

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 71 August 2023

Mooroolbark Concert

It was great to be back “in harness” on stage at the Mooroolbark Community Centre parading our wares to an appreciative, capacity audience for what is looking to be the start of a hectic performance schedule until the end of the year.



And what wares there were. With some new songs and old favourites, no fewer than four soloists (all choir members) and with songs being sung in five or six different languages - English, Welsh, French, Portuguese, Maori and Latin the capacity audience was delighted with the variety and quality of the performance.

After a rousing and very traditional opening bracket featuring *Calon Lan*, *Shelter*, *Rachie* and *Y Darlun*, our president - baritone **Kevin Seerup** came on stage to sing *You're still you* (by Ennio Morricone).

An experienced amateur theatrical performer, Kevin has performed in such musicals as *Annie*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *White Christmas*, *The King and I*, *Oliver*, *Rockin' Robin*, *Man of La Mancha* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*.



Following the second bracket of songs - *They Call The Wind Maria*, *You Raise Me Up* and *Man of La Mancha*, tenor **Tony Meuwswen** entertained the audience with the beautiful ballad from *Les Miserables* - *Bring Him Home*.

Tony has been performing since the age of 8 when he joined the “*Hollands Jongenskoor*” - the Dutch Children’s Choir - as a boy soprano and went on tour with them to Germany and Belgium. He remembers rehearsing 3 times a week and had to give up soccer, much to his father’s disappointment. In Australia he joined the Dutch Male and Ladies Chorale for a short while as a seventeen-year-old. He has sung with “*Arion*”, the German Male Choir and for twenty years with Melbourne Male Choir (formerly the Melbourne Dutch Choir). He has also done solo work at various concerts, weddings and eisteddfods.

The last two items by the choir before the interval included the beautiful Maori lullaby *Hine E Hine* followed by the Elvis Presley classic *American Trilogy*.

After the interval the choir, in their Prosser tartan waistcoats and bow ties, opened with a bracket of old favourites including *Every time I feel the Spirit*, *Hallelujah*, *When I fall in love* and *Take me home*.



Another of the choir's first tenors, **Raymond Crooke** then took the stage with his guitar and encouraged the audience and choir to join in the chorus of a saucy French drinking song *Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*. One half of the audience had to sing "Oui, Oui, Oui" while other sang "Non, Non, Non". Everyone joined in enthusiastically. Raymond followed this up appropriately with a traditional American comic ditty "Three pigs".

The choir returned with the beautiful Welsh ballad *Y Darlun*, followed by the traditional Irish favourite *Danny Boy*, then Robat Arwyn's lovely contemporary arrangement of *Benedictus* and *Anthem* from the musical *Chess* (composed by the Abba team).

The last of the soloists from the choir, bass - **Mark Coffey** brought his beautiful double bass to accompany himself, supported at the piano, by our talented jazz pianist Simon Walters, as he sang (in Portuguese) *Garota de Ipanema* (which many of us would know as Antônio Carlos Jobim's "The girl from Ipanema". (Incidentally the second most recorded song in history)



The choir's last bracket was Cwm Rhondda followed by the acapella (and un-conducted) tone poem from *Under Milk Wood* – *Eli Jenkins Prayer*.

The audience's demand for an encore was rewarded with the choir's wonderful rendition of the tongue twisting *Rhythm of Life* from the musical *Sweet Charity*.

Upcoming concerts

Proms Concert with the Legends of Brass

Sunday August 6th, 2023, 2:00 p.m.

The Centre Ivanhoe

275 Heidelberg Road

Ivanhoe VIC 3079



The Legends of Brass



The PLC Ladies Pipes and Drums

Those of you who attended the previous *Last night of the Proms* concert with the Legends of Brass will recall what a splendid afternoon's entertainment it was.

For this year's concert, in addition to performing some existing songs from our repertoire, we will have a brand new, choir/band song arrangement of "The Lost Chord" which was specially requested by the Legends for this concert.

Flags will be provided for the traditional waving. So, book quickly and bring your voices to join in the songs and the traditional Proms anthems. A good time is guaranteed. This year's pipes and drums are provided by PLC ladies so there will be something for everyone.

Tickets are only \$30 which, in the current climate, is an absolute bargain.

Bookings through the choir's website

www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au or via our

trybooking website <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1079926>



Morning Music Concert

Tuesday, August 15th, 2023,

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Karralyka Centre

Mines Rd, Ringwood VIC 3134,



The choir will be performing for the popular Morning Music concerts at our local theatre complex - the Karalyka Centre in Ringwood. We also have a delightful young soloist - **Lisette Bolton**.



Wagga Wagga-born soprano Lisette holds a Bachelor of Music (degree with Honours) from the University of Melbourne, where she majored in performance and graduated in 2022 with first-class honours. She is an alumna of *Opera Australia's Regional Student Scholarship* program, the *Young Songmakers Development* program, and *Opera Scholars Australia (OSA)* where she was recipient of the White Foundation Scholarship.

Bring your partners, friends and colleagues and enjoy the choir's four-part harmonies and Lisette's pure delivery of some of our favourite music theatre songs

These enjoyable events start with refreshments in the dining room at 9:30 a.m. followed by a full concert commencing at 10:30 a.m. Seats are limited so make sure you book early.

For accessible seating contact the Centre team on 03 9870 2888 or karralyka@maroondah.vic.gov.au

Australian Youth Band Concert

Sunday, August 20th, 2023

James Tatoulis Auditorium

MLC, 207 Barkers Road,

Kew. VIC 3101

The choir enjoys a great working relationship with the Australian Youth Band (AYB), who provided the instrumental accompaniment, for our concert to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the end of WWI on the 11th of November 2018, at the Melbourne Town Hall.

To return the favour, we will be performing with the AYB at their annual concert at MLC on August 20, 2023. Look out especially for the arrangement of the song *Exodus* which was specially arranged by the Band's Music Director Richard O'Toole for this occasion.

Tickets are available via the AYB website – www.AYB.org.au



Background to another of the choir's favourite songs - *Man of La Mancha*



Man of La Mancha, based on Cervantes' epic 17th-century novel, *Don Quixote*, is a remarkable, poignant, moving musical that was one of the first shows to musicalize a piece of historical literature. The original 1965 Broadway production ran for 2,328 performances and won five Tony Awards, including Best Musical. The musical has been revived four times on Broadway, becoming one of the most enduring works of musical theatre.

The arrangement the choir sings includes the three songs *Man of La Mancha*, *Dulcinea* and *The Impossible Dream*.

Set in the context of the Spanish Inquisition, *Man of La Mancha* is presented as a play-within-a-play.

We encounter historical author Miguel de Cervantes in prison, awaiting trial by the Inquisition. When his fellow prisoners try to take Cervantes' belongings from him, including his manuscript, Cervantes proposes a trial in which he proves the merit of the manuscript through a re-enactment, enlisting his fellow prisoners as characters in his play.

Together, they tell the story of the aged Alonso Quijana who believes himself to be a knight errant, names himself Don Quixote, and pursues an obsessive quest to attain an impossible dream. Against all odds, Quixote and his trusty squire Sancho Panza take to the road in a quest to chivalry and seek out the good and innocent in a world filled with darkness and despair.

Through the story, all the prisoners – at least for a moment – are transformed. The mad Don Quixote may think a windmill to be a giant and a tavern to be a castle, but along the way he also transforms a wretched woman into a beautiful lady – and proves that an old man's belief can truly make him a knight. *Man of La Mancha* features such stirring songs as “*Dulcinea*” and the now-famous standard, “*Quest*” – more famously known as “*The Impossible Dream*.”

Man of La Mancha started as a non-musical teleplay written by Dale Wasserman for CBS's *DuPont Show of the Month* program. This original telecast starred Lee J. Cobb, Colleen Dewhurst (who replaced Viveca Lindfors) and Eli Wallach and was performed on a television sound stage.

The DuPont Corporation disliked the title *Man of La Mancha*, thinking that its viewing audience would not know what La Mancha actually meant, so a new title, *I, Don Quixote*, was chosen. The play was broadcast live on November 9, 1959, with an estimated audience of 20 million. The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center, Billy Rose Collection, has a rare tape of this broadcast.

Years after this television broadcast and after the original teleplay had been unsuccessfully optioned as a non-musical Broadway play, director Albert Marre called Wasserman and suggested that he turn his play into a musical. Mitch Leigh was selected as composer, with orchestrations by Carlyle W. Hall. Unusually for the time, this show was scored for an orchestra with no violins or other traditional orchestral stringed instruments apart from a double bass, instead making heavier use of brass, woodwinds, percussion and utilizing flamenco guitars as the only stringed instruments of any sort.

The original lyricist of the musical was poet W. H. Auden, but his lyrics were discarded, some of them considered too overtly satiric and biting, attacking the bourgeois audience at times. Auden's lyrics were replaced by those of Joe Darion.

Want to join our choir

Interested in singing in four-part harmony ensemble, everything from full throated anthems to gentle love songs? If so then whether you've been involved in music all your life, sing in another choir, or only sing in the shower, come along to our rehearsals at Maroondah Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood and join in the fun and the stimulating learning process, that being a part of the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir is all about.

The choir is open to people of all ages from 18 to 88 and all nationalities.

Our current and past members include people with Scots, English, Irish, New Zealand, Dutch, French, German, Egyptian, South African, Tongan, Samoan and Australian ancestry.

So, provided you pass the (relatively simple) audition, you will be made most welcome.

While our musical heritage is Welsh, and we aim to have Welsh songs as a quarter of our concert programs (not necessarily all in the Welsh language), we are fundamentally a multicultural choir with probably less than half of us having direct Welsh ancestry.

We have an excellent rehearsal facility at Maroondah Federation Estate, with 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.

David Ashton-Smith OAM, our Music Director, has a background as an opera singer, teacher and adjudicator, which 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 talented accompanist, **Simon Walters**, himself a music director and arranger of some note.

We have mentors for each vocal section, who look after all new members, to ensure they are introduced to other choristers and are properly equipped with the relevant music scores. They oversee new members for the duration of the probationary period, help with pitch or pronunciation, where appropriate and answer any questions they might have.

There is a break for tea or coffee during rehearsals, which gives everyone the opportunity to mingle with other choristers. On the first Wednesday in the month, one of the sections provides the choir and our 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 for your introduction to the choir. Otherwise, just come along on a Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m., introduce yourself and you will be made most welcome.

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

We also have Welsh language sessions, given by some of the Welsh speaking members of the choir, to help new and existing choristers in the pronunciation and translation of the words of the Welsh songs in our repertoire.

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

Have you thought of 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, or at smaller venues such as our venue for St David's Day Concert (the James Tatoulis Auditorium at MLC), will be aware that the choir has the skills and ability to produce and run high quality major events.

So, if you are an organization which might require anything from a short rousing opening to a conference or entertainment at a formal dinner(say), to a full two-hour concert, together with quality

guest artists and an orchestra or band (if required), please call **David Field (0418 175 584)** or any committee member to discuss how we can meet your unique needs.

The choir is available for community, corporate and sporting events, dinners, anniversaries, weddings etc., at most times in the year.

Bear in mind that we're talking about a choir of 40 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 money.

The choir is looking for sponsors

The choir is a not-for-profit organisation and we rely on revenue from concerts, membership fees, sponsorship and donations for our 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 company and product or service in our concerts, marketing material and promotions.

Communicating with the choir

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 him on 0419 562 353.

Your feedback is important to us, so please 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 might like to see us perform in our future concerts.

Laughter is the best medicine.

Driving qualification

A teenage boy had just passed his driving test and inquired of his father as to when they could discuss his use of the car.

His father said he'd make a deal with his son, "You bring your grades up from a C to a B average, study your Bible a little and get your hair cut. Then we'll talk about the car."

The boy thought about that for a moment, decided he'd settle for the offer and they agreed on it.

After about six weeks his father said, "Son, you've brought your grades up and I've observed that you have been studying your Bible, but I'm disappointed you haven't had your hair cut."

The boy said, "You know, Dad, I've been thinking about that, and I've noticed in my studies of the Bible that Samson had long hair, John the Baptist had long hair, Moses had long hair, and there's even strong evidence that Jesus had long hair."

Dad's reply: "Did you also notice that they all walked everywhere they went?"

Schoolteacher

The schoolteacher was taking her first golfing lesson. "Is the word spelt p-u-t or p-u-t-t?" she asked the instructor. "P-u-t-t is correct," he replied.

"Put means to place a thing where you want it. Putt means merely a vain attempt to do the same thing."

Clinical Assessment

Man goes to see his doctor and asks.....

Doctor, how can I live longer than 100 years?

Doctor: Do you smoke?

Man: No.

Doctor: Do you eat too much?

Man: No.

Doctor: Do you drink alcohol to excess?

Man: No.

Doctor: Do you go to bed late

Man: No.

Doctor: Do you have affairs with promiscuous women?

Man: No.

Doctor: Then why would you want to live more than 100 years?

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CHOIR DIRECTORY

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