



Notes from the President. I hope that you all had a relaxing time over the Christmas and New Year break, especially after the excitement of our last concert performance of Messiah, with its rather startling interruption. For believers and non-believers alike, it felt like the hand of God!



As usual I visited my family in New York in the lead-up to Christmas, and while there had the privilege of seeing a performance of Wagner's Die Meistersinger at the Met. Six and a half hours of stunning opera. They really know how to put on a show. It's interesting to note that several members of our choir are currently in New York, both visiting the Met and also performing in a new work by Karl Jenkins, with the composer himself conducting. Such is the enthusiasm of members of the MWC!

This year's programme will give us some new challenges whilst at the same time revisiting an old favourite (the Mozart G Minor Mass). I'm sure that our participation in the first ever performance in Australia of the Cant de les Estrelles by Granados, both at the Sydney Conservatorium in March and in our own concert in May, will be especially exciting. Added to that we are tackling for the first time the Missa in Tempore Belli by Haydn. It is such a beautiful work that I wonder how it has escaped our notice for all these years.

We have steadily been improving our professionalism over the years under the inspiring direction of Carlos, and I urge you all to ensure that you attend all the rehearsals and DO YOUR HOMEWORK! The public by now has a very high expectation of us, so we must not disappoint them.

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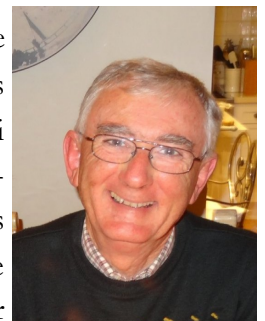
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Casals' Song of the Birds

An introduction



A note from your new editors. At the end of 2014, Julie Dawson, Cindy Broadbent and Jane Cameron handed over the reins of Noteworthy to your new editors Richard Griffiths and Naomi Roseth. Naomi joined MWC in 2007, sings Soprano and is Secretary and Ticket Secretary. Richard joined in 2006, sings Bass, was Choir President from 2009 to 2013, and is now a member of the Committee. We would like to thank Julie, Cindy and Jane for their



vision and hard work in getting Noteworthy off the ground over the past two years. Our vision for Noteworthy is to maintain what it has been over the past nine excellent issues. We will do our best to continue to bring articles which are topical, informative and entertaining. This issue has some longer articles, and is presented in what we hope is a screen-friendly format. Please let us know whether you like it or not. Thank you.

Reflections on singing Handel's Messiah



It was interesting to talk to members about singing Messiah in December. Bass John Killick (right) sang with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs before joining MWC, and has lost count of the number of Messiahs he has sung. Alto Robyn Blainey (left centre)



knows that with MWC and other choirs she has sung Messiah on precisely one hundred occasions.

On the other hand, Tenor John Tuohy (below) has recently come back to singing after a long break. Messiah was his third concert with MWC and his first performance of Handel's great work.

John writes: I was excited at our first rehearsal for Messiah. Carlos introduced it as a **privilege** for us to perform. Roger noted that so many people would like to join for Messiah that the Choir would have to be temporarily 'closed'. With the whole Choir welcoming me, I felt comfortable in this environment, but I also still felt like a "newbie" with so much to learn. Our choir is a great fit for me: so much expertise with Carlos at the front and many experienced choristers around me.

As we got into rehearsals, I was impressed with how much my fellow choristers already knew of the work and as always relied on John Kibby's Rehearsal CDs to help me study the piece. I became aware of sections that I heard before and got a lot of pleasure from learning to sing them. Under Carlos' guidance the choir improved each rehearsal. The full variety and challenge of the work continued to grow on me right through to the last few rehearsals when the soloists and orchestra joined us. The work has such variety in the dynamics and such powerful meaning. Being an old trumpeter myself, I loved the trumpet solo. The few times I was late for rehearsals it was great to hear the choir as I approached and to know that I am a part of it all now. Much of the work is sung in full voice and our small tenor section – a real bunch of champions – often had to stand for itself to be heard among the strong voices of the other sections.



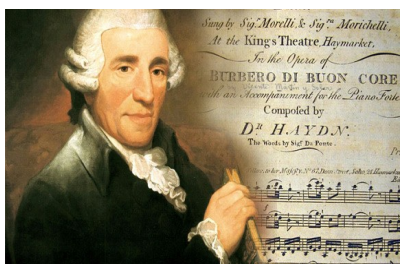
Finally to the performances. It is nice to know that we can sell out two performances for this work. On the night, for me it's about singing the work to the best of my ability and enjoying the choir, soloists, orchestra and the audience reaction. With Messiah all of these components peaked for me and were perhaps enhanced by the thunder and lightning during the Sunday performance. I knew we had done well when I saw the smile on Carlos' face at the end, though it was the Sunday performance that really pushed me over the edge. The audience standing for the Hallelujah chorus really adds to the power of this piece. I was watching an elderly lady in the front row, helped to stay standing by her daughter. This lady was right in front and would have been experiencing this piece in full force. She was mouthing the words and was moved to dancing by bobbing her head throughout. The impact this performance was having on her and her enjoyment of it was amazing and just lovely to see. The power of this experience was too much for me and I was moved to tears just watching her. It took most of the break until the next song for me to compose myself.

I look forward to more singing with the Manly Warringah Choir. Singing adds to my happiness; it gives me a release from any pressures in my life and a connection with others. Performing the Messiah consolidated pleasures for me to fortissimo!

Haydn's Paukenmesse - An introduction by Naomi Roseth.

Haydn (1732 – 1809) composed this mass in C major in Eisenstadt, Austria in 1796. He has written fourteen masses, of which this is the tenth. The title “Missa in Tempore Belli” (Mass in Time of War) appears in Haydn’s own handwriting in the autographed manuscript but the prominent inclusion of timpani in the orchestration earned the Mass the title “Paukenmesse” (Kettledrum Mass). He composed his great oratorio, “The Creation”, around the same time.

As Kapellmeister to Prince Nikolaus II Esterházy Haydn’s duty was to compose an annual Mass to honour the name day of the Prince’s wife and this Mass was the annual contribution in 1796. It was, however, written at a time following the French Revolution when Austria was doing badly against the French in Italy and Germany and feared an invasion.



The title of the piece and the background against which it was written has led scholars to debate whether the piece expresses anti-war sentiments. There is no indication from Haydn that this was his intention. Some argue that the drum sounds and the unsettled nature of the music in the Benedictus and Angus Dei suggest an anti-war sentiment. Others believe that the lyrical, joyful nature of the Mass belies this view.

What do you feel as you sing the Mass? Beautiful C major melodies – sure. But is there a hint of an anti-war message?

The Latvian Radio Choir by Richard Griffiths.

Many choirs are good, some are very good and a very small number are outstanding. Count the Latvian Radio Choir in the last category, if their recent performance at the Sydney Festival is any indication. Twenty four professional singers use their voices as instruments to create magical sounds of all pitches, volumes, rhythms and timbres. Singing music written or arranged by composers of their own and neighbouring countries, they entranced the audience not only with their technical ability but also by communicating the essence of the music most effectively.

One piece had no words but had the singers making all sorts of sounds to create something akin to an abstract painting – something beautiful in its own right without trying to describe something else. There were two beautiful, slow pieces by Arvo Part, and two transcriptions of pieces by Mahler. One of these, a vocal rendering of the Adagietto from the Fifth Symphony, is still going round my head several days later. The other piece which still comes back to me had the Choir standing in a row, all the voices mixed up. They sang a four-line Bach Chorale – beautifully, of course. Then they sang it again, slower, introducing all sorts of dissonances as each phrase progressed. At the last note of each phrase, the dissonances seemed to evaporate very slowly, the music eventually coming gently to rest on a pure chord.

After an hour and a half’s singing complex a cappella items, the Choir members were probably tired and ready to go back to their hotel. Not so the audience. The applause was loud and sustained. Many of us would willingly have stayed to listen to them all night.

Dates for your diary
Rehearsals Every Thursday at Collaroy Plateau PS.
March 17 and 19 Mandatory rehearsals for the concert at the Conservatorium.
March 24 Concert at the Conservatorium (See page 4)
May 9 MWC Concert Reaching for the Stars -Song of the Stars by Granados -Song of the Birds by Casals -Nights in the Gardens of Spain by de Falla -Mass in a Time of War by Haydn

Song of the Stars (Cant de les estrelles). This little known work by the Spanish composer, Granados, is featured in our next concert in May. It is also the subject of a PhD thesis by Carolina Estrada (right) of the Sydney Conservatorium, who will play the piano solo both at our concert and at the Australian Premiere of the work (see below). Her research leads her to the proposition that the work is one of contrition towards his wife for his weakness for other women. Apparently he fell in love very easily, but his wife always stuck by him, even urging him to recover from illness for the sake of the “other woman”. The work demands three separate choirs to create an ethereal effect accompanying sparkling music played on piano and organ.



The song of the birds (El cant dels ocells) will also be performed at our next concert. It is a traditional Catalan lullaby and Christmas song, relating the joy of the various birds at learning of the birth of Christ. After his exile from Spain in 1939, the renowned Catalonian cellist and pacifist Pablo Casals began each of his concerts by playing his arrangement of the song. It has since become a symbol of Catalonia. A moving video of Casals’ performance at the United Nation can be found on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_T8DjwLt_c4



SONG OF THE STARS
Lost masterworks of Enrique Granados
Australian Premiere

Song of the Stars

Australian Premiere of lost masterworks
by Enrique Granados

CAROLINA ESTRADA, Piano
DR. CARLOS ALVARADO, Conductor
JIM ABRAHAM, Organ
ANNIE RICCI, Violin

MANLY-WARRINGAH CHOIR and CORO AUSTRAL
MARGOT MCLAUGHLIN, Coro Austral's Artistic Director

DETAILS AND TICKETS

Tuesday, 24 March, 2015, 7pm

Verbruggen Hall
Sydney Conservatorium of Music

FREE EVENT

