

# THE SHARP EDGE

Registered Charitable Trust No CC21921

October 2015



PHOTO: BROOKE BAKER

New Zealand Youth Choir with David Squire, Dean Sky-Lucas and Morag Atchison, Hamilton, 5 September 2015

## RETURN TO THE WAIKATO

THE 50 MEMBERS OF THE NEW ZEALAND YOUTH CHOIR ASSEMBLED IN SEPTEMBER TO REHEARSE, PERFORM AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS IN THE WAIKATO AND TAURANGA.

Strangely, the NZ Youth Choir's Hamilton residential course started with three days of rehearsal in Auckland. An unexpected (to us) netball tournament in Hamilton almost booked out all the economy accommodation in the city, which forced the Youth Choir's management into a Plan B situation.

When the Choir party eventually arrived in Hamilton on Wednesday, 2 September, 28 of its members were accommodated in private homes by generous Youth Choir supporters. The remaining 22 singers and staff had to endure two noisy 6.00am wake-up routines from enthusiastic young athletes before they went home giving the Choir members a bit of peace and quiet. It could have been worse and, all in all, it was a very happy and rewarding week.

The Thursday morning 2-hour schools' workshop took place in St Paul's Collegiate School in Hamilton and young choristers came to this event from all over the central North Island. More about this is in Jayne Tankersley's report inside.

Friday saw the NZ Youth Choir's first visit to Te Awamutu, often called 'The Rose Town of New

Zealand', just a half-hour drive from Hamilton. The Choir had a warm welcome from a large audience to the concert presented by the Te Awamutu Music Federation in St John's Church.

The Gallagher Concert Chamber in the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts, University of Waikato, is a stunning, award-winning venue built in 2001. Thanks to help from Hamilton's arts promotion guru, Russell Armitage, together with Jayne Tankersley and her NZ Choral Federation team, most of the front-of-stage seats were filled by an appreciative audience for the Saturday night concert.

Sunday, 6 September was a busy day. Departing Hamilton promptly at 9.00am, the tour party left for Tauranga for a brief rehearsal with its hosts, the Tauranga Civic Choir, at the St Mary Immaculate Church. The combined choirs sang three items together and the rest of programme was given by the Youth Choir. The large audience of 360 was greatly to the credit of Tauranga Civic Choir's manager, Nigel Drake and Music Director, Jeremy Whimster.

Thank you Te Awamutu, Hamilton and Tauranga – we will be back!

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# YOUTH CHOIR VISIT 2015

JAYNE TANKERSLEY GIVES  
HER IMPRESSIONS OF  
HAVING NZYC IN TOWN



PHOTO: BROOME BAKER

*A full house at the Gallagher Concert Chamber.*

*It* was a great pleasure to have the NZ Youth Choir in residence in Hamilton for four days in September as they had not performed here since 2002. They rehearsed, ran a workshop with local secondary school students, and completed wonderful concerts in Te Awamutu and Hamilton before they travelled on to Tauranga for a third concert.

David Squire, Music Director, is of course, a proud Waikato boy, who attended Fraser High School, and he is a fierce Chiefs supporter. When he took up the position in 2011, I asked him to consider holding one of the courses in Hamilton. It wasn't a hard sell – it was already on David's radar and we were delighted to learn last year that they would be including Waikato in their plans.

We have a thriving choral community in the Waikato, and the local New Zealand Choral Federation Branch, of which I am the current chair, was happy to be the link and assist NZYC with their visit. Hamilton has had its fair share of criticism over the years, for reasons that are completely beyond anyone who lives in this wonderful city! We knew the Youth Choir would have a great time here, and to cement it we welcomed the choir with afternoon tea when they arrived on Wednesday.

One of the branch's main objectives in having the NZYC in Hamilton was to involve local schools students in a workshop. The 2-hour workshop held at St Paul's Collegiate was the highlight of the week for me. Over 150 students participated: the Hamilton schools were Hamilton Girls' High, St John's College, Sacred Heart College and Waikato Diocesan. From further afield there were participants from Tauhara College from Taupo, Aquinas College from Tauranga, Otumoetai College, Thames High

School and Hauraki Plains College from Ngatea.

A familiar challenge that all conductors face, especially secondary school choir conductors, is to access appropriate modelling of sound, and to inspire singers to make the best sound they can to sing with conviction and confidence. David, who works extensively with this age group was invaluable and he wisely dispersed his choir members throughout the secondary school students, which was a brilliant idea.

The students were able to sing 'amongst' the incredible sound of the Youth Choir, instantly addressing the modelling-of-sound objective, and giving them more confidence. Some of the young basses suddenly sat up taller and some of the girls open up to fuller voices as they gained more confidence.

Acting Assistant MD, Dean Sky-Lucas, led us through some very freeing and focusing warm-ups, and David cleverly ran the Youth Choir through their paces with a few songs and asked the students to play an active part in the 'rehearsal' by helping the Youth Choir get more emotional depth into the text. After the Youth

Choir sang a few songs by themselves, there was a group sing-through of an African-American spiritual, 'I'm gonna sing', which sounded 'mighty' at the end of the workshop. The students were buzzing for days!

The concert on Saturday night at the Gallagher Concert Chamber at the University of Waikato was wonderful. Word had got out, and the sell-out crowd buzzed with anticipation as the first notes of the concert sounded. David, Dean, and vocal consultant, Morag Atchison, had sculptured a rich and lively sound. It was refreshing to hear a large percentage of New Zealand works too, and the arch of the concert was thoughtful and beautifully paced. The choir performed with true sincerity and conveyed enjoyment in every note they sang.

Thank you for such a wonderful week! We look forward to the Youth Choir's next visit to the mighty Waikato! An enormous thank you to all the helpers who billeted choir members during the week, baked, cooked, provided transport, and thanks also to St Paul's Collegiate for hosting the workshop.



PHOTO: JAYNE TANKERSLEY

*Hamilton Schools Workshop.*

# Some Familiar Landmarks

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ROGER LLOYD

Taking advantage of a family holiday to the UK planned for July this year, a simultaneous reconnoitre of the New Zealand Youth Choir's 2016 Landmark European Tour seemed a good way to save on cost and to make the investigation a little less arduous.

There needed to be a few compromises and taking three days out to travel to Padubice, 100 kilometres from Prague, to the site of the International Festival of Academic Choirs was just not possible. As the competition has been running for 48 years based at the well-appointed University of Padubice we decided this could be taken on trust. Choirs from all around the world have taken part in the Festival and NZYC will be the first New Zealand group to participate.

On its way to Europe the Choir will have a three-day stopover in Singapore. Hosted by the Singapore Youth Choir, it will perform in the Victoria Concert Hall which reopened in August 2014 after a four-year refurbishment. It looks fabulous.

The northern French town of Le Quesnoy will be a familiar name to many New Zealanders. It was the site of the last action of the NZ Division in WWI and, liberating the town without a massive artillery bombardment, brought about an enduring friendship with New Zealand and New Zealanders.

For further information go to [www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/le-quesnoy/new-zealand-and-le-quesnoy](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/le-quesnoy/new-zealand-and-le-quesnoy) The Youth Choir will perform in the town's church and will be house guests of the people of Le Quesnoy.

Attending a Saturday High Mass at Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris was a must in order to give our tour party a briefing on the event. They will have only a short rehearsal before participating in this important Service in one of the most famous religious buildings in the world.

The NZ Youth Choir performed in the St John's Smith Square concert hall on its last visit to London in 2007. St John's Church built in 1728 survived fire, lightning, bomb plots and the Blitz and was restored as a concert hall in the late 1960s. This will be NZYC's performance highlight of its European Tour.

A further group of famous venues awaits the Youth Choir and all have strong choral traditions. There will be lunchtime concerts at St George's Chapel in the grounds of Windsor Castle, in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral, and an evening concert in Oxford. The tour ends with a performance in the Cambridge Summer Music Festival. All the performances will be special in their own way. We can't wait! Information about the NZYC 2016 European Landmark Tour will be available on [www.choirsnz.co.nz](http://www.choirsnz.co.nz) soon.



A Street in Le Quesnoy.



PHOTO: JIM BOVIN/AP

Sir David Willcocks conducts a rehearsal in 2001.

## Sir David Willcocks

The world's choral community was sad to hear of the death of Sir David Willcocks at the age of 95. Sir David paid regular visits to New Zealand and Australia giving concerts with the NZSO and Orchestras of the ABC and was associated with many of this country's choirs.

Sir David Valentine Willcocks CBE MC, born 30 December 1919 in Newquay, Cornwall, was an internationally acclaimed British choral conductor, organist, composer and music administrator. He was particularly associated with the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, as its Director of Music, and the series of books 'Carols for Choirs', a must for every school and church choir, contains several of his descants and carol arrangements written for King's annual service of *Nine Lessons and Carols*.

David Willcocks began his musical training as a chorister at Westminster Abbey from 1929 to 1934 and in 1938 took up the appointment of organ scholar at King's College. During the Second World War he served as an officer in the British Army, and was decorated with the Military Cross for his actions during the Battle of Normandy.

After the war he returned to Cambridge to complete his studies and in 1947 was elected a Fellow of King's College. In the same year, he became the organist at Salisbury Cathedral and moved to Worcester Cathedral in 1950. In his seven years at Worcester he was organist of the Cathedral, principal conductor of the Three Choirs Festival in 1951, 1954, and 1957, and conductor of the City of Birmingham Choir.

From 1957 to 1974 he became Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge. He made numerous recordings with the college choir and toured extensively giving concerts worldwide. In 1969 Willcocks astounded the more conservative members of the Bach Choir when he announced that they were to record with the Rolling Stones and Mick Jagger. 'You Can't Always Get What You Want' which appears on the album *Let It Bleed*.

David Willcocks was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours of 1971 and created a Knight Bachelor in 1977 in the Queen's Silver Jubilee Honours.

In 1980 Sir David came to New Zealand to conduct the one-year-old National Youth Choir at the invitation of its founder, Guy Jensen. He found in the role of joint conductor of the choir a fellow 'Kingsman' from Kings College, Peter Godfrey. The concert with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra had as its major work Tippett's 'A Child of Our Time'. It was a great success and is fondly remembered by founding alumni of NZYC.

Sir David returned to us in 1988 to conduct a performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana* where members of the Youth Choir combined with the NZ Secondary Students' Choir together with the NZSO in the Wellington Town Hall. John Button in *The Dominion* reported that the packed hall "...received the performance with enormous enthusiasm".

Our sincere condolences go to Lady Willcocks and her family in Cambridge.

# VOICES CELESTIAL SPHERES



Leonie Holmes

Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir with harpist, Helen Webby, horns, David Cox and Julian Weir and conductor, Karen Grylls, will give a concert under the heading 'Celestial Spheres' at the Church of St Michael and All Angels in the Christopher's Classics concert series. Ending the performance will be the world premiere of Leonie Holmes new work *Land Pictures*, a setting of five poems by Anne Powell for women's voices and harp.

Leonie Holmes is a lecturer in Composition and Music Studies at the School of Music, University of Auckland. She has written works for orchestra, chamber, choral, vocal and solo instrument, and receives frequent commissions from both professional and community groups. A particular interest is orchestral music, examples being *Aquae Sulis*, *Fronde*, *Ancient Rhythms*, *For Young Nick* and *Solstice*, all of which have been recorded by the NZSO.

Stemming from her work as Composer-in-Schools in the 1990s, Leonie is interested in music education and in developing a musical language that will engage and challenge non-professional players. She has written many works for school and community groups and is regularly invited to speak or direct workshops with Secondary School students and teachers. Recent commissions from community groups include the orchestral works *In the Lair of the Cave Weta* and *Tango Mangle* for orchestra, *The Journey* for orchestra and massed choir, *Silver Whispers* suite for choir and instrumental ensemble, and the choral works *The Estuary* and *The Wanderer*.

*Land Pictures* was commissioned by Choirs Aotearoa NZ Trust for Karen Grylls and the Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir. In these poems the larger themes of honouring land and ancestry are intertwined with the memories of small and intimate scenes from everyday life. The first piece (*Land Pictures*) speaks of the land as power, but also as parent and grandparent. The second (*Nana's Measure*) continues the theme of grandparent in a more domestic setting, recalling memories of Nana's sewing as a haven of safety and love. The rhythms of the choir mimic the treadle of the sewing machine in this piece. The following *Interlude* captures the nostalgia of childhood memories, whilst the fourth piece (*Intent*) depicts a cat being teased by blackbirds. The final piece (*Blessing*) is a prayer for healing.

Also featured in the concert are works by Brahms, Poulenc, Holst, David Hamilton and Douglas Lilburn.

For more information contact Diana Moir (03) 355 2691, 021 126 5738, [dhmoir@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dhmoir@xtra.co.nz)

**WHAT:** Celestial Spheres

**WHERE & WHEN:** Church of St Michael and All Angels, 86 Oxford Terrace, Christchurch, Friday 6 November at 8.00pm

**TICKET INFO:** Door sales (cash only) \$40, full-time students \$15.

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## Mystery Jogger

A professional photographer taking group photos in the open air has to contend with many trials and tribulations – inclement weather for one thing and the inability of people en masse to understand reasonable instructions is another. A particular inconvenience is accidental intrusions which, in the main, bring embarrassment on the perpetrator who invariably leaves the scene as quickly as possible.

But there are exceptions to this rule such as the jogger who came across the 50-member NZ Youth Choir plus Music Director, Acting Assistant Music Director and Vocal Consultant beside Knighton Lake on the University of Waikato Campus – not an everyday occurrence. Although well-equipped to make a speedy departure, he decided to enjoy the moment. Congratulations to our photographer Brooke Baker for her quick reaction in taking the shot.

Does anybody recognise this athlete as we would like to send him the photo? Contact us at [choirs@choirsnz.co.nz](mailto:choirs@choirsnz.co.nz)



PHOTO: BROOKE BAKER