

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 78 March 2024



St David's Day Celebrations

What a weekend it was.

Saturday

Firstly, the *Gymanfa Ganu* was held at St Paul's Cathedral for the first time, and it was a triumph for the Welsh Church and their organising committee.

The day was sunny, the church was full and the conductor (*Jeffrey Howard*) was commanding, enthusiastic and witty. What more could one ask - well how about two divine singers (*Ceri Haf Roberts and Heulen Cynfal*), a mezzo and a soprano, both winners of the Coveted Blue Riband at the Welsh National Eisteddfod and six choirs, 3 male voice (*Victoria, Australian, and Melbourne Welsh*), 2 ladies' choirs (*Geelong and Mornington Peninsular Welsh*) and a mixed choir (*Excelsis*).

The welcome and introductions by the Canon Missioner of St Paul's - *Rev. Robert Vun*, the British High Consul General for Melbourne - *Mr Steph Lysaght* and the Senior Minister of the Melbourne Welsh Church - *Siôn Gough Hughes* were commendably brief but heartfelt.

The acoustics leant themselves to massed choirs and a powerful organ, but also provided clarity for the glorious voices of our Blue Riband winners. A wonderful event at a very special venue.

Sunday

The great thing for our choir was we were able to utilise the services of *Ceri, Heulen* and *Jeffrey* as guests in our concert at MLC in Barkers Rd, Kew on the Sunday.



Jeffrey Howard, Ceri Haf Roberts, Mitch Meyer, Heulen Cynfal & MWMC President Kevin Seerup

A near capacity audience was treated to a wonderful afternoon's entertainment in the comfort and intimacy of the James Tatoulis auditorium at MLC.

Jeffrey, in his role as accompanist for the guest artists, was very appreciative of the tone and touch of the Steinway grand piano at the venue.

Our new Music Director - Mitch Meyer could not have had a better introduction to his endeavours with the choir.



Heulen and Ceri performing Benedictus

From the stirring introduction “*The March of the Men of Harlech*” to the moving closing song “*You’ll never walk alone*” with *Heulen* and the choir, the audience was treated to an exhilarating afternoon of male choral and female soloist singing. In addition to the printed program, our two soloists reprised, as a duet, the beautiful song – *Bendith* - in Welsh, which they had performed in St Paul’s. Our choir sings the same arrangement (written by Robat Arwyn) – *Benedictus* – in Latin. The audience applause for the

whole ensemble at the end of the Welsh National Anthem to end the afternoon’s concert said it all.

Upcoming Events

Robert Burns Celtic Festival

Sunday 27th July 2024 2:30 p.m.

Camperdown Theatre Royal,
2 Bath Street, Camperdown, Victoria 3260

We have been invited by the organisers of the above festival to perform a full concert for this festival. As a result, we will be adding some new Scottish, Irish and Cornish songs to our repertoire. Tickets will be available soon on www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1056482.

Mooroolbark Concert

Saturday 27th July 2024 2:30 p.m.

Mooroolbark Community Centre
125 Brice Avenue, Mooroolbark, 3138

One of the choir’s favourite venues – this intimate theatre, with its limited seating, fills quickly so book early to avoid disappointment. For tickets, which will be available shortly, book via:

www.trybooking.com/eventlist/melbournewelsh

Background to one of the Choir’s favourite anthems - *the Prayer*.

One of the items which the choir performed in the St David’s Day Celebration Concert was the powerful chorus from the Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin* - “The Prayer”

A favourite with the bass section of the choir - the *Kings Prayer* comes from the first act of Richard Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin*.

The king prays for justice and right to prevail in the contest between Telramund and Lohengrin (the knight in shining armour).

A synopsis of the opera is given below.

(Incidentally the same opera features one of the world’s most played pieces of music - the wedding march).

ACT I

Antwerp, first half of the 10th century.

In Antwerp, on the banks of the Scheldt, a herald announces King Heinrich, who asks Count Telramund to explain why the Duchy of Brabant is torn by strife and disorder.

Telramund accuses his young ward, Elsa, of having murdered her brother, Gottfried, heir to Brabant's Christian dynasty. (Gottfried was enchanted by the evil Ortrud, whom Telramund has wed.)

When Elsa is called to defend herself, she relates a dream of a knight in shining armour who will come to save her.

The herald calls for the defender, but only when Elsa prays does the knight appear, arriving in a boat magically drawn by a swan.

He pledges his troth to her on condition that she never ask his name or origin.

Defeating Telramund in combat, the newcomer establishes the innocence of his bride.

ACT II

Before dawn in the castle courtyard, Ortrud and the Telramund swear vengeance.

When Elsa appears in a window, Ortrud attempts to sow distrust in the girl's mind, preying on her curiosity, but Elsa innocently offers the scheming Ortrud friendship.

Inside, while the victorious knight is proclaimed guardian of Brabant, the banned Telramund furtively enlists four noblemen to side with him against his newfound rival.

At the cathedral entrance, Ortrud and Telramund attempt to stop the wedding - she by suggesting that the unknown knight is in fact an impostor, he by accusing Elsa's bridegroom of sorcery.

The crowd stirs uneasily.

Though troubled by doubt, Elsa reiterates her faith in the knight before they enter the church, accompanied by King Heinrich.

ACT III

Alone in the bridal chamber, Elsa and her husband express their love until anxiety and uncertainty at last compel the bride to ask the groom who he is and whence he has come.

Before he can reply, Telramund and his henchmen burst in.

With a cry, Elsa hands the knight his sword, with which he kills Telramund.

Ordering the nobles to bear the body to the king, he sadly tells Elsa that he will meet her later to answer her questions.

Escorting Elsa and the bier to banks of the Scheldt, the knight tells the king he cannot now lead the army against the Hungarian invaders.

He explains that his home is the temple of the Holy Grail at distant Monsalvat, to which he must return; Parsifal is his father, and Lohengrin is his name.

He bids farewell and turns to his magic swan.

Ortrud rushes in, jubilant over Elsa's betrayal of the man who could have broken the spell that transformed her brother into a swan.

But Lohengrin's prayers bring forth Gottfried in place of his vanished swan, and after naming the boy ruler of Brabant, Lohengrin disappears, led by the dove of the Grail.

Ortrud perishes, and Elsa, calling for her lost husband, falls lifeless to the ground.

Prayer (from Lohengrin)

Oh Lord our God, be with us now.
Give us thy judgment clear and strong.
Before thy word all men shall bow,
That right may triumph over wrong.

Give strength to him whose heart is true,
And give the guilty one his due.
Lord let thy will to us be known.
Wisdom is found in thee alone.
Wisdom is found in thee alone.

To him whose heart is true,
Lord give the guilty one his due,
Oh Lord our God, thy will to us be known.
Wisdom in thee alone.

O Lord, we pray thee to
Show us thy wisdom's holy light.
Do thou O God defend the right!
Oh Lord our God!
Oh Lord our God defend the right.

Want to be part of the start of a new era for the choir?

While the choir maintains its ability to regularly put between 40 and 50 choristers onstage, we are keen to increase those numbers and hence we are embarking on a recruitment drive.

Would you like to be 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, possibly sing in another choir, or only sing in the shower, then 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 of any nationality, age, colour or ethnicity.

Our current and past members include people with Scots, English, Irish, New Zealand, Dutch, French, German, Egyptian, Latvian, South African, Tongan, Samoan, American 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 any 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 the interval.

In addition, we have the best music director and accompanist combination in Melbourne.

Mitch Meyer, our new Music Director, has a background in music and management. An accomplished soloist as well as a respected conductor of several choirs, he was most recently the music director of the Buderim Male Choir in Queensland.

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.

On the first Wednesday in the month, one of the sections provides the choir and our visitors with a light 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 facilities, which will enable you to learn and practice the individual vocal parts at home. This makes the process of getting up to speed with the Choir's repertoire very 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 beautiful Welsh songs in our repertoire.

Following a few rehearsals and a formal audition, you could be wearing a choir uniform and 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 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), then 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 (with a portable electric piano, where required).

We have an eclectic repertoire, wonderful sound and provide great 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. Hence potential sponsors with products to market to this demographic e.g., those providing services in investment, insurance, real estate, retirement homes etc., might find supporting the choir worthwhile.

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, product or service through our concerts and marketing materials.

If you would like to support the choir via a donation, please contact any member of the committee. The choir is a registered charitable body and all donations are acknowledged and are tax deductible.

Newsletter Feed-back

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 welcome your feedback on our recent YouTube videos.

We are seeking to increase our patronage and we are happy for you copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends and relatives. 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.melbourneshshchoir.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 friends and 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.

Laughter is the best medicine

Definitions

Heaven is where the police are British, the chefs Italian, the mechanics German, the lovers French, and it's all organized by the Swiss.

Hell is where the police are German, the chefs are British, the mechanics French, the lovers Swiss, and it's all organized by the Italians.

Isn't it the truth?

Never criticize someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes.
That way, when you criticize them, they won't be able to hear you from that far away.
Plus, you'll have their shoes.

What's that!

A man was telling his neighbour, "I just bought a new hearing aid. It cost me four thousand dollars, but it's state of the art. It's perfect."

"Really," answered the neighbour. "What kind is it?"

"Twelve thirty."

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