

NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF
ORANGE MALE VOICE CHOIR Inc.

March/April 2011

Vol. 21 No. 1

'Friendship through song'

Founded 1926

Visit our website www.omvc.org.au



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A Changing of the Guard at OMVC

It's often said that the only constant in an ever-changing world is change itself and so it is with our Choir.

Our long-serving M.D. Leon Paix has stepped aside after many years of wonderfully dedicated service. Leon's influence on Orange Male Voice Choir has been inestimable. The next edition of *Notes* will bring you a full report of Leon's Testimonial Dinner as well as a précis of the legacy he leaves the Choir.

It's a very big welcome to our new M.D., Melanie Meers. OMVC is fortunate indeed to secure Melanie's services. As our first female Music Director, Melanie has made history even before she lifts the baton. She has an excellent pedigree in both music education and performance. A singer herself, Melanie has had considerable experience in leading both small and large choirs, as well as working with a Capella groups. Melanie is a busy professional currently employed as a Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator with the Department of Education and Training (DET).



Melanie Meers MLMEd (UON), Dip. A (Music)(USQ),
GDipTeach (USQ), GCertEd (UON), GCertEdSt (Sydney)
Music Director/Conductor

Melanie was born into an artistic family. Her mother Anita, a talented artist and her father Bob and grandfather Walter were both singers with beautiful voices who were always singing at home or on the stage ... little did she know that this early introduction into the world of men singing would lead to Music Director of the Orange Male Voice Choir.

Melanie has had a 30 year love affair with singing and choirs, learning from and working with some of Australia's greats, such as: Richard Gill (Australian Opera, Sing 2001); George Torbay (School Spectacular, Sing 2001); Brett Wymark (Sydney Philharmonia Choir, Sing 2001); and Peter Rorke & Lawrence Leopard (University of Southeast Queensland 1983-1985).

Melanie's most treasured memory to date is conducting a 1000-voice choir in the Opera House Concert Hall during her time as conductor of Sing 2001 (1998-2001). This 120 voice children's choir sang at the Sydney 2000 Olympics; Sydney 2000 Paralympics, Opera House Concerts, Pan Pacific Games and Centenary of Federation Celebrations.

Melanie's other choral experiences include conductor of *Stray Notes*, Wellington from 1995 -2001, and receiving with her husband, Peter, the Australia Day Community Citizenship Award 2001 for work with Stray Notes, Wellington Amateur Theatrical Company (WATs) and the Wellington community. She was also the conductor for the DET Western Spectacular in 2006 with a choir of 300 students.

Melanie studied opera at university in Queensland and sang with the University of NSW Choir when she moved to Balmain NSW to take up a music teaching position in 1987. On arrival in Orange in 2002 she was delighted to be back singing and joined *Good Companye* led by David Tattersall and then *8th Note* where she both led and sang in this intimate a Capella group.

Melanie is excited about the challenge of taking up the position of music director of her first male choir, a choir with a proud 85 year history of bringing beautiful music to audiences locally, nationally and internationally.

Elvis Festival

Following its successful concert in Parkes in 2010, OMVC accepted an offer to perform at the legendary Elvis Festival in Parkes last January.

A smallish contingent of 30 or so singers sacrificed a Sunday sleep-in to report for early duty at the Gospel Service in the Woolworths carpark. Most choristers will admit to initial reservations about this gig. The assignment had its concerns; the prospect of travelling almost 280 km return to sing the bulk of our material as an 'audience warm-up' in a commercial carpark seemed less than enticing. Our fears however were quelled when we were acclaimed by an enthusiastic audience with rapturous applause.

This performance was Leon's final engagement as M.D. of the Choir and the boys were extra keen to give it their best shot. The audience clearly liked what they saw and heard. The audience was effusive in its comments after the service and your editor was stopped by the organiser of the Elvis Street Carnival inquiring about engaging the Choir for concert performances in local churches.



Old rockers never die - they just meet up with Elvis

Some of our membership assembled at Newstead on Saturday, 26/2 for our Annual Dinner.

Reviving memories of the past in his striped Octet waistcoat, compere John Read saw to it that the evening ran smoothly and speakers didn't outstay their welcome at the microphone. With any other speaker he might have intervened, but John realised that Gillian Roweth's response to the ' Toast to Our Ladies' (by Norm Bembrick) was too good to be meddled with and the audience was treated to a great tribute to the Choir which was at once both humorous and touching. No-one present was unaffected by Gillian's heartfelt love of the Choir as she recounted her long association with it and its special significance in her life. Thank you Gillian.

We had the rare privilege of having both our new and immediate past M.D.s with us for the evening. It was gratifying to have Leon and Jacque sitting with us again and Melanie and husband Peter for their first annual dinner. We're lucky indeed to have musicians of the calibre of Leon and Melanie to lead the Choir.

The Choir opened the evening with 'A Rovin' and 'She was Beautiful.' It looked like dessert for Choir members might be confiscated as a penalty for a poor performance of the first, but we recovered sufficiently in the second to narrowly avoid what would have been a bitter disappointment for all our sweet tooths.

The evening was characterised by the humour and pride that's come to typify this annual occasion as speakers shared their insights and gratitude. Alwyn Roweth toasted Queen and Country, Norm Bembrick our ladies, Michael Schmich saluted music and Don McDonald toasted Bev and Leon, paying special tribute to Leon for his great service over many years. Bev responded with her own homage to Leon, and Rob and Joy Westcott provided a glimpse of the special project that's brought great joy to so many in Fiji. John Spencer was fittingly awarded the Rowland Gregory Service Award for his outstanding contribution to the Choir in 2010.

With her easy charm, our new M.D. Melanie won over those meeting her for the first time as she extolled the virtues of music, and singing in particular, relating its often overlooked health benefits (as endorsed by research), as well as the social, spiritual and cognitive dividends of involvement in music.

It was wonderful to have Doug and Val Brown with us again during the evening. Maybe we can entice Doug back to the ranks!

A lovely moment was shared by all in singing 'Happy Birthday' to Tom Fenton for his 87th. What a trouper he is. Tom is truly one of our great stalwarts and we value to a man all that he brings to our group.

President Chris Morgan closed the evening with thanks to everyone and speaking directly to our ladies, asked them to consider how they too might support the OMVC cause.

Thanks to Allan Grant for again so generously organising the dinner, to the ladies (and several gentlemen) of Forrest Reefs Uniting Church for providing another superb home-style dinner, to Bev and Dorothy for decorating the tables, John Holland for his co-ordination and John Read for compering the evening.

Leon's Testimonial Dinner (more shots next issue)



What's he got in there? Is it welcome or farewell?

Calendar

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|------------------|---|
| 25 April | ANZAC Day Dawn Service, Robertson Park, 5.30 am |
| June | Possible concert in Dubbo (awaiting confirmation) |
| August | Orange Eisteddfod (dates t.b.a.) |
| September | Possible High School boys' choirs joint concert |
| 23 October | Orange concert with Woden Valley Youth Choir |
| 23 - 28 November | Wellington, N.Z. Anniversary concert with Wellington and Nelson Male Choirs |

For your diary

Our next two Bunnings BBQs:

Sat. 21 May

Sat. 4 June

Before you go

Father Patrick Flanagan awoke on Sunday morning and realizing it was an exceptionally beautiful spring day, decided that he just had to play golf.

So ... he told his associate that he was unwell and that he would be saying mass today in his place. Father Flanagan headed out of town to the golf course some thirty miles away to ensure there'd be no accidental contact with any of his own parishioners.

Setting up on the first tee he felt heavenly premonitions as he thought of his flock at worship.

At about this time, Saint Peter leaned over to the Lord while looking down omnipotently from the heavens and exclaimed, "You're not going to let him get away with this are you?" The Lord sighed in resignation, "I suppose something should be done, shouldn't it."

Meanwhile, Father Flanagan hit a perfect two wood drive smack up the middle of the fairway. Following the ball's flight, he was in turn surprised and overwhelmed to see it fall immediately in front of the green, roll onto the apron and continue its course to the flag. He was truly elated as it fell neatly into the cup. A 420 METRE HOLE IN ONE!!

St. Peter was flabbergasted. He looked in astonishment at the Lord. "Why did you let him do that?"

The Lord smiled knowingly, "Who's he going to tell?"