

A Chronology of
The Serenata
Singers -
1970 - 2020

A Chronology of the Serenata Singers, 1970-2020

Compiled by John McCollow

The Serenata Singers are a community choir based in The Gap, Queensland. In 2020, in trying circumstances, the choir celebrated its 50th anniversary. Its future, in a post-COVID world, is uncertain. But, looking through the records of the choir, it is clear that it has experienced tough times previously and has managed to overcome obstacles to endure.

Foreword: Reflections from the Music Director ... Lois Cutmore

Being a Gappie, I joined Serenata Singers in 2012. I work full time so wasn't able to participate in weekday concerts but enjoyed the 'out of hours' performances. In 2014, the conductor's role became a job-share arrangement with a balance of weekday/weekend events. Since then, the role has followed that pattern - a positive arrangement as each conductor brings their own expertise and style to the role. There's no shortage of expertise in the musical team as the choir has had a rotation of gifted accompanists with conducting skills and our conductors are accomplished pianists. The choir is also very privileged to have had pro-active committees with strong leadership.

Being a choir of older singers doesn't mean being 'out-of-date' or 'laissez-faire'. In line with this, the 'young at heart' Serenata Singers always aim high and have made a number of positive changes over the last few years, designed to improve the quality of our programs and administration. These include:

- becoming an incorporation in 2014 through updating the constitution.
- including a Barbershop Quartet group to showcase our male singers and to encourage more men to join (must resurrect this).
- rotation of the Emcee role for all concerts (formerly done by the conductor).
- encouraging more members to present solo items on a roster basis.
- annual addition of new music to the SS library through the acquisition of grants.
- a weekly newsletter, significant upgrade of the website and regular articles in local newspapers.
- provision of online part and full rehearsal tracks with accompaniments using Noteworthy Composer.
- Zoom rehearsals during the height of the COVID-19 restrictions.
- greater involvement of our patron in annual AGMs, Lions Concerts and social events.
- participation of members in events by other choirs and organisations (Choir of Hard Knocks, QLD Music Teachers' workshops, Opera QLD Sing, Sing, Sing and workshops, QLD Medical Orchestra/Choir, Brisbane Chorale, Choral Connection and Brisbane Folk Choir).
- themed annual concerts with the Ashgrove Lions Club.

All of these innovations have: added greater variety to our programs; valued members through their increased involvement; broadened our perspectives through exposure to other choirs/organisations; and, provided greater musical support for our singers. It's been a long-standing SS tradition to provide a 20-30 minute bracket of songs at The Gap Uniting Church April Fair and to organise themed music programs for the Annual Ashgrove Lions Fund-Raising event in November. For the Lion's Concerts, we have been able to promote young artists from the QLD Academy for Creative

Industries and, more recently, The Gap State High School. In 2017-2019, we joined with the Brisbane Music Performers' Club. In 2018, we performed at The Gap State High School Christmas in July, and until 2019, participated in the annual Christmas celebrations at St Gerard Majella.

A particular highlight for me was the 2018 Lions Concert, which incorporated the 100 Years' Centenary Anniversary of the World War I Armistice in 1918. Around Australia, state-wide programs were set up to celebrate this event close to Remembrance Day. In Queensland, Voices of Remembrance combined with the Queensland Music Festival in 2 concerts under the directorship of Dr Jonathan Welch who provided training for conductors. Local choirs were invited to use the music (Stille Nachte, Keep the Home Fires Burning, Better Be Home Soon and the National Anthem) for their own celebrations. Prior to Remembrance Day, several members of the choir were interviewed by ABC Breakfast Show hosts about our November 3rd concert program entitled Memories – Popular and Patriotic. The ABC recorded the choir performing the Voices of Remembrance songs to be aired on the Macca on a Sunday Morning Remembrance Day program.

Serenata Singers invited the Australian Army Band Woodwind Quartet, The Gap Combined Schools Brass Group and Ran Luo (violinist) as special guests. The program included music from WWI and II, the poem In Flanders Fields, short biographies of famous musicians during the two wars, a letter from the Dardanelles, The Ode and the Last Post. The celebration concluded with I Still Call Australia Home. Choir ladies worked around the clock to find suitable memorabilia, making decorations and different coloured poppies for singers to wear. Reverend Rod Fisher, from The Gap Uniting Church, was our wonderful Emcee. Unfortunately, Macca seemed to forget about us on Remembrance Day, and although we sat glued to our radios, our recording was not played. At least we have a CD copy to commemorate the event! It was very uplifting to be part of such an important state-wide collaboration and we were chuffed to be guests of the ABC.

One of the misfortunes of being a choir of primarily older voices, is that, over time, we lose members who become too ill to continue or say goodbye to those who pass away. However, memories of them are with us every time we resurrect a song they were part of, and we are grateful for the time we shared with them.

COVID-19 has made life very challenging for many people in 2020, not the least of whom are performers in the ARTS. However, professional companies are now back in full swing for the most part.

Here's to a bright, new 2021 with lots of opportunities for making music and celebrating our fifty-first anniversary – something we couldn't do this year!

Introduction and Overview

Choir records are incomplete. For some years there are copious notes of meetings as well as concert programs and newspaper clippings. For other years, there is little written record. Even where records exist, there can be difficulties (e.g. illegible writing, references to people only by their position or initials). Furthermore, it was beyond the capacity of the compiler to conduct interviews. Therefore there will be omissions and errors in this record.

Inspection of choir records shows that certain themes recur throughout its history:

Membership and recruitment

Ensuring that there are enough singers in each of the SATB sections has been a continual struggle. This is particularly the case for male singers. The phrase “tenors and basses are urgently needed” was an ongoing part of the choir’s annual recruitment ads.

Appointment of conductors and accompanists

Attracting and retaining conductors and accompanists has also been an ongoing concern. This is difficult in the best of circumstances, but in some cases personality conflicts or differences in opinion about the direction the choir should be taking have complicated matters considerably. The choir’s capacity (or lack thereof) to adequately remunerate conductors and accompanists has also been an issue.

Procurement of sheet music

The capacity of the choir to purchase sheet music across a variety of forms of choral music has been an ongoing problem.

Debates about the direction and nature of the “musical society”

Debates about the direction and nature of the organisation can be said to have coalesced around two issues: expansion beyond a focus on choral music and what kind of a choir the group should aspire to be.

a. Expansion beyond a choir

The organisation was founded as The Gap and District Musical Society (not “choir”) and nor was “choir” mentioned in the organisation’s “objects” as set out in the earliest extant version of its Constitution. Its objects were:

- To foster the love of music by members, and to improve their musical knowledge and ability;
- To participate in eisteddfodau and musical competitions;
- To give concerts from time to time;
- To raise funds for achievement of these objects and for the purchase of such music, materials and other property as is necessary;
- To join and assist any federation, union or association of cultural groups;
- To do all such other things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

A choir is mentioned elsewhere in the document; however, it appears that at its founding and for a significant period of its history, there was a hope that the Society would encompass a wider range of musical activity including instrumental music.

This aspiration appears now to be consigned to history. The current organisation defines itself as “The Serenata Singers” and includes in its objects: “to perform choral music”.

b. Direction and nature of the choir

A more enduring issue has been the differing expectations and perceptions of choir members about the direction and nature of the choir. One source of continuing debate/discussion is choice of music. Should we sing more or less spiritual music, fewer American songs, more serious music, more Australian pieces, fewer medleys? Is there enough variety?

There have been those who have joined for the joy of choral singing, who may or may not read music, and who have no or limited expectation of attaining a professional standard of performance or of challenging themselves with ever-more sophisticated and demanding musical works. There are others for whom the lack of commitment to tackling a challenging set of musical works and the achievement of a high standard of performance grates. Of course, these are not neat oppositional categories, expectations and commitment vary across a spectrum. Nevertheless, tensions occasionally rise to the surface.

One conductor noted in his letter of resignation:

... I am an ambitious person who likes to help choirs reach a professional standing not only vocally but with an interesting and varied program. However it is repeatedly coming to my attention that many of the choir are just happy limiting the choir to singing at nursing homes, and I am sure you are losing some of your choristers over this.

Another chorister stated in his letter of resignation:

I have endeavoured to discover if the group would be performing any new, and perhaps more vocally challenging music in the future, but it would appear that the programme is likely to continue with the present type of repertoire and degree of repetition.

Others have resigned for the opposite reason, because they felt pushed to perform musical works that are too difficult, to invest more time and energy into practicing than they have to spare.

At an AGM in the 1970s a choir member was reported as stating that:

He liked the relaxed attitude that had been at the format of the previous years. He didn't want to have to get too serious about any heavier works ...

As one conductor put it:

... there will always be ... members who come to rehearsal for the joy of singing with others.

Furthermore, for many members the group was a social group as well as a choral group. For many years, suppers were held after rehearsals and regular social gatherings were arranged.

Finally, there is the public service aspect of the choir's activities. As Ken Foley put it in his 2011 President's report:

The greatest reward for our members must be to bring enjoyment to the elderly who attend our performances.

While the challenges faced have meant that the journey of the choir has not always been smooth sailing, it is testimony of the power of choral music to motivate, inspire and bring joy to people that the choir enters its second fifty years stronger than it has ever been. No small thanks are due to those who laboured to establish and build it. As choir president Lyn Orchard noted in her report for the 2018-19 year:

The research on the power of music to unite a community and spread inclusion is extensive. One researcher sees music as "a tool for creating social bonds" and another as "a signal of group cohesiveness". As Serenata Singers we aim to include everyone who is interested in joining us to bring pleasure to many who are unable to join in events outside of their residence.

Good music has been a consistent hallmark of the choir

A final theme evident in the choir records is that, despite many challenges and some ups and downs, the choir has delivered many high-quality, entertaining performances over its history. It has brought much joy to audiences and to choir members themselves. As musical director Lois Cutmore stated in her 2018-19 report to the choir AGM, the choir has now earned a reputation ...

... for its quality programs, enthusiastic singing and varied repertoire that appeals to a broad range of musical tastes.

Rehearsal Venues Over the Years
The 2010 40 th anniversary program notes that rehearsals were originally held in the home of the choir's first conductor. It appears that over the years rehearsals and social events have been held at the homes of various choir members.
However, the main rehearsals venues have been: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Payne Road SS library, 1973-76;• Payne Road music room, 1977;• Payne Road activities block, 1978;• West Ashgrove Kindergarten/Pre-School, 1979-85;• The Gap SHS music block, 1986-2002;• The Gap Uniting Church library, 2003-04;• The Gap Uniting Church auditorium, 2005-present.

Personal Memories

Past and current choir members were asked to share a comment on or memory of their experience as a member of the Serenata Singers. Why not add yours? It can be as brief or extended as you wish. Just email us at serenatasingersthegap@gmail.com.

- I joined the choir in 2007, I am an alto, and I think my favourite song over the years has been "You raise me up". - **Jenny Taylor**
- I joined the choir - I think - in 1998 with my daughter Lynette. Lynette left in 2000.

One of my earliest memories of the choir was performing at Keperra Sanctuary (it was my first or one of the first performances for me). [This was probably the performance in February, 1999.] In those times we often had people outside of the choir performing. This particular day we had a clown - he was really more of a children's clown. Our pianist had hurt her ankle the day before the concert and we had to find someone else to fill in. We had been learning Phantom of the Opera for the first time and our Conductor decided to give it an airing on this day. The combination of a different pianist and us not knowing the piece all that well was a bit of a disaster in the middle. We managed to pull it together and finish the piece. However, it was quite some time before we were asked to perform there again. When I got home my son asked if they threw flowers. My response - we were lucky they didn't throw rotten tomatoes! I must admit the other pieces in the concert were fine.

As for my favourite song - there has been way too many to pick one song. However, we performed a Christmas Cantata about the birth of Christ (which we had just learnt) at a retirement village, and had to do it without a conductor as she was sick and unable to attend. I think we did brilliantly - everyone had to concentrate more on their parts. – **Marilynn Reville**

- I didn't take up singing until my retirement (and had no formal engagement with music since I was in my high school band). I joined Serenata in 2015 on the recommendation of Ian Symes, whom I had met at an Opera Queensland workshop. The experience has been rewarding in many ways, I am learning about singing and music, I am performing for elderly people, bringing a little entertainment into their lives, and I am experiencing the pleasure of choral music. A song I particularly enjoyed was "The Beauty of the Earth" by John Rutter. – **John McCollow**
- My Serenata story begins back in the 1930s when my mother sang with the Queensland State and Municipal Choir which is now the Queensland Choir. She also sang at weddings but I didn't hear much of her lovely voice as I grew up. I sang in my primary school choir then choirs took a back seat for many years. About 1983 I, too, joined the Queensland Choir and the experience of singing major works in the Concert Hall and the City Hall was incredible and invaluable.

I'd heard of the Serenata Singers through Lyn Orchard and also because they sang at Aveo Newmarket which was mum's home for her later years. In 2010 it was time for me to check them out. I found a friendly group of people who thoroughly enjoy singing together – perfect! My home is with the Altos but I like tackling a few high notes too! I believe the challenge of learning our part is definitely good for the brain.

I've always loved the style and variety of music we sing, and I especially value the fact that we bring music to many people who are in care. We're understanding more and more the value of music, and particularly singing, to those in nursing homes, and also to ourselves. It's good for the soul. When all is going well we make a beautiful sound and it feels wonderful!

Our conductors and accompanists do an amazing job with us, coaching and cajoling. But never a night goes by when we don't enjoy a few laughs together. My time with the Serenatas has been a very happy and rewarding one; long may it continue. – **Desleigh Byrne**

- I joined The Gap and District Musical Society, as it was then called in either late 2004 or early 2005. My husband, Ian, was a member back in the very early days of the choir but with two small children it wasn't possible for both of us to join at the same time. He went on to join another choir which also met on a Monday night. My reason for joining when I did was that we'd gone through a very traumatic time with our daughter's very serious illness where we didn't know if she would survive or not. A friend who was a member at the time suggested I needed some "me time" and invited me to join.

In my earlier years I'd sung in the church choir back in Adelaide and also here at The Gap. I took up the invitation and have thoroughly enjoyed the friendship of members. There have been a few hiccups during the time but we have overcome these. I've been happy to use some of my gifts to undertake several roles within the choir. We have been fortunate over the years to have had very talented people lead us as conductors and accompanists and share their love of music with us.

One of my favourite songs would be "You Raise me Up" which still gives me goosebumps. At our 40th Anniversary on 30th October 2010 former members of the choir were invited to join us on stage to sing "You'll Never Walk Alone" – another special time. An interesting sing was when we sang carols in Bowman Park in Bardon. – **Lyn Orchard**, Soprano

- I joined the choir late in 2018 (only a few weeks before the Gala concert). I sing Tenor. My favourites include all songs from Phantom of the Opera.

Joining the choir is something in life that I am doing for myself. I thoroughly enjoy and look forward to every Monday night and every chance to take part in singing at all the concerts the choir has. I enjoy and take part in all the back and forth engagements between members on our practice nights. I would surely miss not being able to be a part of the choir. – **Ray Wiseman**

- My husband Peter and I joined the choir in 2007. I sang second soprano at first and then was moved into the first sopranos. I have met some wonderful people here over the years and the joy of singing with a group at the different venues never changes.

Special memories:

- Ed Lang singing " I met a man called Peter " as a tribute to our late tenor Peter Harris.
- We were at St Martins and one of the residents insisted on dancing with Barbara Hawkes as she was singing her solo. So she obliged.
- Margaret Crowe was an inspiration and her encouragement pushed Ann Woeller and I into our first trio with Barbara Hawkes.
- Ken Foley was president when we joined. He is the image of my father who had been dead for over ten years in 2007. He quite happily treated me as another daughter. We shared many happy moments.

As for a favourite song I find that one difficult. So many have given me those goosebumps over the years or brought back happy memories of my mother singing in the kitchen.

The kindness and understanding from the choir when life gets tough is treasured. – **Sharon Schinkel**

- I first joined the Choir in 1986. I went to help them in some Christmas music. They sat me near Barbara Anderson and I have been there ever since. I enjoyed the Choir then and I still do. I am a first Soprano.

The piece of music they were singing at the time was: 'Come to the fair in the morning'. I think the Conductor liked the choir singing it in ff. – **Beverley Crouch**

- Bob Day was the guiding light behind the formation of the Gap and District Musical Society. I probably first met him in the late 1960s during what one might describe as the "ecumenical spring".

As a representative of the Mater Dei Parish of St John's Wood, I would sing with the Ashgrove West Methodist Church choir for special performances of Christmas and Easter cantatas. Harold Mann was the conductor. Four-part singing was a new experience for me and I was one of the basses.

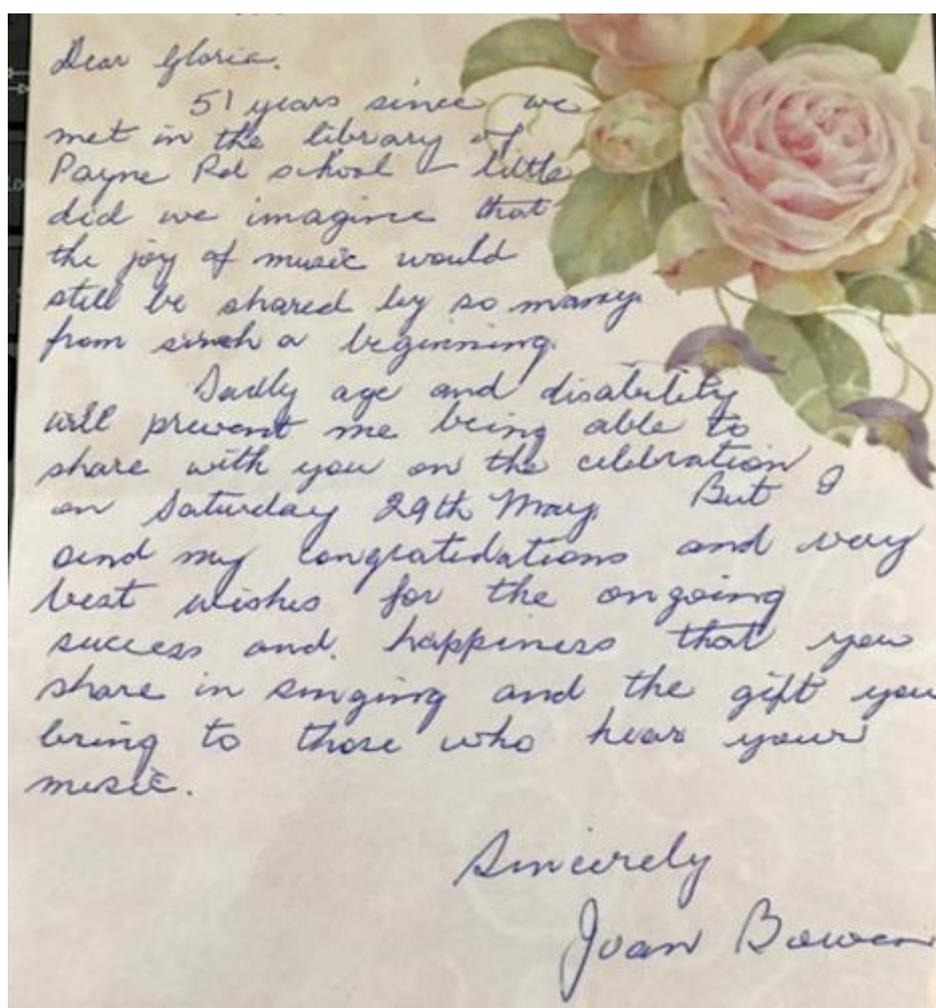
So it was that Bob Day invited me to attend the general meeting at which the Gap and District Musical Society was formed in 1970.

I particularly recall that we initially rehearsed with conductor Nerida Ellwood at Ashgrove State School for a while. We were a very small group at the beginning, perhaps half a dozen or so.

We persevered and numbers grew little by little but we always had too few men – or, more to the point – very few tenors, just a couple or so. I would stand next to them, and when occasional absences meant that they were even fewer in number than usual, I would join them to make it seem that there were more than there really were. Our master of ceremonies, Ian Symes, then a teenaged member of the choir, would remember that.

I have had a look at a chronology which has recently been put together from the minutes of committee meetings – I'm glad that they are still extant – and was reminded that I occupied all offices over the period that I was on the committee. It was something of a musical chairs exercise. Our decisions in committee were so predictable, that, when I was secretary, I would write up the minutes in advance of the meeting and insert the names of movers and seconders as meetings progressed.

But that is all long in the past now. – **Paul Sayer** (from his Opening Remarks at the Serenata Singers 50th Anniversary Celebratory Concert on 29 May 2021)



The Chronology

1970

The earliest records of The Gap and District Musical Society, as it was originally called, date to 1973. There are two extant accounts of the foundation of the choir in 1970. The first appears in the program for choir's 1995 silver jubilee concert "A Concert Evening at the Light Opera". It states:

[The choir] was originally formed at the instigation of Mr Bob Day (then Director of the Ecumenical Council of The Gap) with three members, one of whom, Mr Paul Sayer, is the present Patron.

The second account appears in the program for the 2010 fortieth anniversary Gala Concert. It states:

Our founding conductor was Nerida Elwood (sic) who was also hostess to the very first meeting of enthusiastic music lovers in her home.

However, minutes of a general meeting of the Society in 1973 refer to a "committee" dating from 1953, so it is possible that the choir can trace its provenance back even further than 1970.

Commenting on this, Choir Patron Paul Sayer notes:

I am unsure what the "committee" was but the previous organisation was the defunct Brisbane Municipal Girls' Choir. I can't recall how Bob Day did it, but I think the agenda for the general meeting to form the Gap and District Musical Society included a motion to change the name of the Brisbane Municipal Girls' Choir to "Gap and District Musical Society". There were some funds remaining in the Brisbane Municipal Girls' Choir account and, with the change of name, the funds became what we might now describe as "seed funding" for the Gap and District Musical Society.

1971

Conductor: Nerida Ellwood

1972

Secretary: L. Day; Conductor: Nerida Ellwood

As noted above, no records have been discovered for this year, but the program for the choir's 1995 silver jubilee concert notes: "By 1972, the choir was firmly established with approximately 15 members under their able conductor, Mrs Nerida Ellwood".

1973

President: R. Day; Secretary: P. Sayer; Patrons: Sir Douglas Fraser; Cec Hansen; Conductor: Nerida Ellwood, Ian Orchard (deputy); Accompanist: K. McIntyre; Alison Anderson (relieving), Piers Lane (relieving).

Notes from an Executive Meeting held on 6 August note that it was "the first Executive Meeting of the Society".

The Society's Constitution was revised.

The minutes of a general meeting of the Society held on 29 August note that a young pianist named Piers Lane (now a world-famous classical pianist) had agreed to help out as an accompanist for some choir rehearsals.

The venue for rehearsals was the Payne Road SS library. According to the program for choir's 1995 silver jubilee concert choir membership had grown to 38 in 1973.

1974

President: R. Day; Secretary: Paul Sayer; Patrons: Sir Douglas Fraser, W. Dart, Edwin Kohnke; Conductor: Nerida Ellwood; Accompanist: K. McIntyre.

Mr Kohnke, principal of Payne Road SS was made a patron of the Society and at a general meeting expressed his support for the Society and that he was glad to have it using the school's facilities.

The choir planned a charity concert to be held at West Ashgrove Methodist Church Hall in late April. Unfortunately, there is no record of whether this concert took place. Minutes of the AGM in early 1975, include a report on a successful "Cantata" performance, which presumably occurred in late 1974.

A recurring theme in the early years of the choir was the ambition to expand the "musical society" beyond a choir to encompass instrumental music as well. At a general meeting of the Society in February:

Mr Day [chairman] said ... the choir now appeared to have established itself as a unit of cultural importance in The Gap district ... With the future expansion of the choir, Mr Day would like to have incorporated a light orchestral group.

1975

President: R. Day; Secretary: Mrs Cross (?); Patrons: Sir Douglas Fraser, W. Dart, Edwin Kohnke, Mr Britton; Conductor: Nerida Ellwood, Ian Orchard (deputy); Accompanist: K. McIntyre, V. Smith (deputy).

The choir continued to use Payne Road SS for rehearsals, though no longer rehearsed in the library.

Performances in 1975 included a concert at Payne Road SS to raise funds for musical instruments, a cantata at Enoggera Presbyterian Church, "Carols by Candlelight" and at "Talent Quest".

1976

President: Paul Sayer; Secretary: A. Hubbard; Patrons: Edwin Kohnke, Sir Douglas Fraser (?); Conductor: Nerida Ellwood; Accompanist: Val Smith, Junia Rose (deputy).

At the 1976 AGM, outgoing President Day expressed disappointment in the failure of the choir to grow its numbers and again expressed his hope that the choir "would some day be associated with an instrumental group".

The Gap and District Musical Society held a very successful concert version of "Oklahoma" in the West Ashgrove Methodist Memorial Hall.

Mr Dart resigned as Patron. Nerida Ellwood resigned as conductor as she had moved to the Sunshine Coast.

1977

President: P. Sayer; Secretary: A. Hubbard; Patron: Edwin Kohnke; Conductor: John Soden, Neil Colledge (acting); Accompanist: Val Smith

Rehearsals in 1977 were conducted in the Payne Road SS music room.

It is clear from minutes of the general and executive meetings of the Society that 1977 was a difficult year. The choir membership was low and fees were raised to remunerate the new conductor. Debates about the direction of the choir caused stress and frustration that saw the resignation of the conductor and accompanist. For all these troubles, President Sayer observed that he thought Mr Soden's tenure as conductor had allowed the choir to "achieve a much higher level of presentation and performance".

The choir presented a concert "Maytime Musicale" under the direction of John Soden at West Ashgrove Methodist Hall on 20 May. The program included "Sing We at Pleasure", "I've Got Rhythm", "Oh Dear! What Can the Matter Be" and "The Exodus Song".

A planned performance of Edward German's "Merrie England" was cancelled. At year's end the choir performed a Cantata at Enoggera Uniting Church under acting conductor Neil Colledge.

1978

President: P.Stokes; Secretary: Jan Gerard; Patron: Edwin Kohnke; Conductor: John van de Laar; Accompanist: Junia Rose

At the AGM, patron Edwin Kohnke noted a proposal to form junior band and adult band as a part of the Society. From the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Gap & District Musical Society, February, 1978:

Mr Kohnke ... has received an offer by several enthusiastic citizens ... to form a junior band and adult band as part of our Society and to join under our auspices as an established community group for our mutual advantage.

Later a meeting was held in March to form a district concert band. Minutes of a choir executive meeting in May state that the "junior band" was expected to start rehearsals "after the school holidays". Minutes from an executive committee meeting in June indicate that band rehearsals were taking place but the band was not yet ready to perform. This meeting also clarified that the band was not at that stage "affiliated" with the choir.

The choir's "Annual Musicale" took place at the West Ashgrove Uniting Church Hall on 28 July. Conductor John van de Laar guided the choir through numbers such as "Come to the Fair", "Oh Susanna", "Climb Every Mountain", and "The Bells of St Mary's".

The program expresses a hope that the choir can expand to include a wider scope of musical endeavours and invites other local music groups to contact the choir to explore collaboration. It also expresses hope that the proposed Gap SHS Activities Building may become a performance centre for the choir.

Rehearsals from late August 1978 were held at the Payne Road SS Activities Building. However, due to the imposition of hire fees in late September, the choir sought an alternative rehearsal venue, temporarily using The Gap Uniting Church as a venue.

1979

President: Peter Stokes; Secretary: Jan Gerard; Patron: none; Conductor: John van de Laar; Accompanist: Junia Rose, Fay Baker (asst.).

A notice in The Gap News of 19 May, invites new members to rehearsals being held at the West Ashgrove Kindergarten Centre.

The choir's annual concert had the theme "The Joy of Music" and was held on 13 July at the West Ashgrove Uniting Church Hall.

The minutes of a choir executive meeting held in August record that the conductor expressed concern about poor attendance at rehearsals.

In December, the choir performed Christmas carols and other items at the Taylor Range Club, the Mt Jindalee Nursing Home, and the Gaythorne Uniting Church.

1980

President: Paul Sayer, Peter Stokes; Secretary: Peter Stokes; Patron: none; Conductor: John van de Laar, Paul Sayer (deputy); Accompanist: Fay Baker, B. Anderson.

1981

President: John Hopsick; Secretary: Raewyn Cross; Patron: none; Conductor: John van de Laar, John Hopsick (deputy); Accompanist: Fay Baker, Eileen van de Laar (deputy).

In his report on the 1981 year, the choir president observed that "it is a most frustrating task to interest the male of the species into motivating themselves into joining a choir".

The annual concert was held in May, which was reported as a success both musically and financially. The choir files contain an undated program entitled "A Maytime Musicale" which is most likely from 1981. Among the numbers performed were: "Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind", "Down by the Riverside", "Click Go the Shears" and selections from "Kismet". Guest artists included students from Payne Road SS and The Gap SHS.

Concerts were held in "various nursing homes".

1982

President: John Hopsick; Secretary: Raewyn Cross; Patron: none; Conductor: John van de Laar, John Hopsick (asst.); Accompanist: Kathy Hirche, Kathy Peters.

Choir rehearsals for 1982 took place at the West Ashgrove Kindergarten Centre.

On 26 May, the choir welcomed its audience to "A Grand Concert" at West Ashgrove Uniting Church Hall. Led by conductor John van de Laar, the choir performed numbers including "I Whistle a Happy Tune", "Younger than Springtime", "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" and a Lennon/McCartney medley. Choir members appeared for the first time in their new choir uniforms at this concert. The choir president noted that there were differences of opinion within and outside of the choir on the uniforms.

Concerts were held at four nursing homes during the year and a Christmas performance was given at Myers, Brookside.

1983

President: John Hopsick; Secretary: Raewyn Cross; Patron: none; Conductor: John van de Laar, John Hopsick (asst.), Leon Fisher; Accompanist: Kathy Peters

The choir presented a concert "September Harmony" in conjunction with The Newmarket Community Band at the West Ashgrove Uniting Church Hall on 14 September. Numbers included "Come to the Fair", "Country Gardens", "Zadok the Priest", "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" and "Go Down Moses". Proceeds aided the Paddington Meals on Wheels.

Other concerts included those at: the Jindalee Nursing Centre; Sunsetholme, Normanby; and Burdeu House, Gregory Terrace.

Rehearsals for 1983 were held at the Ashgrove West Preschool Centre. In late 1983, choir conductor John van der Laar resigned due to his relocation to Melbourne.

1984

President: John Hopsick; Secretary: Raewyn Cross; Patron: none; Conductor: Leon Fisher, John Hopsick (asst.); Accompanist: Kathy Peters.

Choir rehearsals for 1984 were held in the music section of The Gap SHS. At the AGM held in February, the conductor's position was not filled. Leon Fisher assumed conducting duties in August.

The AGM foreshadowed consideration of a name change for the choir.

Concerts in 1984 included Carmel Presbyterian Church; a benefit concert in the Ithaca Room at Brisbane City Hall; Freemason's Home, Sandgate; and a Christmas concert with the Australian Post-Tel Institute Concert Society.

1985

President: John Hopsick; Secretary: Raewyn Cross; Patron: none; Conductor: Leon Fisher, John Hopsick (asst.); Accompanist: Kathy Peters, Mavis Gill.

A suggestion that the choir change its name to "The Savannah Singers" was floated at the AGM but deferred for later consideration.

The year was noted as a difficult one for the choir with low numbers of members and fewer concerts.

1986

President: Val Johnston; Secretary: Raewyn Cross; Patron: none; Conductor: Leon Fisher, John Hopsick (asst.); Accompanist: Mavis Gill, Kathy Peters (deputy).

Choir rehearsals for 1986 were held in the music section of The Gap SHS. This year also saw the introduction of new "cooler" summer blouses for the women in the choir. Choir numbers were down and sickness contributed to low rehearsal numbers and a reduced number of performances. Only two concerts were presented, one at St Paul's Villa, Rainworth and one at Nazareth House, Wynnum North.

1987

President: Val Johnston; Secretary: Monica Plant; Patron: none; Conductor: Leon Fisher, John Hopsick (asst.); Accompanist: Mavis Gill

Valma Johnston reported to members that:

It is with great pleasure that I present the President's report of the activities of The Gap and District Musical Society, now performing under the name of "The Aeolian Singers" for the year 1987.

This name was unanimously chosen by members from a selection of three submitted by our conductor, Mr Fisher, early in the year. It has created a considerable amount of interest at the venues of our performances this year and perhaps this will remain in the memories of all who have heard us sing.

However, the name change was short-lived, lingering in (inconsistent) usage into 1989. Apparently it was discovered that there was another group using this name.

Performing as The Aeolian Singers the choir participated in Easter services at Ann Street Presbyterian Church and performed the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols (a Christmas service) at St Mark's Anglican Church in The Gap on 6 December, and also (apparently) at St Paul's Presbyterian Church, St Paul's Terrace on 20 December.

Performing as The Gap and District Musical Society, the choir participated in the Australian Post-Tel Institute Concert Society Christmas Concerts on 2 and 9 December.

1988

President: Paul Sayer; Secretary: Monica Plant; Patron: none; Conductor: John Dingle; Accompanist: Randall Wood.

Concerts in 1988 included those at Hopetoun Aged Persons Complex (as the Aeolian Singers); Freemasons Home, Sandgate; Forest Place Retirement Village; Nimbin Nursing Home, New Farm; and Christmas carols aboard The Kookaburra Queen. The President's Report for the year noted that "attendance at rehearsals were consistently high during the year" in contrast to some previous years. Still, it was noted that "tenors are a very scarce resource".

1989

President: Paul Sayer; Secretary: Monica Plant; Patron: none; Conductor: John Dingle, Paul Holley; Accompanist: Randall Wood, Mavis Gill, Judy Greenwood.

During the year both conductor John Dingle and accompanist Randall Wood resigned due to other commitments. Paul Holley took up conducting duties and Mavis Gill and Judy Greenwood shared the role of accompanist.

The President's report noted that membership for the year "hovered" around 16-20.

For the Christmas season, the choir performed the cantata "So Great a Gift" five times on three consecutive Sundays at the Ann Street Presbyterian Church, Sinnamon Village, The Gap Uniting Church, the West Ashgrove Uniting Church and Forest Place.

1990

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jan Vanderiet; Patron: none; Conductor: Marilyn Terlich; Accompanist: Delphine Leeding.

A recruiting campaign conducted during the year succeeded in increasing female membership by approximately 70 per cent, but was "not so successful" in increasing male membership.

Concerts were presented at St Paul's Nursing Home, Rainworth; Marycrest Nursing Home, Kangaroo Point; Little Kings Home, Buranda; and Sinnamon Village. Christmas season was busy with performances at Brookside Shopping Centre; The Gap Village Shopping Centre; The Gap Anglican Church and other venues.

1991

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jan Vanderiet; Patron: none; Conductor: Marilyn Terlich; Accompanist: Delphine Leeding, Mavis Gill, Roslyn Kay.

A topic at the AGM was the "shortage of music". Long delays in receiving music that had been ordered were noted.

During 1991 the choir performed regularly at nursing homes and aged care facilities and had a full schedule of Christmas engagements as well during which it performed a cantata "The Glory of the Lord" and assorted carols.

1992

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jan Vanderiet; Patron: none; Conductor: Leanne Johnston, Michael Wright, Nell Fanning (asst); Accompanist: Delphine Leeding, Mavis Gill (asst).

Leanne Johnston accepted the conducting role on a temporary basis until a conductor could be found. During the year, Michael Wright was appointed but suffered back problems that made him unable to continue. Leanne resumed conducting duties. These difficulties led to a reduced number of concerts being presented during the year. The choir did end the year with a full Christmas schedule of performances.

In December, Paul Sayer, one of the original members of the choir resigned (to return later in another role). Paul describes the circumstances:

I resigned because of my father's dementia and the necessity for my siblings and me to relieve our mother by ensuring that we siblings visited my father in the nursing home every week (for the following eight months, as it turned out).

1993

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jan Vanderiet; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Robert Henley, Rhoda Hall (deputy), Peter Harris (interim/deputy); Accompanist: Darcy Gough (interim), Rita Entwhistle, Leanne Burns (interim)

The Gap and District Musical Society Choir performed at a number of venues during the year including Forest Place; Sinnamon Village; Compton Gardens, St Gabriel's Anglican Church, the API Concert Society Christmas Concert and others.

1994

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jan Vanderiet, Alma Schofield; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Robert Henley, Peter Harris (deputy); Accompanist: Darcy Gough, Justine MacConville.

The choir performed 14 concerts in 1994 including as a part of Hilderfest (at Hilder Road SS); at a Senior Citizens Concert at The Gap SHS; and at The Gap RSL for Anzac Day.

The President's report for the year states that choir membership ranged from 12 to 15.

1995

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Alma Schofield; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Director and Conductor: John Amos, Peter Harris (asst.); Accompanists: Darcy Gough, Mavis Gill

Rehearsals in 1995 were held in The Gap SHS music room.

This was a year of activity and celebration for the choir. The choir even instigated a (hard copy) newsletter.

On Palm Sunday, the choir under the direction of John Amos presented "Music and Lessons for the Passion of the Lord" at St Paul's Presbyterian Church. This included a performance of "The Crucifixion" by Sir John Stanner. Soloists were John Soden and Trevor Hunter. The choir also participated in the ANZAC commemoration service at The Gap RSL Sub-Branch on ANZAC Day.

In conjunction with The Concert Society Orchestra, on 21 October, the choir presented "A Concert Evening at the Light Opera" featuring excerpts from The Mikado, HMS Pinafore, Ruddigore and Pirates of Penzance. The concert venue was the Mitchelton SHS Auditorium. An estimated 450 people attended. The concert proceeds benefited the Blue Nursing Service.

On 5 November, the choir participated with The Concert Society Orchestra in a concert entitled "Lest We Forget" in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII. The performance was at St Paul's Presbyterian Church. Choral numbers included "Abide with Me", "Ave Verum", and "The Lord Bless You and Keep You".

The Gap and District Musical Society celebrated "25 Years of Harmony" with a function at the Bardon Bowls Club on 4 December. On 9 December, the choir presented a program of Gilbert and Sullivan numbers at a Senior Citizens Concert at The Gap SHS.

On 13 December, the choir, in conjunction with The Concert Society Orchestra, performed "Carols by Candlelight" at Government House Queensland,

The August edition of the choir newsletter included a biography of choir member (and later conductor) Con Byrne. Con's achievements were impressive. He was a pharmacist by profession but found time to play, sing, write and conduct music, master six (!) languages other than English and indulge an interest in history.

1996

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jeannie Ford-Johnson; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Alan Moffat, Peter Harris (deputy); Accompanist: Judy Collins, Darcy Gough, Julie Webber.

The choir performed at venues including Forest Place Retirement Village, Marycrest Nursing Home and others. It participated in the ANZAC Commemoration Service at The Gap. The choir appeared at a "Music of the World" Concert sponsored by the Endeavour Foundation. On 8 December, the choir appeared in a "Variety Concert" at the Mitchelton SHS Auditorium.

1997

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jeannie Ford-Johnson; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Con Byrne, Peter Harris (deputy); Accompanist: Darcy Gough

In 1997, the choir presented a number of concerts, including at Madonna Villa, Mitchelton; Marycrest, Kangaroo Point; Greenmore Gardens, Ferny Hills; and others. The choir was apparently in great demand as an executive meeting in October determined that "concerts be limited to one per month, unless otherwise requested".

As a fund-raising measure, the choir introduced a weekly raffle to be conducted at each rehearsal. This was continued as a practice for many years. Ruth Cuerel and later Bernie Smith were two choir members, among others, who oversaw this activity. (Under Bernie's stewardship, this became a mystery raffle with the title "What's in the Box?".)

The choir newsletter of March announced that "Our name in the future will be: 'The Gap Choral Society'". However, there is no evidence that this name was used for concerts in 1997, though it was in 1998 (see below).

1998

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Barbara Miles; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Con Byrne, Peter Harris (deputy); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe

In 1998, the choir performed 11 concerts at 8 venues, including at The Chateau, New Farm; Forest Place, Albany Creek; Greenmore Gardens and others. For some of these concerts the choir was billed as "The Gap Choral Society". The choir performed a "Mass" written by choir conductor Con Byrne at St Brigid's Church in honour of Mary McKillop.

At the AGM held in February, conductor Con Byrne presented a paper "The Choir: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow". Unfortunately, no copy of this paper was found in the choir records. A handwritten paper, titled "What's in a Name?", dated November, 1998 and apparently written by Con (initials C.G.B.), argues that a new name for the choir is needed that meets six criteria: that it have *meaning*, that it is *clear*, that it is *relevant*, that it *sounds well*, that it has *distinction* and that it is *memorable*.

1999

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Barbara Miles; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Con Byrne, Peter Harris (deputy); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe, Judy Collins.

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Gap and District Musical Society, February, 1999 note that:

During 1998 our conductor Con Byrne put forward to the Choir that the name of The Gap & District Musical Society or The Gap Choral Society was not all that suitable and was really a "no" name for a choir. After several discussions and suggestions of a new name from members a secret ballot to choose a new name took place.

The final result was a change of name to "SERENATA SINGERS". The name change will be used under the The Gap & District Musical Society Constitution.

Ken Foley organised a "Serenata Singers" display board for use at concerts at a cost of \$160.

The choir performed music written by choir conductor Con Byrne at Our Lady of Victories Church on the occasion of the beatification of Padre Pio.

Eleven concerts were presented in 1999. Venues visited by the choir in 1999 included Keperra Sanctuary in February (see Marilyn Reville's "personal memory" of that performance above), Pinewoods Age Care Centre, Cleveland Gardens and others. This appears to be the year in which "community singing" sessions were introduced as a regular feature of concerts.

2000

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jean Wight; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Con Byrne, Peter Harris (deputy); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe, Judy Collins (deputy)

The minutes of the AGM held in February note that choir membership had doubled in the last three years, with 47 "active members" at the time of the meeting. (It was also noted that there was still a need for more tenors.)

A choir executive meeting in March discussed the choir uniforms, including possible changes. Women were to wear black skirts, black stockings/tights and white blouses "but with some sort of coloured decorative detachable collar". Later, scarves were selected as preferable to collars. Men to wear royal blue bow ties and "possibly cumberbunds" (and presumably shirts and pants).

The (handwritten) conductor's report for the year 2000 from the 2001 AGM includes a brief reference to a "canonisation celebration at Bowen Hills", and a performance at a Mass at Our Lady of Victories on 30 April is shown on at least two schedules of Year 2000 performances.

Choir member Marilyn Reville remembers singing in a Mass at Our Lady of Victories Church at Bowen Hills in honour of Mary McKillop around 1999. The only performance at Our Lady of Victories in 1999 was the Mass for Padre Pio, so the experience she remembers could have occurred in April 2000. Here is Marilyn's account:

How could I forget having to learn all that Latin - we spent ages practising all those hymns/responses etc. The service we attended was at Our Lady of Victories Church at Bowen Hills. I ... remember one new young fellow attending at the beginning of the year whilst we were learning all these Latin pieces and [he] never returned ...

Whilst singing at the church service ... we were 'heckled' by a worshipper who was convinced we were "Masons" – the men wore black bow ties in those days.

In June, the choir executive noted that there were concerns about the choir performing too many Latin masses and that the number of such performances should be reduced.

Together with Saint David's Brisbane Welsh Singers, The Sherwood Singers, and The Brisbane Apollo Male Voice Choir, The Serenata Singers performed "The Crucifixion" by Sir John Stanner at Brisbane Boys' Grammar School on 17 September. The choir participated in the multi-choir benefit performance to aid the Brisbane Birralee Voices to meet expenses on their overseas tour.

The choir performed ten concerts including at Marycrest Nursing Home, Sinnamon Retirement Village, Maranatha Retirement Village and Compton Gardens, among others. The choir also travelled to Maleny for a concert at a nursing home. Marilyn Reville remembers, "we hired a bus and made it an all-day trip with a picnic lunch, and then performed in the afternoon at the Nursing Home where Barbara Anderson's parents were residents".

Late in the year, the choir executive discussed tensions that had arisen between the conductor and the accompanist.

2001

President: Keith Cuerel; Secretary: Jean Wight; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Chritine Oxnam; Accompanist: Margaret Crowe, Judy Collins (deputy)

A "stormy" AGM was followed by the stepping aside of Conductor Con Byrne. In his report to the meeting, the conductor noted "discontent" and "complaints", including that there were too many repeats of musical items, that there was too much religious music, that there was too much opera and foreign language music. After, defending his work as conductor, Mr Byrne stated "So I'm Out!".

The position of accompanist was also left unfilled at the AGM. Margaret Crowe resumed these duties during the year.

A special general meeting of the choir was convened in March to consider a revised Constitution of the choir.

Performances were conducted by the choir at Marycrest, Kangaroo Point; Compton Gardens; Sinnamon Village; Forest Place, Taringa and other venues.

A joint concert with The Apollo Male Choir and Brisbane Musica Orchestra was held at Eventide Nursing Home.

2002

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Jean Mottershead; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Christine Oxnam; Accompanist: Margaret Crowe, Judy Collins (deputy).

During the year an audit of music in the choir library was undertaken to determine the copyright status of the music.

Concerts were presented at Ashgrove Bowls Club, Maleny Retirement Village, Compton Gardens, Forest Place, Redcliffe Nursing Home, Oakleigh SS and Marycrest. The choir performed at an ecumenical church service at Albert Street Uniting Church.

2003

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Jean Mottershead; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Christine Oxnam, Michelle Albert; Accompanist: Margaret Crowe

The choir vacated the music block of The Gap SHS as a rehearsal space due to an increase in rental fees. The new rehearsal venue was The Gap Uniting Church Library. The music library was also relocated to the church. Conductor Chris Oxnam resigned due to ill health and family commitments in August and was replaced by Michelle Albert.

The choir performed a special concert for former conductor (and instigator of the choir's name change) Con Byrne who was ill at Mater Private Hospital. Mr Byrne died later in the year.

Performance venues in 2003 included Oxford Park Retirement Village; Hilltop Gardens; Marycrest, Kangaroo Point and others.

2004

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Jean Mottershead; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst.); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe

The 14 performances by the choir in 2002 included those at the Oxford Park Retirement Village; Masonic Care, Sandgate; Marycrest, Kangaroo Point and for the National Seniors at the Arana Leagues Club. Music sung at these included Irving Berlin, Gilbert and Sullivan, Phantom of the Opera and American spirituals. This year's records include the first mention of performances of The Harmoniques sub-group

A June meeting of the choir executive discussed the "further decline in numbers in the choir".

2005

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Jean Mottershead; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst.); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe

Rehearsals shifted from The Gap Uniting Church library to the auditorium. At the beginning of the year choir membership was recorded as 34, with 25-30 attending rehearsals.

An executive committee meeting in February noted that "the men are still not entirely satisfied with the large bow ties" that form part of the choir uniform. Smaller versions were obtained later in the year (courtesy of choir member Bernie Smith). In August, it was resolved to add black waistcoats (to be purchased by choir members) to the men's uniform.

The choir executive approved purchase of further copies of Jerome Kern Melodies and Fiddler on the Roof.

During the year choir member Ed Lang constructed risers for use by the choir.

Seventeen performances in 2005 included those at: Forest Place, Albany Creek; Wesley Hospital; the Southerden Lodge Retirement Centre and other venues.

Choir member Marilynn Reville remembers:

I recall performing in a concert for the The Gap Lions Club Girl in a Million Quest Entrant - a music student - which was held in St Peter Chanel Catholic Church Hall. We sang 4 numbers - 2 in each session of the concert. It was after this concert that Peter Harris, who was also a member of the Lions Club, advised the choir that something like that would not be hard to organise if we went 50/50 with the Lions Club. It was this concert that started our yearly concerts and association with The Gap Lions Club.

The Girl in a Million Concert must have been in 2005, as Peter Harris was asked to report on progress in discussions with the Lions at a choir executive meeting in February, 2006.

2006

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Jean Mottershead; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe

The Serenata Singers in conjunction with The Gap Lions Club presented "Harmony: An Evening of Song" on 3 June at The Gap SHS Auditorium. Guest performances were provided by Melissa Gill, The Gap SHS Stage Band and The Harmoniques. This is arguably the first of the choir's annual concerts in their current format in cooperation with the Lions Club. For a number of years these concerts were held in May.

Choir member Marilynn Reville describes the evolution of these concerts:

At those early concerts which were performed in The Gap High School Music Auditorium, the Lions Club looked after the supper as well as selling wine and cheese. The alcohol stopped when we commenced the concerts at the Uniting Church. The Auditorium was becoming too small to accommodate our audience.

The choir performed at Eventide, Sandgate; Aveo Albany Creek; Forest Place, Taringa, the Maranatha Retirement Village among other venues. The choir also presented a Christmas Carols by Candlelight concert at Bowman Park.

2007

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Lyn Orchard; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst.); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe

Performance venues for 2007 included: Marycrest, Kangaroo Point; Masonic Care, Sandgate; Aveo Taringa; Aveo Albany Creek; Aveo Clayfield and others.

2008

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Lyn Orchard; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst.); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe, Alison Siemon (asst.).

The president reported at the AGM in January that "registered membership" of the choir was 39.

The musical director's report states that the choir performed in 21 concerts in 2008. These included the Lions Club concert and first-time performances at St John's, Wheller Gardens and Tri-Care

Stafford. Other concerts were presented at Aveo Taringa; for the Arana Hills Senior Citizens; and the Moreton River Presbytery Adult Fellowship.

In April a "meeting of the ladies of Serenata Singers" was held to discuss the "ladies' uniform".

2009

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Lyn Orchard; Patron: Paul Sayer; Conductor: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst.); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe, Alison Siemon (asst.).

The choir performed 21 concerts in 2009 including at: Oasis Retirement Resort; Craigslea Senior Citizens; Eventide, Sandgate; Holy Spirit Home; and Aveo Clayfield. This was the first year that the choir performed in the Christmas festivities at St Gerard Majella. It was also the first year that the Lions Club concert was held in The Gap Uniting Church auditorium.

2010

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Lyn Orchard; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Director: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst.); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe

The 40th anniversary concert was held at The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium on 30 October, with the theme: "The Serenatas Celebrate". A noteworthy moment was the presentation of a bouquet of flowers to inaugural choir conductor Nerida Ellwood.

Musical numbers included "Easter Parade", "Get Me to the Church", "Over the Rainbow", and "The Chorus of Hebrew Slaves". Guest artists were Luke Venable and Melissa Gill. There was also a performance by "The Harmoniques" (Barbara Anderson, Beverley Crouch, Roberta Fletcher, Ken Foley and Jan Stevenson). At the conclusion of the concert former members were invited to join the choir in singing "You'll Never Walk Alone". Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

Master of Ceremonies for the evening was Malcolm Thorne who would perform MC duties at a number of Serenata Concerts over the years.

Performances were provided in 2010 for the following: Sinnamon Village; Keperra Sanctuary; Masonic Care, Sandgate; Marycrest, Kangaroo Point; Aveo Newmarket and other venues.

2011

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Lyn Orchard; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Director: Michelle Albert, Peter Harris (asst.), John Soden (asst.); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe.

A concert, "Bring on the Song", was performed by the choir on 29 October at The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium. Performances included those by "The Harmoniques" (Barbara Anderson, Beverley Crouch, Roberta Fletcher and Jan Stevenson) and by "Our Men from Apollo" (Jackie Carroll, Charlie Knoke, Tony Siebold, Keith Cuerel, Ed Lang and Peter Schinkel). Guest artists were Luke Cuerel, Euan Cumming and Melissa Gill. Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

Among the 19 choir performances in 2011 were those at St Gerard Majella; Parkview Wheller Gardens; Aveo Newmarket; The Gap Church Fair; Compton Gardens; St Martin's Nursing Home and more.

On a sad note, long-term choir member (a rare tenor!), choir librarian and assistant conductor Peter Harris, who instigated the annual Lions Club concerts, died in June. The choir made a \$100 donation to Lions Medical Research as a tribute to Peter.

2012

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Lyn Orchard; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Director: Michelle Albert, John Soden (deputy); Accompanist: Margaret Crowe.

John Hopsick, choir president and assistant conductor in the 1980s, died in January.

The theme for the choir's annual concert, held at The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium on 27 October was "Lullaby of Broadway". Guest artists were the jazz duo Luke Cuerel and Euan Cumming and the octet 8 to the Bar. Numbers sung by the choir included: "Rhythm of Life", "Gonna Rise Up Singing", "I'll Go Home with Bonnie Jean" "Puttin' on the Ritz" and "Lullaby of Broadway". Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

In 2012 the choir performed at Cooper House, The Gap UC Senior Fellowship; St Martin's Nursing Home; Holy Spirit Home; Tri-Care, Stafford and other venues.

2013

President: Ken Foley; Secretary: Kar-Tin Lee; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Director: Michelle Albert, John Soden (deputy); Accompanists: Prue Gibbs, Margaret Crowe, Margaret Ward

The choir's annual concert was held at The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium on 2 November. The theme was "Anything Goes". Melissa Gill was once again a guest artist. Numbers performed by the choir included: "All that Jazz", "Razzle Dazzle", "Tears in Heaven", "Side by Side", an Andrew Lloyd Webber medley and, of course, "Anything Goes". Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

Performance venues for 2013 included Tri-Care, Stafford Heights; Cooper House, Tarry-Brae-Iona Nursing Centre; Masonic House, Sandgate and others.

In November a special meeting of the choir executive was held to discuss "reasonable expectations of a conductor". The meeting endorsed a list of nine "performance indicators" relating to issues of organisation, punctuality, planning, efficient use of time, communication, consultation and collaboration. It was determined to bring forward nominations for choir positions for 2014, with nominations closing on 31 December.

In his report for the 2013 year, President Ken Foley noted, "The end of the year has brought disharmony among members on various subjects which has saddened me immensely".

2014-15

President: Desleigh Byrne; Secretary: Heather Fielder-Kwok, Lyn Orchard, Gay Hull; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Directors: Lois Cutmore, Margaret Ward; Accompanist: Prue Gibbs, Brandon Swain.

At the AGM held in January, a major point of discussion was the conductor's position. The incumbent conductor's nomination had not been accepted as she had not filed a nomination by the required closing date, nor agreed to the performance indicators. Arguments were heard from those supporting the current conductor and critical of certain members of the choir executive and particularly of the arrangements endorsed by the meeting held in November, 2013. A motion that the nomination process be declared null and void was defeated: 12 in favour; 17 against. Several members resigned in protest.

The AGM also adopted a resolution to investigate amendment of the choir's constitution. In June a special general meeting approved a motion to seek incorporation as "Serenata Singers, Inc." and

adopted a document entitled "Rules of the Serenata Singers". This meeting also approved changing the choir's year to align with the financial year rather than the calendar year.

An ad for the choir in The Hills Echo featured members Ken Foley, Ed Lang and Bill Reilly. It asked, "Hey Fellas – Want to know why these three boys are looking so pleased with themselves?" Serenata member Don Field was featured in an article in The Westerner entitled, "Farmer Finds Serenity in Music".

The theme for the choir's Gala Concert was "For the Love of Music". Numbers included "Ave Verum", "Georgie Girl", "An Eriskay Lovelilt" a Gershwin medley and a barbershop chorus featuring Ian Symes, Denis Joyce, Don Field, Trevor Spragg, John Campling and Frederick Priesler. Guest artists were from the Queensland Academy for Creative Industries Music Department. Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

Other performances took place at Parkview, Wheller Gardens; Arana Hills Senior Citizens Club; Wheller on the Park; IRT The Ridge and other venues.

In their conductor's report for the 2014-15 year, Lois Cutmore and Margaret Ward noted the addition of a number of items to the choir repertoire, including: "I Whistle a Happy Tune"; "Camelot"; "High Hopes", a Cole Porter medley; "For the Beauty of the Earth"; "Comedy Tonight", "I Still Call Australia Home" and others. They also note that concert dress for the year has been: Men – black shirt, black trousers, blue tie (for Lions Gala Concert); Women – black skirt/trousers, white or black blouses, blue or multi-coloured scarves.

2015-16

President: Desleigh Byrne; Secretary: Gay Hull; Patron: Paul Sayer; Music Directors: Lois Cutmore, Margaret Ward; Accompanist: Brandon Swain

The AGM was held in July, reflecting the change to alignment with the financial year.

"Sing, Sing, Sing" was the theme of the Gala Concert held at The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium on 7 November. Numbers included "Camelot", "High Hopes", a Cole Porter medley, "Comedy Tonight" and, of course, "Sing, Sing, Sing". Guest artists were from the Queensland Academy for Creative Industries Music Department. Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

The choir performed 15 concerts in the 2015-16 year, including at Aveo Albany Creek; Inner City Blue Care, Keperra Sanctuary, St Peter Chanel and other venues.

Early in 2016, choir members joined with members of The Apollo Choir to sing at the funeral of long-time choir member Ed Lang.

2016-17

President: Desleigh Byrne; Secretary: Gay Hull; Patron: Paul Sayer; Music Directors: Lois Cutmore, Margaret Ward; Accompanist: Brandon Swain

The Gala Concert was held at The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium on 3 September. The theme was "The Magic of Music". Numbers performed included: "One Hand, One Heart", "Lullaby of Birdland", "Sloop John B", "Fly Me to the Moon" and "Wind Beneath My Wings". Guest artists were again from the Queensland Academy for Creative Industries Music Department. Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

Performance venues in 2016 included St Gerard Majella; Parkview Wheller Gardens; St Joseph's Mitchelton and others. For the first time the choir performed at the Brisbane Music Performers' Club at the 4MBS performance studio.

2017-18

President: Desleigh Byrne; Secretary: Gay Hull; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Directors: Lois Cutmore, Margaret Ward, Kirstie Page; Accompanist: Brandon Swain, Prue Gibbs

The Gala Concert was held at The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium on 2 September with the theme "Musical Moments". Numbers included "Shenandoah", "Over the Rainbow", "Amazing Grace", a Jerome Kern medley and excerpts from HMS Pinafore. Guest artists were The Gap SHS Junior Rock Band.

In late 2017 Margaret resigned as co-conductor. Kirstie Page took up the position from early 2018. Accompanist Brandon Swain left in early 2018 and was replaced by Prue Gibbs.

The choir performed a total of 18 concerts. Venues included Aveo Albany Creek; Rangeview Blue Care, West Ashgrove; and Regis Care, Sandgate. Of particular note was a performance on ABC local radio on their Sunday morning choir segment.

2018-19

President: Lyn Orchard; Secretary: Paul Beckman; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Directors: Lois Cutmore, Kirstie Page, Sue Stewart, Jenni Mersiades; Accompanist: Prue Gibbs

At the AGM in July it was reported that the choir had 39 members, including "seven new choristers".

In late 2018, Kirstie Page resigned as co-conductor due to work commitments. Sue Stewart was appointed to take her place. In mid-2019, Sue was forced to resign due to health issues and Jenni Mersiades took up the position.

The Westside News included an article about the choir working bee in preparation for the Gala Concert with a photo of choir members Marilyn Reville, Carolyn Harper, Lenore Murphy, Sue Edwards and Gay Hull "making poppies". Three choir members were interviewed on ABC local radio about the concert.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI, the theme of the Gala Concert was "Memories – Popular and Patriotic". The choir welcomed the Australian Army Band Woodwind Quintet and student performers as guest artists. The program included a medley of WWII era songs and music from "Voices of Remembrance". Wing Commander (Retd) Jim Aked read a letter from the Dardanelles written during WWI by his relative Pvt JC Aked. The concert concluded with a rousing rendition of "I Still Call Australia Home". Proceeds aided the Lions Medical Research Foundation.

Secretary Paul Beckman introduced a number of innovations, introducing a weekly email newsletter, overhauling and updating the Serenata website and conducting a detailed online survey of choir members to shape the choir's future directions.

An article in the January edition of The Westside News about the choir's open night featured a lovely photo of the choir in full throat at its 2018 Gala Concert. During 2019 a number of articles about the choir appeared in local newspapers.

The choir performed a total of 18 concerts in 2018-19. New venues included the Mitchie Day Club; Viridian Retirement Village; and Bellevue Nursing Centre. The choir also performed at The Gap SHS

Christmas in July concert. Christmas carols at The Gap Village Shopping Centre proved very popular. On a sad note, choir members sang at the funeral of long-time member Bill Reilly.

2019-20

President: Lyn Orchard; Secretary: Gloria Allen-Ross; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Directors: Lois Cutmore, Jenni Mersiades; Accompanist: Prue Gibbs

The second half of 2019 saw the choir performing 9 concerts at various venues, including Viridian Retirement Village; St Josephs Hostel; the Brisbane Music Performers Club; and the Mitchie Day Club. The year's final performance was carol singing at The Gap Shops.

The theme of the Gala Concert held on 2 November in The Gap Uniting Church Auditorium was "I'm Gonna Sing!". Numbers included medleys from West Side Story and Oklahoma, a Gershwin medley, a Gilbert and Sullivan medley, "Down to the River to Pray" and "I'm Gonna Sing". We were joined by guest performers from The Gap SHS.

A history page was added to the choir's website to commemorate the choir's fiftieth anniversary. It contains photos of the choir over the years and a list of current and past members (which was updated from time to time). It was also planned to hold a celebratory "high tea", inviting current and former members in May, 2020.

Coming off a very successful year in 2019 into our fiftieth anniversary year, expectations were high for 2020. The year started well with a successful open evening. Then the corona virus struck rendering the choir unable to perform or even rehearse. Fiftieth anniversary celebrations were shelved. Choir members were able to stay in touch via an expanded weekly email newsletter and in June fortnightly Zoom meetings were instigated.

The choir was saddened to learn of the death of a former member and choir president Ken Foley. He was also a member of the choir sub-group "The Harmoniques" that entertained at choir concerts.

2020-21

President: Lyn Orchard; Secretary: Gloria Allen-Ross; Patron: Paul Sayer; Musical Director: Lois Cutmore; Assistant Musical Director: Jenni Mersiades; Accompanist: Alison Siemon

The 2020-21 year commenced in the midst of a COVID driven rehearsal/performance drought (Zoom get togethers were better than nothing, but a poor substitute). Finally, in October live rehearsals (conducted under COVID-safe guidelines) resumed. We were also able to hold the end of year Christmas social at the Arana Hills Leagues Club. As the end of 2020 approaches, we hope that 2021 will bring a timely return to performances. Some choir members did get an opportunity to perform, singing carols in conjunction with the Samford Choir on the steps of the Samford RSL in December.

Final Note

The Serenata Singers were able to hold a belated 50th Anniversary Celebratory Concert (and afternoon tea) with family, friends and former members on 29 May 2021. There was even a celebratory cake cutting!