



The Whitehorse Orchestra

The Whitehorse Orchestra is a community orchestra based in Box Hill, in the City of Whitehorse. It 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 years, when Hungarian-born 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 has now enjoyed some fifteen years of great stability, 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 the early nineties, the orchestra has been fortunate to retain the services of the well-credentialed director, conductor and musician Gerald Keuneman.

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 is involved in Council-initiated community activities such as the Whitehorse Spring Festival. For some years now, the orchestra has also joined forces with the Council of Adult Education in the organisation and running of the annual CAE Summer Music Camp at Harrietteville.

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, Hayden and Borodin, clarinet and horn concertos by Mozart, Grieg's piano concerto, overtures and 'occasion' pieces by Beethoven, Rossini, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Copland, Walton, Vaughn Williams and Holst, excerpts from works by Wagner, Gershwin, Lloyd Webber and Williams, Gounod's Mass for St Cecilia (with the Southeastern Sinfonia) and pieces by contemporary Australian composers such as Nottle, Tahourdin, Grandeson, Box Hill composer Andrew Blyth, and the Orchestra's own John Myers. In 2002, the orchestra even presented the world premiere of a tone poem by a young Mexican composer, who attended the performance in person.

The Orchestra's seasons 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 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 'The Sourcerer's Apprentice', accompanying a real magician.

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 Council of Adult Education music camp at Harrietville.

WANT 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 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>

If you don't have access to email or the Internet, phone the current president, Mr Jo Kruithof, on (03) 9807 4776.

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

A MUSICAL IDYLL

"Imagine a picture-postcard mountain village, nestled at the foot of Mt Feathertop and washed by the headwaters of the mighty Ovens River. Imagine, in this verdant setting, a gathering of musicians ... some old, some young ... strings, brass, woodwinds, singers, recorders ... some to rehearse, to perform, to talk music, to learn new skills, to make new friends. Imagine eight days of peace and pleasure. Clear, crisp mornings, sun-drenched afternoons, starry nights. The perfect ambience for music making. The Harrietville Music Camp - a legend now, for nearly a quarter of a century. Be there. Be part of the legend."

Thus runs the publicity for the CAE's annual Summer Music Camp, organised in partnership by the CAE and the Whitehorse Orchestra. Tempted? Contact the CAE or the Orchestra for more information. Pamphlets and booking details are usually available by November each year.

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