

M NOTES FROM THE TOP

Mandurah City Choral Society Newsletter | Autumn edition 2017 | Editor Roger Palmer

President's Message

You will read elsewhere in this newsletter that the format for Notes from the Top is changing and this will be the last official President's report. In its place, the Committee will be sharing news from our monthly meetings so you are to date with current events. Opportunities to participate in supporting our fabulous choir from time to time, in a variety of ways, will also be included in Committee News.

Come and Sing is looming on April 29. Please note that we only have 4 rehearsals prior to the workshop. We will all need to do lots of work at home to ensure that we can support our guests on the day.

Just a reminder of our two paid performances: Acadia Waters proposed for Saturday June 10 at 3pm and Yvonne's Bridge Club proposed for some time in June - pending completion of their extension.

Please also note that the secretary's position on the Committee remains open. I am acting in that position at the moment which is an overload. If there is any possibility that you could join the Committee in that role and that you have access to the internet and can use Word, please consider joining us.

Happy singing!

Jannette Barrett
MCCS President



Musical Memories

In the early 1940s when I was very small our farm had no electricity so our musical entertainment was self-generated.

My father had a beautiful tenor voice and loved to sing so the dairy cows were regularly treated to the strains of "Goodbye" ("The White Horse Inn"), "The Drinking Song" and "Serenade" ("The Student Prince") and various marching songs from WW1. I still remember most of those lyrics.

My mother had a sweet, light soprano voice and also played the piano which meant that "sing-alongs" around the piano were popular entertainment for us, especially on evenings when neighbours dropped in.

Mum and Dad were also the proud owners of a gramophone. This, of course, had to be wound up by hand and the brass needles replaced at fairly regular intervals. There was a limited supply of 78 records which gave my sister and me a great deal of fun, not the least of which was letting the machine run down so that the pitch and tempo got progressively lower and slower until it petered out all together.

Ahhh...The simple things.....

Coral Woodhead



Choir news

Make sure you have these dates in your diary:

- **Monday, 27 March** - Rehearsal and Social - men to supply
- **Saturday, 8 April** - Singing in Guildford
- **Monday, 17 April** - Easter Monday - no rehearsal
- **Saturday, 29 April** - Come & Sing workshop



Committee news

February Meeting

Constitution - Department of Commerce - The Constitution gods required that all club constitutions be amended according to a set of guidelines. The MCCA constitution now complies with the new rulings and has been submitted for approval - thanks Jen and Bronwyn.

Copyright - The Committee often need to refer to complicated (and often changing) copyright rules. Several Committee members plan to meet to develop a set of current guidelines to ensure that MCCA complies with copyright.

Attracting Men to the Choir - This is an ongoing issue regularly discussed at meetings. We asked in the 'response to your suggestions' email for a choir member to lead the charge, however no-one has responded. We would love to hear from you!!

Come and Sing - Planning discussions are well underway.

Memberships Officer - We have developed this new position with responsibility to greet new members and find them a buddy, and generally to assist with joining the choir or any other issue relating to memberships. Jen has volunteered for this role.

Website - Our new website is up and running - thanks Annie.

Jannette Barrett



come
sing &

modern musicals

Saturday, April 29, 2017 | 9:45am | Nellie Regan Hall, Mandurah

The program for Come & Sing has been released with some great tunes from modern musicals including *Circle of Life* and *Can you feel the love tonight* from the Lion King, *Do you hear the people sing?* and *I dreamed a dream* from Les Miserables, *One* from A Chorus Line, *Thank you for the music* from Mamma Mia and more.

Get your friends and family together for a great day – register online [here](http://www.mandurahchoral.org.au).



My Christmas present

For New Year 2017 I got a Ukulele
 A novice player, woe is me, I have to practice daily
 Resolved to learn and play a tune for family parties gaily
 My task is hard, my fingers sore, my countenance glows palely.

Perhaps I should have chosen an instrument more subtle
 Perhaps a lowly triangle or a drum which I could shuffle
 Practice time would no doubt fewer feathers ruffle
 And I could quietly rehearse with a little less kerfuffle.

But no, I love my instrument, my lovely ukulele
I'll persevere, even though my fingers move quite frailly
 I cannot promise rock and roll just like wild Bill Haley
But may attempt to play for you, won't you come home Bill Bailey?

Bronwyn Jones



The rise and fall of Gaborone Music Society (GMS)

GMS was the one and only non-gospel choir in Botswana in the 1970s, but we were very popular among all communities in a country the size of France with, at that time, three only cities and four only tarred roads. Black Botswana choirs were found in each settlement as local singing and the influence of Christian missions was strong, the whites drank and ran in what was known as the Hash House Harriers, a drinking club that ran off the effects..

Our choir was made up of some as young as 16 and others in their 70s and we were a plethora of colours and religions, Africans, Europeans, Indians, Christians, Atheists, Animists and even the occasional wandering Jew. The ladies were mainly white expatriates of British origin and the men were mainly black with a few older white and bearded fellows.

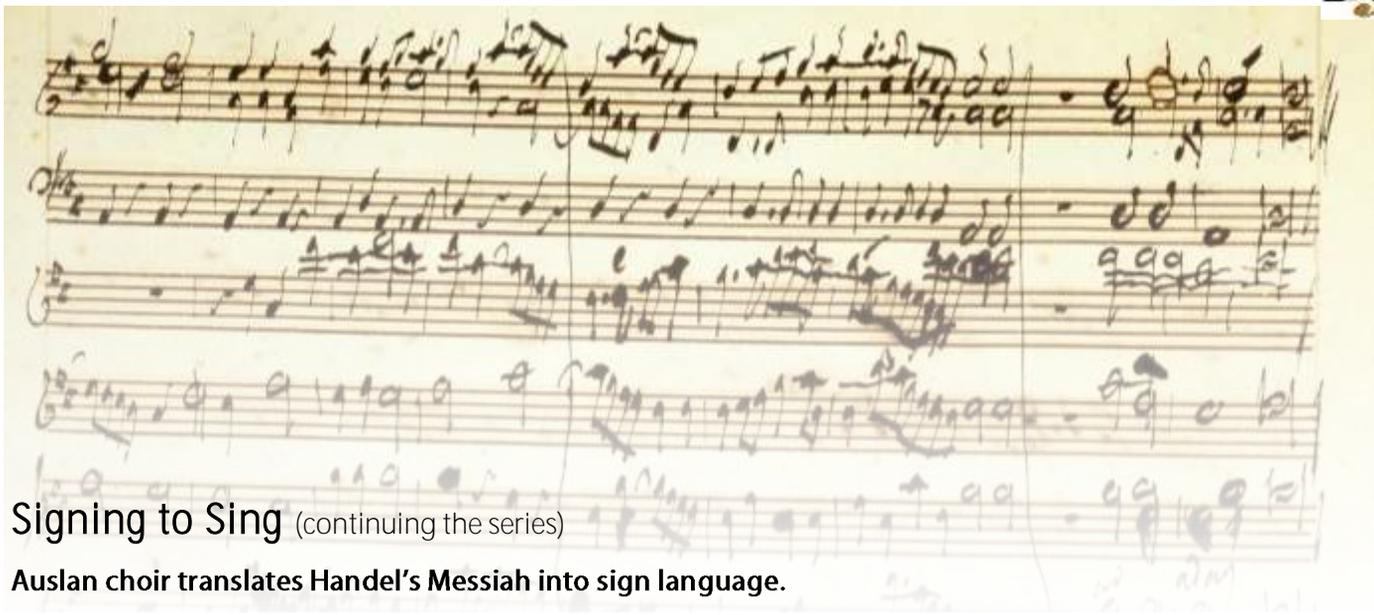
The volunteer choirmaster was gay, thin, young, very charming and extremely competent who did both conducting and playing the piano. Later we found a lovely, large, and mainly Lesbian lady to accompany the **motley bunch. We all paid our subs except those who didn't and had to borrow Pula or rain (money) from those wealthier than they were.** Our school built Maitisong, the place of music and our choirmaster ran everything!

We sang the *Messiah* and *HMS Pinafore*, *Isaiah* and *Joseph*, and once a year an orchestra came in private cars from Johannesburg, 450 KMS away. We roared out the National Anthem and we whispered *Stille Nacht* and Billy Joel. African choirs stuck to Gospel Music and pulsating beats. They drew large crowds and we drew our relatives and friends.

At our zenith we numbered 50 and at our nadir there were the faithful five! The expatriates steadily returned home over the years and the few white citizens and black compatriots diminished. There were no longer sufficient expats to help fetch the Botswana from the poorer areas and taxis stopped at 8pm. Funds were always a problem until we hired ourselves out for weddings and funerals, at Malls, churches, and sometimes distant mines! We never performed for nothing and businesses appreciated our efforts.

In the end we shut up shop and I fled to Australia to find a choir. There are however numerous black choirs in **Botswana and singing in choirs became almost as popular as playing the beautiful game....football!** I miss our inclusive non racial society and especially our delightful choirmaster, but am happy to have found a replacement in my retirement.

Derek James



Signing to Sing (continuing the series)

Auslan choir translates Handel's Messiah into sign language.

Billed as a world-first, the Sydney Philharmonia Choir's presentation of Handel's Messiah will feature a deaf community "signing" choir on stage alongside a full orchestra and the 400 massed voices of the Symphony and Christmas choirs. As well as translating the libretto into Auslan (Australian Sign Language), the 20-strong signing choir will add movement to convey emotion – all in time to the music.

"We aim to deliver the meaning of the words through sign language but do it in a poetic and lyrical way," says deaf actor, director and Auslan translator Alex Jones. "Signing can express so much using visual elements, space and the synchronicity of the movement. It's going to be really powerful for the regular Messiah attendees."

Jones, who co-directs the signing choir with Sydney Philharmonia Choir's music director Brett Weymark, says they have chosen iconic signs the audience might already be familiar with, as well as adding movements that will be easy to understand for those without Auslan.

"For example, the audience will see half the signing choir make a fist and use that to 'crucify' their other hand, which is open," Jones explains. "The other half of the choir will do the same thing, using the opposite hand. Then they will all branch out looking like they are on the cross. That will be very visual for the audience."

The word "hallelujah" used repeatedly in the famous Hallelujah Chorus will be represented by the Auslan sign for "happy" and the sign for "Christ", which is signified by raising the arms in the air, as if in praise.

"The word 'hallelujah' is repeated so often that we've worked out a number of ways to represent it as a celebration. Sometimes you'll see us throw our arms in the air. Other times, you'll see us sign 'happy' or we'll be cheering or waving our arms around. It will be absolutely recognisable," Jones says.

More than half the signers are deaf. Others are hearing people fluent in Auslan. Jones says it's vital to have some hearing people who can help with the tempo. "All of the choir are volunteers from the deaf community. Some of them have had very little performing experience and they are very nervous," says Jones. "But it's an incredible opportunity for them to be part of something so exquisite."

Weymark says he got the idea for the signing choir after an Accessible Arts launch at the Sydney Opera House, where an opera singer performed the Toreador Song from Carmen with an Auslan translator.

"I was instantly moved by the beauty of it and by watching and listening at the same time, I was getting a whole lot of other meanings and depth," Weymark says.

"I found it dramatically satisfying. It is a poetic license to interpret the music through gesture. I immediately thought we should do this with Messiah. The singers in the big choir saw them rehearsing on Sunday and they are absolutely hypnotised by it. If the singers are convinced, I'm sure the audience will find it mind blowing."



The Silver Envelope

We got this fancy looking invite, in a silver envelope it came.
 The wife said there's a party, and it mentions us by name.
 Now the prospect didn't thrill me, not so much as perhaps it should.
 I've been to these posh shows before, and they don't do me any good.
 She had to buy a cocktail dress, a slinky looking thing.
 My beloved looked real swish in black, and sparkly coloured bling.
 I said I'll wear my work boots, and wipe off all the sand,
 And if we wash my singlet, I could pretend I'm in the band.

But no, you'll wear the clothes I say, if you want to be my date,
 Spray on this new deodorant, and your hair must stand up straight.
 To keep the peace I let her win, and wore my fancy jocks.
 And yes you guessed it, she bought pink lycra for my socks.
 Well, off we went at six pm, before we'd had our tucker.
 They promised all these nibbly things; I must have been a sucker.
 I said where's all the real stuff, like steak and chips and beer?
 The waiter sniffed and minced off, with a dark and nasty sneer.

I talked the price of cattle, to this swanky looking sheila.
 In a scornful cultured accent she said, I'm a futures broking dealer.
 I told her I had 50 cows, I serviced them this season.
 She said you bloody pervert; I still don't know the reason.
 Then this bloke stood up to speak about, the nation's economic woes.
 He had his shirt all hanging out, and shoes with pointed toes.
 His speech went on for ages, and my bladder's kind of weak.
 But I couldn't find the toilets, and I was bursting for a leak.

A fancy looking gigolo type, oiled up beside my wife.
 I cottoned on to his smart game; I didn't mean to cause him strife.
 But when he took to patting her, upon her rear end.
 I thought I've had enough of you, my poncey little friend.
 They finally brought him back to life, with iced water on his face.
 The glaring crowd were blaming me, muttering what a damn disgrace.
 Now one thing that I notice, and I guess it's down to me.
 We get no more silver envelopes, well, none I ever see.

Roger Palmer



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My Interest in Music!

I have been interested in music since childhood. I started off learning the piano and the theory of music when I was quite young. My piano, theory and musical perception lessons continued whilst I was at high school and achieved Seventh Grade in all three in AMEB exams. I did not continue any music for a few years after I left school concentrating my efforts on my teaching qualification.

In my early twenties I became quite ill with recurring bronchitis. After some medical intervention and physiotherapy I regained my health and was advised to take up some form of exercise that would encourage me to continue breathing correctly. Singing was an obvious choice so found a singing teacher that started me off and at the end of that year did the Fourth Grade AMEB. I went on to study singing at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and continued through the grades eventually reaching Seventh Grade. Whilst at the Con we were encouraged to join the Opera School productions to further our singing experiences. I was lucky enough to perform very small parts in Verdi's "Rigoletto" and Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi".

After my marriage and relocating to Perth children came in quick succession and there was no time for pursuing my singing. However, when I went back to teaching I did become involved in school music programmes and trained school choirs. When Doreen Turnam advertised for interested singers to start MCCS I was very interested and so began my time with MCCS.

Interestingly, I have only had one bout of bronchitis in fifty years!!

Jennifer Thompson



New members welcome

We would like to welcome new members

- Caroline in the Sopranos
- Margaret in the Altos and
- Dave in the Basses

Lovely to have you singing with us!

Editor's Comments

With the Southern Hemisphere Autumnal Equinox, which this year falls on Monday, 20 March 2017 at 6:29 pm AWST, comes the Autumn edition of your newsletter.

This edition is entirely at your mercy, that being contributions from choir members, apart from one article which I felt was too interesting to leave out. Your offerings have been left entirely alone by me. They are as I received them with no editing.

You may find the following link of interest.

<http://www.blurb.com/b/7441503-the-collected-works-of-norton-roger-palmer>

After much deliberation, future editions of NFFT will be monthly and restricted to two pages of current items of general interest, mostly gleaned from the minutes of each committee meeting. We feel that this may keep members more up to date with current happenings.

Roger Palmer
Editor

