



# Friends Newsletter

St Francis' Choir Inc. 326 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne 3000 Ph. (03) 9663 2495  
Vol. 20 No. 1. March 2011



## Director's Report

Dear Friends,

Welcome to 2011 with St Francis' Choir. Our year has already started with a flourish. On Sunday, 6 February, the choir began its season with a special Mass to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of St Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. The choir sang Roger Heagney's attractive arrangement of the Andrea Gabrieli's *Missa Brevis* and the motet was the rousing conclusion to Marc-Antoine Charpentier's famous *Te Deum*. John Byrne's informative notes on the music program in this issue will give you further information on the wide range of great music we have in store for you this year.

Given the choir's long and interesting history, it's not surprising that we often have anniversaries to celebrate. Of particular significance this year are a number of anniversaries concerning Dame Nellie Melba, undoubtedly the choir's most famous former chorister. She was born 150 years ago, gave her final performance with St Francis' Choir 125 years ago and died 80 years ago. Melba never forgot her association with the choir and remained grateful for the support it gave her in her early years. When she returned to Melbourne in 1909 as a famous celebrity she invited choir members to her concert in the Exhibition Building 'as a testimony of her friendly feelings for the musical association which formally acknowledged her claims to artistic recognition in the days of long ago'. The choir remains committed to encouraging young singers and providing them

with opportunities that they might not otherwise have. This is one of the many ways our long and vibrant tradition continues.

Another way in which the power of the music and the liturgy at St Francis' manifests itself is in a wider concern for those less fortunate. On 27 March at 2.30pm in St Francis' Hall, our well known soloist, Merlyn Quaiife will join pianist Andrea Katz in presenting a fundraising concert for ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans). ACRATH is committed to working together towards the elimination of human trafficking in Australia, the Pacific and internationally. The support of ACRATH involves a number of people associated with St Francis'. Roger Heagney, director of music emeritus has written a series of songs for Merlyn which have been recorded on CD. The monies raised by the sale of this disc (with cover art by Fr Pat Negri, SSS) go to ACRATH. Merlyn and Andrea have also presented many fundraising concerts featuring these songs. The concert on 27 March is one such event and I urge you and your friends to support it, so the valuable educational and pastoral work of ACRATH may continue.

As always, the choir joins me in thanking you for your support throughout 2010 and we look forward to welcoming you to St Francis' throughout what promises to be a most interesting and satisfying year of music making.

With every best wish for 2011,

**Tony Way**  
*Director of Music*

**St Francis' Church:** [www.stfrancismelbourne.org](http://www.stfrancismelbourne.org)

**St Francis' Choir:** [www.stfrancischoir.org.au](http://www.stfrancischoir.org.au)

**e-mail:** [stfmusic@blessedsacrament.com.au](mailto:stfmusic@blessedsacrament.com.au)



## In Brief

Dear Friends,  
Welcome back to all our past friends and to those new friends who have recently joined our ranks,

We are all in for another busy year, marked specially by several celebrations in honour of Dame Nellie Melba.

John Byrne has once again provided informative notes in this newsletter detailing some of the music to be performed over the next six months. Many thanks for your continued efforts, John.

Onto other matters, we are looking for a new treasurer and would love anyone with the time and knowledge to spare to get in touch after reading the advertisement in this newsletter. Martin Brown has made an outstanding contribution as treasurer in recent years and we thank him for his efforts.

Finally, we would like to draw your attention to the ACRATH concert (details are enclosed in the newsletter). By participating in this event, you are supporting a very worthy cause.

Wishing you all a happy 2011,

**Marilyn Jamieson**  
*Coordinator of the Friends of the Choir*

## SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

Please return your annual subscriptions as soon as possible.

This year we need to raise \$25,000 to meet the costs of maintaining the music program at St Francis. Can you help by making a donation when you return your subscription? Every donation goes directly towards maintaining the music program at St Francis.



## Annotations

This year brings us an unusually late Easter therefore the choir will be able to use the time to present a few interesting new works, including works to make the four hundredth anniversary

of the death of Tomas Luis de Victoria and the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Franz Liszt. We shall also start the year with a commemoration of the two hundredth birthday of St Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers. The five weeks leading up to Lent will see us featuring masses by Andrea Gabrieli, Roger Heagney, Colin Mawby and Louis Vierne together with motets by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, Colin Mawby, William Lloyd Webber, Anton Bruckner and Richard Farrant. William Lloyd Webber's sumptuous setting of the text "*Love divine, all loves excelling*" was first heard by our Director, Tony Way, but all efforts to procure the music were to no avail. Finally in desperation he

wrote to Julian Lloyd Webber, one of the composer's famous sons, who immediately sent a copy of his father's work with permission to perform it.

The five weeks of Lent will feature Masses by Victoria, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Franz Liszt, while among the motets to be presented will be "*O nata lux*" by Morten Lauridsen, a widely acclaimed American composer who is professor of composition at the University of Southern California. His music has achieved wide popularity in recent years and is notable for its deep mystical atmosphere. Among the many, many pieces of music presented during Holy Week will be "*Tanquam ad latronem*" by Joseph Haydn's little brother, Michael, and a setting of "*Ubi caritas*" by the young Norwegian Ola Gjeilo whose music combines elements of popular, jazz and classical style. The Melbourne composer Gordon Kerry will be featured during the Easter Vigil when we shall sing his challenging "*Sapientia liberavit*" which has been written as a gift to the choir. Mention must also be made of masses by

Franz Schubert, Roger Heagney and Christopher Willcock. For the evening liturgy on Good Friday we shall sing the splendid cantata “*The Seven Words of Christ*” by Theodore Dubois. Overshadowed by his famous contemporary, Saint-Saens, Dubois was highly regarded as a teacher and organist. His *Seven Last Words* was written in 1867 and has been a favourite at St Francis for almost fifty years. The weeks after Easter are an opportunity to sing some of the more spectacular items from the repertoire when we sing masses by Antonin Dvorak, Camille Saint-Saens, Alexander Gretchaninov and motets by Josef Rheinberger, John Rutter, Richard Proulx, Ralph Vaughan Williams and William Harris whose famous double motet “*Faire is heaven*” we sang some years ago.

In 2011 we also take the opportunity to celebrate the 150th birthday of Dame Nellie Melba who was born in Richmond, the daughter of a wealthy builder, David Mitchell. After a short-lived marriage to George Armstrong in Queensland she returned to Melbourne prior to setting off for Europe and England where she would and achieve unparalleled fame. One hundred and twenty-five years ago she was soprano soloist for some months at St Francis’. While we do not have a complete list of the works she sang at St Francis, it is known that she did perform in Haydn’s *Nelson Mass* and Gounod’s *St Cecilia Mass*.

On 12 June (Pentecost) we shall perform the *Nelson Mass* which is without doubt one the Haydn’s greatest works. Written in 1798 it is one of six magnificent masses written each year by Haydn for the name-day of Princess Marie Hermenegild of Esterhazy. Haydn was in retirement at the time and his only duty was the composition of an annual Mass for the beautiful and kind Princess. Europe was in the grip of the Napoleonic wars and the necessity of a modest orchestra is turned into a dramatic texture of strings, trumpets and percussion.

Always known as the *Nelson Mass*, this work was performed at Esterhazy when Lord Nelson visited there and indeed Lady Emma Hamilton, his “companion”, sang the soprano solo. Nelson presented Haydn with his pocket-watch and Haydn gave him the quill used to compose the mass. The first performance in Melbourne was on 31 May 1858 when St Francis’ Choir sang it at the opening of the Ladye Chapel – the first orchestral mass in Melbourne. The first performance in modern times was on 25 November 1979 conducted by Roger Heagney.

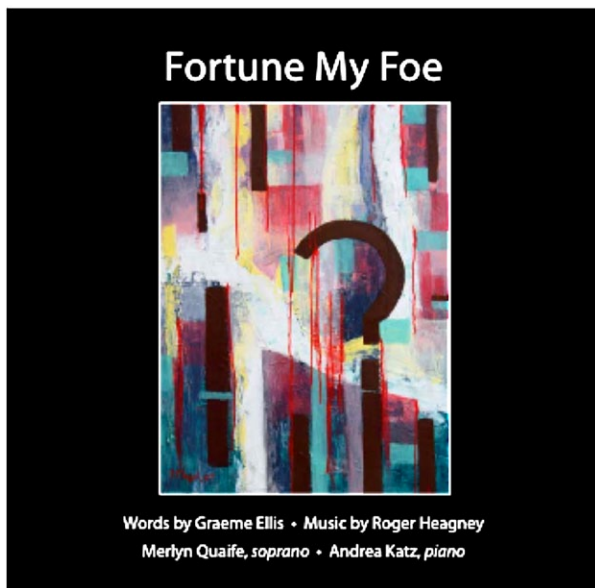
Two weeks later of June 26 (Corpus Christi) the choir will perform the *St Cecilia Solemn Mass* by Charles Gounod. The *St Cecilia Mass*, written 1855, is arguably the most popular mass at St Francis’ ever since the choir gave the first Australian performance in 1868, singing it with Nellie Melba as soloist in 1885. The composer Saint-Saens had a low opinion of Gounod and especially his operas, including *Faust*. Wagner, who attended the first performance of *Faust*, walked out during the second act! Opera was the fashion in late nineteenth-century Paris, however Saint-Saens wrote that when all Gounod’s operas are consigned to museums where they belong, future generations will hear the *St Cecilia Mass* and wonder at the genius of such inspired music. Gounod never quite fulfilled his early promise and although he won the highly esteemed Rome Prize in 1839, he flirted with joining the priesthood. His music has been unkindly described as the work of an ‘erotic priest’. Come to this mass and hear the sumptuous greatness of which Gounod was capable.

**John Byrne**

## CHOIR TREASURER

St Francis’ Choir is seeking a new honorary treasurer. The treasurer maintains the financial affairs of St Francis’ Choir and the St Francis’ Choir Foundation. While no formal accounting qualification is required, someone who has experience with financial software (such as Quicken) would be preferred. The role requires up to eleven hours of work per month. A detailed job description is available from the Director of Music, Tony Way. Tel: (03) 96394560 or email [stfmusic@blessedsacrament.com.au](mailto:stfmusic@blessedsacrament.com.au)

# Special Fund-Raising Concert



Experience a powerful concert of poetry and music and support a worthy cause.

Soprano Merlyn Quaife and pianist Andrea Katz perform song cycles by Roger Heagney based on poetry by Graeme Ellis.

All proceeds go to the work of **Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans**.

For more information about **ACRATH** go to [www.acrath.org.au](http://www.acrath.org.au)

Merlyn says “the beauty, power and depth of the music and poetry resonate well with the work of assisting victims of human trafficking”.

**Sunday, 27 March 2011 at 2.30pm**  
**St Francis' Church Hall**  
**326 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne**

\$50 full, \$25 concession

Admission includes concert, CD and afternoon tea.

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**Booking Form** *Please return booking form to ACRATH Concert, 326 Lonsdale St, Melbourne 3000*

Yes, I wish to purchase ..... tickets @ \$50 each and ..... tickets @ \$25 each.

Name .....

Address .....

I enclose a cheque payable to ACRATH for \$ .....

or

Please debit my  Mastercard  Visa Card for \$ .....

St Francis' Choir Inc. will appear on your statement.

Card Number \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Signature .....

Name on Card ..... Expiry Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_