

An Angelic Christmas with the King

CAL WEBB

Adrian King (that really should be King Adrian) arrived on the Sunshine Coast from the UK back in 2006 with his wife Helen. He joined Noosa Chorale as a tenor (and Helen as a soprano) before taking over the baton in 2007 from retiring conductor Leonard Spira.

And as they say... the rest is history. Sixteen wonderful years later, it is his turn to retire, and our concert on 16 and 17 December will be his very last.

Chorale singers are setting aside their sadness at losing Adrian to concentrate on bringing a truly joyous and angelic programme of Christmas carols to our audiences next month.

Amongst the repertoire are some of Adrian's all-time favourites and the choir is responding to his sheer delight in conducting these by producing the most angelic of sounds—and yes, even the basses are sounding like angels.

Many of the chosen pieces are by one of the best-loved living choral composers, John Rutter who, along with David Willcocks, edited the

collection that choirs everywhere tend to think of as virtually their Christmas carols bible, "100 Carols for Choirs".

The exquisite "Candlelight Carol" by Rutter paints a gorgeous picture with its sweet harmonies bringing a shining luminescence to the words "candlelight, angel light, fire light and star glow, shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn".

Along with the less well-known carols will be quite a few traditional ones that the audience can sing along with. As in past years, Adrian's conducting of the audience sing-a-long will be guaranteed to bring joy, laughter, and conviviality, the perfect antidote to another year of great challenge.

Frank Wilkie, Deputy Mayor of Noosa Council, who has generously agreed to be the Chorale's Master of Ceremonies again, will bring his characteristic wit and charm to the event.

And this year's raffle is shaping up to be a big hit with some fabulous prizes being donated by many local businesses and organisations once again.

The angelic decorations in the J Theatre (combined with the theatre's superb air conditioning) will transport you to a blissfully cool angel heaven with sweet sounds in the air all around, and a King in exuberant but final command.

An Angelic Christmas
The J Theatre, 60 Noosa Drive
Friday 16 December, 7pm
Saturday 17 December, 2pm
Tickets: \$39 adults / \$20 student/child
Phone: 07 5329 6560
www.thej.com.au/an-angelic-christmas



*Celebrate the festive season with Noosa's favourite Christmas concert—
an angelic fun-filled, raffle-prized, singing-along
treat for the whole family—
and the last concert conducted by esteemed
conductor Adrian King before his retirement.*

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15 years of Christmas Cheer

JIM FAGAN

The joy of Christmas is on again at The J Theatre next month with Noosa Chorale presenting its 15th anniversary Christmas Cheer concert.

In 2007 when the choir held its first Wassail, it was generally agreed that there had never been anything like it before in Noosa. The audience was sitting at tables, eating and drinking merrily, and joining in the carol singing with the choir.

The idea was brought to the choir by our then new conductor Adrian King and his wife Helen, a gifted soprano who had also sung with Adrian's choir in the UK.

The Bicentennial Hall at Sunshine Beach was festooned with stars and Yuletide decorations by Yvonne Woodlock and an eager swarm of volunteers. The concert was called "Wassail" from the Ancient Norse words "waes hael" meaning good health.

Since then, these convivial choral events have come to be considered by their loyal followers as the "unofficial start to the Christmas season".

With Covid's entry into our world,

social distancing has meant the audience sitting in allocated theatre seats instead of tables, but it hasn't stopped the merriment and the enjoyment of the carol sing-along.

The popular two performances are a sell-out every year, and this year looks like being no exception.

The theme is "Angels" and the Chorale promises a celestial performance as it is Adrian's last sweep of the baton with the choir.

After 53 years of conducting choirs in different parts of the world, the last 15 of which has been with Noosa Chorale, he has decided to retire.

The concert, on 16 and 17 December, will be filled with the traditional carols the Chorale and audiences all know and love to sing, along with festive songs from that doyen of Christmas music, John Rutter.

It will be a joyous time to remember.

[Click here to book your tickets.](#)



The first Wassail, December 2007, at Bicentennial Hall in Sunshine Beach

How it all began

An excerpt from "Noosa Sings: Fifteen Years of Classical Harmony" by Jim Fagan, 2009.

Adrian's suggestion of a Christmas concert emanated from one of his U.K. groups, the Grimsby Bach Choir, which each year stages a Wassail, a word derived from the Old Norse ves heill (or, from a later time, the Anglo Saxon waes hael.)

The words literally mean "good health," but they can, depending on how you feel at the time, be a toast, an alcoholic drink, like mulled or spiced ale, or a party, particularly at Christmas.

It is a picture-evoking word. It is easy to imagine roistering Vikings hallooing Wassail as they dip their beards into their cups, or 12th century English peasants, warming up in the winter weather, with a Christmas carol and a hot bowl or two.

The Chorale loved the idea of its audience sitting at tables, drinking punch (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) eating mince pies and shortbread, and singing carols and festive songs. And Noosa loved it, too, both nights being sold out with door patrons, hoping for tickets, somehow being squeezed on to already crowded tables.

Members were thrilled about the chance to do something different and no one was more excited than Wassail organizer, Yvonne Woodlock: "I thought it was my opportunity to get involved and make sure everything ran smoothly," she says.

The theme was STARS and the Bicentennial Hall looked like a giant winter fairyland with a 4-metre tall tree studded with pine cones painted white, huge stars on the walls and a stage screen, dotted with more stars, behind the singers.

Helen King's Grimsby experience and her skills as an interior decorator, Ann Milland's artistic flair, plus a big effort from the choir, were responsible for the transformation.

Says Yvonne: "There was a lot of preparation and Chorale members did all the work, from baking 1500 mince pies in my kitchen and Ann's, setting up and dressing tables, decorating the hall and making punch, to waiting on tables during the concert and clearing up afterwards."

15 years of Christmas cheer with Adrian King



Two terrific tenors join the tremendous team ANGIE OAKLEY

Newly arrived tenor Mark Taylor has taken a fascinating and circuitous route to the Noosa Chorale. And although he regrets that he never had formal training in music as a subject, he more than makes up for it in singing experience and expertise.

A forty-year career in complex geophysics has taken him far from “the rural quietude” of a wheat farm in Dalby, where Mark enjoyed singing from an early age.

“A memory of singing *Rhythm of Life* in the school speech night choir still brings back the cheeky contemporary feeling of those songs in our conservative little town!”

Mark moved to Brisbane to finish high school. He studied Physics, Maths and Chemistry at university, along with “this new thing called Computer Science”.

It turned out that all of these interests set him up perfectly when he stumbled on a career in exploration geophysics. This specialization created unexpected opportunities for him and his family to live all around the world.

Thus they moved to Houston, then to Adelaide, then to Paris and finally to the Gulf (Bahrain and Saudi Arabia), but with music always accompanying him and his wife Julie (also a singer) and their two daughters.

“My most significant choral experience was under the conductor of Bahrain’s Manama Singers, Alistair Auld. There are many British people in Bahrain, so the Singers followed that strong British tradition of choral music. We produced four to five concerts per year.

Alistair and his wife worked to pull together the orchestra as required by the particular performance from the excellent musicians of Bahrain.

“We’d often fill gaps courtesy of a Gulf Air sponsorship to fly a harpist from Abu Dhabi, or string players from Dubai, or a horn player from UK, or the Australian Ambassador and his violin from Riyadh, then borrow the double bass from Bahrain’s Defence Force, and once even dragged the organ from the Cathedral to a hotel ballroom just to make it ‘perfect’ for the performance.

“Many of our concerts were ‘premiers’ for the Gulf region. I recall the most difficult music for me to learn was Brahms’ *Requiem*. The most majestic was Verdi’s *Requiem* with 110 voices and 85 players on stage.

“The most riotous was *African Sanctus* under the direction of the composer David Fanshaw. The longest was probably the full *Messiah*.

“The silliest was a 30-minute ‘Horotorio’ by Horowitz, designed to be sung badly and in ghoulish costume – my role was Frankenstein’s son being wed to Dracula’s daughter!

“As well, I loved the smaller opera or Broadway selections we performed in cultural venues and clubs in Bahrain. The great energy of those years in Manama Singers helped me grow as a singer.”

On his return to Queensland, Mark found his way to the Chorale’s May performance of the Fauré *Requiem* and Karl Jenkins’ *Stabat Mater*.

“I decided from my seat in the audience that I must sing with this group. It was an excellent decision!”



Tenors Mark Taylor (left) and Oj Rugins

Fellow Chorale newby, Oj Rugins, declares, “I’m loving working with Adrian and Janet. Wish I’d come on board earlier, but you can’t do it all!”

And looking at his range of musical experience, we would have to say we too are sorry he didn’t join us earlier, but are delighted he’s here now to add his voice to the tenors.

And as he says, his musical career has been ‘a right mixture.’ From childhood

he has played the piano accordion – a legacy of his Latvian parentage, along with a strong singing tradition.

Since then he has added guitar, and double bass – which he played in a school performance of Benjamin Britten’s one-act opera *Noye’s Fludde*.

And latterly he played the tenor-bass steel pans for around 12 years with the group “Pantastic Steelband” most notably on weekly Noosa River Calypso Cruises and monthly at Eumundi Markets. They are currently regrouping for some Australia/New Zealand steel pan festivals.

As well, he has lived in what could be termed ‘a right mixture’ of places. Originally from Nottingham, Oj trained as a teacher in Leeds, and completed a graduate degree in Canada, and a graduate diploma in Applied Linguistics through Charles Darwin University.

His interests and career choices have also ranged far and wide, adding Physical Education, drama and French to his musical work.

After migrating to Australia, Oj concentrated on the teaching of French, and was able to incorporate singing and drama via the AIM approach (Accelerative Integrated Method) into primary school French programs as an itinerant teacher on the Sunshine Coast.

His students annually performed a trio of short AIM plays at the Brisbane French Festival on Southbank over six years pre-Covid.

Thus we shouldn’t be surprised to find him playing the accordion for the Sunshine Coast *Alliance Française* Bastille Day celebrations.

Along with cycling, golf and—most importantly—his wife, music is central to his life, as he tells us:

“You do get the satisfaction of improving with practice, and the results can be most heartwarming.

“But then a chance encounter with a piece can stop you in your tracks, transform you to another world, make your day, lift your mood. Without it, it’s like a day without sunshine.”

Chorale members loved their singing classes CAL WEBB

Noosa Chorale was delighted to have been awarded a Noosa Council Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) Grant to provide its members with a vocal development programme in 2022.

The aim of the project was to trial the value of offering members, many of whom are untrained singers, an opportunity to learn about and practise some basic elements of vocal production in small groups, facilitated by a professional vocal coach.

The programme kicked off in July 2022 with singers signing up to a series of workshops led by Gympie-based vocal teacher Kerri Eaton.

Kerri was the ideal choice to run these workshops. Following her studies at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in the 1989, Kerri was selected to join Opera Queensland's young artist programme. It wasn't long before she was invited to London to further her professional singing career.



Vocal teacher Kerri Eaton (seated) with Wilma Barnes (left), Daphne Wayth, and Donald Grant

Returning to Australia, Kerri set up her vocal studio catering for classical, musical theatre and contemporary singing styles. She was well known for her capacity to connect with students of all ages whilst making their learning experience positive and good fun at the same time.



Proudly supported by Noosa Council



The Regional Arts Development Fund is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Noosa Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.

With a teaching job at Matthew Flinders Anglican College and guest teaching/mentoring at the University of Queensland, plus her membership of the Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing, Kerri was enthusiastically snapped up to teach the vocal development sessions.

48 of the Chorale's members took part in the workshops which were conducted over two weekends in July and August. Each of the two 90-minute workshops was offered at six different times, with groups of up to 10 singers in each group.

The workshops were conducted in the delightful and very suitable setting of the Tait-Duke Community Cottage in Tewantin. Far enough away from surrounding buildings, this meant the singers were able to belt out their practice without fear of disturbing the neighbourhood.

Participants were invited to complete a survey about their experience of both workshops. The benefits they reported on were felt very positively with singers reiterating Kerri's own reports of their improved breath control, posture and relaxation techniques, and increased vocal range.

Singers also reported on their enjoyment of singing together in the workshop small groups, and the friendly camaraderie that Kerri engendered. In the light of the two previous years of social restrictions imposed by the covid pandemic on the

choir, the project came at just the right time to add to the Chorale's rebuilding of its corps d'esprit.

Serendipitously, savings that had been made on the venue costs for the workshops were able to be channelled back into the project, with approval by Noosa Council's grants management team.

These funds enabled the provision of some follow-up individualised sessions for singers, either singly or in pairs.

The 26 participants in the individualised follow-up sessions were delighted to have received Kerri's expert help in identifying and addressing particular problems they were having with their singing.

Some reported that, as well as the session targeting their own particular needs, it was less daunting to sing in a pair than in a small group.

However, one participant candidly explained, "When in a group, I tended to sing more tentatively and softly, worried I might make a mistake! There's no hiding in an individual session."

As a pilot project, the opportunity that the grant provided has enabled the Chorale to test out the idea of offering a vocal development programme for its members, in two different but complementary learning formats.

Whether such a programme can be continued in future will depend heavily on minimising the costs, and weighing these up against the proven benefits.

Suffice to say, it has been a thoroughly positive experience for those who took part, myself included as both project coordinator and eager, hopeful learner.



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