual concert at the beginning of Senior's week on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September, which is sponsored by Tuckers Funeral and Bereavement Services.

The reverberation which comes from high ceiling and solid walls of the cathedral contribute to the harmonies of the choir and makes it a wonderful place to sing and to hear a choir like ours.

Tickets will be available from Tuckers Funeral and Bereavement Services 03 5221 4788

**Final of MWMC Singer of the Year Competition & Concert - 2:00 p.m. Saturday 5th November**

**Ringwood North Uniting Church, 14 Dickson Crescent, Ringwood North, 3134**

Bookings via the Choir website [www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au](http://www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au).

Applications are now open for our Annual *Singer of the Year* Competition on 5 November, which this year will be held at **North Ringwood Uniting Church**. This is a relatively new venue for us but the layout and acoustics are perfect for a concert and competition like SOTY. Note that this is a change of date from that previously announced in order to allow adequate time for contestants to respond.

The elimination heats for SOTY will, as in earlier years, be held live, at our rehearsal facilities at **Federation Estate**, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October and will provide those with an ear for music a perfect evening's free entertainment, listening to the best of Australia's up and coming opera and musical theatre talent competing to make the *MWMC Singer of the Year 2022* final.

***Bernadette Robinson in concert with the Melbourne Welsh Choir 2:00 p.m. Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October***

Our major concert for the year with a brilliant international guest artist is scheduled for Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October at the **Ulumbarra Theatre** (in the former jail complex) **Bendigo**.



**Bernadette Robinson** will be our guest artist.

Her acclaimed performances in *Songs for Nobodies* and *Pennsylvania Avenue* have confirmed her standing as one of Australia's leading singer/actresses.

Audiences and critics alike loved both shows :

“The audience is on it's feet with a standing ovation” (The Age)

“Bernadette Robinson's performance is theatrical alchemy” (Herald Sun),

“Beyond virtuosity to the sublime” (the Australian).

After he saw *Songs for Nobodies* for the second time, Barry Humphries announced “Bernadette is a major talent and a spellbinder”.

Australia's general theatre-going public have discovered Bernadette's virtuosic acting skills and her uncanny ability to inhabit the voices of famous singers such as Judy Garland, Patsy Kline, Billy Holliday, Edith Piaf and many others.

If you have friends or relations in Bendigo, tell them not to miss this show.

It will be worth the trip from Melbourne to Bendigo just to see this one-off performance.

Book your tickets now, you won't be disappointed.

Here is some background to one of the songs added to the choir's recent repertoire:

### *The sea shanty - John Kanaka*

John Kanaka is a great example of sailors adopting words and phrases from the lands they visited. *Kanaka* is the Hawaiian word for Man, or perhaps "Man from Hawaii". Many sailors had difficulty pronouncing the names of the Hawaiian natives that worked with them on the ships, and so would call them Kanaka. The repeated syllables "*naka*" might sound nonsensical, but in Hawaiian it means "shell" or "sea creature", so John Kanaka-naka would mean "John the Hawaiian sea creature"

This was a "long haul" chantey, used at the halyards for hoisting up the sails. Many Hawaiians worked aboard ships that sailed the Pacific and were renowned for their excellent seamanship. English-speaking sailors often had difficulty pronouncing their names, however and so called them by the Hawaiian name "Kanaka," which means "Hawaiian Man."

The lyrics "*Tu lai e*" are very common words in Polynesian languages, and roughly translate to "stand your ground", referring to the necessity of planting one's feet firmly on the deck when hauling on a halyard at sea, to raise sails for example. Many versions change the refrain to "Too rah yay" or "Too rye ay", to suit the English-speaking tongue.

The version the choir sings is the one sung by the group - **The Fisherman's Friends** who are a folk music group from Port Isaac, Cornwall, (which many people will recognise as "*Portwen*" in the BBC comedy series - *Doc Martin*) who sing sea shanties. They have been performing locally since 1995. Whilst essentially an a cappella group, their studio recordings and live performances now often include traditional simple instrumentation.

Their story was told in a recent (released in March 2019) British comedy drama film directed by Chris Foggin.

#### **John Kanaka** (*chorus in brackets*)

I thought I heard the old man say (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

Today, today it's a holiday (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

Too-rye-ay, oh! Too-rye-ay

John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay

We're bound away at the break of day (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

We're bound away for 'Frisco Bay (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

Too-rye-ay, oh! Too-rye-ay

John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay

Them Frisco girls ain't got no comb (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

They comb their hair with a herring backbone (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

Too-rye-ay, oh! Too-rye-ay

John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay

Just one more heave and that'll do (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

'Cause we're the crew to pull her through (hoo!)

(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)

Too-rye-ay, oh! Too-rye-ay

John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay

I thought I heard the old man say (hoo!)  
(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)  
Today, today it's a holiday (hoo!)  
(John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay)  
Too-rye-ay, oh! Too-rye-ay  
John, Kanaka-naka, too-rye-ay

## Why join a choir?

We hope you liked Canadian, Robert Rowat's **nine reasons for joining a choir**, which was featured in our last two newsletters.

We'd like to expand on the second three of his points specifically in relation to the MWMC

### 4. You learn to listen

*While it's fun to belt it out like Björling, the key to good choral singing is paying attention to what's going on around you - listening. (It's a good thing to do outside choir, too.) A rule of thumb is, if you can't hear the person next to you, you're singing too loudly.*

Just asking people to listen as they sing assumes that they truly know how to listen. The art of listening is not the same as hearing. They may seem to be similar but they are vastly different. Both hearing and listening involve the use of your ears.

*While hearing is the passive reception of sound, listening is the active process of tuning in to those sounds we wish to receive while screening out those we do not wish to receive. Listening involves the perception of both external sounds as well as those of our own voice. **Paul Madaule***

For example, you hear sounds every day, all the time. You have no control of the sounds happening all around you. So, hearing is truly involuntary and happens subconsciously whether you like it or not.

Listening, on the other hand, is a learned skill. It seeks to understand the sounds you hear. The key here is to use these listening skills while singing. The more a choir is aware of the sounds around them the better their tone, balance and blend will be. So, developing listening skills is important to the overall ensemble.

Let's look at some ways basic listening skills are adapted into choir rehearsals.

The Music Director encourages listening within each individual section (tenor 1, tenor 2, baritone, bass)

There are many advantages of listening to those around you as you sing. This assures that you're singing the right part and helps you to sing better in tune. In addition, you will be able to sense when you are singing too loudly or softly. Being a good listener also helps your voice blend well with other singers.

Some questions to think about while singing.

- Am I singing in tune?
- Could I be singing too loudly?
- How well am I blending well with others?
- Am I singing the right part?

### 5. It's a workout for your brain

*Most choirs require basic music-reading skills, which are known to increase the capacity of your memory, sharpen your concentration and improve your spatial organization. You hit the gym three times a week to keep your body in shape (right?). Think of choir as a boot camp for your brain.*

One of the most common challenges facing new choristers with limited reading skills is how to learn to follow a score and sing independently. Many singers have learned (wisely!) to depend on their ears to learn new music. The problem with this is that they may rely on strong singers around them or hearing their part first before they can sing it. This may create a lag within the ensemble and promote inconsistent entrances and cut-offs.

As a new chorister, you may worry that you won't appreciate the value of learning the basics and may doubt you can learn to be a good reader.

You will find that with a little encouragement, people who are (re)introduced to the rudiments of reading can gain the confidence to further develop their skills.

The Melbourne Welsh Choir sings all its songs from memory, so the reading skills are required during the learning period but thereafter listening and watching the conductor are the essential tools required for good harmony.

## **6. It's an exercise in teamwork**

*A choir is the perfect manifestation of the adage "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." You don't need to have a particularly beautiful voice to contribute to a beautiful, collective sound. Being part of something bigger than yourself is both humbling and motivating.*

A choir functions as a unit. Each person contributes to the whole and each has to work with each other to neither eclipse nor be eclipsed. As a group made up of sub-groups (tenor 1, tenor 2, baritones and basses) which in-turn are made up of individuals, a choir is a complex organism. Only by synergistic teamwork does it function.

Each person has to exhibit a degree of professionalism and expects it from everyone around him/her. Professionalism is defined here as keeping in tune, knowing the difference between soft and loud, and keeping timing and words crisp. One person out of tune can affect the whole group. Sub-groups must work together to blend their voices so that they sing one part and also do so at the right combined volume. It is teamwork that leads to experience in knowing how loud one has to sing to blend with the others around you to hit the perfect level required by the passage.

Additionally, teamwork is fomented by helping one another with difficult passages or timing issues or even the pitch of notes. As team bonding occurs individuals need to become more comfortable with speaking up with each other and pointing out problems that they can work out together rather than relying on the director to address every issue.

Hand in hand with this is the fact that the group learns each other's strengths and weaknesses. Some people have limitations at one end of a range or another (some sing higher notes better than lower or vice-versa) or with volume (some can sing louder than others but others sing sweeter, vibrato notes while others are more strident).

Teamwork sets in by the group making adjustments to cover individual weaknesses with others' strengths.

If you agree with Robert Rowat and would like to enjoy the many benefits a choir offers, then call me on 0419 562 353 or just come along to our rehearsal rooms at Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood, on a Wednesday evening and you will be made most welcome.

## **Hiring the choir**

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. 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 great value for money.

## **Sponsoring the choir**

The choir is a not-for-profit organization and relies on revenue from concerts, membership fees, sponsorship and donations for its continuing operation.

If you would simply like to donate to the choir, please contact any member of the committee. The choir is a registered charitable body and all donations are 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 marketing and promotional material and in our concerts.

The choir is actively seeking donors and sponsors for the support of 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 is open to singers under the age of 35 and draws competitors from all parts of the state and indeed interstate. A testament to its success and drawing power is the number of winners and runners-up of this competition who have gone on to make careers on concert and opera stages worldwide.

In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the finalists, the choir also 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 presentation ceremonies on the Singer of the Year finals' night and in the elimination heats.

The choir is able to perform at a sponsor's nominated site if required, as we have done in the past.

If you would like to be associated with any of our 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 dollar.

## **Communicating with the Choir**

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](http://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. Alternately if you want to speak with the newsletter editor about any of the content, please phone 0419 562 353.

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.**

### **How things have changed - EATING IN THE 50'S**

1. Pasta was not eaten.
2. Curry was a surname.
3. Takeaway was a mathematical problem.
4. A Pizza was a leaning tower.
5. Crisps were plain; you had to choose whether to put salt on them.
6. Rice was only eaten as a milk pudding.
7. A Big Mac was what we wore in the rain.
8. Brown bread was something only poor people ate.
9. Oil was for cars; fat was for cooking.
10. Tea was made in a teapot.
11. Fish didn't have fingers.
12. None of us had ever heard of Yoghurt.

13. Indian Restaurants were only found in India.
14. Cooking outside was called camping.
15. Seaweed was not a food.
16. Kebab was not even a word.
17. Muesli was readily available; it was called cattle food.
18. Prunes were medicinal.
19. Water came out of a tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than petrol, they would have thought them nuts.
20. Things that were never allowed on the table in the 50's were elbows.

### **A stranger at the bar**

A polar bear walks into a pub in Britain and orders a pint of beer.

The barman says, "£7, please."

The polar bear pays and takes a seat.

Bemused, the barman approaches and says, "This is exciting, we don't get many polar bears in here!"

To which the polar bear replies, "I'm not surprised with beer at £7 a pint."

### **Travel tribulation**

A customer was hassling an airline agent at the ticket counter, yelling, and using foul language.

However, the agent was polite, pleasant, and smiled while the customer continued to abuse her.

When the customer finally left, the next person in line said to the agent, "Does that happen often?"

I can't believe how nice you were to him".

The agent smiled and said, "No problem, I took care of it. He's going to Sydney. His bags are going to Bangkok...."

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