

Manly Warringah Choir – 50 years celebration

This year the Manly Warringah Choir is celebrating 50 years of its establishment. To mark the occasion its August concert will feature highlights of past concerts. In a December 2024 I invited Choir members to submit their choices of works, or part works, which they would like to be included in that concert.

Forty-three members submitted suggestions – way beyond expectations. They made a total of thirty suggestions for the music of twenty composers. Many commented that making a choice was a hard task but they were grateful for the opportunity to have a say in the program planning.

I asked people to specify which movement within a work they would like to be performed, given that it would not be possible to perform an entire work. Some followed this instruction; others did not. The suggested movements are too clumsy and meaningless to be included in the analysis.

The table below lists the choices of the 43 ‘voters’. It outlines in order of popularity the composer, the work voted for and the numbers who voted for the work. The last column notes the date the Choir last performed the work.

Composer	The Work	Number voted	Date last performed
Jenkins	The Armed Man	18	November 2022
Brahms	German Requiem	14	May 2023
Handel	Messiah	14	December 2018 (Excerpts: December 2023)
Mozart	Requiem	14	May 2018
Faure	Cantique de Jean Racine	10	August 2024
Handel	Coronation Anthems	10	July 2022
Mozart	Ave Verum	10	May 2024
Alvarado	Prende la Vela	8	August 2022
Beethoven	Ode to Joy	8	December 2023
Vivaldi	Gloria	8	August 2019
Vivaldi	Magnificat	8	May 2024
Gershwin	Porgy and Bess	7	August 2023

Composer	The Work	Number voted	Date last performed
Orff	Carmina Burana	7	August 2011
Bach	Magnificat	6	December 2017
Bach	Christmas Oratorio	4	December 2024
Bach	St John's Passion	4	May 2016
Bernstein	West Side Story	3	August 2018
Faure	Requiem	3	August 2024
Schonberg	Les Mis	3	August 2023
Bach	St Mathew's Passion	2	August 2019 (Choral no. 68)
Bolliger	St Francis Prayer	2	August 2024
Mozart	Great Mass in C	2	December 2019
Mozart	Laudate Domine	2	May 2024
Ramirez	Misa Creola	2	September 2017
Shearing	Songs and Sonnets	2	August 2018
Whitacre	Five Hebrew Love Songs	2	August 2018
Chilcott	Little Jazz Mass	1	August 2018
Mozart	Regina Coeli	1	May 2018
Mozart	Coronation Mass	1	May 2024
Various	Opera Choruses	1	Aug 2016

What does the table tell us?

Jenkins' The Armed Man is clearly 'the winner'. Eighteen of us would like it to be featured in the highlights concert.

Brahms' German Requiem, Handel's Messiah and Mozart's Requiem take equal second position with 14 votes each.

In third position are Faure's Cantique de Jean Racine, Handel's Coronation Anthems and Mozart's Ave Verum, each voted by ten people.

Mozart tops the composers' popularity list. Four of his works are featured in the table above. Four Bach works are featured and two each by Handel, Faure and Vivaldi.

Fourteen out of the 30 works listed were performed in post-Covid concerts. Obviously the more recent works are more likely to come to mind but for many works performed long ago are still identified as favourites. We performed Orff's Carmina Burana in 2011 – the earliest year featuring in the table.

My email to the choir asking for nominations, included the paragraph:

“Please note: this is just a search for ideas. Obviously, we will consider your suggestions but can't guarantee that they will be included. Ultimately it is factors such as time, availability of scores, overall program balance and other factors that determine how a choral program is put together. So please don't get dejected if your choice is not included.”

Clearly, we are not bound by the popularity vote implied in this voting procedure, but with that many responding to the task in a considered and grateful manner, it would be remiss of us not to include the information outlined in the above table when shaping the Highlights Concert.

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