

## In Acknowledgement of Mr John Hogan's 40-year contribution to the Diocese of Sandhurst

### Paul Taylor's Speech



### Early Years

One of my earliest memories of John dates back to September 1982, a couple of years after his appointment to Sacred Heart, during the weeklong celebrations in St Kilian's to mark 100 years following the death of Fr Henry Backhaus. The liturgies featured singing by the Cathedral Choir directed by John, with accompaniments provided on the 1870 German pipe organ which had been recently refurbished.

Intrigued by the tone of the organ which I'd heard played by John's predecessor, Maisie Evans, whilst serving Mass on Sunday

evenings, I recall asking my parents if I could learn to play the organ from Mr Hogan at the Cathedral as John was looking to teach students the organ.

Lessons were duly arranged after school, and I can remember John was most generous in sharing his broad knowledge, scores of music, and very patient tutoring me on that historic and *somewhat challenging instrument*.

### Historical Perspective

Looking back over the Cathedral Choir's rich history since its formation around 1901, a series of Organists, Choir Directors and Choristers have played important roles, including Liz van Emmerik's husband, Bill, who was Choir Director for 10 years before John, and Noel Denton's mother, Eileen, who was a Cathedral Organist for many years.

However, John is distinguished as one of the longest serving musicians; exercising for the first time the dual roles of Organist and Choir Director but also Director of Sacred Music in the Diocese of Sandhurst; and, in later years, Chair of the Liturgical Commission. Like the Bishop at the opposite end of Sacred Heart Cathedral, John has been required to wear a number of *distinctive hats*!

### Achievements

John has been instrumental in building the Choir from an ensemble of voluntary musicians into a choir of adults and young students many on scholarship at Catholic Colleges, thanks to the generous financial support of the successive Bishops, Cathedral Administrators and Diocesan Chancery staff. John's teaching position at Catholic College over some 30 years was clearly an advantage in helping

the choristers in other formational settings, and I'm sure helped him to *twist a few arms* when it came to persuading students to sing and play at College Masses.

Over four decades, John has progressively enriched the music resources of Sacred Heart, overseeing the enhancements to the Organ in 1987 and 2010, and even the provision of a small pipe organ at the front of the nave. John has composed over a dozen Mass Settings (including the Mass of St Augustine we sang this morning, arrangements of motets, the complete set of Responsorial Psalms for the three-year Lectionary cycle, and introduced new works by composers from Australia and overseas, including Colin Brumby, John Rutter and many others.

As many of the choristers will appreciate, playing the organ in the choir gallery required John to have *eyes in the back of his head*. It literally involved keeping one eye on the clergy and servers in the sanctuary (plus bridal processions at weddings) – whilst looking through the mirror on the console, whilst giving cues to the choir in the gallery. This capacity reflected John's ability to look in several directions at once: appreciating the Church's rich heritage on the one hand together with its ever present and future liturgical, musical and pastoral needs on the other.

His directions to the choir to "watch" for cut-offs at the end of phrases were matched by clear directions to "listen" both to the accompaniment and each other. These two activities — watching and listening — were ones that John tried to put into practice more broadly: always watching out for the needs of the Choir (overseeing the provision of new Choir Library facilities, new Choir gowns, a new grand piano for rehearsals, new collections of liturgical music) and listening to feedback from members of the clergy, choir and congregation. John ensured the Choir was at the heart of the Cathedral's liturgy and thus helped to contribute great life and vitality to the parish's worship and prayer.

We will always be grateful to John for his encouragement towards Choir members across *the age spectrum*, especially the Cantors (including Sarah Gould and Jo Bonazza, Stan Tobias and Anne Hamilton, Chris MacCormack, Kerry Percival, and other members here present) and Organists (including Sam Whitehead, Angus Killick, Jane Lean and Tim Holland). John recognised that a Cathedral music programme is not a one-man-band but really requires a team of collaborative players, each contributing to the whole.

If I were to use a set of *traffic lights* to describe John's approach to new directions and possibilities and initiatives in the Church, I would suggest he seemed to lean more towards GREEN rather than red or caution! His openness to new ideas, in theology, spirituality, liturgy and music, new ways of approaching challenges, has kept his attitudes fresh towards public prayer, musical composition and improvisation, and inspired others also to be open and enthusiastic.

## Personal qualities

As you know, John is blest with a wonderfully informed knowledge of the Church's colourful history, its music, composers and their life stories. I recall the Principal of Marist College, Darren McGregor, at John's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner here in 2010 declaring that John was THE "go- to" person when he needed information on some aspect of Religious Education, liturgical music, or the College's history.

And today, during these COVID-pandemic days, John continues to share his knowledge of the Cathedral's history with local visitors and tourists to Sacred Heart.

### **Lessons for us**

I am sure that utilising our talents and leaving a legacy is something we all desire to do and John has certainly succeeded in helping to bring much joy to the liturgy and the lives of Cathedral parishioners over 40 years. He has helped to develop a wonderful model for other Cathedrals and parishes within Victoria and Australia more broadly. The resources at Sacred Heart would be the envy of many Cathedral parishes, I am sure, particularly in country dioceses.

### **The Future**

My final tribute is to say that John's remarkable dedication and commitment over 40 years (involving what I estimated to be some 7000 Masses) has shown us what is possible, what can be done, when we have faith in God, the Church, liturgy and God's people.

- John, we all wish you God's blessings for the future.
- We trust our musical efforts each Sunday will reach the same high standards that you encouraged so diligently.
- We're delighted to know we have a NUMBER ONE cheer squad leader barracking for the Cathedral Choir from the nave each Sunday.