



## **GREAT NEWS!**

***We are delighted that ANCA will publish an editorial on the Chorale in their next edition of their national magazine 'SING OUT' .....***

The Central Coast Chorale is a group of people who come together to sing and have a genuine love for choral music as well as a great respect for their gifted Music Director, Christopher Bowen OAM. The Chorale was established in late 1992 (as the Gosford Chorale) when a small group of singers came together for a “one-off” concert performance with the then Gosford City Orchestra at a Christmas Concert at Laycock Street Theatre in Gosford. The audience response to this small Chamber Choir was so positive that Christopher Bowen (*Conductor of the City Orchestra and Director of the Central Coast Conservatorium at the time*) decided to form the Chorale as a permanent



Chamber Choir with the goal of establishing a new musical benchmark for the performance of choral music on the Central Coast. He relocated to Sydney in the early 1990's but has continued on as Music Director (MD) for the Chorale travelling from Sydney every Wednesday for rehearsals. Christopher has been a staff member of the Vienna and Sydney Conservatoriums and has worked with the Victorian State Opera and Opera Australia. Since his return to Australia in 1989 he has conducted numerous choirs and orchestras and has been MD of the Sydney University Graduate Choir and the Chorale for the past 16 years. He is also MD for several other choirs in Sydney. Christopher is a Fellow of Sydney University and his awards include The Stephen Lardner Memorial Award for excellence in adult education. He was also the recipient of the Order of Australia Medal in January 2009 for his service to music as a composer, conductor and director, particularly through the Sydney University Graduate Choir and to music education. Christopher has released four CDs over the years with the Chorale, *'For the Beauty', 'Botany Bay & Beyond', 'A Touch of Heaven'* and *'Reflections'*.

The Chorale comprises approximately 45 singers, a number professionally trained and with solo experience. Some members have gone on to join the chorus of Opera Australia and others perform regularly with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs as well as the Sydney University Graduate Choir. The Chorale has been performing on the Central Coast since 1993 presenting three concerts each year. The concerts are keenly looked forward to and over the years the Chorale has gained a strong following among lovers of fine choral music. Some of the works presented in concerts over the years include Beethoven's *'Choral Fantasia'*, Haydn's *'Creation'*, a children's length adaptation of Mozart's *'The Magic Flute'* featuring the Children's Chorale later to become known as the Central Coast Children's Choir under the direction of Jenny Bell, a foundation member of the Chorale. Other works have been Faurè's *'Requiem'*, Vivaldi's *'Gloria'*, Handel's *'Messiah'*, Mozart's *'Requiem'*, John Rutter's *'Mass of the Children'*, Saint Saëns *'Christmas Oratorio'*, Mozart's *'Coronation Mass'*, Charpentier's *'Te Deum'*, John Rutter's *'Gloria'*, Beethoven's *'Scottish Folksongs'*, Handel's *'Dettingen Te Deum'* and *'Zadok the Priest'*. Concerts have also included gems of stage and screen from musicals and operettas including a Tribute to Sigmund Romberg with excerpts from *'Desert Song'*, *'Student Prince'* and *'New Moon'*, Andrew Lloyd-Webber's *'Phantom of the Opera'* and Alain Boublil's *'Les Miserables'*. The Chorale's talented young accompanist, Isaac Hayward, is playing keyboard in the musical *'Mary Poppins'* currently in Sydney.

Little did we know that these years of preparation would lead to the biggest challenge faced by the Chorale in its history; that of performing an Opera! We faced the challenge with as much courage as we could muster and successfully presented Henry Purcell's Opera *'Dido & Aeneas'* on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2011. This was a *first* to our knowledge, not only for the Chorale but also for the Central Coast, as no other non-professional choral group had previously attempted presenting a complete Opera. Margaret Hardy, Editor of the MAC Newsletter (Multi Arts Confederation), in the July edition reviewed the

Opera saying, *'The packed auditorium of Gosford High School for the performance of "Dido & Aeneas" on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May, was testimony to the following the Central Coast Chorale now has within our community. Their new venture into performing an Opera was overwhelming for some of the choristers, but the sheer pleasure and delight of their achievement was displayed on their happy faces as they performed this story of love, betrayal and death.*

*The inclusion of Central Dance Co (Aus) was an added bonus for all those who attended. The dancers trained by Patti Gleeson, had never been involved with an opera or classical music before, but they faced this challenge with good spirit and became enamored with the music, costumes and performance. Their learning curve involved vocalising and performing live with an orchestra. What a challenge! The Chorale was joined on this occasion by the Sydney University Graduate Chamber Choir in singing the glorious music of Purcell. Alex Knight guest soloist from Sydney singing the role of Aeneas and Central Coast soloists Elke Hook, Elizabeth Dilley, Jill Erem, Jacqui Binetsky, Danita Weatherstone, Jenny Bell and Kaine Hayward were all honoured to have Joan Carden AO OBE present in the audience to see two of her students perform; Emma Moore as 'Dido', the holder of the 2011 Joan Carden Award and current winner of the McDonald's Operatic Aria from the Sydney Eisteddfod and the lovely and talented Elke Hook who sang the role of 'Belinda'. Joan Carden indicated there is an abundance of talent on the Central Coast and a real urgency for a performing arts space to be established as soon as possible.*

*Congratulations to Christopher Bowen for training the Chorale in their first go at an Opera, and also for collaborating with Central Dance Co (Aus) to bring together dance and music in an amusing and entertaining opera. It was a delight to see the happy and excited faces of the choir who enjoyed the performance just as much as the audience. It is hoped the Chorale will present another Opera in the future as successfully as 'Dido & Aeneas' which was a joy and inspiration to all'.*

This production of 'Dido & Aeneas' was made possible by a 2010/2011 Cultural Grant from Gosford City Council which the Central Coast Chorale gratefully acknowledges.



Photos provided by Barbara Galvin

Further information about Central Coast Chorale or CDs produced can be obtained by phoning Publicity Officer, Pamela Warton on 4385 2164 or Elke Hook, Assistant Music Director, on Mobile 0403 933 379.