

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by Graeme Morton – 2003 Churchill Fellow

To study leadership in the choral ensemble

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Signed Graeme Morton

Dated April 8th, 2004

Graeme Morton
21 Alexandra Av,
Taringa,
AUSTRALIA 4068
gmorton1@optushome.com.au

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INTRODUCTION

This Fellowship was undertaken under the very general heading of "Leadership in the Choral Ensemble". This was chosen as it allowed a very wide and open interpretation – in fact there is probably no aspect of choral music that cannot be included in such a broad description. This allowed me to look at aspects such as - the qualities of leadership found in exceptional choral directors; repertoire choices that are made by exceptional choral leaders; administrative structures that reflect good leadership, and in turn, allow good leadership to occur; micro techniques used by outstanding conductors in choir training and in rehearsal; leadership initiatives taken by organizations both within and outside the choral community that allow for better leadership in choirs, and a whole hosts of other aspects of the choral experience.

The Fellowship was undertaken in the USA and Canada.

The USA was important because it contains the largest and best resourced choral community in the world.

Canada was of particular interest in that

- a. Australians generally know less of Canadian choral music than we do of the USA and Europe
- b. Our cultural and social similarities mean that Canada may have much to show us that may lead to better leadership in Australia.

It is important to state that the Fellowship report does not imply that Australia has poor choral leadership - far from it. Our best choral directors are of world standard. No statements in this report are intended to reflect badly on my choral colleagues. However, a better led, or more efficiently led choral community is in the interests of us all. Thus the improved leadership in my own ensembles arising from my study is already a major benefit of this Fellowship. If some of my observations also assist others, then this is of course an added advantage.

The work of an under-resourced Australian National Choral Association (ANCA) and its hard-working committee members, both national and state, is also acknowledged.

As I suspected, while visits in the USA led to new professional insights for myself, the choral community there is so well resourced, and choral programmes so imbedded in churches, schools, colleges and universities, that there is relatively little of the "macro-view" that can be transferred to the Australian context. Generally what was most gained from my USA observations was an improved understanding of the specifics of choral leadership and direction, and the methodology that they have developed for the leadership and training of choirs.

In Canada I found that there were sufficient similarities with Australia to allow for a greater transference of ideas and proposals. The report therefore, given that it reports to the Australian choral community on matters of community interest, appears to focus more on my Canadian experience rather than on the USA experience.

I wish to particularly acknowledge the following:

The Winston Churchill Fellowship Trust for making this trip possible

The support and assistance of Mr Steve Rudolph, Head of College of St Peters Lutheran College, and of Mr Gary Holley, who acted as Director of Music in my absence

Those who undertook tasks to cover my other responsibilities while away, notably Mr Alex Dixon

In undertaking this project, I was able to draw on the following professional experience:

Career Highlights	<p>Churchill Fellow 2003</p> <p>Prime Ministers Award 2003</p> <p>Visiting Professor in Choral Music, St Olaf College 1997 (St Olaf College is home of the world renowned St Olaf Choir)</p> <p>Awards from the Australian Music Centre and Radio 4MBS for contributions made to Australian Choral Music</p> <p>Conductor of The Australian Voices while they represented Australia in Festivals in Georgia and Florida, and at the World Symposium on Choral Music</p> <p>As a composer, performances by St Olaf College and at Westminster Choir College</p>
Currently	<p>Director of Music St Peters Lutheran College (The St Peters Chorale has commissioned many of the works, which have become Australian "choral classics")</p> <p>Director of Music Christ Church Anglican Church St Lucia, Brisbane</p> <p>Director of Brisbane Chamber Choir (also Chamber Choir in Residence, St John's Anglican Cathedral)</p> <p>Artistic Director, National Youth Choir of Australia (NYCA)</p> <p>Director, Morton Music (publisher of Australian Choral Music) mortonmusic.com.au</p> <p>Composer published by Augsburg Fortress and Morton Music</p> <p>Lecturer in Conducting (part-time) Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Griffith University</p>
Professional Service	<p>Former National Vice President and former State President, Australian National Choral Association</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Australian Choral Music lags behind that of overseas countries, and particularly in comparison with Canada, a country of similar heritage and size, we are clearly underdeveloped.
2. Choral growth is hindered because choral activity is largely hidden from the general community. Further, without such exposure, the choral community itself remains segmented and uninformed of activity elsewhere in the community. Its ability to enrich itself is therefore limited.
3. Consequently, choral activity is also under-resourced.
4. Choral music has the potential to dramatically change the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of Australians. We have no understanding of how this might appear in the future, having no such experience of being a developed choral community. However, choral music's potential to engage and absorb people of all ages and skill levels is very high indeed.
5. The USA and Canadian experience supports the view that music education based in performance will ultimately increase the number of people actively involved in choral music, and (also vitally important) the audience base that is needed to under-pin and stimulate choral activity. As a flow-on, it will also increase the community's involvement in instrumental Artmusic as well.
6. Many of the recommendations contained in this report are directed at non-choral organizations. These include government (both federal and state), the ABC (which has a particularly vital role to play), and education authorities.

In particular, the report makes recommendations to:

Government	page 11
The Media (particularly the ABC)	page 14
The Education Sector	page 16
Choral Organisations (notably ANCA)	page 19
Venue Providers	page 20
Individual Conductors and Choirs	page 21

PROGRAMME

Over a period of nine weeks I observed choir rehearsals and performances, interviewed choral directors, and researched choral resources in Seattle and Tacoma, Boston, Princeton, Nashville, Chicago, Minneapolis, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver.

The choirs included university ensembles (Washington State, Pacific Lutheran University, Montclair State, Wheaton College, University of Alberta, Columbia College), community ensembles (the Boeing Choir, South Jersey Chorale, Concerto Della Donna, Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Richard Eaton Chorale, Chor Leoni and Elektra), school ensembles (Trinity School, Minneapolis), professional ensembles (Matthew Culloton of the Dale Warland Singers, Vocal Essence, Elora Festival Singers, The Vancouver Chamber Choir) and church ensembles (St George's Nashville, Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal, St John's Elora).

In nine weeks I sat in on thirty separate rehearsals, heard forty-seven choirs in performance (including performances in two ACDA Regional Conventions), participated in five workshops or lectures, met with six music publishers and/or dealers, and interviewed or had discussions with twenty-five conductors. This report offers my conclusions arising from this process, at least as concerns the wider choral community in Australia.

Itinerary

Tuesday 3/2	Boeing Choir rehearsal - evening
Wednesday 4/2	Uni of Washington – Choir rehearsal (Geoffrey Boers). Meeting to follow Meeting with Graduate conducting students
Thursday 5/2	Pacific Lutheran University (Richard Nance and Kathryn Leehmann). Rehearsals and meeting
Friday 6/2	Capitol Music Center (Scott Barker)
Saturday 7/2	The Boeing Choir Workshop
Sunday 8/2	The Boeing Choir Concert 6.00pm
Monday 9/2	Travel to Boston
Tuesday 10/2	Resources and Research Day
Wednesday 11/2	Free Day
Thursday 12/2- Sat. 14/2	American Choral Director's Association Regional Convention
Sunday 15/2	Travel to Princeton
Monday 16/2	South Jersey Community Chorus (Heather Buchanan) Meeting and rehearsal
Tuesday 17/2	Montclair State University – 2 rehearsals (Heather Buchanan)
Wednesday 18/2	Resources and research day
Thursday 19/2	Montclair State University – rehearsal-conducting lesson
Friday 20/2	New Jersey Music Educators Conference
Saturday 21/2	Meeting with Norman Selby

Sunday 22/2	Free Day
Monday 23/2	Meeting with James Jordan South Jersey Community Chorus Rehearsal
Tuesday 24/2	Montclair State University – 2 rehearsals Harry Parch Collection
Wednesday 25/2	Travel to Nashville Meeting with Andy Peters
Thursday 26/2 – Sat 28/4	ACDA Regional Convention
Saturday 28/2	ACDA Meeting with David Child
Sunday 29/2	Meeting with Dr Murray Forbes Somerville Evensong Christ Church Cathedral
Monday 1/3	Travel to Chicago. Meeting with GIA Publishers Wheaton College Concert Choir rehearsal (Dr Guy Jansen)
Tuesday 2/3	Wheaton College Rehearsals and meetings (Dr Mary Hooper)
Wednesday 3/3	Chicago Music Institute (Pen Campbell) Rehearsal (Kate Ullett)
Thursday 4/3	Travel to Minneapolis
Friday 5/3	Resources and research Day
Saturday 6/3	Free Day
Sunday 7/3	Northern Pines rehearsal (David Jorlett) Meeting with Dr Anton Armstrong
Monday 8/3	Morning at Trinity School. (David Jorlett) Evening – Performance by Erik Westberg Vocal Ensemble (Sweden)
Tuesday 9/3	Morning at Trinity School. Afternoon at Hopkins High School (Matt Culloton) Evening at Vocal Essence Rehearsal (Phillip Brunelle)
Wednesday 10/3	Travel to Montreal
Thursday 11/3	Free Day
Friday 12/3	Meeting with Iwan Edwards. Noon organ recital. Afternoon – Canada Music Centre
Saturday 13/3	Observe Iwan Edward Rehearsal. Evening Concert – French Music (Ottawa Bach Choir)
Sunday 14/3	Christ Church Cathedral morning and afternoon
Monday 15/3	Evening – Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (Noel Edison)
Tuesday 16/3	Free Day

Wednesday 17/3	Meeting with Steve Domingo at The Opera Store Elora Festival Singers Rehearsal evening (Noel Edison)
Thursday 18/3	Meeting with Noel Edison St John's Elora rehearsal (Noel Edison)
Friday 19/3	Free Day
Saturday 20/3	Workshop at The Opera Store Meeting with Brainerd Blyden-Taylor McMillan Singers Concert – Doreen Rao
Sunday 21/3	Morning at Healey Willian's church – St Mary Magdalene Elora Festival Singers Concert (Rachmaninov Vespers)
Monday 22/3	Travel to Edmonton. Evening Observe Graduate Recital Rehearsal, University of Alberta
Tuesday 23/3	Madrigal Singers Rehearsal (Canadian Composers reading session). Meeting with Dr(s) Debra Cairns, Bob De Frece, and Len Ratzlaff. Evening rehearsal – Robert Eason Singers
Wednesday 24/3	Lecture on Australian Choral Music Rehearsal – University of Alberta Concert Choir (Dr Debra Cairns) Rehearsal - Concordia University College (Dr John Hooper)
Thursday 25/3	Travel to Vancouver rehearsal Columbia Singers rehearsal (Tony Funk)
Friday 26/3	Resources and Research Day Rehearsal of Richard Eason Singers and Vancouver Bach Society Choir (Bruce Pullan) – Orpheum Hall
Saturday 27/3	Lunch meeting with Tony Funk Evening Concert (Tony Funk)
Sunday 28/3	Free Day
Monday 29/3	Free Day
Tuesday 30/3	Rehearsal Vancouver Chamber Choir (Jon Washburn) Meeting to follow.
Wednesday 31/3	Meetings: Willi Zwordeski Ian Bullen Ray Horst Larry Nickel Rehearsal Chor Leoni and Elektra (Diane Loomer)
Thursday 1/4	Travel to Portland. Meeting with Barbara Conable
Friday 2/4	Meeting with Michael Kysar

THE REPORT

What does this report offer?

There were innumerable personal and professional benefits arising from this Fellowship. The opportunity to talk with leading choral musicians and to sit in on their rehearsals is an opportunity rarely afforded musicians. The Churchill Fellowship opened such doors. These benefits are not described in this report, being specific to me personally. Should you wish to know of these benefits then you had best attend my concerts, rehearsals or workshops.

Nor is the report about listing the qualities of good choral leaders. That is the subject of textbooks on the choral conducting process.

However during the Fellowship I was able to reflect on various leadership strategies and actions that can be undertaken by various organizations and groups within Australia, and invite the consideration of these recommendations by these various groups.

This report does not wish to become involved in the advocacy for choral music, although there is perhaps the possibility for individuals or organizations in Australia (ANCA and others) to define for the Australian community just what the choral process can offer our community as we develop, consolidate and expand our choral activities.

Sufficient to make four brief statements:

1. Choral music has both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits for individuals and societies. Its benefits are not only musical, but impact on our social and cultural context
2. Choral music in Australia lags behind that of other countries

The following facts about Canada, a country of similar history and not dissimilar in size (Canada has a population of approximately 30 million), put some factual evidence to this experiential observation.

- (a) In Manitoba, a relatively sparsely populated state of one million people, there are over 1000 choirs. In Australia there may not be many more than 1000 choirs in the entire country of 20 million.
- (b) In Edmonton, Alberta, with a population of 800,000 in the greater Edmonton area, there are 63 adult (non-church) choirs. In Brisbane, a city of approx 2 million, there are possibly 20 adult (non-church) choirs.
- (c) Canada has at least six professional community choirs (in the sense of regularly functioning choirs which pay a fee to singers for rehearsals and performances). Australia, to my knowledge, has no professional community choirs. There are few fully professionally employed conductors in Australia, and those that are, are usually financially supported by the members of the organization (members fees, parental fees etc) rather than by the community itself.
- (d) Canadian choirs show an interesting diversity. While in Canada I heard of choirs for the following "non-mainstream" community groups: homeless people, fishermen unemployed because of regulation of the industry, indigenous people, labour choirs, prisoners, ethnic groups (e.g. O. Koshetz Choir supporting Ukrainian cultural traditions).

There is of course no such thing as a national propensity for choral excellence. If Australia does lag behind other countries, then there is no reason for such a lag other than lack of opportunity. We in Australia have not created opportunities for the development of a choral tradition, as have other countries.

3. Choral Music is diverse. It spans all cultures and histories, a wide range of aesthetic styles, and yet is accessible by the most inexperienced and untrained amateur as well as the most highly trained choral artist.
4. Choral music, more than instrumental music, "Is tied to its subject matter and in our country this matter not infrequently springs from our history and geography, our natural and working environment, our peoples" (Canadian composer Donald Patriquin). It is a reflection of how we speak and how we think of ourselves, indeed of who we are.

However, "we do not know what we do not know". We as a country have not experienced the true benefits (as individuals and as a community), that come from a greater immersion in choral activities. As a result we as a nation are not motivated to achieve such an increased involvement, having no models of how our community might look in such a state. This was summed up by Sarah Hoblyn, in *In their own Words*

"Georgeville is a community that I serve with music. I don't think Georgeville realized it needed music. Now it knows it can't do without it"

Since choral music in Australia is overwhelmingly amateur, the art form generally lacks the organisational advocacy and structural support that accompanies, for instance, orchestral music. Much of the advice arising from this report is actually more relevant to those currently outside the choral community rather than those currently involved in choral music. Choral music in Australia requires structural change and organisational support.

CONCLUSIONS

The amateur nature of almost all choral conducting in Australia means that choral conductors, even the best of them, are too busy being involved in the process of conducting their choir(s) to have time to be lobbyists, protagonists and activists for the choral art. Nor is this necessarily their skill. They must first maintain a full-time occupation in order to maintain an income, and the job of choral conductor, or choral educator, (an activity which is so often full time overseas), is forced to become a very part-time activity.

This means that many of the leadership initiatives proposed in this report must come from people not currently involved in the choral process. Many of these will also need to come from well-developed organizations and authorities. In short, the choral community cannot expect to have to pull itself up by its own shoestrings. It requires support from the level of the Federal Government down. Some of these proposals must be viewed as being national in their scope and impact.

As a consequence, the benefits arising from such actions will stimulate choral activity. This will be to the benefit of the whole community, not merely choral musicians, and will be national in its scope and impact.

While Australia waits for such structural change, there are leadership initiatives that can be implemented at a more individual level. These are the initiatives that generally can be implemented by individual choir directors and individual choirs.

Implied in all these recommendations is the notion that it is imperative that we as Australians develop a sense of being "a" choral community. Given the oft-quoted but very significant "tyranny of distance" this is no mean task.

It means –

1. That conductors need to develop a collegiality that is quite the antithesis of the "tall poppy syndrome". We need to remember that success (with integrity) by one person in one area of the choral process ultimately benefits all people in all areas of the choral process.
2. That all choral musicians need to be able to access information about all parts of the choral process in Australia – we need the means to easily and quickly establish a national view.
3. That choral music needs to be more obvious to the general Australian community. One of the reasons sport thrives in this country is that it is highly visible. Rock and Pop music is similarly widely exposed. Choral music remains largely hidden, and therefore struggles to self-generate and expand.
4. That choral singers also need to see themselves as part of a national process, and feel a kinship with singers elsewhere in the country. An understanding of such broad participation in choral music will inform and confirm the individual's own involvement.
5. That we need to be able to develop career paths for choral leaders and ensemble singers that are financially viable for those individuals.
6. That we need to rethink the relationship between conductors and choirs in the urgent need to fast track the development of a choral culture within Australian society. In the past we believed that better trained conductors were the most urgent priority. Consequently numbers of conductors (at considerable personal cost) went overseas to enhance their skills and either came back to Australia to find that nothing had changed structurally within the community, or (worse still), in response to this lack of change, decided not even to return, and so the choral community did not grow. It is therefore imperative that we see the adoption of the Recommendations for Organizations listed below. People currently outside choral music need to be an important part of this process.
7. That it is imperative that we develop audience-building strategies in choral music. Australian choral music will soon die if strategies are not put in place to develop the choral audience base.

USA and Canadian conductors were continually amazed when I described typical audience sizes for Australian choral concerts. In Canada, for instance, halls are typically 80-100% full for choral concerts –

in fact the Toronto Symphony draws a larger audience when the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir is singing with them than in their own concerts without a choir.

8. That choral musicians in Australia, and Australia itself, need to utilise and further develop the wonderful resource we have in Australian composers.

It says something significant about this situation that while I am a publisher, published composer and nationally-known choral conductor, and therefore assumedly one who knows the Australian choral scene well, even prior to the Churchill Fellowship I could name more Canadian composers by name than I could Australian composers. When in Canada it is immediately obvious that Canadian choral composers flourish because they are often performed – the programming of Canadian composers is normal, rather than exceptional.

I suspect a number of circumstances mitigate against Australian composers getting wide-spread performances.

I Australian composers have no way of becoming known to the choral community, because Australian performances by one choir remain unknown to other choirs, and because there is no effective way of distributing scores in such a small and dispersed community.

II Australian composers are often more skilled than Australian choral directors and therefore write music that cannot immediately or easily be understood by conductors just from the score. They would benefit from the increased availability of recordings, or of recorded live performances. Even overseas many conductors rely on the fact that a piece has been published, or that it has been performed by such-and-such a choir, in order to gain affirmation that a particular piece is worthy of the time it will take to rehearse. In Australia, such affirmation cannot easily be obtained, since works remain unpublished, and choirs and their conductors remain isolated.

III Australians generally, and our conductors in particular, often still suffer the effects of the “cultural cringe” that implies that “overseas is best”. One way to overcome this with regard to Australian composition is simply to decide that we must first concentrate on more, rather than better or best. This means that conductors should perform Australian music freely, in order for it to develop and expand, rather than waiting to be sure that any particular work performed is worthy of the highest accolades. This view is supported by the idea that composers need performances in order to grow and develop.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Structural Initiatives discussed here are exceptionally important in the progressing of Australia as a nation whose social, civic, aesthetic and emotional life is enhanced by increased choral activity. In the past we have mostly considered that the skilling of conductors was the prime component in such development. This is important (hence recommendations A2, A3, D and E). However, those conductors who have studied overseas, and returned (and those who have studied overseas and chosen not to return home as there is nothing in Australia for them) have generally been frustrated because while they developed their skills, nothing within the Australian community has changed to enable them to exert their newly developed leadership potential.

Recommendation to Government

A. The Federal Government is invited to

1. Provide funding for infrastructure for the choral sector in Australia

For example, \$100,000 per annum provided to the Australian National Choral Association (ANCA) would enable the establishment of a full time National Director, and appropriate administrative support for this position. Such a step is essential if this body is to become the force it needs to be in the resource-poor choral sector

2. Create an National Institute for Choral Activities

Since choral education is not widely available from the tertiary education sector at present, such an Institute could provide education and professional development for conductors and singers. How significant has the Australian Institute for Sport been in this country? For a fraction of those costs a choral institute could be equally effective in developing the skill base of choral musicians at all levels. Further, it could support the development and expansion of the pool of creativity that lies in our composers

3. Demand that more choral education and more effective choral education be provided through universities and other education providers
4. Assist (at least in terms of start-up funding and developmental support) the creation of professional choral ensembles in Australia.

With a budget of approx one million dollars per annum, the Vancouver Chamber Choir is able to offer the Canadian community the following –

- 10 public concerts per year (plus additional concerts "around our home community")
- Regular broadcasts for the CBC
- Regular performances with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra
- A Canadian tour every year
- An overseas tour ever two years approx (a total of 53 tours in 29 years)
- Recordings (currently 32 plus) including highlighting Canadian composers
- Commissions of Canadian composers (over 200 separate commissions)

- Education programme for emerging conductors (National Conductor's Symposium)
- Development programme for young Canadian composers (Interplay)
- Education programme for young Canadian singers (OnSite)

How much could one such ensemble (let alone six) change the face of choral music in Australia?

5. Provide financial assistance to the National Youth Choir of Australia in order that young professionally trained singers can have access to heightened choral experiences. Great Britain, Canada and, more spectacularly, New Zealand, all have thriving National Youth Choirs, while in Australia our national youth choir (NYCA) struggles to be structurally and financially viable

6. Move to disband the "AMCOS Agreement"

This agreement between publishers and the federal government was intended to improve access to choral scores by schools across Australia. It benefits schools in a specific way (i.e. fewer scores need be purchased), and publishers (i.e. some publishers receive windfall reimbursements for product that they only supplied in small quantity). However, it has all but destroyed the dealers who were selling choral music in Australia, since they now sell 80% less product than previously. Consequently choral musicians cannot easily purchase music by browsing through available titles, and so the pool of pieces being performed has tended to diminish. Further, smaller publishers, including Australian publishers, are disadvantaged, as it is less likely that their product will appear in the random surveys upon which the distribution of funds is based. However, smaller publishers generally are more innovative in the music they publish, and Australian publishers are necessary in order to support the development of a choral community which fulfils Donald Partiquin's description of the role of choral music (page 5)

7. Move to address the shortage of moderate sized performance venues in most Australian cities.

Choirs generally struggle to find adequate performance spaces, and in Brisbane, for example, there are NO suitable venues for community choirs outside a handful of churches (and churches generally suit a limited style of performance).

The establishment of large and expensive concert venues in metropolitan centres in recent years has particularly disadvantaged choral music. Such venues

- a. Are too large for most choral performances
- b. Are too expensive for choirs
- c. In the public's view, tend to give performances community credibility, and so by excluding choral performances, fail to affirm choral music to the general community of concert attendees

Regional centres are generally accommodated by reasonably recent theatres and Entertainment Centres. Generally these have fly towers and acoustics suitable for drama and for amplified music, and are to the detriment of community based choral performances.

8. Develop strategies to support Australian composition, for the improved well-being of the Australian community, and to further enhance the way Australia is perceived by musicians and their communities elsewhere in the world.

State Governments are also invited to participate in similar programmes in partnership with State choral organizations.

In essence at all levels of government we need creative, innovative initiatives that support community enrichment through the choral art. Initially such initiatives will need to **lead** rather than **reflect** community expectations and wishes.

Funding from Federal and State governments should be in addition to what is already provide to the Arts, and not be taken from existing allocations to the Arts sector.

Recommendation to the Media

B. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation is invited to

1. Programme a weekly two-hour choral music programme on ABC National FM radio.

Such a programme will include Australian composers and choirs, and will have a charter to increase dramatically the exposure of the Australian public to choral music. With the right presenter, this can easily become one of the highlight programmes of ABC radio. The Canadian Broadcasting Commission's programme "Choral Concert" (CBC Radio Two) may be a model for such a programme here in Australia. The ABC is the only organization that can easily give choral music a national profile in Australia.

Such a programme needs to be produced and presented by musicians who are fully emersed in the Australian choral community. (The CBC "Choral Concert" is produced by Robert Cooper, himself a significant choral conductor in Toronto). We are not talking about more performances of the mainstream fare – Pergolesi *Stabat Mater*, Mozart *Requiem*, Handel *Messiah* etc., but a programme that explores the diversity of the choral experience, and opens up to listeners the experience of choral music from all periods, styles and cultures.

Such is the media deprivation of choral music in Australia that we can have an ensemble such as the Australian Voices, who regularly win international awards and competitions, and their conductor, Stephen Leek, who recently received the Robert Edler Award (an award only offered to the very distinguished achievers in the international choral scene) almost totally unknown within the Australian community. Compare this with the profile enjoyed by, say, the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Choral music desperately needs media support, and that best comes from the ABC.

My own high school singers ask "Why can't we hear choral music broadcast in Australia?" It is a question to which I have no answer.

This must NOT be seen as an alternative to the current programme "For the God who Sings", but a complement to it – a programme whose repertoire can be freer and more wide- ranging than that provided by that wonderful presenter, Kay McLennan. However, it is also strongly noted that both programmes need to be broadcast at accessible times. To programme "For the God who Sings" from 10.30pm-12.30am, as is currently the case, is of no assistance at all in contributing to the expansion of Australia's choral culture.

Such a programme could have a significant spin-off for the ABC in that it has the potential to engender support for classical music generally. This is very important, as many people would feel that we are currently witnessing the demise of classical music. To expand the choral community may well be ultimately to expand the classical music community. Why might this be so? Why might the ABC succeed in developing a choral audience base when it is not succeeding in expanding an instrumental audience base? The answer for me is simple and lies in two different areas. Firstly, the diversity of choral styles, the variety of choral tonal colours, together with the fact that choral music offers the listener the "added-on" value of text, imagery and poetic ideas, means that choral music can appeal to many more people than currently respond to classical instrumental music. Secondly, people respond to choral music as listeners because they can also become involved (or have been involved) as participants. The notion of participation – of doing – underpins our whole current school system. We learn by doing, rather than by knowing. This may also initially account in some degree for the development of Rock and Pop music in the 1950's. Young people could teach themselves to play, and play together very quickly – something not possible in Classical music and Jazz. Singers and potential singers can respond to such a programme by joining a community choir, even without any real experience or specialist training. This is not so with instrumental music, which must largely remain a listener's art.

A programme of choral music on the ABC would gather an instant following if it reached those currently involved in choral music. It then would significantly expand the community's access to choral music, and make a significant contribution to the development of choral music in Australia. In turn, it may well invigorate more traditional "Classical Music".

The music presented in such a programme would be loosely based around shorter choral works, often in the genre that could be termed "choral song".

2. Initiate a national choral contest, again loosely based on that offered by the Canadian Broadcasting Commission (The CBC National Choral Competition for Amateur Choirs).

Such a competition would be run predominantly by the submission of recordings. Awards would be made in various categories, and include access to broadcast for winning choirs (live or recorded). The release of CDs (i.e. a recording contract for one particular choir, or a compilation CD), released on ABC Classics would be a further incentive for participation in this competition.

Benefits of such a competition would be:

- a. An incentive is provided for conductors and choirs to produce their best and have it seen in relation to others who are working in the choral community. This will encourage heightened standards among many of our choirs (Canadian colleagues speak of how the current standards their CBC programme are infinitely higher than those of just a few years ago, such is the significance of such a competition)
- b. Heightened awareness by the community of choral music in general, and specific ensembles in particular. Good choral performance in Australia is currently a hidden art. This is the most significant outcome of such a programme
- c. Individual choirs are affirmed and honoured, and given the kind of public recognition that is essential for a vibrant choral community
- d. ABC radio would over time increase the listener base for this programme, and for its programming in general

A competition such as this, carefully planned, would reap the benefits of competition in music, generally without any of the sometimes-unfortunate aspects of competition.

Canadian conductors attributed the CBC national choral competition, and the weekly programme "Choral Concert" as being very significant in the development of choral music in Canada.

C. Community Radio Stations are invited to set up their own similar choral-specific radio programmes.

Such programmes should be prepared by leading local choral exponents. The programmes should be inclusive of as many choral styles as possible, and should include a component of local content – Australian composers and Australian choirs, but not exclusively so.

It would even be more preferable for such stations to develop strategies for sharing such programmes, since it would better contribute to the development of a national choral sense.

Recommendation to the Education Sector

D. Tertiary Education

Universities are invited to establish graduate and post-graduate degrees in Choral Music. These need to be built around exceptional teachers of the choral process. Such lecturers will concurrently establish and develop exceptional choirs that model for students, singers and audience the best aspects of the choral art.

E. Other Education Providers

Other education providers are invited to establish choral training under the auspices of Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Because of the amateur nature of so much Australian choral activity, and the distances involved within the Australian community, there will always be conductors who will lack access to any university programmes that are established. VET training, especially offering innovative approaches to distance education in choral music, would be able to assist such people and develop music in regional communities.

In creating an achievable qualification in choral music leadership, the qualification will in turn become a benchmark by which administrators and employing organizations can assess the suitability of conductors.

F. School Education Authorities are invited to radically rethink the structure of music syllabi, and develop courses in Music Performance based on ensemble singing.

These courses would replace the more common model in schools of a pre-Conservatory course that attempts to encompass theory, history, appreciation, score analysis, composition, aural skills and practical components. Such courses generally fail because they attempt too much – syllabi often require of one school subject, all the educative and developmental experiences that would otherwise comprise a whole (full time) tertiary education.

Performance based choral courses will enable Australia to broaden significantly the youth-base of singers, in order to develop for the future, a broad pool of singers from which choral excellence can come. When ONE high school choir from New Jersey (as heard in the ACDA regional convention) can deliver 100 singers most of whom are vocally more developed than many of the singers in the National Youth Choir of Australia (NYCA), then strategies that develop singers within ensembles here in Australia are surely a dramatic need.

That singing is fundamental to a good music education is reflected in the following statements:

1. Singing requires no highly individualized development of technical skills as is required of instrumental performance, so all students have the potential to participate equally, and benefit equally from such courses.
2. A comprehensive singing experience has the potential to touch on all periods of history, and all cultures and social groups. It therefore can impact on, and enhance studies in literature, history, geography, sociology, aesthetics, ethics, study of religion etc
3. A comprehensive choral music education can become the core for studies in theory, music history, score analysis, aural skills, music reading skills, composition (through modelling) and performance – all the aspects currently being attempted in the various music syllabi currently in use, but in a much more meaningful way as it is based in experience
4. Choral ensembles develop musicianship – something that it is very difficult to teach. Evidence of this may be seen in two brief examples:

(1) When Michelle DeYoung, mezzo-soprano who shared the 2003 classical Grammy award with Charles Dutoit was interviewed after she won the Metropolitan Opera auditions she was asked where she had received her musical training. She replied that her technique had come from her voice teacher, but her musicianship had come from singing in her College choir. Such a response is typical of the experience of many.

(2) The number of Conservatories that are increasingly requiring ALL students to participate in choral ensemble singing as part of their studies

Such a course is particularly pertinent in Queensland (my home state) and any other states where a Kodaly-based philosophy of education is implemented in primary schools. My own experience of such Kodaly-based programmes is that they are of limited value. To make this claim is not to denigrate those fine colleagues who work with Kodaly education, or who champion it. However, I am concerned that after possibly three decades of Kodaly-based primary instruction in Queensland the standards of music education have shown no significant improvement, and as a community there is no appreciable benefit from this approach to primary music education. Further, in my experience students currently become less engaged in class music at around year 5 -7, not more engaged, suggesting that current music education is failing to inspire the young student to participation in musical activities.

The reasons for this do not necessarily lie within Kodaly-education itself, but in two external factors. Firstly, in the fact that there is no connection between the aesthetic musical experiences of a student's school music education and the aesthetic musical experiences they encounter in their "real world" - their world of commercial music (rock, pop etc as experienced in film, video, TV and radio). Let me be clear. I am not suggesting that there should be such a connection, but simply that if Kodaly-based education has some relevance, it will not be found in such an aesthetic connection. A proper music education has to involve far more than an experience of those aesthetically limiting styles.

However, it does not contribute to student's aesthetic development, Kodaly-based music education might have a great deal to offer in terms of the development of musical skills (after all it is primarily a skill development programme) except that the students (especially once they reach year 6 in school) have nowhere to demonstrate and implement the skills that Kodaly education may have given them. My proposal for changed music syllabi addresses this problem. The musical skills found in the vocally based Kodaly approach to education will find application in choral based Music Performance subjects offered from, say, Year Seven or Eight.

A choral ensemble based programme of music education – Music in Performance – implemented in year 7, and continuing through high school would validate the years of Kodaly-based education as it would provide an aesthetic link between the two experiences, and also allow students to implement and extend the skills established in the early years. It would justify the Kodaly-based education, which hitherto has, at least in my eyes, failed to justify itself. Few lives have been changed by being able to hand sign the alto part while singing the soprano part in solfege, while playing the bass with the other hand. However, many lives have been changed by participation in a choral ensemble, while at the same time acquiring the musical skills for a lifetime of engagement with the choral artform.

Such a model of choral based music education might in a sense be seen in the United States of America. However, special curricula need to be developed for Australia – curricula that blend elements of the USA model (primarily the fact of choral music within the curriculum) with elements of assessment appropriate to the assessment models required within Australian education.

I am sure that ANCA would be delighted to engage in discussion with the various education authorities to help bring about such a rethink in music curricula.

The principles exposed here were best exemplified in a small 400-student school in the Minneapolis area – Trinity School, Burlington. Here I witnessed Year Nine compulsory music classes (every student engages in a choral based music curriculum until the end of year 10) of 32 students singing three part Latin motets in a class room, rarely resorting to using the piano as a teaching aid - all this in great contrast to the popularly-held view of American education today.

My own experiences at St Peters Lutheran College support my argument. The music programme was never better than when it offered a choral based Music Education through Performance programme (and that programme was only offered at the Year Eight level – how much better to extend such a programme up to the Year Twelve level).

Recommendation to Choral Organizations

G. The Australian National Choral Association (ANCA) is invited to

1. Develop a strategic plan for Australian Choral Music and for its own role in that plan
2. Develop a means of acknowledging the achievements of Australians in support of choral music
3. Lobby to bring to fruition those elements of this Churchill report that it considers worthy
4. Increase the level of awareness within the choral community of health and care issues related to singers, and also to conductors. While vocal health is increasingly understood in Australia, the work of Andover Educators in the area of Body Mapping was also observed during the Fellowship. Conductors (and other performers) with issues of physical damage arising from the performance process may well find preventative and remedial strategies that arise from the work of this discipline. Such training initially can be included in choral conferences and conventions

In Canada, interesting parallels were observed between ANCA and the Association of Canadian Choral Conductors. The ACCC was formed after strong provincial (i.e. State) organizations had been established. The national body is seen as providing four important roles (three of which are currently fulfilled by ANCA National in Australia)

1. Bi-annual conference (Podium)
2. Publication of a journal
3. Oversight of the Canadian National Youth Choir (which is deliberately kept at "arm's length" from the ACCC in organisational detail)
4. National Awards to acknowledge the contribution of significant people and organizations in a number of categories

Recommendation to Venue Providers

H. Performing Arts Performance Venues are invited to

1. Programme more choirs and a greater variety of choirs
2. Find creative ways to support and acknowledge good local choirs. This might include a series of choral foyer performances preceding mainstream concerts, so that the audience is exposed to more choral music

Of course standard is important in such presentations. Its importance is to expose patrons to good choral music in a simple and manageable programme, and not to widen the appeal of the venue itself. We have all suffered TV Christmas carols by local choirs chosen with no regard for standard, but rather with the view to widen the audience network of the TV station. Such is not the intention here.

Recommendation to Individual Conductors and Choirs

Within the specific level of individual choirs and directors there are a series of recommended initiatives where increased leadership can be manifest.

These include:

I An Australian Alliance of School-Aged Choirs

It is recommended that a self-help Alliance of School-Aged Choirs be created.

Such a co-operative network would capitalize on the sharing of ideas, experiences and skills. It would be based on the idea of members of the alliance accepting a charter that gives strength to the alliance and its members, and freely shares ideas and strategies. It is underpinned by the notion that members must be active rather than passive. As a co-operative, all members are expected to contribute rather than just "sign up" and wait for someone else to deliver the benefits of membership.

Tenets of such a charter may be:

1. Members undertake to perform music of a local composer or editor each year
"Local" here is deliberately kept ambiguous. It may be a recognized Australian composer, an unpublished composer, someone from the local community, the conductor themselves, a student composer (possibly engaged in tertiary studies) or even a member of the choir. Any of these has the potential to further develop and benefit the Australian choral community.
2. Members undertake to establish a particular relationship with another member of the alliance. This relationship will require
 - (a) A performance at least once a year within the school or community of the partner (possibly a lunch-time concert). This ensures that members of each choir get to hear another choir in performance, and develop a sense of "choral solidarity". Sporting teams, by their very nature, enjoy and thrive on such awareness.
 - (b) That the conductor attends at least one other performance of their "buddy" conductor within the year. This is a simple means of establishing collegial support, and also establishing a framework for mutual support, feedback, problem solving and sharing of ideas.
 - (c) That members undertake to support the appropriate photocopy laws and regulations
 - (d) That members undertake to complete an annual report which accounts for the activities and events planned within the year

Workshops, meetings and other communications would also be organized for the wider alliance membership. There is no need of such an alliance to become national – in fact numbers of alliances established in particular states or areas might be more desirable than the administrative issues that arise from a national organization. Nor would such an alliance be in competition with the work done by ANCA at either a national or a state level.

J. Apprentice Conductors

Such a programme would capitalize on the strength of the Mentor process.

Individual choirs are invited to appoint trainee conductors. The model created by the Brampton Festival Singers in Ontario is a good model for such a process, which, if well done, would create a win-win-win-win situation. Winners are the conductors (who gain leadership assistance) the choirs (who gain additional leadership) the trainees (who gain skills, insights and experience) and choral music in Australia (which gains a broader leadership base).

One model is cited below:

Brampton Festival Singers Conductor Apprenticeship Program

Brampton Festival Singers Announce Conductor Apprenticeship Program Brampton, ON - July 22, 2003 - The Brampton Festival Singers and Music Director Stéphane Potvin are pleased to announce to their creation of a conducting apprenticeship program. This opportunity is available to someone whose career goal is professional conducting and offers young conductors the much-needed practical experience required to compete in this very competitive market.

The apprenticeship program is intended to complement the apprentice's academic studies. Private sessions will focus on areas including score study, discussion of the practical aspects of conducting, gestures, interpretation, ensemble psychology, pedagogy, vocal technique, rehearsal methods and repertoire. In addition, depending on the ability and level of confidence, the apprentice will conduct a select number of pieces during rehearsals and performances.

To apply, an applicant will have completed a university-level basic conducting course, have a minimum of two years of choral experience and must provide a resume with cover letter explaining the candidate's reasons for applying to the program, two letters of reference and a video tape showing the applicant's conducting abilities in rehearsal or performance. The deadline for application is September 19, 2003. Final selection will be made based on personal audition and interview.

Founded in 1985 to celebrate St. Paul's United Church's 100th anniversary, the Brampton Festival Singers are a semi-professional choir dedicated to bringing the best of choral music to the City of Brampton. In addition their concert season, the choir performs for benefits, civic functions, retirement homes and other special events, both in Brampton and neighboring communities. A focus on Canadian works is important to the choir, as is performing a wide range of music, from Handel's Messiah to Gilbert and Sullivan to Simon and Garfunkel. Stéphane Potvin, originally from Montreal, arrived in Hamilton in 1995. Since then, his conducting career has taken him across North America and Europe to work with numerous ensembles including Symphony Hamilton, the Royal Conservatory Orchestra, the Canadian Armed Forces Band, the Niagara Children's Chorus, the Lorelei Singers of Ontario and the Canadian Orpheus Male Choir. He is founder and Artistic Director of the Hamilton Camerata Chamber Orchestra and Phoenix Ensemble, as well as percussionist and guest conductor for Symphony Hamilton. Stéphane has studied both choral and orchestral conducting with such teachers as Otto Werner Muller, Gustav Meier, Timothy Vernon, Fred Stoltzfus and Frieder Bernius. He is also an active composer and arranger. (Sourced from the internet)

K. Publications

A sense of community is developed when knowledge of the members of the community is shared throughout that community.

Of the many publications that could contribute in such a way, I invite consideration of a book based on the Canadian book *In their own Words*. This book consists of interviews with thirty-five significant Canadian conductors who talk about their lives, their career moves, and the kinds of things that are important to them. It is not a book about how they train their choirs (although no one was excluded from making such comments) but more about who they are, what they think, and what they have done.

It makes heroes (in the best sense) of such leaders, and acknowledges their contribution to the choral community. It also provides role models for aspiring conductors and singers.

As an aside, it would be interesting to consider how many Australian choral conductors (let alone members of the wide community) could identify by name thirty-five Australian choral conductors, or better still, Australian conductors of significance. This is the need for such a publication.

L. Directors of potential are invited to develop the role of the community children's choir

What comes first, the chicken or the egg? What comes first, the conductor or the choir? By that I mean, is the important process for Australian choral leadership that inspiring conductors create wonderful choirs, out of which come future choral leaders, or that, firstly, out of existing choirs come aspiring conductors, who then become inspiring conductors.

When listening to conductors from the USA and Canada, and in reading *In their own Words* I was struck by the number of conductors who attributed their achievements first to the early experiences singing in a church choir. It seems, perhaps, that a church choir has the potential to provide emotional and aesthetic development (i.e. inspiration) alongside skill development in an appropriate balance.

Of course in Australia such opportunities (i.e. gaining experience within a church choir of appropriate standard) have rarely been a reality, and if not in the past, then even less likely now. But the fact remains that choral conductors are more likely to come forward out of their own experiences within choirs, so in that sense the choir begets the conductor.

Canadian conductors also frequently spoke of how important children's community choirs have become as a nurturing ground as music within education has declined.

Without a vibrant culture of choirs neither within churches nor within schools (with of course some notable exceptions), then for the moment the role of "choral soil in which a future conductor may grow" may need to come from the community children's choir.

It is important that such choirs are led within an appropriate philosophic framework. Some tenets of this framework may be:

- e. Such choirs must be non-profit. Just as there is no place for schools that exist to return a profit to owners, then nor should this be the case with children's choirs. All revenues must be returned to the benefit of the singers within the programme, if a choir's philosophy is to have integrity. This is the first question parents must be ready to ask of possible choirs for their children
- f. Such choirs must be supportive of each other, and not inappropriately competitive. Successes for one are ultimately successes for all
- g. Such choirs should include contemporary music (not to be confused with recently-composed music) in their repertoire. To quote Jean Ashworth Bartle, a world leader in children's choirs "If you cannot find any contemporary music that you wish to sing, then find a new profession"

- h. Such choirs must be process-driven, not product-driven
- i. Such choirs must be inclusive and not exclusive. While auditions may be used to grade singers and place them into an appropriate ensemble, the bottom line must be that no person is excluded from the opportunities and benefits of choral training and participation in the choral experience.

M. Individual conductors are invited to develop a mind-set that makes us all part of a community of choral musicians, and to act proactively as lobbyist, ambassador, initiator, facilitator for the betterment of the Australian community, and for choral music in Australia. Some of the proposals arising from this report might be exactly where we can all start.

Graeme Morton
April 3rd, 2004