

Church Music Australia

The National Newsletter of
RSCM Australia – A National Church Music Association

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Music Sunday

It is now almost 100 years since the landing of the Anzacs during the First World War. Yet appreciation of that event and the sacrifice of service people in general seems to etch itself more and more into the minds of Australians (and young Australians in particular). Why? There's a plethora of factors. However, could I suggest that the landing of the Anzacs might by now be half forgotten if we did not have a designated day to remember that event and all that it implies?

Having "a day" keeps an important part of who we are in the forefront of our minds. There's Anzac Day, Australia Day, Labour Day, the Queen's Birthday, and so on. We honour family members by celebrating birthdays (or the birthdays of important historical people in our lives – did you remember it was Bach's birthday on March 22?). I looked at the web and found that in the month of April there are approximately 30 special "days" or "weeks" in which we remember some event, cause or charity. They include International Guide Dog Day, World Malaria Day, Earth Day, World Heritage Day, World Autism Awareness Day – as well some which appear silly but on closer examination are serious business. For example April Falls Day (on April 1) and Pillow Fight Day! And of course, the church uses the same principle to remember and teach the faith – Good Friday, Easter, Christ the King, Advent, Christmas Day and so on.

RSCM suggests that one way to celebrate the importance of music to the church is to celebrate "Music Sunday". Some churches already have such celebrations on or near St. Cecilia's Day (22 November). RSCM has suggested that Music Sunday might be celebrated on June 13 in the UK. This probably won't work for Australia – it being the weekend when most people celebrate the Queen's Birthday. However, you might wish to celebrate on a Sunday close to June 13, or celebrate close to St. Cecilia's Day (but note that 21 November is Christ the King).

Such celebration can take many forms or contain many elements. If you go to the RSCM UK website, there are appropriate readings, prayers, hymns, songs, anthems and organ music which may be used. The day might be used to celebrate the gift of music as well as the gift of the talents and time that musicians make to the church. One might commission musicians, award ribbons, admit members to the choir, or recognise worship group singers, instrumentalists, band members, cantors and so on. Sermons and homilies might consider the huge number of references to music in the Bible, or perhaps might consider the function of music as prayer, inspiration, teacher and healer.

I also like the idea of connecting liturgical celebration with secular celebration. A barbecue, breakfast, sausage sizzle, morning tea, small concert or other such event might be held after your church service. Making music is a joy but also demanding, and we church musicians are sometimes so busy rushing from rehearsal to service and then back to the choir room to deal with the next important issue, that we don't spend the time mingling with the congregation. Chatting informally with the members of the congregation at a morning tea gives them the opportunity to express their appreciation personally, and gives you the opportunity to build bridges. Or perhaps an informal concert which presents your choir or instrumentalists in ways that they are not normally seen? An organist playing a bit of Brahms or Gershwin on the piano, a church choir singing some madrigals or other secular music, a chorister singing a solo all allow the congregation to see you in a new light and perhaps see your church musical contribution in a new context.

A wine and cheese evening, a choir annual dinner, a "music marathon", or a more formal concert might be midweek events that you could connect with Music Sunday. These allow the possibility of fundraising for the music program. They also raise the possibility of fundraising for RSCM, for the fundraising dimension of Music Sunday is a 50:50 arrangement (at least in

the UK) – 50% of funds go to the local church music program and 50% to RSCM. In Australia we don't have quite so formal an arrangement, but certainly state branches would welcome your donation!

We of course have all paid our membership dues each year, so we all might ask, "why should we be asked to give more?" Each of us must answer for ourselves, but in my case, I am not ashamed to wear my heart on my sleeve and say that RSCM has contributed a massive amount to my life and work. I choose music using Sunday by Sunday, several of my choirs use Voice for Life (and in the past I have used other RSCM Training programs), my choirs participate in RSCM choral festivals, some of my junior choristers have attended introductory sessions on the organ given by RSCM, I use a number of the choral publications of RSCM, I have attended National Summer Schools (and so have some of my choristers), and so on. If I focus less on the details and more on a global perspective, I should say that RSCM has given two gifts to church music. The first is the desire to make the best music we can in the service of God and the church. The second is the structure and tangible materials to do so. Both worth much more than a membership fee!

Ralph Morten

President RSCM Australia



Margaret Helen Macpherson (17 Nov 1942 – 7 Jan 2010)

It is with extreme sadness that we report the sudden death on 7th January of Margaret Macpherson during the Australian RSCM Summer School in Adelaide where she was part of the NSW delegation. Margaret was a member of the NSW committee as the central west representative. She was an alto chorister and choir librarian at All Saints' Cathedral in Bathurst. Over 400 people attended her funeral service in All Saints' Cathedral. The augmented choir numbered around 70. The Chancellor of Charles Sturt University where she had previously been librarian gave a tribute and announced that the flags of CSU were flying at half-mast that day.

The Precentor of the Cathedral, the Reverend Michael Deasey OAM, ARSCM who is also the Chair of RSCM NSW, delivered the following homily.



'In my Father's house there are many dwelling places...I go to prepare a place for you...so that where I am, you may be also' Jesus said.

Margaret had so many talents and so many passions and interests, but it was mainly as a church musician that I knew her – not just as a faithful, loyal and totally committed choir member and choir librarian here at All Saints', but as an organiser supreme of big events where she would get together as many as a 100 people from the central west, from the Blue Mountains and even Sydney to come and sing at festivals of the Royal School of Church Music, usually here in this cathedral, or Mudgee or Cowra.

On New Year's Day Margaret, Antonia and I left Bathurst by car to travel to the National Summer School of the RSCM in Adelaide. We spent two nights on the way at motels, which Margaret had organised, of course. The three of us shared the driving. She was in wonderful spirits and joined fully in conversation. On the way we all had a picnic at Mildura on the Murray River. It was to be her last picnic, but significantly it was by a river.

You see, ever since I've known her, I've associated Margaret with a river. Soon after I arrived in Bathurst four years ago she invited me to join her little walking group that walked early each Saturday along the paths of the Macquarie River.

And then when the summer school started in Adelaide, one of the pieces we began to rehearse was an arrangement by the American composer, Aaron Copland of 'Shall we gather by the river'. She loved that piece, but by the time we sang it in St Peter's Cathedral the following Sunday, she was no longer with us.

So Margaret, in a few minutes we're going to sing it for you – in memory of our walks by the river and the great privilege that Antonia and I had of sharing that last picnic with you by another river and in the knowledge that you have now reached 'that *shining* river, where your pilgrimage has

ceased, where you have gathered with the saints by the river that flows by the throne of God'. And why do I believe that? Because Jesus promised, 'I go to prepare a place for you'.

On Wednesday night 6 January we were all in Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the centre of Adelaide where Margaret sang her last service. We sang a hymn that she often had kept urging me to include in choir festivals. It's a hymn written for all those who are dedicated to the music of the church. And today the choir has already sung it. But that Wednesday night, it was the last hymn of the service, so the last words that Margaret sang on earth were these:

When in our music God is glorified, and adoration leaves no room for pride, it is as though the whole creation cried: Alleluia.

Dear Margaret, that sums you up so much. Your adoration for God left no room for pride, for adoration for God and human pride are mutually exclusive. And your whole life was a constant reminder that only the humble will dare to be drawn into the wonder of a power greater than themselves, greater than our minds and imaginations could conceive.

Thursday 7 January was our mid-course free day. Margaret decided not to come on our bus trip to the Barossa but phoned me on the way to say that she had just changed our accommodation bookings for the return journey so we could be back in time for Bishop Ken Leslie's funeral [a retired bishop of Bathurst]. We found out later she'd been shopping that morning, but in the evening when we came to collect her at her to take her to the formal course dinner, she didn't respond to our door knocking – and we became concerned.

And so Margaret died the way she had lived – privately, discreetly and with great dignity. Sometime in the afternoon she had lain down on her bed and gone to sleep peacefully, and she would be absolutely mortified to think she might have inconvenienced anyone, or found herself the centre of attention.

Through all this, Antonia and I were supported so much by Paul [chaplain of All Saints College, Bathurst] and Jenny Woodhart who were also with us in Adelaide, and Paul accompanied me through the police interviews and at the formal identification procedure the next day where we were able to have final prayers with her. And St Peter's Cathedral Adelaide offered us (all the Summer School people) a memorial Eucharist on Saturday morning, where Paul was the celebrant and I assisted – a Bathurst takeover that only Margaret could have accomplished.

The day before we left Adelaide, the police finally released Margaret's belongings, at the request of her sister Chris, to bring back to Bathurst. But as I loaded them in the car I was struck by the obvious thought that, of course, Margaret has no further use for them. She was not able to take them with her.

But that's not a morbid thought, because there is something, and one thing only that we can take with us when we die, and that is our relationship with God, for only God is on both sides of the great river. And Margaret cultivated that relationship all her life. And by extension, since all love and relationships are derived from God, whether some choose to recognise that or not, so our love and our relationships she also takes with her.

Dear Margaret, you were not only a great friend but like a sister. And the cathedral choir and the NSW branch of the RSCM, of which you were Central West representative, and which I currently chair, will never know how much I depended on you to make me appear competent.

And it took you to remind me that we never know when we are seeing or speaking to someone for the last time. We felt a little guilty, certainly bereft and lost, setting off on that long journey home without you a week ago today, two of us instead of three. Your countless acts of kindness over the years continued even then, because at the little cottage in Broken Hill you had booked, we discovered you'd already paid the accommodation as a gift to us.

That beautifully restored miner's cottage was such a delightful dwelling place, and the second bedroom we kept calling Margaret's room. We so much wanted you to be with us, but over time, we must learn to rejoice that you are now in your dwelling place, which Jesus prepared as he promised, and where he has now welcomed you, and taken you to himself.

Michael Dewsey

Chair RSCM, NSW Branch
Precentor, All Saints' Cathedral, Bathurst NSW



The Bathurst Summer School Bulletin

1. Introduction to Bathurst

Bathurst is the cathedral city in the Central West of New South Wales, about 200 km or three hours easy drive from Sydney. Blaxland Lawson and Wentworth found a way over the Blue Mountains in May 1813, but the Great Dividing Range was conquered later in the same year by George Evans; it was Evans who on 9 December 1813 camped on the site of the city-to-be and named the area "The Bathurst Plains". Sheep were introduced and wheat was grown in the area by 1816.

Charles Darwin visited Bathurst in 1836. The town came to world attention with the discovery of gold in 1851. Cobb and Co. moved out of Victoria in 1862 and set up their New South Wales headquarters in Bathurst.

These days, Bathurst has a population of about 26,000. It is the centre of very fertile farming and grazing lands. There are secondary and tertiary educational institutions, manufacturing industry and fine cultural and sporting facilities. It also boasts a very well-known motor-racing circuit.

The Bathurst Summer School will be centred on the campus of Charles Sturt University (CSU) which lies at the foot of Mount Panorama and within walking distance of the city centre.

Bathurst is well served by planes, trains and buses, but perhaps the best way to reach it will be by car. The CSU campus has acres of unrestricted parking.

The university has a range of accommodation. For the young-at-heart and budget conscious there are the student apartments with single bedrooms and shared bathrooms. For those who look for a little more comfort and are prepared to pay for it, the Centre for Professional Development where most of the Summer School activities will take place has its own motel rooms with en suite bathrooms and air conditioning.

A word about the weather in Bathurst in January: the daily average maximum temperature is 28°C, and the overnight average minimum is 13°. The average number of January days over 30°C is 12; over 35° two; over 40° none.

The musical theme of the Bathurst Summer School will be "A Taste of Heaven". Our musical chef will be Matthew Owens, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Wells Cathedral in the UK. Our sous chef will be accompanist Peter Jewkes, organist at Christ Church St Laurence in Sydney.

While the adult course is running at CSU, there will be a summer school for high school students running at All Saints College in Bathurst under the musical tutorship of David Russell.

Some advance warning about dress codes: as usual at summer schools, there will be a number of church services during the week. Choir robes may be worn at each and every one. But some choirs no longer wear robes, and even if they do, robes can be difficult to manage when you are travelling. The very acceptable alternative to choir robes at church services in Bathurst will be black bottoms (shoes, socks, skirts, trousers) and bright single colour – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo or violet – tops (shirts, blouses). If you don't currently have such a top, how about putting a couple of different colours on your next birthday/Christmas wish list?

Look out for the next Bathurst Summer School Bulletin in your Branch Newsletter.

Brian Wilson

Registrar, RSCM Summer School Bathurst 2011



Leaning on God

Joyce Rupp tells us: "I came upon an old lean-to on one of my mountain hikes. A few pieces of wood had been nailed together and set up in a remote pasture. As I looked at the lean-to, I imaged cattle, horses, and sheep seeking shelter, finding comfort from the harsh storms that can come so quickly to the high places.

"I could also see how we humans need our lean-tos in the storms of life which come upon us when our bodies are too weary to work, our spirits are too hurt to struggle, and our hearts are too pained to care.

"The journey of the human spirit has tiring searches, long stretches of grief and letting go, dark-hearted things that steal the energy from our spirits. At these times we need lean-tos. Our lean-tos can be anyone or anything that brings us a sense of hope, a pause from the pain, a bit of strength to sustain us, a little vision for guidance, a touch of happiness. Lean-tos are not permanent havens; they are temporary but essential shelters when the storms rage around us or

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inside of us. Becoming too dependent upon others is emotionally unhealthy. We need to trust others for comfort, support, and vision when our spirit feels weak and visionless, but in the end, we have to do our part, accept our responsibility and make our own choices and decisions. Others cannot do our growing for us.”

Joyce’s article got me thinking. I wondered how humans – my friends in particular – handled this need for a lean-to, and how often they used it either when in need of comfort themselves when a heart-breaking event presented itself and huge decisions had to be made, or when approached by someone else with a problem. The old lean-to used by Joyce Rupp would have seen animals huddled together creating a warmth from togetherness against the storms.

Privacy is another form of a lean-to and I remember my young brother making a "crow’s-nest" in our parents’ pine tree in the middle of the backyard. He’d be up there – usually when needed to dry dishes – with climbing access via the branches with sections hacked out of the middle of the tree. With his faithful blue-heeler Doc, he’d be up there for hours on end, and of course kept tabs on all the neighbours’ comings and goings, in all five backyards within his vision. Our chooks and ducks were observed very closely too. (I still can’t believe that Dad allowed the mutilation of that tree).

So I asked around and was somewhat surprised at the diversity of lean-tos given –

- The church family;
- A teacher leaning on another teacher in the town;
- "Small group" or "house church", meeting weekly throughout the year;
- Her husband, and Christian communities throughout the world;
- Ask. ;Jesus asked for help to lean on;
- A walk with a tree canopy in the next street to her home;
- The West End of Rottnest Island after a bike ride;
- Near the top of Mt Reuapheu, Nth Is, NZ where there are three volcanic cones – makes her think of Ps 121 and the world around her;
- The first floor balcony of their seaside holiday home, looking across Geograph Bay;
- Storms developing after watching a storm develop across the Bay in Phuket. Has had the same feeling ever since;
- On the walk path by our local river, fringed by many species of natural Australian gums. She was a country girl;
- A boat on a calm sea;
- Riding a bike anywhere;
- Sitting on the back steps from the laundry door. Often a "confessional" place for her family.

I had difficulty being explicit about my own lean-to, but know that the Michael Joncas song "On Eagles’ Wings", TiS 48, gives me the assurance of shelter and comfort that I sometimes need. Through the music as well. Ps 91 captures my feelings without needing to climb a mountain to a lean-to or create a cubby in a pine tree. I have known since my teenage years that I’m one of God’s favourite daughters – and what a comfort that has been.

Perhaps a lean-to for me for the past 40 years has been just relaxing by treading water in our solar-heated swimming pool. This is so therapeutic. To look up, surrounded by our beautiful garden then up further to God’s blue sky is as reassuring as any other place I can think of.

Dairde J Russell,

Chairman, RSCM Western Australian Branch.

Acknowledgement: Adapted from LEANING ON GOD, chapter 3. Joyce Rupp MAY I HAVE THIS DANCE?



Teaching Old Hymns New Words

A few weeks ago, we were singing choral mass during which the hymn “Be thou my Vision” was sung. In *Together in Song* (TiS) the old words “Be thou my battleshield” have been changed to “Be thou my armour” And again, “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind” has been changed to “Dear Father, Lord of Humankind”. A few members of the choir automatically sang the old words without even thinking, but one sang the old words very consciously (and loudly!), refusing to change to the modern text. Some other choir members took exception to that, and demanded that he sing the words that were printed. He refused, stating that his conscience wouldn’t allow him. At one point I thought we were going to have a physical fight on our hands in the choir loft, but instead the two choristers just refused to talk to each other for a while!

This got me thinking though – the problem is well recognised that when old hymns are suddenly given new words some people aren’t happy. But what’s the solution?

I suggested to our musical director that maybe we should just be allowed to sing whatever words we like – that the congregation will still be in time, just with different words. I was told that that solution would not promote unity. Maybe not, but perhaps it would lead to all choristers (and congregation for that matter) being more confident about believing in what they sing.

Perhaps the reason for the change in words needs to be considered too. For the most part, words are changed to incorporate inclusive language eg “human” for “man”, for which the motivation is understandable (although if it is generally accepted that “man” means “mankind and include of all genders” there shouldn’t be a problem), but when the words change the flow of the text altogether, then it is not surprising that people are uncomfortable with something different. (One should never underestimate the power of a “comfortable” hymn.) There comes a point also, when changing words for change’s sake gets a bit monotonous. And when a completely new set of words is set to an otherwise very recognisable tune (eg TiS 416 “Great God our Spirit” to Parry’s tune “Jerusalem”) then no wonder people get upset. (If you want to sing Jerusalem, sing it, if you don’t, then go and find your own tune!).

You may be thinking that this is an issue that will go away with the next couple of generations, but don’t be so sure. The average age of the choir which was referred to above is mid 20s; the person in question singing the old words is only a couple of years older than that. Don’t make the assumption that young people don’t like old words.

I don’t know what the long term solution to this conundrum is: whether you let people sing whatever words they like, whether you stick with the old or insist on the new. I’m quite sure that whatever you decide will upset someone. But if an entire congregation lifts its voice to God, perhaps it doesn’t matter if some people are singing different words from their neighbours!

Gemma Dashwood
Chair ACT Branch



COMPOSITION COMPETITION

IT’S ON AGAIN. DETAILS WILL BE RELEASED SOON – CHECK OUR WEBSITE AT www.rscm-act.org FOR DETAILS.

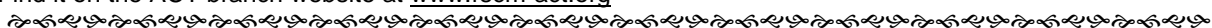
FINALISTS’ CONCERT WILL BE HELD IN WAGGA ON THE WEEKEND OF THE 17TH AND 18TH JULY.

ACT BRANCH WEBSITE CHAT FORUM

Open to all RSCM members to join. Once you’ve signed in you can join in a thread expressing an opinion, review concerts or discover links to other church music sites. If you want you can start a conversation of your own.

This is a great way of meeting other RSCM members and getting to know other people.

Find it on the ACT branch website at www.rscm-act.org



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