

## Calendar of Events

Chorus Performances

- Saturday 4 July  
Massed Voices
- Saturday 31 October  
Elijah

Chorus Development

- Tuesday 14 July  
Auditions: Soprano/Alto
- Tuesday 21 July  
Auditions: Tenor/Bass
- Tuesday 28 July  
Sara Macliver Masterclass
- Monday 9 November  
G. Abbott Masterclass
- Tuesday 10 November  
G. Abbott Masterclass
- Sunday 13 December  
International Summer  
School

Chorus Activities

- Tuesday 4 August  
Reception  
Government House
- Sunday 16 August  
Elijah Welcome: The  
Grange

Other Opportunities

- 9-12 July  
Festival of Voices
- 5-17 July  
Intersarsity Festival

# T SO SOTTO VOCE

Volume 12

July 2009

## Welcome

I am delighted with the response from the TSO Chorus to sing Mahler 8 in Adelaide in March 2010. Sixty-one choristers have indicated they can participate: 20 sopranos, 15 altos, 10 tenors and 16 basses. This number also includes a handful of choristers who make 'guest' appearances with the Chorus as required upon invitation.

To rehearse this work so early in the year, prior to rehearsals in Adelaide, creates scheduling issues which are unavoidable, and I acknowledge any proposal will not suit everyone. I intend to introduce the work later this year by way of scores, pronunciation guide and rehearsal CDs, and distribute a timetable at the earliest convenience. Each chorister will then have the means to prepare this work either side of rehearsals he or she can attend.

With regard to the vocal technique sessions with visiting singers, I feel they have been a mixed success, and I am especially pleased with the feedback from Chris Richardson's sessions. I look forward to Jamie Allen's contribution and the missed session with Jane Edwards will happen in conjunction with Mahler 2 later this year.

Keep up the good work...

**June Tyzack**

Many thanks to our very own **James Powell-Davies**. He very generously donated a carton of blank CDs to TSOC to use for notes and recordings of our repertoire as a learning tool. James' generosity benefits us all.

## Staying Well

With the current media saturation of swine flu warnings it is timely to cover a few health basics for TSOC rehearsals. Stay up to date with health department releases regarding precautions and the need for quarantine.

Adhere to normal common sense infection control guidelines (i.e. pre-pandemic) such as hand washing, covering mouth/nose for sneezing/coughing and using disposable tissues.

In a choir situation it is good etiquette to avoid unnecessary exposure of peers to whatever brand of infection one is carrying at that moment.

I would favour not absenting oneself unless too ill to sing or sporting HINI symptoms as publicised by the media on behalf of the chief medical officer.

I think it makes both the sufferer and the rest of the section feel more comfortable if the sniffer sits in their own little section, however we would do well to remember most seasonal viruses are all around us anyway and it is generally futile to think one is avoiding these bugs with such behaviours.

**Dr Christine Boyce**



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## Calendar of Events

### TSO Performances (Hobart)

- Thursday 9 July  
You're a Legend
  - Friday 24 July  
Fire and Ice
  - Friday 7 August  
Symphonie and Chanson
- Saturday 15 August  
Romantic Masters
- Saturday 22 August  
Viennese Greats
- Saturday 12 September  
Ultimate Mahler
- Saturday 19 September  
Mozart+
- Friday 2 October  
Baroque Jewels
- Tuesday 6 October  
Triumph and Tragedy
- Saturday 24 October  
TSO Lexus Ball
- Saturday 14 November  
Symphonie Fantastique
- Thursday 26 November  
The Birds and the Bees
- Saturday 5 December  
Sublime

## Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus

### Member Profile: Beth Coombe (*Alto*)

#### Tea or coffee?

I'm definitely a tea person. I don't like coffee and won't even eat coffee cake. Chai latte is my new passion.

#### Favourite tv show?

*New Tricks*. I also enjoy Agatha Christie adaptations.

#### When I'm not singing I like to...

Read, work in my garden, walk my dogs or ride my scooter.

#### If I were to sing karaoke, my song would be...

I would probably pick a jazz or blues classic like *Black Coffee*.

#### Tell us about life growing up.

I had a very conventional upbringing in the northern suburbs of Hobart. I'm one of four and we were very lucky to have had caring, hard-working parents.



#### How did you come to be involved in music? And singing in particular?

Both my parents sang and music was always in our family. The first music to grab my attention was Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, Beethoven's Fifth and Smetana's *Ma Vlast* – the first LP I bought as a teenager (the second was Skyhooks, so I was still trying to cling to some street cred). I'm greatly indebted

to a young, enthusiastic music teacher I had in high school, who involved me in the first choir the school had ever had and who hired orchestral scores of Dvorak's ninth so we could read the score while we listened to the music; this experience opened up a whole world of listening for me.

#### If I could be anything...

Perhaps a writer, or someone with a part-time job in something undemandingly administrative and the leisure to tinker with other interests – I am a professional dilettante at heart.

#### Favourite music?

I particularly love early a cappella church music (if Byrd, Tallis or Palestrina ever wrote a clumsy note, I haven't heard it), major choral works (any requiem is a good requiem) and orchestral music (the Dvorak experience stayed with me).

#### My most memorable singing experience...

TSO did a concert of *Madama Butterfly*. There is a tiny mezzo solo role in the opera, which I wouldn't blame you for having forgotten. I was asked to do it. It was a bizarre experience. I sang in the chorus first half, changed at interval and appeared in a different blouse with soloists for the other half. My most lasting memory is of the soloists' orchestral call. I finished teaching, leapt into the car, ran every red light into the city and rushed in to find rehearsal in full swing and all the soloists on stage. I had no idea where they were up to and there was no-one to ask. I dashed onto the stage just in time to miss my first entry. Mr Kamirsky brought the orchestra to a shuddering halt and snapped, "You're late!" without looking up from his score. I had the feeling things could only improve from there – and I was right!

## Calendar of Events

### Intervarsity Festival

60th Australian Intervarsity Choral Festival  
Hobart Wind Symphony

*Tchaikovsky*  
**1812 Festival Overture**  
with massed chorus, brass and cannon

Borodin | Polovtsian Dances  
Tippett | Negro Spirituals

**World Premieres**  
Don Kay | *Northward the Strait*  
Matthew Orlovich | *The Blue Gum Forest*

Stanley Burbury Theatre  
Churchill Ave, Sandy Bay

Friday 17th July 2009, 8.00pm  
BOOK NOW at Centertainment 6234 5998

**When:** Friday 17 July, 8pm

**Where:** Stanley Burbury Theatre, UTas

**Tickets:** \$30 & \$25

[www.60IV.aicsa.org.au](http://www.60IV.aicsa.org.au)

### So in Love



Soprano **Charlotte McKercher** and pianist **Michael Curtain** team up to present a sparkling evening of songs including classics from the Great American Songbook by George Gershwin and Cole Porter through to the Broadway musicals of Marc Blitzstein, Kurt Weill and Stephen Sondheim.

**When:** Friday 3 July 7:30pm

**Where:** Moonah Arts

Centre

Entry by gold coin donation

### Intervarsity Choral Festival

Passionate choristers from universities around Australia will come to Hobart in July to celebrate 60 years of Intervarsity Choral Festivals.

Hosted in Tasmania for the first time in a decade, this uniquely Australian choral festival attracts up to two hundred singers annually to work with internationally acclaimed composers, conductors and orchestras. Festival participants share a love of music and singing and this gives exceptional vitality to their performances.

“Intervarsity Choral Festivals have a proud tradition of presenting new works from Australian composers and this Festival will be no exception,” says Musical Director Simon Reade. “Two World Premieres by renowned Australian composers Don Kay and Matthew Orlovich will be presented at our Gala Concert on Friday, 17 July.”

Matthew Orlovich adds to his fine record of compositions for Intervarsity choirs with a setting of a Roland Robinson poem *The Blue Gum Forest*, commissioned by the Festival for the 60th anniversary celebrations.

Don Kay’s *Northward the Strait* was inspired by Tasmania’s North West, the region of his childhood, and is dedicated to the people of that region. This will be the first performance of the complete set of songs.

The Festival Choir will be joined by the Hobart Wind Symphony, directed by promising young Tasmanian composer and conductor Simon Reade.

TSO Chorusmaster, June Tyzack will prepare the choir and conduct the a cappella works. June is well known to Tasmanian audiences and brings a wealth of experience to the Festival.

### Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus

### New Musical Terms

#### *Angus Dei*

To sing with a divine, beefy tone

#### *Anti-phonial*

Referring to the prohibition of mobile phones in the concert hall

#### *Appoggiatura*

A song you regret singing

#### *Appoximonto*

A musical entrance, somewhere in the vicinity of the correct pitch

#### *Bar Line*

What musicians – and choristers – form after a concert

#### *Concerto Grossissimo*

A really bad performance

#### *Fermantra*

A note that is held over and over and over ...

#### *Good Conductor*

A person who can give an electrifying performance, or, alternatively, one who obeys the orchestra and chorus

#### *Kvetchendo*

Gradually getting annoyingly louder

#### *Mallade*

A romantic song that’s really awful

#### *Molto Bolto*

Heading straight for the ending

#### *Tincanabulation*

The annoying or irritating sounds made by extremely cheap bells

#### *Vesuvioso*

A gradual buildup to a fiery conclusion

#### *ZZZfortzando*

Singing REALLY loudly in order to wake up the audience

#### *Colleen McIntyre*

## Singing Thoughts: Posture & Body by Jane Edwards

- ✦ **Touch toes with head hung freely**, then roll up feeling each bone of the spine sit back in place, ending with the head, bit by bit.
- ✦ **Bring arms overhead and then bring them out sideways** and down, through the clock face, to resting position. This helps to bring on the feeling of expanded but not held ribs. Try to maintain this feeling whenever singing, taking care not to drop the chest, EVER. If you feel you are running out of air in a phrase, try gently lifting the chest away from the lower body, and you might be surprised how you regain capacity to continue phrase.
- ✦ **Check lower body.** Lock knees back, and then consciously unlock them without going into a squat, rather JUST release them. Gently think of pulling up through the thighs without re-establishing lock in the knees. Note how this helps with position of pelvis, which should feel upright and activated. Take care to neither tuck the pelvis under, nor *duck's bum* it out. The pelvis should bring a sense of support and strength to the torso. Be aware your sides feel lengthened from top of pelvis to lower ribs. Sorry to mention the dreaded credit card again (thanks to those basses who waved their credit cards aloft in greeting at start of my last TSO Chorus warm up – methinks Riddoch was the ringleader, boom boom), but do imagine the pelvic floor to be dropped and relaxed, and the anal sphincter to be open. Squeezing these areas up and in introduces too much tension into abs (try it, and note the tummy is very tight).
- ✦ **Head sits atop** all of this naturally, avoiding chin jut or tuck.
- ✦ **Jaw should drop freely away.** It is similar to the feeling of dropping the jaw naturally, and then stretching just a little more than this, but noting that no tension or hardness is established as a result. Relaxed, uninvolved jaw is not always easy when singing busy text, but ensure you are aware of the feeling by warming up on easy, seamless vowel combinations that place no unnecessary stress on the jaw. Then, as much as possible, try to replicate this with text, allowing the jaw to remain free and neutral, and avoiding mastication on challenging consonant clusters. Check the drop of the jaw by placing fingers directly behind the jaw hinges, right where the ears join the face. Then drop the jaw heavily and note the little opening that is created there, somewhat like your fingers dropping into a small trench. Don't overdo this feeling, but observe, and aim for that feeling to remain, whatever vowel combos you might be singing. Keep the jaw uninvolved. The tongue should sit happily in the mouth throughout and you may note some movement at the back of the tongue as you work through vowels bright and dark. You should be able to effect vowel changes with tongue movement alone, sensing a production which otherwise seems to come through "one hole". The tip of the tongue will rest easily just behind the bottom teeth, and as we come in all shapes and sizes, some people might even like to gently rest it in puppy position, just visible on the inside of the lower lip, if easier to establish a sense of where the front of the tongue is.
- ✦ **Drop and relax tummy.** Observe away from singing. The tummy should generally feel inactive when singing, to avoid early pulling up and in, or rigid holding out. If you imagine the gut to be hung, it will travel at the right rate throughout the phrase. Then simply release the accumulated tension in the tummy at phrase end. It is important to not think of taking in air, but get used to the idea that the release IS the intake, allowing the breathing to feel like an automatic action. The tummy should feel like it drops away at release and some describe it as a feeling that the opening of the trapdoor is across navel line, and the constant hinge is across the bikini line, therefore, top of tummy drops down as if letting it all hang out.
- ✦ **Feeling of opening of mouth** is always north south, allied to the relaxed jaw drop. Try to avoid any sideways grimace or

## Singing Thoughts: *Continued*

stretch. Remember the soft palate is a very long way back in the mouth. The idea of sniff or smell the rose can be confusing, as many tend to think the soft palate is lifted subsequently, but in fact for many this simply creates tension behind the nose, but the soft palate is still lazy. Think of stretch right up the back wall of the throat and this should ensure the nasal pharynx is closed off by a well rounded soft palate. It is helpful to imagine the walls of the throat (uprights or fauces) elongated and tall, and not particularly pulled east west. When you think about this, it is easy to realise that in stretching the walls east west, you are cancelling out the arch required in the soft palate. Tall is a great way of imaging your sound.

- ✦ **The best exercise I know** is an unpitched one, that is, using SSSSS for practising phrase

lengths in a song, observing the action of the gut throughout and attempting to leave it *neutral*. If you note a point at which the abs become overly tense, try to release and continue. The main thing is management of air emission and coming to the realisation the body always has enough air for the requirements. Usually when you feel you are out of air, you are in fact, in fight mode in the abs. Air is your friend and your body need not fight it by tensing too much for singing. Imagine the air has an energy level of say, two out of ten constantly, knowing that the reed, your vocal folds, just needs enough air to excite it to produce sound. A simple wash of air, without fight in the abs is the aim at all times.

- ✦ **Below are two of the exercises** we did in warm up and which you might want to see written out.

### Exercise 1



- ✦ **Begin this simple little phrase on ee**, and work up chromatically for range extension. Once completed through all workable keys for your vocal range, do again, this time having one rotation of asterisked notes on ee, then changing to eh on the repeat of same notes, then completing the exercise on the eh vowel. Work throughout range. Start yet again, on ee, then eh as noted, then change to ah on third rotation of asterisked material, completing on ah. After working through range, do again adding oh, then finally adding oo. At all times, aim for one sausage of tone and don't try to pump or scatter gun the coloratura. Simply hang the jaw, relax the larynx and let the articulation happen with gentle constant air and small movement at back of tongue for vowel changes. It should all feel sloppy and you may feel the run isn't as clear as you would like. A loose larynx produces best runs!

### Exercise 2



- ✦ **This is a lovely legato tone production exercise** which you can sing on any vowel that suits. Aim for completely legato tone, with no renewals of tone at pitch change. One sausage of tone, with no break in gentle air emission.

## Contact Details

### Chorus Administrator

Trish Robinson

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### Websites

[www.tso.com.au/aboutthetso/tsochorus.html](http://www.tso.com.au/aboutthetso/tsochorus.html)

[key.org.au/tsoc/](http://key.org.au/tsoc/)

[www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8510342527](https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8510342527)

Are you a new member of TSO Chorus? Have you changed your contact details? Please contact Chorus Administrator, Trish Robinson for a membership form or to advise of changed details. Keeping membership up-to-date is essential for the smooth running of the chorus and we appreciate your assistance.

### Your Committee

Tony Sprent

Michael Muldoon

Sheila Knowlton

Trish Robinson

Tim Oxley

Tony Parker

Virginia Vaughan Williams

Eryl Raymond

### Reminders

#### Name Tags

Please wear to all rehearsals

#### Fund Raising

Please support our activities. The committee organises raffles, sports cards and occasionally social events. Surplus funds help support the Chorus.

## Why Do We Do It?!

**It's interesting to hear why people give up their time to sing for a hobby. Why sing and not do macramé, or cook or race motorcycles? What inspirations drive us? Let's find out from the TSO Chorus what inspires them to do what they do.**

My reasons for singing are my mother who played the piano and encouraged all to sing, Choirmaster of St David's, John Nicholls, who taught me the joys of choral music and the TSO for the excitement of public performance with the best band you could ask for.

### Tim Oxley

I sing because it makes me happy, it challenges me and takes me way beyond my comfort zone. Singing in the TSO Chorus has introduced me to works I would never have had the opportunity to sing and being on stage with the orchestra is a superb experience, even after 10 years. I am finding the Haydn an absolute pleasure, no stress, just gorgeous sound. I enjoy being an Alto, I have always preferred to harmonize than sing the tune and I love to stand next to another section to hear the mix.

### Michelle Warren

I have been singing ever since I can remember and my first public performance was at age six. If it doesn't sound too cliché—singing is the expression of who I am. The times I felt the most at home have been when singing with a band (not choir sorry to say), feeling direct communication with the audience and 100 per cent support from the musicians.

### Joy Tattam

## Q&A Forum

**Send questions to [syemm@aapt.net.au](mailto:syemm@aapt.net.au). Thanks to Jane Edwards for her responses this issue.**



### 1. I have a sore throat after singing.

If the throat is sore after singing, it's likely you're constricting. This is a huge topic, but in brief try to maintain a relaxed, open feeling in the throat and not overdo articulation of text with throat. All text can come through "one relaxed hole", without mastication on consonants or grip on vowels. Imagine air to be coming through gently and

picture the air keeping things open, with an image or sensation of the lightest wash of air allied to tone. Also check the tongue isn't held.

"Give me a laundry list and I will set it to music"

*Gioacchini Rossini*

### 2. I go flat when singing softly.

Imagine more vibrancy in the sound to help lift pitch. Picture the wave pattern of the vibrato, aware it produces overtones in the sound and imagine you see a gentle oscillation over the note. Often dead straight tone is out of tune, as sound needs overtones to ring, so nil vibrato is not ideal. Vibrato is an essential part of tone and won't be intrusive in choral singing as long as it's gently energised and not a slow wobble. Emma Kirkby, regarded as having a straight voice, actually has a very fast well controlled vibrato that gives her voice its unique timbre.

### 3. How do I avoid "scooping"?

Scooping is undesirable in choral and solo singing. *Portamento* is another technique altogether, appropriate in operatic production. To avoid scooping, you must have a strong visualisation of pitch prior to moving to it and step in a legato fashion, but quickly. If a preceding consonant is involved, it is imperative the consonant is gently phonated on the new pitch, not the old one.