

BEHIND THE SWIRL

First Edition - March 2010

from our Artistic Director

I'm thrilled to be able to introduce the very first edition of *Behind the Swirl* - an occasional journal which will celebrate the activities of the family of Gondwana Choirs. Whilst all of our choirs are undertaking so many exciting performances, tours, workshops and camps, it can be difficult to gain a full picture of the breadth of projects undertaken by the organisation. Designed for all our friends and supporters, *Behind the Swirl* (a name for which we must thank members of Gondwana Voices 2008) will open a window on the passion and inspiration of all our wonderful choristers, artistic and admin staff, volunteers and collaborators.

In this first edition I would give a little insight into the development of this now large and vibrant choral organisation. As a professional harpist, I had long held a hidden love of the sound of young people singing. I also held a belief that we could expect exceptional artistry from young musicians. The journey began with a small group of approximately 15 singers in the back studio of 2MBS FM in the late 1980s. In 1989, the Sydney Children's Choir emerged and was launched at the Great Hall of Sydney University. From this very first concert, new works were a significant part of our program and Stephen Leek was there writing arrangements right up until the last moment! The Sydney Children's Choir quickly became a much-loved player on the Sydney musical scene.

In 1996, I decided that I would love to give similar opportunities to young singers from all over Australia. We had an overwhelming response to the creation of the very first Gondwana Voices choir in 1997. Choristers came from cities and farms, urban, regional and remote areas. I will never forget the day of the first rehearsals, which I shared with my great friend and colleague Mark O'Leary. It was clear from the first note that these singers were not just relishing an opportunity to sing together but were inspired and determined to create a remarkable and lasting choir. This culture has continued and flourished to the point where we welcomed 280 young singers (who make up four choirs), composers and conductors aged 10 - 25 to Gondwana National Choral School this year. It is a great thrill for me to walk into the dining hall at National Choral School and see young people of all ages, joyfully sharing their love of music and of life. For many, 'Gondie' is *the best time of the year*.

Over the years, we have been involved in many great collaborations and performances with leading ensembles such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Sydney



Symphony, the West Australian and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, Synergy, Taikoz and Sirrocco (I must incidentally congratulate one of our former collaborators, Shaun Tan, who just won an Oscar for Best Short Film!).

Perhaps the most significant of our collaborations came through Sani Townson, who introduced us to the people of the Torres Strait. This wonderful opportunity grew into the creation of the newest member of our family of choirs - the Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir (GNICC) - whose members are now making their mark nationally and internationally. Over a thousand children took part in GNICC workshops last year. Gondwana Choirs offers the most talented of these young singers a richly deserved pathway to excellence. So this is how the family has grown, always driven by a desire to give young people, from wherever they come in Australia, the opportunity to achieve musical excellence.

In closing I would like to offer an enormous thanks to our departing General Manager, Alexandra Cameron-Fraser. Alex has been with us for six years and has overseen the most remarkable growth and development of the organisation. Never one to cringe at any of my new hare-brained ideas, Alex has been a constant source of support. Her extraordinary dedication, intelligence and skill will be greatly missed, yet we all wish her all the best in her exciting new position with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Please enjoy reading about the musical adventures of Gondwana Choirs. *Lyn*

🌀 2010: what a year that was!

2010 was one of the biggest years in the history of Gondwana Choirs

- we celebrated our 21st Birthday, toured China (twice), expanded our GNICC program to the Northern Territory and revisited the Torres Strait (where it all began), performed at the Sydney Opera House with ensembles such as the Sydney Symphony, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and conductors including Vladimir Ashkenazy, appeared in a new Australian feature film and Oprah's Ultimate Australian Adventure, and much more...

January

- **National Choral School** brought together choristers old and new from across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Australia for a fortnight of music, learning & friendship. 2010's program featured a collaboration with Synergy Percussion and included new works commissioned from Christopher Gordon & Graham Leak, and the choirs learnt and performed a diverse repertoire of music from all over the world – old & new – led by Lyn Williams and guest conductors Allison Harrigan, Harley Mead, Claire Preston, Ben van Tienen, Mark O'Leary, Paul Holley and Karen Grylls.
- 4 children from our Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir (GNICC) – as part of the Qantas Choir - performed at the **G'day LA** week, meeting Hollywood stars like John Travolta, going to Universal Studios and generally having a wonderful time.



Gondwana Choirs choristers in Sydney, April 2010

The massed choirs raise the roof at Voices of Celebration, July 2010

Photo: Kevin Lacey



February

- Our celebrated Gondwana Voices and Sydney Children's (Senior) Choir performed **Mahler Symphony No.8** at the Sydney Opera House with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Western Australian Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia, under the baton of Principal Conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy .
- GNICC Community Workshops were held in Shepparton, VIC.

March

- 10 Cairns-based GNICC choristers went to the Melbourne **Grand Prix** for a very exciting appearance trackside with Gabriella Cilmi.
- GNICC Community Workshops were held in the Torres Strait Islands and Cairns.
- The SCC Kats-Chernin & Leek Choirs toured to Brisbane to take part in **'Next Generation Sings'** with the training choirs of Birralees Voices and the Young Voices of Melbourne.

May

- The SCC Senior Choir performed to great acclaim at Verbrugghen Hall as part of **International Society of Contemporary Music Conference World New Music Days**.

June - July

- A huge couple of months beginning with the **GNICC's Shanghai World Expo Tour** - 10 children, most on their first overseas trip, performing at Australian National Day at World Expo as special guests of the Australian government.
- This was followed by our **21st Birthday concert** at the Sydney Opera House - **'Voices of Celebration'** - a magical and critically acclaimed event, which brought together Gondwana National Choirs, the Sydney Children's Choir, GNICC and Alumni for the very first time. For many children, this was also their first time performing at the Sydney Opera House, and the season was enjoyed by choristers and audiences alike!

SCC choristers on the Great Wall of China, July 2010



2010: what a year that was!

June - July *continued*

- SCC Senior & Leek choristers recorded the soundtrack and took part in the filming of a new Australian feature film, **Mei Mei** starring Claudia Karvan, Guy Pearce, Lincoln Lewis and Rhys Muldoon.
- Gondwana Voices toured to Tasmania as special guests of the **Festival of Voices**, where they performed at Hobart Town Hall, Federation Concert Hall and Hobart Cathedral. Lyn was also invited to be Guest Conductor of the Festival of Youth stream.
- Gondwana Chorale performed at the Australian National Association's **Choralfest** in Port Macquarie's new 'Glasshouse' Theatre, then travelled to Brisbane to perform with the New Zealand Youth Choir - one of the world's finest choirs for young people - under the baton of Karen Grylls.

August

- Local GNICC choristers performed at the opening of the **Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair**, watched by an enthralled audience including the Qld Premier and Governor.
- The SCC Senior Choir toured to **China** performing to large and appreciative audiences at the **International Society for Music Education World Conference** in Beijing; at the **Forbidden City Concert Hall** in Beijing (a concert which was filmed and re-broadcast on Chinese Central Television several times). The group were given a 'rock-star' welcome on the Bund in Shanghai, delighted other tourists with an impromptu performance of 'Happy Birthday' atop the Great Wall, and gave a wonderful performance at Beijing's spectacular Capital M restaurant!
- Members of Gondwana National Choirs performed at a concert at the City Recital Hall in memory of **Ken Tribe AC**, along with musical luminaries including Nathan Waks, Trioz and the Goldner String Quartet. SMH critic Peter MacCallum wrote; *Tribe's work was always about the future, captured in an exquisitely beautiful performance of Lyn Williams's Uphill by the young voices of Gondwana Choirs.*
- The SCC Kats-Chernin & Leek choirs hosted a visit and performed a concert with Vancouver's **British Columbia Boys Choir**.

September

- Marked the first **GNICC trip to Darwin and Arnhem Land**. We conducted workshops and visited several schools in Darwin and a small community called Belyuen, located on the eastern side of Cox Peninsula. In Arnhem Land, we visited Jabiru and Gunbalanya where, after fording a crocodile-infested river, we met and some extremely excited children ready to give singing a red hot go!
- **Studio Day:** SCC's annual (& ambitious) project of making a studio recording of all of our fourteen training choirs at Trackdown Studios. All 370 choristers abandoned their shoes, practiced absolute stillness and silence in a professional recording studio (no mean feat for a choir of forty five 6 year olds!), learnt that recording involves much repetition and had the opportunity to have a look in the control room. Their enthusiastic singing voices are captured on the CD Studio Day 2010 - a wonderful artistic record of the choral journey, as it shows the younger choristers where they are heading and reminds our oldest



SCC choristers at Studio Day Photo: Angus Wilkinson



SCC & GNICC choristers at the NRL Grand Final

choristers where they have come from. Our youngest choristers will be 'old hands' at recording by the time they progress into Senior Choir!

October

- The **NRL Grand Final** brought together choristers from the SCC, Sydney and Cairns-based GNICC and the Glebe Public School Choir (who Lyn and Alumni Eavan Dowse and Kate McCallum have been volunteering their time with), for the chance to perform the Australian National Anthem with Jessica Mauboy in front of thousands and a TV audience of millions.

2010: what a year that was!

October *continued*

- The GNICC **Torres Strait Island Regional Camp** itself took place on Thursday Island over 4 days. 43 children participated, from across 10 islands, and were accompanied by Gondwana Choirs staff including choreographer Sani Townson, conductor and composer Dan Walker, pianist Luke Byrne, 4 young musical mentors who have been or are current members of Gondwana Choirs as well as volunteer chaperones. Choristers sang songs in local languages, accompanied by choreography by Sani Townson, and the camp culminated in a performance to a packed house at the Port Kennedy Community Hall. Among the works on the program included a world premiere by Dan Walker called *Island Dreaming*.
- Provided the opportunity for the SCC Kats-Chernin Choir and Sydney GNICC to perform together at the **National Centre for Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) Gala dinner**, inspiring an audience of some of Australia's key business and Indigenous figures.
- The SCC Senior & Leek Choirs performed **Berlioz' *Te Deum*** with the Sydney Philharmonia Choir at the Sydney Opera House.

November

- The **GNICC Sydney Regional Camp** at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence involved choristers right across Sydney, including the outer Western Suburbs. Choristers spent time at the Art Gallery of NSW (as part of our year-long collaboration with the Gallery) and took part in visual art workshops and rehearsals. The Camp culminated in a performance with acclaimed didgeridu player William Barton at the beautiful Kingcoppal Rose Bay School Chapel.
- GNICC choristers, straight from the Sydney Regional Camp (including some brand new to Choir) appeared at **Qantas' 90th Birthday gala dinner**, attended by John Travolta, with an 'awesome' QANTAS A380 parked right next to the stage.

December

- The SCC performed **Mahler Symphony No. 3** with the Sydney Symphony, internationally acclaimed mezzo-soprano Lilli Paasikivi and the Ladies of the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, under the baton of Vladimir Ashkenazy. Critic Steve Moffatt wrote; *Ashkenazy deployed his massive forces with aplomb, with the Ladies of the Sydney Philharmonia Choir and the Sydney Children's Choir sounding jubilant as well as angelic in the fifth movement...*
- **Oprah's Ultimate Australian Adventure!** 40 or so of our GNICC choristers from Cairns, Sydney and Thursday Island were involved in the filming of Oprah's Grand Finale at the Opera House. The children were very pleased to share the stage and sing with Hugh Jackson, Russell Crowe, Olivia Newton-John, Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban, and of course the star herself. Chorister Tyus sang the introduction to *I Still Call Australia Home* in Kala Lagaw Ya language and received a hug from Oprah!
- Sydney Children's Choir and Gondwana Voices presented our much-loved annual festive Christmas concert, **Voices of Angels**, at the City Recital Hall, Angel Place. Highlights included a newly commissioned work from Australian composer Ben van Tienen, a solo from one of Australia's foremost cellists Julian Smiles, a selection of traditional Christmas carols, excerpts from Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, and a medley of traditional Jewish songs.



WELCOME TO **BEHIND THE SWIRL!**

This newsletter is designed to share with you the many activities of each of our choirs.

And who might you be? You are choristers - past, present and maybe even future; you are parents and friends; you are supervisors and volunteers; you are supporters; you are staff. You're all friends of Gondwana Choirs in some way, shape or form. We hope you enjoy our first edition!

Have your contact details changed?

Have a comment or something to add to the next *Behind The Swirl*?

Prefer not to receive *Behind The Swirl*?

Please email daria@gondwanachoirs.com.au

NATIONAL CHORAL SCHOOL 2011

In January, 284 young and talented choristers, composers and conductors from all over Australia gathered in Sydney for a fortnight of rehearsals, workshops and performances at the Gondwana Choirs 2011 National Choral School, under the direction of Artistic Director Lyn Williams OAM, with the assistance of several other leading Australian choral conductors.

This year's NCS ran very smoothly and many achievements were noted, including; the artistic achievement of the Junior Gondwana choir, which doubled in size and coped very well with the challenge of more complex 3-part music; the first year of Gondwana Singers as a Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass (SATB) choir, which they embraced wholeheartedly and made a great success (we will be building on this arrangement in 2012!); the outstanding commitment of the volunteer supervisors, whose caring attention is essential to the wellbeing of the choristers; the performances of Joseph Twist's specially commissioned and critically acclaimed piece *Lux Aeterna*; and the success of the inaugural Composer's School, under the stellar leadership of Stephen Leek.



For some choristers, just getting to NCS was a major challenge: **Britney**, aged 15, of Gondwana Singers, was cut off by the floods that swept through Queensland, drove across the flood-ravaged Toowoomba Range to make it to NCS.

At first we were all just watching the news to see what would happen – then the next day, the Toowoomba Range was closed... Murphy's Creek was too dangerous so we went to Warwick, but that closed too so we were stuck – we waited for 3 hours at the house of a local until we could go back to Toowoomba . I was scared for everyone because I knew lives had been lost. [When I realised I couldn't get to NCS] I was disappointed at first, but I didn't want to put my family in harm's way.

When the road south cleared, I called the other choristers from Toowoomba, and the Gondwana office, to see if we could still come to NCS & they said that of course, under the circumstances, we could, so we drove to the Gold Coast. They were only letting 100 cars through at a time... driving down the range was so eerie & daunting – you knew something bad had happened there. It was a really emotional experience, witnessing the destruction... at one point the grass was at one level, then it suddenly dropped one metre, and there was a car, mangled in a tree – it made me feel sick.

When I met Rachel at the airport, she gave me a big hug & I felt like I was home again. Gondwana is such a close community. I was still conscious of what was happening, but sitting at home with the news on all day was very depressing, and being here [at NCS] we can forget about it for a while.

Singing helps. Being in a positive community released a lot of unwanted pressure – I want to help [with the recovery effort] when I get home and I feel like I can focus on that now. [Britney has already donated many toys to local charities]

Kahlia, 16, of Gondwana Voices, from Rockhampton, got out just as water overtook the airport runway:

Gondwana gives you a chance to meet people who'll always be part of your life, learn new life lessons (like being away from home)... at school they don't share your passion – they don't know the sound we make; it IS a National Choir! The stuff you learn here you couldn't learn even in private lessons, and the supervisors are amazing – they're like parents away from home.

NATIONAL CHORAL SCHOOL 2011 *continued*

Sheila, a Gondwana supervisor & choir parent of 8 years, from Yeppoon/Rockhampton:

There was a slow build up with the floods, then such anxiety and such a relief when we were welcomed to NCS with open arms. Some children managed to get out to Brisbane in advance, but we drove out via the only open road & flew out of Mackay – others caught buses through the night to make it.

My children couldn't imagine not coming & seeing their friends – for them this is another family. They love it – it's become such a huge part of our life. My son said, 'if we miss NCS, it will be the worst thing that's happened in my life!'

Gondwana is such a special opportunity for children to be with like-minded, talented peers, feel appreciated, supported, accepted ...and the sound they can make – the music is challenging and they thrive, there are no labels, no stigma attached to performing – everyone joins in, and they have lots of opportunities not available in their everyday lives – especially those from the country. It is a community. It is very special.



James, aged 15, Hobart, Gondwana Voices

Gondwana [choirs] is the most amazing thing that I've ever been a part of. It was so fantastic to just be around so many people who share the same interests as you. I have some amazing memories of the times I spent at Gondwana. Everybody works together well, and we push each other forward during rehearsals to work towards an amazing performance. I learnt so much there and it has definitely helped me as a musician. I loved being a part of Gondwana [NCS] - being there was the most fun I have ever had!

Joe, aged 13 (now relocated to the UK), Gondwana Voices

Gondwana voices [at NCS] was the experience of a lifetime! [It] completely changed my perspective on singing and has made me a better musician. It made me feel like I belonged. Everyone is so welcoming and friendly. I enjoyed every day. The standard of singing was out of this world.

The conductors we so easy to talk to, valued our opinions and made everything fun.

NATIONAL COMPOSERS SCHOOL 2011

In 2011, in tandem with the National Choral School, the Gondwana Composer School gave 18 young people aged 15 - 21 the opportunity to work with internationally acclaimed Australian choral composer Stephen Leek for a week. Eighteen year old composer, Leighton Triplow, gives a first-hand account of his time at the Gondwana Composer School below:

One would expect a composition school to be a time of writing music in the usual way - a peaceful environment, sipping tea with time for contemplation and reflection. The Gondwana Young Choral Composers School was definitely different. Under the direction of composer/conductor Stephen Leek, eighteen young composers aged between 15 and 21 from across Australia quickly discovered that this was going to be a week that would significantly challenge their musical reality and reveal to them a new spectrum of composition possibilities.

In daily seminar-style workshops given by Stephen, we explored tools and techniques which helped us become more skilled in writing choral music. We sang. We studied the effects of vowels and the colours they make in a choral sound. We analysed and discussed choral works from Australia - Atherton, Gyger, Walker, and from abroad - Miskinis, Whitacre, Vasks and Macmillan. We quickly realised that there was much to discover about writing choral music. Throughout the week we had guest speakers who were working within the Gondwana Choral School - Artistic Director Lyn Williams, Carl Crossin, Paul Holley, Sally Whitwell and Dan Walker. Leading figures in Australian choral music, each gave us unique insights into writing for choirs and enlightened us on composer-conductor collaborations through their experience. Sally Whitwell, pianist and composer, had recently been writing children's music and shared with us her interesting challenges of writing effectively for young singers.

NATIONAL COMPOSERS SCHOOL *continued*

...All presenters generously shared their own experiences with us in these valuable sessions.

Every day we found ourselves on manuscript or on laptops, creating new compositions. In other sessions we focused on bringing the music to life. The week aimed at giving us a taste of a composer's life in the 'real world', so our usual slow methods of writing needed to be reconsidered in light of deadlines imposed on us. This intensive process helped us connect intuitively with our musical ideas, and, at the same time, enabled us to utilise our new-found choral knowledge in more spontaneous ways. On several days our compositions were workshopped in small groups by the Gondwana Conductor Interns. We sang through each piece and learned by discussing constructive possibilities as to how these could be developed.

One activity during the week was to write choral music for young children. We soon discovered that creating music for this specialist area can be extremely rewarding but somewhat challenging. This activity highlighted the importance of communicating ideas clearly and simply, and showed us different ways of getting a composition 'off the paper'. Other activities involved us collaborating with different groups of the school - each time demanding that we take responsibility for our ideas, communicating them clearly through the score. The major task of the week involved writing a new work for the acclaimed Gondwana Voices or the Gondwana Chorale. Writing for such amazingly beautiful, complex and skilled choirs was exciting, yet daunting for all composers. Everyone rose to the challenge and all composers were more than happy with the results.



National Composers School 2011 with fearless leader, Stephen Leek

Under Stephen Leek's direction, the Gondwana Choral Composers School was a demanding, yet life-changing experience. At the end of each day we were exhausted but we all felt like we had made significant advances. I still can't believe we achieved so much in a week. All composers came away with a valuable network of composer-friends, different perspectives on the life of a composer, and skills in choral writing that will sustain us into our futures.

GONDWANA NATIONAL CHOIRS 2011 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The **Gondwana Voices 2011 North America Tour** will take place in April, an opportunity to perform with some of the world's finest children's choirs; the excellence of the North West Girl Choir in Seattle and the Toronto Children's Chorus is undisputed and we are thrilled that Gondwana Voices will be performing with these two world-class choirs. The choir will also perform in Vancouver and Whistler, and with the internationally renowned Anima Singers in Chicago. Gondwana Voices will then tour to New York where they will experience the buzz of 'the city that never sleeps'!

In late April the **boys of Gondwana Singers and the GNICC** will go to the **Pemulwuy National Male Voice Festival** in Brisbane, where they will work with Stephen Leek, present works as an ensemble, as well as performing with the massed choir in a number of concerts. The Pemulwuy Festival is an exciting national event that encourages males throughout Australia to engage in singing at a high level and meet hundreds of other young men who love to sing. It will be attended by many local and interstate choirs and culminate in an extraordinary celebration of 500 males of all ages singing under one roof in Queensland's premier Concert Hall at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre! In 2011 there is a special international guest director, Dr Chris Kiver from Pennsylvania State University. The 2011 event will also welcome 150 treble boys (10 - 14 yrs) from community choirs (including the Sydney Children's Choir) throughout Australia. Our own Artistic Director Lyn Williams, OAM, will be conducting this special ensemble treble voice ensemble. **Gondwana Chorale** will tour **New Zealand** in June - July. A true highlight of this tour will be the opportunity to take part in a residential season with the world-class New Zealand Youth Choir, under the direction of Dr Karen Grylls. One could travel to the other side of the world for such a chance, so we are very fortunate to have them just across the Tasman! Gondwana Chorale will also perform with the combined choirs of the Westlake Girls and Westlake Boys High Schools. The Westlake choirs are two of New Zealand's premier youth choirs; their excellence has been demonstrated in their selection for performance at the World Symposium of Choral Music and other international events.

Junior Gondwana & Gondwana Singers Girls will not miss out – **they are invited to take part in Festival of Voices**, Australia's only national annual choral festival, held in Tasmania in early July. The Festival of Voices literally brings Hobart alive with music and song!

2011: the year so far...

G'DAY USA

Goodness gracious, what a trip! Four of our GNICC choristers from Cairns toured to LA, Houston & New York, as part of the Qantas Choir - they even sang on Wall Street in the snow. They performed at the G'Day USA celebrations in LA celebrations, at the Howard Hughes Centre, and the Lawrence School (with many a celebrity in the audience). In Texas they were warmly received as they performed the Texas State Anthem. Each of our GNICC choristers had either a singing or speaking solo. They sang beautifully, behaved very professionally, and made us proud!



GNICC choristers on the red carpet at G'Day USA

GNICC at NCS

Another four of our GNICC choristers - from Cairns, Shepparton and Thursday Island - attended National Choral School this year. They made lots of new friends and enjoyed being part of such an intensive learning experience, unlike anything they can access at home.

Taeg, aged 12, from Cairns said of her experience at NCS; *I've loved it. This has given me a great boost of confidence – I always knew I could sing, but this has made my voice better – teaching me to sight-sing, I used to sing softly, now I can sing loud and (sort of) pitch – it's made my voice sound more mature.*

In my time with GNICC I've met amazing people – famous (Oprah, Jess Mauboy, the Governor-General) and non-famous—and made some good friends.

I don't think I would've sung if it hadn't been for GNICC – I was way way too shy to even sing in front of my family before! My family think this is a great opportunity. It's boosted my confidence. They love what I'm doing.

My teacher broke out in tears when she saw me singing on TV the first time. She told the whole class!

I'd like to continue singing – and I'd like to try conducting. I was thinking I'd like come back to NCS next year. It's too awesome to put into words!

AUSTRALIA DAY on the Harbour

The Sydney Children's Choir launched into 2011 in great style this year, with an exciting concert on Cockle Bay, Darling Harbour for Australia Day. The Senior Choir, joined by members of the Gondwana Chorale, participated in a performance of a new work by Nigel Westlake. Our choristers were positioned on various barges throughout the bay as the entire Sydney Youth Orchestra (complete with harp) floated into position. As the rich and colourful 15 minute work was performed, a beautiful boat came into view carrying two soloists; renowned guitarist Slava Grigoryan and our own chorister Lachlan Massey. Our diminutive Artistic Director hid behind her giant headset in the background. Huge images of the performance were project onto massive screens. Once the show was finished and the National Anthem sung, the sky exploded with a spectacular fireworks display. Safely back on shore Lyn heard a long-time supervisor exclaim; *that's the best time I've ever had!* **You can share some of the evening's magic here - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4sgCiDgUhc&feature=player_embedded.**

NTH SHORE SCC & MINI-UP

Thirty eight enthusiastic young choristers formed the founding members of **SCC North Shore** in February 2011. This expansion to the North Shore recognised the demand for a quality choral training program in this area. Our choral education director Allison Harrigan is enjoying conducting rehearsals on Monday afternoons at Pymble Uniting Church and there is a growing waiting list for our North Shore Mini Singers. You can help build these choirs by spreading the word to any local young singers in years 1 - 5 at school, as we are looking to add Wednesday afternoons to cope with the demand. The north shore program is ably supported by SCC alumni Anita Burkhart in an operations role.

2011 is the third year of the **SCC Mini Up** Project, which is inspired by the British *Seven Up* series and aims to record a cohort of SCC choristers annually, as they move through their choral journey. This year saw more than 40 young choristers singing, reading rhythms, sight-singing and playing their instruments for the camera. Our Choral Education Director, Allison Harrigan, is already marvelling at the leaps and bounds made in this short time. The information gathered by Mini Up informs the SCC choral curriculum regarding choristers' needs and is a valuable record of the musical progress that is possible within a period of 12 months. Some of it would make great You Tube viewing (six year olds can be a little unpredictable) and we are also looking forward to sharing this footage with the choristers so they can fully appreciate the value of their time with SCC.

www.gondwanachoirs.com.au www.sydneychildrenschoir.com.au

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the future's so bright, we've got to wear shades

We've come a long way in a short time, and 2011 is looking to be another busy year of growth and development. Like many budding families, Gondwana Choirs has outgrown its current home and we are actively looking for appropriate new space to fit our administrative and operational needs. We are also always looking for organisations and individuals interested in building long-term partnerships to help our programs grow and flourish.

If you would like to be involved, please contact Daria O'Neill, Development Manager daria@gondwanachoirs.com.au or Clare Ainsworth, Philanthropy Manager clare@gondwanachoirs.com.au or call us on 02 9251 4226 (ext 6). Here's a quick snapshot of some of the exciting things coming up in 2011:

GNICC choristers at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair
photo: David Campbell



LYN'S CAIRNS RESIDENCY

From **March – July 2011**, Gondwana Choirs Artistic Director & Founder Lyn Williams OAM will undertake an artistic residency with the Cairns community.

Lyn has been visiting Cairns regularly since early 2009 to introduce local children to the Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir training program. The aim of this residency is to spend a significant period of time working with children in Cairns, giving them the opportunity for intensive training - opportunities available to our SCC choristers on a weekly basis.

The 2011 Cairns Residency will develop the skills of talented children, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, across Cairns and provide valuable professional development opportunities for local music teachers and conductors – creating a long lasting benefit to the community..

Lyn says;

In Cairns, I discovered huge potential and a great deal of enthusiasm from some very talented young Australians, many of whom are living in challenging circumstances.

This is a chance to create something special – given the opportunity, these kids are capable of extraordinary results, so I am dedicating this time to give them that opportunity and see what's possible.

A SPECIAL OFFER FOR YOU! The Song Company presents *Bach to Bach* on Wednesday 6 April

Hailed by the Sydney Morning Herald as one of the "six best concerts" in Sydney this year, *Bach to Bach* celebrates music from one of the world's most prodigious families. Immerse yourself in the magnificent voices of Australia's leading vocal ensemble, including guest artists Tobias Cole (countertenor) and Marcus Lacy (tenor) and early music specialists Daniel Yeadon (cello) and Neal Peres Da Costa (harpichord). Featuring songs, preludes and chorales from the Notebook for Anna Magdalena, Cello Suite Nr.3 and four timeless motets by J.S and J.L Bach, the Song Company will take your breath away in this glorious program.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR GONDWANA FRIENDS: adult tickets at concession prices for *Bach to Bach* at City Recital Hall Angel Place on Weds 6 April at 7.30pm. To redeem this offer, click [here](#) and enter codeword "GONDWANA" or call the City Recital Hall Box Office on (02) 8256 2222 (booking fee applies).

SYDNEY the SINGING CITY

2011 is the inaugural year of our **Sydney: The Singing City (STSC)** project. Funded by the City of Sydney, STSC, will enhance the choral culture of Sydney by working with students and teachers from four disadvantaged schools. Gondwana artistic staff Sally Whitwell and Allison Harrigan work with each to develop a choral program that will culminate in a performance with SCC in St Andrews Cathedral - a celebration of all the choirs have achieved in 2011, promoting a great sense of community and bringing

together an audience who may have never before attended a concert.

BOTANIC GARDENS COLLABORATION

Following Sydney Childrens Choir's very productive collaboration with the National Gallery of NSW in 2010, our special collaborating partner this year will be the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. The gardens have generously donated the time of their education staff to work with the Sydney Children's Choir on this project. The Royal Botanic Gardens is one of the great gardens of the world, full of amazing plants and the area has a rich, exciting history. SCC visitors will (amongst other things) look into the history of the Garden Palace, an incredible structure built in 1879 to house the Sydney Exhibition. The building stretched from the Conservatorium of Music to the State Library and included one of the largest domes in the world, taller than the Town Hall clock tower. Sadly, the building burned down in 1882. The SCC will perform at the gardens on Monday 13 June (Queen's Birthday weekend) and our repertoire will include a work performed at the opening of the Sydney Exhibition by 500 children, as well as work by our Composer in Residence (writing works for choristers in all choirs), Ruth McCall.

ARTISTIC STAFF

Lyn Williams OAM, Artistic Director
Allison Harrigan, SCC Director of Choral Education, Conductor & Sight-Singing Tutor
Dan Walker, Conductor
Sally Whitwell, Pianist & Conductor
Amandine Petit, Conductor & Vocal Coach
Elizabeth Vierboom, Conductor
Erica Byrne, Conductor
Petrina Lewis, Conductor
Marcus Bortolotti, Music Craft Tutor
Tristan Coelho, Music Craft Tutor
Joe Twist, Sight-Singing Tutor
Laura Altman, Sight-Singing Tutor
Libby Choo, Vocal Coach
Thomas Johnson, Pianist

ADMIN STAFF

Alexandra Cameron-Fraser, GM
Caroline Kane, Finance Manager
Cassandra Bayley, Accounts Admin
Clare Ainsworth, Philanthropy Mgr
Daria O'Neill, Development Manager
Rachel Whealy, Gondwana National Choral Program Manager
Erica Byrne, Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir Coord
John Nolan, Artistic Administrator
Sophie Longmuir, Artistic Admin Asst
Jess Chambers, SCC Operations Coord
Anita Burkhart, Nth Shore Ops Asst
Carla Deplancke, Saturday School Asst

BOARD

Lyn Williams OAM
Rebecca Davies
Claire Duffy
Nicholas James
David Longmuir
David Lumb
Warren Lee

THANK YOU!

To the many wonderful volunteers and supporters who help us to provide quality music education, exceptional professional performance opportunities and a happy and safe environment in which children can be proud to learn, be inspired, aspire to excellence, form friendships, and flourish!

from our General Manager

Dear Gondwana Families,

It is with both excitement and sadness that I am writing to let you know that I am moving on from Gondwana Choirs. I have been offered, and accepted, an exciting new role at the Australian Chamber Orchestra, where I will be working with their management team in the new role of Corporate Relations & Public Affairs Manager.

I have been at Gondwana Choirs nearly six years now and have had many wonderful opportunities in this time - from being at Gondwana Voices' 2007 performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London as part of the BBC Proms, to touring through Finland, Estonia and Denmark with the Sydney Children's Choir in 2008, to fording crocodile infested rivers in Arnhem Land en route to a remote community for our Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir workshops last September!

Whilst I will be very sad to leave, I feel that it is the right opportunity for me and I am looking forward to the new challenges that it will bring.

I have loved getting to know our choristers and their families in my time here and am constantly in awe of the talent of our Artistic Director, as well as our young singers, conductors, composers and my fellow staff. I am very grateful to our Board and the parent body for the tremendous support they provide us – as volunteers, audience members, donors and advocates. I don't start at the ACO until 23 May, so will have over two months here to recruit a new General Manager and do a handover. I look forward to introducing them to you in due course. I also look forward to seeing you at Gondwana & Sydney Children's Choir concerts in the future.

With very best wishes, **Alex**



INVITES YOU to join us on **Wednesday 9 March** from **7.30 – 8.15pm**, to celebrate our collaboration with the Art Gallery of NSW in 2010, our internationally acclaimed **Sydney Children's Choir**, conducted by Dan Walker & accompanied by Sally Whitwell, will perform works written by Composer-in-Residence Ben Van Tienen, inspired by our choristers' time at the AGNSW.
All welcome, please join us - entry is free!
[Art Gallery of NSW](#), Art After Hours, The Domain, Sydney

& to help us celebrate our impending performances in the [YouTube Symphony](#), on the **19 & 20 of March**, under the baton of internationally acclaimed conductor Michael Tilson-Thomas. You can download the app, watch live or participate at the Sydney Opera House - for details visit: <http://www.youtube.com/symphony>



GNICC & SCC choristers at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence, July 2010



Communities arts nsw

Australian Government



Australian Government
Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts
Indigenous Culture Support Program

CITY OF SYDNEY

