



Tso Sotto Voce

Volume 13

September 2009

Calendar of Events Chorus Performances

- Saturday 31 October
Elijah

Chorus Development

- Monday 9 November
G. Abbott Masterclass
- Tuesday 10 November
G. Abbott Masterclass
- Sunday 13 December
International Summer
School

TSO Performances

- 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

Other Performances

Broadway to Australia is a partnership between *The Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music* and *The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers*. The collaboration enables writers and performers of musical theatre, cabaret and popular music to learn from and engage with Broadway's most illustrious practitioners.

When: 8pm Wednesday
9 September 2009

Where: Tasman Room,
Wrest Point Casino

Tickets: \$67.50/\$52.50

www.broadwaytoaustralia.com

Welcome

*Home, home on the grange
Where the chooks and the wallabies play
Where seldom is heard a liturgical word
When the skies are but rainy all day.*

A TSO Chorus Sunday at The Grange brought joy to one and all! It was the perfect rainy day for being indoors and listening to Elijah in preparation for our performance at the end of October. The enormity of the input of the chorus in this oratorio was acknowledged and everyone left knowing they had work to do...

Glasses of wine, a smoke filled courtyard, boys in puddles, and God well and truly 'lavething' the thirsty land as voices sang 'thanks', add to the collection of TSO Chorus memories.

We heard stories of unforgettable English Cathedral Elijahs, African Elijahs and hit-and miss Elijahs but as a performance of Elijah in Hobart is long overdue, let's make ours an outstanding and memorable performance!

June

Ceremony of Carols

Experienced female singers are invited to perform this timeless Britten choral work on **Monday 21 December, 6 pm** at St David's Cathedral.

Rehearsals will be for musical refinement not note learning, allowing them to be kept to a minimum. The work will be prepared by Helen Todd, conducted by Joan Wright and accompanied by pedal harp.

To indicate your interest please call or SMS 0417 123 680.

From the Committee

Once again we delve into a new work (at least new for many!) and the challenge of producing work to a yet higher standard.

With the kick off day, and June and Gary's wonderful hospitality, now behind us, the enormity of the work and sheer number of notes to learn will present a challenge to us all. Yet I am sure that it is one to which all chorus members will rise spectacularly!

The new committee has now met for the first time and is dedicated to helping June take us on this path. Chorus members can assist June in this by making the most of the rehearsal time available to us.

To help relax after long nights of dedication it has become somewhat of a tradition for chorus members to gather across the road at the *Baa Bar*, so please come and join in, even if it is only for a few minutes.

Also on an important social note, the committee is working hard to try and finalise arrangements for this year's quiz night. We have had some problems with a suitable venue being available, but we think this is now in hand.

Last year's quiz night was a great success, not only by all accounts providing a most enjoyable night for quizees, but also raising valuable chorus funds. So prepare a table of friends, swot up on old episodes of sale of the century, and pick your wits against the quizmaster!

**Cheers,
Tony Parker, Chairman**

Music in Community Awards

Entries have opened for the *Music in Communities Awards 2009*. Active involvement in music and singing can help counteract many negative aspects of modern life such as alienation, isolation and depression. It promotes mental health and physical wellbeing and helps foster a strong sense of community spirit and identity. How does being musically active improve life in YOUR community?

Who can enter?

Local councils; community and volunteer organisations delivering and supporting music programs in communities; all forms of music groups including choirs, bands, orchestras, uke groups, drum circles, youth groups; schools; individuals and others.

Programs need to have been running for three years or more. The main test is how you convey to us the **IMPACT** of music making on participants and on community life.

How to enter

Go to www.musicincommunities.org.au for all the info and to enter online.

Win a share of the \$20,000 prize pool.

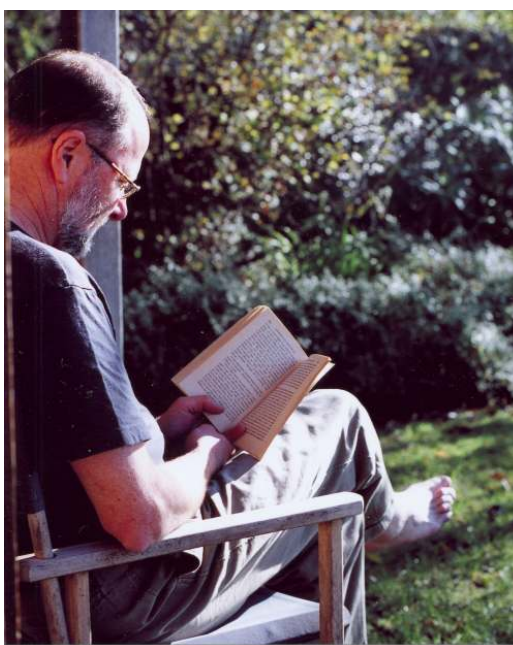
**Entries close
21 September 2009**

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Member Profile: Tony Marshall (*Tenor*)

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

Read and walk (often simultaneously), cook, eat, drink wine, talk to the cat, do biographical research. I've been obsessed for many years by an obscure and fascinating nineteenth-century character called Nathaniel Lipscomb Kentish. Eventually I'll write his life, but I have much more research to do before I get there!



If I sang karaoke my song would be

I'd need help, because voices in harmony are always best. Maybe a Comedian Harmonists number – "Night and Day"?

Tell me about life growing up

A conventional middle-class upbringing in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Two family homes (we moved when I was twelve) and two schools (one primary, one secondary). A bit of a swot (though school reports always said "Could do better"). I also played sport – mainly football and cricket.

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

The only instrument I learned was recorder – great training for reading a vocal line. School choirs throughout

primary and secondary school, school operas (Gilbert & Sullivan), and into a community G&S company while still at school. Apart from a few years off in my early 20s, I've sung in choirs nonstop, most notably in Melbourne with the Tudor Choristers (conducted by the redoubtable John O'Donnell); since I came to Tasmania in 1990, with TUMS, TSOC (from its inception in 1992), Tasmanian Chorale, Loose Canon and any other opportunities which arise!

If I could be anything...

An independently wealthy biographer.

What is your favourite music?

Depends on the time, the mood, the occasion, the purpose...

A very partial list: Astaire (Fred), Bach (JS), Brozman (Bob), Comedian Harmonists, Derek & the Dominoes, Elgar, Ensemble Amarcord, Finzi, Hicks (Dan, & his Hot Licks), Jones (Spike), Plumb (Luke), Reinhardt (Django), Shoglanifty, Strauss (Richard), Vaughan Williams, Zulya.

Greatest achievement?

Not continuing to be an economist.

Tea or coffee?

Coffee.

Favourite film/book/tv show?

I've never had a TV. I'm a *Radio National* junkie. Don't often get to films (but I love 1930s musicals). Favourite books are the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (still in progress, after 18 volumes) and Anthony Powell's incomparable novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*.

What has been your most memorable singing experience?

Too many to say! With the TSOC, perhaps the 2003 Brahms *Requiem*. (I've never felt so physically and emotionally exhausted by a concert.) Or perhaps the 1996 *La Cenerentola* tour.

Singing Thoughts by Chris Richardson

Hi TSO chorus! Thank you for your great enthusiasm and smiles during my time with you this year for vocal warm ups! I had a great time with you all.

Upon being asked to share some of my “singing thoughts” with you, I thought of many random things I could share, many of which you would have heard before—about technique, posture, tone production etc. So, instead of sharing something random, I decided to answer the question, “If I could say one thing to a choir full of very able, talented and educated musicians and singers, what would I say?” As soon as I posed this question, the random thoughts fell away to leave one very clear thought in mind.

So what is the one thing I would say to you all? It is this: *The most important thing to remember when singing, is **what** you’re saying and **who** you’re saying it to.* If you do this, you are on your way to being a powerful communicator and effective performer, whether singing in an ensemble or an operatic aria.

As singers, we are accustomed to learning and implementing various *singing values*—things that are important to do when singing. These are indeed important to grab-a-hold-of and practice so they become part of our way of operating as singers. However, when it comes to our moment of *actual delivery* in performance, the most important thing to remember is you have *something* to communicate and *someone* to communicate it to. At that moment, everything you do must be done to achieve this outcome effectively—to communicate what it is you have to say in such a way that *listeners are impacted and captivated by it.*

Most of us remember the good-ol’-days of school assemblies—of visiting speakers, teachers, the school principal and student peers getting up to speak. I certainly remember who captivated my attention and who made me yawn and switch off. Those who managed to capture my attention not only knew what they wanted to communicate, but also proceeded to communicate it to every listener with strong conviction, clarity and confidence. As singers we have the opportunity to do the same every time

we get up in front of an audience. If we get up with something to say (be it a poem, text of a requiem mass, or libretto of an opera chorus) and say it with appropriate conviction and engagement with the listener, then we succeed in being effective and powerful performers. However, if we become consumed with the *how* rather than the *what* of what we’re saying (the dynamics, articulation, posture, breathing, diction etc), we will fail to deliver a convincing and engaging performance—and we won’t enjoy the process as much ourselves either! All of the performing *hows* are important, but they must be practiced *in preparation* for a performance so that *in* the moment of the performance, we can be consumed with what we’re saying and who we’re saying it to.

To help in your performance preparation, here are some things I do during my *preparations* so I don’t have to think about them *during* the performance.

Get familiar with the text

“If you can’t say it, you won’t be able to sing it.” I spend a lot of time saying text, translating text which is not in English, thinking about its intention, meaning and intended audience.

Get familiar with the “nuts and bolts” of the music

Tapping & clapping the rhythm, singing the melody line on a vowel etc.

Get familiar with the phrase lengths and breathing spots

I often *drone* or *say* the text in rhythm (without differentiating pitch)

Get comfortable combining all of these elements together

Get comfortable with the thought of doing this in front of an audience—CONNECTING with them

Imagine actually being on stage... where are you looking, where is your focus etc.

Happy singing and look forward to seeing you soon!

Chris Richardson

The first Tasmanian performance of "Elijah"

There's a wistful review in *The Mercury* of Tuesday 21 July 1868: "The amateurs of the 2-14th Regiment gave a performance last evening at the Theatre Royal, but probably owing to entertainments elsewhere, the house was not so full as could be desired."

The 'entertainments elsewhere' was possibly a *Town Hall Organ Fund Concert*, "under the distinguished patronage of His Excellency the Governor Gore Browne and Mrs Gore Browne". It was the first Tasmanian performance of Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah*, which had achieved great popularity following the premiere under Mendelssohn in 1846.

The Town Hall opened in 1864 and now a pipe organ was under manufacture in London. Frederick A Packer was, like his father, an organist of St David's Cathedral. He was in his late twenties and a rising musical star and this fund-raising concert was under his direction.

A winter Monday evening might not have been the best of times. *The Mercury* reviewer noted: "The production for the first time in Hobart Town of Mendelssohn's sublime oratorio *Elijah*, even though it was essayed by amateurs, should have induced a very numerous audience... and we confess to disappointment that it was not so. The room was not half filled, and the beggarly array of empty benches must have had a chilling effect upon the spirits of the ladies and gentlemen who have been working so hard during several weeks past to master one of the most difficult compositions of modern times."

Who were these ladies and gentlemen? The concert programme identifies, "Conductor—Mr Packer", but no-one else. The chorus was probably the Hobart Town Choral Society, inaugurated in 1846, and the orchestra would have been convened by the Society.

The chill seems to have got to the reviewer and one gets a rather Monday-night-ish feeling about it: "As to the manner in which it was rendered last night, we can only say it was creditable, all the difficulties of the task considered, and had the efforts of the performers met with more generous sympathy at the hands of the public, it

is possible that we should have been enabled to announce a decided success."

The soloists were well received but the principal bass soloist was served with a strong critique: "The role of Elijah fell to a gentleman who possesses a very excellent voice, with abundant range and flexibility, but which needs much cultivation ere he will be able to render effectively the magnificent music in which the maestro has clothed the words of the Prophet... At times the *Elijah* of last night was extremely weak and throughout there was a want of animation, and an indistinctness of articulation which marred an otherwise careful effort."

Perhaps the reviewer would have been happier with the military band at the Theatre Royal.

Local opinion, in the form of *Veritas*, responded ten days later: "Of the performance itself on the whole we can conscientiously speak in terms of high praise, and in so doing we feel certain we simply re-echo the opinions of all those lovers of high class music whose good fortune it was to be present at the concert."

"In some of the choruses the cadences were marred by false intonation and a slight wavering. Still as hardly dealt with by other critics, who seem to entirely ignore the great difficulty of the part which he was kind enough to undertake."

And at last we learn the names of the dramatic personae including a 'Miss Sherwin', who was possibly Amy Sherwin of Huonville, then 13 years old and known to have been a pupil of Packer's. She went on to a highly successful international singing career. And the bass?

"The exceedingly difficult part of *Elijah* was allotted to Mr Pringle and was, we may truly say, very creditably performed. This gentleman has been rather a lover of high class music whose good fortune it was to be present at the concert."

Peter Fawcett

Thanks to Tony Marshall for assistance with sources

Nicholas Yonge

Steve and I were in the UK recently, and in a lovely garden in the town of Lewes we came across this bronze statue dedicated to Nicholas Yonge.



Nicholas Yonge (c.1560 – buried 23 October 1619) was an English singer and publisher. He is most famous for publishing the *Musica transalpina* (1588), a collection of Italian madrigals with their words translated into English. This proved to be explosively popular, beginning (or fuelling) a vogue for madrigal composing and singing in England which lasted into the first two decades of the 17th century. Indeed, William Heather, founder of the music chair at Oxford University, included the book in his portrait, painted c.1627, confirming the longevity of *Musica transalpina's* influence and popularity.

There is a Nicholas Yonge society and they are proud of their association with the madrigal because of this local resident bringing the madrigal to England.

Eryl Raymond

TSO Chorus Cookbook

Shakespeare wrote, “If music be the food of love, play on”, and over the centuries people have recognised what a good combination music and food are. So what better way to raise funds for the TSO than producing our own *TSO Chorus and Celebrity Cookbook*. I am hoping with the input from chorus members and their contacts that we can raise enough funds to help towards the cost of the trip to Adelaide for those taking part in the Mahler 8 concert.

I would ask chorus members to please rack their brains and help with the following:

- Their **favourite recipes** and brief comments about it
- Any **celebrity contacts** they may have that might be willing to contribute a recipe (creative artists—eg musicians, artists, authors, actors, and others to be patrons of the arts etc)
- Any ideas about how to produce this at the lowest cost so that we make the biggest possible profit
- Offers to help with the production of this book
- Any ideas!!!!

As I mentioned at a recent rehearsal, one of the cookbooks I showed you was produced by children aged 10—14 years so if they can accomplish it, we should surely be able to do even better. I AM COUNTING ON YOU!!! I would like to have this for sale by Christmas as the ideal present.

My email is : jofield1@bigpond.com

Thanking you all in anticipation
Jo Field

Gustav Mahler was a firm believer in the curse of the ninth—a superstition that any composer of symphony, from Ludwig van Beethoven onwards, will die soon after writing their ninth symphony. This is held to be the reason why Mahler did not give a number to the symphonic work ‘Das Lied von der Erde’, a large-scale work for two vocal soloists and orchestra, which followed his eighth symphony.

Contact Details

Chorus Administrator

Trish Robinson

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Mobile: 0409 148 382

Email: ChorusAdmin@tso.com.au

Websites

www.tso.com.au/aboutthetso/tsochorus.html

key.org.au/tsoc/

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 Parker
Sheila Knowlton
Eryl Raymond
Jo Field
Duncan How
Jennifer Phillips
Dick Shoobridge
Tony Sprent
Johanna van Tienen

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.

As someone who enjoys my own company and typically goes pretty badly in teams, I really treasure this opportunity to mix with others in a joint creative project. June's leadership, the chance to work alongside the TSO and the appreciation of our audiences are the icing (and cherries AND chocolate sprinkles) on the cake. This is one of only a handful of things I have done in my life where it's actually easy to sustain my commitment and enthusiasm. I feel very blessed!

Joanna Crisp

I had always sung from school and so kept it on as a hobby thereafter—through uni and into the community. It's a way in which I found I can take part in music well. It's a communal activity and it gives me great pleasure.

Peter Fawcett

“Music is what feelings sound like“

Hip Hopper Hearing

According to recent findings, scientists have concluded that grasshoppers 'hear' with their legs. In a very simple experiment, a tuning fork was sounded nearby to the insects, and in all cases, the grasshoppers jumped at the vibrations. There was no reaction to this stimulus however, when the insects' legs had been removed.

Q&A Forum

Send questions to syemm@aapt.net.au. Thanks to Chris Richardson for his responses this issue.



1. What exercises can I do to improve my breath control?

My favourites are of course bubbling, and one which I refer to as “droning”... this is all about saying the text in-rhythm, in long legato phrases (as opposed to singing it). The aim of droning is to both create and feel the sensation of a constant flow of air (without acceleration or deceleration of air speed).

2. How wide open should my mouth be when I'm singing?

I don't tend to think of opening the mouth when singing so much as dropping and relaxing the jaw, and creating a tall, resonant space INSIDE the mouth. It is indeed possible and not beneficial to over-extend the jaw when singing... this tends to lead to one simply looking silly when singing!!

3. Should I have singing lessons if I'm just a chorister?

Just as the strength of a chain depends on the strength of its individual links, the overall standard and strength of a chorus depends on the individual standard and strength of its individual singers. I personally carry the value of “being the best you can be”. I would encourage any chorister to have singing lessons... both for the sake of what they “bring to the table” in the chorus, and for their own personal enjoyment and development. For example, I used to be a musician who could only ever sing as part of a choir or ensembles, until I had singing lessons. Once that happened, I discovered a voice I never knew was in there and now I have the privilege of enjoying both ensemble and solo work.