

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 83 August 2024



Mooroolbark Winter Concert Saturday 27th July 2024

The Mooroolbark Community Centre in Brice Avenue is one of the choir's favourite venues of the choir's favourite venues.



This intimate theatre, with its limited seating, is usually the venue for one of the choir's Christmas concerts and because of demand, the choir normally gives two performances on the same day.

The choir was invited to present an additional single afternoon winter concert and the resounding applause at the end of the performance was testament to the success of that idea and to the quality and variety of the choir's program.

In addition to the choral numbers, the capacity audience was treated to songs by individual soloists *Kevin Seerup* and *Tony Meeuwsen* (singing in French in honour of the Olympic Games host country), our guitar playing folk-singer - *Raymond Crooke* and (in a first for the choir) - a duet involving our accompanist *Simon Walters* singing and playing piano with *Mark Coffey* on double bass.



Our talented accompanist/ vocalist - Simon

The two encores at the end of the session reflected the audience' approval.

Upcoming choir commitments

It is amazing what a good performance spawns in terms of future engagements.

Following the choir's performance at Royal Melbourne Golf Club, we have been invited to perform at the Melbourne Club in September.

In addition, the Australia Club have told us that they would like us to perform at their establishment later in the year at a date to be confirmed. Both male clubs have their own choirs so we will have to be on our mettle to justify our fee.

Melbourne Club Concert

Friday 13th September, 6:30 p.m.
Melbourne Club
36 Collins Street,
Melbourne 3000

Note that this event is for club members, guests and partners only.

Singer of the Year Competition and Concert

Sunday 22nd September 2:30 p.m.
James Tatoulis Auditorium,
MLC
207 Barkers Road,
Kew 3101

Applications have currently closed for the choir's popular "*Singer of the Year*" competition with the finalists being judged at the choir's concert next month at MLC's beautiful James



Last year's finalists - Lisette Bolton, Naomi Flatman and Alessia Pintabona

Tatoulis Auditorium in Kew. The elimination heats will be conducted at the choir's rehearsals rooms in Ringwood on Saturday the 10th of August and will be open to the public.

Entry is free so come along and support these up-and-coming artists.

This competition attracts the best young talent from Victoria and interstate and in addition to the prize monies

the finalists get the opportunity to perform with the Choir as guest artists in future concerts.

Previous winners of our SOTY competition have gone on to grace opera and concert stages around the world.

Applications were coordinated, as usual, by Alan Stevenson and the adjudicators for the elimination heats will be David Ashton-Smith OAM and Mitch Meyer.

Background to another of our new songs - *Bridge over troubled water*

Bridge over Troubled Water is a song by the American folk rock duo Simon & Garfunkel, released in January 1970. It was written by Paul Simon and produced by Simon, Art Garfunkel and Roy Halee.

"*Bridge over Troubled Water*" features lead vocals by Art Garfunkel and a piano accompaniment influenced by gospel music, with a "Wall of Sound"- style production.

Simon felt Garfunkel should sing solo, an invitation Garfunkel initially declined.

The song won five awards at the 13th Annual Grammy Awards in 1971, including Grammy Award for Record of the Year and Song of the Year. It is Simon & Garfunkel's most successful single, and is often considered their signature song.

It topped the *US Billboard* Hot100 chart for six weeks, and was the No.1 song on the Billboard Year-End Hot 100 singles of 1970.

It also hit number one in the United Kingdom, Canada, France and New Zealand. It reached the top five in eight other countries, eventually selling over six million copies worldwide.

It became one of the most performed songs of the 20th century, covered by over 50 artists, including Elvis Presley, Aretha Franklin and Johnny Cash and is ranked number 66 on *Rolling Stone's* 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.

Background

“Bridge over Troubled Water” was composed by Paul Simon in early 1969. The song came to him very quickly, so much so that he asked himself: “Where did that come from? It doesn't seem like me.”

The title concept was inspired by Claude Jeter's line “I'll be your bridge over deep water if you trust in my name,” which Jeter sang with his group, the *Swan Silvertones*, in the 1959 song “Mary Don't You Weep.”

According to gospel producer and historian Anthony Heilbut, Simon acknowledged his debt to Jeter in person and handed him a cheque.

Simon named Johann Sebastian Bach's “*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*” as the inspiration for parts of the melody. He wrote the song initially on guitar but transposed it to the piano to reflect the gospel influence and to suit Garfunkel's voice.

Simon told his partner, Art Garfunkel, that he should sing it alone, the “white choirboy way”, though Simon adds harmony on the final verse. Garfunkel initially felt it was not right for him; he liked Simon's falsetto on the demo and suggested that Simon should sing.

At the suggestion of Garfunkel and producer Roy Halee, Simon wrote an extra verse and a “bigger” ending, though he felt it was less cohesive with the earlier verses.

The final verse was written about Simon's then-wife Peggy Harper, who had noticed her first grey hairs (“Sail on, silvergirl”). It does not refer to a drug abuser's hypodermic needle, as is sometimes claimed.

The verse was Garfunkel's idea, but Simon reportedly did not like it.

The vocal style in “Bridge over Troubled Water” was inspired by Phil Spector's technique in “Old Man River” by The Righteous Brothers. Simon said it sounded like the Beatles' “Let It Be”, stating in a *Rolling Stone* interview: “They are very similar songs, certainly in instrumentation.”

As relation frayed preceding their 1970 breakup, Simon began to experience regret for allowing Garfunkel to sing it solo. He felt he should have done it, and many times on a stage, when he'd be sitting off to the side and Larry Knechtel would be playing the piano and Artie would be singing “Bridge”, people would stomp and cheer and when it was over Simon would think, “That's my song, man...”

The words of the song are given below

Bridge over Troubled Water

When you're weary
Feeling small
When tears are in your eyes
I will dry them all
I'm on your side
When times get rough
And friends just can't be found

*Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down*

When you're down and out
When you're on the street
When evening falls so hard
I will comfort you
I'll take your part
When darkness comes
And pain is all around

*Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down*

Sail on Silver Girl
Sail on by
Your time has come to shine
All your dreams are on their way
See how they shine (See how they shine)
If you need a friend (If you need a friend)
I'm sailing right behind

*Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind*

The choir's four-part male harmony arrangement is by Alan Simmons.

Want to join our choir

Life is never dull for members of the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir with so much fabulous music to sing and concerts to reform so why not join us.

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 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 a relatively simple audition, you will be made most welcome.

While our musical heritage is Welsh and we aim to have Welsh songs as roughly a quarter of our concert programs (not necessarily all in the Welsh language), we are fundamentally a multicultural choir with 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 the interval.

In addition, we have possibly 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 is ably assisted by our talented accompanist, **Simon Walters**, himself a music director and arranger of some note. He is also a talented vocalist as was seen at our recent Mooroolbark concert. 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 their probationary period, help with pitch or pronunciation where appropriate and answer any questions new members 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 the Ringwood railway station is a 5-minute walk away. If you contact us via 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 member facilities, which will allow you to 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, Hamer Hall, Melbourne Town Hall, Ulumbarra Theatre Bendigo, or at smaller venues such as our venue for our SOTY 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, a 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 retail, hospitality, investment, insurance, real estate, retirement homes etc., might find sponsoring 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 Feedback

Feedback is important to us, so please let us know what you think about the choir, our newsletters, and our recent performances, whether live or on video.

In particular, we welcome your feedback on our recent *YouTube* videos.

We are always seeking to increase our patronage and hence 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, so they get their copy by email from the choir, simply let us know their email address.

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

www.melbournewelshchoir.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

Religious Cowboy

The devout cowboy lost his favourite Bible while he was mending fences out on the range.

Three weeks later, a cow walked up to him carrying the Bible in its mouth.

The cowboy couldn't believe his eyes. He took the precious book out of the cow's mouth, raised his eyes heavenward and exclaimed, "It's a miracle!"

"Not really," said the cow. "Your name is written inside the cover."

A young woman tells her boyfriend to share his worries

"When we get married, I want to share all your worries and troubles and lighten your burden," a young woman said to her boyfriend.

"That's very kind of you, darling," her boyfriend replied. "But I don't have any worries or troubles."

"Well, that's because we aren't married yet."

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