

November 11, 2003

Musical Director's Report

November has already been a busy month. Our march at the Kiewa School celebrations was a little longer than most of us had anticipated, ending in a perilous encounter with a cattle grid! However, we played well and all survived for refreshments afterwards. Our efforts were most appreciated by the crowd. Well done to all members who contributed.

The Bright fireworks recital began well enough - a few ominous clouds in the distance looked as though they might clear. However, we were ultimately rained out along with everything else except the fireworks. Shivering under cover in bleak conditions watching a spectacular display at close quarters was a unique experience.

I suspect that memories of this recital will stay with us for our good playing at opening of the show, the excellent Bright scenery while eating tea, our huddling under cover waiting for the rain to abate, and then sitting in total darkness when the power failed just as we were about to play our second bracket!

Fortunately we kept our good humour and left with an invitation to return next year. Thank you to the O'Sullivan family who provided such warm hospitality after the concert.

Christmas Concert

I have completed some intensive work with the *Sing Australia Choir* and feel very confident that they will be better than ever this year. They are an enthusiastic group and have been well trained by Joi Wilkinson to follow a beat. (There's a message in there for all of you!)

The choir will be joining in the choruses of many carols, as well as presenting a few items of their own. All choristers have been issued with rehearsal CDs of the band arrangements played on piano, courtesy of some clever Macintosh software. We will work with the choir from 8:00 pm for three Wednesday nights, beginning on November 12.

I am very happy with the carol arrangements in the new hymn books and will be using these for several key items in the main concert. We will also use them in small group recitals closer to Christmas. We will play off lyres to save ourselves some effort at the various venues.

We heard our first soloist last week and several more are expected over the next two weeks. Members who played at our last St Matthew's concert will remember Dianne Prince and Matthew Winnell who sang the *Blue Danube*. They will be joining us as part of a team of soloists gathered by myself and Caryl Cook.

The choirs of St Monica's and Wodonga Primary will be making an important contribution this year. The St Monica's group is a *signing* choir not a *singing* choir, and will perform with the Wodonga choir in a combined presentation. This should make for an interesting item.

You are reminded that the dress rehearsal this year is on **Monday, December 15** at the Catholic College beginning at 7:00 pm sharp. Please arrive early enough to be set up, warmed up and tuned up in time to begin promptly. We will rehearse *Sleigh Ride* and any difficult carol arrangements until 7:30 pm when the choir and soloists will join us for a full run of the entire programme.

Please do not park inside the school grounds. Last time we used the CCW auditorium several cars were forced to drive on the grass because of traffic congestion. This caused significant damage to the lawns outside the hall. Park outside the grounds on Silva Drive, or in the staff car parks.

Junior Band

My experiment asking Toby and Elliot to play at St Monica's school has resulted in three new players. A child of one of our own members has also joined and some others have shown an interest in joining soon. All the new students are very musical and are making rapid progress. Our Sunday morning lessons have been very enjoyable and I have received positive feedback from all the parents involved. If I can maintain this level of interest we should have some new players joining the main band sometime in 2004.

Metronome

I have included an article I wrote about the importance of using a metronome as part of your every day practice routine. Please read this carefully and try some of the suggestions. Getting the rhythm correct is the first and most important component in band music. If we can't play exactly in time then everything else (breathing, articulation and tone quality) becomes futile.

To help with this year's preparation for the Christmas Concert I will be issuing all members with a copy of the same CD that I made for the choir. This should have two major benefits. Firstly, everyone will know in advance the exact tempos, introductions, and the numbers of verses. Secondly, you will have a tireless guide during your home practice.

Playing with a backing track is extraordinarily valuable. You have to keep going, even if you play a wrong note or two, and you must stay strictly in time (no speeding up in the easy bits). Also, you can make subtle adjustments to your intonation as you practise to ensure that you really are in tune. Please take advantage of this opportunity to improve your playing.

The busiest season of our year has begun. Please attend all the rehearsals, work at home to improve your own personal contribution to the band's efforts, and don't forget to sell a large number of raffle tickets. We really do need new percussion instruments and a successful raffle will help get us started on this vital and expensive project.

Best Regards

Gregory Lewis