



KMC Grapevine No.4



Editors' Note

Welcome to the May edition of Grapevine 4.

In this edition I am catching up on the "Getting to Know You" segment with

two excellent profiles from David Foster and Ken Davis. Next month I will be featuring a profile from Jerry Foley.

For the past month I have been delving into the choir's archives and have successfully put together a detailed article on the Choir's history through the period 1946-2021. This will be published in two parts the first commencing this month.

The MCAA have recently circulated a survey to all member choirs to assess the attendance at the Sydney Choral festival in October. A result should be known early next month as to whether we will be performing in October or the Festival will be again deferred to March/April 2022.

Enjoy your browsing.



May 2021

Message from the President



As the leaves fall from the deciduous trees, and the decibels rise at our weekly rehearsals. We are looking forward to a fuller year of concerts than we anticipated. Thanks to our Concert Co-Ordinator, David Foster, we have five concerts scheduled at retirement villages, in addition to our 2 church practice events and the Hornsby RSL concert. That makes an average of a concert per month, which is awesome (as the youth would say).

We discussed a large number of matters at last night's (24/05) Committee meeting, thanks to Ken Wade's attentive and dedicated agenda preparation. The Committee



expressed thanks to Peter Wright and his wife Julie for organizing 2 banners to promote our choir to prospective members and the wider community. Peter, with some text from Paul and a photo courtesy of Ian, has arranged for an article to appear next month in the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Post, so keep an eye out for that. A number of people have contributed

to the preparation of posters for our church concerts, including Ian Stapley and Ken W. There has been preparation by Gidley of flyers that can be handed to prospective members, including your friends.

Thank you everyone for considering and passing the changes to our Constitution: it was good to have Jerry back at the Committee contributing his sensible ideas.

Kim presented a stable financial report for the Choir and will be submitting an application on our behalf to Ku-ring-gai Council for an Arts and Cultural grant. A proposal was discussed to seek Patrons and Sponsors for the choir to improve our cash situation for the future, and we will be moving forward on this.

Bruce Sharpham updated us on the MCAA concert which, at the time of writing, remains in doubt for this year.

My wife and I will be travelling north for part of the winter, and I am grateful to Wayne Newton for agreeing to deputise for me at the church concerts. I am looking forward to being back before our first retirement village performance.

The Covid situation, which caused the event to be postponed last year, is causing concerns relative to the number of choirs and choristers that will take part, and the potential size of the audience that will be attracted.

To obtain estimates of numbers for choristers and audience, the MCAA has circulated a survey to member choirs requesting information on each choir's position and estimate of likely participants and audience. This is required to allow the committee to assess the viability of continuing with the festival this year. A decision on the booking of the Town Hall will need to be made in the near future. This has a significant financial issue for the Association.

As part of the festival, the MCAA is organising a Sydney Harbour dinner cruise on the evening of Saturday, 30th October. The cost will be \$85.00 per head. An estimate of numbers for this event is included in the survey.

Member choirs are requested to respond to the survey by 30th May. We will then know if we will be singing on the 31st of October, or if a further option on a potentially deferred festival to March/April 2022 is accepted.

Sydney Choral Festival MCAA Survey



The Male Choirs Association of Australia (MCAA) is organising its Choral Festival at the Sydney Town Hall on Sunday

31st October 2021.

Getting to Know You

By David Foster

Concert Organiser

I guess I have been singing for as long as I can remember. It started in grade 3 primary in Melbourne when my teacher discovered that I had a reasonably good soprano voice. She encouraged me to use it and would often have me singing out in front of the class. I auditioned and was accepted for St Paul's Cathedral Choir, but my parents thought spending all day every Sunday in church was not such a good idea, so I did not take it. As well as singing I learned to play the school fife, recorder, and clarinet. With the latter I played in the Melbourne Junior Symphony Orchestra, which was the training orchestra for the MSO.



At age 12 I went to Melbourne Boy High School in year 9. Youngest boy in the school. At MBHS there was ample opportunity to expand on my musical interests via the junior choir and the symphony orchestra. At speech night one year I sang a solo "Where e're you walk" in the Melbourne Town Hall and the following year soloed with the Adagio from the Mozart Clarinet Concerto.

I matriculated at the age of 15 which was below university entrance age, and it was suggested that I get a job for a couple of years to mature a little. I worked in an advertising agency as a copywriter, creating ads for Shell, Heinz, Kayser, Road Safety and a whole lot more. I was enjoying

this life so much I forgot about university and stayed in the advertising game for many more years.

I have maintained my musical interests meanwhile and developed into a reasonable tenor, aided by my singing teacher at the time, Mrs Thomas. I joined the Lyric Light Opera Society and had various roles in musicals including Rose Marie and Oklahoma, playing the male lead Curley in the latter.

In 1971 a job opportunity, plus the prospect of increasing my involvement in sailing (in International A Class catamarans) brought the Foster family of four to Sydney, which was the best thing we ever did. Over the years I have sung in various choirs, including a Sing Australia choir based at Collaroy Plateau. With this choir Margaret and I toured the Australian Outback, performing in many country towns, and also Italy, where we sang mainly Italian songs in many historic places, including St. Peters and the Colosseum in Rome and even in a fleet of gondolas cruising down the Grand Canal in Venice.

I love the Ku-ring-gai Male Choir, not only for the musical stimulation but the camaraderie and great friendships I have made. My only regret is that I did not know about it and join earlier. I hope I can keep singing for a few years yet, but Have noticed my voice is deteriorating with age, so I do not know how long it will last.

Getting to Know You

By Ken Davis

Marshall

It was the late 1950s and Sputnik had just been announced to the world. But that mattered little to me, born in Epping the same year, where I was to



enjoy the suburban lifestyle by my carpenter Dad and stenographer Mum whose roots went back to AWOL midshipmen, petty Scottish criminals, and United Irish convicts before 1800. Don't mention the Maori bloodline or I might do a haka for you Bro'.

Epping Boys High (EBHS) launched me into engineering at UTS (than NSWIT) and then a master's degree in management studies at UNSW. So much for drawing board and calculators; I somehow managed to impress enough senior managers in the Tubemakers (then BHP/OneSteel) corporation to push me around Australia and overseas troubleshooting and leading integrated manufacturing businesses of base metal products, automotive fabricated parts for assembly lines, and fluid conveyance pipelines. Lots of tough gigs, and even more travel. Running a Sino-Australian JV in the back woods of Communist China was a cultural delight.

Interestingly, and perhaps in what might have been a catastrophic piece of misguidance the careers officer at EBHS in 1972 had told me to avoid both technical work and dealing with people and stick to administration. Right.

So, for the past 25 years, it has all been about transformational change in the workplace through building effective organisations and guiding leadership development. Simply put, making things happen with what you've got and doing it excellently through them. Oh, and delivering value to the shareholders.

More recently my work has seen experiences supporting organisations in merger integration, generational change, business planning and delivering of new ways of working. As MD of my consulting group (comprising 10 older "C Suite" gentlemen in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne) much of my time is spent "leveraging" ore 400+ years of broad experience, with clients ranging from large abattoirs, major gas utilities, industrial products distributors, service organisations.

R&D commercialisation, third party logistics providers and the defence industry.

On a personal level, many of the choir have net my rock Anna who is a midwife and currently Child and Family health Nurse and my other delight and challenge in 24yo Talia who is a facilities Manager with Rabo Bank. Together we have travelled to visit European family for many years. And while the sports of squash and tennis elude me these days, as a director of one of Australia oldest ski clubs based in Perisher Valley, we share our love of the outdoors with a few weeks of cross country skiing each year. Running a 28-acre farm property also has its challenges.

Acquired business skills and great mentoring from others has led me to work supporting the Community,

whether on church committees, councils and extended mission efforts, environmental activities or serving youth in Scouting at a local program level (in my younger days) and leading state Scouting organisations and Jamborees and large annual state-based events.

As a younger person, I think that my interest in languages (particularly Mandarin and German) and the sense of tone and vocal stress aligned well with the love of music.

My real interest in singing started when a close cousin suggested that I take up learning classical singing under Noel Melvin in 1977 who was then Grand Director of Music for the Masons, and his accompanist and business partner Joan Allen who was formerly Peter Dawson's accompanist in the post war years.

During this time, I made a vague attempt at AMEB music theory, but also took great enjoyment as an occasional performer with the Sydney Conservatorium Choir and even sang under the directorship of Maurice Wheeler (formerly of KMC) in a production of Joseph (yes, and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat) in about 1985 with (fellow Brothers) Norman Lees and Arthur Bailey.

More recently I sang for a few years with Bruce Elliot in "Carols in the Park" in Epping and for a long while as a member of Thornleigh Uniting Church with Bruce Sharpham in their choir.

Instruments have always been someone else's tool, and from what I see, the range of an instrument is what it is built for, but my voice has moved in the past 20 years from low

bass to a much higher and extended range.

I bumped into Arthur Bailey again in 2008 where I can thank him for twisting my arm to join KMC. Great fellowship, funny times, and a whole new opera in my life.



75 Years of History

1946 - 2021

The Ku-Ring-Gai Male Choir was established in 1946 by a small group of returned servicemen and others with a common love of singing. The Choir is now one of the oldest communities based male choirs in the country.

1946 - 1960

The Choir has no record of the names of the men who comprised the original first membership group. It is more than likely that a significant number of the 27 members listed in the 1952 choir membership were also part of the initial group.

At that time, the Choir consisted of

- 8 First Tenors
- 5 Second Tenors
- 9 First Basses
- 5 Second Basses

Paul Nunns conducted the Choir, and his accompanist was V D Renshaw. Paul continued as conductor of the choir until 1960.

On 28th January 1952, the Choir auditioned for the ABC at studio 217 Woolworths Building Kings Cross. However, it seems that the

management of the ABC did not find the choirs performance of “suitable entertainment value” to be recorded and broadcast. This did not discourage the Choir from entering the 1952 Railway Eisteddfod on the 27 November 1952, being placed first in the “over 16 voice section”.

In those early days, the Choir practiced in the old timber school hall at St. Albans Church Lindfield on Monday evenings.



The concerts given by the choir during these early years were by request only and were conducted in church halls mainly on the Upper North Shore, but also including similar venues at Dee Why, Epping, Eastwood, and Strathfield. In May 1953 it was decided that unless the concerts were “definitely for charity” a fee of 10/6 (\$1.05) would be charged for the Choirs services. During the 1950 the Choir averaged about 7-8 concerts a year.

On the 19th of September 1953, 23 members of the Choir took part in the Sydney Eisteddfod, obtaining a mark of 233/300 a merit pass.

During 1953 and 1954 the Choir struggled to maintain membership, with numbers falling to 24 and 22 respectively, with only 12-15 members attending practice on a regular basis. The “Summary of Events” for 1954 showed that the

Choir only performed 5 concerts that year.

At the Choir’s 1954 Christmas Party a son of one of the members performed a bracket of numbers on the piano, his name was Roger Woodward, then only about 12 years of age, but from all accounts already demonstrating the prodigious talent that ensured his success as one of the world’s great pianists.

Roger continued to be involved as a guest artist with the Choir for several more years.

Other artists who regularly performed with the Choir during this period included.

- Muriel Hawkins - Soprano
- Mildred Dudley – Elocutionist
- Bert Ayres- violinist.

In February 1955, the members agreed that the Choir should “widen our field of activities by letting other charitable organisations know that we are available to assist them in their concert programs”. As a result, during 1955 the Choir performed some 14 concerts, including the ANZAC Service at Linfield, two concerts at the TPI Club, a concert at the War Veterans Village at Narrabeen, a performance at the Royal Historical Society’s Christmas Party and a concert at St. Albans Hall Lindfield in aid of Carlingford Homes.

September 1956, the first mention of a uniform for the choir appears in the minutes. It is noted that two dozen ties had been ordered for the members, with each member paying 6/9d for his own tie.

In 1959 the Choir managed to present only 5 concerts plus another 4 performances in a support role. For

these events, the Choir averaged only 16 members per performance.

On 15th May 1960 saw the Choir play a supporting role in the inaugural concert of the Ku-ring-gai Chamber Orchestra.

In the minutes of 6th June 1960, it was noted that:

"nine members attended the St Albans Church Hall, which was very disappointing to those present being unable to practice owing to insufficient numbers and not having any music. New member Mr. Ted Fryer."

History has shown that Ted was not to be discouraged by this inauspicious start to his involvement with the Choir. Ted was a World War II Veteran and served in the Royal Australian Navy and was one of 24 saved when the HMAS Parramatta was sunk on route to Tobruk on 27th November 1941. Eight months later he had to abandon the HMAS Nestor after it was bombed and severely damaged off the south west coast of Crete.

Ted finally resigned as a member of the Choir in July 2005 a membership of 45 years (the longest recorded) serving as Treasurer for 28 years from 1970 to 1998.

July 1960 the Choir's conductor Paul Nunns died suddenly. The minutes record that he had been the conductor "since the earliest days of the choir."

On 14th November Mr Les Buck was welcomed as the new conductor. Les

was to guide and develop the choir until he retired on medical grounds in late 1967. In early November, the Choir performed its only concert for the year at West Pymble Congregational Church.

1961 - 1970

In early February 1961, the Choir welcomed a new accompanist Mrs Lillian Sharpham. This proved to be a long and successful relationship lasting over 16 years. The involvement of other members of the Sharpham family continues to this day. Lillian's nephew, Ernest Sharpham joined the choir in 1993, followed by his son Bruce in 2003. Bruce is still an active member of the Choir. Ernest who often performed as a soloist with the Choir, even while in his 80's, finally retired in 2006.

During the early 60's there was a concerted effort to increase the membership.



This included arranging for articles to be placed in the North Shore "Courier" and North Shore

"Times" and organising a radio appeal on station 2GB.

2GB

However, membership numbers continued to hover in the mid-twenties, with practice nights attracting less than half that number.

At the end of 1963, because of a decision to demolish the St. Albans Hall, the Choir moved to the Lindfield Methodist Hall for its regular practice. That location was to



become the home of the Choir for the best part of twenty years.

During this period major concerts were few and far between, with the Choir mainly assisting at local church services.

Choir records contain a copy of a program from a successful concert in August 1962 at the Turramurra Methodist Church featuring Meg Temple soprano and Beryl Potter pianist. Beryl had been performing as a guest artist with the Choir from at least 1958 and continued performing with the Choir throughout the sixties.

Members of the Choir were very pleased when Beryl renewed her association with the Choir after many years when she acted as guest accompanist in September 2005.

Towards the end of the decade the number of concerts performed by the Choir increased. In 1968 the Choir participated in 6 concerts, St. Giles Church of England Greenwich, Mosman Civilian Widows, Lakemba Church of England, East Roseville Church of England, Roseville Bowling Club, and the Masonic Lodge Fairfield.

Following Les Buck's retirement Bob Vincent, previously from the disbanded Wollstonecroft Male

Choir, became the conductor and was to direct the Choir for the next 5 years.

The Secretary's report for 1969 records that the Choir participated in 9 concerts during the year and finished the year with just 16 members.

To be continued in June edition of Grapevine.

Well folks that is all from me for another month.



Hope you have enjoyed the contents of this rather long edition

*Keep safe and see you all in June
(My doesn't time fly)*

In Harmony

Tony Rathbone

Grapevine Editor