

THE SHARP EDGE

Registered Charitable Trust No CC21921

December 2012



NZ Youth Choir at Parliament

After a two-and-a-half year interval, the New Zealand Youth Choir returned to Parliament House to perform a concert.

The hundred guests of Hon Christopher Finlayson, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage included US Ambassador, David Huebner, Government Ministers Jo Goodhew, Phil Healey, and Kate Wilkinson, representatives of the arts and commercial communities, former music directors and administrators of the New Zealand Youth Choir and current Trustees and staff of Choirs Aotearoa.

The puriri canopy and the rimu panelling of the Legislative Council Chamber provided a perfect acoustic for NZYC's hour-long programme from its current repertoire. Beginning with NZYC Alumni Andrew Baldwin's *Magnificat* the programme included Hawke's Bay composer Stephen Lange's *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven* and Helen Caskie's *Ten Cent Mixture*. Looking ahead to 2013 and Benjamin Britten's centenary, the Choir performed his *A Hymn to the Virgin* and, with the 50th anniversary of the death of John F Kennedy next year in mind, Herbert Howells' *Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing* written in memory of JFK.

Two of Schumann's Double Chorus Songs Op.141 'Zuversicht' and 'Talismane' were followed by Andrew Carter's arrangement of the George Shearing

jazz classic, *Lullaby of Birdland*, and the waiata, *Wairua Tapu Tau Mai Ra*, written especially for the NZ Youth Choir by Te Whanau Wehi.

Afterwards, enthusiastic audience members and performers mingled in the Grand Hall. In his speech Minister Finlayson acknowledged the ongoing success of the Choir, the financial supporters of the Trust, and the artistic staff who had nurtured such talent during its 33-year history. He congratulated Infratil for its insightful and generous new sponsorship and looked forward to witnessing the fruits of this partnership.

Alan Sorrell, Chair of the Arts Board of Creative New Zealand, the Trust's main funder, added his good wishes and applauded the Choirs Aotearoa New Zealand Trust's resolve and hard work. Chair of Choirs NZ, Trevor Kempton, outlined the ambitious plans for 2013 including a tour to the Eastern Seaboard of the USA to end the current Youth Choir's three-year term. David Newman, Chair of Infratil, concluded the formal proceedings expressing his company's pleasure in being involved with the New Zealand Youth Choir and looked forward to a happy relationship in the years ahead.

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VOICES
NEW ZEALAND
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NEW DIRECTIONS

Ex Cathedra in Birmingham has established an international reputation as a leading UK choir and Early Music ensemble. The Choir's education and community work is award-winning and seeks to inspire a love of singing in people of all ages and backgrounds.

"Singing Playgrounds is Ex Cathedra's highly acclaimed first-access singing project. It has already been delivered to over 400 primary schools in the UK, and also in Thailand, China and New Zealand. A project for everyone involved in a primary school community, Singing Playgrounds aims to bring singing into the heart of the school, enabling children and teachers to discover themselves as singers."

"Singing Medicine is an award-winning project delivered by Ex Cathedra at Birmingham Children's Hospital, which enables children with life-limiting conditions to participate in singing activities and experience the wider benefits of singing. Children who are in hospital for long or regular periods are equally entitled to access to the arts as when living in their own communities. Singing Medicine provides this access by using the far-ranging and wonderful benefits of singing to brighten the lives of the children and their families."

SOURCE EX CATHEDRA WEBSITE

There are many people concerned about the lack of opportunity for children to sing in our NZ schools and communities. This past January I made contact with the team responsible for Choral Education programmes in the Birmingham-based choir, Ex Cathedra. With the help of the UK-NZ Link Foundation I was able to be part of a day at the Birmingham Children's Hospital with the Singing Medicine team, and attend a training session for the Singing Playgrounds. The relationship that the Ex Cathedra team has built up with the hospital over the past seven years is remarkable; the hospital staff recognise the purple singing medicine t-shirts the practitioners wear and are very welcoming of them.

The wards we visited included oncology, renal, cardiac, neurology and burns. The power of the singing put smiles on the faces of some

very sick children and some very concerned and anxious parents. During the day, which lasted from 10:00am until 4:30pm, we sang with over 40 children. It was absolutely thrilling for Singing Medicine to receive a Royal Society Arts and Health National Award in 2011, national recognition for a very special initiative.

Later I was invited to attend a training session for Singing Playgrounds, Ex Cathedra's highly acclaimed first-access singing project. A group of teachers, some music specialists but mostly generalist teachers, attended this training day at the Birmingham Town Hall. This was the first session that would lead to 1,000 children singing and dancing in the Town Square and in the Birmingham Town Hall at the end of the school year. This visit gave me much to think about and act upon here in New Zealand.

— Dr Karen Grylls



Michael Stewart

Michael Stewart is at the forefront of the younger generation of choral conductors in New Zealand, as well as being one of the country's leading concert organists. In June 2011 he was appointed Organist and Director of Music at the Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, after previously serving for five years as Director of Music of the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. He is also the Music Director of The Tudor Consort, sings in Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir and is a member of the Artistic Team of Choirs Aotearoa and assists with the NZ Youth Choir.

Michael was awarded a BMus with First Class Honours from the University of Canterbury and was the recipient of a Dame Malvina Major Arts Excellence Award in 2002. This enabled him to pursue further study at McGill University (Montréal, Canada) graduating with a Master of Music degree in 2004.



The 33-year history of the NZ Youth Choir is shared between the four batons of its Music Directors. Guy Jansen (1979-1982), Prof. Peter Godfrey (1983-1988), Dr Karen Grylls (1988-2010) and David Squire (2011-)

GOODBYE ANTHONY — HELLO DAVID

Due to pressure of work, Anthony Ritchie decided to retire from the Board of Choirs Aotearoa NZ Trust in June. His new full-time post as a senior lecturer in composition at University of Otago, in addition to his freelance composing, is keeping him very busy. We are sorry to lose him from the Board but as an Alumnus of the NZ Youth Choir, we look forward to keeping in touch.

Joining the Board at its September meeting was David Hamilton who, like Anthony, is an Alumnus of the NZ Youth Choir and a well-known New Zealand composer. We look forward to David's involvement in the years ahead.



Anthony Ritchie



David Hamilton



Old Coventry Cathedral

GREAT BRITTEN

“My subject is war, and the pity of war. The poetry is in the pity ... all a poet can do is warn.” *Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)*

The 2013 programme launch of the Auckland Arts Festival on 31 October revealed the extent of Choirs Aotearoa's involvement in next year's Festival. Recently it was announced that Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir and the New Zealand Youth Choir, along with a combined children's choir, would join the Auckland Philharmonia for a performance of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* on Saturday, 23 March in the Auckland Town Hall at 8pm.

The *War Requiem* was written for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral after the original 14th-century structure was destroyed in a World War II bombing raid on the night of 14 November 1940. Britten, a pacifist, was inspired by the commission and he set the traditional Latin Mass for the Dead interwoven with nine poems about war by the English poet, Wilfred Owen. The premiere was given on 30 May 1962 in the new cathedral with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Meredith Davies.

Incidentally, the Southern Hemisphere premiere was presented in Wellington on 27 July 1963 with John Hopkins conducting the NZBS National Orchestra (now the NZSO) and the Royal Christchurch Musical Society with soloists Peter Baillie, Graeme Gorton, and Angela Shaw.

Before the Auckland Arts Festival's mighty *War Requiem*, and emphasising Britten's great contribution to the choral repertoire, will be the 'Little Britten' recital in Holy Trinity Cathedral on Wednesday, 20 March at 7pm.

David Squire will direct the NZ Youth Choir in a performance of *Rejoice in the Lamb* accompanied by organist James Tibbles, and Karen Grylls will lead Voices NZ in Britten's *Sacred and Profane* and *Five Flower Songs*. The programme also includes two organ solos by Tibbles, the recently discovered *Voluntary on Tallis' Lamentations* and Britten's best known organ work, *Prelude and Fugue on a theme of Vittoria*. The two choirs will combine for performances of *A Hymn to the Virgin* and *Festival Te Deum*.

Tickets are available from THE EDGE Tel: 09 357 3355 or 0800 289 842

www.buytickets.co.nz

AUDIENCE CAPITAL

Message from the Chief Executive, Roger Lloyd

Creative New Zealand's fifth 21st Century Arts Conference was held on 21-22 June 2012 at the Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington, on the theme 'Audience Capital'. Delegates, who were practitioners, and administrators from all disciplines in the arts community, were asked to consider their Audience Capital – to assess the value of the support of their patrons, their means of communication, how they might bring audiences closer, and what advantages that might bring.

An inspiring keynote speaker was Canadian, Guy Mallabone, President and CEO of Global Philanthropic Inc., who likened the stance of his fellow countrymen to that of Kiwis in sharing an innate generosity but inbred reluctance to request financial help. His talk was summed up in the title 'It's OK to ask'. We were encouraged to be brave particularly, as Mallabone suggested, "government subsidy is not a growth industry".

Australian, Fiona Allan, currently CEO of the Curve Theatre in Leicester, England, provided case studies from personal experience working at the Sydney Film Festival, Sydney Opera house and the Millennium Centre in Wales. The Curve opened just four years ago and has established itself as a major producing theatre in addition to being a space for rent by touring productions.

Interaction (engagement) between artists and audience would seem to be unavoidable at the Curve as performers have to cross public areas to get to the stage. Also it has a policy of using plain English which excludes the marketing hyperbole and over-selling which is seen all too often.

Throughout the various seminars there were consistent strands upon which Audience Capital can be established. These included value for money, reliability, professionalism and giving service leading to audience loyalty, trust and preferred choices. The delegates were encouraged to be pro-active in meeting the needs of audiences as this will earn their commitment to a favoured arts provider.

It was a stimulating couple of days provided by Creative New Zealand which, hopefully, will benefit both providers and consumers of the arts. As 'It's OK to ask', perhaps I should bravely point out the donation form on the reverse of this page.

Roger L. Lloyd

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George Frideric
Handel's
Messiah



Handel's *Messiah* is arguably the most popular oratorio of all time, and it was changing musical tastes that brought this form of choral performance into being.

George Frideric Handel took up residence in London in 1712 and became well-known as a writer of Italian-style operas which became all the rage. He was given a pension by King George II, the office of Composer of Music to the Chapel Royal, and even had a statue erected in his honour, a distinction not usually bestowed upon the living.

But fashions change, and in the 1730s the public's desire for Italian opera began to wane. Not one to allow the grass to grow under his feet, Handel began to introduce English language oratorios as an alternative to his operas. He had had some experience in this when as a young man in Rome, papal decree had forbidden opera performances.

Handel's early oratorios were, effectively, the nails in the coffin for his Italian operas so in 1741 he abandoned them. Shortly after this, the librettist, Charles Jennens, sent a new text to Handel – *Messiah* – which he set in 24 days of hurried work. This is evident from the original score covered in blots and corrections, and there were to be many revisions and rearrangements in the years that followed.

Jennens was rather put out to discover that the premiere of *Messiah* in 1742 was not to be in London, but in Dublin, where Handel was wintering. The

choir was drawn from the choristers of St Patrick's and Christ Church cathedrals and comprised 16 men and 16 boys. To ensure the largest possible audience for the charity premiere at the Great Music Hall in Fishamble Street, gentlemen were requested to remove their swords and ladies not to wear hoops in their dresses.

The London debut at Covent Garden in 1743 led to the inclusion of *Messiah* in festivals and cathedrals around the country and, after Handel's death in 1759, performances were given in Florence (1768), New York (1770), Hamburg (1772), and Mannheim (1777) where Mozart first heard it.

In Vienna the sweeping reforms of Emperor Joseph II to modernise the Catholic church, saw the decline of church music which led to including *Messiah* in festivals and cathedrals. Baron Gottfried van Swieten, former diplomat and Imperial Librarian, used his influence and connections to encourage this by founding the Society of Associates with Mozart as director.

Fearing the demise of Baroque music in favour of the newer Classical style, van Swieten commissioned Mozart to modernise Handel's *Messiah* by filling out the orchestration to include flutes, clarinets and horns, with trombones supporting alto, tenor and bass parts (Colla parte) and recasting a number of the solo airs. While not changing anything in the music – the choir parts are virtually unaltered – the Mozart arrangement achieves a blend of the original Baroque counterpoint with the Classical style.

The Mozart arrangement of Handel's *Messiah* will be performed in the Wellington Town Hall on Sunday, 2 June 2013 at 3.30pm with Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir and Orchestra Wellington (formally the VWO) conducted by Karen Grylls. Tickets are available through Orchestra Wellington subscription bookings and are on general release through Ticketek from 2 April 2013.



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