



The Whitehorse Orchestra

The Whitehorse Orchestra is a community orchestra based in Box Hill, which is part of the City of Whitehorse in the Eastern reaches of Greater Melbourne. The Orchestra provides an excellent and enjoyable musical experience for musicians and audiences of all ages and performs regularly in the City of Whitehorse and surrounding areas. Its origins go back more than thirty-five years, when the late Anthony Czakacs-Cook, a well-known musician and flute teacher around Melbourne at the time, founded The Whitehorse Youth Orchestra. Originally consisting of music students of the then Whitehorse Technical College, the orchestra soon expanded by allowing older, non-student members to join. It was renamed The Whitehorse Orchestra and grew to the extent where it had two divisions called the Training Orchestra and the Senior Orchestra. By the mid-eighties, it had consolidated back to a single orchestra with a membership of about sixty-five musicians of all ages and a wide range of expertise and experience. It now has about 75 members and has enjoyed some twenty years of great stability in membership, with a steady increase in its level of musicianship under the expert tutelage of its Music Director, Gerald Keuneman.

It is one of the few remaining amateur orchestras that can be called a community orchestra in the true sense of the word - all musicians, amateur and professional, are welcome. There are no age or proficiency limits and there are no auditions. Nevertheless, the orchestra demonstrates a continuously improving performance standard which compares favourably with other amateur orchestras. This is achieved by engendering an atmosphere of friendship and mutual support amongst the members, and by carefully selecting its Music Director. Since 1990, the orchestra has been fortunate to retain the services of the well-credentialed director, conductor and musician Gerald Keuneman and, since 2001, has also had the benefit of the leadership of concert master Cheung Young Chung.

PURPOSE

The Orchestra's purpose is directed both at its members and at the community. It offers musicians of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to develop their musical skills by rehearsing and performing orchestral works in a relaxed and encouraging atmosphere. The Orchestra also offers soloists at various levels the chance to study and perform to the accompaniment of a live orchestra and endeavours to broaden the depth of musical knowledge for players and audience by including in its concerts music from various time periods and of varied ethnic origins.

The Orchestra offers the community an opportunity to attend orchestral concerts in their own neighbourhood and at accessible prices. This particularly benefits those senior citizens who are no longer able to afford, or travel to, concerts held at the Victorian Arts Centre and other distant venues. Through its special concerts for young people, the Orchestra offers pre-school and early primary school children the opportunity to enjoy orchestral music in an intimate, non-threatening and entertaining atmosphere. In addition, the Orchestra has been involved in Council-initiated community activities such as the Whitehorse Spring Festival. The orchestra also organises and runs an annual Summer Music Camp at Harrietville, in North-eastern Victoria. Started more than thirty years ago as an initiative of the Council of Adult Education, it is now a 100% Whitehorse Orchestra undertaking, attracting over 100 participants each year.

PERFORMANCES

The Whitehorse Orchestra has a wide repertoire and performs music of many periods and styles. Being primarily a symphony orchestra, the emphasis is of course on symphonic works. Occasionally works for string ensemble or concert band are performed by appropriate sections of the orchestra. Works presented in recent years have included such diverse selections as symphonies by Dvorak, Schubert, Beethoven, Haydn, Borodin, Niels Gade, Brahms, and Sibelius; clarinet concertos by Mozart and von Weber; horn concertos by Mozart and Richard Strauss; piano concertos by Grieg, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and MacDowell; violin concertos by Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Beethoven and Mendelssohn; Dvorak's cello concerto Op. 104; overtures and 'occasion' pieces by Beethoven, Rossini, Sibelius, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Copland, Walton, Vaughn Williams, Saint Saëns, Holst and Ravel; excerpts from works by a long list of composers of various styles and times; Gounod's Mass for St Cecilia (with the Southeastern Sinfonia); medleys from the musicals and other favourite light classics; and pieces by contemporary Australian composers such as Nottle, Tahourdin, Grandeson, Andrew Blyth, and the Orchestra's own John Myers. In 2002, the orchestra even presented the world premiere of a tone poem by the young Mexican composer Luís Ramírez, who attended the performance in person.

Another 'first' was the world premiere live performance of the symphony 'Tarka', by Harry Williamson and Anthony Phillips, in the Melbourne Town Hall in February 2010.

The Orchestra's presentations of concerts for young people have become an institution in the region and attract capacity audiences. Musical programs designed especially for young people have become rare, leaving a significant cultural gap in this area. The Whitehorse Orchestra has endeavoured to fill this gap by offering educative and entertaining concerts for young children in the friendly 'in-the-round' environment of the Community Arts Centre at Box Hill and the more spacious Holy Redeemer Hall at Surrey Hills. The success of these concerts, and the fact they draw audiences from communities way beyond the boundaries of the City of Whitehorse, demonstrates that the Orchestra is addressing a very real need. Works performed in recent years (most of them several times) have included classics such as 'Peter and the Wolf', 'The Story of Babar the Little Elephant', 'Paddington Bear's First Concert', 'Tubby the Tuba', and 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', as well as Colin Brumby's 'Alice', Roald Dahl's 'revolting' version of 'Little Red Riding Hood', and a special programme (designed by Gerald Keuneman) about the young Mozart. There have also been several magic shows, using a 'real' magician accompanied by music such as 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice' and themes from the 'Harry Potter' movies.

GERALD KEUNEMAN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Gerald Keuneman has been the Music Director of the Whitehorse Orchestra since 1990. He is an orchestral director with commanding experience in the world of fine music and offers a unique blend of quality and authority in music direction.

His musical background includes performing as a cellist in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the ABC Show Band, and many stage, film and TV productions. He has wide experience in conducting and directing community and corporate orchestras, arranging touring orchestras for visiting artists and in running musical workshops and senior classes at seminars, schools and camps.

Gerald has always held a great interest in promoting and supporting community participation in the enjoyment of fine music. Apart from his work with the Whitehorse Orchestra, he has been involved in many workshops for adult amateur musicians and, for many years, has been a director, tutor and conductor at the annual music camp at Harrierville.

SEUNG YOUNG CHUNG, CONCERT MASTER

Seung has been the Orchestra's leader for nearly ten years, and his expertise and quiet yet commanding influence have added yet another dimension to the Orchestra's presence. He is a professional musician and teacher, with a major background at senior levels in the music scene of the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

TO FIND OUT MORE ...

The Orchestra rehearses every Saturday morning from 9 am till 12 noon at the Box Hill Community Arts Centre, at the corner of Station and Combarton Streets, Box Hill. Anyone interested is welcome to come along and have a look and a listen. Most concerts are presented on Saturday or Sunday afternoons, at various venues.

All musicians, amateur and professional, are welcome to join. There are no age or proficiency limits and we do not audition. Generally, potential members join us for a few rehearsals and then decide for themselves whether to apply for membership or not. To date, the only reason for occasionally deferring acceptance of applications has been a practical limit on the number of players of each instrument.

For enquiries, please contact us on one of the email addresses below, or visit the Orchestra's web site at:

<http://www.whitehorseorchestra.org.au>

General enquiries: enquiries@whitehorseorchestra.org.au
Membership queries: members@whitehorseorchestra.org.au
Ticketing: tickets@whitehorseorchestra.org.au

A MUSICAL IDYLL

“If it's music you want, come along to Harrierville, the last petrol stop before the climb to the Victorian Alps, where the grass is green, the air is ever fresh, the days are warm, the evenings are cool, and the backdrop of gum-clad mountains is truly beautiful. Come along in January to clear the mind, enjoy a break, start the year on a high. Bring your instruments and vocal cords to join friends old and new in a week of uninterrupted music-making. Discover the joys of what, over more than thirty years, has become known as The Harrierville Experience...”

Thus runs the publicity for the annual Summer Music Camp, organised and run by the Whitehorse Orchestra, assisted by a team of professional tutors. Tempted? Contact the Orchestra for more information. Pamphlets and booking details are usually available by November each year.