

THE SHARP EDGE

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PHOTO: JULIA RINEHOLT

NZ YOUTH CHOIR IN SUNNY NORTHLAND

Music Director, David Squire, reports on the New Zealand Youth Choir's recent successful week-long residential course in Northland, culminating in two concerts and a feature performance at the treaty grounds on Waitangi Day.

Marsden Bay Youth Camp near Whangarei was our location for the week, with the days consisting of rehearsals from 9am-9pm, plus a few breaks thrown in for meals and the odd swim! Having the choir in one place meant the singers bonded much better between the rehearsals, and I was pleased by the way they grew as a whānau – something that will be very important on our overseas tour.

An impromptu performance at One Tree Point School next door to the camp, on the second day of the school term, was a great opportunity for the singers to perform their repertoire from memory. This was important preparation for the overseas tour, where all the repertoire performed at the festival in the Czech Republic must be memorised. The principal had heard us rehearsing the day before school started, and asked if there was any chance we could come and sing for the whole school. The students were really enthusiastic and received the choir well.

One of the highlights of the week was a visit from staff and students at Te Kura Taumata O Panguru,

who had travelled for almost three hours from the northern Hokianga to be at the camp for a schools' workshop offered by the NZYC in conjunction with the New Zealand Choral Federation. The 15 students had a wonderful time sitting in with the choir members, assessing the stylistic quality, wairua and Te Reo of the waiata, learning and rehearsing a spiritual, working on vocal technique, and hearing the different tone qualities that can be produced by a choir like this. After the workshop, they joined us for afternoon tea, engaging with our singers in animated conversation and asking loads of questions. It was a very special time.

One member of NZYC said "It was humbling that so many of them (nearly one-fifth of the school) had driven three hours just to attend an hour-and-a-half-long workshop with us. It was incredibly rewarding to see their faces light up and their jaws drop, when we sang for them. It was great fun to chat to the students afterwards and goof around attempting to play volleyball. But most significantly for me, it felt like a true and very beautiful cultural exchange."

Towards the end of the rehearsal week, the NZYC

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NZ YOUTH CHOIR IN SUNNY NORTHLAND

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sang a concert in Whangarei, with all but one of the pieces in the 90 minutes of repertoire performed from memory. The concert was well attended and the audience included former NZYC Deputy Music Director, Peter Watts, as well as a couple of choir alumni.

The following day saw the NZYC heading further north to Waitangi, having been invited to present a 30-minute outdoor performance as part of the Waitangi Day celebrations. Although the weather wasn't quite as sunny as we would have liked, it was meaningful to the singers and organisers that NZYC returned to this event for the first time in 26 years. Many of the singers had never been north of

Auckland before.

On the way back to Auckland on Sunday afternoon, NZYC sang in Warkworth to a large and appreciative audience, including another former NZYC Deputy Music Director, John Wells, and several more NZYC alumni. The support we receive from former members of the NZYC is a vital part of this choir's history and future, and we're always delighted to see alumni at our concerts!

NZYC finished the course with a further rehearsal in Auckland, spending more time working on repertoire for their upcoming tour to Europe, which included working with UK-based alumnus Andrew



PHOTO: MORAG ATCHISON

Workshop at Marsden Bay

Baldwin on his mass which the choir will be singing at Notre-Dame in Paris. The choir next meets in Wellington in late May for final rehearsals before departing Auckland on tour a few weeks after that.

— **David Squire**



PHOTO: EMMA DOWDLE

Requiem for the Fallen – recording session

Requiem for the Fallen

Ross Harris and Vincent O'Sullivan's *Requiem for the Fallen* was jointly commissioned by the New Zealand String Quartet Trust and Choirs Aotearoa NZ Trust with funding from Creative New Zealand's Arts Sector Development Incentive Fund. This dramatic new work, written in commemoration of World War I with additional material from taonga pūoro composer and performer Horomona Horo, was premiered on 28 February 2014 in Wellington Cathedral of St Paul as part of the New Zealand Festival. The performance featured Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir, the New Zealand String Quartet, Horomona Horo, and tenor soloist Richard Greager under the baton of Karen Grylls. Robert Wiremu acted as māoritanga in the preparation of the work and Jonathan Alver was stage director for its theatrical presentation.

The work interweaves text from the Requiem Mass with poetry, taonga pūoro and string quartet. The atmospheric resonance of Wellington Cathedral provided an evocative setting for this passionate plea against the horror of war. The premiere received an emotional reception with a standing ovation.

William Dart in the *NZ Herald* wrote "Voices NZ and Grylls are a potent team and there was pride of ownership in their handling of Harris' immaculately crafted score. The arching phrases of 'In Paradisum' seemed to leap to heaven itself..."

"Who will forget the New Zealand String Quartet, Voices New Zealand under Karen Grylls, Richard Greager as the soldier back home and the spellbinding artistry of taonga pūoro musician Horomona Horo? An unforgettable occasion..."
— John Button, *Dominion Post*.

Repeat performances followed in the Dunedin at the Arts Festival on 19 October 2014 in Dunedin Town Hall and in the Auckland Arts Festival on 15 March 2015 in Auckland Town Hall. Both performances met with an overwhelming audience response and a commercial recording of the work seemed inevitable if not essential.

Planning for an early 2016 recording was undertaken. However, despite having a very good case for funding, the application was unsuccessful. Undaunted by a little matter of money, the NZ String Quartet and Choirs Aotearoa Trust managements asked the musicians to donate their performances in the hope of making a recording work and they all agreed unhesitatingly. Generosity from the trusts and some individuals to finance travel and accommodation costs made this recording project possible.

Wayne Laird of Atoll Records has written, "About as far from the freezing trenches of the battlefields of Flanders as it is possible to get, Voices NZ, the New Zealand String Quartet, Horomona Horo, Richard Greager, and a talented bunch of additional musical and technical staff, all gathered in January in the gorgeous grounds

of Michael Park School Ellerslie, to record a work of Ross Harris' that is considered one of the most important classical music works to come out of NZ in recent years. In the midst of a plethora of events and publications commemorating "100 years since the Great War", this work shines as one that will still be with us after 100 more years, because of its integrity, its great emotional quality, and perhaps at least partly because of this recording. 'Requiem for the Fallen' just had to be recorded; it is the stuff of music history that such performers assembled on this occasion for the sole reward of being part of recording this work. The unusual circumstances seemed to impart a highly positive atmosphere to the sessions; it all happened with terrific application and efficiency, despite the potentially energy-sapping 30 degrees-plus Auckland days. The proceedings were led inspirationally by Karen Grylls and took place in the authoritative presence of the composer Ross Harris. Look for it to be available later in 2016."

• Thanks go to the members of Voices NZ Chamber Choir and the New Zealand String Quartet, Horomona Horo, Richard Greager, Karen Grylls, and Eric Renick (bass drum). Also Robert Wiremu, Catrin Johnsson, Rachel Fuller (artistic support team), Wayne Laird and Larry Elliot (Atoll), and Emma Dowdle (administration) for donating their services to make this recording possible.



An Evening with Dame Kiri

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, born in Gisborne, has had a successful international opera career since 1968. She was educated at Saint Mary's College Auckland and formally trained in operatic singing by Dame Sister Mary Leo. Her recording in 1965 of the 'Nuns' Chorus' from the Johann Strauss II operetta *Casanova* was New Zealand's first gold record. The same year Dame Kiri won the Mobil Song Quest with her performance of 'Vissi d'arte' from *Tosca*. As the winner, she received a grant to study in London.

In 1966 she won the prestigious Australian Melbourne Sun-Aria contest and enrolled at the London Opera Centre to study under Vera Rózsa and James Robertson. In 1969 she was offered the role of the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* after an audition of which the conductor, Colin Davis, said, "I couldn't believe my ears. I've taken thousands of auditions, but it was such a fantastically beautiful voice".

She was seen and heard around the world in 1981 by an estimated 600 million people when she sang Handel's *Let the bright Seraphim* at the wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer in St Paul's Cathedral, London.

The following year the famous impresario, Victor Hochhauser, presented Kiri Te Kanawa and the New Zealand Youth Choir in a concert at Wembley Conference Centre with all 2,700 seats sold-out two weeks in advance. The programme included Te Kanawa and the choir performing Schubert's 'Ständchen' and an arrangement of 'Hine e Hine'. Prince Charles attended the concert and was particularly pleased with the choir's present for Prince William of a woolly toy lamb which he promptly named 'Cutlets'.

In the upcoming NZ Festival concert in the Michael Fowler Centre on Sunday, 13 March, Dame Kiri and Voices NZ Chamber Choir directed by Karen Grylls will perform 'Ständchen' the Strauss 'Nuns' Chorus' and 'Hine e Hine' together with Mozart's 'Laudate Dominum'. Voices NZ will sing David Hamilton's 'Una Noche de Verano', Fauré's 'Cantique de Jean Racine' and Brahms' 'Vier Quartette' and Dame Kiri, accompanied by Terence Dennis, will perform music from her recital repertoire.

• *Tickets are selling fast. For booking information about this New Zealand Festival event go to:*

www.festival.co.nz/2016/events/dame-kiri-te-kanawa/



SOURCE: CHOIR OF THE WORLD, SIMON TIPPING

NZYC members with Kiri Te Kanawa after the Wembley rehearsal July 1982

The French Connection

There have been many articles written about Le Quesnoy and the daring exploits of the NZ Division in capturing the town just four days before the end of World War I. After resisting the German offensive in the spring of 1918, the Allied Armies launched a counter-attack along the length of the Western Front in what was to become known as the Hundred Days Offensive. On 21 August the British Army launched the first of a number of attacks on the Western Front in the sectors under its control: Amiens, Albert, Arras and Bapaume. The Allied troops advanced up to the Hindenburg Line which they breached at Saint-Quentin Canal on 5 October and at Le Nord Canal three days later. Lille and Douai were liberated on 17 October and the British Army pressed on towards the Belgian border while the New Zealand Division was given the job of liberating Le Quesnoy.

The 18th-century Vauban fortifications protecting the town encouraged the Germans garrisoned there to hold out against the Allied advance but the precision of the New Zealand artillery disrupted the German defence. The decision to liberate the town by stealth, rather than crushing it with artillery, has been long remembered by the townspeople. Visitors will find many references to the bond between Le Quesnoy and the country on the other side of the world. From the main town square, we see the plaque 'Place des All Blacks' and 'Avenue des Néo-Zélandais', which leads to the 'Jardin du Souvenir' (Garden of Remembrance) and a path to the NZ Memorial.

Recently a NZ Youth Choir connection with Le Quesnoy has come to light with an alumna of the 1980 - 84 choir, Robin Averill, telling us that her great uncle, Lieutenant Leslie Averill, was the first man over the wall in this courageous action. Averill was awarded the Military Cross for exceptional gallantry during the assault on Bapaume but it is his Le Quesnoy exploit for which he is best remembered. In the general confusion, Kiwi soldiers managed to set up a ladder on the south side of the town and enter through a sluice gate. Led by Lieutenant Averill, the New Zealanders completely surprised the Germans who, after much fighting in the streets, surrendered the town in the evening of 4 November.

Together with a number of his comrades-in-arms, Averill attended the unveiling in July 1923 of the Le Quesnoy Memorial positioned in the ramparts near where he scaled the walls on a ladder in order to begin the liberation of the town. In 1977 he returned to Le Quesnoy where a school was named in his honour.

On Thursday, 7 July at 10am, the NZ Youth Choir will participate in a service at the Le Quesnoy Memorial before performing a concert in the church that evening at 7.30pm. [SOURCE: NEW ZEALAND HISTORY]

Make your donation to the New Zealand Youth Choir's 2016 European Landmark Tour overleaf. For more information about the tour go to www.choirsnz.co.nz/youth/tours/2016



Porte Fauroulx, Les Quesnoy

DONATIONS FORM

THE COST OF NZYC'S EUROPEAN TOUR is over \$400,000 and the choir members have been asked to each contribute \$5,000 towards this. This leaves a \$150,000 shortfall for Choirs Aotearoa NZ Trust to find from its grants and through fund-raising and sponsorship. Every contribution will help us to showcase our music and youth as New Zealand's cultural ambassadors. On the panel below please make a contribution to the Trust for the tour or go to www.choirsnz.co.nz/youth/tours/2016/venue-donations to donate online.

MY DONATION to the Choirs Aotearoa NZ Trust for the NZYC's 2016 Landmark European Tour

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Donations over \$50 will be acknowledged on the website and all gifts in a Choirs Aotearoa publication.

(Unless you chose to be anonymous)

Thank you for your donation to
CHOIRS AOTEAROA NZ TRUST

Go to our website to take part in the **Prize Draw!**

Welcome to Carolyn & Peter Diessl

The name Diessl is well known in the New Zealand arts community. Carolyn and Peter Diessl have supported projects for the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Music New Zealand, NZ Trio, Nelson Arts Festival, New Zealand Portrait Gallery and, most recently, the New Zealand Festival. They were a 'City Sponsor' for the NZ Youth Choir's North America tour in 2013 and have recently become the NZYC's Tenor Section Sponsor for 2016.

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2016 EUROPEAN LANDMARK TOUR PRIZE DRAW

Our tour banner shows five famous European landmarks in places the New Zealand Youth Choir will be visiting on its journey.



To win one of the three \$100 prizes all you have to do is name the landmark and the city or town in which it stands.

You can submit your entry online at Prize Draw www.choirsnz.co.nz/youth/tours/2016/prize-draw

NB Tip: be careful about your city/town answers.

Each prize is a \$100 credit with **Marbeck, the Music Specialist**, to use on their website.

The draw will take place mid-May and will be announced in our 'Fine Tune' publication that month. Good luck!

www.marbecks.co.nz

