

MELBOURNE WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR



CONDUCTOR: PHILLIP SMITH



a musical tribute to Victoria's architectural legacy

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HERITAGE

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**A MUSICAL TRIBUTE
TO VICTORIA'S
ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY**

- 1** American Trilogy *Newbury/arr. Humphreys* Rippon Lea/Melbourne Welsh Church 5'32"
- 2** Men of Harlech *trad. Welsh Air* Rippon Lea 3'17"
- 3** Gwahoddiad *J. Hartsough* Old Melbourne Gaol 2'59"
- 4** Morte Criste *I. Watts. arr. E. Jones* Rippon Lea 3'59"
- 5** Matt Monro Medley *arr. Humphreys* Melbourne Welsh Church 5'01"
- 6** Amazing Grace *trad. Arr. Humphreys* Rippon Lea 3'00"
- 7** Deep Harmony *Parker/Charles/Jones* Maldon 2'26"
- 8** Welsh Lullaby [Harp solo] *anon.* Maldon 3'23"
- 9** Tydi A Roddaist *T.R. Hughes/Arwel Hughes* Old Melbourne Gaol 2'51"
- 10** Li'l Liza Jane *trad. Arr. Stanford Robinson* Rippon Lea 2'08"
- 11** Myfanwy *J. Parry* Old Melbourne Gaol/Como 4'36"
- 12** My Lord What a Morning *arr. Gilliam* Old Melbourne Gaol 4'32"
- 13** Rhythm of Life *D. Fields/C. Coleman. arr. Barnes* Melbourne Welsh Church 3'12"
- 14** Goin' Home *A. Dvorak/Ditson/Fisher* Como/Old Melbourne Gaol 3'14"
- 15** Gwahoddiad *J. Hartsough* Como/Melbourne Welsh Church 3'18"
- 16** Eli Jenkins' Prayer *D. Thomas/A.H.D. Troyte* Melbourne Welsh Church 2'08"



Musicians are often heard to remark that they would like to perform in a particular building because of its acoustics. It matters not that these buildings were never conceived or built as performance venues; they nevertheless possess that sometimes indefinable quality of tone and resonance that makes singing or playing a musical instrument such a pleasure. It seems to be also true that these buildings are invariably old. Modern buildings, more often than not, seldom have this quality. The reason seems obscure. Whatever it is, musicians know it when they hear it.

The Melbourne Welsh Male Choir has performed at many venues throughout the State of Victoria, and this recording was borne out of discussions among members of the choir concerning the acoustic properties of the various buildings we had sung in.

“What if,” said one, “we went around these old buildings and made a recording. Emphasis would be on the acoustic properties of each venue.” The choir approached the National Trust, Victoria, for its support, which was readily given,

What we hear in this recording is the result of visits over a six-month period, to five properties in Victoria, all Classified by the National Trust.

They are: The **Welsh Church** in Latrobe St., Melbourne; the **Congregational Welsh Church** in Maldon, Central Victoria; **Como**, in South Yarra; the **Old Melbourne Gaol** in Russell St., Melbourne and **Rippon Lea**, in Elsternwick.

The completed recording has not been altered electronically in any way, although some performances at separate venues have been edited together. Where this has occurred there has been no attempt to equalise the sound.

Each of the five venues represented a most unique set of problems to a choir of this size. The first, the Welsh church in Latrobe Street, is a hilly, functional church and as such was only available to us outside service times. By the time we set off to Como House, it was December in Melbourne, hot and balmy. A 130 year old Hapsburgh Parlour Grand piano graces this old home and lends a unique quality to the close sound of the Como Ballroom.

Maldon is a small and historic village, two hours drive from Melbourne with a beautiful but tiny church. As no keyboard exists in this church, I invited

Kevin Lee, a Melbourne harpist to join us. I found the harp to be such a lovely instrument for the choir to sing with that I also invited Kevin to our next venue, the Old Melbourne Gaol. Here the past is ever-present and the effect on the choir was noticeable. The sound is unique and most beautiful and the evening provided one of the most wonderful experiences of this whole process. On a stormy, wet and very cold April evening and in stark contrast to the evening at Como, we now found ourselves at Rippon Lea. The rain was pouring down and the choir, accompanied by Adeline Han playing a very fine Bernstein Grand, sang those numbers that benefited from the force and strength provided by this combination.

Some old, some new but all very special, “Heritage” is symbolic of the choir’s past and it’s future. The old repertoire performed in a new way at historic venues. All the members have been supportive and professional, the project has taken some time and has been achieved with the efforts and sweat of all. I thank them and you, our audience, and hope that the enjoyment you receive while listening to “Heritage” is equal to the joy that we have had in producing it for you.

Phillip Smith (M.I.M.T), Music Director,
Melbourne Welsh Male Voice Choir. May
1996.

HERITAGE - THE TECHNICAL STORY

1 *American Trilogy.* The Trilogy begins at the last venue we used, Rippon Lea (large ballroom, Bernstein Concert Grand piano) Approximately half-way into the Trilogy the recording changes to the Welsh Church, Latrobe Street (upright piano), the first venue. In essence this track concludes five months before it begins.

2 *Men of Harlech.* Recorded at Rippon Lea

3 *Gwahoddiad.* This version was recorded at the Old Melbourne Gaol and is accompanied by the harp. The resonant acoustic of the Gaol adds a new dimension to this classically beautiful hymn.

4 *Morte Criste.* Rippon Lea.

5 *Matt Monro Medley.* Welsh Church, Latrobe St. Upright piano.

6 *Amazing Grace.* Rippon Lea

7 *Deep Harmony.* Welsh Church, Maldon. This tiny church, constructed of solid brick, was designed along the traditional lines of Welsh non-Conformist Chapels, functional and sparsely decorated. The resonant acoustics, however, belie the severity of form.

8 *Welsh Lullaby.* (Harp Solo) Maldon

9 *Tydi A Roddaist.* Old Melbourne Gaol, with harp accompaniment. A haunting, beautiful sound. The second verse is sung in English.

10 *Li'l Liza Jane.* Rippon Lea

11 *Myfanwy.* The opening verse is sung without words and was recorded at the Old Melbourne Gaol, accompanied by the harp. The second and third verses are the traditional a capella format and were recorded in the small ballroom at Como.

12 *My Lord, What a Morning.* Most appropriately this was recorded at the Old Melbourne Gaol. The choir was actually divided between all three levels of the Gaol, with the First Tenors on the floor (in front of the whipping frame), the Second Tenors and Baritones on the second level and the Bases on the top floor. The microphones were set up to capture the different spread of sound created by this type of separation. The conductor stood on the gallows trapdoor.

13 *Rhythm of Life.* Welsh Church, Latrobe St. Upright piano.

14 *Goin' Home.* The first part of this song was recorded in the ballroom at Como. However, what was turning out to be a nice performance was interrupted towards the end by the chiming of the old clock in Como. Rather than repeat the song we decided to edit it on to the recording at the Old Melbourne Gaol. Consequently this begins with a piano accompaniment and concludes with the harp.

15 *Gwahoddiad.* This is my favourite and could be the reason it appears twice. However this was a beautiful vocal performance from the early recording session at the Welsh church in Latrobe Street. So as to feature the unusual tone of the Como piano, the recording has been edited in such a way that all the piano sections, the introduction and the sections between each verse, are taken from the Como tapes and the vocal sections from the Welsh Church. The contrast between the Grand piano at Como and the upright piano at the church combines to make this a most unique recording of this famous and much-loved hymn.

16 *Eli Jenkins' Prayer (Sunset Poem).* With words from Dylan Thomas' Under Milkwood, this seemed to be a most fitting finale. The voices blend beautifully in this delightful and humorous prayer offered by the most Reverend Eli Jenkins. Recorded at the Welsh Church, Latrobe Street.



Music Director
Phillip Smith M.I.M.T.

Accompanists

Piano: Loretto Perkins, Adeline Han,
Alan Stevenson. / **Harp:** Kevin Lee

Choir photography

Shannon Mattinson. Other photographs
courtesy of the National Trust

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Album cover:

The Choir rendering the Cantata,
Opening of the Centennial Exhibition,
Melbourne Exhibition Building, 15
August 1888. Illustrated Australian
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THE OLD MELBOURNE GAOL

Today less than half remains of the complex of buildings which once made up the Melbourne Gaol. The history of the site goes back to the early days of Melbourne, when an allotment of scrub to the north-east of the town was selected as the location for Port Phillip's first permanent gaol. It is three storeys high, with walls two feet thick. The recording took place directly below the scaffold where more than 104 people were hanged, among them Ned Kelly. Ironically the thick slab floor is 100% Welsh slate.



RIPPON LEA

Rippon Lea is a national treasure. It is the last of the great privately-owned 19th Century suburban estates to survive largely intact in Australia. Created by leading Melbourne businessman and politician Frederick Sargood, it was built and developed between 1868 and 1903. The garden at Rippon Lea is of international significance. During the late 1930s the interior of the house was significantly modified by the last private owner, Mrs Louisa Jones. Her extravagant alterations included a Hollywood-style entertainment complex, the focal point of which was the glamorous ballroom and adjacent swimming pool. The choir used the ballroom for its recording session.

WELSH CHURCH, LATROBE STREET MELBOURNE

The church was dedicated and opened in 1871, under the ministry of the Rev. W.M. Evans. Initially all services were in Welsh, but prior to the turn of the century, English services were introduced to meet the needs of the first generation Welsh Australians. In 1896 Dr. Constance Stone, wife of the then minister, Dr. David Egryn Jones, began an outpatients' clinic in the church hall. Assisted by volunteers and fellow women doctors, the clinic was the foundation of the world-renowned Queen Victoria Hospital for Women, now continuing as the Monash Medical Centre. This church is one of a very few Welsh churches outside the United Kingdom (photo left) which still conducts services in the Welsh language.





WELSH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MALDON

In his now-famous "Diary of a Welsh Swagman", Joseph Jenkins wrote of this church (photo right) as follows: "It stands on a healthy and hilly site within the township, and is surrounded by ornamental trees. The building is of brick and is well built." His comments were written in November 1888, on the death of Mr. John Lewis, one of the church's main benefactors, a Welshman who was at the time one of the richest men in Maldon, having found gold just outside the town. On one occasion Jenkins noted during a visit to the church that ... "the congregation consisted mostly of children who sang melodiously. The majority of the Welsh community in Maldon attend English churches. They don't keep together like the other nationals do. The main reason is that they wish to be well versed in the English language. The church is now a National Trust listed property and was recently restored.

COMO

Como, in South Yarra, is of cultural significance because it has retained the layout and plans of a house and its outbuildings as they were built in the 1840s. Como is a rare example of a house in Victoria that was not only owned by one family for a century, but also retains a large number of that family's possessions. The National Trust has owned Como since 1959.

