



Noosa Chorale

Tune In

Tune In—The Newsletter of Noosa Chorale Inc

Volume 18, Number 2, May 2024

Performance of *Elijah* heralds Chorale's thirtieth year

This year Noosa Chorale is celebrating 30 years of bringing high-quality performances of much-loved music, classical, popular, and jazz, to Noosa audiences.

The choir hit the ground running from the end of January with rehearsals for Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, the first concert of the year this May, under the masterful direction of Kim Kirkman. (Read about *Elijah* on page 4 of this issue.)

This is only the second time that the choir has performed this extraordinary work whose popularity over the years since its premier performance in 1846 has rivalled that of Handel's *Messiah*.

The performance by the choir in 2007 coincided with a period of fervent opposition by Noosa residents to the decision to amalgamate Noosa with other shire councils.

As local journalist (and bass singer in the choir) Jim Fagan points out in his book "Noosa Sings—fifteen years of

classical harmony", the publicity for the event took a decidedly political turn.

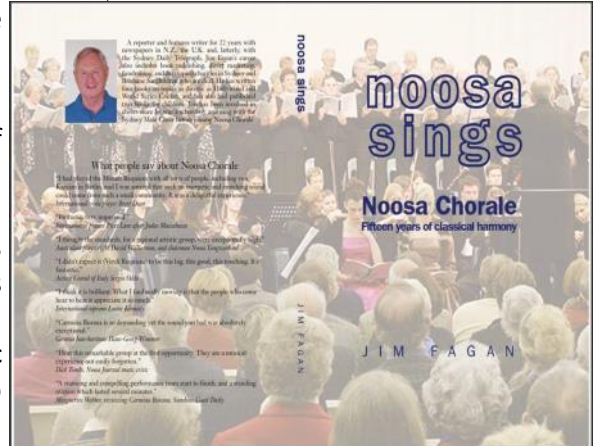
He quotes then president of the choir, John Woodlock, "thundering" in the local press: "As Noosa fights to keep its identity and fights to retain its values and traditions, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is a tonic to maintain the rage and to stick to the grand vision".

The book, published by the Chorale in 2009 to mark its first fifteen years, was launched at the Bicentennial Hall in Sunshine Beach to an audience of some 300 people. Author Jim says in his foreword to the illustrated book, "There have been many thrilling moments in the life of the choir since its first concert (Handel's *Messiah*) in 1994. It just seemed to me they should be recorded."

New Chorale president Donald Grant said, "We want to thank all our

supporters over these 30 years and hope you will share in our celebrations this year at our upcoming concerts."

The last remaining copies of the limited edition book are now being offered for free to our readers. Send us an email if you wish to secure your free copy: noosachorale@gmail.com "Noosa Sings—fifteen years of classical harmony", by Jim Fagan, 2009.



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NOOSA CHORALE PRESENTS

MENDELSSOHN'S

ELIJAH

CONDUCTED BY

KIM KIRKMAN

WITH ORCHESTRA
AND SOLOISTS

FRIDAY 24 MAY, 7PM
SATURDAY 25 MAY, 2PM



Fran steps down as President

At the recent AGM of Noosa Chorale, retiring president Fran Wilson handed over the “president badge” to Donald Grant.

Reflecting on her three years in the role, Fran acknowledged her tenure had been marked by some unique challenges, “not the least of which were providing leadership in the troubling years following the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, and finding a new conductor to replace multi-talented music director, Adrian King, who had been our conductor from 2007 to 2022”.

Deputy Music Director Pam Sage thanked Fran for her commitment to the choir’s overall health and success, and the sheer unrelenting energy that drove her efforts.

For her part, Fran says she felt privileged to have held the role and enjoyed her years as President with the strong support of the management committee team and all members of the choir.



Fran Wilson with incoming president Donald Grant at the March AGM

“On retiring, I was humbled by the vote of thanks and proud of the choir’s achievements over the past three years, maintaining our high regard in the community, and welcoming many new members.”

She is also delighted about just being a soprano again, and giving her all to singing Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* at the choir’s upcoming May concert.

Fran thanked retiring committee member Peter Althaus for his

contributions, and congratulated Donald as the new president in this, the choir’s 30th year.

Interestingly, the president’s position has been filled in the past by two basses (John Woodlock and John Davies), one alto (Gai Ramsay), and one soprano (Fran Wilson), so it is definitely time for a tenor, in the form of Donald, to complete the four-part harmony in taking up the post.

Fran also congratulated the other elected committee members: Rita Malik (vice-president), Margaret Haffenden (secretary), Babette Urban (treasurer), Pam Sage (librarian), Philip Holmes (events coordinator), Denise Mason (marketing and publicity coordinator), and Dianne Roberson.

The year ahead for Donald and the committee will see the choir tackle the powerful oratorio *Elijah* in May, an August fun-filled jazz concert, and a joyous Christmas concert in December.

From little things, big things grow

by ANGIE OAKLEY

We are in an age of start-ups. New enterprises are constantly springing up, nurtured by the enthusiasm and drive of their instigators. But many of them fail – according to some statistics, a whopping 90% of them don’t survive the first year. Just having a good idea it seems isn’t enough to ensure their survival.

Imagine then an enterprise that depends on a group of people coming together, in order to work really hard, dedicate many, many hours, and huge amounts of energy to something that is not aimed at making a profit.

And these people are among the most capable, accomplished, and passionate, that you will ever meet. They have lots of other things going on in their lives but there is something that inspires them to insist that this enterprise will thrive and grow – for thirty years!

What has inspired them to keep going? The answer lies in an idea

suggested by the well-known psychologist and writer Steve Biddulph, who sees a life as a house – his is actually a mansion! He suggests that each floor represents a part of the self – body, emotion, thought. But the one that interests me is “the fourth floor, a roof terrace open to the stars” that offers the mind and the spirit endless possibilities.

That’s where music is to be found, along with nature and art and all the things that do more than just sustain us, they give us joy and hope and take us to places outside our ordinary lives. They enable us to learn and grow with no particular end in view, other than the process of becoming a fuller human being.

This is what has driven our enterprise, Noosa Chorale. But it’s not enough. All that joy and energy needed harnessing. It needed leadership, and organisation and an army of wonderful people, who have volunteered to

preside, to assist, to contribute, to move chairs and bring food, publicise and print, usher and run raffles.

And, let’s not forget the humble scribes who record it all for posterity including Jim Fagan whose book chronicling the first fifteen years of the Chorale’s life is such a rich resource for choir enthusiasts. (See article page 1.)

Thirty years ago, local barrister Joe McMahon had the initial idea, and the highly accomplished musician Leonard Spira had the expertise, and the passion to do something with it.

Leonard had studied French horn at the Melbourne Conservatorium and played with both the Melbourne and Sydney Symphony Orchestras. He went on to form the Victorian Opera Company, and later the Sydney Occasional Orchestra, all the while maintaining his day job as a talented architect.

Continued Page 3

From little things, big things grow by ANGIE OAKLEY (continued from page 2)

But music was always his first love. His arrival in Noosa was a case of “right time right place”, and for Noosa, right person, as Joe McMahon attested. “Leonard glued it all together. We would not be 20% of where we are without him. We grabbed him straight off the plane and are very lucky to have him.”

Also very lucky was Leonard’s choice of a partner in life and in music. Gail Spira is still to be found among the altos – as enthusiastic about the Chorale as she was thirty years ago. ‘It was very hard work,’ she recalls. ‘We had to nurture the singers, many of whom were not confident in their ability.’

But between herself and Leonard – Gail describes herself as the go-between – they were able to persuade and inspire our nascent choir. Over the years Gail has served as patron of the choir and contributes enormously to the social well-being of choir members.

But an enterprise still has to land in the right place, and sure enough they found in Noosa a community that loved the ideas and were prepared to bring the range of their skills and energy to the project.

So it came about that on 11th December 1994, enough like-minded folk considered it important enough to



Leonard Spira OAM



Gail Spira (centre front) sits quietly as the audience stands to applaud the Offenbach concert, Leonard’s last concert in 2006. (From “Noosa Sings: fifteen years of classical harmony”, by Jim Fagan)

gather together and sing and play ‘Messiah’.

And they have been gathering – in greater and greater numbers ever since - to offer many more wonderful musical events to the Noosa community every year.

The fellowship engendered by this extraordinary project has proved to be

a major source of joy for the participants for the next thirty years. And that joy has spread throughout the region among audiences that must number in the many thousands.

And as for leadership, success has bred success. The group has since been led by the extraordinary Adrian King from 2007—2022, and our current maestro Kim Kirkman, who have enhanced the project immeasurably with their talent and charisma.

“From little things, big things grow.” Paul Kelly’s memorable words were composed for another enterprise of the heart, but fitting for us as we embark on the next very big thing thirty years on: a May concert performance of *Elijah*, with orchestra, soloists and a truly wonderful choir.

The choir last performed *Elijah* in 2007 under the baton of Adrian King. Reviewing the performance in Noosa News, Margarite Webber described it as “the stand-out musical event of the year”. This year’s performance in May with Kim Kirkman promises to be a transcendent experience and a very fitting beginning to the Chorale’s next 30 years.

Elijah
7pm 24 May; 2pm 25 May
Bookings: [The J Theatre](#)



(above) Noosa Chorale singers with Leonard Spira occupy the lifesaving tower at Noosa Beach in 2001 and (right) return to the same tower in greater numbers with Adrian King in 2019.



Elijah—the lowdown by DENISE MASON

Here is the unofficial retelling of the story from the Old Testament Book of Kings I, and the related choruses from Mendelssohn's powerful oratorio *Elijah* (shown here in *italics*).

Characters: King Ahab, an Israelite; Jezebel, a Phoenician princess; Baal, a false God; Baal's prophets; and Elijah, a prophet of God.

Story: This being an Old Testament story, you will not find peace, kindness or forgiveness here. Instead, there is fire and brimstone, and in this case mostly fire. There is also dreadful drought, famine and more fire. This will be followed by a fiery chariot, some fiery horses and a fiery whirlwind. Read on.

The trouble started when King Ahab married Jezebel and she became queen. At the time, it was customary for a foreign wife to be allowed to continue to observe her religious practice but Jezebel, who was a follower of Baal, had grander ideas. She was very keen for all people to listen to the prophets of Baal and to turn away from God. This they did.

Predictably, God was not happy. He told Elijah to tell the people that there would be drought and famine as punishment (*Introduction*). It lasted for three and a half years (*Help Lord!*)

King Ahab accused Elijah of causing the trouble and Elijah accused King Ahab of allowing the worship of Baal which in turn caused God to mock the

people. There was an enormous amount of tension, particularly when the people redoubled their efforts to ask Baal for deliverance, believing that God no longer looked upon them (*Yet doth the Lord*).

Elijah would not join them. His faith in God was unshakeable and he set out to bring people back to fearing God (*Blessed are the Men who Fear Him*).

Elijah challenged Baal's prophets to a contest to bring down fire to burn a sacrifice. The God that did this would be proven as the one true God (*As God the Lord of Sabaoth*). Despite the crying, wailing and pleading of the prophets (*Baal, we cry to Thee*), Baal remained silent. They cried out even louder (*Call him louder*).

However, Elijah merely spoke to God (*Cast thy burden upon the Lord*) and God sent fire, lots of fire (*O Thou, who makest thine angels sing*). Elijah then rounded up the prophets and killed them and then announced the arrival of heavy rain. The drought was over (*Thou hast overthrown thine enemies*).

Jezebel was furious and set out to kill Elijah. He fled for his life and God sent a fiery chariot with fiery, fiery horses and took him up to heaven in a fiery whirlwind. Safe at last (*Then did Elijah*).

The people once again recognised God as the creator and the Lord of all the nations (*And then shall your light break forth*).



Elijah ascends to heaven

Stained glass panel, by Heaton, Butler & Bayne, 1902, Cathedral of St Michael and St George, Aldershot, UK.

Epilogue: And what happened to Jezebel? If you read on to Kings II you will find that, in typical Old Testament style, Jezebel met a grizzly end. She was thrown from a high window and died when she hit the stones below. Immediately after this, she was trampled by a horse and then eaten by stray dogs so that she would have no resting place.

Did you know... ? Some curious facts about Mendelssohn's *Elijah* for your next trivia night...

Mendelssohn worked on *Elijah* for about 10 years before a commission from Birmingham Festival (UK) inspired him to complete the work. Mendelssohn conducted that first performance to an ecstatic audience of 2000 people, and it premiered in English, not German as composed.

Elijah was well-received by the critics but not by George Bernard Shaw. He detested it and described a huge gap between "true religious sentiment" and Mendelssohn's "prettiness."

After Mendelssohn's death, *Elijah* was performed to raise money to establish a composer's scholarship. The first recipient of the scholarship was Arthur Sullivan of Gilbert and Sullivan fame.

Music from *Elijah* was on the program for the very first concert at Carnegie Hall in New York when it opened in 1891. It was also on the program for the 100th anniversary, in 1991.

Elijah was to be the composer's last large-scale work. Exhausted by an extremely rigorous concert schedule and the demands of preparing the *Elijah* score for publication, Mendelssohn was disconsolate over the unexpected death earlier that year of his beloved sister, Fanny.

Mendelssohn suffered a series of strokes and died on November 4, 1847, at the age of thirty-eight.

Chorale singers go out to the community

IAN JOBLING



Verrierdale dawn ceremony, conducted by deputy music director Pam Sage



The choir after the Eumundi ceremony



From left: Donald Grant (president), John Davies, Marianne McLennan, Pam Sage (deputy music director), and Janet Brewer (accompanist)

Thirty singers from Noosa Chorale participated in the Anzac Day Dawn Service at Verrierdale Hall and the ceremony at Eumundi Amphitheatre, conducted by Deputy Music Director Pam Sage, with Janet Brewer accompanying on keyboard. The choir sang "Abide with Me", the New Zealand National Anthem (in both English and Maori), and the Australian National Anthem. Singers were delighted to enjoy the lavish Gunfire breakfast at Verrierdale before going on to the Eumundi ceremony.

Photos: Ian Jobling, Greg Cramb, and Rose Brown



From left: Margaret Haffenden, Debbie Boyles, Linda Bishop, Bronwyn Innes, Rosemary Brown, Fran Pennay, Margie Fisher, Jenny Jackson, Fran Wilson, Rosemary Brown, and Jackie Martin



Colin Brown with daughter Hannah from St Andrews Anglican College Peregian Springs, Janet Cramb, Jean Bleyerveld, and Wilma Barnes

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