

# THE SHARP EDGE

Registered Charitable Trust No CC21921

September 2014



NZ Youth Choir, Dunedin Town Hall, September 2014.

PHOTO: PETER DU PLESSIS

## IN THE SOUTH

A South Island Diary of the New Zealand Youth Choir's visit to Dunedin and Christchurch.

**SUNDAY, 31 AUGUST:** Fog and technology disrupted my careful planning for the NZ Youth Choir's arrival into Dunedin. The Auckland plane circled the Southern Alps for 40 minutes before heading back to Christchurch to refuel and return to Dunedin. However, at least the Aucklanders were treated to one of New Zealand's best views from the air while the Wellington and Christchurch people languished at Christchurch Airport waiting for the fog to clear, and for the computer on our plane to reboot after a power surge. Eventually, we arrived to a beautiful day in Dunedin and the tour got underway.

The staff and singers stayed in the very convenient On Top Backpackers in the centre of Dunedin. The name should have been a clue as it seemed to have the longest staircase in Dunedin, which served as a reminder to all that they should have packed less.

**Emma Dowdle, Operations Manager**

**MONDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER:** Our week began in a beautiful Dunedin, which turned on the weather for the six days we were there. **Savannah Post, NZYC Member**

Our rehearsal venue for most of the week was the Burns Hall at First Church. The choir provided a tuneful accompaniment to the various other

activities going on at the church, including a boxing class and a mah-jong tournament. As always, my morning and afternoon teas were pounced upon by hungry choristers in the kind of feeding frenzy usually seen only on nature channels. **Emma Dowdle**

**WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER:** We enjoyed our schools workshop with Otago Girls and Boys High Schools: workshops are always fun and friendly events and it's great to share something you love with a slightly younger generation of singers.

**Savannah Post**

OBHS was thrilled to host the NZYC for a day during their week in Dunedin. As well as enjoying a combined choral workshop, our OBHS/OGHS choir, Barock, was able to celebrate their recent win of The Auahi Kore Performance Award (joint winners with, Voicemale) at the NZ Choral Federation's Big Sing National Finale. David Squire brought the trophy to Dunedin and the NZ Youth Choir performed for both the Junior and Senior School Assemblies as part of Barock's celebration. **Robert Duffy, Head of Music, OBHS** Both OBHS and OGHS have a proud history of producing singers, such as our alumni Jonathan Lemalu and Tecwyn Evans, who go on to have successful careers in music.

Wednesday was also choir dinner night at the Great Taste Restaurant, the site of many raucous NZYC gatherings over the years. **Emma Dowdle**

**FRIDAY 4 SEPTEMBER:** Dunedinites are hardy people and seemed not to notice that the heating was not working for the first few hours of rehearsal. The same could not be said for the North Islanders and our Australian Acting Deputy Music Director, who could have been forgiven for thinking we were trying to turn him into an ice sculpture. **Emma Dowdle**

Having jetted in from Wellington that morning, I encountered the long stairway at the backpackers, and the even longer steps up to the front of the Cathedral before members of the tour party were able to inform me of the shortcuts avoiding this physical exercise. The result of five days of intensive rehearsal under the guidance of David Squire, together with Vocal Consultant, Morag Atchison, and Acting Deputy MD, Dean Sky-Lucas, was clearly evident in the choir's secure performances.

**Roger Lloyd, CEO, Choirs NZ**

Congratulations to David and the Choir for a simply outstanding and uplifting concert in Dunedin. I happened to be seated quite close to the performers, and that just enhanced my appreciation of the brilliant singing: their range of dynamics, tone and style, crystal clear rhythms and diction – one could go on and on. And the programme was excellent. Thank you! **Philippa Harris, General Manager, Southern Sinfonia**

As a chorister, it's not often that you have the chance to give something back to your conductor and I think we were all excited and happy to work with David towards his MMus recital on the Friday evening. **Savannah Post**

It was wonderful to see so many long-time supporters and former members of the NZYC at our Dunedin concert! **David Squire, Music Director, NZ Youth Choir**



NZ Youth Choir warming up with Otago Girls and Boys High School choirs.

PHOTO: PETER DU PLESSIS

**SATURDAY 5 SEPTEMBER:** This was a big day as we needed to get ourselves by bus from Dunedin to Christchurch for our concert there that night. We started the day a bass down and may have ended it that way if it were not for the fast driving of a kind backpackers manager, who chased after the bus with our rather sheepish missing man. After a scenic trip through Oamaru, Timaru, and Ashburton, the choir arrived at our Christchurch concert venue, the wonderful Transitional (Cardboard) Cathedral. **Emma Dowdle**

The choir got straight off the bus from Dunedin and into a rehearsal and sound check in the impressive Transitional Cathedral. We all then walked the short distance to the earthquake memorial where the singers spent a poignant time interacting with the 185 white chairs laid out opposite the site of the former CTV building. It's been a moving trip to Canterbury and we hope to return soon. **David Squire**

What an excellent concert we heard from the

NZYC performing in Christchurch! From the very effectively staged opening piece, Peter Phillip's Ecce vicit leo, with the double-choir standing at opposite ends of the beautiful Transitional Cathedral to the final Moses Hogan spiritual in a gospel-style arrangement, this concert was a resounding success. The cathedral was full and the very appreciative audience heard a great variety of quality choral repertoire sung in five different languages with compositions dating from 1613 to 2013. We heard a beautifully blended, mature choral tone, and enjoyed very expressive, communicative singing. It was easy to forget the choir are aged 18-25 years with some members still at school! We heard some very impressive soloists, who sang with confidence and beauty of tone, yet when they were singing in the full ensemble the blend was marvellous. As an NZYC alumna, I am very proud to say that I used to be a member of this fabulous choir. **Sue Densen**

Thank you to all the contributors.



NZ Youth Choir in the Christchurch Transitional Cathedral.

PHOTO: FRANK NZ/THE PRESS

## TRANS-TASMAN TOUR

In November Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir cross the Ditch for a week-long visit to Australia for only the second time in the choir's 16-year history.

In 2000, the female chorus of Voices NZ collaborated with the NZSO for a performance in the Sydney Olympic Arts Festival, so a return to the vibrant concert scene of our large neighbour was long overdue.

In 2010, at the end of their Asia/Australia tour, the NZ Youth Choir performed a live broadcast for the ABC from the Eugene Goossens Hall in Sydney. Going out on the ABC Classic FM network and relayed simultaneously on Radio New Zealand Concert, this was a collaborative first for these two radio stations. Not to be outdone, Voices NZ under the baton of Music Director, Karen Grylls, is broadcasting a time from the ABC on Monday, 10 November at 8:00pm Sydney time, which can be heard via satellite on Radio NZ Concert at 10:00pm.

The programme, entitled '... of the Virgin and the Bard', features songs of the Virgin Mary and Shakespeare's texts set to music to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the Bard's birth. Alongside works by Rachmaninov, Schnittke, and William Mathias will be pieces by Kiwi composers, David Childs, Andrew Baldwin, and David Hamilton. By special request, as a contribution to Australian Music Month, an Australian item is included, Andrew Ford's 'Chimney-Sweepers'.

The tour party will then move on to Melbourne to perform a lunchtime concert in St Paul's Cathedral on Wednesday, 12 November at 1:00pm. The next day, Voices travel out to Brighton to give a schools workshop at Firbank Girls' Grammar, where New Zealander, Philippa Jones, is Co-Director of Music. Karen Grylls and the choir will also participate in a conductors' workshop under the



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aegis of the Australian National Choral Association. On Saturday, 15 November, Voices NZ join forces with Polyphonic Voices, a Melbourne-based chamber choir formed in 2013 under the artistic direction of Michael Fulcher. Choral supporters will remember Michael as Organist and Director of Music at the Wellington Cathedral of St Paul and Music Director of the Wellington Orpheus Choir. The two choirs will provide contributions to the first half of the programme and after the interval come together to sing J. S. Bach's Magnificat in E-flat, BWV 243a. A fitting end to Voices' Australian tour!

## CLASSICAL EXPRESSIONS

The New Zealand Youth Choir in Upper Hutt's concert series.

Following in the illustrious footsteps of Barry Douglas, Pascal Rogé, Michael Houston, the NZ String Quartet and many more internationally acclaimed musicians, the Wellington-based members of the NZ Youth Choir form a 20-voice chamber choir to perform in the Classical Expressions Concert Series in Upper Hutt on Monday, 13 October. The concert, in the Genesis Energy Theatre at Expressions Arts & Entertainment Centre, starts at 7:30pm.

The Choir will present a selection of works from the NZYC's 2014 repertoire. To honour the Shakespeare anniversary, the programme has a number of items using the Bard's texts and the concert also includes a wide range of music from a double-choir 17th-century motet by Peter Philips to a contemporary setting by choral super-star Eric Whitacre of E.E. Cummings' 'Little Man in a Hurry'.

Among the traditional spirituals being performed are the five incorporated by Michael Tippett into his oratorio 'A Child of Our Time'. The performance, conducted by Music Director, David Squire, will include a kapa haka number especially written for the NZ Youth Choir and, as a souvenir of its 2013 tour to the USA and Canada, George Shearing's 'Lullaby of Birdland'.

For further information go to [www.expressions.org.nz/book-tickets/](http://www.expressions.org.nz/book-tickets/) or telephone 04 527 2168

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## Donations

Donations are vital in maintaining support for the New Zealand Youth Choir and Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir. They also assist in funding expenses relating to both choirs' rehearsal, performance and educational activities throughout New Zealand. For further information go to [www.choirsnz.co.nz/donate](http://www.choirsnz.co.nz/donate) and complete the donation form overleaf.

See over for Donations form

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Ross Harris, Karen Grylls, Jonathan Alver, Richard Greager and Horomona Horo.

## REQUIEM IN DUNEDIN

On Sunday, 19 October, South Island concert-goers will have their first chance to experience the Ross Harris/Vincent O'Sullivan commission, 'Requiem for the Fallen', in commemoration of World War I. This will feature the New Zealand String Quartet, Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir, taonga puoro composer Horomona Horo, and tenor Richard Greager, under the baton of Karen Grylls. The Dunedin Arts Festival has promised its patrons that the Town Hall will be reconfigured in a dramatic and unique way by director Jonathan Alver to stage this work.

John Button, *Dominion Post* reviewer, described the premiere in the NZ Festival in February this year as 'An unforgettable performance', and Elizabeth Kerr in the *NZ Listener* said 'Impeccable execution by choir and string quartet captured the anguished pain and beauty of the work'.

Staged choral works are an expensive exercise and our colleagues in Dunedin have been very brave in undertaking this task, making it a 'Don't Miss' opportunity.

For more information go to: [www.artsfestivaldunedin.co.nz](http://www.artsfestivaldunedin.co.nz)

## VOICE OF THE SOUL

In September 2014, Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir's latest CD under the baton of its Music Director, Karen Grylls, received a 5-star review by William Dart in the NZ Herald.



**Verdict: The country's premier chamber choir maps out an unforgettable journey**

Recommending this issue, William Dart writes: 'The packaging is luxurious – a sturdy, book-like cover, with 20 pages of useful text, all adorned with the ethereal feather images of Maureen Lander. We are reminded, in this age of the charmless download, that CDs can indeed be objects of beauty.' He went on to say, 'Traditional repertoire like Morten Lauridsen's Six Fire Madrigals and Britten's Five Flower Songs reveals the unimpeachable technique and musicianship that Grylls demands and gets.'

To buy your copy of this remarkable CD, go to [www.choirsnz.co.nz/cd/](http://www.choirsnz.co.nz/cd/) *voice-of-the-soul* on the Choirs Aotearoa website. The CD costs \$25 plus an additional \$5.00 charge for postage and packaging for each order.