

Sounds Organised

For my enemy is dead, a man as divine as myself is dead.

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

A Departing Reflection on Unity in Diversity

At our last AGM, Doug spoke eloquently about the pleasures – and challenges – involved in a community choir like the Camberwell Chorale, and I'd like to expand on that theme in this, the closing editorial of my brief period as *Sounds Organised* editor.

When we all sing together, whatever our individual beliefs or idiosyncrasies, we share a common purpose – working towards a shared goal, hopefully more or less in harmony. Some of us – when singing a traditional Christian work, for example – may believe more strongly than others in the sentiments expressed. Some singers may be more confident, others happy to follow, and some may sing more right notes than others. For some individual singers, our efforts may seem to fall short, although a perfect performance is probably only possible in heaven, if it exists. But the strength of our performance is that we all end up working together, joining our various skills and talents with the single aim of the best performance we can possibly muster on the day. I still remember the thrill I experienced in my first performances with the Victorian Chamber Choir and Camberwell Chorale 20 years ago. Nowadays, I hope, I'm more demanding on myself – and others. But it's good to recall that initial excitement, and to try to recapture it in each concert, revelling in our creative unity.

Various metaphors arise when thinking of choral singing – sporting teams, for instance, with their ideal blend of individual brilliance and teamwork. But the current concert, focusing as it does on the

terrible theme of war, also brings other potent parallels to mind. In their passionate settings of the poems of Walt Whitman, Wilfred Owen and others, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Michael Easton urge us to consider not only the awful suffering and waste, but also the shared humanity involved in war. Singing together is a far less serious business, but it's still

worth considering how much we depend on one another when we sing. We've all come in too early, or sung the odd bung note, but it's good to know that we have comradely support and a shared identity. These are virtues our predecessors learnt in the harshest way, but they are virtues we can glimpse through singing together.

JG

Grant us Peace



"Dona nobis pacem". The words mean, simply, "grant us peace" – something which so many of us want, but somehow, strangely, this world refuses to give. How it is we yearn for peace in this day and age; but how do we compare to those who lived, fought, and died in the wars? In the middle of the 1930s, the world was poised again on the brink of war. A war which we now, of course, write down in history as words and pictures – while those

who were there, nursing memories now, pass into history one by one. Is peace derived only by forgetting?

Memories cannot be transferred across minds; poetry, powerful as it is, remains words imprisoned by language. Although it was composed and performed before the War, Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* spoke across time, warning of the destruction, ignored; and thus ultimately also to commemorate the destroyed. In our time now, more powerful than images, more expressive than words alone, the music – with the words; how beautiful they become – becomes a great humanitarian song, beseeching the same messages, warning the same warnings, commemorating death eternally recurring, but also life eternally surviving.

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Editorial

It wasn't planned that way, but this edition of our newsletter has a lot to say about war – reflectively, musically, personally. It's pretty good, cerebral – and heart – stuff.

Another notable feature is the level of contributions by 'normal' Chorale members. It'd be very nice to see that continue, not least, as a continuation of the 'travelogue' series. I can't believe that a number of members haven't been on highly interesting trips in the recent past, nor that a few of you don't have interesting personal stories to tell.

Talk to Chris Selby Smith, the new Editor of *Sounds Organised*.

Finally, I wish to add my thanks to David Dyson for his contributions during my period as Editor.

JG

THE SOCIAL SWIRL

- Thanks to those who contributed time, effort, and lots of delicious salads and deserts, the 'Summer Buffet' was a great success. The next Buffet will be held on Tuesday, 17th July with a Christmas theme and offerings.
- The annual Garage Sale will take place on Saturday, 6th October. We're seeking plenty of goods and helpers.
- Our Christmas Dinner will be held, again, at Malvern Valley Receptions, at the East Malvern golf course on Tuesday, 11th December. We're looking forward to a revamped menu!

MH

COMMITTEE STUFF • COMMITTEE STUFF

New Committee

Following the AGM on 20th March and a subsequent Committee Meeting, members and allocated tasks are –

President

Lionel Marks (Ph – 9803 3931)

Vice-President

Margaret Hill (Ph – 9500 0542)

Music Director

Doug Heywood (Ph – 9391 2086)

Secretary

Levi Orenstein (Ph – 9523 6970)

Treasurer

Adam Brown (Ph – 9809 2086)

Social Co-ordinator

Margaret Hill (Ph – 9500 0542)

John Gregory (Ph – 9537 0153)

Concert Organisation

Lionel Marks (Ph – 9803 3931)

Publicity and Marketing

Lionel Marks (Ph – 9803 3931)

Doug Heywood (Ph – 9391 2086)

Librarian

Sean Dillon (Ph – 9894 1898;
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Chris Selby Smith (Ph – 9429
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Uniforms and Ticketing

Helen Brown (Ph – 9836 9704)

Fundraising

Margaret Keighley (Ph – 9561
2531)

Pauline Lynch (Ph – 9572 2252)

Website Liaison

Janet Ooi (Ph – 9890 5545)

Newsletter Editor

Chris Selby Smith (Ph – 9429
6705)

Garage Sale

Margaret Hill (Ph – 9500 0542)

Helen Brown (Ph – 9836 9704)

Pauline Lynch (Ph – 9572 2252)

Membership

Marieke van de Graaff (Ph – 9872
8273)

Non-Committee Positions

Stage Manager – Chris Murray

Website and Newsletter Mechanics
– David Dyson

Auditor – Max Latham

Highlights from recent Committee Decisions and Activity – Secretary, Levi Orenstein reports . . .

We welcome new Committee Member, Chris Selby Smith.

Library – we were intending to store this year's music in the one storage cabinet we were permitted to keep at the Church. Since the meeting however we have been asked to remove this too, so Sean Dillon must now keep all five cabinets in his garage.

A "rubbing out" session will take place at rehearsal after each concert to remove pencil markings prior to returning borrowed music.

Using the main front entrance instead of the side one is proving more pleasant and convenient.

Choir risers – a decision must still be made about whether to purchase risers, or Sean Dillon continues making them.

Finance – donations, Garage Sale, Margaret Keighley's fundraising efforts and a Boroondara Council grant have led to a healthy surplus. None of these is guaranteed to be repeated.

Garage Sale will take place on Saturday 6th October. Helen Brown and Margaret Hill are in charge.

Christmas Social will be on 12th December. East Malvern Golf Club will be given another chance after promising to improve the food.

Treasurer – Adam Brown has kindly agreed to continue in the position for the time being until a replacement is found. Do you know of anyone suitable and willing? They need not be a singing member.

Heart-warming Performance for a Winter's Afternoon

Yes, this review of a concert performed in July is a tad late! But, one of the great things about reviews is that there are lessons in them. The review is by guest reviewer, Marian Birkett, viola player in the Camerata Orchestra.

From the outset I must explain that this review is from a different perspective to that of a normal reviewer – this is the inside story, so to speak.

As a member of the orchestra you need to understand that my aural perception is skewed due to the placement of my instrument within the orchestra. It is not possible to provide an overall picture of the performance, and so what follows is probably somewhat imbalanced. Sitting as I was in front of the brass and woodwinds, as well as concentrating on the music in front of me (for cues, etc), made it difficult to hear or listen to the Chorale at all times, particularly having my back to the choir. While playing, my mind was focused on the music and the immediate sounds around me. On the other hand, having been asked beforehand to review this concert, my aural faculties were heightened in a new way; I was especially listening to the Chorale and the overall sound, the 'togetherness', the entries, the contrasting dynamics, the flow of the music, the spirit intended by the composers, the strength of the vocal entries, and the diction.

The Wand of Youth Suite No. 2 – Elgar

These childhood-inspired pieces of the Victorian period were a joy to play. Under the baton of Doug Heywood, I felt that the opening 'March' was performed with vibrancy and spirit, while the delicacy and innocence of Victorian childhood were recaptured in the 'Little Bells', 'Moths and Butterflies'

and the 'Fountain Dance'. At times, the intonation was not accurate, but generally it was pleasing. Elgar's writing is so expressive and evocative that one is easily transported to his world in the imagination, even as a player. My favourite piece was the 'Tame Bear' with its gentle rolling rhythms. While the orchestra mostly played with tenderness and wistfulness, as required by the music, the writing of the final 'Wild Bears' demanded – and received – an energetic, lively and boisterous sound. Although the music in many ways may sound simple and straightforward to the ear, technically it required great skill and flair from all sections of the orchestra to produce the desired effect.

Te Deum – Charpentier

This performance displayed great charm and character, capturing the spirit of Louis XIV's time. It was a delightful presentation, enhanced by the youthful voices of the Victorian State Singers. Where necessary it was light and dance-like, the music flowed, and the words were clear. Everyone sang as a cohesive unit. I thoroughly enjoyed this work both as a player and as a listener – but then Baroque music has always been a favourite of mine.

Mass in D Major Op. 86 – Dvorak

This is a colourful work, with its rich and beautiful harmonies and textures. I must admit that at the last rehearsal, I had my doubts as to whether the choir would be able to contrast dynamics, as the vocal range seemed limited, or whether members were confident in their entries; it seemed weak and uncertain in parts. Perhaps that's the nature of rehearsals, for on the day the choir rose to the occasion singing with vitality where it was needed, good, clear diction, a wide range of dynamics (the soft passages were sung with feeling

and understanding), mostly strong vocal entries, and as one body. The only major area that lacked conviction was in the Credo, which had some hesitant entries. On the whole, everyone seemed to be paying due attention to finishing passages cleanly, except for one section. There was a superb part where the tenors sang solo in unison; it was strong and confident. The Victorian State Singers added a new level of colour with its pure – though at times too soft – voices. It's that purity of voice that is so attractive, contrasting with, as well as beautifully complementing, the maturer voice, and providing another level for the aural senses. There were a few uncertain moments in both the choral and orchestral entries, but generally it was an enjoyable performance.

This observation by one of my colleagues who was unable to play, although attended the performance, sums it up, "You don't realise how good the choir really is when you're in the orchestra". It was an afternoon of pleasurable music, and I thoroughly enjoyed being part of it.

Marion Birkett

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Marian Birkett obtained her BA (Mus) from the Canberra School of Music, where she graduated in piano performance. As a pianist she has accompanied vocalists, instrumentalists and small community choirs, and continues to play regularly in a piano trio. As well as this, Marian has had many years' experience playing violin and viola in orchestras, ensembles and chamber music.

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Editor's note: Special mention should also be made of the Camberwell Chorale's very own Chris Murray, who stepped in at very short notice to give a thoroughly convincing performance on the big bass drum and assorted other percussive things, in the Elgar suite. Carn'a tenors!!

August, 2006

A Visit to Antarctica

Chris Selby Smith (tenor) visited Antarctica in February this year. His wide ranging story should tempt you all to do likewise.

The "Wow!"-factor is high. Antarctica is the driest, highest, coldest and windiest continent of all. It is also a place of extraordinary beauty.

My wife and I recently spent a fortnight on a Russian ice-breaker, Polar Pioneer, with Aurora Expeditions, as part of a month in South America. We departed from Ushuaia, an Argentinian port on the Beagle Channel, named after one of Phillip Parker King's ships which were sent out by the British Admiralty in 1826.



Zodiac



The boat had a Russian crew – who were excellent, spoke quite good English and had an open bridge policy (so long as one didn't obscure the helmsman's view or spill coffee

over the chart table) which added greatly to our enjoyment. Aurora provided the expedition leader (a Dane, who lived in Sydney), the naturalist (an Argentinian who gave regular lectures on seals, birds, penguins, whales, climate, ice, etc), a doctor (who was kept quite busy, especially in the early days of the trip), an assistant manager and the hotel manager. They had their specific roles, but were all prepared to muck in with a range of tasks, for example, zodiac (small rubber boat) driving and helping us on and off the boat – sometimes waves up to a metre or two made this challenging. The two cooks kept us well-fed throughout despite the difficulties caused by the substantial seas – at one stage an inconvenient wave caused the chief cook to be completely covered in custard. Being a Scot, he served excellent porridge each morning. The ship also had a good library. The Russian crew and the Aurora staff were always ready to answer questions or explain further details about the route, the flora (two flowering plants – only!) and fauna, the history of the area, etc.

RELATIVITIES

The Drake Passage between the tip of South America and the Antarctic Peninsula, although some 900 kilometres across, is the only real choke point for the great current which circles the Antarctic Continent from west to east under the influence of the continuously westerly winds. The current, we were told, is some one thousand times larger than all the fresh water rivers in the world. The southern tip of South America, Cape Horn, at 56° south, is much closer to the South Pole than the southern shores of Africa (about 35° south), Australia (Hobart is 43° south) or New Zealand (Stewart Island is about 47° south). The Antarctic Peninsula also reaches much further north than the rest of the Antarctic continent.

The Force 9 gale which met us as Polar Pioneer emerged from the Beagle Channel and steamed for a day-and-a-half towards the Antarctic Peninsula reduced, by some eighty percent, the numbers

who attended breakfast or the early lectures. However, once we reached the Peninsula there were many islands which enabled the captain to shelter the boat from the worst of the wind. Also, the wind decreased after we reached the Peninsula – and the icebergs and sea ice acted to moderate the swell.

There were fifty-four paying passengers on the ship, which was about two-and-a-half thousand tonnes. As a result we were able to disembark relatively quickly and to take advantage of any favourable changes in the weather. From the time the ship dropped anchor we could be climbing into the zodiacs within about twenty minutes. It usually took us nearly that long to get dressed – some people wore up to twenty-six separate pieces of clothing – and once we had dressed, we had to rush outside so as not to be overcome by the heat.



Insulation

Generally we embarked twice; on one day we had three separate excursions. Some trips involved a landing, for example, at a penguin rookery, a seal colony or a research station. Other trips were wholly cruises in the zodiac, for example, coming quietly close to whales, seals or penguins in the open water, admiring the colour and shape of icebergs and glaciers (ranging from intense white to deep blue), bird watching (we saw many, including albatrosses, terns, cormorants and petrels) or landing on the floating ice.



Look Mum, no blankets!



Snow bunnies

Of course, we only encountered a very small piece of Antarctica, but that was enough to give us some idea of the immensity of the continent. For example, seventy percent of all the fresh water of our planet is locked up in Antarctica. The ice sheet is up to 4,775 metres thick. The quantity of ice, if spread evenly across Australia, would average three kilometers in depth. And if the Antarctic ice sheet melted, the world's oceans would rise by some seventy metres. Antarctica in summer is bigger than Australia in surface area; it doubles in size during the winter as the sea freezes; and it expands seaward by some four kilometres a day as winter approaches. The sea ice eventually extends some 1,000 kilometres from the coast. Because of the weight of the ice some of Antarctica's underlying landmass has been reduced greatly in height – by up to 1,600 metres in some places. Nevertheless, the Vinson Massif, the continent's highest point, rises to 4,900 metres (Mt Kosciuszko, 2,229 m; Mt Everest, 8,850 m). Only about 500 kilometres of the Antarctic coastline (of a total of some 30,500 kilometres) is ice free.

Antarctica is, on average, the highest continent. It is also the driest, with average precipitation lower than in the Sahara. Yet the ice can be very long lasting – one ice core has gone back

over 450,000 years. Completely surrounded by the Southern Ocean, it is the most isolated continent on earth. Needless to say, it is the coldest continent, with a recorded surface temperature as low as -89.6°C (at Russia's Vostok station in July 1983). It has an immense impact on the global climate, including massive heat exchanges with the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans – in some cases reaching well into the northern hemisphere. While beautiful, it is a hard and unforgiving environment, in which man is still dwarfed by the elemental forces of nature. Antarctica is the windiest continent. Mawson noted, in his book about the 1911-14 expedition, *Home of the Blizzard*, that "the wind blew at an average velocity of ninety miles per hour throughout the whole twenty-four hours". Individual gusts, of course, were much higher.

The Antarctic story is replete with stories of courage and endurance – and also with tales of disaster. The death of Scott's whole party in early 1912 contrasts with Amundsen's success in reaching the Pole in December 1911. There is Mawson's survival, against enormous odds, after Ninnis was lost down a crevasse with most of the stores and the best dogs, just when they were at the furthestmost point from their base hut, followed by Mertz's death from starvation, exhaustion and exposure while Mawson was still a hundred miles from the hut. And



British Antarctic Survey hut on Detaille Island. The hut had to be evacuated within an hour in the late fifties.

there is Shackleton's Weddell Sea expedition, with Hurley's magnificent photographic record. After their ship, *Endurance*, was crushed by the relentless pressure of the ice, they drifted on an ice floe for nearly five months, then succeeded – through inspirational leadership, heroic efforts by all concerned in appalling conditions, and Worsley's amazing feats of successful navigation and seamanship – in reaching Elephant Island. Here Shackleton left most of the party, many of whom were not fit to continue, and sailed the small boat, *James Caird*, with five others on an epic journey to the southern shore of South Georgia, only to have to cross its rugged mountains as well to reach the whaling stations on the northern coast. Incredibly, Shackleton managed to save every single member of the party.

We, in incomparably more congenial conditions, and extraordinarily well-treated by the *Aurora* staff and the Russian crew, were able to enjoy this magnificent continent and to learn more about its birds and sea creatures, its geology, glaciers and history.

It was a terrific opportunity which brought us the greatest pleasure.



Sign of the Cross . . .
-ing of the Arctic Circle

* *Editor's Note:* following articles in recent newsletters by Bernadette Taylor (*"Diary from Africa"* 2/04) and Di Camelleri (*"Four Nights in Shanghai!"* 1/05), it seemed a good idea to turn this into an occasional travel series. We will try to get Doug and/or Thomas to contribute something in the next issue about Thomas's grand organ tour currently underway.

CSS.

April, 2007

OUR STARS

Chris Murray (tenor)

Chris Murray was born in Lincolnshire of parents who were basically tone deaf! But Chris was very fortunate to be enrolled in the local St John's Church of England choir when he was just seven. St John's was very high and the choir had a long history of presenting choral music under its dedicated conductor. All the responses were sung (often in Latin, depending on the feast day), and the psalms were a solid training ground for four-part harmony and rhythmic singing.

"As choir boys, we had to undergo some pretty tough initiations", says Chris.

Rehearsals were for two hours, twice weekly and on Sundays. We sang Holy Communion in the morning and Evensong in the evening. Highlights were weddings on Saturdays when we were paid half-a-crown for the chance to delight newlyweds. There were only two altos who were actually counter-tenors, and no ladies at all.

The choir often had the chance to travel, and sang in Lincoln Cathedral on many occasions. Chris was offered a scholarship to the Cathedral Choir, but sadly (at the time anyway), Chris's mother decided it was too far to travel – it was, after all, 18 miles away!

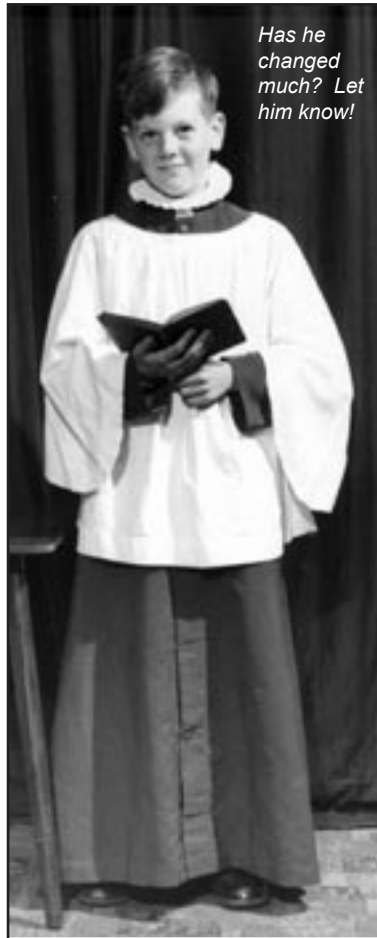
By the time Chris went to the local grammar school, he was an accomplished chorister having carved his name on the choir stalls where he had sat for many years.

"I remember my first music lesson at grammar school when I asked the master, did we ever get the chance to sing complex harmony works. At that time, I had little experience of major choral works such as Messiah and St Matthew Passion". The school performed these two works with an orchestra every year. The music master coaxed him through the shaky transformation from treble to tenor, with the result that Chris sang the tenor solos in Messiah and the Evangelist in the Passion in his last year at school.

He joined the Gainsborough Musical Society for the Faure Requiem with

Two fellow-choristers with broad musical experience

John Shirley Quirk as the tenor soloist. "It was the most beautiful piece of music I had ever sung up to then", says Chris. "The performance by the Camberwell Chorale of the Faure in 1989 compared favourably with the GMS performance all those years ago – the tenors having the cream of the melodies".



At the tender age of sixteen, Chris left home and joined ICI at Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire. He immediately joined the local musical society, and progressed from there to the operetta. "We performed La Belle Helene – I was in the chorus. During one dance routine, the boys had to run from the back of the stage, jump over the girls and land in a crouch before jumping up – you know the typical dance hall routine. Unfortunately I had always been short sighted and no glasses were allowed. At the top of my jump I could see I was about to land in the orchestra pit!!! But relief – the stage ends were rounded and painted black – I just landed on the edge".

Many pantomimes followed, and simultaneously the Welwyn Garden City Welsh Male Voice Choir. With the Welsh came performances at the Royal Albert Hall (Hansel & Gretel), Royal Festival Hall, Dorchester and many more.

There was something magical when the choir coach would stop at a pub on the way home from a concert. Even though many pubs had "No Singing" signs, the choir would start singing so quietly it was barely perceptible. Then as the noise in the pub started to subside the choir would gradually increase in volume. "Many an evening was spent with patrons begging for more and the landlord plying us with free beer", recalls Chris.

Australia beckoned in 1970 with Sydney the destination. Chris met Patricia late in that year, and married on May Day 1971. There then came a time of choral hibernation in between successive moves between Sydney and Melbourne.

Patricia and Chris finally settled in North Balwyn in 1982. It was then that Patricia noticed a call for tenors in the local paper – "call Marjorie Marks". Well he did, and the rest is part of CC history.

Patricia and Chris have three children – Michaela sang with the chorale for a term – but the men have no leanings in this direction.

If you ask Chris about the key ingredients that make a successful chorister, this is his reply:

"Know the music – first and foremost. If you cannot accurately sing the music on your own when standing next to another voice part, you need to do some homework. Study the bits that confound you, and try to recognize when things are not quite as they should be". (Messiah #26, bar 85 is one of my nemeses; it has taken me thirty-five years to get that note!)

"Mark your score – it amazes me when I see some of my fellow choristers (of all voice-parts) with scores spotlessly unmarked! How do you ever remember the counting, the entries, and the tricky intervals; and when, especially, to breathe? It is no disgrace to mark 1, 2, 3, etc

... continued opposite ... 

Stuart Hamilton (bass)

Music has played a central part in my life for over forty years. I have played the piano and the flute since a teenager, and over the years have accompanied singer-friends or played in chamber music groups in concerts and in home music-making – a central pleasure of musical life. I played the flute in a couple of amateur orchestras – but flute-playing is not like bicycle-riding: I have long since run out of puff!

I originally taught myself to play the keyboard on an old family pedal harmonium, which led to all sorts of strange habits. Most of these were beaten out of me by my teacher (literally – she was of the old tactically-applied-ruler-to-the-wrists school of piano teaching). But I occasionally still find myself pumping the pedals!

My flute playing led to some wonderful summers at National Music Camp, and made friends for many years. I remember having lunch one day at the 1967 Camp at Geelong Grammar when word came in about Harold Holt's disappearance across the bay.

I did Music Performance as part of my Matriculation, and had

 . . . continued from opposite . . .

in a score. It may even give you confidence to come in when no one else will! (That reminded me of advice from my very first choir master –if you make a mistake – make it a big one – at practice!)

"Watch the conductor. Having come to grips with the two issues above, you should be able to watch. Some conductors insist you do this even before you have completed the steps above. This can be tricky.

"The stronger help the weaker. If you know the music, try to help those that are not yet so proficient. Listen and blend your voices for a single sound for each voice part.

"Lastly have fun. There are many things in life that give us pleasure. Being part of a harmony group, listening to the different voice-parts around you, and enjoying the whole experience is what keeps us coming back for more".

JG and CM

some thoughts of making it the direction of my life, but there came a moment of realization during my final year at school that I simply wasn't going to be good enough to become a professional musician. So music became a side-dish to my straight academic and later work life. It came literally to centre stage at times however.

During that last year at school (at old Hobart High School) the drama teacher thought that, because I had a 'nice speaking voice' – whatever that meant – I should sing the lead in the school production of Kurt Weill's one act folk opera, *Down in the Valley*. She muttered something about needing an untrained voice for the part. Well, notwithstanding her hurried coaching, she certainly got one; I had never sung before, not even in the school choir. I can no longer imagine what possessed my sixteen-year old mind (not to mention her fifty-six-year old one) to think I could get up on the stage of the Theatre Royal and sing a lead role! The memory still makes me writhe with discomfort – and with relief that it was not recorded!

I saw that stage again while at university where I had joined the uni drama society, and played the flute as part of a gaggle of demented musicians in a production of *Marat/Sade*.

Despite my Weill experience (pun intended), I sang in the university choir at Tasmania (TUCS), and took part in many Intervarsities, during which some singing occasionally also took place (I remember particularly well one hosted by MUCS at Queenscliff – including long nights at the beloved Hotel Ozone). Much of the CC repertoire I remember first singing at either TUCS or IV – probably a frequent experience of choristers.

At Oxford I joined several of the many choirs there – and remember highlights such as the Berlioz *Requiem* at Alexandra Palace in London and a concert performance of Berlioz' *Les Troyens* at St John's Smith Square (yes, a particular hero of mine – but perhaps the forces he requires are a little bit beyond us!).



Since leaving Oxford in 1974 and starting work back in Australia, I found time to keep up only piano-playing, and I've only recently returned to the other side of the piano stool. While I was running some sizeable public sector operations in Canberra and here, committing myself to the uncertain political schedules set (and upset) by Ministers, I couldn't really commit to a rehearsal schedule set by a choirmaster.

But about ten years ago in Canberra, after leaving government service and joining the National University Association where (vice-chancellors notwithstanding) my time was a little more my own, I started singing again, with the Llewellyn Choir based at the Canberra School of Music. A highlight: we sang in the Mahler Eighth at the Canberra equivalent of Telstra Dome – the home of the Canberra Raiders!

And now, having left behind for a second time – this time in Melbourne – the unpredictable delights of serving Ministers, and having taken up a job running a private university company, with more predictable hours again, I have joined the Camberwell Chorale, where I'm enjoying widening my music-making again, and enjoying that good balance of work and the rest of life which it is easy to recommend for your physical and mental health but sometimes hard to practise.

And if you got the end of that tortuous sentence without needing a breathe, you must be a singer!

SH

Peace from War

Kristin Schneider (tenor) gives a personal view of the significance of war and the notion of ANZAC.

It is always a joy to sing songs for peace, and the *Dona Nobis Pacem* of Vaughan Williams and Easton's *Unsung Heroes* are powerful peace prayers. These works send love and light to all soldiers, friend and foe, past, present, and to come, as prayer and love are *outside* the boundaries of time. Thus we can assist the soldiers of World Wars I and II through our current prayer. I became aware of this whilst writing a biography of my great uncle, Charles Denehy, who served during WW1. I knew Uncle Charlie as an old man, a school teacher, and remember when he led the Anzac Day march in 1962 shortly before his death.

When war broke out in 1914, although married with three small children, he joined up immediately as a 2nd Lieutenant, in the 7th Battalion under the leadership of the famous Pompey Elliott. Denehy wrote a beautiful diary which describes the journey across the Indian Ocean to Egypt in a mature and compassionate way. The diary is a gem, but unfortunately finishes just before the Gallipoli landing. A part of my task will be to write the rest of Denehy's story in a way which complements his writing.

Along with most of the officers of the 7th Battalion, Denehy was wounded at the Gallipoli landing. He was eventually sent to England to recuperate, and rejoined the Battalion just in time to assist in the evacuation of Gallipoli — the only successful part of the campaign.

One day I was telling a friend of my feelings about war, and Uncle Charlie's role in bringing out the last troops of his section at Gallipoli. Suddenly she had the impression that he was present, and had something to tell me.

He said that he was honoured by the way I think of him because it was not possible to discuss the war afterwards. It had been a most exacting time. He said he knew that war was wrong, but was able to put this aside in order to take care of the men.

I am always moved to receive messages from those who have left the physical world, and some time later decided to write his biography. Charles seemed pleased

with this, and so the project began.

We, who are in physical bodies, can offer assistance to other discarnate beings, simply because we are physical as well as being in higher dimensions. If people have left things undone on earth, we can, through love and openness, assist them to complete their tasks.

The clearing of battlefields and associated traumas has been a job tackled by many over the years. It was with this in mind that I decided to go on the Battlefield tour run by the Australian War Memorial during 2006. This tour comprised two weeks in Turkey, including a week at the Gallipoli battlefields, then two weeks in France and Belgium.

Charles Denehy



So much love accompanied me on this tour, I felt as if I was walking on air. I had expected to be depressed by the fate of the men, but was always conscious of their courage, and their journey from Australia to Turkey, as well as from earth into other realms. I photographed the Lone Pine Memorial which commemorates many of Denehy's 7th Battalion colleagues. Although Gallipoli is a small battlefield, we travelled by bus, but also walked the ground over which the men had fought and died.

At Hill 60, we were walking in a ploughed field beside the cemetery, and I started to find many objects: the plug from a bomb, a piece of shell — and then a piece of skull. It lay in my hand, so beautifully sculpted, the tiny hole in it to allow a nerve or blood vessel to pass through. As I ran my finger

over it, I felt the spirit in it say it wished to go home. This surprised me as I had thought that the spirit departed after death. But apparently not entirely. If the soldier believed he was trapped in Gallipoli, or in his bones, then so it is. Suddenly a task became clear. It was to liberate spirit from bone, and allow all soldiers to go home, whether this was to be Australia, or the fullness of spirit. This can be done with love in unity with spirit and all creation, and specifically by joining with the millions who have visited Gallipoli with love in their hearts, with all of those who look with love on the soldiers, and with my own colleagues in Australia. The release took place during the Anzac Day Ceremony, when we felt the soldiers' enormous rejoicing.

I return to Denehy. After Gallipoli he was transferred to the 15th Brigade when it was formed in Egypt and led by Pompey Elliott. When in France he was given the 58th Battalion (about eight hundred men) two hours before they had been ordered to take part in an attack. I try to imagine Denehy's feelings, being transferred to command men he did not know, with an ill-planned attack to be immediately supervised. This was the infamous Battle of Fromelles, during which about five- of the twelve-thousand 5th Division men were killed or wounded. It was planned to divert the Germans' attention from the Somme, but from the beginning, Elliott could see the disaster looming.

From then on, Denehy became a competent commander, and his troops grew in self-esteem and confidence under his leadership. He was decorated several times, receiving the DSO and bar, as well as the Belgian Croix de Guerre.

He was a compassionate man, desperately missing his wife and little children, but poured out his soul in taking care of the men. Brigadier Elliott speaks of Denehy and his fatherly ways. During the Battle of Polygon Wood, in Belgium, the 58th Battalion distinguished itself by holding their lines in the face of a determined attack. Denehy had been on duty elsewhere, but Elliott writes a few days later, 'Colonel Denehy is back with us now. He is beaming with delight about how his boys have saved the army'.

So these are the thoughts that will occupy me whilst singing in the Anzac Day concert, to bring joy and peace to the world, and especially to my many soldier friends who have gone from the physical world.

☞ , , , continued from page 1

In the 1930s, before the Second World War, the British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams compiled a text from the Bible, the famous American 19th century poet, Walt Whitman, and British parliamentarian, John Bright. With all this was born surely one of the great masterpieces of (anti-)war music, the title which belongs to the Mass. The thirty-five-minute cantata holds in its core the angelic cry of “*dona nobis pacem*” from the soprano, repeated at intervals. From the beginning, she is the first to appear, soaring high and distant, beseeching peace against a choir alternatively gloomy with war, then echoing in serenity.

The second movement is a violent depiction of war, a furious setting of Whitman’s “*Beat! beat! drums!*” for choir, heralded by volleys of brass and rattling percussion. Schools, churches, brides, farmers, sleepers, old men and children are in turn swept aside by the warring sounds.

The heart of the work, in my opinion, is the third movement. As *Beat! beat! drums* peters out, the drums slow down into the lapping, tranquil rhythms of *Reconciliation*. This heart-wrenching poem, also by Whitman, is matched in perfect spirit by the sensuously beautiful setting by Vaughan Williams, in the grand tradition of melancholic English song, sung by the commanding yet gentle voice of the baritone –

*Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its
deeds of carnage must
in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death
and Night incessantly, softly,
Wash again and ever again
this soiled world;
For my enemy is dead, a man
as divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and
still in the coffin – I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly
with my lips the white
face in the coffin.*

Whitman’s long lines are not easy to set to music, and here they are, perfectly flowing in this music. Heart-wrenching dissonances in this song tear at the words with almost intolerable beauty – and truth; such wretchedness and compassion, shocking *carnage* against shining humanity. The choir washes into the orchestral soundscape like an ocean of calm, faithfully depicting the sisters Death and Night, *incessantly, softly, washing – again and ever again – this ... soiled ... world ...*



Detail from “The Resurrection” from the Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere (1927-32). By Sir Stanley Spencer (1891-1959)

As the soldier left alive bids his enemy – fellow human being – farewell, the soprano again intones in their behalf, *dona nobis pacem*. The music moves on to the *Dirge for Two Veterans*. The drums return, now not with the march of war, but a funeral procession; not a funeral to mourn within, but a song of hope. Whitman describes two veterans, son and father, *dropped together, / And the double grave awaits them – Now nearer blow the bugles, And the drums strike more convulsive, And the daylight o’er the pavement quite has faded, And the strong dead-march enwraps me. In the eastern sky up-buoying, The sorrowful vast phantom moves illuminated, ‘Tis some mother’s large transparent face, In heaven brighter glowing. O strong dead-march you please me! O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me! O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial! What I have I also give you.*

*The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the
drums give you music,
And my heart, O my
soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.*

Although it starts at a moderate level, the choir channels the words into a colossal paean of hope, before delivering a final hymn of peace, farewell and love. The drums and brass have transformed into instruments of

noble commemoration; the strings and harp creating a serene field over which the choir fills with the surprisingly tender words.

The fifth movement begins with the famous lines by John Bright, *The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land ...*; darkness seeps through the music, first quietly then with a dramatic interjection of *Dona nobis pacem* – Vaughan Williams creates an atmosphere

of anxiety and expectation; one is left wondering in a kind of limbo – will the war ever end? Will we find peace? *We looked for peace, but no good came ... The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved ...*

But the final message of the composer is optimistic. The conclusion of the cantata begins with an invocation by the baritone, beseeching man to fear not, to receive peace on earth. Messages of consolation, peace and togetherness from the Bible are joined together in celebration as the orchestra is brightened with the sounds of flutes, tuned percussion, brilliant brass and choral festivity – the effect is Christmassy and a welcome finale against the previous movements. Nevertheless, we are not allowed to forget what has transpired – war – as the soprano leads the serene final pages: as in the beginning, *Dona nobis pacem*. Grant us peace.

Chia Han-Leon
Inkpot Classical Reviews

Michael Easton and 'Unsung Heroes'

Yes, this article by Sean Dillon (tenor) appeared in Sounds Organised a couple of years ago. New members will not have seen it, and old members may like a refresher, or suffer from – slightly, of course – deficient memories or filing systems.

Few choristers are aware of the surprising story behind the development of a major work of music for the Camberwell and Caulfield Chorales: *Unsung Heroes* by Michael Jonathon Easton – written during the year 1990. As you will see, the organisation of a performance of this work is no trivial task.

Michael J. Easton (1954-2004) led a short, but interesting and busy life. Born in Hertfordshire, England, he was encouraged to study music composition by composer Elizabeth Poston, after a serious rugby accident cut short all his sporting activities. With the support of Sir Lennox Berkeley he demonstrated his commitment to music and music composition through his studies at the Royal Academy of music, eventually becoming a noted composer, arranger and consummate pianist. His work in the music-publishing world with Chester Music initially, and later with Novello and Company, brought him to Australia in 1982, where, after being head-hunted by the Allans Music Company he decided to stay. His life touched that of the members of the Camberwell and Caulfield Chorales through the medium of his friendship with conductor Douglas Heywood.

Doug met Michael at the Conservatorium and rapidly formed a friendship. He recalls Michael as musically very well read, funny, open and affable. Michael's great sense of humanity obviously struck a chord in Doug, who happens to

believe strongly in the worth of social comment. This chemistry lead to the suggestion that they write an oratorio commenting upon war in general, and on the First World War in particular.

The writing and initial arranging of *Unsung Heroes* was undertaken as a labour of love, and, amazingly, was completed in less than a year. Michael wrote the music, and set a series of poems dealing with war to it, while Douglas transcribed most of the manuscripts into an early and rather primitive music software program. This was a course of action that would come back to haunt the creators.



Michael Easton wrote that he "strove to paint a picture of the 'Great War' and its effect on the community at large: the work is, in its simplest form, a cinema poster of the war with various elements splashed across the canvas of the score." He further commented that his symphony was influenced by the works of Sibelius and Elgar. Easton wrote *Unsung Heroes* in memory of his maternal grandfather, Samuel Rainford, who was gassed at the Dardanelles, and dedicated the work to Douglas Heywood, the members of the Camberwell Chorale, Caulfield City Choir

and the Camerata Orchestra.

Unsung Heroes is a work of six movements, scored for choir, two soloists and orchestra. Each movement was inspired by some aspect of the First World War, and incorporates poems by various British authors as part of the oratorio. The poetic extracts are diverse and come from works of Binyon, Brooke, Gibson, Owen, Rosenberg, Sassoon and Shakespeare! In addition, Easton gained inspiration from diaries of soldiers involved in the conflict, as well as photographs and newspaper reports from the time.

Unsung Heroes was first performed by the Camberwell Chorale and Caulfield Choir, with the Camerata Orchestra on 14th May, 1990, at the Camberwell Civic Centre. The Soloists were: Lynore McWhirter, soprano, and Ian Cousins, baritone. Jocelyn Terry read each poem between the respective movements, and Michael Easton was present – with a big bandage on one finger!

Doug comments that the completed work still needs further revision, with some of the longer parts requiring trimming, while the parts for the percussion, soprano and baritone soloists are as yet untranscribed.

Prior to Michael's death in 2004, and having lost contact with him, Doug was left in the position where various parts of the separate orchestral and solo voice parts had been scattered, literally, around the globe. This situation was compounded when it was found that the early music transcription software employed for the notating of the parts was inaccessible to modern software, and so, was virtually unusable. It is amazing how difficult it can be to perform a seemingly straightforward task! Nevertheless, Doug has been persistent and hard working, and has succeeded with the huge job of finding, collating and arranging this modern work.