

# Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 84 September 2024



In our fortieth year the choir has been hard at work learning new songs for our upcoming concert repertoire.

Some of these have been chosen by our Music Director while others will be required for our trip to Adelaide next year to participate, with several other Australian choirs, in the Male Choirs Association of Australia (MCAA) 2025 concert at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

As a matter of interest, the choir's current library contains 412 songs which we have rehearsed over the past forty years, excluding carols (which would add another 47 songs). This is why for our regular audiences, each concert program seems totally different to the ones before with a mix of old favourites and new songs.

We will be holding a fortieth anniversary dinner later in the year, to which all previous choristers are invited, which promises to be a great night. A history of the choir together with reminiscences from current and former members of their favourite choir memories both here and overseas will be among the highlights of the evening.

## 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 2024.

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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2:30 p.m.  
James Tatoulis Auditorium,  
MLC  
207 Barkers Road,  
Kew 3101

The elimination heats for the choir's popular "*Singer of the Year*" competition have been held and the finalists will be judged during the choir's concert next month at MLC's beautiful James Tatoulis Auditorium in Kew.

This is one of the choir's most popular events and the auditorium although having great acoustics and comfortable seating, has limited seating capacity, so be sure to book early via the choir's website [www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au](http://www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au).

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.

The finalists who will be competing this year are two sopranos - Esther Counsel and Lisette Bolton and a tenor - Ben Glover. Their profiles are given below.

### **Esther Counsel - Soprano**

Praised for her “Melting vocal technique” (Operachaser) and “Expressive largesse” (Limelight magazine), Esther Counsel is an emerging soprano based in Melbourne.



Esther studied a Master of Opera Performance at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. She is also a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, with both a Bachelor of Music (Classical performance) and a Graduate Diploma (Vocal performance).

In 2023 Esther made her debut as Mimi in *La Boheme* (Puccini) for City of Boroondara’s Opera in the park, she also performed the Soprano solo in Mozart’s *Requiem* with Victoria Chorale and sang the role of Charlotte in the Australian premier of Krenek’s *Der Diktator* with IOpera.

Upcoming performances include Donna Elvira in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* presented by BK Opera.

### **Lisette Bolton - Soprano**

Wagga Wagga-born soprano Lisette Bolton is a master’s student at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and an alumna of Opera Australia’s Regional Student Scholarship program, the Young Songmakers Development Program and Opera Scholars Australia.

She has performed with Victorian Opera, Australian International Productions and at the Albury Chamber Music Festival.

Her performance as Olive (*Fly*, Barry Conyngham, 2019) with Lyric Opera and the Girl (Viktor Ullmann, *The Emperor of Atlantis*, 2022) with IOpera saw her nominated for two Green Room Awards.

Her other roles include Parrwang (Deborah Cheetham Fraillon, *Parrwang lifts the sky*, 2024), Laetitia (Menotti, *The Old Maid and the Thief*, 2023), Erste Dame (Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 2023), Bird (Joseph Twist, *The Grumpiest Boy in the World*, 2023) and Second Woman (Purcell, *Dido and Aeneas*, 2022).

She has also been study-cover for Contessa (Mozart, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, 2019) and understudy for Blanche (Poulenc, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 2018)



## Ben Glover – Tenor

Ben Glover is a Melbourne-based tenor regularly engaged as a concert, oratorio and opera singer.



A graduate of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music where he attained his Master of Music (Opera Performance) in 2021, Ben is quickly emerging as a soloist in Melbourne’s concert singing circuit.

An “intricately textured tenor” with “impressive timbre and range”, Ben performs across the spectrum of classical vocal genres.

As a concert singer Ben has various credits, notably having performed the tenor solo in Mozart’s *Requiem in D minor* with the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic in April 2023.

Ben was a finalist in the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Aria Competition in both 2022 and 2023, where he was awarded the Conductor’s Encouragement Award in 2022.

He performed in Saint-Saëns’ *Oratorio de Noël* with Victoria Chorale in December 2022, and joined The Geelong Chorale in May 2022 as a soloist in Vaughan Williams’ *Mass in G minor*. In August 2023 Ben joined The Geelong Chorale a second time for Mozart’s *Requiem*.

Ben also sings as a soloist with the St Francis’ Choir on feast days throughout the liturgical year.

Ben is equally at home in opera as on the concert stage. His major roles to date have included

Tamino in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, Rinuccio in Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi*, Laurie in Adamo’s *Little Women*, and the title role in Offenbach’s *Orphée aux enfers*.

Ben performed for Victorian Opera in their Youth Opera production of Schubert’s *Die Freude von Salamanka* in 2021. He also joined the chorus in Victorian Opera’s production of *Alice Through the Opera Glass* in 2019 at Arts Centre Melbourne.

## **A new song for the choir – *Away from the roll of the sea***

One of the choir's new songs, introduced by our new American/Australian music director, is a gentle, wistful, Canadian ballad - *Away from the roll of the sea*, written by one of that country's most famous and enigmatic, folk song writers and composers.



**Allister MacGillivray** CM, D.Litt (honors), is a Canadian singer/songwriter, guitarist, and music historian from the Cape Breton region of Nova Scotia.

He was born January 17, 1948, in the coalmining and fishing town of Glace Bay. Alister began performing at the age of seven, later became a boy chorister and, as a teen, sang in local folk bands. During his twenties and thirties, he travelled the world as a guitar accompanist with some prominent Celtic performers, including *Ryan's*

*Fancy, Makem & Clancy* (Tommy Makem, Liam Clancy) and *John Allan Cameron*. With Cameron, he performed on the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville in 1970, earning a lengthy standing ovation and stealing the show from the likes of Hank Snow, Roy Rogers, and Bill Monroe.

Since leaving the road, MacGillivray has lived close to the village of Marion Bridge, also known as *Drochaid Mhira* which remains strongly Canadian Gaelic-speaking.

A well-respected author/composer, his most popular songs include: "*Away from the roll of the sea*" and "*Coal Town Road*",

He is best known for a composition called "*Song for the Mira*" that provided the theme as well as the sound track for an Atlantic Canadian film, *Marion Bridge*. "*Song For the Mira*" has been translated into Italian, Dutch, French, Scots Gaelic, and Japanese. In 2018, it was inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame.

MacGillivray's songs are often performed by choral groups, with over 1000 choirs throughout the world performing his works in classical contexts.

His *Away from the Roll of the Sea* is known in Italy as *Vecchi Amici* and is sung in typically Italian operatic style by the group Coro Leone Bologna. The song has also been performed in Korean by the Hanyang University Male Choir.

### ***Away from the Roll of the Sea***

*Small craft in a harbour that's still and serene,  
Give no indication what their ways have been.  
They rock at their moorings all nestled in dreams,  
Away from the roll of the sea.*

*Their stern lines are groaning a lullaby air,  
A ghost in the cuddy, a gull on the spar.  
But never they whisper of journeys afar,  
Away from the roll of the sea.*

*Oh, had they the tongues for to speak,  
What tales of adventure they'd weave.  
But now they are anchored to sleep,  
And slumber alee.*

*Come fair winds to wake them tomorrow, we pray,  
Come harvest a-plenty to them ev'ry day;  
Till guided by harbour lights they're home to stay,  
Away from the roll of the sea.*

Instrumentally, his songs have been arranged for bagpipes, brass quintet, recorder ensemble, jazz ensemble, ukulele ensemble, massed brass & pipe band, guitar, violin, piano, and symphony suite.

His children, Ciarán and Fiona MacGillivray, are also noted performers in the Celtic-music field.

Alister has a Bachelor of Arts degree (St. Francis Xavier University), has been awarded an honorary doctorate by The University College of Cape Breton, and has been designated The Official Bard of Clan MacGillivray Canada.

On December 13, 2013, he was appointed to the **Order of Canada** (2013). His citation of investiture to Rideau Hall reads as follows:

*Cape Breton's musical heritage has been enriched by the contributions of Allister MacGillivray. A musician and composer, he is beloved for his original songs, many of which depict the traditional way of life of Cape Breton coal miners and fishermen. His compositions are popular with both professional and amateur choirs, notably his "Song for the Mira", considered a classic and translated into several languages. His various anthologies and publications about fiddling, step dancing, and the Gaelic language have also helped to preserve the island's traditional culture.*

On November 15, 2022, at Province House in Halifax, NS, Allister MacGillivray was presented with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal in a ceremony conducted by Lieutenant-Governor LeBlanc.

## 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 perform in, 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 repertoire (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 previously a respected conductor of several choirs in Queensland.

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. In addition, our music director occasionally gives a music classes prior to rehearsal for interested choristers to expand their knowledge and understanding of music theory and the essentials of reading music.

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 tend to be predominantly middle to older-aged citizens. Hence 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 investing in the choir very 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.melbournwelshchoir.com.au](http://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 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**

### **Smartest man in the world**

A doctor, a lawyer, a little boy and a priest were out for a Sunday afternoon flight on a small private plane.

Suddenly, the plane developed engine trouble

In spite of the best efforts of the pilot, the plane started to go down.

Finally, the pilot grabbed a parachute, yelled to the passengers that they had better jump, and then he bailed out.

Unfortunately, there were only three parachutes remaining.

The doctor grabbed one and said, "I'm a doctor, I save lives, so I must live," and jumped out.

The lawyer then said, "I'm a lawyer and lawyers are the smartest people in the world so I deserve to live."

He also grabbed a parachute and jumped.

The priest looked at the little boy and said, "My son, I've lived a long and full life, you are young and have your whole life ahead of you take the last parachute and live in peace."

The little boy handed the parachute back to the priest and said, "Not to worry, Father the 'smartest man in the world' just took off with my backpack!"

### **Reason for speeding**

A man just bought a new Ferrari and he decides to take it out for a spin.

He starts speeding down the road when he suddenly notices a police car is behind him with his lights flashing and siren wailing.

The man floors the gas pedal and takes off.

A few moments into the chase the man thinks,

"What the hell am I doing? This isn't worth going to jail!" He pulls over and the cop approaches the car and says "Listen, we both know that you were speeding. My shift is over in 5 minutes and if I write you a ticket, there's going to be paperwork that I don't want to do.

If you can give me one good reason as to why you're speeding, I'll let you go."

The man thinks for a moment and says,

"Well officer, just recently my wife decided to run off with a police officer and when you were chasing me, I thought you were bringing her back"

The officer laughed and waved him off!

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### **CHOIR DIRECTORY**

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