

Chorus Performances**2009**

- 17 November
Norske Skog

- Sunday 13 December
Mahler Symphony No 2
(In collaboration with the
University of Tasmania)
- Thursday 17 December
Christmas Concert
(Government House)

2010

- Saturday 13 March
Mahler Symphony No 8
(In collaboration with the
Adelaide Festival of Arts)
- Saturday 28 August
Faure Requiem
- Wednesday 20 October
TSO Goes to the Opera
- Saturday 11 December
Christmas with the TSO

Chorus Development

- Monday 9 November
G. Abbott Masterclass
- Tuesday 10 November
G. Abbott Masterclass

Sotto Voce

Volume 14

November 2009

Welcome

As we near *Elijah*, I am reminded of Chorus achievements and I'm impressed by the energy and dedication. The pursuit of excellence is demonstrated by an increasing number of choristers taking singing lessons, performances at Eisteddfods, the preparation of repertoire resulting in eyes barely glancing at the score, and embracing the vocal technique sessions and masterclasses on offer.

Zadok resounding in St David's Cathedral started the year magnificently and the Mills' *Passion* was remarkable and moving. Going to Launceston to repeat the audience favourite Proms concert necessitated sacrifices, but gave the north an opportunity to hear what an amateur chorus with professional attitude can do.

Working with Maestro Letonja was a lesson in extended phrases and control, and an unforgettable *Agnus Dei* moment! To prepare a score so simple in comparison to the Mills, provided the Chorus with the opportunity to do better than ever.

Fewer rehearsals, a buffet of warm-up advice, an exclusive with the brilliant Sara Macliver and later, the guru of choral music, Graham Abbott, and having an appointed Administrator to assist with administrative detail, has made 2009 quite special. Indeed I thank you all and wish you the best of health and spirit for 2010.

With 17 showcase *Elijah* choruses, a handful of interjections and a semi chorus on display, the Hobart audience can prepare for an uplifting choral experience. And then there's Teddy and Sara and...

June Tyzack**For those wondering ...**

While all Mahler's works are considered autobiographical to an extent, it is through the first and second symphonies his personality really shines. The composer himself admitted, "My whole life is contained within them: there I have set down my experience and my suffering... to anyone who knows how to listen, my whole life is illuminated, for my creativity and my very existence are so closely intertwined that I believe that were my life to flow as serenely as a brook through a meadow I would no longer be capable of composing."

The second symphony continues the narrative from the *Titan Symphony*, following a hero through life. It describes his life, with all its hopes and ambitions, trials and tribulations, and ends with a funeral and resurrection. In 1915, Gerhard Specht proposed it is this spiritual content that accounts for such a wide public embrace: "The problems of the hereafter and immortality, for which this work provides such a redeeming and promising answer, are problems with which everyone has wrestled. What is expressed here in tones is the echo of all fear, all hope, and all doubt, which everyone carries about in the depths of his being and which is ever-present."

This sentiment is carried most prominently in the Finale, although the text resembles New Testament teachings—the last line reads, "Die I will, so that I might live," from the first letter to the Corinthians. In Mahler's view of the Apocalypse, "There is no sinner, no righteous one, no one great – and no one small – there is no punishment and no reward! An almighty feeling of love illuminates us with blest knowledge and being."

Continued on page 5...

Calendar of Events

TSO Performances

2009

- Saturday 14 November
Symphonie Fantastique
- Thursday 26 November
The Birds and the Bees
- Saturday 5 December
Sublime

2010

- Friday 19 March
Electrifying
- Saturday 27 March
Brilliant Performers
- Saturday 10 April
Creatures Great & Small
- Saturday 17 April
Celebration of Strings
- Saturday 24 April
Dynamic Duo
- Thursday 29 April
Peter & the Wolf
- Saturday 8 May
Baroque & More
- Friday 11 June
Howard Shelley Anniversary
- Saturday 10 July
The Lark Ascending
- Saturday 17 July
Viennese Classics
- Wednesday 4 August
Name that Tune!
- Friday 13 August
Grand Concertos
- Saturday 18 September
Russian Romantics
- Monday 11 October
Classics Old & New
- Saturday 13 November
My Homeland
- Saturday 27 November
Bernd's Back!
- Monday 29 November
New Worlds

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Member Profile: Andrew Bainbridge (*Tenor*)

When I'm not singing I like to...
Watch dvds of Black Books, or police shows like Morse, SVU or even Midsomer Murders.

If I were to sing karaoke, my song would be...
The Ying-Tong song.

Tell me about life growing up
I was born in Sydney, but we moved to Melbourne when I was three. We lived in the outer eastern suburbs to start with: I had two brothers and a sister, and no pets until I was about 17.



How did you become involved in music? And singing in particular?
I joined the choir of St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, just before my eighth birthday and I've been singing ever since. We sang at least seven services a week, as close to a professional standard as possible. It was total immersion in the finest church music from about 1500 onwards. I started piano lessons straight away, then organ lessons (when I was tall enough) and things have gone on from there.

If I could be anything...
Obscenely wealthy has always been attractive to me...

What is your favourite music?
Bach *St Matthew Passion*, almost anything by Tallis, Britten *War Requiem*, Schubert Lieder (especially sung by Fischer-Dieskau with Gerald Moore). I love the drama of the Bach and the Britten, the glorious stillness and complexity of Tallis and Schubert's wonderful sense of invention (and that voice... and that accompanist!)

What is your greatest achievement in life so far?
My three lovely children (now aged 16, 12 and nine), and convincing my wife that I was an okay bet.

Are you a tea or coffee drinker?.
I gave up coffee for a foolish indulgence in the Pritikin diet about 25 years ago, and never got back into it. I have a cup of tea after church on Sunday most weeks.

What's your favourite book?
My favourite book I think is Susan Cooper's "The Dark is Rising" sequence (five children's fantasy novels). I've loved these stories since I was about 13, and I still read them every year. My eldest daughter loves them too.

What has been your most memorable singing experience?
Funnily enough, as a boy soprano, singing the youth in "Elijah" for the Frankston Choral Society: this was my first paid job as a solo singer! As an adult, I think it was singing Tallis' 40-part motet, "Spem in alium" in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, with John O'Donnell directing (Tudor Choristers, with only one voice per part). Beethoven Nine at Port Arthur might come a close second.

Singing 'A Capella'

I was reminded of the importance of singing to the audience at the *Men's Harmony Convention*, in Hobart, early October. Barbershop style involves close harmony, unaccompanied voices and four-part singing, but engaging with the audience is vital to a successful performance. The chorus or quartet moves with the music and does not stay on the risers.

I recall my first public performance with the *Wellingtons* when the conductor added short pieces, or 'barber poles', which were not on the program. Imagine singing songs like *My Evaline* or *Heart of My Heart*, for the first time without music. You must still convince the audience you are singing in harmony, even if you're on the lead. Not surprisingly, I learned them quickly after that experience.

The four voices in a quartet are arranged in on stage as tenor, lead, bass then baritone, with the two strongest parts in the middle. However, the loss of one part is immediately audible as it is the close harmony of four voices which produces the memorable 'ringing tones'. These are the overtones or extra notes produced by particular resonant chords. This is one of the delights of singing *a capella*.

There are other important skills to master such as learning and listening carefully to the other parts. If you can't hear the other voices, you can't harmonise. Consequently, barbershop is always sung from memory.

Another recent experience of *a capella* was much closer to its origins, 'in the church style'. In 2008, Anne and I stayed at the monastic town of New

Norcia near Perth, WA. We attended Mattins in the chapel. As we listened to the Benedictine monks chanting, I wanted to join in. The community prior invited me to sing which gave me great pleasure. I was taken back to my time as a choir boy at St Andrews, Rochford.

As a result of my experience of church and barbershop singing, I am more aware of singing to the audience. In a large work like *Elijah* it is not possible to sing it all from memory—not in the rehearsal time we have. However, the chorus must always sing to the audience.

It may be helpful to pick a member of the audience and sing to that person to personalise your performance. We follow the conductor's baton, but we are not singing to the conductor. The audience has come to hear and see the chorus as well as the orchestra.

I hope our chorus seeks more opportunities to sing *a capella*. Performing Frank Martin's *Mass* in the Bond Store was special. I know June has plans for performing at least part of this mass again. Perhaps, we can add some songs by Dowland and Grainger in a concert titled, 'Songs without Scores' or 'Singing Inside and Outside the Church'.

Duncan How

G
U
E
S
S

W
H
O
?!



Space available
here to
advertise your
next event!

Email Simone at
syemm@aapt.net.au
by 19 February
2010 for
inclusion in the
March 2010
issue.

Calendar of Events

Southern Gospel Choir

A concert and CD Launch not to be missed!

This concert will feature songs from our amazing new CD.

All tickets for the Southern Gospel Choir concert on the 21st of November 2009 will be sold through Centertainment and are now on sale.

Contact details for Centertainment are:

53 Elizabeth Mall, Hobart
Phone: 62345998
www.centertainment.com.au

The ticket price for the concert is:

\$35 Adult
\$25 Concession

inclusive of all booking fees

Benjamin Britten Ceremony of Carols

This beautiful work for all female chorus will be performed by a select group of choristers, accompanied by pedal harp and conducted by Joan Wright on:

Monday 21 December
6pm at St David's
Cathedral

Tickets available at the door.

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Singing – A Beautiful Frustration! *by Jamie Allen (DSCM)*

Preparing an article about the art of singing is a daunting challenge. Is it possible to list all the physical, psychological, musical and lifestyle choices that make singing as it should be—that is, as natural as possible? The answer is yes, but detailed observation about procedures, exercises and self-awareness shows it is something which needs dedication and love.

For myself, I have always strived to achieve naturalness in vocal production. The speaking voice and the singing voice are

inseparable, that is, the sounding of both should be linked and in no way separated.

I marvel at the way my 10 year old daughter, without any training at all, can churn songs from *High School Musical* in

a completely natural, musical way. She is obviously, passionately in love with this music (and Zac Efron) which is the key. To be passionate about anything in life means a dedication which is an unquestioned given—that to me is the most important thing in both nurturing and improving on what you have got. Passion for me in operatic singing was aroused by the first Three Tenors Concert. Up to that point I was a freelance flautist, performing and teaching in Newcastle and Sydney. I started by trying to belt out *Granada*, *Federico's Lament*, Andrea Chenier's *Improviso* and, of course, *Nessun Dorma*. Needless to say there were lots of cracks and misjudged top notes but the seed of love and passion for the directness of expression implicit in this form of singing changed my life, literally.

I was an untrained singer when I successfully auditioned for Opera Australia. It was obtaining that first

role (one of the Apprentices in Wagner's *Meistersinger*) that convinced me to start training. Six teachers and a lot of soul-searching followed. I found myself going from this naturally produced instrument which I thought I loved, to questioning everything I believed were strengths in my vocal production.

Eventually I discovered the one teacher who put everything as simply and as tersely as I wanted to hear. He listened to me and simply said to me, "Jamie – just sing!" I sang the

"It is cruel, you know, that music should be so beautiful. It has the beauty of loneliness and of pain: of strength and freedom. The beauty of disappointment and never-satisfied love. The cruel beauty of nature, and everlasting beauty of monotony."

Benjamin Britten

same aria a second time and realized how far I had gone from my original vocal production. All that had to be done then was to refine certain aspects of my technique, specifically breathing and space.

Successful singing, as far as I see it, demands complete control of the breath and a perfect balance of resonance in all registers.

I find the best way to breathe properly is to firstly take an inhalation through the nose. Repeat this until you feel the chest is engaged—that is, the chest feels open and unconstructed and the muscles surrounding the ribs and abdomen are engaged. Then repeat the procedure with a slightly open mouth making sure not to take in too much air. Muscular control can be checked by sibilance—that is, making an 'S' sound and holding it as long as possible. It is indeed impossible not to feel muscles engaged through this procedure.

My regular routine starts with the above procedures and I am then ready to vocalize by starting with a simple vowel exercise by using Italian vowels—Ah, Eh, Eel, O, U. I start with some lower register long notes making sure that the

Calendar of Events

The Mystery Plays

A modern adaptation of the *York Mystery Cycle* with Tasmania's most sought after theatre director Robert Jarman at the helm.

The show retains much of the richness of the original medieval language, edited and altered to make it more accessible to a modern audience. It is shaped so as to bring out many contemporary resonances.

The cast of characters is dressed as modern workers, much of the humour is earthy and the traditional stories whizz by. A cast of nine local actors literally change hats (or wings!) every couple of scenes and musical accompaniment is provided by members of the All Saints Choir.

There are just three of the original *Mystery* cycles in existence and this is the first time in more than 30 years that a complete cycle has been performed in Tasmania. While Elijah doesn't score a scene other characters familiar to singers from the oratorio repertoire do pop up. Several members of the TSO chorus are involved in various capacities.

Performances

11–14 November
All Saints Church

(Macquarie St)

Tickets \$20 and \$15

Door sales available

Bookings 6223 1795

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus

resonance is even through all the vowels.

Scales involve quaver and eventually semiquaver patterns over an octave then two, then two and a half octaves. Finally end with vowel modification exercises designed specifically for singing through the “passagio”—that area of the voice which needs TLC. Never force in this area (indeed in any area) and always aim for a lightness/brightness in the sound you make.

Placement of the voice should be as forward as possible with no constriction or tightness in the throat. Always sing as though you are yawning, with the throat in that position always.

With all the best advice in the world and through regular exercise, singing does become easier. There will be days when singing seems as easy as a walk in the park and the next day (or indeed during the same day!) you seem to struggle and become dissatisfied with your vocal adequacy. Take heart, we are all only human and half the time, what seems to be a backsliding in standard can simply be put down to one's mood or the fact our own standards have arrived at a higher level. So, far from being a negative, self-examination is a positive, an affirmation of our respect and love for this special art—the art of singing, a beautiful frustration!

For those wondering ...

The opening movement *Funeral Rites*, was originally intended as an independent symphonic first movement. Later, when Mahler decided to add to this movement to complete another symphony, he admitted to a friend it would be very hard to compose a fitting finale to such a powerful opening movement. Mahler recalls, “For a long time I had been pondering the idea of including a choir in the last movement. Only the fear that this might be considered an overt imitation of Beethoven made me hesitate again and again! When Bulow died, I attended his funeral. The mood I was in as I sat there thinking of the deceased was very much in the spirit of the work I had on my mind at that time. Then, from the organ loft, the choir sang Klopstock's chorale *Resurrection!* This hit me like lightning, and everything appeared clearly and distinctly before me!”

Johanna van Tienen

Etiquette

Dear Choristers,

It has been brought to my attention we must address issues of a personal nature. Please consider the list below as it may apply to you.

Do not wear perfume, cologne, after shave or strong smelling cosmetics to rehearsal. This includes an abundance of hair spray or hair grooming products. These strong odours can affect some people and bring on asthma attacks or allergic reactions.

If you have been exercising before rehearsal, consider not only body odour, but also clothing and footwear. Sweaty tops, socks and sneakers are offensive in close proximity.

If you have been eating before rehearsal, clean your teeth or eat mints before singing. Food, especially spicy food, alcohol and coffee can all be a bit much for people around you who are breathing in your expelled breath. Some medications can also affect the sweetness of your breath.

You may need to consider this.

In spite of our best intentions it becomes very hot and close in the studio. When it's hot all the above become exacerbated. Please consider your fellow choristers.

Trish Robinson

Continued from page 1

Contact Details

Chorus Administrator

Trish Robinson

Phone: (03) 6232 4421

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.

Letters to the Editor

This is what my sister had to say about Elijah. "Things took an unexpected turn for the worse this morning when I started playing disk two. That Jezebel is a nasty piece of work! I see now where she got her reputation. I'm still hoping things end well for Elijah who appears to have got the rough end of the pineapple (or middle eastern equivalent) thus far. It's refreshing to listen to a major oratorio in English – sometimes you can just have too many *quom oh lim Abrahaes* and so on."

Beth Warren

A new singing teacher available in Hobart is the very lovely Ben Davidson. All his contact info is at bendavidson.com and he is currently based at Collegiate School for lessons. Ben teaches traditional Bel Canto technique and has until recently been based in the US.

Joanna Crisp

I am seeking a mature and sensible "Family Sitter" who is keen for a regular 6-8 weekly gig looking after my home and three kids in Mount Stuart, as well as a couple of extended periods during 2010. Arrangements are very flexible. If you know anyone who might fit the bill, please contact me at joanna.crisp@bigpond.com or phone 0403 932 471.

Joanna Crisp

I'd like to make a comment about the methodology of *Hip Hopper Hearing* (September issue). Didn't the scientists confound their experiment by removing the grass hopper legs, how could they expect them to jump, supposing they felt vibrations at some other site? They couldn't jump because they didn't have legs, not because they couldn't feel the vibrations. Their Ethics Committee must have also been feeling in a very benign mood to have sanctioned such a barbarous experiment.

Andrew Tulloch

Q&A Forum

Send questions to syemm@aapt.net.au. Thanks to Jamie Allen for his responses this issue.



1. How can I blend better?

If you cannot hear ALL of the other parts when singing, you are too loud. Treat choral singing as an expanded form of chamber music—that is, always listen to what is happening around you, and sing accordingly.

2. When I have a long phrase I always run out of air just on the last note. Is it psychological?

If you maintain that a long phrase can never be achieved in one breath then psychologically you are placing a hurdle before yourself. Long phrases demand extra concentration on the emission of breath. By using your intercostals and abdominal muscles to help the diaphragm stay low, you will be able to emit the amount of air you need for these types of phrases without giving too much too soon. It requires calm in a storm, but it can be achieved. NEVER FORCE YOUR AIR OUTPUT!

3. How do I stretch vocal chords to hit a higher note than usual?

A knowledge and recognition of the 'passagio', that area of the voice between the middle and top registers is vital. Vowel modification through this region (eg ah-aw) will help make sure the passagio is not open. Take care not to over sing through this zone and think of that 'yawn'. The easiest thing to say about the passagio is that the tone becomes darker through vowel modification above. I sing two and a half octave scales and on a good day can achieve a "G" above top "C" down to a "G" on the bottom line of the bass clef – three octaves!! It never hurts to work the voice in this way. Always use the voice in a gentle, caressing manner.