

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 73 October 2023

2023 Singer of the Year (SOTY) Competition and Concert

This year's competition produced some wonderful performances from the competitors at the elimination heats at Federation Estate and an outstanding finale with the auditorium at the North Ringwood Uniting Church resounding to the songs and arias of our SOTY finalists.

The SOTY winner on this occasion was mezzo-soprano - *Naomi Flatman*.



The finalists left to right Alessia Pintabona, Naomi Flatman and Lisette Bolton pose with our MD David Ashton-Smith

We congratulate all the finalists on their performances and look forward to having them perform with the choir as guest soloists in future. The choir's thanks go to the distinguished adjudicator Margaret Arnold and the finalist's talented accompanist - Phillipa Safey

In addition to the performances by these talented young ladies, the choir was also in good voice and the audience was treated to a veritable smorgasbord of songs, ranging from the majestic *Soldiers Chorus* and *Sing Rhondda*, which opened proceedings, to the gentle love themes of *Myfanwy* and *Love Story*.

In addition to *Myfanwy* the Welsh songs included the song of a mountain stream - *Nant y mynydd* and *Y Darlun* - the story of a picture of two hands by T Rowland Hughes (described in our April 2020 newsletter). Add in lovely ballads like *Homeward Bound*, *The Water is Wide* and *Tears in Heaven*, a comedy Beatles song *When I'm*




64 and finish with Ennio Morricone's *Nella Fantasia* (in Italian), and you had a program which delighted the capacity audience at the venue.

Upcoming Choir concerts
St Alfred's Anglican Church
Blackburn

Saturday 21st October, 2023

The choir has accepted an invitation to perform in St Alfred's Anglican Church *Night of Music* at the church in Blackburn North on Saturday 21 October at 7.30 p.m.

This is a new venue for the choir and we look forward to entertaining a new and different audience. Tickets for this concert are only available from St Alfred's.





TICKETS: \$25 EACH
BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL:
STALFREDS.ORG/EVENTS



A NIGHT OF MUSIC
FEATURING ST ALFRED'S MUSICIANS
& THE MELBOURNE WELSH MALE CHOIR

7.30PM SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER
AT ST ALFRED'S ANGLICAN CHURCH



The Choir's Christmas Concert.
North Ringwood Uniting Church
Saturday December 9th, 2023

It is some time since the choir produced their own Christmas concert, so we are delighted to announce our upcoming event on December 9th with guest artists **Roy Best** and **Carly Owen**.

Tenor - Roy Best is well known to Australian audiences and has performed on numerous occasions with the choir.

Carly Owen on the other hand is making her debut with the choir, although we have witnessed her performance last year in the Welsh Church's concert to celebrate St David's Day (which involved representatives from all the Welsh choirs in Victoria).

In addition to her talents as an opera singer, Carly is a native Welsh speaker so expect something special in Welsh. Seating is limited so make sure you book early via the choir's website. www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au



Nadolig Llawen
A Christmas Concert

with the
Melbourne Welsh

Male Choir

guest artists including
Roy Best - Tenor

and
from the Welsh National Opera

Carly Owen - Soprano

Conducted by **David Ashton-Smith DAM**

Accompanied by **Simon Walters**

MC Bill Spanton

North Ringwood Uniting Church

14 Dickson Cres, Nth Ringwood
Saturday December 9th 2023 at 2:30 pm

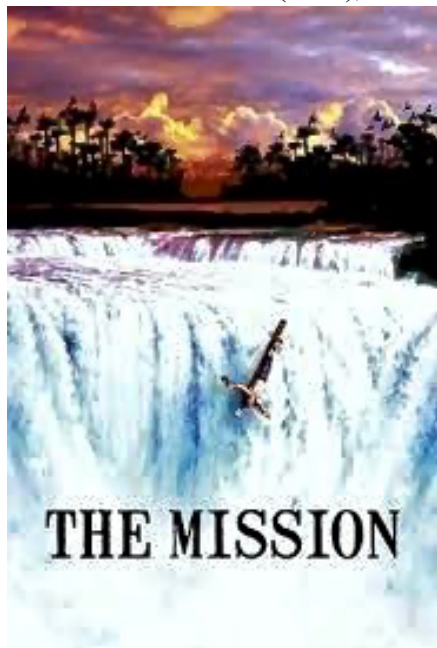
Tickets \$45 adult, \$40 concession, \$35 group (6+) \$15 student
<https://melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets/>



Sponsors: Bendigo Bank, The Welsh Church, Robert Salzer Foundation

Another of the choir's favourite songs - *Nella Fantasia*

Nella Fantasia ("In My Fantasy") is a song, sung in Italian, based on the theme "Gabriel's Oboe" from the film - *The Mission* (1986), with music by composer Ennio Morricone and lyrics by Chiara Ferrà.



"Nella Fantasia" is popular among classical crossover singers, and was originally released in 1998 by Sarah Brightman. It has since been covered by many artists.

The four-part harmony version, which the choir sings, was arranged by Joy Amman Davies the (then) Music Director of the Morryston Orpheus (one of our brother choirs in Wales)

"Nella Fantasia" first appeared on the Sarah Brightman album *Eden* (1998).

On the March 1999 video recording of her concert *One Night in Eden*, when introducing the song, she said: "My next song was originally an instrumental written by the composer Ennio Morricone for the film *The Mission*. About three years ago I wrote to Mr. Morricone, asking whether he would give me permission to turn this particular piece into a song. He flatly refused. So, every two months I would send yet another begging letter until I think he became so sick of me that he finally relented. And I am really glad that he did, because I think it works beautifully as a song."

In the liner notes of *Eden*, the lyricist of the song was named as "Ferrà". In a review of a Sarah Brightman concert at the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts on September 14, 1999, Philip Anderson wrote that "Nella Fantasia"... was inspired by an instrumental soundtrack for the film, *The Mission*, which Sarah had begged the composer to allow her to put lyrics to".

It is possible that Brightman wrote the lyrics of the song in English and they were translated into Italian by Ferrà. Confusingly, the liner notes of Brightman's subsequent album *The Very Best of 1990–2000* (2001), which also featured the song, state that the composers of the song were Berta Ferraud and Ennio Morricone.

Whatever its origin, this beautiful song is a favourite with choir and audiences alike.

Italian Lyrics

*Nella fantasia io vedo un mondo giusto
Lì tutti vivono in pace e in onestà
Io sogno d'anime che sono sempre libere
Come le nuvole che volano
Pien d'umanità in fondo all'anima*

*Nella fantasia io vedo un mondo chiaro
Lì anche la notte è meno oscura
Io sogno d'anime che sono sempre libere
Come le nuvole che volano
Pien d'umanità*

*Nella fantasia esiste un vento caldo
Che soffia sulle città, come amico
Io sogno d'anime che sono sempre libere
Come le nuvole che volano
Pien d'umanità in fondo all'anima*

English Translation

In English, the song says:

*In my imagination I see a just world
Where all live in peace and honesty.
I dream of souls that are always free
Like clouds that soar
Full of humanity; deep in spirit.*

*In my imagination I see a bright world.
There even night is less dark.
I dream of souls that are always free,
Like clouds that soar.*

*In my imagination there is a warm wind
That breathes over the cities, like a friend.
I dream of souls that are always free,
Like clouds that soar.*

New Choristers

The choir continues to attract talented new recruits and this month we feature a brace of recent newcomers.

New Chorister - Baritone - Peter Martin

Our latest recruit to the baritone section is Peter Martin,



Peter lives on a farm near Wesburn in the Upper Yarra Valley. He has been married to Julie, his lifelong friend, since 1985. They have two adult daughters and four grandchildren. Peter's work life is an interesting story.

He worked as a builder's labourer on farm projects in order to earn enough money to put himself through university.

Peter gained a Bachelor of Science degree - with honours - in the field of computer science and graduated in 1982.

He then worked initially as a systems programmer and later as a communications systems architect. With experience, he started managing technical teams and working for larger companies.

Moving into planning and implementing large integrated business applications led to work in Canada, USA, UK and Thailand.

In 2005, he returned to university full-time to try to address the growing issue of climate change. After completing a Masters in Hydrogeology, he worked at Southern Rural

Water, then as a consultant to the National Water Commission and finally for the Bureau of Meteorology.

He retired in 2018 and now spends his days on the farm.

With regard to his musical background, his dad played the euphonium and loved military music from his army days. Peter and his mum and older brother would sometimes march in a line behind their dad, listening to Colonel Bogey or Seventy-Six Trombones as youngsters.

It was great fun and left fond memories. He has warm recollections of his parents sitting down before tea, listening to their classical records, each of them in the grip of Beethoven's *'Pastoral Symphony'*, Tchaikovsky's *'Capriccio Italien'*, and many others. Peter would try to conduct to the records he knew best with great gusto and intensity!

He took up violin lessons because he loved the passion of the instrument. But sadly, he was moved onto the viola at grade three, apparently due to his large fingers and not so perfect pitch!

Soon sport took over and he moved away from music as a performer.

Later, as a parent, he joined a local choir with his wife and daughters and participated in feature performances around the theme of *Les Misérables*.

On overseas work postings, he particularly sought out and found comfort and joy in classical performances.

As a young man Peter loved sports. He rowed in the first crew at Ballarat Grammar, played judo and tennis, but his passion has really been in the outdoor sports, including white-water kayaking, hiking, rock-climbing and, later in life, endurance cycling.

Cycling has taken Peter to many places, culminating in France as a member of the Australian Masters Team in the 1200km non-stop Paris-Brest-Paris *Randonnée* [pronounced rahn-doe-nay], held every four years. (In common cycling usage, a *Randonnée* typically refers to a non-competitive, long-distance ride that's timed for safety, with several controls (or stops) along the route to keep the riders honest).

He still enjoys cycling and hiking and sailing. He is also committed to planting and growing trees on the farm and working as an adviser to the Yarra Ranges Council.

And why the Melbourne Welsh?

Peter has always been captivated by Welsh male choirs. Welsh and Russian choirs, in particular, seem to embody a real strength. Our culture is so much richer when men can show feeling and emotion in a proud and confident way.

Ever since attending the first Wednesday rehearsal, thanks to (long time bass member) Phil Wallens, Peter has been deeply impressed by the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir and considers himself fortunate to have found this group.

Peter, welcome to the Melbourne Welsh, and to the baritone section.

New Chorister - Second tenor - Tracy Roberts

Tracy lives in Bayswater North where he lives by himself, though he has a daughter and 3 stepsons.



He is now retired, but during his working life he spent 30 years in the Information Technology sector.

Tracy has quite an extensive musical background.

While living in Gippsland, back in the 90's, he performed in amateur musical theatre both as a baritone and first tenor.

His love of singing led him to be a member of several musical groups.

He was a member of the *Latrobe Chorale* – an SATB choir based in the Latrobe Valley who perform sacred and classical works and also the *West Gippsland Chorale* – who's repertoire includes classical choral music of all periods, madrigals, folk songs, contemporary compositions, jazz and pop standards.

Tracy was also part of the *Latrobe Light Opera Society* (now the *Latrobe Theatre Company*), where he performed in Gilbert & Sullivan shows, European three act operettas, musicals and plays.

He also performed with *Green Shed*, which later became the *West*

Gippsland Performing Art Society.

In 1994 he won a Gippsland Amateur Theatre Guild award for best supporting actor in "*Charlie Girl*".

Currently he sings with *RECHOIRED*, a mixed-voice community choir based in Surrey Hills who sing an eclectic repertoire of music including musicals, pop, folk and classical in 3 and 4-part harmony.

Over the years, he has sung in English, Latin, Italian, French and German - but not in Welsh!

As for his other interests, Tracy is a member of the *Society for Creative Anachronism* - a community pursuing research and re-creation of pre-seventeenth century skills, arts, combat and culture.

Tracy's specialty is as a fencer - you know that lunge and parry stuff!

He is also a Radio Ham, and a member of several ukulele and jamming groups.

Why join the *Melbourne Welsh Male Choir*, you ask? Well, he met choir member - Bernie Padget at a ukulele and guitar strumming session and it was he who suggested he should come and take a look at our choir. Tracy liked what he saw and heard and here he is!

Any Welsh ancestry? Tracy's grandmother was born a Wyatt, but this is an unexplored part of his family tree. Apparently, there was a Welsh Minister in his background somewhere, but he hasn't found him yet.

His mother's side of the family is descended from a convict who was transported to Tasmania in 1823.

His father was born in Lahore with Anglo Indian heritage, but it is all a bit murky.

Tracy, welcome to the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir, and to the 2nd tenors in particular.

Want to join the choir

Interested in singing in a 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, just 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 any nationality.

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.

Want 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 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 or an individual requiring 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 tailor a performance to 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.

Sponsorship opportunities

The choir is a not-for-profit organisation and we rely solely on revenue from concerts, membership fees, sponsorship and donations for our continuing operation.

Our audiences are predominantly middle to older aged citizens so potential sponsors with products to market to this demographic may find this of interest.

Alternatively, if you have a product or service which you believe might appeal to any or every audience, then please contact us and we will be delighted to promote your company and product or service in our concerts, marketing material and promotions.

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.

Communicating with the choir

Please 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 (Gwyn) about any of the content, feel free to contact 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. In particular, we would like your feedback on our recent YouTube video *Canwn – Let's Sing*.

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.

Confession

A preacher was told by his doctor that he had only a few weeks left to live.

He went home feeling very sad, and when his wife heard the sad news she said to him, "Honey, if there's anything I can do to make you happy, tell me."

The preacher answered, "You know, dear, there's that box in the kitchen cabinet with what you always called "your little secret" in it and you said you never would want me to open it as long as you lived. Now that I'm about to go home to be with the Lord, why don't you show me what's in that secret box of yours?"

The preacher's wife got out the box and opened the lid. It contained \$10,000 and three eggs.

"What are those eggs doing in the box?" the preacher asked.

"Well, Honey," she replied, "every time your sermon was really bad, I put an egg in the box."

Now the preacher had been preaching for over forty years and seeing only three eggs in that old shoe box, he started to feel very proud about himself and it warmed his soul.

"And what about that \$10,000?" he asked.

"Oh, you see," she whispered softly, "every time there were a dozen eggs in the box, I ..sold them."

Beer buying expedition

One Saturday afternoon the grasshopper, the snail, and the centipede were sitting around the grasshopper's house drinking beer.

They ran out of beer before they were ready to quit drinking, so they decided one of them should go out for more beer.

The snail said, "I'd go, but I'm kind of slow. Besides, Grasshopper, this is your neighbourhood so you know where to go."

The grasshopper said, "I don't mind going, but my hopping will shake up the beer and we'll get sprayed every time we open one."

So, they decided to send the centipede; and the grasshopper explained how to get to the nearest liquor store.

An hour or so passed and still the centipede hadn't returned, so the snail and the grasshopper decided to go look for him.

They got as far as the front door and found the centipede sitting there putting on his shoes.

Clever Student

One day a student was taking a very difficult essay exam.

At the end of the test, the invigilator asked all the students to put their pencils down and immediately hand in their tests.

The young man kept writing furiously, although he was warned that if he did not stop immediately, he would be disqualified.

He ignored the warning, finished the test 10 minutes later, and went to hand the test to the invigilator.

The invigilator told him he would not take the test.

The student asked, "Do you know who I am?"

The invigilator said, "No and I don't care."

The student asked again, "Are you sure you don't know who I am?"

The invigilator again said no.

So, the student walked over to the pile of tests, placed his in the middle, then threw the papers in the air.

"Good" the student said and walked out.

He passed.

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