

Concert Choir Sydney Tour, 28th July-1st August 2004

The Pollard *Australasian Choral Championships* are held annually in Sydney as part of the McDonalds Performing Arts Challenge. This competition was originally as the City of Sydney Eisteddfods in 1933 and is the largest of its kind in the world.

Brighton's Concert Choir and Chamber Choir recorded a stunning achievement winning all five divisions entered:

- The John Lamble Australasian Choral Open Championship
- The John Lamble Australasian Championship for Secondary School Choirs
- U18 Choir
- Sacred Choral Award for Secondary Schools
- U18 Chamber Choir

This complete domination of Australia's largest and highest quality Choral Championships has been invariably described as the most significant choral achievement by a school choir in this country. In particular, the 2004 Brighton Concert Choir is the first school choir to ever take out the open Championship, the largest choral prize in Australia.

The four adjudicators (Dr Steve Watson, Ben Macpherson AOM, Stephen Schafer and Julie Christiansen) who evaluated the performances were overflowing in their praise for Brighton, a sample of their comments follows:

"Riveting...tone is remarkable, as is the sheer musicality of this group. Outstanding by every measure."

"Highly impressive. This is one of the most outstanding choral ensembles we have heard in recent years. We need to promote you. You should be on the world stage mixing it with the best in the world. This is the best school choir in Australia"

"Not much to say. .fabulous! Very confident, a pleasure to hear this choir."

"We are unanimous that this is the best choir...excellently tight ensemble...a great feat of managing..."

"A great sense of fun comes through. Very entertaining and accomplished."

"You are so refined. Bravo conductor, the challenges were masterfully rendered. You're a wonderful wonderful choir –wow! An absolute credit to your school and a wonderful example to all young choirs in this country".

The conductor and Musical Director of both choirs is Michael Griffin, who also conducted the Choir on its successful tour of China last year. The accompanists were Heather Elliott and Jeffrey Kong.

Student report by Jessie Swan

On Wednesday the 28th of August, the Concert Choir of 2004 set off to Sydney to participate in nation-wide competitions. After a year of working hard, we really wanted to do our best, and at least get into the finals of the Secondary School division. However, our hopes weren't very high – we had had two 'practice concerts' the day before, and our performances had been less than satisfying, considering the amount of work we had put in. Nevertheless, as we travelled on the plane at 8 in the morning, we were ready to put our best into our competitions!

Our first competition: We didn't have a lot of time to prepare, having just arrived that day. There was time for a brief run-over the two songs we would be singing, then straight into the performance! But we sang well, and left the stage...

Every day after that, we would get up, have breakfast while listening (if you were near him) to Mr. Griffin's Plans – do this, change that – and then head up to a small stuffy room where we would rehearse for as long as needed, putting into action Mr. Griffin's Plans of 'do this' and 'change that'. I think that those rehearsals gave us a real advantage, and gave us time to concentrate on our singing.

We competed every day for the five days, and found that it was tough work to put 100 % into something for five days straight, not to mention staying awake later than we should have and getting up earlier. The fact that whenever we won (which turned out to be every day) and the choir got up and screamed every time didn't help either. Screaming hurts.

The Open division was without a doubt our toughest competition; the Big One. Our little Secondary School was against big University choirs, and Adult choirs. Mr. Griffin concocted a magic program. We were all aiming for an honorable mention at most – we knew that the competition would be tough.

When our Choir got up to sing, we sang well. At the end of the performance, we felt ok. When the Judge read out 2nd prize to be the choir we thought would win, we felt surprised. Who would win? When our name was called out, the Concert Choir went ballistic. People jumped, screamed, hugged, and I think I saw one person start to cry!

As you can imagine, by the last day we were extremely tired. The bags under our eyes were huge. When we got to breakfast, we met a very (disturbingly) awake Mr. Griffin. He had worked out a program that would – 'blow the Judges away', and because we won the open we were to sing through the adjudication. We had a little warm up, and to our annoyance, we sounded tired and worn out. While listening to the younger choirs, I felt my eyelids drooping, and saw a few others follow suit. However, this wasn't good enough, if we wanted to win. By now, we were expected to do so, and Concert Choir had caught the winning bug.

Directly before our performance, Mr. Griffin ran another quick warm up, and by now, people had started to wake up and turn themselves on for our performance, the Secondary Schools division, which originally contained 16 choirs. When we got on stage, what came out of our mouths was a lot different than what had in our previous practice. Both our soloists sang (Heather Muggridge and Trevor Anderson) and we did marvellously. We had learned to switch on performance, to create energy! We felt invigorated by the end.

Our trip was absolutely fantastic. Our Teachers gave everything they had those five days into the choir. They got us moving, and made us do our very very best. The trip truly was a once in a life-time opportunity, and I know that we will remember it for years to come.