

Nelson Civic Choir - Acting Chair's Report for 2023

We have had a busy year in the Choir, with three inspiring performances.

Mozart - magical, mystical, monumental (13 & 14 May) at NCMA:

Our guest orchestra opened the concert, then Louis Lucas-Perry, our wonderful rehearsal accompanist, performed the 'Coronation' Piano Concerto; some of us were able to watch from the stage, which is a great viewpoint! In the second half we performed *Ave Verum*, the Coronation Mass, then the final chorus from *Die Zauberflöte*. We had locals Rosemary Galton & Erica Sim, joined by visitors Sid Chand & Edward Smith, as soloists for the Mass.

Choral Peace (16 & 17 September) at the Cathedral:

This performance was tied into the International Day of Peace, 21 September, and we performed excerpts from Karl Jenkin's *The Peacemakers* along with *I Was Glad*, *The Lord Bless You And Keep You*, *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, *You Raise Me Up*, and other pieces on the theme of Peace. These were interspersed with readings from *The Peacemakers* by Anton Bentley, and a solo from Zoë Dee. We enjoyed a Social gathering at The Rutherford Hotel after the second performance. Then on 21 September we were involved in a Livestream performance with the TimeDate Consortium from Switzerland, and were able to show off our gorgeous part of the world before singing from the NCMA Auditorium. Part of our recordings from the weekend concerts were also broadcast around the world.

Joy To The World 2023 (1 & 2 December) also at the Cathedral:

We returned to the Cathedral for our Christmas concert, with soprano soloist Caroline Burchell and her father David on the organ again. We also welcomed the Nelson Male Voice Choir, who performed three of their own pieces (including a beautiful version of *O Holy Night*), and joined us for a few of ours. The audience also joined in, particularly boisterously on "Five Gold Rings" for every verse of *The Twelve Days Of Christmas!* Then Jason called on Caroline to "solo" on the front stage with the sleighbells for *Jingle Bells...* so she brought out the reindeer antler headband for him to wear! The After Party was a rather noisy affair at Melrose House in the rain, but was a great way to finish the year off.

At the beginning of 2023, the Chair and Committee - Elizabeth Williams, Kay Hunter and Todd Padgett - were working hard behind the scenes to bring these concerts to fruition; myself, Richard Talbot and Jill Seeney were added to their number in March. Jason Balla, our Music Director, has been introducing new working practices, and we went through a difficult transition period involving much discussion, misunderstandings, and some disagreements. We have now developed a Production Team of volunteers from the choir who organize the concerts under Jason's direction, while the elected Committee will continue to undertake the legal, constitutional, financial & governance aspects, as well as overseeing the weekly rehearsals and other general matters. In August, I was voted as Acting Chair as Elizabeth took Leave of Absence to attend to family matters, and I would like to thank her and acknowledge the time and effort that Elizabeth put in to the Civic Choir.

In the run up to the Christmas concert, the Production Team geared up, the planning and organization went smoothly, and we are confident that this new organizational structure will take us - with ease - through the next year of wonderful productions.

Of course, we would be unable to do any of these performances without financial backing from our Grant bodies, sponsors, and programme advertisers, and we extend our sincere appreciation to them. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Bishop, Dean and staff of the Cathedral, the CEO and staff of NCMA, and to recognize the valuable work that Lucy Davies does for us as the Community Music Manager. It is so important to have support from our soloists, instrumentalists, the choir members and their friends and family as well; so I'd like to say a huge 'thank you' all round.

Our productions would not have been possible without lots of hard work from some amazing people. Firstly, for his encouragement, vision, artistic direction, and amazing skills in teaching and conducting us, our appreciation goes to our Music Director, Jason Balla. We are also very privileged to have the talent and skills at the piano each week from our accompanist Louis Lucas-Perry. We have a wonderful Production Team, with Suzie Peacock on Design, Ann Briggs as our Stage Manager, and Sarah Holmes and Gretchen Howard sorting out the website & social media respectively. Our newer members and roles include Sarah Holmes organising Front of House; Gretchen Howard as Membership Co-ordinator; Allison Cormack organising Events; Inga Lane helping with Hospitality; and Jane Morrison sorting ticket sales, with Frances Coleman now assisting. Our new Librarian is Sarah Potter, with Patti Martin as Deputy, and - with Jason and other volunteers - they have performed a radical de-clutter and huge transformation of the 'Harry Potter' library over the summer. Joe Waller has been organising and finessing the Sponsorship process, and over the next year, Conal Atkins (Irene de Jong's husband) will kindly assist us in formalising the new Constitution. And last, but by no means least, the retiring Committee members: Elizabeth Williams, Richard Talbot, Jill Seeney, and Kay Hunter. A huge 'thank you' to you all, too.

We are looking forwards to our Opera Festival (performances at NCMA on May 4 & 5), Choral Magnificence (at NCMA on August 24 & 25) and Joy to the World - a Kiwi Christmas (at the Cathedral on November 29 & 30), and already have tentative plans for 2025. I have enjoyed being a part of the Nelson Civic Choir for the last 2 years, and I am sure that the next two are going to be even better!

Thank you all for your support and trust in me during the last year,

Jan Brayshaw
Acting Chair, Nelson Civic Choir