



KMC Grapevine No.5



Editors' Note
Welcome to the June edition of Grapevine.

In this edition I will cover the news of the deferment of the

Sydney Festival. A very interesting profile by Gerry Foley.

Our first concert this year at the Killara Uniting Church was a success.



BREAKING NEWS **SYDNEY LOCKDOWN**

The NSW Premier has announced a 14 day "stay at home" COVID-19 lockdown for the Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Wollongong areas commencing from 6pm Saturday 26th June until 11.59pm Friday 9th July.

There will be no choir rehearsal meetings for the next two weeks and the concert at Thornleigh on Sunday 4th July has been Cancelled.

Keep safe.



June 2021

Message from the V/President **Performing Again (at last)**

It was a cold and bleak Saturday afternoon on June 19th. The first time our choir has been allowed to perform for more than one year!



There were some pre-performance nerves about but all of us were excited to be able to perform again at

last. The church sanctuary had been set up for the performance and we checked in according to COVID-19 rules.

We had an audience of around forty people, and they took their seats while conductor Paul ran the choir through some much-needed warm-up exercises.

During the performance, the choir sang thirteen pieces, and these were supplemented by two stunning vocal



brackets by songbird Anita and an amazing, performance by our accompanist Hank.

During these brackets, we had time to listen and reflect on how fortunate we are to have



Anita and Hank as part of our "family". Thank you to Anita and Hank for a job very well done!

We made a few mistakes during our performance. Of course, these will be addressed by Paul at our next rehearsal. Those mistakes did not detract from the audience's appreciation of our performance, the first in a very long time.

Audience members I spoke to after the performance complimented the choir for giving them a very entertaining afternoon. The minister of Killara Uniting Church (Yangrae Son) approached me and said that he thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and, said that he would be happy to have us sing in his church anytime. High praise indeed.

This afternoon would not have been possible without the dedication of Paul Whiting, Stuart Hill, Gerry Foley, Kim Rennick, Bruce Sharpham and John Salamonsen for keeping us together during the trying period COVID-19 lockdown. The forty Zoom meetings on Tuesday nights kept us all in the "Tuesday night is KMC rehearsal night" mindset and kept the choir together. A big thank you too all.

Now we have fixups and more polishing. Roll on 4th July.

Sydney Festival Deferred to 2022

At its meeting today, the MCAA Committee decided regretfully to cancel the already-deferred Festival proposed for the weekend of 30th – 31st October 2021 at the Sydney Town Hall.



Also, the Committee decided to defer the festival to the weekend of 30th April - 1st May 2022 at the Sydney

Town Hall. Negotiations will begin immediately with the Sydney Town Hall, Musical Director, Paul Jarman and all associated artists to change the date.

The Sydney Organising Committee carefully considered the responses from all member choirs to the survey questions posed last month. The ongoing challenges of Covid-19, restrictions, lockdowns, travel limitations, vaccine rollouts and impacts upon choirs' attendances at practices and therefore confidence about credible performance standards, all helped inform this latest decision.

Specific praise and thanks must go to the members of the Sydney Organising Committee headed by Vice President, Peter O'Driscoll. Who are all prepared to knuckle down for yet another period to bring our Festival to fruition?

Hopefully, over the next 10 months, circumstances will change so that the national perspective of our association may be properly reflected on the performance stage.

Meanwhile, I trust that news indicating that most choirs have returned to regular practices and that the number of choristers attending are on the increase augurs well for next year's Festival and its performance of the "Red Book" repertoire.

Thank you to all members for your ongoing patience and understanding around events usually beyond the Committees' control.

Keep singing
Regards NEIL FLEMING President
11th June 2021

Getting to Know You

By Gerry Foley

Associate Conductor

I was born in Newcastle in 1943 but spent my early childhood on a wheat



farm in the Riverina, where I attended Barellan Central school (Evonne Goolagong was a member of the community). On account of my mother's poor health our family relocated to Newcastle, where I completed my schooling and attended university, whence I graduated with an Arts degree majoring in Pure Mathematics and Modern History.

After the completion of Grad. Dip. Ed course at Newcastle Teachers College, I had my first teaching appointment at Telopea Park High in Canberra in 1966("when coins began to mix"), where I taught mathematics – no teaching of history, owing to the death of qualified maths teachers. I enjoyed the social life in Canberra, and there met my future wife Christina, who was personal secretary to the head of the CSIRO.

I taught in Canberra for two years then got a transfer to Sydney, where I enrolled in a MA course in mathematics with Professor Chong, at the newly opened Macquarie University. Christina and I were married in May that year (yes, May, the marriage month for teachers) and we lived in a flat in Malton Rd. Beecroft (the elderly owners of the flat who lived next door were very concerned that \$13 per week would be too much for us). Our son was born in 1969. My teaching appointment was to Cumberland

High at Carlingford where I taught for four years, before taking up a Head Teacher position at Canley Vale High. At the end of 1971 out twins arrived, unexpectedly (well, we were expecting something – a girl or a boy, not a girl and a boy!).

After three years at Canley Vale, my career took a change of direction, when I moved into tertiary education as a lecturer in Mathematics Education at Kuring-gai CAE, where I ran the Grad Dip Ed program preparing students to teach secondary maths. At this point I undertook some further studies, completing a Med (Hons), which included a thesis investigating the support of maths learning with computers. In about 1990, the CAE amalgamated with UTS, and I finished my career as a Senior Lecturer in the areas of mathematics and computer education. The university stage of my career was interesting because there was a bigger emphasis on research and publication. As a coda to my professional life, I should add that I am doing quite a bit of maths tutoring at the moment grandchildren doing HSC calculus; next door neighbours, one in year 12, one year 10; a gifted young Irish student whom I regularly meet on Zoom for a session in enrichment maths; and several other grandchildren doing maths in junior high school.

I should say something about music in my life. My mother was a fine soprano who sang in concerts both in the city and country, so there was always music in the home. As a teenager I had piano lessons which focussed on improvisation and arranging, skills I put to good use later playing in jazz bands, and even

a rock group. The latter had a very fetching name – Johnny Storm, with the Clouds (instrumentalists) and the Raindrops (girl backing group). Our piece de resistance was a rock version of Beethoven's Fur Elise, called Passion Flower of my Heart!

I sang in school choirs, the university choir and the Canberra Philharmonic Choir doing large works from the repertoire such as Mozart and Verdi Requiems, the Missa Solemnis and Bach's Matthew Passion. And of course, in more recent times I have sung with KMC. In addition, I have played with various recorder groups over the years, with a focus on Renaissance and Baroque music.

And finally, on the musical side of things, I often sit at the keyboard and lead a singalong for the residents at my wife's nursing home for people with dementia. It is a wonderful thing to see someone who is normally quite unresponsive react with joy to a song they recognise.



75 Years of History

Part 2 1970 - 2000

During the early years of the 70's there appears to have been a conscious effort to increase the proportion of concerts specifically aimed at senior citizens and performed in nursing homes and retirement villages.

It was about this time that Mrs Meg Fox, comedienne and vocalist began a very long successful and valued

association as a featured artist. Meg, in partnership with vocalist Beryl Ewing, was very popular with audiences. Meg continued to perform with the Choir for the best part of thirty years.



In 1970 Bill Parker resigned as treasurer, having held the position for 10 years. The responsibility for this function was taken up by Ted Fryer, who became the longest serving treasurer in the history of the Choir, finally resigning in 1998 after 28 years in the job.

1971 – 1980

During 1971 the Choir gave 13 performances, which was a record for the Choir. The record was again broken the next year with 14 performances, with about half the concerts conducted in retirement villages or nursing homes. These busy schedules were achieved despite the membership remaining at about 18-20 during the period.

Between 1974 and 1978 two members of the Choir, Cliff Gartrell and D. Coote shared the responsibilities of music director and conductor until a permanent replacement could be found.

In late 1976 Lillian Sharpham informed the Choir that she had finally decided to retire after 16 years as accompanist. The choir was very fortunate that Mrs Lucy Gartrell, Cliff's wife, was able to take on that role and she continued in that position until 1985.

Following the retirement of Lucy Gartrell, Dorothy Bennett joined the Choir as accompanist and served in that role for the next three years.

Choir papers record that on 27th January 1979 “an excellent organist and conductor who had conducted



the Roseville Lord St. Church Choir” was approached to consider taking on the role of conductor for the Choir. That conductor was in fact Paul Whiting who at

the time was not able to take up the position because of University studies. Fortunately for the Choir, Paul must have found the offer tempting because he finally became the Choir’s conductor some 21 years later!

The Choir was nevertheless fortunate to gain the services of another conductor Jim Waters who was to have a significant influence on the direction of the Choir over the next two decades.



Jim had been involved with Choir’s for many years. In the 1950’s he established the Hawkesbury Choral Society.

During the 1960’s he led the Lane Cove Municipal Choir to four wins in the City of Sydney Choral Championships. Jim also undertook to rearrange many choral works in the Choir’s repertoire to better match the needs of four-part male singers. Many of these arrangements are still sung by the Choir.

On the 17th March 1980 members of the Choir were saddened to hear that ex member Frank Underwood had passed away. Frank had been a member of the Choir for over 32 years and was one of the original

members when the Choir was first assembled in 1946.

Between 1971 and 1980 the Choir operated on a financial year reporting cycle. The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on the 9th July 1980 indicate that the annual donation for the use of the church hall would be \$20.00. The Treasurers report showed a credit balance of \$162.54. Membership of the Choir then totalled 20 plus Lucy Gartrell accompanist and associate artists Meg Fox and Beryl Ewing. Eleven concerts had been performed during the previous 12 months.

1981 - 1990

Unfortunately, most of the official records of the Choir for the period 1981 to 1995 cannot be located so the comings and goings of the Choir and its concert programs during that period have been difficult to assemble. However, from the odd material that is available it is clear that this period was a very busy and productive one under the musical direction of Jim Waters.

In February 1983, the Choir’s then Secretary Cliff Gartrell, produced a brief “History of Ku-ring-gai Male Choir”. Cliff had been a member during that whole period, being listed in the 1952 records as a first tenor. It is also possible that Cliff was in fact a foundation member.

Cliff’s contribution to the life and success of the Choir were significant and long lasting. He not only undertook the roles of secretary, conductor, and historian with enthusiasm, but he was also responsible for obtaining one item that is still in use by the Choir today.

Cliff decided that he needed something to stand on, in order to be seen by all members of the Choir. Being a handyman, he constructed a stool out of scrap timber. For added comfort he covered the top with an off-cut of carpet that he “found” at Northhaven Nursing Home, Turramurra, then one of the concert venues. That conductor’s stool still travels with the Choir to all our concerts.

Early in the decade, The Choir moved its practice venue from Lindfield to the Uniting Church Hall, Congham Street, West Pymble. The practice night was finally changed from Monday to Tuesday night in about 1992. By 1995 the Choir comprised about 30 members.



During the early 80’s Cath Waters (Jim’s wife) became the Choir’s Publicity Officer, and as a result regular items began appearing in local newspapers, in particular the “St Ives Village News” and the “North Shore Advocate”. In the main these articles emphasised the Choir’s need for more members, particularly tenors. The shortage of tenors remains a problem to this day.

It was about this time that Jim Water’s son and daughter-in-law prepared a poster calling for new members, particularly tenors. The poster, which was distributed widely throughout the district, featured two singing birds each holding

handkerchiefs, a reference no doubt to Luciano Pavarotti who was then at the peak of his career.



During 1984 Beryl Ewing, after many years as associate artist, indicated that she would not be able to continue performing with the Choir. Fortunately, the Choir was able to acquire the services of Wendy



Dalton who was introduced by Eric Barlow, a member and long-time supporter of the Choir. Thus began a long term and valued association with the Choir that

continued for over 20 years. In March 2002 Wendy received the Premier’s Individual Award for Outstanding Services to the Community and New South Wales in recognition of her services to the aged.

In 1998 the Choir obtained the services of a new accompanist, Pam Cornish. Pam was to continue as the Choir’s accompanist until 1999. Pam’s father was Choir member Phil Skinner, an accomplished mandolin and banjo player who often accompanied the choir in some of its pieces as well as performing as a solo artist. Phil lived at “Kamilaroy” a retirement home at Lane Cove, and for a number of years it became the

venue for the choirs first concert of the year.

In June 1988, the Choir comprised 27 members plus Pam Cornish, and associate artists Meg Fox and Wendy Dalton. Wendy finally retired as full time Associate Artist in July 2006.

As choir members increased, a number of performance venues had to be discontinued due to space availability. Included on the program during that period was a weekend away, singing at the Mount Eymard Retirement Village, Harbison on the Moss Vale Road south of Bowral on a Saturday night. A baked dinner was served before the concert. So much for singing on an empty stomach.

1991 - 2000



The Choir in 1992 with Jim Waters, Conductor, Pam Cornish, (right front) accompanist, and Meg Fox (left front) vocalist and entertainer.

Long distance travel was clearly not a barrier for some enthusiastic members of the Choir. Although Pam Cornish later moved to Wyee (Lake Macquarie) she “never missed a Tuesday night practice or concert). It was because of Pam’s move to

Wyee, and her work commitments, that the practice/concert nights were changed from Monday to Tuesday. Furthermore in 1994 two long time serving members of the Choir, Maurice Wheeler, the assistant conductor, and George Coggings, compere, had moved to Springwood but continued to travel to West Pymble every Tuesday for practice. At the same time, on several occasions Wendy Dalton returned to Sydney from Cleveland, Ohio, where her husband had been transferred, in order to meet her concert commitments.

By the mid 90’s publicity for the Choir indicated that the concert program had become very similar to that existing today with about 18 concerts per year mainly in retirement villages with a few special concerts. For example in November 1994 the Choir participated with the Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra and various dance groups in a concert arranged by the Ku-ring-gai Performing Arts Committee.

Towards the the end of the 90’s the Choir again moved its practice



venue, this time from West Pymble to the Uniting Church, Kissing Point Road Turramurra.

To be continued in July edition of Grapevine

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