



Brisbane Concert Choir

DEBRA SHEARER-DIRIÉ MUSICAL DIRECTOR

at St Andrew's

# MEMBER HANDBOOK

[www.brisbaneconcertchoir.com](http://www.brisbaneconcertchoir.com)

## Brisbane Concert Choir at St Andrew's Inc.



The Brisbane Concert Choir *at St Andrew's Inc.* is an auditioned, adult, mixed voice community choir of up to 70 members drawn from all walks of life, based in Brisbane, Australia. Formed in 1996 by Dr Guy Jansen as an initiative of St Andrew's Uniting Church's Arts Outreach, it was directed by Christopher Kiver until July 2002, and thereafter came under the direction of Graeme Morton, until the end of 2003. Following an extensive search for a new Musical Director, Debra Shearer-Dirié was appointed to the position in May 2005.

The choir has established an excellent reputation for its performances of diverse repertoire ranging from a cappella pieces to full symphonic works. Performances have included appearances with The Queensland Orchestra, Queensland Pops Orchestra and in prestigious festivals such as Brisbane Cathedrals Week and the 4MBS Festival of Classics.

The choir embarked on a highly-successful ten-day tour of the North Island of New Zealand in 1999 and in June 2002, following the release of its first CD, *Journey*, the choir toured to north Queensland. The choir has recorded performances for broadcast on ABC-TV and 4MBS Classic-FM. In 2008 the choir released another CD, *Radiance*, and went on its first European tour to Prague, Salzburg and Vienna.

Most recently, the choir toured to Italy in September 2011, where it was exceedingly well received. The choir has also produced its third CD which features music for the Christmas festive season: *Rejoice!*

### Musical Director — Dr Debra Shearer-Dirié



Originally from Perth, Dr Debra Shearer-Dirié maintains an active career as a choral conductor, music educator, clinician and scholar. She holds a Master of Music Education degree and Doctor of Music degree in Choral Conducting from Indiana University. During her time there she directed the Indiana University Children's and Youth Choir, was assistant director to maestro Paul Hillier with the Pro Arte Singers, and Director of the International Vocal Ensemble at Indiana University for two years. From 2000 to 2001, she

conducted the Northwest Girlchoir in Seattle, a 400-voice organization of young women who perform frequently with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

Debra has received numerous invitations to present at national conferences both abroad and in Australia, including the National Conference of the American Choral Director's Association in New York in 2003, and has been invited to present at each Australian National Choral Association (ANCA) Choralfest since she has returned to Australia in 2003.

Upon arriving in Brisbane mid 2003, she conducted the Queensland Young Conservatorium Chamber Choir through diverse repertoire which led to an invitation to perform at the ANCA conference in 2004. In 2005, she was appointed Musical Director of Brisbane Concert Choir, and in 2006 founded Vox Pacifica Chamber Choir. In 2009 she founded Fusion, a semi-professional adult a capella ensemble. She continually searches for opportunities to collaborate with other musical groups, composers, dancers, visual artists and cultural groups. Debra's most recent vocal ensemble is Vintage Voices, a programme for older people in the community to join in song. She began leading this group 18 months ago.

Debra has lectured at the Queensland Conservatorium, the University of Queensland School of Music, and in 2013 will be teaching at the Australian Catholic University. She is currently serving as editor of the ANCA journal Sing Out, as well as being on the National Council for ANCA. She has also been contributing reviewer for the International Choral Bulletin (the publication of the International Federation for Choral Music) since 2012. Debra is in demand as an adjudicator, clinician and conductor for festivals and eisteddfods throughout Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

## Accompanist — John Woods



John was born in Stirling, Scotland and studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, and the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester. Prior to joining the staff of the Queensland Conservatorium he worked for the RNCM, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and Granada Television. He has accompanied singers and instrumentalists throughout the UK, Europe and Australia, on the concert platform and in radio and television broadcasts, and has also

accompanied the master classes of several distinguished musicians including Dame Joan Sutherland, Dame Janet Baker and Dame Elisabeth Schwarzkopf.

# ABOUT THE CHOIR

## Our Purpose

The purpose of the choir is to:

- provide a forum for singing together, and preparing for, and participating in performances.
- promote, encourage and support choral activity in the general community as an important aspect of the community's culture and cultural heritage;
- promote and encourage interest in, and the study and development of, choral music and performance;
- provide opportunities for social interaction among the Choir's members;
- contribute to the arts outreach mission of St Andrew's Uniting Church in recognition of the Choir having been established as a result of this activity of the Church;

## Performances

The core of the choir's activities is the three major concerts it holds in a year, generally on a Sunday in late April/ May, late August/September and early December. Two of these concerts are usually performed with orchestra. These concerts are usually held in St Andrew's Uniting Church, on the corner of Creek and Ann Streets, in the Brisbane CBD.



In addition, the musical director seeks opportunities for the choir to be involved in other events (for example, Cathedrals' Week) or with other choirs (such as choirs visiting from overseas). In recognition of the support provided to the choir by St Andrew's Uniting Church, the choir sings at two church services during the year.

The choir also uses its choral talents to generate revenue for the choir to minimise the membership fees. This includes an annual 'from scratch' performance (the general public pays to join the choir on a Saturday afternoon and early evening to rehearse and perform a well known work) as well as paid engagements (such as weddings and carolling in one or two shopping centres in Brisbane's suburbs in December). To support the development and production of the CDs and tours, there may also be one off events such as the Italian cafe concert in 2011.

Members are expected to participate in all of these performances and activities as far as possible.

## Rehearsal Commitments

The rehearsal schedule is organised around the three major concerts. Therefore, in each calendar year there are three distinct rehearsal periods which culminate in a concert.

The choir usually rehearses on Tuesday evenings from 6.15–8.45pm in the hall underneath St Andrew's Uniting Church. (The hall entrance is on Creek Street.)



In addition, in each concert season, a Saturday or Sunday afternoon rehearsal is also scheduled. There are also dress rehearsals, usually on the Friday evening prior to a concert. The dates for these are provided well in advance.

A copy of the current rehearsal and performance schedule is always available in hardcopy at rehearsals and electronically by email.

The membership secretary maintains an attendance sheet for rehearsals. The Musical Director reserves the right to audition singers for a particular performance if there have been too many absences, and to decide that a singer may not participate in the performance.

## Fees

As a community choir, the choir is self-funded and the members pay membership fees to cover the costs of running the choir — music, musical director and accompanist fees, etc. The current fee schedule for our choir is on the website. There is a reduced fee for students.

Fees can be paid either annually or by concert season (there is a discount for paying annually), by cash, cheque or direct deposit.

## Membership

As a community choir, membership is open to any singer who satisfies the audition process.

If you are thinking of joining our choir, you are encouraged to come to a rehearsal (and sing) and take the opportunity of meeting the current choir members and the musical director to see if our choir is the right “choral fit” for you.

If you decide you would like to join, an audition will be organised for (usually) the end of the next rehearsal you attend.

The audition will consist of:

- your own choice of song (this can be as simple as a hymn or short song - no operatic arias expected!)
- vocalizing led by the Musical Director
- an ear test (singing notes in a chord)
- a short sight-singing exercise

You will also be asked to complete an application form with relevant details about yourself and your singing experience.

It should be noted that the choir has a limited number of places and that it is also important to keep a balance between the sections. If that limit has been reached, or you are in a voice group which may already have sufficient singers, you may need to go on a waiting list.

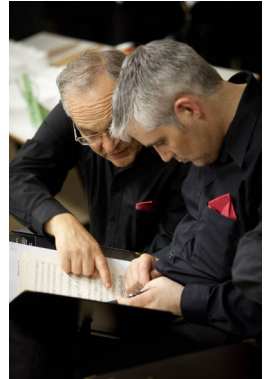
# INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

## Music

The choir has a (voluntary) librarian who provides members with all the music needed at any given time.

Until you have passed an audition you will not be able to take the music home with you. After this you will be able to take the music for the relevant period and will be responsible for it. This enables members to review the music between rehearsals.

You will be asked to mark your score with appropriate notations. This should be done lightly in pencil only, preferably with a soft lead such as a 2B.



Music usually needs to be returned immediately following a performance. The librarian will provide a box for its return and members must ensure that they return their music promptly, particularly when we have it on a hire arrangement. You will need to rub out any pencil notations which have been made. If your music is lost or damaged, you may be required to reimburse the cost to replace it.

## Folders

The choir has folders which are used for most performances. These have been purchased through a grant from the Queensland Government's Community Benefit Fund. You will be provided with a numbered folder at your first performance with the choir, which only needs to be returned if you leave the choir.

## Tasks

As a community organisation, the choir depends on its members to assist in practical ways in the running of the choir.

For rehearsals, the carpet and chairs need to be set out and those who can arrive before 6.15pm are asked to assist in set up and others to stay behind for a few minutes after a rehearsal to put everything away.

Everyone is expected to actively promote a concert and pre-sell as many tickets as possible to ensure we have a good-sized audience. Leaflets and posters are

provided to members for distribution.

Those who are physically able are needed to assist with setting up and dismantling the stage and choir risers.

The choir usually provides post-concert refreshments for the audience, soloists, orchestra and choir. Everyone is expected to “bring a plate” and assistance is needed with the setting up, serving and clearing away.

### **The “tea break”**

About half way through each rehearsal there is a “tea-break” for about 20 minutes. Tea, coffee and biscuits are available for a gold coin donation. This is a great chance to have a chat to other choir members — particularly those from different sections.

There is a duty roster for assisting in the setting up and serving the tea and coffee to share this task around the choir. Feel free to bring something home-baked to share - it’s always appreciated!

## **Uniform**

The choir has a formal uniform which is worn for all concert performances. The uniform has been kept as simple as possible as members have responsibility for providing their own uniform, except for the women’s scarves.

### **Women:**

- Plain black three-quarter sleeve, round/boat/scoop necked top
- Black tailored (corporate) style trousers
- Black closed toe shoes with black socks/stockings
- Red choir scarf (these are handed out immediately before the concert and returned immediately afterwards)

### **Men:**

- Black long-sleeved collared shirt
- Black long trousers
- Black shoes with black socks

If the correct uniform is not worn, the singer may not be able to participate in that performance.

For performances, singers should keep jewellery to a minimum and avoid wearing strong smelling perfumes or after shave.



## Communication

The vast majority of information is provided through email due to its ease for mass communication and the time of voluntary committee members being limited.

Members are asked to check their emails regularly. If you do not have email, you should find an "email buddy" who will commit to passing this information on to you.

We also use the time at the beginning of the tea break to update or provide information to the choir. Rehearsal and concert schedules and other notices will often also be available (in hard copy) at rehearsal.

## Transport and Parking

Due to our City location parking can be difficult. Ann and Creek Streets are clearways until 7.00pm.

You may find on-street parking on Wickham Terrace which has parking meters and some streets around the Astor Terrace area are free after 6pm. It's first in best dressed — and a good incentive to be at rehearsal early!

There are moderately priced public car parks close by such as the Wickham Terrace multi-storey and under the Novotel Hotel in Astor Terrace.

For those coming by train, the Central Railway Station is only a short walk.

## Security

The church and hall are accessible to the general public. Members of the public will occasionally come and sit in the hall or church when we are rehearsing. Unfortunately there have been incidents when items have gone missing.

Neither the choir nor church's insurance covers loss of personal possessions and therefore you will need to take responsibility for them.

During performances, we are usually able to put valuables and bags in a locked room. However, the safest way is to bring a bare minimum of valuables with you and to keep them with you as much as possible.

## Insurance

As a result of the choir being a member of the Australian National Choral Association, the choir and its members have the benefit of personal injury insurance cover at rehearsals and performances and for travel to and from these events. The terms of the policy are available on request.

## Management and Administration

The choir is an incorporated association and is therefore managed and run through a management committee which is elected every year at the choir's annual general meeting (AGM).

The Committee consists of the following honorary positions: a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and up to five general members. The musical director is also a full member of the committee. All positions are honorary. The committee meets as needed but at least once per concert season. Summaries of the meetings are made available to choir members.

Some administrative roles are undertaken by non-committee members, including the librarian, membership secretary and performance folder custodian.

The choir's AGM usually takes place in April or May. Notice of the meeting and call for nominations for the committee or items for discussion are made to choir members at least two weeks in advance. The meeting is held on a rehearsal night with the rehearsal finishing around the tea break to allow for this.

A copy of the constitution and a list of the current committee members can be found on the choir website.

## Expectations

Each financial member has the **right** to:

- participate fully in the choir's activities, including to:
  - sing in performances
  - speak at and vote in all general meetings of the choir, including the election of the members of the management committee
  - attend any social events organised for members
  - contribute their ideas in relation to repertoire and any other issues which would assist in the smooth running of the choir or the

enjoyment of its members

- receive proper notice of all meetings and events in a timely manner
- be treated respectfully by other members of the choir.

Each financial member has the **responsibility** to:

- actively participate in the choir, including the tasks associated with rehearsals and events noted in this handbook
- ensure that they have a copy of the rehearsal and concert schedule and check for emails from the choir
- attend as far as possible, the rehearsals and events as detailed on the schedule, and in particular to:
  - attend a minimum of 75% of rehearsals, or otherwise demonstrate their competence to the satisfaction of the musical director, to be able to participate in a performance
  - sign the attendance record sheet at each rehearsal
  - register an apology with one of the nominated people (see contacts list) or on the attendance sheet if known in advance
  - be punctual at rehearsals and events
- practise as much as possible between rehearsals
- take good care of the music and return it in the same condition it was received
- wear the uniform stipulated at each performance
- treat other members of the choir with respect

## Useful Contacts

For all **general matters**, as well as **apologies for rehearsals**, please contact:

**Chairperson, Jim McNicol**

Phone: 3300 1932

Email: choir@brisbaneconcertchoir.com

For **last minute apologies**, please send an SMS to:

**Membership Secretary, Sue Gray**

Mobile: 0419 744 805

For **musical matters**:

**Musical Director, Debra Shearer-Dirié**



**Brisbane Concert Choir at St Andrew's Inc.**

Phone (07) 3300 1932

[choir@brisbaneconcertchoir.com](mailto:choir@brisbaneconcertchoir.com)

[www.brisbaneconcertchoir.com](http://www.brisbaneconcertchoir.com)