

Sounds Organised

December, 2010



2/10

Verdi ... has bursts of marvellous passion. His passion is brutal, it is true, but it is better to be impassioned in this way than not at all. His music at times exasperates, but it never bores.

-- Georges Bizet (1818-75), letter, 1859

Ever-verdant Verdi

Camberwell Chorale and West Gippsland Chorale joined forces under the baton of Douglas Heywood for two thrilling performances of Verdi's *Requiem*, at the West Gippsland Performing Arts Centre in Warragul on Saturday October 16th, and at the Hawthorn Town Hall on Sunday October 31st. Verdi's *Requiem* is the most dramatic and operatic of the classical arrangements of the Latin requiem mass. Verdi, who was an agnostic, may have been playing on his audience's fears in the fire-and-brimstone setting of the *Dies Irae* (Day of wrath and doom impending), but the music has a humanity that reflects the sorrow and mourning of death, whilst also containing an element of hope for life, if not the resurrection. The combined choral and orchestral forces had the power to do justice to the drama of the music, while also managing a delicacy of sound in the softer passages that gave the performance real feeling.

The *Requiem* begins with hushed choral chords of *Requiem*, and the choir sang these like a devout prayer. The opening a capella fugue, *Te decet hymnus*, *Deus* began in resonant tones from the basses, and the other sections joined in to develop a clear sound that filled the auditorium. The first entry of the soloists in the *Kyrie eleison* was particularly exciting, as these singers' voices rang out in the relatively intimate venues, giving the audience an almost visceral feel to their singing. Young tenor, Michael Lapina, was the stand-out of the soloists. His authentic Italian-style tone was lyrical, with his glorious high notes thrilling in the *Ingemisco* section of the *Dies Irae*, and *Hostias* in the *Offertorio*. Lapina also sang in

perfect balance with the other soloists in sections such as the *Lux aeterna* trio, blending well and not overpowering the music when not required. Mezzo soprano Kerrie Bolton had a rich tone and beautiful sense of line, giving a warm and poised performance. A highlight was the *Lacrymosa*, where the audience could feel the tears and mourning in her voice. Bass, Jerzy Kozlowski, sang well, with a very expressive *Confutatis maledictis*, and his sombre *Requiem aeternum* tolling out like a mournful bell in the *Lux aeterna*. Soprano Kathryn Grey was occasionally tentative and not always assured on her high notes, but sang the final *Libera me* movement with passion.

The choir and orchestra were ably led by conductor, Douglas Heywood, who, despite an injured hand, marshalled the large forces impressively. Heywood emphasized the drama and emotion of the music, and if the slowed tempo of the final climax in the *Libera me* was perhaps a trifle overdone, this was understandable in an interpretation that was notable for its feeling and musicality. The Camerata Orchestra, led by Mary Johnston, generally played with verve and enthusiasm. The woodwind section was outstanding, particularly noticeable in the perfectly executed bassoon accompaniment to the soloists' *Quid sum miser tunc dicturus*, and the lovely flute obligato in the *Agnus Dei*. One of the most exciting pieces of writing for brass is the orchestra introduction to the *Tuba mirum spargens sonum*. The brass section excelled, even with the potentially tricky timing of the off-stage trumpets co-ordinated perfectly, sending a shiver down the spine of the audience.

Despite the large sections sung by the soloists, the success of this performance of Verdi's *Requiem* really belongs to the choir. The combined voices generated an impressive wall of sound in sections such as the *Dies irae*, and one of the highlights of the piece was the heartfelt pleading of the choir's *Salva me* in this movement. In the same movement, the strong men's sections were evident in the *Rex tremendae majestatis*, and the women's trio in the *Lacrymosa* was beautiful. The eight-part *Sanctus* felt like a sprightly dance, and the high notes from the sopranos of the choir sounded effortless. The final movement began with the soft, almost chanted introduction, and the fugue was sung with confidence by all sections. The choir, soprano Kathryn Grey and orchestra built inexorably to the final pleading, yet triumphal, crescendo, before finishing with a last hushed entreaty of *Libera me* that echoed the solemn beginning of the piece. These performances of Verdi's *Requiem* were thoroughly enjoyable, as they captured the feeling of the music perfectly, and any minor blemishes in execution did not detract in the least from a rousing and exciting experience.

Helen MacLean

Helen started singing in school choirs, joined the Melbourne Uni Choral Society, and later sang with The Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society. During four years in Boston, she sang with Chorus Pro Musica. On returning to Australia, she joined the MSO Chorus, with which she currently sings.

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Your Committee extends best wishes for the Festive Season and the coming Year

Doug-isms

(recorded March 2010)

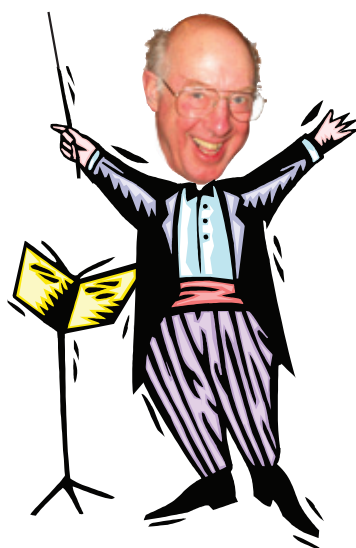
Some of the most important books 'by' famous philosophers were not actually written by them. In fact, they were assembled from recollections or notes of their sayings, as recorded by faithful students. Examples are the entire works of Plato (reporting the wisdom of Socrates), the 'Philosophy of History' of Georg Friedrich Hegel, and the 'Seminars' of radical 20th-century French psychoanalytic theorist, Jacques Lacan. Without the work of their devoted disciples, we would be much the poorer in these key areas of human knowledge and understanding.

Doug Heywood, as many of us have come to appreciate over the years, displays comparable wit and wisdom in his chosen field. The following examples (highlighted in **bold below**) were collected during Camberwell Chorale practices during the month of March 2010. The work being rehearsed at the time was Joseph Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* (*The Creation*). [Editorial comments are noted in square brackets.]

- **Don't spend too long on the short notes.**
- **The art of singing is the art of relaxation.**
- **Don't be seduced by the triplets** [basses and tenors, particularly those of advanced

years or fragile health, should take care not to be confused by this cryptic utterance].

- **It's really important not to make a high note sound like a high note. Let the note just sit there.**
- [In reference to golf?] **How you hit the ball in the beginning makes all the difference** [NB completely spontaneous aside by Jesam: 'Yes!'].



- **The Creation must not be a Rudd-less performance** [on earth as it is in Kevin!] [ed. note 2 (Nov.2010): of course in retrospect, given subsequent events during 2010, viz. the onset of the Age of Gillard, this was a particularly prophetic

Doug-ism. Indeed, to add a controversial note, was he suggesting that, without a socialist sub-text, Haydn would lose all credibility, as Philip Adams and others have indicated recently, in reference to the removal of Rudd as prime minister? NB, despite the tempting prospect of opening up further speculation on the impact of Doug's political leanings on his general philosophy of music and life, no further correspondence will be entered into on this matter, as this is a staunchly non-partisan publication].

- **Let the consonants be a springboard for the sound (like a yo-yo)** [?!?]
- **Don't Serge unless your name's Prokofiev.**

As in the case of Socrates et al., many other gems have been lost, but the few recorded here may suffice to give a glimpse of the rich insights we receive from Doug each week. Their frequently jovial or casual tone shouldn't blind us to their true value.

Many thanks to Sean Dillon for assisting with the transcriptions. The editor would be pleased to be informed of further Dougisms recalled by choir members. In other words, along the lines of Blue Hills, this could become a regular Newsletter item!

JG

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Some reflective comment on our concerts

Messiah

"Come for Tea"

(Stay for the Bassoon)

Review of the Camberwell Chorale performance of Messiah – 13 November 2010

Like many other Australians, I grew up with the obligatory annual dose of Handel during 'Carols by Candlelight' on Channel 9. The script is firmly rooted in memory: Ray Martin implores the crowd to raise their candles, Marina Prior tells everyone how "beautiful you all look from up here", and the poorly amplified choir belts out the Hallelujah chorus to take us all home. And, like many other Australians, for all I knew, the Hallelujah chorus might have been the only thing the guy wrote. For all I knew, Doug wrote it.

So the opportunity to see the Camberwell Chorale perform the Messiah (in full) on 13th November at St. John's Church in Camberwell, was not to be missed. My boyfriend, Peter, who sings tenor in the choir, certainly wasn't going to let me miss it in any case. I am not much of an authority on music unless I'm asked about the Beatles or Deep Purple, and I'm in no position to compare the Camberwell Chorale's performance with any other recording or live performance. I am quite happy to take Peter's word that the Camberwell Chorale is one of the finest Handel interpreters in the country.

I did mis-hear some of the libretto, and so was very grateful I'd earlier been handed a copy for reference. One never finds such conveniences at an Eagles gig. So when I thought the excellent tenor, Robert Stewart, sang "Come for Tea" in his opening phrase, I was a bit confused trying to remember in which gospel Jesus invited his mates around for a cuppa. When I heard something mentioned about a Qantas vessel dashing in pieces, I knew I was off the mark. The bassoon player was a stand-out, if only because I was able to witness how such an impressive instrument is assembled during a performance. The choir itself was great (particularly the tenors), though I thought the timing might improve if the choristers looked up from their music, and at Doug, more often.

Simon Stone on the Charlie Brown

piano was the star performer, and I strongly suggest that for future performances he be given, at the very least, a proper sized instrument on which to demonstrate his remarkable skill. In all seriousness, the standard of his playing was worth the price of admission alone.

The Messiah is a beautiful piece of work, with beautiful parts for choir, orchestra and soloists. Though an amateur listener, I genuinely enjoyed the experience (not at all diminished

by knowing how the story would end) and I take my hat off to all the choristers and musicians who clearly work very hard to produce a great performance of what, I can imagine, would be a very difficult piece. To anyone reading who may not yet have had the privilege of listening to the choir perform, you will not be disappointed. However, do take a cushion. Uplifting one's soul is a wonderful thing; uplifting one's chiropractic bill is not.

Nicca Grant

Requiem

Listening to the Choir

Reflections on the Verdi Requiem

At the performance of Verdi's *Requiem* on Sunday 31st October, for the first time I became a listener to the Chorale, rather than a small voice in the chorus. I had started learning the *Requiem* with the choir, but then gone away for five weeks to Europe and Queensland. This meant that I did not know the music well enough to be able to sing at the performance, though I could recall some of Doug's cajoling at tricky bits during rehearsals. What would the experience of being in the audience be like? It turned out to be a mixture of being a respondent to the performance, and being a 'silent' soprano.

So, we start off quite softly with the *Requiem* and *Kyrie*. The diction seems pretty good (of course it helps to have the text in front of me in the concert program). Not too many 's's' (say them, don't sing them says Doug). Then—sudden goose-bumps with the power of "*Te decet hymnus*"

Next, *Dies Irae*. I was anticipating that it was going to be a blast – and it was! The on- and off-stage trumpet 'dialogue' was wonderful; of course – I had not heard that in our rehearsals without the orchestra. The orchestra was great, too. Then the repeated calls "*salva me*" – both pp and fff. I can remember our early rehearsals, and I silently sing along with the soprano part, listening (as Doug urges us) to the other parts. The "*amen*" was beautiful.

Now, the orchestra is tuning-up again. That means no interval? Oh dear: when I was taking tickets at the door, I assured a couple of people

that there would be one. 'hope they lasted the distance. I suppose the Warragul choir need to finish early to get home. It's great to have the combined power of these two choirs.

The *Offertorio* I haven't heard before, because it is for the soloists only. Are the strings OK? I worry for a moment. Wow, the tenor lets rip – very dramatic!

Oh, yes, the *Sanctus* IS gorgeous fun. I enjoyed it when we were learning it, and the double chorus goes well. I think they are all having fun, leading up to the huge ending of joyous "*hosanna in excelsis*".

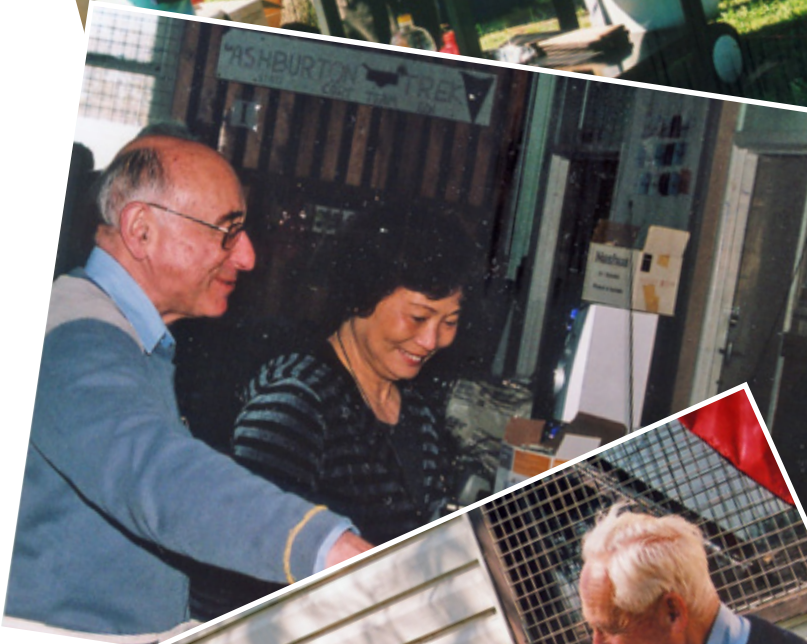
Lux Aeterna—another one for the soloists. I think that's a hard one to sing – soft, and almost unaccompanied at times.

Now, *Libera Me*. More goose-bumps with the wrath of God. The orchestra is fantastically atmospheric. The *capella* parts sound lovely. There is the soft prayer to deliver us, and the loud desperate prayer for deliverance, and the last frantic prayer for deliverance from the final fiery judgment of the world.

Maybe not all of us believe in judgment day, or in prayer, but Verdi is able to make us – singers and audience – express that plea for deliverance from everlasting death. It's amazing to read in the program that he was an agnostic.

As a member of the audience, I've been on a roller-coaster of responding to this powerful music. If I'd been singing, perhaps I would not have felt those goose-bumps, but I would have felt the great exaltation of being a tiny cog in the performance. The two sides of a concert. Thank-you, choir, orchestra, soloists and conductor. Next time I want to sing it!

Joanna Tapper, Soprano



**Netto
\$4K**



Touring in Austria, Croatia and Hungary



Harry and I have travelled to many parts of the World together since the early 1970s. However, there was one part that we had always wanted to visit, but never seemed to be part of our travel plans – that is the Dalmatian Coast on the Adriatic Sea. So, this became a priority for our latest overseas travel.

After studying all the usual travel brochures covering the area, we settled on a Trafalgar 16-day tour from Vienna to Budapest, particularly because it included three nights both in Split and in Dubrovnik.

Leaving on May 19th, reaching Vienna required a call in at London (Heathrow). The 'real' trip commenced three days after leaving Melbourne.

Twenty-eight other travellers accompanied us on our bus. A tour of Vienna was first – the Opera House, Parliament and Hofburg Palace, home of the Habsburg Dynasty. A walking tour followed around the oldest parts of the city with a local guide.

Just across the border, lunch in Bratislava (Slovakian capital), was followed by more sight seeing.

The next day saw us at Lake Bled via the city of Graz. We enjoyed two wonderful nights in Resort Accommodation at Lake Bled, in the heart of a National Park. Views of Lake Bled and the surrounding mountains were marvellous. An optional tour to the

Postojna Limestone Caves filled the afternoon. The caves included a 90 minute tour by Electric Mini-Train travelling through the vast caverns with their natural limestone cultures.

We left Lake Bled the following day and headed for the Plitvice Lakes and a one night stopover. The highlight of our visit was the walking tour through the National Park with numerous waterfalls and grand mountain scenery.

Next came Split, with a lunch stop on the waterfront at Sibenik – a most picturesque spot overlooking the Adriatic Sea.

Part of the following day's sight seeing was a visit to the Roman Palace of Diocletian, a well-preserved fortress of Roman history built in 305AD for the Emperor's retirement.

Friday's sight seeing was a full-day ferry visit and tour of the island Hvar in pleasant sunny conditions with plenty of photo opportunities.

Between Split and Dubrovnik, a three-night stopover point, we travelled via the scenic coast road. A song and dance festival, en route, at Ston made it a 'different' lunch. Performers dressed in the local colourful costumes. We arrived in Dubrovnik late afternoon, and after our evening meal, a guide walked us through the Old City.

The following morning we spent nearly two hours walking on the fortified Old City walls viewing local life both inside and outside



the walls. Later, on foot, we visited churches and street scenes within the City walls. That evening we cruised by boat at sunset viewing the fortified City from the sea. The third and last day in Dubrovnik, we all spent doing our own sight seeing etc. It was a long drive to Zagreb, capital of Croatia. The scenery changed from rocky outcrops to lush green countryside dotted with farms. Zagreb greeted us with wet weather. A prior arrangement for a walking tour of the city continued with raincoats and under brollies. We found Zagreb interesting, viewing the architecture of many churches with their colourful roofs. On Thursday 3rd June, we crossed the border into Hungary on our drive to Budapest. On the way we skirted Lake Balaton, Hungary's largest and most popular holiday resort, before arriving in the Danube Valley and the twin cities which straddle it – Buda and Pest! Many parts of the countryside were flooded after heavy rains in Central Europe. Our arrival into the city was delayed by heavy traffic and heavy rain. After dinner we joined a river on the flooded Danube River with the water level close to its peak. The aim of this cruise was to view the exceptional lighting of the city. Sight seeing the following morning was another way experience with a local guide. Old Buda offers

most interesting buildings and views of the Danube River in flood.

We departed Budapest in bright sunshine (a bit late for our visit) and flew to Heathrow for a ten night stay in London at Endsleigh Court Apartments near Euston Station in the Bloomsbury area.

During our stay we experienced many cold and wet days even though it was summer. As part of our sight seeing, we arranged a tour by coach to Oxford and Cambridge which gave us an insight into the ways of University life. Most of the day was wet but we made the most of it. The highlight of the visit to Cambridge was King's College Chapel including organ practice – a bonus. Oxford included a tour of the Great Dining Hall which was used to film the "Harry Potter Series". Also, whilst in London we could not resist some hours shopping in Oxford and Regent Streets, plus a visit to Harrods. A Thames River cruise took us to Greenwich where we extensively walked through the Parkland finishing at the Meridian Line at the Observatory.

As entertainment could not be overlooked in London, we visited ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS, Trafalgar Square for music recitals. Opportunities arose to see Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest musical, LOVE NEVER DIES, at the Adelphi Theatre, and the English National Opera's performance of THE PEARL FISHERS at the London Coliseum.

On Tuesday 15th June we left London for Heathrow Airport to join our Qantas flight home via a refuelling stop in Singapore.

So endeth our travels for the time being.

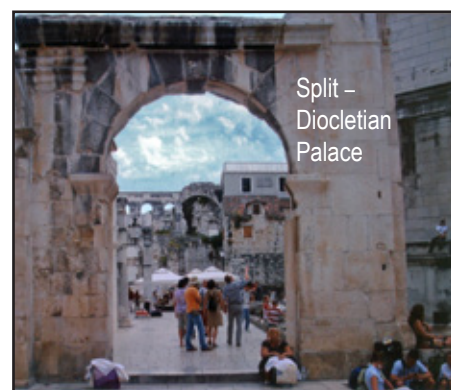
Anne Ferguson,
soprano, and Harry



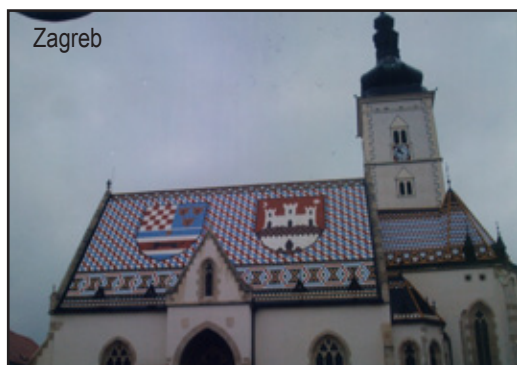
Cambridge University



Meridian Line Greenwich



Split – Diocletian Palace



Zagreb



Budapest

VALE

**Patricia Agnes
Carney**



The Chorale was greatly saddened by Pat's passing, after a long illness, on November 8th.

She was a long-term member of our choir, who took particular pleasure in performing Messiah.

She demonstrated an irrepressible enthusiasm for all things musical: choral singing with CC, Heidelberg Choral Society, and Melbourne Chorale, conducting of three or four choirs, coaching singing, dancing in musicals, writing concert programme notes, and generally encouraging community music. She showed, also, great creativity with such things as needlework, and floral arrangement, among other things.

Pat's professional life was largely in public relations and communications with organisations such as the ABC, and Vogue magazine.

Pat is survived by a son and daughter, and six grandchildren.

Each year, the Chorale participates in two ceremonies with the Malvern East Branch of the RSL.

REMEMBRANCE DAY ADDRESS, 2010 MALVERN EAST RSL

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Galea

Commanding Officer Monash University Regiment

Ladies and Gentlemen

We meet together on the 91st anniversary of the first Remembrance Day. The suggestion that there should be an Empire-wide mark of respect for the fallen was first put forward in London on 8th May 1919, by an Australian. He was the Melbourne journalist, Edward Honey, who put his suggestion into a newspaper article in the London Evening news. King George V adopted the idea and proclaimed on 7th November, 1919, that a two-minute silence would be observed. He asked that the Empire mark the moment which "*stayed the world wide carnage of the four preceding years, and marked the victory of Right and Freedom*".

So on the 11th of November at 11am, 1919, twelve months precisely after the guns fell silent, Australia with the rest of the Empire observed a two-minute silence for the first time, on what was then known as Armistice Day. On the second anniversary of the armistice in 1920, the commemoration was given added significance when it became a funeral, with the return to Britain of the remains of "an unknown soldier of the Empire from the battlefields of the Western Front". Unknown soldiers were interred with full military and national honours in Westminster Abbey in London and at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. The soldier who lies in London may well be an Australian.



After decades of peace in Europe, the scale of the loss between 1914 and 1918 was overwhelming. That first modern world conflict had brought about the mobilization of over 70 million people, and left between at least 9 million dead worldwide, perhaps as many as one-third of them, with no known grave. Not surprisingly, the allied nations chose this day and time for the commemoration of their war dead, and the symbolic burial of those lost beyond the wire and never recovered, or entombed with their sunken ships.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s, on each Armistice Day national and personal grief was expressed in religious services, in a country-wide collective silence for two minutes, and the wearing of the ubiquitous and symbolic red poppy. The tremendous artillery bombardments at the Dardanelles and on the Western Front ploughed up the chalk soils, and exposed long-buried poppy seeds to the light. It also enriched them with lime from the broken rubble of French and Belgian villages. This combination caused drifts of these blood-red flowers to bloom on the battlefields.

When the war ended, the lime was quickly absorbed. The poppy disappeared again, but its symbolism was never forgotten. Many replies to Colonel McCrae's posthumous poem "*In Flanders Fields*" were written, to pledge loyalty to the dead:

*And now the torch
and poppy red
Wear in honour of our dead.
Fear not that ye have
died for naught*

*We've learned the
lesson that ye taught
In Flanders' fields.*

At ceremonies Australians remembered their 60,000 dead sons in cities, towns and hamlets, for nowhere was untouched in this wide brown land. In the northern hemisphere, the falling of Autumnal yellow leaves adds poignancy to the sacred day. The 11th of the 11th was always associated with solemn pride, and a recognition of irreparable loss. The Shrine of Remembrance, in Melbourne, was even constructed so that sunlight shining through a particular window would illuminate the main centrepiece at precisely 11am on the 11th of November.

Traumatized nations also sought to ensure that the loss of life in what that generation called the "Great War" would never be forgotten by children and by us – by all the generations yet to be born. In Britain and Canada, Remembrance Day is *the* day when those nations remember their dead lost in war. Here, and in New Zealand, we pay our respects principally on ANZAC Day, but we also continue the tradition of Remembrance Day.

Armistice Day was re-named Remembrance Day after the Second World War because "the war to end all wars" had been succeeded twenty one years later by another six years of sacrifice, pain and loss, as the totalitarian dictatorships of Germany and Japan were, at great cost in blood, defeated and replaced. Once again the fresh pain of bereavement needed national solidarity and acknowledgement, as parents, widows and orphans mourned their sons and daughters, who lie far from home. Remembrance of the fallen and the symbol of the poppy has been steadily extended to embrace those men and women lost since 1945, in the snows of Korea, the jungles and paddy fields of South East Asia, the sands of the Middle East, and the now the barren rocks of Afghanistan.

In Canberra on the 75th anniversary of the armistice, 11 November 1993, Remembrance Day ceremonies again became the

focus of national attention. On that day the remains of an unknown Australian soldier, exhumed from a First World War military cemetery in France, were ceremonially entombed in the Australian War Memorial. Remembrance Day ceremonies were conducted simultaneously in towns and cities all over the country, culminating at the moment of burial at 11 am and coinciding with the traditional two minutes' silence. This ceremony, which touched a chord across the Australia, re-established Remembrance Day as a significant day of national commemoration.

Just this year on 12 July 2010, the French community of Fromelles has gathered to remember Australia's darkest day in war – The Battle of Fromelles, on its 94th anniversary. My understanding of World War One revolved around Gallipoli and portions of the Western front, but Fromelles as a battle within that was not very well known.

The Battle of Fromelles, on a 400-metre patch of French soil, was the first time the Australian Imperial Forces fought on the Western Front.

It has been humbling to understand what Australian soldiers endured in that battle. 7,000 men got up out of their trenches and moved across open ground. 5,533 became casualties. 1,700 were killed and 1,300 went missing in action.

We as a nation have not forgotten those soldiers, and in the course of 2010, almost 1,600 Australians from within the national community came forward to provide DNA samples to the Australian Army to help identify the soldiers and give them the dignity of a military burial and a named headstone.

This year's annual remembrance ceremony in France was held at the Australian Memorial Park, where wreaths were laid at the famous Cobbers Monument and V.C Corner by military and community dignitaries.

The Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, the Mayor of Fromelles, Monsieur Hubert Huchette, Commonwealth War Graves Commission Fromelles project manager, Mr David Richardson, relatives of fallen soldiers and members of the public attended the event.

This year's service was held two days earlier than the anniversary of the 19th July, 1916 battle, due to the upcoming official opening of the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery, where the final and 250th soldier was laid to rest with full military honours.

Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie

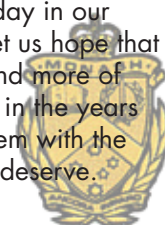
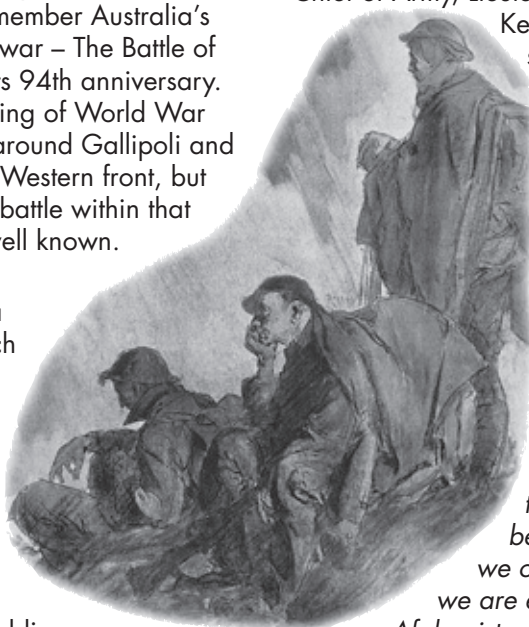
said Australians should all take time to remember Australia's darkest day. I quote: "... Australians need to understand Fromelles and where it fits in our history and what it meant to us. I find it to be something that we can reflect on as we are experiencing in Afghanistan at the present

time with our losses. I can consider it a bit of a pilgrimage back to where this all began, the sense of sacrifice of such large numbers of Australian soldiers who set an ethos that we try and live up to today."

In other plots at V.C Corner lie the remains of 410 as yet unidentified Australians, and behind these graves a plaque carries the names of 1,299 men from the 5th Division who were killed in action.

Events such as those that took place in Fromelles earlier this year should again rekindle Remembrance Day as a significant day in our national calendar. Let us hope that we can continue to find more of those lost WWI souls in the years to come, and treat them with the dignity they so richly deserve.

Lest we Forget.



More reflective comment on our concerts

Beethoven's Mass in C Major

On July 18th at the Hawthorn Town Hall, the Camberwell Chorale and the Camerata Orchestra presented Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 in B minor, the *Pathétique*. They followed after interval with Beethoven's Mass in C Major.

Reliving the signature motif of Russian pathos, which Tchaikovsky's fourth movement resolves, I wasn't well prepared for Beethoven.

Tchaikovsky's passionate despair was quite unlike the Mass with its loftiest of spiritual ambitions. Tchaikovsky's immeasurable sadness brought tears to my eyes, while Beethoven lifted me up and exalted me to reflect. *Gloria in excelsis Deo* makes exalting music. Yet Beethoven invited me to bewonder the purpose of a mass at a moment in history when our confidence in our Christian roots falters. *Credo in unum Deum!* Upon what do agnostics base their moral and spiritual sensitivity if they follow the logic of their lapsed confession? How do the faithful hold their belief when nihilist pleasure and self-centredness seduces many from the authority of the Church?

I wondered whether we can find contemporary relevance for the mass in an understanding of the liturgy that subsists by virtue of its truth, within a broader more accepting theological and

philosophical mood, a mood which shelters the difficult mysteries of the creed and the superlatives of the *Gloria*'s praise, from any sceptical assault. Can our mature culture broaden the receptivity of its spiritual message to the world?

In its aesthetic perfection, Beethoven's sculpting of voice and orchestration takes on this task. Melded in spiritual perfection by his genius, it provides a sanctuary for the faithful and the faithless allowing each to satisfy their personal truths and to experience their spirituality through music.

The Mass certainly achieves this for me.

Its application of choir and soloists to express the importance of its liturgical intentions musically, the Mass led the audience toward that end. The brighter, higher pitched voices elegantly sang the *Gloria*, whilst the *Credo*, with its serious overtones of earnest commitment and the darker references to the crucifixion, utilised the voices centred around the deeper tones.

I suppose this is obvious to the musically educated. However, as a painter, I was entranced by the work's crafted sophistication. I enjoyed the mid-range voices acting at times to smooth and create balance between bass and soprano when the sopranos were called to brightly illuminate a passage. Contributing colour, the tenors and the altos were at times used to blend the musical focus up or down from the expressive datum, so that highlights worked with each other and the orchestration without conflict. I realise that's

only to be expected, but it was extremely rewarding for me to experience Beethoven's high musical intelligence skilfully put to work by orchestra and chorale.

I also know aesthetic perfection extends beyond the edge of a canvas, so to experience it stretching beyond a concert as it simulates the possibility of lived perfection is uplifting. In terms of the Mass, it was fascinating to imagine the range of aesthetic balance projected to the classical ideal of spiritual harmony.

The performance on Sunday succeeded beautifully in almost all departments. At times though, sitting two-thirds back to the left, its integrity didn't always carry.

Probably more important to a connoisseur, I noticed at times that the brighter voices, that is the tenors and sopranos, were easy to hear and the darker voices were sometimes subdued. No venue is perfect but it was more pronounced with the soloists. In one passage, when the four were singing and the orchestra was subdued, their song was sublime, but once the dramatic intensity increased the soprano was still easily audible but the two male singers faded, the alto no longer a soft link between all sides.

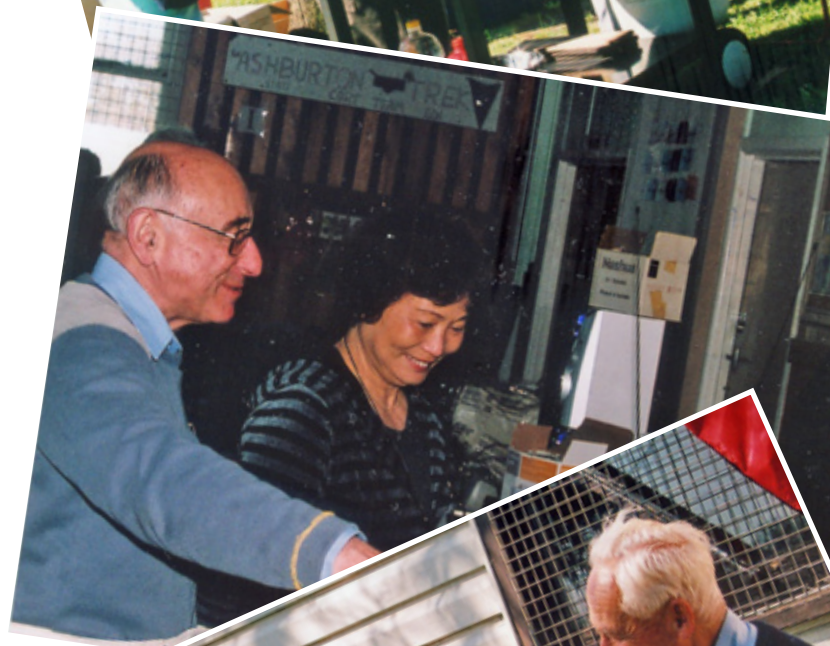
To my untrained ear this was noticeable only on recollection and never distracting from a delightful afternoon's entertainment. Gracious company, dedicated and talented musicians and singers, and music of high passion and devout spirituality!

Colin Shingleton

Former PhD student and friend of John Gregory



Former alto and repetiteur, Jeanette Martin, married Marco in mid-July, this year



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