

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 61 October 2022



Proms Concert with the Legends of Brass & Old Scotch Pipes and Drums



The choir under the Welsh Flag

The weather was drizzly, but the hall was warm and the unusual steps to the stage at the beautiful Ivanhoe Centre caused the choir to sing from its risers at the side of the hall, rather than centre stage, with our hosts the Legends of Brass located on stage above us and to our right.

The location mattered little, the near capacity audience enjoyed a wonderful mix of traditional brass, pipe and drum and choral pieces.

Essentially similar to the *Last Night of the Proms* concert at London's Albert Hall, there was plenty of audience participation

and flag waving particularly in the closing stages.

From the band's opening pieces *Septuagarian* and *All through the night* to the Choir's opening bracket of *Llanfair*, *Soldiers Chorus* and *the Prayer* followed by the Old Scotch marching in, to the skirl of the pipes and drums, to the finalé of *Rule Britannia*, *Land of Hope and Glory* and *Auld Lang Syne*, the appreciative audience was enthralled.

Our Music Director, David Ashton-Smith displayed his experience as an operatic baritone when he led the finalé in the rousing verses of *Rule Britannia* with the Choir and the audience singing the chorus.



We changed into our Prosser Tartan waistcoats for the second half

The standing ovation at the end of the concert said it all.

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

Unfortunately, our regular annual concert for **Tuckers Funeral and Bereavement Services** scheduled for 2:00 p.m. Friday 30th September 2022 had to be cancelled. (yet another victim of the COVID pandemic). Tuckers have assured us that they wish to continue with the concert next year when they feel their audience will feel comfortable being part of a very large congregation in the lovely old cathedral.

The consolation for our Geelong supporters whose missed out on seeing and hearing the choir this year is that their Cats won the AFL grand final the following day!

Upcoming events and concerts

Bernadette Robinson in concert with the Melbourne Welsh Choir

2:00 p.m. Sunday 30th October - Ulumbarra Theatre, 10 Gaol Road, Bendigo



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

Bernadette's performances in *Songs for Nobodies* at London's Ambassadors Theatre earned the show an Olivier Awards nomination and announced her as a new star on the West End. Alone on stage, Bernadette introduced London Audiences to the 5 "nobodies:" of the title and 5 iconic singers of the 20th century that had already enchanted and thrilled Australia audiences: Judy Garland, Patsy Cline, Edith Piaf, Billie Holiday and Maria Callas.

In addition to performing some favourites and new songs from our repertoire, the choir will act as a "backing group" for some of Bernadette's songs, and we are looking forward to rehearsing with her.

We will not be performing with Bernadette in Melbourne this time so, for our Melbourne based supporters, make the trip to Bendigo, we guarantee the show will be worth it!

Tickets are available via the Ulumbarra theatre box office 03 5434 6210 or via the choir's website www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au.

MWMC's Singer of the Year Competition and Concert

2:00 p.m. Saturday 5th November 2022

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

Entries for this competition have now closed and the elimination heats will, as in earlier years, be held live at our rehearsal facilities at **Federation Estate**, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood on Friday 15th from 6:00 p.m. onwards.

A substantial portion of the choir and their partners and friends will be on hand to provide an appreciative audience for these aspiring artists. The evening is open to the public and will provide those with an ear for music a perfect evening's free entertainment. So come and join us in listening to the best of Australia's emerging opera and musical theatre artists competing to make the **SOTY** final.

The finalists will perform as part of the Choir's concert on Saturday 5th September 2022 at the lovely **Ringwood North Uniting Church**. In addition to hearing some of Australia's emerging stars of opera and music theatre, the choir will have some new and exciting songs to showcase its expanding repertoire.

For a wonderful afternoon's entertainment, at a bargain price, please ring 0408 280 953 or book your tickets via the choir's website www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au.

Background to another of the songs in the choir's repertoire – Llanfair

This hymn is a favourite with the choir and with audiences alike.

Featuring wonderful four-part harmonies, a maestoso section and a magnificent amen, the choir was first introduced to the hymn as part of the repertoire we learned for our performance with the World Choir in Atlanta, Georgia, USA in 1994.

It was written by Robert Williams, who was blind from birth.

Born in Mynydd Ithel farm, Llanfechell, Anglesey in 1782, Robert died at a young age of 36 in July 1818. He was a basket maker by trade, and a musician of great repute. He composed tunes and dictated them to a scribe.

He is associated with the tune *Llanfair*, which is found in a manuscript book belonging to him, although it may have been a folk tune and he may not have been the composer of it. It had the name *Bethel* and was dated 14 July 1817. It was harmonised by John Roberts (1807 – 1876).

“Llanfair” is an abbreviated name of a Welsh village with a very long Welsh name i.e.



The town sign at the railway station

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysillioogogoch

which means “Church of St. Mary in the hollow of white hazel near the rapid whirlpool of the Church of St. Tysillio by the red cave.”

The Choir always sings this song in Welsh and the anglicised translation is given below:

Llanfair

Gwyn a gwridog hawdd gar iawn,
Yw f'Anwylyd,
Doniau'r nef sydd ynddo'n llawn
Peraidd, hyfryd;
Daear faith, nac uchder nef,
Byth ni ffeindia
Arall tebyg iddo Ef,
Haleliwia.

2. Yn ddo'i Hunan y mae'n llawn
Bob Trysorau
Dwyfol berffaith werth fawr iawn,
Am fy meiau
Gwir ddoeth ineb hedd a gras,
Gwerth fawr oca'.
Nerth I hollol gario'r, maes,
Haleliwia.

3. Dyma sylfaen gadarn gref,
Trwy fy mywyd,
Credu ac edrych arno Ef
Yw fy ngwyn fyd.
Ynddo bellach trwy bob pla
Y gobeithia;
Ac mewn rhyfel canu wna. Haleliwia.
Amen, Amen, Amen.
A-men ac A-men

Church of Mary

Praise the Lord his glories show,
Hallelujah.
Saints within His courts below,
Hallelujah
Angels round his throne above,
Hallelujah
All that see and share His love,
Hallelujah.

2. Earth to Heaven and heaven to Earth,
Hallelujah
Tell his wonders, sing his worth,
Hallelujah
Age to age and shore to shore,
Hallelujah
Praise Him, praise Him evermore,
Hallelujah.

3. Strings and voices, hands and hearts,
Hallelujah,
In the concert bear your parts,
Hallelujah
All that breath your Lord adore,
Hallelujah
Praise Him, praise Him evermore.
Amen, Amen, Amen.
Amen and Amen

Are you interested in joining the choir?

The choir is always keen to attract new members but particularly now that the major COVID restrictions are over.

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

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!

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. It has a grand piano, comfortable seats, good acoustics and facilities for tea and coffee at interval. In addition, we have the best music director and accompanist combination in Melbourne.

Our Music Director, David Ashton-Smith's background as an opera singer and adjudicator, shows in his coaching of 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.

Mentors for each section look after all new and prospective members, to ensure they are introduced to other members of their section and are properly equipped with the relevant music scores. They will oversee the new member for the duration of the probationary period and will answer any questions he might have.

There is a break for tea or coffee during rehearsals, which gives everyone the opportunity to chat with 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 only a 5-minute walk away.

If you contact us on the phone numbers or email addresses shown in this newsletter, we will respond promptly and arrange to introduce you to the choir. 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 the songs 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, given by some of the Welsh speaking members of the choir, to assist new and existing choristers in the pronunciation and translation of the words 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.

Would you like to hire 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, or smaller venues such as MLC, will be aware that the choir has the skills, 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. Please bear in mind that we're talking about a choir of 40+ voices plus a professional music director and accompanist.

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

Would you like to sponsor 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 concerts, marketing material and promotions.

The choir is actively seeking donors and sponsors for the support of our prestigious *Singer of the Year (SOTY)* concert which will be held in a few weeks' time (refer to the concert detail above) at North Ringwood Uniting Church, with elimination heats being held at our rehearsal venue, two weeks earlier.

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. 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. Our 2012 Winner, *Lee Abrahmsen*, is scheduled to perform next year in Opera Australia's production of *Wagner's Ring Cycle* at the Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo.

Note that the Choir will be performing with Bernadette Robinson at this venue on Sunday 30th October 2022

In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the SOTY 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.

Some of our videos produced and released during the COVID lockdown period were viewed by over 30,000 viewers and for the 2020 and 2021 SOTY events, the videos of the final three competitors on YouTube had both local and international exposure. We expect the videos of the 2022 SOTY event to have a similar impact.

The choir is willing and 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.

Communicating with the Choir

Communication with our supporters is the life blood of the choir, so feel free to copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends and relatives. We are keen to increase our supporter base, so if you would like us to add them to our distribution list, simply let us know their email address.

Alternatively, they can subscribe directly to the newsletter via our website:

www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au or via our Facebook page.

We treat all information provided as confidential and 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 author 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.

What's in a name

The foreman on a large worksite noticed a new labourer one day and barked at him: "What's your name?"

"John." The new bloke replied.

The Foreman scowled. "Look, I don't know what kind of wishy-washy worksite you were on before, but I don't call anyone by their first name. It's weak and wastes time. I call my employees by their last name only Smith, Jones, Baker, that's all. If I want a job done, I yell, Baker, get this or Jones, do that. Now that we have that straight, what's your last name?"

The new bloke sighed. "Darling. My name is John Darling."

The foreman paused briefly for a couple of seconds, then said quietly... "OK John, the first thing I want you to do is.....!"

Scottish Painter

There was a Scottish painter named Smokey MacGregor who was very interested in making a penny where he could, so he often thinned down his paint to make it go a wee bit further.

As it happened, he got away with this for some time, but eventually the local church decided to do a big restoration job on the outside of one of their biggest buildings.

Smokey put in a bid, and, because his price was so low, he got the job.

So, he set about erecting the scaffolding and setting up the planks, and buying the paint and, yes, I am sorry to say, thinning it down with turpentine.....

Well, Smokey was up on the scaffolding, painting away, the job nearly completed, when suddenly there was a horrendous clap of thunder, the sky opened, and the rain poured down washing the thinned paint from all over the church and knocking Smokey clear off the scaffold to land on the lawn among the gravestones, surrounded by tell-tale puddles of the thinned and useless paint.

Smokey was no fool. He knew this was a judgment from the Almighty, so he got down on his knees and cried: "Oh, God, Oh God, forgive me; what should I do?"

And from the thunder, a mighty voice spoke.

"Repaint! Repaint! And thin no more!"

Spiritual directions

A little boy was waiting for his mother. As he waited, he was approached by a man who asked, "Son, can you tell me where the Post Office is?"

The little boy replied, "Sure! Just go straight down this street two blocks and turn to your right."

The man thanked the boy kindly and said, "I'm the new pastor in town. I'd like you to come to church on Sunday. I'll show you how to get to Heaven."

The little boy replied with a laugh; "You're kidding me, right? You don't even know the way to the Post Office."

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