

In the original choir, and down through the years, were many whose names were familiar in both local and Dominion musical circles. At some considerable pains the committee of the choir has collected the names of those who have from time to time been members, and the list will be preserved in the Jubilee souvenir to be published shortly. Many visitors from abroad during the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition of 1889-'90 in Dunedin were greatly charmed by the high standard of music then rendered by the choir.

Subsequently the choir visited Christchurch, having entered a competition for choirs in connection with the Canterbury Jubilee Industrial Exhibition. This event, however, was abandoned, much to the disappointment of St. Joseph's Cathedral Choir, then probably at the most efficient stage in its career, which would probably have easily won the contest had it been held. While in the northern city, the choir rendered Mozart's Twelfth Mass at St. Mary's Church on the Sunday during its visit. On that occasion Mr. A. Vallis presided at the organ, and Mr. R. H. Rossiter conducted. Well deserving of mention is the very active interest taken in the choir by Rev. Father Lynch during his lengthy term of duty in connection with St. Joseph's Cathedral. Local vocalists and musicians who, although not regular members, assisted the choir on special occasions during former years, included Mrs. H. Rose, Mr. J. Jago, Mr. F. L. Jones, Mr. J. Knox, and Mr. C. Umbers.

In celebration of the present important period in its history, the choir intend to celebrate the Jubilee with a reunion on Thursday evening, the 12th inst., of past and present members in the form of a *Conversazione and Musicale*; and on the following Sunday evening in the Cathedral with a recital of sacred music.

#### The Choir Fifty Years Ago Mr. R. A. Loughnan's Recollections

In response to a request for some of his valued reminiscences of the early days of St. Joseph's Choir, Mr. R. A. Loughnan (now of Wellington) writes:—

The memory of my old Dunedin days is very warm, more especially those of the St. Joseph's Choir service. They were the first of my choir work of 51 years—an unbroken record of great privilege. Their memories are of pleasantest comradeship in assiduous practice, and there shine through them recollections of the good Bishop Moran of the benevolent face, and the wonderful Father Coleman of the thorough practical work. They were building the diocese on firm foundations, and the Cathedral, now such an ornament to the city, was beginning to grow under their careful hands. So was the *Tablet*. But heavy as the calls were upon their zeal and time, their recognition of the choir never failed in their encouragement of us for a single instant. You ask for a few of those recollections. I thankfully comply with the few lines herewith.

When I joined in 1871, the choir functioned in Old St. Joseph's, which I entered first in December, 1865, the month of my arrival from Melbourne. In the six years that followed there was great music often in the old church. Living up country, I could only hear it on occasional visits to Dunedin. On some of these I heard Julia Matthews, a delightful singer in light opera and musical comedy, who frequently visited Dunedin, and sang in the church with members of her company. Some great Masses of Mozart and Haydn they sang with the choir. Her voice was beautiful in these, and in motets at the Offertory it soared wonderfully. I was told of others—operatic stars and others—who used often to sing at High Mass, and of whose work I heard most glowing accounts from all and sundry. Thus when coming to live near Dunedin—at Green Island—I joined the choir in 1871, I realised that I had become a member of a choir with a great traditional reputation.

Mr. Sykes was the organist and choirmaster,—an exceptionally clever organist he was,—and he had an organ, small of course, but beautifully balanced, sonorous, with some fine stops, on which it was great to hear him play. All the great accompaniments—Mozart, Haydn, Weber, and the rest of our not small repertory—he played like a master; his voluntaries were delightful, and we enjoyed the fine marches with which he played the congregation out. Of these the "Silver Trumpets," the March from "Eli," the Beethoven "Alleluia," I remember at a venture. And he was an accomplished and delightful ex-

ponent of the Gregorian at Vespers. Miss Hesford (later Mrs. Angus) was our main soprano, with a glorious mezzo voice, who often took the greater contralto solo parts very effectively. Sometimes she was magnificent, as in Mozart's Twelfth, and her "Adeste" at Christmas was always simple, tender, noble, and full. Later Miss Murphy came into prominence as a soprano leader with a pure high voice. I distinctly remember her leading in the "Credo" of Haydn's First, which rose to thrilling effect in the final "Et Vitam Venturi Saeculi," one of Haydn's greatest inspirations of tumultuous thanksgiving.

Mr. Leary was for a time our chief basso—a great voice, very sonorous and powerful in the "Qui Tollis" of the Imperial it was, quite realising the master idea of the High Priest voicing the prayer of the people, with occasional interruptions by the faithful induced to join by sheer compulsion of the great strain. In the fine orchestral accompaniment of this—arranged for the organ—Mr. Sykes always rose to inspirational level. This is one of my best recollections of the good old days at St. Joseph's.

Another is of the performance of Gounod's "Messe Solennelle" by the entire force of Cagli's Opera Company, which delighted Dunedin in the early seventies with Italian opera. It was one of those companies common in Italy, of singers not of European reputation, but all very capable in artistry, for Italian audiences know their operas and tolerate nothing that is not really good. Signor Cagli on this occasion was good enough to send three principals—Signora Coy, soprano, a delightful light voice of great sympathy; Signor Coy, a liquid pure tenor; and Signor Dondi, a basso of enormous power and fine quality—and his whole chorus and orchestra under Herr Zimmerman. How we packed them all into the organ loft and found room for the choir which, knowing every note, was useful, I can hardly remember. But it was done, and the result was a performance of that great work such as has never been heard but that unforgettable once in New Zealand.

Another recollection is of a concert given by the choir, which, like all choirs of all times, required to supplement its library fund. It was a miscellaneous concert—First part, selections from Haydn's Imperial Mass; second part, songs, duets, etc. It was a new departure in Dunedin, rather ambitious. We were very excited, and I remember one of the great choruses of the Mass ran away with us, or we ran away with the chorus, put it how you like, and the press was very good to us next day. I regret to add that the audience was not large. But it made up by kindness for lack of numbers. There was a Choral Society in those days which used to mass forces on the oratorio stage far beyond our power. But nobody made any comparisons, at all events not in cold print. So there was no harm done. And after all, dear sirs, we didn't do so badly—and the benevolent smile on the faces of the good Bishop and his padres heartened us up a good bit.

What more can I say but that we went the even tenor of our way. Some Sundays we were brilliant, especially when some travelling professional came and helped with a motet—for example Mr. Amery, who used to give a rousing rendering on the concert platform of "Why Do the Nations," sang the sonorous "Ecce Deus" at the Offertory and led the bass in the Mass music—and some Sundays in winter when "coughing drowned the parson's saw" we were anything but brilliant. But we kept up our good repertory, and almost always attended practice—that was a joy worth the ride of seven miles in and out from Green Island.

Early in 1875 (January) came the bitter day of parting from the choir.

Leaving for Christchurch to take up journalism, I took leave of my friends—Mr. Smith (who is still a member of St. Joseph's, I hear), a fellow veteran; Mr. Milner, the veteran of our day, who criticised us with comparisons of choir doings at Ushaw College what time he was a lusty young basso and we were babies, and taught us what tradition was, and who, alas, has joined the majority; and Mr. Cantwell, the exact, conscientious secretary, who did all our financing with rigorous punctuality and methodical exactness; the ladies aforesaid; and many more too numerous to mention. It was a sad parting. I have sung in choirs regularly since, in Christchurch, Wellington, Sydney, and again in Wellington, where still I enjoy the privilege. But never have I had better comrades, and every time of practice I seem to hear the voices of the old days when the terror of a small solo on Sunday morning kept me awake with fright half the Saturday night.

**W. F. Short**

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