

DIAMOND VALLEY SINGERS & ELTHAM ORCHESTRAS PRESENT



THE
*Merry
Widow*

FROM BLUEGUM CREEK



DIRECTORS NOTES

When we think of *The Merry Widow*, we immediately think of the beautiful, haunting melodies of Franz Lehar, sumptuous costumes, the romance of Paris and a magical *Cinderella* love story.

This version has all that and more. We are transported to the fictional Australian Embassy in Paris at the turn of the 20th century. The poor Aussies are rather out of their depth in sophisticated Paris and would not survive without their wily French translator.

The script is brilliantly adapted by Frank Hatherley, an Australian who spent many years working for Thames and the BBC in London. The dialogue sparkles with wit and just a pinch of naughtiness.

It is fifteen years since DVS's first production of *The Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek*, so we felt it was time to bring this delightful romp back for another airing.

We have a wonderful cast led by two young opera students, Teresa Ingrilli and Andrew Lees, who have already made their mark in the Victorian Opera scene. They are supported by a talented lineup of principals and ensemble members, with whom we have thoroughly enjoyed working.

This year we are again fortunate to be working with Mary Wright and the Eltham Orchestra. Mary has also worked as costume designer for this production, making the majority of the beautiful costumes herself.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge our musical director, Ian Lowe, choreographers, Julie Wright and Narada Edgar, lighting designer, Ian Craig, lighting and sound crews and our stage manager, Maxine Lemcke. also the tireless efforts of Trevor D'Ambrosio, Steve Wilkie and all who assisted with set construction...

The role of production manager is huge and very often goes unseen. We are so grateful for the support given by Angela Hennel in this role.

It has been a wonderful journey filled with hard work, heaps and heaps of laughter, and renewed friendships. We have all had a ball, and we sincerely hope you, our audience, enjoys our offering as much as we have done in preparing it.

Lynne Counsel and Graham Ford.

DIAMOND VALLEY SINGERS & ELTHAM ORCHESTRAS PRESENT

THE MERRY WIDOW

FROM BLUEGUM CREEK

JULY 3RD TO 11TH 2015 | WARRANDYTE HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Lynne Counsel
Assistant Director	Graham Ford
Musical Director	Ian Lowe
Conductor	Marie-Louise Wright
Choreographers	Julie Wright & Narada Edgar
Stage Manager	Maxine Lemcke
Stage Crew	Caitlin Sharkey, Tash Reeve
Sound	Robyn Mulder, Dianne Richter, & Gary Richter
Costumes	Marie-Louise Wright
Set Graphic Artist	Lynne Counsel
Sets	Lynne Counsel (design) Trevor D'Ambrosio, Steven Wilkie & cast
Lighting	Ian Craig (design), John Keys, Jeremy Alfond, Kyle Turpin & John Lemcke
Props	Helen Watt
Graphic Design	Teresa Ingrilli
Publicity	Angela Hennel
Front of House	Jennie Barnett and volunteers
Photographers	Rachel Lowe, Aaron Purnell
Videographer	Bod
Rehearsal Accompanist	Gerard Banner, Ian Lowe & David Paterson
Hair and Make-up	Lynne Counsel, Nicole Tabone & Piri Jakab
Parking	John Keys and Volunteers
Ticketing	Angela Hennel
Website	Bod
Production Manager	Angela Hennel

SYNOPSIS

It's 1901, the federation of Australia is newly formed, and the new Australian ambassador to France, Sir Zachariah Wentworth, is understandably nervous about his first official function. Apart from his own staff, there is an array of guests to meet a mysterious recently widowed Australian who happened to be in the area and "thought she'd drop in". To add to his woes, the PM has sent a telegram telling him that the old widow should not marry a foreigner or they'd all be looking for new jobs. The new federation could not afford to lose that amount of money.

However, all does not go as planned. The widow, Anna, turns out to be quite young and pretty, with typical Australian contempt for the protocol Zack had been so carefully trying to establish. His assistant attaché, Danny, seems to be nowhere in sight when needed, and the other two attachés appear to be losing the battle to keep their wives away from various amorous Frenchmen. At least his young wife, Valerie, is no trouble. He has so much to do, it is a pleasure to have her escorted by the nice young cove, Count Camille de Rosillon. Zack has also been fortunate enough to find a Frenchman, Michelin, to translate for the embassy staff, but he appears to understand little of the English that Zack and his staff use and tends to spend most of his time organising everything else. This includes Zack's favourite project, the flag competition for his new country.

Eventually Zack manages to motivate Danny to try and keep the other Frenchmen away from Anna, not knowing that Danny and Anna had been childhood sweethearts. When Zack is not around Danny and Anna spend some time together during that first evening, although Danny does not appear to be having his usual success... Maybe things will go better the next night, when Anna has invited everyone to an Australian fancy dress ball at her rented mansion. Things just seem to go from bad to worse. Zack's Ned Kelly costume is just a bit tight, and he ends up getting lost, missing Anna's lovely song, and not being able to see where he is going with his head jammed in a tin bucket, but there is plenty of beer, so all is not lost. Then there is some real fun, when he discovers one of the Frenchmen in the summerhouse with one of the wives. However, as the Australian women appear on the scene, Zack is heartbroken when he thinks that it is his beloved Valerie in the summerhouse.

Again Zack is embarrassed when it is Anna who steps out of the summerhouse, and there is consternation all round. Danny deserts the party to go back to his favourite haunt, Maxim's, while Anna organises for it to be shut for the evening and the women to present their equivalent can can for the men when Danny returns. The men are mightily impressed with this and, in spite of all the problems encountered during their evening, Danny and Anna finally get together.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Music by Franz LEHAR | Lyrics by Frank HATHERLEY

ACT ONE – A Reception Room at the Australian Embassy, PARIS, 1901

1. **Australia in Patee** Sir Zackaria Wentworth & Chorus
2. **A Respectable Wife** Lady Valerie & Viscount Camille De Rosillon.
3. **The Only Frenchman** Michelin, Olga Crompton, Sylvia Boggins & Embassy Secretaries
4. **Gentleman, G'Day!** Anna Gladstone (Merry Widow) & Ensemble
5. **Maxim's** Danny MacQuarie
6. **It Only Seems Like Yesterday** Anna & Danny
7. **Ladies' Choice (Finale Act One)** Ensemble

- Interval -

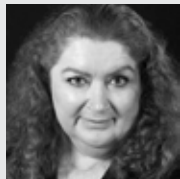
ACT TWO – Anna's Rented Mansion in Paris

8. **Intro, Dance and 'Bluegum'** Anna & Ensemble
9. **Riding in the Horse-n-Cart** Anna & Danny
10. **Women, Women, Women!** Danny, Zack, Cascada, St. Brioche, Crompton, Boggins & Michelin
11. **Flirtation** Anna & Danny
12. **Soon as Cold Winter's Ending** Valerie & Camille
13. **Not Anna and Camille!** Ensemble

ACT THREE – The New Maxim's

14. **The New Maxim's (Cakewalk)**
15. **The Ladies of Patee** Anna, Valerie, Olga, Sylvia, Marjorie, Sheila, Mabel & Ensemble.
16. **I Love You** Anna & Danny
17. **Finale – Women, Women, Women (Reprise)** Ensemble

THE PRODUCTION TEAM



Production Manager – Angela Hennel

Taking on the position of production manager seemed a natural progression for Angela after over 30 years involved in equestrian sports and event management. Having played Golde in *Fiddler On The Roof* and *Alice (In Wonderland)* while still at school, Angela feels any on-stage contribution would be negligible, although an appearance in the Melbourne Opera chorus for *Der Freischütz* this year may herald a change in her attitude to “poncing about on stage”. Angela fell into ticket sales for the DVS’ *Kismet* in 2008. Personally preferring to sing in choral works including the Mahler in 2013, with the occasional alto solo, Angela believes that producing is a good fit for her with DVS and continues to assist DVS, in various capacities, secretary included.

Production Manager’s Message

I am so proud to be able to present to you *The Merry Widow From Bluegum Creek* as Diamond Valley Singers’ major production in 2015, celebrating 30 years of music making in the Diamond Valley. DVS last presented *Widow* in 2000, and I know many of you were in the audience then, and some of you were in the cast. Thank you to the extremely hard working, creative team of *Widow* – Lynne, Graham, Ian, Julie and Narada – whose dedication, vision, and talent for inspiring others, will soon be before you to see. Thanks to Lesley Walton for joining us on the audition panel to help choose our wonderful cast.

Thank you to those who have worked to put this production on the stage: our artists, set builders, accompanists, costumes, props people, painters and designers. Everything you are about to experience has taken a lot of work on the part of numerous individuals over many, many hours. Thanks also to the cast and orchestra who have worked long and hard perfecting their roles and parts. I hope you have all enjoyed the experience and the opportunity that DVS continues to provide members of the community. I wouldn’t be able to begin to tally how many hours have gone into *Widow* from pre-production planning, auditions, rehearsals, to set building, costumes, publicity, ticketing, staging and a myriad of other necessary tasks.

We look forward to presenting for your pleasure and entertainment our beautiful, and often hilarious, *Widow*, so sit back and please enjoy the performance.



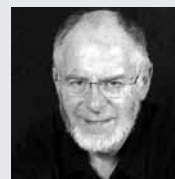
Director – Lynne Counsel

Lynne, a former art/craft and drama teacher, has worked for over forty years in both amateur and professional theatre as a director, performer, set and costume designer, and make-up artist. She has directed many plays, musicals and pantomimes amongst them, *The Old Man Came Rolling Home*, *Brigadoon*, *Kismet* and *Hobyahs* as well as numerous school productions including *The Hobbit* and *Wizard of Oz*. Lynne’s character roles include Aunt Abbie (*Arsenie and Old lace*), Elvira (*Blythe Spirit*), Harry the Horse (*Guys and Dolls*) and Yente (*Fiddler on the Roof*). For seven years she appeared regularly in Theatre Restaurant productions. This is her 19th show with DVS. With this show, Lynne and DVS have come full circle, the earlier production of *The Merry Widow of Bluegum Creek* being her first involvement with the group.



Assistant Director – Graham Ford

A joint founder of Diamond Valley Singers, Graham is currently the Artistic Director. He has been a student at the National Theatre Opera School and a Sun Aria semi-finalist. He has previously directed or co-directed many DVS productions. He teaches singing in the local area, and many DVS members are his students. He has sung lead roles on many occasions with Diamond Valley Singers, as well as with the semi-professional Globe Opera, taking leads in *Paint Your Wagon*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Kismet*. He conducts a couple of other choirs and works for More Than Opera.



Musical Director – Ian Lowe

Ian Lowe was a co-founder of DVS back in 1985, and has worked with the company ever since. Until 1998 he conducted the Eltham Orchestra with DVS in one stage show and one oratorio each year. Then, after 20 years with the orchestra he passed the baton to Mary Wright, and joined the DVS. Since 1999 he has been Musical Director for every stage show. He is now the president, conductor and frequent pianist for the choir, and for this performance is playing keyboard in the pit.



Conductor & Costumes – Marie-Louise Wright

Originally from Graz Austria, Mary studied music in Australia. She studied Violin with Tim Wachtel, Zefferino Mendes and Warwick Stengards and conducted with Robert Rosen, Peter Clinch, Marvin Rabin, Jerry Nowak, Robert Culver and attended Symphony Australia workshops in Melbourne, Adelaide and Tasmania. She attended workshop with the Royal Australian Navy Band and the Cairns Winter School for Orchestra. Mary conducts Surrey Hills Orchestra, Eltham Orchestra and its two string ensembles and teaches strings at Briar Hill Primary School. She is the past conductor of Henry Touzeau Strings for Melbourne Youth Music, Preston Junior Strings and Victorian Concert Orchestra. Mary conducted many operettas and musical theatre productions including *Mikado*, *Gondoliers*, *Merry Widow*, *Merrie England*, *Iolanthe*, *Oklahoma*, *Calamity Jane*, *Brigadoon*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Kismet*, *Carousel*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Pajama Game* and her favourite, *The Pirates of Penzance* as well as *Hello Dolly*. Mary has been privileged to conduct out of the 9 Beethoven Symphonies.



Co-Choreographer – Narada Edgar

Narada finished her Diploma of Dance Teaching at Box Hill TAFE in 2013 and since then has completed with Honours her Cecchetti Advanced 1 exam. Narada has been involved in the Melbourne theatre scene since 2013, having previously done numerous shows in her home town, Wagga Wagga. Since moving to Melbourne, Narada has been a part of several musicals such as *Witches of Eastwick*, *Gypsy*, *Cats* and *Ragtime*, and she has recently been appointed choreographer for Waterdale's production of *Urinetown*, which will open in September. *The Merry Widow of Bluegum Creek* will be Narada's first production with DVS and will be her debut in Musical Theatre choreography. She would especially like to thank Graham and Lynne for giving her this opportunity and Julie for guiding her through the process.

Co-Choreographer – Julie Wright

Julie has been associated with DVS for most of her life, either on stage, choreographing or in the orchestra pit. Julie trained in dance at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School and has appeared in numerous musicals, including *Wizard of Oz* as Dorothy, *Calamity Jane* as Katie and *Brigadoon* as Jean. Julie has also directed *Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat* for Valley Productions Theatre Company and appeared in NOVA's *Beauty and the Beast* and *Cats*. She is thrilled to be back choreographing with Narada, Lynne and Graham this year.



THE AUSSIES

Mrs Anna Gladstone	Teresa Ingrilli	The Merry Widow
Danny MacQuarie	Andrew Lees	Junior Ambassador
Sir Zacharia 'Zack' Wentworth	Gerard Fullarton	Ambassador
Lady Valerie Wentworth	Sabrina Surace	Ambassador's Wife
Bruce Crompton	Neil Spitzer	Military Attache
Mrs Olga Crompton	Barbara Skewes	His Wife
William 'Bill' Boggins	Steve Wilkie	Cultural Attache
Mrs Sylvia Boggins	Robyn Hannan	His Wife
Marjorie Prescott	Marlene Di Battista	Embassy Secretaries
Sheila Dawson	Annette Dick	
Mabel Tompkins	Stephanie Black	

THE FRENCHIES

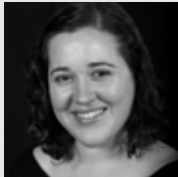
Michelin	Michael Try	Embassy Linguist
Viscount Camille De Rosillon	Darren Rosenfeld	
The Marquis de Cascada	Gary Short	
Monsieur de St. Brioche	Gary O'Dwyer	

CHORUS

- Alan Flint
- Anne Sharkey
- Helen Watt
- Jeanette Flint
- Kevin Pye
- Malcolm Reeve
- Marion Reid
- Nick Hansen
- Rae Lawry
- Sharon Harding
- Trevor D'Ambrosio

DANCING GIRLS

- Bianca Majchrzak
- Jess Cook
- Megan Metcalfe
- Tessa Hulsbosch



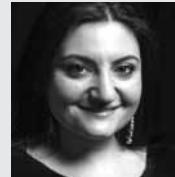
Mrs Anna Gladstone – Teresa Ingrilli

Teresa has been singing for as long as she can remember. She started out as a contemporary / jazz alto. In 2009, she was introduced to the world of classical music, convinced by her teacher she was a soprano, and chose to pursue the soloist route. With the guidance of many wonderful people, Teresa has recently been cast in a number of roles including, *Der Freischutz* (Bridesmaid soloist), *The Zoo / Trial by Jury* (The Plaintiff / Angelina), *The Grand Duke* (Gretchen), and now, Anna Gladstone, The Merry Widow in *Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek*. Teresa has performed with Melbourne Opera, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Diamond Valley Singers Chorus, Gilbert & Sullivan Society Victoria, and the IVOCI Singers. During the day, Teresa works as product manager for a digital design agency and dabbles in a bit of freelance design.



Danny MacQuarie – Andrew Lees

Andrew is currently completing his Bachelor of Music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, and previously studied at the Canberra School of Music. Career highlights have included singing at the Adelaide Festival Theatre (soloist) as a young singer, The Canonisation of Mary Mackillop in Penola, The Centenary of Federation with the Melbourne army band, performing at Swiss and German embassies in Canberra, Opera; *Gianni Schicchi* (Betto), *Mozart Solemn Vespers* (Tenor Soloist), Performing self written cabaret at the Adelaide Fringe festival with Alison Flett (the Newsagency Sydney), *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Turiddu), *Contrabandista* (chorus) as well as a competition winner at various Eisteddfods. He is also an accomplished violinist, having studied baroque violin at MCM, second violinist for Savoy opera orchestra, first Violinist North Queensland Symphony, eg. various corporate gigs and is a string teacher in the western suburbs of Melbourne.



Lady Valerie Wentworth – Sabrina Sarace

Sabrina moved to Melbourne to pursue Post Graduate study at the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Conservatorium. Since moving to Melbourne Sabrina has starred in various productions staged by the Melbourne Opera Company, VCA Opera Studio, Chamber Opera, The Opera Company of Victoria, Percy Grainer Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Melbourne & XL Arts as both soloist and chorister. Sabrina has won a variety of competitions and eisteddfods and has been a finalist in many major singing awards in Adelaide, Melbourne, Queensland & Europe including the 3MBS Armstead Singing Award & the MIA Operatic Awards. She has undertaken Master Classes with Renata Scotto, Emma Matthews and Mitchel Piper. In 2014 Sabrina traveled to Northern Italy for her first European operatic debut in the Cunning Little Vixen under the direction of Patrizia Di Paolo and Maestro David Jackson of the Metropolitan Opera Company. Sabrina is also branching out into Cabaret, combining both opera, pop and musical theatre and has performed this unique style at DT's and Kado theatre.



Sir Zacharia Wentworth – Gerard Fullarton

Gerard began acting as one of the King's children in *The King and I* when he was in primary school many, many (many) years ago. He was a member of various school choirs before joining the Sacred Heart Cathedral choir in Bendigo, and later the St Patrick's Cathedral Choir in Melbourne. Having done some backstage and minor onstage work (one of the lads in *Oliver* in 1971) with the Bendigo Operatic Society, Gerard did not do much other stage work until joining DVS in the mid 1990s, thinking he was going to be safe, hiding in the choral side of the group! Since then he has been involved with *A Nice Dilemma*, *The Mikado*, the 2000 production of *The Merry Widow From Bluegum Creek* (Michelin/Njegus), *The Sorcerer* (Rev Throbbing/ Rev Daly), *Merric England* (Big Ben), *Gondoliers* (Luis), *Brigadoon* (Mr Lundie) and *Iolanthe* (Tolloller), all with DVS, and *Mikado*, *Carmen*, *Trial By Jury*, *HMS Pinafore* and *The Merry Widow* (Pritschitsch) with Babirra Music Theatre and *Iolanthe* with the G&S Society.





Captain Bruce Crompton – Neil Spitzer

Neil Spitzer has been in musical theatre for almost 30 years. He has been involved on stage, backstage and in administration . He has been involved with Diamond Valley Singers for several years, mainly in ensemble. His roles include Joe in *The Pajama Game*, and recently Foreman of the Jury in *Trial By Jury* (30th Anniversary Concert 2015). The role of Crompton is the biggest of his career. Having auditioned unsuccessfully for years with various roles, he now has to do the hard work.



Mrs Olga Crompton – Barbara Skewes

Barb loves to perform, and has featured as leads in *Hairspray*, *Oliver*, *My Fair Lady*, *Chicago* and *Annie*. She has also been involved in *Oklahoma*, *Fiddler of the Roof*, *Calamity Jane*, *Brigadoon*, *Me and My Girl*, *Iolanthe*, *Pyjama Game*, *Pirates of the Penzance*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Hello Dolly*. Barb has worked with various companies such as DVS, Catchment Players. Heidelberg All Stars, Ross Hendy Dancers and Michelle Slayer Performing Arts. Barb also entertains at Nursing Homes, RSLs & Retirement Villages, and has appeared at the Crown Casino.



William 'Bill' Boggins – Steve Wilkie

This is Steve's debut performance in a musical. It is sort of experiment. It looks like fun and sounds like fun, but what does it actually taste like? He has performed with Diamond Valley Singers for about seven years as both tenor and more recently as a bass in their oratorios. Steve also sings and performs with another singing group called *Sisters and Mistrs*. He has enjoyed helping with set construction for this show and is glad that the Eiffel tower is not in his dining room anymore. Does anyone actually know how much 50 million French francs converts to Aussie pounds in 1901 and Aussie dollars now?



Mrs Sylvia Boggins – Robyn Hannan

Robyn Hannan is excited to be performing the role of Sylvia Boggins in her third production with DVS. She returned to the theatre after a break of about 12 years for DVS's production of *Pirates of Penzance*, and last year she performed the vignette role of Mrs Rose in *Hello Dolly*. Previously she performed as a chorus member in the G&S Society for more than 50 productions, and in *The Sound of Music* with Whitehorse Theatre Co. Robyn is enjoying herself hugely, especially since she thought her days of doing the Can Can were long past!



Marjorie Prescott – Marlene Di Battista

This is Marlene's 7th production with DVS, having appeared in *Carousel*, *Iolanthe*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *The Pajama Game*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Hello Dolly*. Performances with other theatre groups include *Stepping Out*, *Jacks High* and several Music Halls with Eltham Little Theatre, *Dinkum Assorted* with Essendon Theatre Group, *Barnum* with Dandenong Theatre Group and *Mama Mia* with Michelle Slater Performing Arts Group. She is also an active member of the Heidelberg Allstars who entertain at retirement villages & nursing homes. Marlene has done several oratorios with DVS and also performed in the Mahler 8th Symphony at the Melbourne Town Hall. She hopes you enjoy this year's production of *The Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek*.



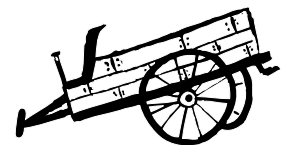
Sheila Dawson – Annette Dick

Annette joined DVS nine years ago when she became interested in singing with a choir, and she says it has been a wonderful experience. She has sung in the past in the chorus and has had some smaller solo roles, as well as having solo roles in the DVS oratorios, last year playing Ernestina in *Holly Dolly*. Annette also sings with the Camberwell Chorale conducted by Douglas Heywood. Her other passion is singing in the choir on Channel 9 Carols by Candlelight. Annette loves to perform because she meets so many talented and wonderful people. She hopes you enjoy *The Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek*, and her performance as Sheila xx



Mabel Tompkins – Stephanie Black

This is Stephanie's third time on stage and her first time in a role. Stephanie was last onstage earlier this year in WATERDALE's production of *Ragtime*, where she got the opportunity to be the resident scream, which featured seven times throughout the show. She is looking forward to *The Merry Widow From Bluegum Creek*, and hopes you enjoy it as much as she does!





Michelin – Michael Try

A life member of DVS, Michael first created the role of Danny back in 2000 for the Victorian premiere of this version. Now he returns to play Michelin, the smartest man on stage, a very rare feat for a tenor! Other roles for DVS have included: Fairfax (*Yeomen Of The Guard*), Ralph (*H.M.S Pinafore*), Nanki Poo (*Mikado*) and Hines (*Pajama Game*). Michael has also featured as tenor soloist in many oratorios including *Messiah*, *Elijah*, *Creation* and *Alexander's Feast*. Apart from DVS, Michael has also performed with various other choirs and musical societies in Melbourne, and was a member of the Opera Australia Melbourne Chorus. In 2011, Michael had the wonderful opportunity to perform the roles of Leonard Merryl (*Yeomen Of The Guard*) and Strephon (*The Arcadians*) at the International G&S Festival in Buxton, UK.



Viscount Camille de Rosillon – Darren Rosenfeld

Darren has been performing for over twenty years in everything from opera to musical comedy and as a soloist in oratorio works *The Messiah*, *Creation* and *Mozart's Requiem*. In 2011 he appeared in *Yeoman* and the rarely staged show *The Arcadians*, at the G&S International festival in Buxton, England, Roles include The Duke (*Patience*), Alfredo (*Die Fledermaus*), St Brioche (*The Merry Widow*), Sebastion (*The Sorcerer*), Mendel (*Fiddler on the Roof*), Charlie (*Brigadoon*), Francis Fryer (*Calamity Jane*), Sam (*Mama Mia!*), Dick Walnough (*Boy from Oz*), and Prez (*The Pajama game*). He has written an operetta based on the characters and plots of Gilbert and Sullivan titled *A Nice Dilemma* and is a member of the Savoy Singers and Ashton Smith Singers. Darren is happy to be reprising the role of Camille he did 15 years ago, minus a bit less hair and hopes you enjoy the show.



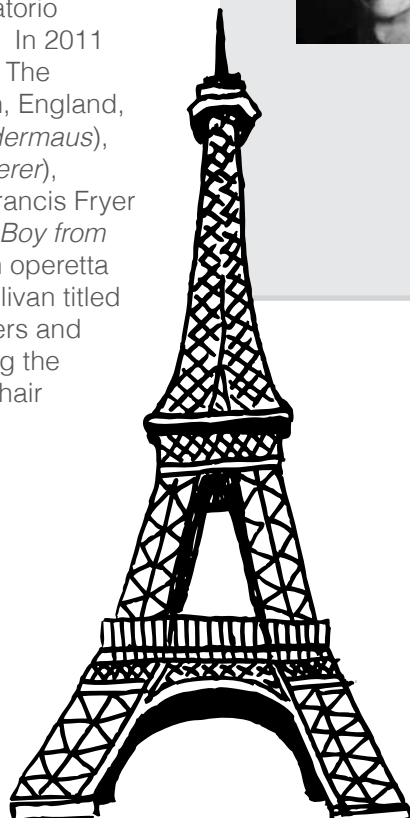
The Marquis de Cascada – Gary Short

Gary remembers being in the audience for the previous DVS production of *The Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek*, since that time, he was enticed to move from the audience to be on the stage. He credits Graham Ford for being a major influence with this. Consequently Gary has appeared in the DVS productions of *Kismet*, *Carousel*, *Such is Life!*, *A Fine Dilemma*, *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way to the Forum*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Pajama Game* and *Pirates of Penzance*. Gary is also a founding and central member of the St. Pauls' Players, in Ringwood, a continuing involvement that began in 1997. Having failed French in year 10 (so long ago that it was called 'Form 4') he asks your forgiveness for his obvious reliance on Monty Python and Poirot for the accent his role required.



Monsieur de St. Brioche – Gary O'Dwyer

Gary made his stage debut as Salesman 2 in St. Gabriel's Theatre Group's 2003 production of *The Music Man*. Since then he has performed in productions with a number of companies, including Moreland Theatre Company, Catchment Players & Eltham Little Theatre. Some of his favourite roles have been Thenardier in *Les Miserables* and King Arthur in *Camelot*. *The Widow* marks Gary's first on stage performance with DVS, but those with a keen eye and good memory may recall that he made a cameo, video performance as a matador in the dream scene of *The Pajama Game*. Gary hopes that you enjoy this production as much as he has enjoyed playing Monsieur St. Brioche.



ABOUT THE DIAMOND VALLEY SINGERS

Diamond Valley Singers started 1985 in response to a desire to raise money for the Freedom From Hunger campaign run by World Vision. Ian Lowe as conductor of the Eltham Orchestra, and asked Graham and Mavis Ford to find a cast to include Gibert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* in the program. Not only did they raise a lot of money that year, but the singers liked the idea so much they formed DVS, and this is their 30th year at it. In that time they have raised about \$150 000 for charities, particularly World Vision and Open House. A charity recently added to their list is a small school in Malawi. Later this year (Nov 15) they will perform Carl Orff's popular *Carmina Burana* with the Maroondah Symphony Orchestra and other choirs.

THE CHORUS



Alan Flint

Alan has performed in leading roles with DVS productions in *Oklahoma*, *Kiss Me Kate* and also in the chorus. He hopes to be able to continue involvement in future productions despite chronic fatigue syndrome from nerve injury, as he finds maintaining activity with theatre friends is therapy he cannot do without!



Anne Sharkey

Anne's first venture into theatre was with DVS for its 2005 production of *Oklahoma* in the chorus. Anne has performed in numerous shows since then with both DVS and St Gabriels, such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Calamity Jane*, *Iolanthe* and *Les Miserables*. She has valued the experience of learning from so many talented and committed artists. She mainly hides in the chorus, but has enjoyed playing the role of the widow in *Kismet*, Panceara, a courtesan, in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* with DVS and Inez in *The Gondoliers*, St Gabriels, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Hello Dolly*.



Helen Watt

Helen was a late starter with DVS and has been in the ensemble for *Kismet*, *Carousel*, *Iolanthe*, *Kiss me Kate*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Hello Dolly* and once again has taken on the role of props co-ordinator. Helen hopes you enjoy *The Merry Widow* from *Bluegum Creek*.



Jeanette Flint

Jeanette Flint's first experience on the stage was in a production of *South Pacific* as a native child with large amounts of stage makeup. They even took the show on the road and she went to a country production where the cast was billeted out for the night. It was a great memory and when she joined Diamond Valley Singers she has been involved in most of the shows over the last twelve years, and really enjoys it.



Kevin Pge

Kevin has performed in too many shows and oratorios with DVS to list, starting with *The Gondoliers* in 1995. This culminated in playing Private Willis in *Iolanthe*, and then a season of *Kiss Me Kate* in 2011 when he didn't sing a word from the start of rehearsals to the end of the closing night due to a bout of whooping cough. Since then he has taken some time off due to illness. He is glad to be able to be back on stage for this repeat performance, and hopes you will all consider registering as an organ donor, if you haven't already so, that others like him can get back to enjoying what they do.



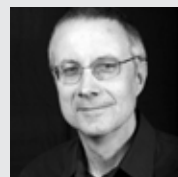
Malcolm Reeve

This is Malcolm's first dabbling into music and theatre since a very young boy and he's really looking forward to it. Malcolm assists with a seniors' choir and works for aging disability support services with Manningham Council and is a restaurateur.



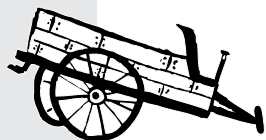
Marion Reid

Marion is looking forward to her first musical theatre performance in *The Merry Widow* from *Bluegum Creek*, a change from Gospel singing with the Open Door Gospel Choir, for which she has performed in the last eight years. Film & Television acting extra roles have been an interesting part of her life in the last 10 years.



Nick Hansen

A long-time member of the Maroondah Singers, Nick is an experienced chorister who has also performed regularly in Opera in the Market and Carols by Candlelight. This is his third straight musical production for Diamond Valley Singers after performing as a Policeman in *Pirates of Penzance* and a chorus member in *Hello Dolly*. Nick has also recently dabbled in some acting as an extra for two independent films and as a Male Doctor for a Vic Police training film.





Rae Lawry

Rae initially started in DVS as Stage Crew in *Oklahoma* in 2005. Her main focus was to ensure that the chimney did not topple, which almost happened a couple of times. Her debut on stage was in *Fiddler on Roof*. Since then she has continued in the chorus in *Kismet*, *Iolanthe*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Nice Dilemma*, *Such is Life* and *Hello Dolly*. Rae has enjoyed learning to waltz for this year's show. She is hopeful of mastering the waltz so that she ceases to step on her partner's toes during performances!! It is great having a show with an Australian slant 'Stone the Crows' Rae hopes you enjoy *The Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek*.



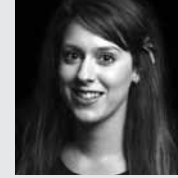
Sharon Harding

Sharon has been a member of the Diamond Valley Singers since 1995. Over the years, she has performed in the chorus of a variety of stage productions, including *HMS Pinafore*, *Brigadoon*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Hello Dolly*, and in many of oratorio performances. Sharon has also been a part of the publicity team for some of the stage shows.



Trevor D'Ambrosio

This is the eighth DVS production, both on and off stage for Trevor. *Carousel*, *A Funny Thing Happened On the Way To The Forum*, *Iolanthe*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *The Pyjama Game*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Hello Dolly* and now *Merry Widow*. He has assisted in the set construction and taken satisfaction in repurposing bits from past shows to give them new life. There are obvious ones from *Carousel*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Hello Dolly*, but he would be impressed if you can spot the *Funny Thing* reclamation. He hopes you enjoy the show and would love to hear what you have spotted.



Bianca Majchrzak

Bianca is making her debut performing in a staged production with DVS singing in chorus and as a dancer. Past productions include *The Grand Duke*, *Trial By Jury*, *The Zoo* (Laetitia), *USS Pinafore*, *Der Freischütz* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Lola), *Contrabandista*. Bianca attained a Bachelor of Music from Melbourne University and now enjoys teaching singing and piano. She also has a strong passion for designing, and sews retro aprons.



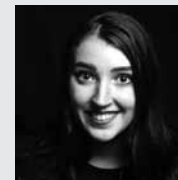
Jess Cook

After a year of trying (and failing) to take a break from theatre, Jess just couldn't resist returning to the stage in her first production with the Diamond Valley Singers. She has spent her life in the theatre becoming a triple threat from the age of 6, with her most recent efforts being *Little Murders* at the Heidelberg Theatre Company, and *All Shook Up* with Amateur Repertory Company. She hopes you grab a Sheila (or bloke) and enjoys the show.



Megan Metcalfe

Since going *Into The Woods* in 2006, Megan has performed in several musicals, the most recent of which was WATERDALE's *Ragtime* (2015). Having been dancing since she was four, there are few things, if any, she enjoys more than dancing and singing with other performers. She is looking forward to dancing in *The Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek* and hopes you enjoy the show!



Tessa Hulsbosch

Tessa Hulsbosch has been taking singing lessons since she was 5 years old, and has been dancing for 4 years. In the past she has performed in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Seussical the Musical*, *Urinetown*, *HONK!*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Ragtime* and others, playing various roles. She is currently studying full time Musical Theatre at SHOWFIT.



1st Violins

Euja Park
Lisa Filmer
Madeleine Smith
Fiona Walsh
Jessica Callaway
Marianne Ma

2nd Violins

Lauren Kirkham
Charlotte Hall
Kevin Mullen
Rylan Herrick
Angus Walsh
Abby Smith
Steven Wang

Violas

Olivia Costas
Finn Endries

Cellos

Jane Moon
Tyrone Louw
Jo Parr
Genevieve Ryan
Lachlan Allen

Flutes

Betty Martin
Katy Neesham
Kevin O'Donnell

Oboes

Judy Lewis
Ben Neale

Clarinets

Derek Wright
Tony Robinson

Bassoon

Sari Nigol

Trumpet

Seren Robinson

Percussion

Peter Robb

Keyboard/Piano

Ian Lowe

About the Orchestra

Check out <http://www.elthamorchestras.org.au>.



New desks bought with Victorian money in 2014

An entertainment of light classical music supporting a nursery school in Malawi

**Sunday August 2 at 2 pm,
Diamond Creek Uniting Church,
Wensley Street, Diamond Creek.**

For several years DVS president Ian Lowe has been supporting Elizabeth Nursery School, in Zomba, Malawi in southern Africa. He has visited Malawi six times.

To date \$15,600 has been sent and half of this has been raised through concerts featuring Ian's grand piano solos and several excellent singers. Entry is by donation; afternoon tea will top off a fun time for a worthy cause.

Elizabeth Nursery School, Zomba, Malawi

This school was built by a Malawian family with whom Ian Lowe, our president, has become very friendly. Ian has visited Malawi annually six times and he has chosen to support a small school whose principal is part of that family. Because government school classes average 100 in size and are very ineffectual, this school has realistic numbers but needs support. Parents are unable to pay much in the way of fees, as many are very poor. DVS is helping him to pay the teachers and provide additional equipment, books and supplies. A fund-raising concert is to be held on August 2.



DVS 1985 – Trial by Jury

Carmina Burana

**Sunday November 15 at 2:30pm,
George Wood Performing Arts
Centre, Yarra Valley Grammar School
Kalinda Road, Ringwood**

DVS is singing *Carmina Burana* with Yarra Valley Singers, Essendon Choral Society, Maroondah Singers and Singularity in one performance with the Maroondah Symphony Orchestra on Sunday November 15 at 2:30pm at the George Wood Performing Arts Centre, Yarra Valley Grammar School Kalinda Road, Ringwood

If you wish to join us in this rehearsals commence at 8pm on Wednesday July 22 at the Uniting Church, Wensley Street Diamond Creek.

Check our website for details
www.dvsingers.org.

Franz Lehar's, *The Merry Widow*, (1905) is unchallenged as the most popular operetta of the twentieth century, Derived from Henri Meilhac's 1861 comedy, *The Ambassador's Attache*, The operetta's original German libretto was written by Leo Stein and Victor Leon, and some of their realistic love scenes caused a stir. There have been many, english translations and 'versions' since, mostly lightweight and tedious for today's audiences, who wait impatiently for the next song, wondering why Lehar's passionate music has been yoked to such pantomime frolics.

The setting is Paris, but most of the characters come from the invented Balkan kingdom of Pontevedrina. At the Pontevedreinian embassy, we meet the ambassador, his impressionable wife, and various attaches and diplomats, all doing their best to represent their ancient, unsophisticated, country in highly-cultured 'Gay Paree'.

The notion behind, *The Merry Widow from Bluegum Creek* is simple. It's still turn-of-the-century Paris, but the main characters come from that new, unsophisticated, not-so-mythical country, Australia. As Federation happened in 1901, it seems fair that Australian might have opened its first continental embassy around that time, and, that the Battling Aussie Ambassador and his staff, are fiercely proud of their far-off homeland, and wary of the stuck up Frenchies. That twist accepted, everything falls into place. In fact, the story seems to regain some of its buried life and, most importantly, the passions of the players being to match the glorious, sensual throb of the music.

© Copyright David Spicer Productions.



thanks for your support.

WWW.DVSINGERS.ORG