

NZ SECONDARY STUDENTS CHOIR
("NZSSC")

NZSSC offers young choristers from throughout NZ the chance to perform to the highest standards both within NZ and internationally. The success of the NZSSC in recent years has been phenomenal.

We have for some years now supported NZSSC in a number of ways:

- (a) Provision of individual scholarships for membership/travel;
- (b) Funding of NZSSC's Outreach Programme where access to performances is available in many cities and regions in NZ;
- (c) Assistance for training camps/workshops;
- (d) Funding of overseas travel/special projects.

We receive detailed feedback and reports from individual scholarship recipients and from NZSSC's Executive Officer.

Access, participation and inspiration all feature with the operation and performance of NZSSC.



IN CONCERT



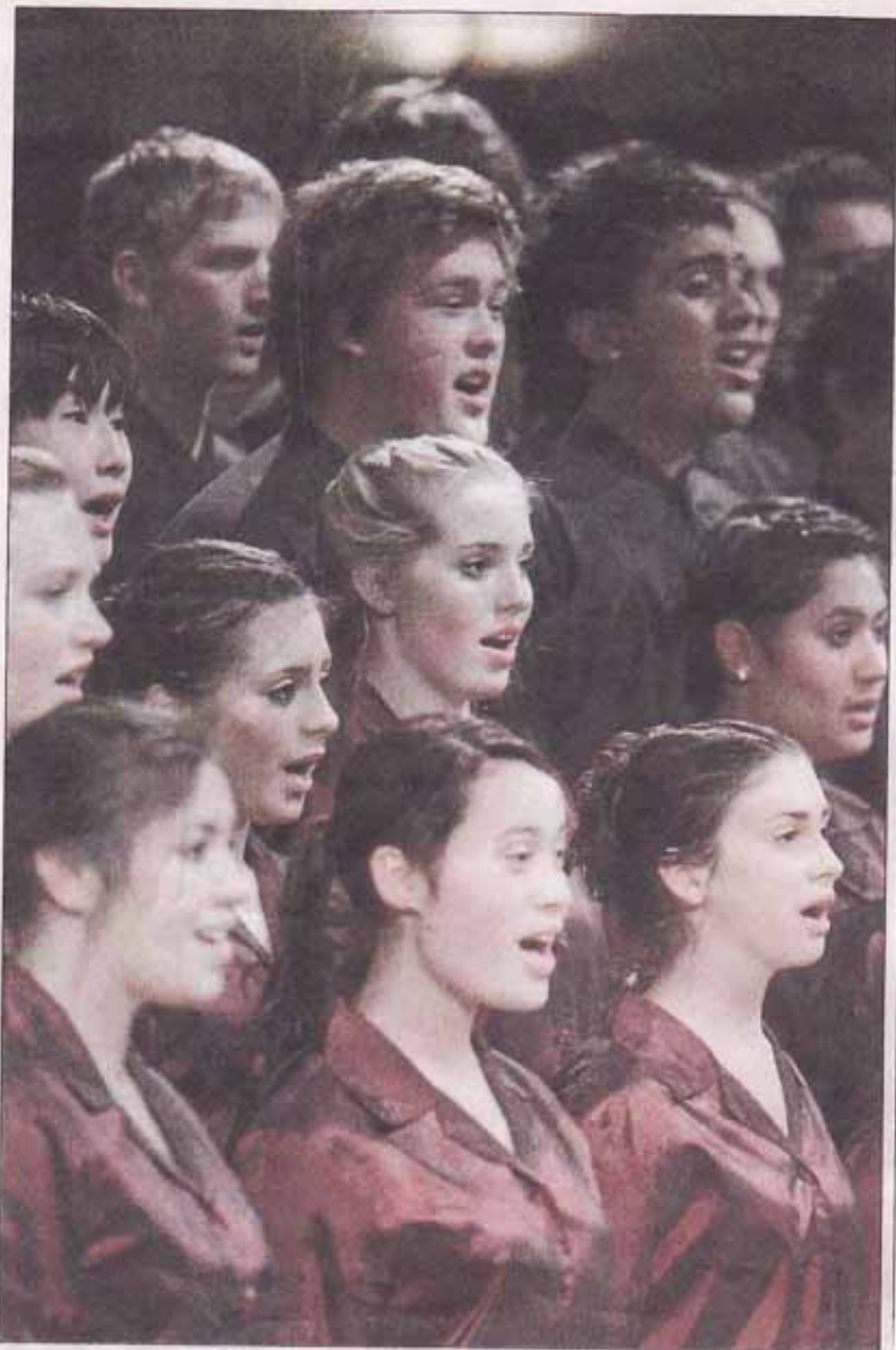


Photo: DON SCOTT

Heavenly voices entertain

The New Zealand Secondary Students' Choir struck the right note with the audience at last night's packed concert in Christ Church Cathedral. Fifty-four of the country's best young

singers, including nine Canterbury teenagers, sang under the musical direction of Andrew Withington, with choral arrangements by Parry, Haydn and Brahms. Kiwi folk-song

composers such as Richard Oswin and Douglas Mews were featured, along with traditional Maori and Samoan songs. The choir gathers four times a year to rehearse and perform.



Musical Director's Course Report

**Christchurch
1 – 11 July, 2009**

I was absolutely amazed that we began our Christchurch course with 100% attendance and that we had 53/54 singing in our final concert in Christchurch Cathedral on Friday 10 July. During the week, Moira and the team worked extremely hard to manage outbreaks of the flu within the Choir – at times it was very challenging.

It is a privilege to be the Musical Director of this very fine Choir and the leader of an amazingly dedicated Music Team. The students are very motivated; the staff very committed.

As so much happened during our third course, I have decided to report about each day:

Wednesday 1 July

The course commenced at Christchurch Music Centre (Barbadoes Street) which was an excellent venue for rehearsing. Eight students had the opportunity of conducting the Choir and receiving feedback on their conducting. It was beneficial to start with this activity as it gave the singers an opportunity to focus on the music. Seven other students will have the opportunity to conduct the Choir at the beginning of the Wellington course in October. Following this, we spent the rest of the day voice matching and learning new repertoire.

Thursday 2 July

The focus for this day was the demonstration performances for schools. Most of this day was focused on revisiting the repertoire we had covered at previous courses. The evening rehearsal worked very well. Awhina Waimotu and Benson Wilson are leading the choreography rehearsals exceedingly well.

Friday 3 July

We travelled by bus to three schools – Elmwood (contributing school), Cobham (intermediate school) and Cashmere (secondary school). The students adjusted very well to the different acoustics of the buildings; a valuable experience as they will need to be able to do this quickly when touring overseas. Performances at Elmwood and Cobham went very well; the performance at Cashmere was a little disappointing in focus and delivery. When the audience had left, we had a discussion where we looked at the positives and advice for the future. Everyone learnt something from the experience and I mentioned to the Choir that it is OK to make mistakes as long as we learn something from the experience. We then spent the rest of the day at the Antarctic Centre. One of the staff talked to the students before they had the

opportunity to have a look around. Some of the staff felt that parts of the seminar were inappropriate and maybe a letter should be written to the Antarctic Centre commenting on this.

Saturday 4 July

We moved to Heaton Intermediate School – an excellent venue for courses as we had enough keyboard instruments and a well-equipped staffroom. This was a focused rehearsal day. The Music Team are fantastic and very supportive: Grant Bartley superbly manages the different styles of music we sing, Morag Atchison and Kate Spence have exemplary knowledge of the voice and are able to communicate their knowledge extremely well, and Helen Charlton joined us on this course and her energy and enthusiasm was appreciated by all. Moira ordered pizzas for the Choir before we travelled by bus to mini golf. The Choir needed to be spoken to at mini golf about their behaviour on the bus.

Sunday 5 July

First day when students were sick – we had a number sick this day. Rehearsals began at 2.00 pm so the students had the morning to rest. After a brief choreography rehearsals, Richard Oswin (composer of five of our pieces), joined us for the rest of the day. He was very impressed with the Choir and how his pieces were progressing. We began with *Sanctus* and he had very little advice for us. We then sang through each of his *Three Folksongs* and he was able to provide background to each of the pieces and make us more aware of some of his ideas. This was a very worthwhile process for the students to experience. We then sight read Richard's *Lux Aeterna* which I intend to perform in Wellington in October.

Monday 6 July

We focused on our performance at the Opening Ceremony of the Music '09 Conference – Modulations. We had a sound check at the Hotel Grand Chancellor at c. 1.30 pm. The venue really surprised us; the acoustics were pleasant. The committee for Music '09 looked after us very well and provided risers for the Choir to stand on. Overall, the 45 minute performance received a standing ovation and the whole programme was performed by memory. There is no doubt that the Choir sings better when they have memorised their music.

Tuesday 7 July

This was a fantastic rehearsal day. We began with a reflection on the performance at the Opening Ceremony of the Music '09 Conference – Modulations. The section leaders led a reflection in their sections and then we reflected as a Choir. Each of the staff contributed to this and then we rehearsed for the remainder of the day. The Choir leaders and section leaders are leading the Choir very well and the students have ownership of what is happening. The atmosphere in rehearsals and concerts is positive and it is something that the audience are commenting on. We focused a lot of 'just intonation' today and were able to fine tune a lot of a *cappella* repertoire. In future courses I will be spending a lot more time doing this as it is very beneficial.

Wednesday 8 July

Because of the sickness within the Choir (and the length of the course), I decided to begin rehearsals at 11.00 am on Wednesday and Thursday to give the students more time to rest their voices. We ran a workshop for the Music '09 Conference – Modulations and it was very

well attended. I think around 26 people attended; I was expecting about 5! In the evening, we attended the New Zealand Youth Orchestra Concert in the Christchurch Town Hall.

Thursday 9 July

We focused on the concert programme for our final concert and had a rehearsal with the Jazz Ensemble in the afternoon. Michael and Andrew Bell played the double bass and the drums, respectively. In the evening, we rehearsed in Christ Church Cathedral. On reflection, this was too much for the students. Next time, an afternoon rehearsal would be better.

Friday 10 July

The students were really focused during the rehearsals and both rehearsals finished c. 30 minutes early – they had an extra long lunch and then an extra long rest before the concert call at 6.00 pm. The concert in Christ Church Cathedral received a standing ovation and the students performed extremely well. The whole programme was sung by memory, including the four new pieces learnt during this course. I have received a lot of feedback from the public and have established some goals for the future which I have written below.

Summary

Musically, the course was superb – we are making excellent progress and the Choir is exceeding my expectations at this stage. The Music Team is dedicated and has extremely high standards and is very supportive. Administratively, Moira and Anna are doing a stunning job. Moira needs to be congratulated on her management of the students who were unwell during the course.

Performance Goals

1. Transfer the energy achieved in *Kua Rongo* into all other repertoire.
2. Connect with the audience more by communicating the meaning of the text of each piece.

Musical Goals

1. Fine tune *a cappella* repertoire using 'just intonation'.
2. Continue to sing with a different choral sound for each piece of music.
3. Articulate the text clearly in different acoustics; adjust to different acoustics quickly.

Technical Goals

1. Sing with correct onsets and releases.
2. Continue to develop the choral sound by balancing upper, middle and lower resonances.

Management Goals

1. Manage your own behaviour during rehearsals and concerts – talking, etc.
2. Ensure that you are responsible for time management and organisation.

Andrew Withington
Musical Director
New Zealand Secondary Students' Choir
18 July, 2009

Course Report for NZSSC

Course 2, like Course 1, was a lot of fun! It was longer and harder than the last course but still enjoyable none-the-less.

The first thing everyone did on arrival was walk around trying to recall people's names - there were some interesting variations. Then, when we started with the music, it was trying to remember our music, with even more interesting results. After the first day, however, we were back on track – back to where we had left off from the last course!

This was useful as we had two days to build a repertoire for our first public performance, so we jumped in with both feet and worked intensely. All the tutors/leaders did really well with their sections. This was evident because Andrew hardly had to talk to us!!

Our sectionals were educational and enjoyable. It was my favourite part because while we learned our parts, we also told jokes, laughed, and generally had a good time. Grant, our section tutor, would rave on about the importance of the bass section, as well as our superiority!

The first concert went off with a bang, and was flawless from beginning to end. We were so happy including all the bosses.

Now that we had proved we could sing, we had to prove we could also dance. The rest of the day was dedicated to choreography for our Samoan piece "Mauga e o le Atuolo". For me, the dancing came naturally and I was so proud to be Samoan and to be able to show off my culture in my singing and dancing. However, it was also the most exhausting day of the course.

We went ten pin bowling on Thursday after a more relaxing day and then settled into Friday and Saturday which was just work, work and more work. We had a concert Saturday evening that meant intense preparation. We took the time to walk around during any breaks to for down-time.

The concert was very professional though it started off a bit shaky. I think it was because we still weren't used to the venue. We might not have started confidently but we definitely finished with a standing ovation after our successful Samoan piece. And just like that, it was time to go home... until Christchurch ☺

by Christian Malietoa-Brown

NZSSC PALMERSTON NORTH APRIL 2009

What an amazing experience! Great to see my choral family again!
I got to know more people in the choir, people I never spoke to during the Auckland course.

From the time I stepped on the bus, the atmosphere was warm and inviting, this made the bus ride more bearable and fun.

The camp was a week long, which I thought was too short, as there were so many great things to take in, and experience.

We learnt new fun warm-ups, how to look after our voices, technique, new languages, and new repertoire.

One of the highlights of the camp was the opportunity to learn a new Samoan action song, which was taught by a person who used to part of the NZSSC. This gave us a chance to experience Samoan Culture, in a way of dancing and singing. As I am a non-Samoan speaking Samoan, this helped me realise how important it is for me to familiarise myself with my language and other aspects of my Samoan Culture.

We closed our course with a concert in the Anglican Church in Palmerston North. This was a chance for us as a choir to show what we had worked on during the two courses. The concert had a great response. We got a standing ovation, which boosted our confidence as a choir.

Overall, this course was amazing, and there's nothing I would change about it. These courses always blow me away, I get to meet new people, learn new things, and experience great tutoring from amazing musicians and teachers.

I look forward to the next one in July, to learning even more and to meeting up with my choir friends again.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the choir for this opportunity and to the Trust that has provided finance for me.

Regards
Fuatino Malo-Siolo

NZSSC Course #2: Palmerston North

The second course for the 2009-10 NZSSC choir was in Palmerston North, over the term one school holidays. Leading up the course, I was anxious, as we had received through the mail notice that we would be doing *two* recitals over the course. When I arrived at the airport (on a typically dreary Auckland morning), I found that I wasn't the only one who was panicking about having their music memorised!

Within an hour of touching down in Palmerston North, we were straight into work with Andrew Withington, Robert Wiremu and Grant Bartley. To my surprise, the things I had learned over the first course were actually still there in my mind, and at the end of the first day I was starting to feel that maybe we really could pull off those recitals...

Over the next 6 days, we had an intense schedule of singing, eating and occasionally socialising. I got to know the names of those people that I hadn't spoken to on the last course, generally through joining them on random trips to McDonalds or the Square. As well as getting to know new people, I got closer to my existing friends, including my billet/roommate Mia, from Wellington. One of the best things about being in a national choir is that when you come to a course, you know that every single person there is just as enthusiastic and just as devoted as you are to making your choir the best it can be. Mia and I spent many late nights in our bedroom, memorising music or practising our actions...!

The highlights of the course for me were definitely the two recitals, but also some crazy moments that we had within the choir. Andrew is one of the most energetic choral conductors I have ever seen - he puts so much emotion and energy into the music, sometimes we just have to stand back and watch him leap around. And laugh a bit, too. It's this sort of fun and enthusiastic attitude that makes us go out into the Square for lunch, and give some impromptu performances of our favourite pieces. (Needless to say, some Palmerston North residents were rather amused.) It also gave me a lot of national pride to be performing both Maori waiata and a Samoan medley that was written especially for the choir. I can't wait for the choir to perform in Auckland, so that my family can see us perform the Samoan siva!

~Luana Prictor, Auckland