



Brian Triglone, OAM

Brian Triglone was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List on 11 June 2018 for service to choral music in the Australian Capital Territory.

Brian has been a tireless volunteer leader and generous contributor to many community and volunteer causes through his love of music: individually, as a member of a group and as the leader and conductor of community-based choirs.

Brian grew up in country NSW, with spells in Bathurst, Goulburn and Queanbeyan. In 1964, at just 19, he formed a folk group called **The Treble Folk** with two friends, Bette Black and Michael Eley. The Treble Folk sang folk music, in the style of Peter, Paul and Mary, the Highwaymen, the Brothers Four and the Chad Mitchell Trio. Brian taught himself guitar—just enough to play accompaniments.

The Treble Folk sang live gigs and did TV work for three years until conscription reduced the trio to a duo. Brian and Bette (who married along the way) kept singing and made the finals of the national television talent quest *Showcase* in 1969.

In the 1990s Brian became Assistant Conductor of the **Rugby Choir**, an all-male community choir in Canberra. In response to requests from local churches and retirement homes, Brian was approached to help set up a new mixed choir dedicated to gospel music.

With Brian as its musical director, **The Gospel Folk** was formed in 2003. It started small—just 10 people turned up to the first rehearsal. The next week it was 12. But it kept building up and within a short time the Gospel Folk had 80 members, and its membership has been at that level since.

During his time as Musical Director, Brian's first goal was for people to enjoy singing. He made sure that rehearsals were full of laughs and goodwill. His ambition was for the choir to go further than leading a large sing-along each week: it was for people to stretch themselves. So the Gospel Folk members learnt about voice production, harmony, performance style and the basics of reading music. They sang in four parts (soprano, alto, tenor and bass), using arrangements often written by Brian who taught himself to write harmony on the computer using a music notation application.

The choir sang (and still does) at non-commercial gigs around the ACT, usually in support of fund-raising for non-for-profit or charitable organisations. In 2013 the choir sang in many events associated with Canberra's centenary, including giving concerts at the National Arboretum and the High Court and each year has performed at the Wesley Music centre lunch-time concert.

Brian is also a member of the male quartet, **Credo**. The group – Brian, Bruce Harvey, Mick Rice and Michael Eley - sing everything from John Williamson to Opera, including Folk, Irish music, Australian ballads, Gospel and songs from musicals. The majority of their songs are *a cappella* but with occasional guitar accompaniment. Almost all their material is arranged by the group with little committed to paper.

Credo has been together for about 15 years. They have performed at the Stage 88 Christmas Concert in Canberra as well as a variety of functions in the ACT and surrounding areas. They have sung in The Great Hall of Parliament House and have twice performed for visiting dignitaries at Government House as guests of the Governor-General. Many of the performances of Credo are voluntary appearances to support community organisations.

In 2007 when Brian was walking through the Pearce shops courtyard and noticed a large fir tree, he decided it had all the makings of a Christmas tree. So from there the planning started for *Carols Under the Stars*, now a much-anticipated annual community event. During the first 5 or so years, Brian and The Gospel Folk had complete running of the event. Louise Page, the nationally recognized, Canberra based soprano, agreed to be the lead act and the ABC's Tim Gavel agreed to be the MC. Both have appeared every year since, along with Credo, and a range of other artists. Around 2012, South Woden Uniting Church became involved, offering financial support as well as some people-power for the distribution of flyers and conduct of the event.

Under Brian's baton, The Gospel Folk has led the community singing and done most of the organising, including publicity, setting up of chairs, organising the sound system, selling of candles and clearing up afterwards. In 2015, the local Catholic Parish of Mary, Help Of Christians became involved, making it even more of an ecumenical community event. Attendance has grown steadily over the years with over 500, including many children, crammed into the limited space at the Pearce shops. It has rained only once in the 10 years and even then the event was completed, with little amplification and with people huddled under awnings and umbrellas. The event now attracts a range of people from surrounding areas and as such is a valuable community- enhancing and building activity.

Canberra's first dementia-inclusive choir, the *Alchemy Chorus*, was founded in October 2016 when Alzheimer's Australia ACT partnered with choir-founder Brian. A friend had sent Brian a YouTube video featuring a choir of people living with dementia in Minneapolis, and he was instantly inspired to start one in Canberra. *Alchemy Chorus* is a working choir that brings together people living with dementia, their carers, volunteer musicians and singers for a morning of music-making, story-sharing, laughter and fun. Each week around 80 singers meet for a 2-hour rehearsal session.

According to the Alzheimer's Australia Dementia Research Foundation, people with dementia who participate in regular singing sessions show improvements in their brain function. Even when people lose the ability to speak, the part of the brain that is activated and full of life is aroused through music. *Alchemy Chorus* aims to be a working choir rather than just a singalong group, with a wide repertoire chosen by participants and opportunities for soloists. Brian emphasises that the choir is not just for people with dementia — there is an equal emphasis on carers.

Brian has deservedly been recognized for his contribution to Australia, bringing music and joy to so many people. Supported by Bette, who has been a singing partner and wholehearted contributor, he has freely made an impact on the lives of many people in our immediate and wider community.