

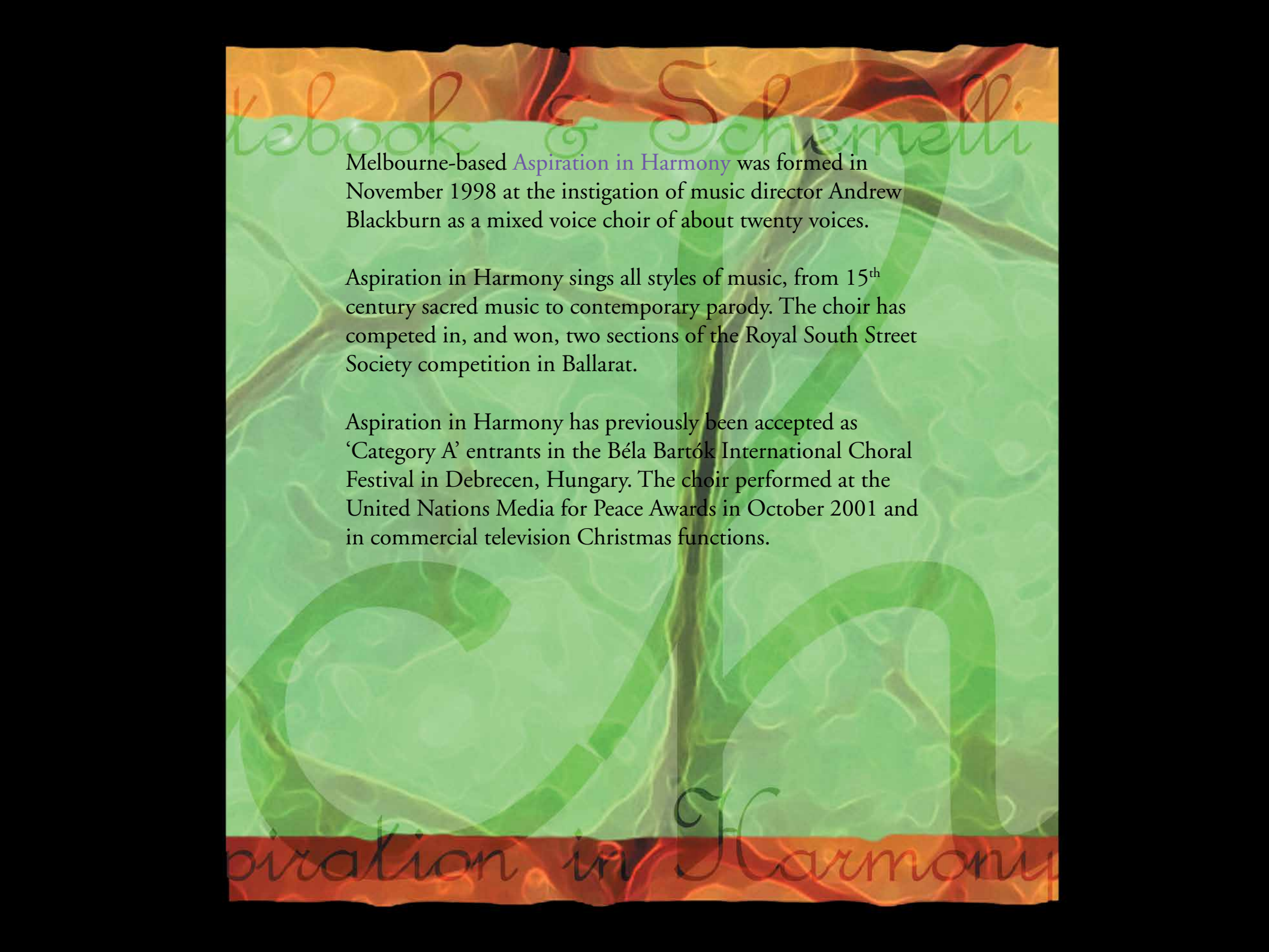
Aspiration in Harmony - Andrew Blackburn

Bente Lancaster



Schemelli Gesang Buch

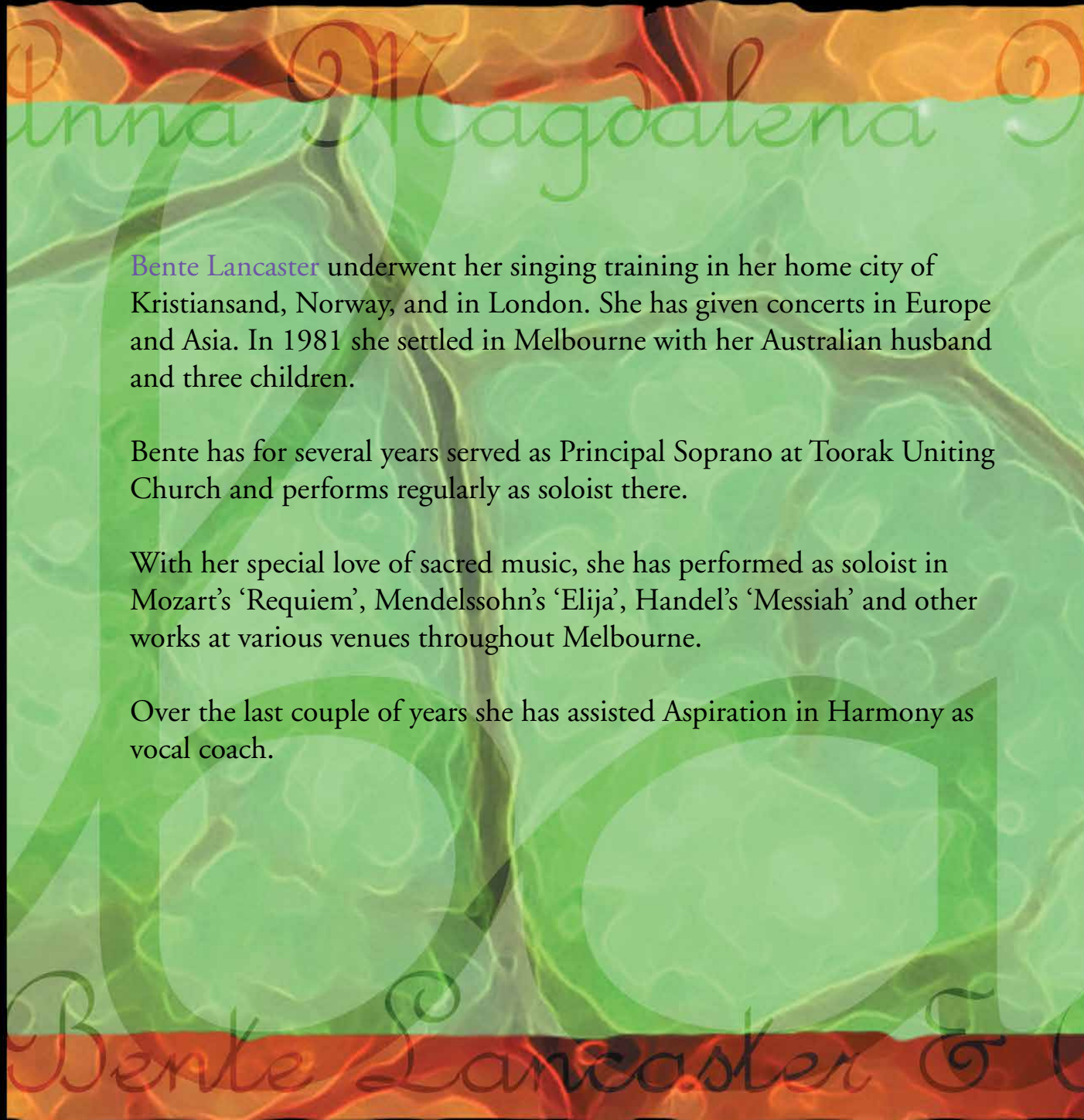
Anna Magdalena Notebook



Melbourne-based **Aspiration in Harmony** was formed in November 1998 at the instigation of music director Andrew Blackburn as a mixed voice choir of about twenty voices.

Aspiration in Harmony sings all styles of music, from 15th century sacred music to contemporary parody. The choir has competed in, and won, two sections of the Royal South Street Society competition in Ballarat.

Aspiration in Harmony has previously been accepted as 'Category A' entrants in the Béla Bartók International Choral Festival in Debrecen, Hungary. The choir performed at the United Nations Media for Peace Awards in October 2001 and in commercial television Christmas functions.



Inna Magdolena

Bente Lancaster underwent her singing training in her home city of Kristiansand, Norway, and in London. She has given concerts in Europe and Asia. In 1981 she settled in Melbourne with her Australian husband and three children.

Bente has for several years served as Principal Soprano at Toorak Uniting Church and performs regularly as soloist there.

With her special love of sacred music, she has performed as soloist in Mozart's 'Requiem', Mendelssohn's 'Elija', Handel's 'Messiah' and other works at various venues throughout Melbourne.

Over the last couple of years she has assisted Aspiration in Harmony as vocal coach.

Bente Lancaster & Co



Andrew Blackburn studied at the University of Melbourne, where he gained a Master of Music degree. He continued his organ studies in England and in France with Jean Langlais.

Andrew is a prominent recitalist, his performances having included concertos with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, concerts for the ABC and many concerts in Australia and abroad. He has been organist at the Toorak Uniting Church since 1981.

As a choral conductor he competed with prize-winning success at the Béla Bartók ...

The life of Anna Magdalena Bach is somewhat vague in records kept before meeting Johann Sebastian Bach. Practically nothing is known of her early years.

It is not until 1721 that she makes her first formal appearance, where she and Bach first met at a baptism to both become Godparents of a child called Hahn.

In two of these records Anna is described as 'court singer' but in the third simply as 'chamber musician'.

Bente Lancaster & Aspiration in Harmony - bach - Sacred Songs and Chorus

There were originally stories that she was somewhat of a public figure, having sung at Cöthen, but these were later discredited. Anna Magdalena was said to have had a beautiful, clear soprano voice.

Born into a musical family (her father was a court trumpeter), she most probably first met the Bach family socially. By the time she was twenty, in 1721, she was well acquainted with Bach, who was aged thirty-six. Following the death of his first wife, she married him on December 3rd of the same year.

The notebook from which these recordings originate is thought to be the second of two, though some references suggest there were three. This book was beautifully bound, having gold lettering on the front, and was most probably given to Anna by Bach for her birthday in 1725. The book was specially ordered, with the intention that it was to be for her next series of compositions.

Within the book itself only one third of the works are confirmed to be in Anna Magdalena's handwriting. Two thirds were written by Bach and others or the composer remains unknown or disputed. The work 'Dir, Dir ist Jehovah' was most definitely notated by JS Bach. If it had not been for this notebook the work would have been lost, for it has never been discovered elsewhere.

Anna Magdalena Notebook & Schemelli Gesang Buch - Andrew Blackburn

The "Schemelli Gesang Buch" is a collection of 950 selected sacred songs and arias in which Bach was clearly involved, providing 69 chorales with figured bass.

The extent of Bach's involvement with the rest is difficult to determine. How many he merely revised and how many he actually composed is still debatable.

Bach's stylistic stamp was marked indelibly on the most simple line.

Notes by Leanne Smales 2002

... competition in 1990 and 1992. He has also performed in Germany, Holland, Italy and Spain.

Currently Andrew conducts 'Aspiration in Harmony' – an award-winning choir becoming known for its innovative programming.

Andrew completed a course at IRCAM in Paris in 1998 and is acclaimed for his work with new music.

Several of his compositions were premiered recently, including a sound installation at the Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne, in March 2002.