

28th March, 2009



**QUEENSLAND YOUTH CHOIR
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT
2008-2009**

It is with great pleasure that I give my first Report as Artistic Director of The Queensland Youth Choir. As a Founding Member and then Vocal Tutor, Assistant Conductor, Life Member, Patron and now Artistic Director I have seen the choir in all of its guises in 'the best of times and the worst of times'; but at the moment the artistic vibrancy of QYC is as exciting as I have ever seen it.

The Queensland Youth Choir has so much to be proud of: starting with the wonderful musical foundation work that Debbie Wilson heads with Bambino Music, through the vibrant early primary singers in Poco Voci led by the indefatigable Marion Wood, our young vocal stars of Stella Voce being groomed by the irrepressible Rhonda Coady, our senior school performers in Vivace Voices who were so beautifully crafted by Kimberly Crawford until the end of 2008, and our show choir par excellence in VoiceWorks led with real integrity until July last year (no more so than during last year's *Battle of the Choirs*) by QYC's former Artistic Director, Sandra Milliken.

Each of these Musical Directors, and their accompanists, Rhonda Coady, Katrina May and Shelley McMahon, deserves our heart-felt thanks for keeping the standard of performance within the choir at such a high level. Standards which are then enhanced by the choreographic magic provided by people such as Ruth Gabriel, Megan Shorey, Callum Mansfield and Leisa Barry-Smith.

After Sandra Milliken relinquished her positions I was thrilled to accept the post of Artistic Director and interim Musical Director of VoiceWorks. In doing so I know that I brought with me my own feelings about the groups and style of direction, and I hope that at least some of these things were noticed in our 2008 Gala Concert: A New World.

Two very exciting things happened last year with the arrival of two new performance groups in the QYC family:

- on the 15th of October Vox Populus, our new community choir, had its first rehearsal led by Penny Connolly-Coates. To fill a gap that had been present for far too long, Vox allows for those who have grown through all of the other groups of QYC to continue making music as well as introducing others to the joys of singing and performing choral music with others.

- and then Out of the Blue, a small cabaret-style group made up of members of VoiceWorks, came together with the hope of finding more specialised performance opportunities in the corporate sphere.

Both groups gave their debut performances at the 2008 Gala and showed beyond a doubt that they have very bright futures in very different ways.

The lead up to Christmas of course was busy as always with groups singing in places as varied as the Queen St Mall, the Southport Yacht Club, at the *Police Commissioner's Carols*, and on regional Channel 7 for the *Pelican Waters Carols by Candlelight*. However, one tradition that I hope continues for years to come is our involvement in the *Southbank Christmas Celebrations* that allows all of our performance groups to sing together for thousands of people over a magical three nights in the days before Christmas at the Suncorp Piazza.

With the beginning of this year we have been able to fill the vacant positions of Musical Directors of Vivace Voices and VoiceWorks with some very exciting musical talents. Maitlohn Drew, a much loved music teacher and Musical Director of many of Harvest Rain Theatre Company's musical productions has taken the reigns of Vivace Voices with his extraordinary young assistant Chare David. And VoiceWorks is certainly being challenged by the very high performance standards of their new MD James Dobinson, an alumnus of The Queensland Children's Choir (now Stella Voce) who for the past couple of years has commuted between Brisbane and New York as a performer and MD, receiving accolades for his music direction of his own company, Warehouse Theatre Company. I can't wait for you to see and hear the results of their hard work very soon!

So, as you can see we are in a very strong position at the moment artistically. I am very happy that the direction in which QYC is headed is so in line with the Vision and Values of the association, something that would not have been possible without a Committee as vibrant and committed as we have been blessed with this past year. There have been some huge changes within the organisation over the past twelve months and inevitably change can be confronting and challenging, but because I know that these changes will enable QYC to continue evolving and improving I would like to invite you all – parents, members...everyone – to embrace the change. Embrace high expectations and thrive on meeting those expectations. This is a very exciting time for the organisation but as with any venture of this type we can only be as successful as we believe we deserve to be. I have been involved with this organisation for my entire adult life and I know how successful it deserves to be, and I will do everything in my power to make it a reality. I invite you all to ignite your passion, engage creative thinking and join me in the belief that this organisation **DESERVES** to be exceptional. Then as you watch each of these groups develop and blossom during this, our 25th year you will realise that QYC really is about *more* than great singing!



Jason Barry-Smith
Artistic Director, Queensland Youth Choir