SYMPOSIUM: CHORAL MUSIC IN MELBOURNE

'And there Came all Manner of Choirs:' Melbourne's Burgeoning Choral Scene since 1950 [*]

Peter Campbell

The great era of the community choral society in Melbourne—as for much of Australia—was probably the fifty years straddling the year 1900, but there is a continuous and frequently vigorous lineage traceable from the earliest years of settlement to the present. District choirs, including the North Melbourne and Collingwood Choral Societies, and the Prahran Philharmonic Society, were established in the period after 1850, during the prosperous gold-rush years,[1] when wealth was able to support the cultural pursuits that were the trappings of higher social aspirations. Similar but later organisations include such choirs as the Malvern Choral Union, established in 1907.[2] The Melbourne Philharmonic Society, which has been established in 1853, flourished after Bernard Heinze was appointed in 1937,[3] especially once the ABC was engaging it for many performances, thus alleviating the Philharmonic of the burden of orchestral and promotional costs. This article examines state of choirs in Melbourne from the time of Heinze's gradual lessening of duties at the Philharmonic, in the early 1950s, to the present day. Changes in purpose, structure and quantity (both in terms of the number of singers and the number of organisations) are noted, and social and musical reasons for the differences are advanced. A summary of Melbourne's contemporary choral landscape is presented in order to illustrate the change that has occurred over the period under discussion.

The lengthy, productive and intimate relationship between choir, conductor and broadcaster seen in the case of the Philharmonic, Bernard Heinze and the ABC, also exacted a great cost.

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[1] Ann Wentzel, 'The Rapid Development of Music in Australia 1851–1861,' *Musicology* 3 (1968–1969): 69–73.
[2] The Malvern Choral Union later changed its name to the Oriana Madrigal Society, under director William Frazier, who also conducted the Bendigo and the Castlemaine Choral Unions. See 'Oriana Madrigal Society: A Chat with its Conductor, Mr William Frazier,' *Australian Musical News* 12.9 (April 1922): 399.
[3] See Kathleen Nelson, 'The Melbourne Philharmonic Society under Contract to the Australian Broadcasting Commission: Preservation and Triumph,' *Context* 25 (Autumn 2003): 25-33.

From the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, there was an appreciable decline in the importance and standing of the large choral societies. There were social and cultural factors at work here: tastes changed, but the repertoire in the main did not; pomp and ceremony, social improvement, and education were all sidelined by the Depression; the War might have been good for the economy, but it removed much of the singing population (particularly the men), and made large-scale concerts difficult. As Covell has noted of Australia's choral societies at this time,

> Their standards declined as the average age of their members rose; their absorption into the A.B.C. concert structure helped dissipate the loyalty of a specific public; the failure of the Commission to make choral music a consistent and integral part of its general subscription concerts … did not foster a new public for choral music at anything like the rate at which these concerts grew new and younger audiences for orchestral music.[4]

While Heinze was at the helm, the Philharmonic remained afloat, if not always under full sail. On his departure to Sydney in 1956, however, the Philharmonic, with its repertoire stagnating and its support dwindling, was becalmed by the general downturn in large-choir fortunes that was not helped at all by the introduction of television in the same year. The Philharmonic appointed a series of high-profile conductors that included Dan Hardy (who had been acting as Heinze's chorusmaster since 1936), Michael Brimer, David Carolane, Andrew Blackburn, Warwick Stengards, Warren Bebbington, Ian Harrison and Peter Bandy, none of whom was able—for any number of reasons—to steer the ship entirely out of troubled waters, nor take command for more than a few years at a time. Perhaps, in hindsight, Heinze's thirty years as conductor was too long a tenure; the Society was unused to change, and unable to find a niche that was not filled first by other organisations.

One such competitor was the Melbourne Chorale. Seeking an alternative to the large, oratorio-style choir that the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society was, Val Pyers formed the Chorale, initially as an eighteen-voice chamber choir, in 1965.[5] The repertoire of the new group was designed to attract a different and diverse audience by concentrating on folk songs, spirituals and modern arrangements, but the Chorale's popularity with singers soon meant that the group was too large for this style of singing, and in 1974 the choir was reconfigured into a select chamber choir, a continuing choir and an (occasional) ceremonial choir. This structure has been maintained, with the chamber group now called the Ensemble and the large choir known as the Symphonic Chorus.[6]

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[4] Roger Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne, Sun: 1967), 122.

[5] Born in Minyip in the Wimmera region of Victoria, Pyers attended Ballarat High School. He studied singing with Elsie Morrison, Victoria Anderson and Victor Harding, and speech and drama with Eilene O'Keefe. Pyers began his first adult choir in 1950 with the Yallourn Madrigal Singers. In 1965, he became conductor of the Heidelberg City Choir and the Melbourne University Choral Society. From 1974 he was employed as Director of Music and Administrator of the Melbourne Chorale. In 1985 he was, with Faye Dumont, Choir Master for the one thousand-voice 'Victoria Victoria' choir that celebrated the State's sesquicentenary. He served on the Board of the MSO in 1988, and in the same year was recognised with an OAM. After leaving the Melbourne Chorale in 1994, Pyers continued his large-choir work by establishing the Victoria Chorale.

[6] Graham Abbott succeeded Pyers as conductor of the Melbourne Chorale in 1994. The current Musical Director is Jonathan Grieves-Smith.

Throughout the 1960s, the ABC continued its close association with the Philharmonic, engaging it frequently for choral works in its concerts, and providing the orchestra for most of the Philharmonic's own presentations. By 1970, the Philharmonic was a regular part of the ABC's Red and Blue series, as well as it Youth programs and the annual Prom concert held during the Moomba Festival in March. This was the situation until 1975. With the fluctuating standards of the Philharmonic and the rising prominence of the Chorale, it was not long before the ABC switched the selection of its preferred provider of choristers for large choral-orchestral repertoire. The Melbourne Chorale was engaged instead of the Phiharmonic in 1975 to sing Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, a work, in all likelihood well beyond the capabilities of the Philharmonic at that time. The ABC continued to play for the by then traditional annual *Messiah* performance with the Philharmonic, but this too ceased in 1986. The 1980s actually saw much more limited choral programming from the ABC under conductor Hiroyuki Iwaki, and a general contraction in the concert market led eventually to the orchestra presenting only one subscription series, and many fewer choral works. The Melbourne Chorale has remained the choir of choice for the ABC.

Another upcoming rival to the Philharmonic was the [Melbourne] University Choral Society, although it too has had a varied existence. A choir existed at the university in the early years of the twentieth century, conducted by staff of the music department, but its operation was erratic. On 10 June 1938, a meeting of 'men interested in choral work' was held, and a decision made to form an informal group, known as the Men's Choral Society, at the university.[7] J. Sutton Crow, the Secretary of the University Conservatorium, was elected as conductor. A similar Women's Choral Society held its first meeting on 13 April 1939, and immediately decided to amalgamate with the men to become the University Choral Society (UCS).[8] Sutton Crow took over as the first conductor of the combined choir, and Dan Hardy succeeded him in 1941.[9] The choir flourished and was one hundred strong by 1945 when it began to give radio broadcasts of madrigals and Christmas carols. In the early years, it concentrated on Bach, and gave the first Melbourne performances of several cantatas. On Hardy's resignation in 1948, UCS had a succession of conductors including the Revd Dr Percy Jones,[10] Donald Britton and Harold Badger.[11]

In 1959, UCS appointed George Logie-Smith and a new, more vigorous era began.[12] Until that time, UCS had presented a single 'annual' concert of madrigals and medium-sized works.

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[7] 'Choral Group,' *Farrago* 14.2 (15 June 1938): 4; 'Men's Choral Society,' *Farrago* 15.5 (27 March 1939): 2.

[8] 'Choral Societies Merge,' *Farrago* 15.8 (26 April 1939): 1.

[9] Hardy was appointed to the voice staff of the Conservatorium in 1943 and was at that time, as noted above, also chorusmaster of the Philharmonic Society. See 'Choral Conductor Joins Conservatorium: Dan Hardy on Staff,' *Australian Musical News* 32 (April 1943): 12.

[10] Born in Geelong, Percy Jones (1914–1992) was director of the choir of St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, from 1942 to 1973, founding a Catholic Philharmonic Society in 1948. He taught at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium from 1950, introducing new courses in music education and music therapy, and was instrumental in founding the Australian Youth Orchestra.

[11] Badger (b. 1930) studied piano with Lindsay Biggins at the University of Melbourne. He joined the performance staff of the ABC after studies in conducting and composition in London. He was director of the Melba Conservatorium from 1963 to 1975.

[12] Logie-Smith studied with Alfred Cortot, Sir John Barbirolli and Sir Adrian Boult before coming to Melbourne in 1959 as Director of Music at Scotch College. He was conductor of the Astra String Orchestra and Choir and an adjudicator and examiner throughout Victoria. See concert programme, Intervarsity festival concert, Melbourne, 2 June 1960, AICSA Archives, Monash University.

By 1961, when UCS's concerts included Handel's *Messiah* and the Brahms *Requiem*, the choir was a serious player on the concert stage. Under Logie-Smith and his successor Bryan Dowling,[13] UCS performed Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, three Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Beethoven's Mass in C.[14]

The newer universities in Melbourne and its surrounds also supported choirs. The Monash University Choral Society (MonUCS) was formed in 1962, beginning weekly rehearsals in the Engineering Drawing Office under Ken Horn, the university librarian,[15] before moving to the Hargrave Cafeteria. In 1968, MonUCS auditioned for a conductor and appointed John McCaughey.[16] The most recently established university choir in Australia is the RMIT Occasional Choral Society (ROCS), begun in late 1999. Their first concert, on 26 May 2000, featured plainchant, movements from Byrd's Mass for four voices, founder and organiser Sandra Uidenbogerd's *Missa Prima* and Michael Winnikoff's *Alleluia*. Part of the concert was conducted by Sarah Chan, who has directed the choir since that time.[17] Also operating at the university is the RMIT Concert Choir, established in 1997 as part of the institution's Context Curriculum. The choir provides students with a subject as well as providing the university with a choir to sing at its graduation ceremonies.[18] Since its inception, the Concert Choir has been conducted by Faye Dumont.[19]

Choral singing has not survived so long at other universities, with the Deakin University Singers being wound up in 1995 and the now defunct La Trobe University Choral Society

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[13] Dowling was assistant conductor of MUCS from the late 1950s, also conducting the madrigal group. He became conductor in 1962 after graduating in architecture from the University of Melbourne. From time to time his brother, Owen (organist at St Peter's, Eastern Hill, Melbourne, and later Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn) assisted him. Bryan established a successful architectural practice in Canberra, also appearing as a vocal soloist for many concerts by local choral and operatic organisations.

[14] Since 1964, around the time when the group's name was formalised at the *Melbourne* University Choral Society (MUCS), its conductors have included Michael Wentzell, Val Pyers, David Carolane, Bryan Dowling (again), Paul Coppens, John Argyle, Peter Ross, Bevan Leviston, Jan Politowski, Kathleen McGuire and, from 1993, Andrew Wailes.

[15] Ken A.R. Horn (1916–2001) studied Classics at the University of Auckland, and served as assistant librarian at the University of Canterbury (NZ) for seventeen years, during which he was an organist and chorister, and completed a BMus degree. In 1961, Horn became the foundation chief acquisitions officer at the new Monash University library. He was appointed the State Librarian of Victoria in 1967, retiring in 1981. From 1993 to 2000 he was honorary Mollison Librarian at Trinity College, University of Melbourne. See obituaries by Evan Burge, *Trinity Today* 59 (Summer 2001–2002): 37; Philip Jones, *Age* [Melbourne], 25 July 2001; Nina Waters, *ANZTLA Newsletter* 44 (August 2001): 35.

[16] John McCaughey has been Musical Director of the Astra Chamber Music Society since 1980. In 2000, he received an Australian Music Centre Award for most distinguished contribution to the presentation of Australian composition by an individual. McCaughey left for Germany in 1971 and was succeeded as conductor of MonUCS by Simon Campian, Dindy McConchie, Douglas Lawrence, Ron Nagorcka, Bevan Leviston, Theodore Piekos, Greg Hurworth, André de Quadros, Margaret Brown, Rick Prakhoff, Adrian Kirk, Noel Ancelll and Trevor Jones.

[17] Electronic communication, Sandra Uidenbogerd to the author, 10 March 2002.

[18] Students must include three Context subjects in their degree programs from a range of about fifty extra-curricular courses. Darren Parer, personal communication, 14 February 2002.

[19] The founding president of the Australian Choral Association (which amalgamated with the Choral Conductors' Association to form ANCA), Faye Dumont is musical director of the Melbourne Chamber Choir (founded in 1983 as the Faye Dumont Singers) and the Melbourne Women's Choir. She also conducts the occasional Melbourne Master Singers and the professional vocal ensemble Chorelation. She is convenor of the Australian Choral Conductors Education and Training schools in Melbourne, and artistic director of the Melbourne International Choral Festival.

active only in the late 1960s and mid-1970s. At the same time, however, liturgical choirs, similar to those operating in Britain, were being established at the older, church-founded residential colleges of the University of Melbourne, chiefly for the purpose of assisting worship, but increasingly used as publicity tools to promote the image of the colleges and to enable them to offer choral scholarships to resident students. While not wishing to begin a long side-track into church choirs (for that is another story altogether), as these organisations are not entirely restricted to students, and ever more frequently present public concerts outside of their liturgical duties, they are worthy of at least a brief excursion.

Although a chapel choir had been formed at Trinity College in 1934, the choir's current form and reputation stems from the appointment in 1976 of Peter Dennison, Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne, as the first official Director of Music at the college.[20] The Choir of Ormond College was established in 1982 and is still conducted by Douglas Lawrence. Both Trinity and Ormond have undertaken several overseas tours and released CD recordings. The Chapel Choir at Queens College was directed for twelve years by Elaine Clarke, and is now under the direction of Grantley McDonald. Newman College recently re-established its choir and instituted several choral scholarships. Its new director is Gary Ekkel. Not surprisingly, perhaps, many of those associated with the university choirs are also conductors of (or performers in) other specialist choirs in the city, and it is clear that in Melbourne, as has been found elsewhere,[21] the history of choirs is often also the story of a series of dedicated and talented individuals.

Some choirs, such as the college choirs mentioned above, have been established primarily to perform sacred works in a liturgical setting, but have developed concert and even secular repertoires as well. Begun in 1948 by George Mitchell, the Choir of the St John's Fellowship later became the Choir of the Canterbury Fellowship.[22] It is known for its liturgical work, but its members have formed the basis for numerous other choirs. Peter Chapman directed them for twenty-five years, subsequently handing the reins to John O'Donnell. Chapman formed Cantus Choro in 1979, drawing its membership chiefly from within the Fellowship. They specialised in music for men's voices, both sacred and secular, ranging from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. The choir perhaps gained most fame for recording—with the assistance of the women of Canterbury Fellowship—three volumes of hymns from the *Australian Hymnbook*. Schola Cantorum of Melbourne, was founded by Gary Ekkel in 1994 and is dedicated to 'liturgical reconstructions of major feasts, the performance of medieval plays and the public exposure of unpublished music.'[23] Since the late 1990s, Graham Lischke has been presenting Bach cantatas in their correct liturgical setting during services at St John's Lutheran Church, Southgate. In this respect, he has followed St Francis's Catholic Church, which has been

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[20] Dennison was succeeded by Bruce Macrae (1985–1989), Peter Godfrey (1990–1991), Christopher Dearnley (1992–1993), Michael Fulcher (1994–1997) and Michael Leighton Jones (1997–).

[21] 'Canberra's musical life can be characterised by the actions of a very small number of important figures, rather than as a series of interrelated movements or organisations.' Peter Campbell, *Canberra Choral Society: A Capital Choir for a Capital City* (Canberra: PC Publishing, 2002), xiii.

[22] The St John's Fellowship was founded in 1937. It changed its name in 1956 when the Church of St John, in La Trobe Street, was demolished and the congregation moved to Trinity College.

[23] Artist biography, http://www.move.com.au/artist.cfm/309 (16 June 2003). Schola Cantorum has released two recordings, *O Rose So Red*, Marian songs and chants (Move MCD156) and Zelenka's *Litanies of St Francis Xavier* (Move MD3209).

performing large-scale orchestral masses by the likes of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert since the 1970s, under the leadership of Roger Heagney.

Until the 1950s, church choirs provided the most reliable training ground both for children who would become adult choristers, and for adults without formal musical training. Since that time, there has been a remarkable growth in specialist children' choirs, and school choral ensembles (in particular in the independent school sector), leading directly to higher levels of skills in both singers and directors. Due to increased leisure time and increasingly achievement-oriented societal expectations, both singers and directors are now more ambitious and musically adventurous than previous generations were able to be, and are demanding more and varied performance opportunities. A desire for an expressive outlet that is not offered by an existing organisation, leads logically to the founding of a new choir. Motive, method and opportunity, the three necessary conditions to be fulfilled by a suspect in a criminal investigation, seem equally applicable here.

The proliferation of specialist groups with skilled directors and increasingly professional ideals, aligned with increases in both the number and quality of smaller choral ensembles, such as the church-based choirs described above, has seen the standard and variety of ensemble singing in Melbourne rise impressively over the last forty years. The increasing number of conductors trained for choral work is itself a reflection of the expansion of tertiary music places in Australia. It is also a product of the decision by Australian musicians to remain in Australia, and the concomitant need for them to develop new conducting opportunities outside the ever-diminishing opportunities in the churches. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, while the number of church choirs decreased, the quality of those that remained was, in general, being raised.

The non-church chamber choirs that began to be seen in the 1960s had forerunners in the small, professional choirs that the ABC progressively introduced in the state capitals from the mid-1930s. After the Second World War, these ABC wireless choruses were active in commissioning and performing new works from Australian composers, including Don Banks, Nigel Butterley, Moya Henderson, James Penberthy and Felix Werder. Small ensembles appearing from the 1960s around Australia include the Leonine Consort in Sydney,[24] the University Consort in Canberra and, later, Jones & Co in Brisbane.[25] To some extent, these ensembles took the place of the ABC-funded choirs, but as they were generally only one- or two-voice-per-part groups, this spelled the end for what little professional profile choral singing in Australia had achieved. Apart from the Opera Australia chorus (which only rarely performs choral works), the Song Company, established in Sydney in 1984, is still today the only full-time professional vocal ensemble in the country.[26]

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[24] Established by Robert Donnelly in the late 1950s, the Consort was conducted from the mid-1960s by Charles Colman, and later became the model for Song Company.

[25] A vocal quintet established in 1984 by the baritone Michael Leighton Jones, from 1989 Jones & Co was resident at the University of Queensland and toured widely for Music Viva.

[26] Founded and directed by Charles Colman, Roland Peelman succeeded him as director in 1990. Many works have been composed especially for the Song Company by, among others, Mary Finsterer, Jennifer Fowler, Moya Henderson, Elena Kats-Chernin, Andrew Schultz, Michael Smetanin, Martin Wesley-Smith, Michael Whiticker and Julian Yu. The Sydney-based Cantillation, established by Antony Walker in 2001, is a fully professional, but sessional, choral ensemble.

In Melbourne, David Carolane, an important figure with wide-reaching influence, established the Tudor Choristers in 1962, originally as an eight-voice ensemble; by 1969, it was already forty strong. The Tudors made their reputation with performances of the works of the Byrd and Tallis generation, but in recent years have significantly expanded this repertoire.[27] The Faye Dumont Singers was created in the early 1980s when Dumont returned from postgraduate choral studies with Rodney Eichenberger in the United States. Now an organisation encompassing multiple performing groups, the core ensemble is known as the Melbourne Chamber Choir, and there is now also a women's choir (established in 1994), and two occasional groups, a male choir (the Melbourne Master Singers) and a professional ensemble called Chorelation.[28]

Mixed-voice chamber choirs, similar in style and sound to successful English groups such as the Tallis Scholars and The Sixteen, now present frequent concerts in most Australian capitals. Nicholas Routley's Sydney Chamber Choir, founded in 1975,[29] has parallels in Melbourne's Ensemble Gombert, founded in 1991 and directed by John O'Donnell, the Adelaide Chamber Singers (1985) conducted by Carl Crossin, and the now defunct Canberra Chamber Singers created in 1991 by Dominic Harvey. Andrew Raiskums began his slightly larger chamber choir Gloriana in Melbourne in 1994, the same year in which Gary Ekkel founded Schola Cantorum. E21, created by Stephen Grant in 2002 as an outgrowth of his work with the University of Melbourne's Early Voices, has had frequent appearances at major music festivals, where its combination of very new and very old repertoire has found favour. In the area of progressive and experimental repertoire, the Astra Choir, founded in the late 1950s by George Logie-Smith and largely under John McCaughey's direction since 1978, has performed numerous new choral works by composers associated with Melbourne, including Anthony Briggs, Warren Burt, Andrew Byrne, Martin Friedel, Helen Gifford, Graham Hair, Keith Humble, Richard Vella, Allan Walker, Lawrence Whiffen and Julian Yu.[30]

At the end of each calendar year, the *Age* newspaper publishes a retrospective opinion-piece reviewing the music heard in Melbourne during the previous twelve months. In his 1996 article, critic Clive O'Connell devoted about one quarter of his words to choral music. Under the headline 'A Forgettable Year,' and otherwise concerned chiefly with professional musical organisations, O'Connell wrote of the state of choral singing in Melbourne as follows:

> As for Choirs! The number of choral groups demanding attention has grown markedly over the past two years. The venerable Royal Melbourne Philharmonic survives, occasionally pulling something out of the box … The Melbourne Chorale continues its

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[27] Since Carolane's departure, John O'Donnell, Holly Matheison and Hugh Fullerton have directed.

[28] Fay Dumont spent her early years in Bendigo before graduating from University of Melbourne and Melbourne Secondary Teachers' College and furthered her studies at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, graduating with a Master of Music and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Music. In 1988, she became responsible for Vocal Studies at the Melbourne College of Advanced Education where she conducted three choirs.

[29] Previously known as the Sydney University Chamber Choir, this group grew out of Routley's ensemble work in the Faculty of Music at the University of Sydney. Many of the singers were members of the Sydney University Musical Society.

[30] Asta Flack formed the Astra Chamber Music Society in 1951 as an orchestra of women musicians. George Logie-Smith became director in 1958 and established the choir. Robert Smallwood was director for 1983–1985, and other guest directors, including Joan Pollock, Graeme Leak, Anne Thompson and William Henderson, have worked with the choir in film, dance and improvisation.

collaboration with the Melbourne Symphony, as well as presenting a subscription series. This organisation is not as active as in its early years, but usually produces an acceptable performance standard. The Tudor Choristers have acquired yet another new conductor but give the impression of limping along with sudden spurts of action. Douglas Lawrence's Ormond College Choir maintains its reputation for youthful brio and enjoyment in music-making. The Ensemble Gombert has situated itself firmly by specialising in late Renaissance works and often reaches a level of captivating authority and intellectual rigor. Gloriana and Schola Cantorum, the new kids on the block, so far have scored more hits than misses, while John McCaughey's Astra Choir maintains its esoteric course, always prepared to experiment and tackle the difficult and/or unpretty.[31]

These public concert oriented groups, however, with their semi-professional membership, relatively experienced administration and hightened artistic aspiration, represent only the more visible, critically appraised and generally high-art sector of the choral landscape. Out of a need for self-expression in an increasingly homogenised society, individuals and communities around Australia have created 'niche' choirs to fulfil specific musical, cultural or social objectives. Chamber choirs continue to form and re-form across the country and across Melbourne. Some last only for a few projects; others find a lasting place in the city's cultural life. The Eternal Choir, established in 1991, has an ideal membership of only seven overtone, or harmonic singers. Borboleta (meaning butterfly in Brazilian Portuguese) is a twenty-voice choir, founded in 2001 by Diana Clark and directed by Christoph Maubach, with a brad-ranging repertoire dedicated to the 'spirit and spectacle of Brazilian song and celebration.'[32] Then there are organisations with a particular social or political foundation or function, and for which musical performance may be a vehicle rather than a primary objective. The Victorian Trade Union Choir is a four-part, mixed-voice, unaccompanied choir founded in 1990, whose members' 'commitment to trade unionism and broader social justice principles finds powerful expression in song.'[33] There is also a gay-and-lesbian choir formed in 1990 as Alsounds before changing its name in 1994 to the Melbourne Gay and Lesbian Chorus.[34] Folk and popular music choirs, A Cappella style groups, and barbershop choruses, both male and female now exist in Melbourne in significant numbers.

Single-sex or mixed secular choirs have been formed within many immigrant communities, including Estonian, German, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maori, Slovene, Swiss, Ukrainian and Tongan groups. The Victoria Welsh Choir (Cantorion Cymreig Victoria) was formed in 1980 by seven expatriate Welshmen, now has over eighty members.[35] Bagryana Popov formed

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[31] Clive O'Connell, 'No Surprises in a Forgettable Year,' *Age* 31 Dec. 1996: B5.

[32] http://www.di-lark.com (2 June 2003).

[33] http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vtuc (2 June 2003). The VTUC was established under the directorship of Sian Prior and is now conducted by Michael Roper.

[34] Founded at the urging of Lawrence McGuire, its first musical director was Trevor Dunn. The current director is Adrian Kirk.

[35] Directed by Faleiry Koczkar, the choir is committed to performing at least twenty-five per cent of its repertoire in Welsh, see http://www.vicwelsh.asn.au (2 June 2003). Other Welsh choirs include: Melbourne Welsh Male Voice Choir, established by Bill Mead in 1984, whose subsequent conductors have been Phillip Smith and Douglas Haywood [http://www.melbwelsh.org.au (2 June 2003)]; Australian Welsh Male Choir, which began in 1973 as the Cambrian Singers, from 1974 known as the Frankston Welsh Male Choir, from 1980 as the Victoria Welsh Male Choir and from 1985 the Australian Welsh Male Choir [http://www.auswelshmalechoir.org.au (2 June 2003)].

Petrunka, the Melbourne Bulgarian women's choir, in 1991 after the first Singers Festival promoted by The Boîte. Canto Coro (not to be confused with Cantus Choro) draws on mainly Greek and Latin American membership and repertoire, while the Scandinavian Choir currently numbers about forty voices, including many non-Scandinavians. Conducted by Staffan Thuringer since 1989, and Danish co-conductor, Vibeke Sybrand, the four-part choir presents concerts and sings at the Sunday service at the Swedish Church in Toorak one a month.[36] The Austrian Choir, established by Dieter Bajzek in 1981, aims to present a wide spectrum of Austrian vocal and instrumental music, ranging from folk to high art forms. The Multicultural Choir based at the Footscray Community Arts Centre was founded in 1992 and is conducted by Peter Mousaferiadis. Performing at many conferences, festivals and community celebrations, it is a variable group of about a dozen singers whose repertoire includes songs from New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Italy, Greece, Macedonia, Vietnam, Georgia, South and West Africa. The choir describes itself as being formed as a way of

> bringing together the diverse musical cultures which migration has brought to our city. By learning and performing songs from a wide range of ethnic traditions, the choir has become a musical microcosm of multicultural Melbourne.[37]

In 1993, Mousaferiadis also created the Choir of the Cultural Association of Hellenic Women that sings traditional and contemporary Greek songs.

Many of these choirs have been established in order to provide welcoming, familiar and safe environments for the many 'new Australians' now resident here. The variety and quality of these groups also keeps these exotic traditions alive while at the same time showcasing them to a public now more widely travelled and interested in leaning about other cultures than might have been the case before the war. But multicultural Melbourne, created first by the nineteenth-century goldrushes and expanded dramatically by post-war migration and the more recent influx from South-East Aisa and the Middle-East, also saw an expansion during the twentieth century of choral activities in those parts of society still largely populated by English-speakers. Especially following the Great Depression, many organisations and companies established work-place choirs, chiefly as a means of generating corporate spirit. Although some began as early as the late nineteenth century, these choirs came to the fore in the inter-war years where their morale-boosting charitable work was invaluable. The choirs of large public-service organisations were amongst the longest lived. The Victorian Postal Institute Choir and the railway choirs in Victoria and NSW were notable. In the private sector, the choir at Foy & Gibson in Melbourne (1922) and the International Harvester Male Chorus, formed in Geelong in 1943, were prominent. The avowed intent of the IHMC currently is to serve the local community through music and to foster local talent.[38] Organised work-place singing, however, now rarely takes on any more serious a guise than a few people singing Christmas carols. David Jones's staff Christmas choirs are perhaps the largest and most organised of these.

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[36] http://members.ocean.com.au/swchurch/choir.html (2 June 2003).
[37] http://home.vicnet.net.au/~mchoir/ (2 June 2003). The website contains the slogan 'Celebrating our many cultures with songs of the world.'
[38] Noel Skurrie, 'International Harvester Male Chorus,' *Shout!* [newsletter of Community Music Victoria], September 2002: 2.

The suburban regions of Melbourne continue to be served by various groups devoted to encouraging participation, musical self-expression, and community pride. Some, such as the Box Hill Choral Society, founded in 1946,[39] now have extended histories of large-scale, public concerts, and are prominent in regional affairs, fundraising and music making, in both their local areas and further afield. They are especially valuable to those for whom travel to attend rehearsals in the city is not possible, or for whom the audition standards or costs of membership of the major city-wide choirs are prohibitive. Other important suburban groups still operating include the Heidelberg City Choir (established in 1920, now called Heidelberg Choral Society), Camberwell Chorale (1944) and the Glen Eira City Choir (1946), some of which developed out of the reorganisation—necessitated by the War—of the old German liedertafels.[40] And new community choirs continue to form wherever a need is seen: the Essendon Choral Society in 1979,[41] and the Monash Chorale in 1995.[42] The Southeastern Philharmonia, directed by Anne Friend, is a community SATB choir formed in 1992 by 'friends who had sung together for many years in school and university choirs.' In an effort to differentiate itself from similar geographically based groups, the Southeastern Philharmonia states that it has been on a

> ten year crusade to extend the experience of amateur music making in Melbourne. The choir consciously explores different and unfamiliar pieces by major composers. It performs work generally overlooked by both professional and community groups and consciously pushes out the envelope of the musical experience of amateur performers. The choir is always looking for versatile, experienced and committed singers who wish to extend their musical experience but [who] may be excluded from other groups by their lack of formal musical qualifications.[43]

These perceived gaps in the repertoire, seemingly prohibitive entry requirements, and the implied lack of variety in the musical presentations of the higher profile, bigger budget (what might, rather inaccurately it appears, be referred to as the mainstream) choral societies, is precisely what caused the recent expansion in the number and types of choirs in Melbourne. This is not to say that the work of such venerable institutions as the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, the Melbourne Chorale and the Melbourne University Choral Society—which

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[39] The Box Hill Choral Society (since 1999 known as the Box Hill Chorale) was established in October 1946 as a result of a public meeting instigated by J. Sutton Crow to establish a choir and brass band and to improve the state of the existing Box Hill orchestra. Crow conducted the first few rehearsals in February 1947, before Leonard Fullard was appointed as permanent conductor, a position he held until 1949. See report of first concert (22 Oct. 1947, Box Hill Town Hall) in *Box Hill Reporter*, 24 Oct. 1947. Rehearsals were held at the Box Hill Tennis Club Pavilion. Subsequent conductors include Herbert Davis (1950–60), Peter Larsen, Jean Wilson (1970s), Peter Nicholls (1977–85), Simon Harvey (1986–88), Michael Loughlin and Andrew Wailes (1995–). In 1985, Box Hill Music Council obtained an Australia Council grant to commission the *Box Hill Gloria* from George Dreyfus. See http://www.boxhillchorale.org.au (2 June 2003).
[40] For a list of choirs operating in Melbourne during the 1930s, see Gladys Rhys Davies, *Music Makers of the Sunny South: A General Survey of Music and Musicians in Victoria* (East Malvern, Vic: The Author, n.d. [ca. 1935]).
[41] This choir has been conducted by Peter Nicholls (from 1979) and Greg Hocking (from 1989). See http://home.vicnet.net.au/~esschor/home.htm. On occasion, while Nicholls was conductor, the Essendon Choral Society performed with the Box Hill Choral Society as members of the Royal Victorian Choir. The RVC was the last incarnation of an organisation originally established as the Melbourne Liedertafel in 1868.
[42] Founded and directed by Michael Loughlin, its current musical director is Rick Prakhoff.
[43] See http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sephil/ (2 June 2003). Anne Friend is acting director of music at Presbyterian Ladies College. She holds a master's degree in choral conducting from San Jose University.

triumvirate is generally considered to be the mainstream of large-scale, traditional choral practice in this city—is inappropriate to today's society, or that these choirs are in any way failing in their duty to society at large, but it does suggest that contemporary society demands a much greater diversity of experience, cultural practice and modes of governance than was previously the case. What is not provided by the mainstream is now achieved by those in need creating a new entity themselves, rather than altering radically what already exists; replacing one thing with another clearly adds nothing to the sum, and urging change on an organisation that has built up considerable knowledge and expertise in a particular field rarely produced a sustainable and wholly satisfying result. Rather than diluting the pool of existing choristers (and risking disaffecting some), new avenues of choral activity increase total participation in music and provide new outlets for community expression.

It is difficult to quantify this increase in the number of choirs in operation. In an appendix to her book *Australia Makes Music*, Isabelle Morseby—writing in 1948 at the very beginning of the period under discussion—lists five major choral societies in Melbourne: the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, Melbourne Liedertafel, Malvern Choral Society, ABC Wireless Chorus and the University Choral Society. 'Other societies worthy of note,' continues Morseby, are the Victorian Railway Choir, Orpheon Choristers, Mitcham Choir, Sandringham Choir, Heidelberg and Ivanhoe Choir, and Camberwell, Brighton and South Melbourne Philharmonic societies, a total of thirteen organisations.[44] Arundel Orchard, writing only a few years after Morseby, similarly notes that there were thirteen choral societies on the Choral Association's list in 1952, chief among these being 'the Malvern Choral Society and the Victorian Railways Institute Choral Society, conducted by Herbert Davies and Leslie Curnow respectively.'[45] A recent internet search for choirs in Melbourne yielded—among 215,000 related pages—three relatively comprehensive and independently produced lists of choirs in Melbourne. One feature of these lists is their variability; only thirteen choirs appeared on all three lists, yet a total of 116 different choral bodies were listed overall. This is not only clear evidence of the substantial increase in the number of groups since the 1950s, but it also suggests that information about the variety of choral activity is difficult both to categorise and to control. A full list of these choirs is given in Appendix A.

This article has described the variety of choral endeavours now being undertaken in Melbourne. As a city's population increases, so too, we might expect, will the number of choirs. The focus here is, therefore, not the number of choirs that have come into existence over the past fifty years so much as the increasing variety of ways in which people can now choose to express themselves through singing. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were a number of suburban choral societies, looking and sounding very much like the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, wanting to be part of the 'improving' social force that choirs then were perceived as being; the Philharmonic was, perhaps, nothing particularly special, except that it was the oldest and for a time the most successful. The Philharmonic is still the oldest, but is now surrounded by hundreds of differentiated organisations, each secure in its

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[44] Isabelle Moresby, *Australia Makes Music* (Melbourne: Longmans, 1948), Appendix 1, "Choral Societies of Australia," 187.
[45] W. Arundel Orchard, *Music in Australia: More than 150 Years of Development* (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1952), 117. The other choirs Orchard mentions by name are the Philharmonic, Royal Victorian Liedertafel and the Oriana Choir.

niche, however that may be defined by its participants, its audiences or its competitors. Each choir now has its own distinct motivations for existence, methods of operation, and opportunities for expansion. In today's cultural landscape, the great joy of choral singing is that no matter what your interest, ambition or ability, there is a probably a choir suitable for you. If there is not, it is entirely within your power to start your own.

Appendix A: Listing of Choirs in Melbourne (as at June 2003)

Column **L1** based on http://cmv.customer.netspace.net.au/links.html (orchestras and children's choirs have been removed); the list was produced by Community Music Victoria.
Column **L2** based on http://home.vicnet.net.au/~choirs/alphabeticalindex.html (children's choirs have been removed); the list was compiled by chorister Karina Gough and supported by Deakin University.
Column **L3** based on http://www.anca.org.au/ChoirList/stateschoirs.asp?RegionID=Victoria (non-metropolitan choirs removed); this is a list of choral orgnisations who are members of the Australian National Choral Association.

It is unlikely that even this composite list is exhaustive. As can be gauged by the differences between these three listings, there is significant variation in who is recognised (or those who wish to be listed) as a choir.

Name of Choir or Organisation	L1	L2	L3
Accademia Arcadia			•
ACU St Patrick's Campus Choir	•	•	•
Altona Community Choir		•	
Amuse			•
The ACCET (Australian Choral Conductors Education and Training) Choir			•
Astra Choir		•	
Australian Pop Choirs			•
Australian Welsh Male Choir		•	•
Austrian Choir	•	•	•
Bayside Singers		•	
Blue Note Vocals Inc.			•
Borboleta [Brazilian Choir]	•		
Box Hill Chorale	•	•	•
Broadmeadows Community Singing Group		•	
Brunswick Womens Choir			•
Camberwell Chorale		•	•
Cantabile		•	•
Canto Coro			•
Cantorion Cymreig Victoria Welsh Choir		•	
The Casey Choir Inc.			•
Cecilian Singers		•	•
Choir of the Cultural Association of Hellenic Women		•	
Chorelation	•	•	

Coeliac Singers	•		
Con Brio		•	•
Concordis	•	•	•
Cranbourne Chorale		•	
Cranbourne Lions Choir Inc.		•	
Crying in Public Places	•		
Da Capo Singers	•	•	•
Diamond Valley Singers	•	•	
Elation		•	•
Ensemble 21 (E21)			•
Ensemble Gombert Inc			•
Essendon Choral Society	•	•	•
Eternal Choir	•		
Faye Dumont Singers	•		•
Free Spirit		•	
German Choral Association of Australia Inc			•
Glen Eira City Choir		•	
Gloriana	•	•	•
Great Southern A Cappella	•		
Green Singers	•		
Gruppo Culturale Italiano Inc.		•	
Harambee		•	•
Heidelberg Choral Society		•	
Highbury Chorale		•	
Hillside Chamber Choir		•	
Joyful Strains		•	
Just Harmony Inc.			•
Kew Philharmonic Choir			•
The Keytones (Formerly The Nurses Choir of Victoria)		•	
Latrobe Chorale Inc.			•
Liederkranz Tivoli		•	
Liron Choir			•
Livingsong		•	
Loose Arrangement		•	
Lowanna Singers			•
Madrigal & All Star Choir			•
Majellan Singers			•
Maroondah Singers	•	•	
Melbournaires Men's Barbershop Chorus	•	•	
Melbourne Chamber Choir	•	•	
Melbourne Chorale	•	•	•
Melbourne Chorus			•
Melbourne Composition Choir		•	
Melbourne Gay & Lesbian Chorus		•	•
Melbourne Male Choir		•	•
Melbourne Master Singers	•	•	
Melbourne Singers		•	•
Melbourne Singers of Gospel (Heaven On Earth)			•

Melbourne University Choral Society	•	•	•
Melbourne Welsh Male Voice Choir	•	•	•
Melbourne Women's Choir	•	•	
Monash Chorale	•	•	•
Monash University Choral Society	•		
Mood Swing		•	
Multicultural Choir		•	
North Melbourne Community Singing	•		
Northern Voice	•		
Once More With Feeling		•	•
Resonance		•	
Ring Singers		•	•
RMIT Concert Choir		•	•
RMIT Occasional Choral Society	•	•	
Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society	•	•	•
Russian Women's Chamber Choir of Melbourne			•
Saint Cecilia Singers			•
SALT (Sing And Laugh Together)	•	•	
Scandinavian Choir of Melbourne	•	•	
Scotsglen Singers			•
Scottish Gaelic Choir of Victoria	•		•
Sing Australia (Hawthorn/Camberwell)			•
Sophie's Voice			•
South of the River Community Gospel Choir		•	
Southeastern Philharmonia	•	•	•
Southern Sounds Chorus			•
Star Chorale		•	
Sweet Adelines International: The Melbourne Chorus		•	
'Sweet Sassafras' Community Choir			•
Swinburne Chorale		•	
Tides of Welcome Soul & Gospel Choir		•	
Tongue and Groove		•	
Treble Tones		•	•
Tudor Choristers	•		•
Tuesday Singers			•
Victoria Chorale	•		•
Victoria Welsh Male Voice Choir	•		•
Victorian State Singers			•
Victorian Trade Union Choir	•		•
Vocal Consort	•		•
Vocally Wild			
Voice Box			•
Waverley Singers		•	
Yarra Valley Singers		•	•
Yukana Singers		•	