



In Harmony

Newsletter of the Adelaide Male Voice Choir
Number 44 Spring 2012

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His Excellency
Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce
AC, CSC, RANR
Governor of South Australia

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Neville Roach
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John Lawson
Robert McLeay
Genty Stevens
Len Turner

Choir practices are held every
Monday from 7.45 pm to 9.45 pm
at Immanuel Lutheran Church,
139 Archer St, North Adelaide

WEB ADDRESS:

amvc.org.au

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our move

As many of you know, some substantial renovations are being made to the buildings within the St Stephen's Lutheran Church complex. This has meant that we had to find a new home for our rehearsals. It was indeed a sad day when we said farewell to the people of St Stephen's, for we have had a very happy association with them.

However, nothing remains the same forever and we have moved to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Archer Street, North Adelaide, where we have been made very welcome and now feel very much at home.

As you might imagine, a move such as this has involved a great deal of negotiation, time and effort by and from a number of people. I daren't start to mention individuals who have helped with the smooth transition to our new premises for fear of omitting someone, but those involved know how much their efforts have been appreciated.

One of the major tasks associated with the move has been the transfer of our extensive music library. Over the last many years our music library has been housed at the home of one of our most loyal Friends, Mrs Irene Glaros, and we extend our sincere thanks to her. Whilst there it has been cared for meticulously by our past and present Librarians and their assistants. Fortunately, our new practice venue has space for us to store our music library on site. John Dick, our current Music Librarian, spent many hours working on the logistics of how the move could be carried out smoothly and efficiently. With the help of a number of his friends this is exactly what has been achieved so successfully.

Thank you gentlemen for a job done so well.

Recent events

Many thanks to the organisers of our *Come to the Cabaret* social evening on 28 July. Everyone was in party mood

and enjoyed the various excellent entertainments. After their stunning performance, the Salsa Dancers bravely taught the cabaret audience some of the salsa steps. The winner of the Best New Salsa Dancer (Female) was Zoe Agnew, while our Conductor Bill Shaw took out the prize for Best New Salsa Dancer (Male)! There were some ingenious costumes reflecting the 1940s and 50s theme, with Lois Wear winning the prize for the Best Female Costume and Jean Pierre Rival for the Best Male Costume.

On 10 August we enjoyed performing at the official opening of the COTA Expo. On 15 August we were delighted to join with the students from the Special Music Centre of Brighton Secondary School for their concert in Elder Hall. What a wonderful evening that was! From the opening percussion fanfare to the closing massed choir's Hallelujah Chorus, the audience was treated to an unforgettable evening which showcased the professionalism of so many young talented musicians and the dedication of their mentoring teachers.

Our *Nostalgia Concert* on 16 September was a very happy afternoon, as we all took a trip down memory lane. (For further details see feature item on page 3: *Three "Firsts" Add Up to a Great Concert.*)

Future events

The next two months will be busy for us, with a range of events taking us to the end of the year. Details are in *Dates for Your Diary* on page 4.

You are welcome to join us for our Christmas Dinner at the Glenelg Golf Club on 7 December. We love to socialise, so it is always an enjoyable evening. Bookings are essential, so please contact Neville (8332 1895) or me (8270 2628) for details.

Thank you for your interest this year and we look forward to your continued support in 2013.

Colin Styles

DENIS HARPER

Denis sings in the First Tenor Section of the AMVC and is our current Treasurer. Here are some extracts from the story of his life.

Denis was born in 1948 at the Queen Victoria Hospital. His parents were teachers, and as a child he did quite a bit of travelling. "My father became a high school headmaster and we moved from Minlaton to Jamestown, Peterborough, Murray Bridge and Nuriootpa. I ended up going to six different schools and had the rather unusual experience of being a pupil at my father's schools for five years."

Denis found he could do well in exams and also at cricket. "With encouragement from my father, I tried to be a tricky slow bowler like Richie Benaud. Similarly at golf, I wished to play like Arnold Palmer or Gary Player."

"Towards the end of high school I found it hard to choose a career path. Agricultural science or biochemistry previously beckoned, but I sought some job where I felt I could be of more direct assistance to people". He decided finally on a career in medicine, and his good Leaving and Leaving Honours marks gained him a place in the medical course at the University of Adelaide.

In 1971 Denis passed his final medical exams and began as a junior Resident Medical Officer in the new year. "I chose the roster that started with three months in Casualty, so that I could continue playing cricket for University on Saturdays. It was shift work with 8 to 16 hour stints." Denis found the sudden change from the role of clinical student to junior doctor to be a considerable shock and extremely stressful. Nevertheless, he continued working for some months until he finally made the difficult decision that this was not the right career for him after all, and resigned.

Over the next years, Denis tried various jobs (medical orderly, laboratory assistant, public servant) as he considered the directions his life might take. Bushwalking became an increasing interest. "In the middle of 1972, I was fortunate to find the Adelaide Bushwalkers Club. I could now use my increased amount of leisure time to go on Club events. There were many exciting trips and I found lots of companionship. On a more flippant level, some members have referred to the organisation as the Adelaide Bureau of Wedlock. It eventually worked for me, and I found my wife Janet in this Club. Janet and I married in 1997".

In the 1980s Denis undertook some more study at Adelaide University, this time in the Arts area. "I passed more than the required subjects in first year,

including history, anthropology, philosophy and psychology. Eventually I obtained my BA, with majors in geology and geography. I found the hard science of geology an interesting contrast with the softer biological sciences. I took to the geomorphology component of geography like a duck to water, because it explained the landscapes I had been exploring while out bushwalking."

Denis clearly had a taste for the outdoor life, and through small advertisements in the Messenger Press he found enough customers to be able to establish a small garden maintenance business. "I discovered that the physical exertion was agreeable and I soon had some nice (mainly elderly) customers, who valued my efforts and enjoyed a short chat over a cup of tea. My career in horticulture lasted nearly two decades and finally ended only this year."

"In the last five years I have been doing about one day per week voluntary work. I go to two aged care facilities and do Meals on Wheels. I find that elderly people like talking to me."

"My latest new interest is singing in the Adelaide Male Voice Choir. I joined five years ago after having been invited by Kevin Fisher. There is a nice feeling in the Choir, and it feels good to be learning lovely music that we can eventually perform publicly."

"I can finish on a bright note. My life is currently very good and improving. I am part of a nice family that is part of a rich extended social network. Any memories of difficult times are on the whole safely stored in the dusty archives of my mind and are rarely revisited. I am satisfied that I have done my best in life and am thankful for all the help I have received along the way from many fine people."



*Denis on a bushwalking trip, pictured at the lacquer factory, Saigon, Vietnam in 2004
A long trek!*

Three “Firsts” Add Up to a Great Concert

Three “Firsts” contributed to the production of our very successful *Nostalgia Concert* on 16 September.

It was the first time we had used the Wyatt Hall at Pulteney Grammar School for a concert and it turned out to be a very suitable venue for the packed concert. The size of the hall contributed to the friendly atmosphere, and the raked seating meant that everyone had a good view. Audience members were transported back to the glamorous 1920s and 30s from their moment of arrival, when they were greeted by our front-of-house ladies wearing the distinctive elegant headbands so reminiscent of that era.

It was the first time too that our Vice Patron, Peter Goers, took part in an AMVC concert, in the role of co-compere with our Conductor Bill Shaw. Peter is a born raconteur, and he delighted the audience with his amusing reminiscences and anecdotes, ranging from his childhood holidays at Port Elliot to his current Op Shop adventures. He had some music recollections as well, including driving along an Adelaide road with the well-known tenor Fred Williamson in full operatic voice in the back seat. The name was familiar to Bill from his research into the Choir’s history, and he was able to refer to the past strong connection Fred had had with the Choir over many years, as indeed had the famous baritone Peter Dawson, who happened to be an old Pulteney Grammar scholar. Like most things in Adelaide, there’s always a connection!

Another “First” at this concert was the introduction of jazz vocalist Luke Thompson as our soloist. His polished and smooth presentation together with his natural charm won all hearts, and it would be hard to imagine that Fred Astaire himself would have received a warmer ovation from the audience.

The three “Firsts” outlined above all added to the overall enjoyment of the AMVC’s concert afternoon. The Choir was in excellent voice, as always, and gave a stylish interpretation of the well-known 1920s and 30s songs, many of them in arrangements by Bill. Our Accompanist Ed Kriek was in sparkling form, and “I Love a Piano” was a fitting tribute. Many thanks to those who provided the sumptuous afternoon-tea. It really added “the icing to the cake”!

In his *Sunday Mail* column the following weekend, Peter Goers made the quotable remark “Nostalgia ain’t what it used to be”, and lamented the general loss of the PSA—Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. He pointed out however that he had recently spent just such a PSA at the AMVC’s *Nostalgia Concert*. It is fitting to

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conclude with his words “A gentle choir of well-dressed gentlemen singing gentle, affirming songs of gentle ages past, with soloist Luke Thompson (one of SA’s best and most charming entertainers), and there was afternoon tea and good, gentle, relaxed fellowship and cheer”.

All that jazz!

Jazz nostalgia is in the air, and our themes this year have inspired many memories. We received a phone call recently from one of our Choir Friends, Mary McLeay, the wife of former AMVC President Robert McLeay. Mary wanted to let us know that her brother, trumpeter David Jenkins, was one of the original members of the very well known and popular Southern Jazz Band. Readers of *In Harmony* may well have happy memories of dancing to the lively rhythms of that iconic Adelaide band.

Where are they?

In Harmony readers who attended AMVC concerts in 2010 and 2011 will be interested to know that two of our fine young soloists Robert Macfarlane and his wife Kate (nee Wyatt) are currently in Leipzig, Germany on study scholarships to further their learning and experience in singing.

The latest news from Robert gives the flavour of their life at the moment:

“...First proper week at Mendelssohn School was fantastic.. Looking forward to more this week, as well as my first German concert on Thursday 18th....”
We wish them both every success in their studies.

Oops!

An orchestral recording session ground to a halt when an oboe player, who was constantly sucking on her reed to keep it moist during rests and between takes, inadvertently inhaled and swallowed it.

The conductor immediately phoned the medical emergency number, described what had happened to the unfortunate oboe player, and asked frantically “What should I do?”

There was a thoughtful pause, then the medical officer suggested “Could you use muted trumpet instead?”

