

AUSTRALIAN INTERVARSITY CHORAL SOCIETIES ASSOCIATION

25 Eratos

Silver Jubilee Issue

August

"Long Live the Queen of Siam"

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E D I T O R I A L :

Well people, I.V. is here already, time to get your scarves and song-books and trek across Australia to Canberra. August is really the end of the old and the beginning of the new AICSA year - the time when a new committee is elected to the positions of President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc. and Erato Editor. This is my last edition, so lots of good luck and wishes to the next Editor.

Remember Erato is only as good as what is sent to the editor. Unfortunately very few societies contributed to this issue as you can see. Because of this I took the opportunity to produce a roneoed Erato which is much cheaper than off-set (see the first two 1977 issues) but correspondingly poorer in quality - notably it lacks drawings and copied material. Please give the next Editor lots of (articulated) support and don't hesitate to prod your correspondent or send in your own stuff.

Good singing,
Vera Green,
Erato Editor.

P U C S

Despite lack of accidental "eraticles", the black duck is alive and kicking, fighting its leash and frothing around the beak at the thought of being unleashed at Canberra in August to sow a few wild eggs. At present it seems that the entire PUCS entourage will be driving to Canberra in three vehicles (14 or so bodies), so have pity on any strangely number-plated, dusty vehicles that appear pitifully lost/abandoned between Adelaide and the capital - actually the article up to this point has been entirely superfluous considering that this "Erato" won't be out until I.V. anyway but stiff bikkies - read on and plunge yourselves into the sordities/depravities or whatever you fancy recently encountered in the ongoing saga of PUCS.

We inaugurated the Perth I.V. fund (1980?) in March with a Guild Show which is really only an excuse for (a) students to regurgitate swilled beer and (b) for us to erect barriers at all the doors of the guild building and charge an exorbitant fee to pass in.

We hired bands and bouncers, and ran the rest of the show ourselves (i.e. we poured beer, collected jugs and finally cleaned up); by 3 A.M. the building had been cleaned up apart from several semi-comatose people we found under some tables and a count showed that we had made in excess of \$1,000 profit.

This example that people could be so easily relieved of large sums of money had a stunning effect on the brain of our concert manager, who shortly afterwards cleverly conceived (amongst other things) the notion of presenting a massed choral activity at an appropriate venue in order to once again rip people off - alas, it was not to be so - our first term concert was musically brilliant but financially a slight loss, leading to the execution of 2/3 of the committee by frenzied shareholders.

The concerts took place in the Octagon on April 22nd (one at lunchtime and the other in the evening) and the works performed were an arrangement of the first part of "Tears of Steel" by Jeannie Lewis, "Bohemian Rhapsody", "Somebody to Love" and "Teo Torriste" by the group Queen, "Brazilian Psalm" by Jean Berger (?) and "Are you Sitting Comfortably" by Moody Blues.

In all, a strange conglomeration of works, especially as the Bartenders (Barbershop quartet) also sang in the evening concert. However, the concerts both went down incredibly well, and especially the "Queen" songs in which our own Freddie Mercury (Bryan Connell) sang the lead vocals so well that he was mobbed during the concert and unfortunately had most of his hair ripped out. One girl in the audience at lunch time broke down and started crying (no kidding) and several people after the concert said that we did the Queen songs better than Queen themselves (Ahem!)

An otherwise idyllic first term was marred by a rather unfortunate incident during which several PUCS were married; the morals office has appointed a committee to investigate but it appears that little can be done to prevent further occurrences - Tim Mason (AICSA president 1975, IV'73 convenor, etc.) and Frances Scalise were married on 24th May at St. Patrick's Fremantle to the sound of about ten PUCS singing various pieces of music in the choir gallery.

Enough of social things - our next concert is scheduled for 30th September in Winthrop Hall where we will perform: two of the choruses from Monteverdi's "Vespers of 1610", two Bruckner motets ("Os Justi" and "Locus Iste"), "Cantique de Jean Racine" by Gabriel Faure, "The True Samaritan" by Nigel Butterley, and (gasp) the Brahms "Requiem". The orchestra will be (as usual) the Melville Symphony which will hopefully be augmented with players from the West Australian symphony orchestra; even the 50 or 60-odd PUCS voices aided by our 500 megawatt loud-speakers system, won't be enough for the "Requiem" so we will be joined for that work by the Perth Oratorio choir conducted by Peter Bandy who usually conducts the major work in our Prom concerts anyway.

As usual arranging the concert promises to be hectic, and at present our concert manager is looking around for some adult sized "Kimbies" for nameless tenors/basses who have so far invariably broken down and wet their pants during the more climatic parts of the two Bruckner motets. With luck we might even get reviewed in the papers this year, despite a block-headed press that refuses to review student drama or concerts. Enuff of whingeing and see you all in Canberra in the very near future.

Love or whatever,

Chris Johnson.

AUKESTRATION.

Abstract. The musical character of the Australian University Choral or Musical Society is, it is hypothesized, directly related to the size of the choir, with a weighting factor subject to the tastes of the individual members

Well, really what I mean is that big choirs like MUCS get to sing works like Saul, where AUCS, with active membership about 40 after the exhausting first term, is turning towards chamber music.

Our next concert, a chamber-pot-pourri of Purcell works, is almost upon us (30/7) The major problem with chamber works is that the venue needs to be smallish; ours is Edmund Wright House, the restored ANZ Bank Building, which is used for Births, Deaths, Marriages and Concerts.

It has a gloriously gilded ceiling, but can fit at most 200 audience, so we're selling cheap seats on the floor on mats, and we hope to cram in more people this way - isn't it dreadful the way artistic considerations get shoved aside in favour of money.

Meanwhile, I'll just hold my breath until the concert is over. Looking at term three, we'll be doing some American works (e.g. by Randall Thompson) with a possible bike hike and a carol singing country tour at Christmas time, to historic Burra, which has an old copper mine or two.

See you all soon, Love from

Cathy Cox and all the AUCS

TUMS - Dear Mainlanders,

Well, there isn't really much news since the last ERATO, except that I made a mistake over the programme for the 25th Sept. concert - its Carissimi's Jephtha we're doing, not Mendel's. The Byrd mass has now been replaced by a Palestrina also.

Half the choir has just returned from holidays - Conservatorium students on semester system, and the other half (Uni) is about to leave - this creates a few rehearsal problems, but we hope that by the concert some of us will know the music most of the time.

It looks as though only about eight of us will get up to Canberra for I.V. but we'll make up in enthusiasm.

A.G.M. and dinner will happen mid-September, and the inevitable carol concert follows that - and hey presto! another year bites the dust,

See you all at I.V.

Love, Nat.

FREE FRITZ ON TUESDAYS (FUCS)

FUCS is slowly but surely progressing towards its concert on Friday, 14th October. In case you've forgotten we're singing Vaughan Williams' 'Dona Nobis Pacem' in St. Peter's Cathedral - a successful venue for us. We are also singing Handels' Zadok the Priest and arrangements of about three Beatles' songs. Any body who wants to come and listen will be very welcome.

We had a folk dance at our camp (July 15-17) in preparation for I.V. and Don (one of our tenors) brought down a set of drums so we had constant jamming in between rehearsals. We sang through Joseph at Saturday breakfast.

FUCS is having a 60's party on Friday, 12th August with lots of early Beatles and Stones records at Deb and Fran's place. Also, our A.G.M. and dinner will be held on Saturday, 10th September.

After the 14th, FUCS will be rehearsing for the Flinders Madrigal Dinner at the end of term,

Well, that's all I can think of for the moment except that about ten of us are going to Canberra and the AUCS concert was really good.

Love from Olive Theresa and the O.T. Chorale.

AN EXPERIMENT TO DETERMINE THE NATURAL PITCH OF A BEER BOTTLE.

Aim: To determine the pitch obtained from blowing across the top of a bottle filled with varying quantities of fluid.

Apparatus: (1) Between 2 and 30 740ml bottles of your local brew. (The number depends on the desired accuracy of the results).

(2) A number of both 7 and 10oz glasses, dependent on how many take part in the experiment.

(3) A tuning fork (for stirring the beer and determining pitches) or a perfect pitcher e.g. Marie Sermon.

(4) At least 2 pizzas to soak up toxic experimental by-products which could otherwise harm the environment (or the carpet).

(5) At least 2 raving besotts (i.e. drunken lunatics)

(6) Two ex-deans who are no longer in possession of their faculties (ho ho)

(7) Bottle opener (or strong teeth, etc)

(8) Sponge and bucket.

Method: (1) Open first bottle and consume

(2) As for step one on bottles 2 - 28.

(3) Regurgitate stomach contents and mop up with sponge and bucket.

(4) Consume pizzas.

(5) Open bottle number 29 and blow across its top thereby producing a pitched note. Wipe beer from eye and if still able determine pitch of note and record on data sheet (a staff which will now appear to have between 4 and 36 lines.)

(6) Pour one 7oz glass from bottle and consume. Proceed as for step 5. Note exponential growth of lines on the staff.

(7) As for step 6.

(8) Again as for step 6

(9) Yet again as for step 6 - if you succeed, pass out in corner.

(10) Record pitch of now defunct bottle.

(11) Now lick out inside of bottle.

(12) Open bottle number 30 if still capable. Repeat as for steps 6 - 9, using 10oz

(13) Replicate pitch of previous empty bottles.

(14) Collapse in screaming heap. glass.

Results: See diagram. Graphing the results demonstrates an interesting change in the curve at the G below middle C.

Discussion and Implications: The results plainly show that accurate approximations to pitched notes can be made from beer bottles and experimenters at various stages of fullness. i.e. from a full bottle one can pitch and sing "Me and Bobby McGee" whereas from an empty bottle one can sing "Gaudeamus".

Consumption of one middy from a full bottle allows accurate pitching for "Laudamus Nomen Domini" by Christopher Tye whereas two glasses gives the pitch for "Innsbruck" by Heinrich Issaac; it was also found that a full bottle's note had a remarkable ability to attract mosquitos from great distances so that they could be killed in an organic manner (i.e. squashed)

The experimenters feel that the results have considerable importance to Australian choral societies except the cider drinking Tasmanians, and will be directing further experiments towards pitching notes from tins of baked beans and varying lengths of hosepipe.

C. Johnson (MB, BS) and J. Elliott (BA (Hons), Dip Ed.)
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News from Otago (alias Antarctica)

Dear Peoples,

If my trusty Husky dogs can get me to the Post Office and if the snow ploughs are able to break through the twenty foot high snowdrifts this article ought to arrive on time! Actually I'm exaggerating a wee bit there as it hasn't snowed at all down here but the above is intended as a lively intro to get you all keyed up and into (as it were) the swing of things.

Music Union this year hops along from near disaster to near disaster. Before each impending disaster everyone declares that this is positively their last disaster but after it we somehow (in a moment of weakness) take on the management of the next disaster. Ah well .. New Zealand's Government seems to have the same policy. Things which we have done and things which we have not done this year include the following:

The camp was not done and in fact just didn't occur. The main reason was the lack of people rushing enthusiastically round saying they were going to come. Only a dozen people did any rushing at all so we had to cancel it.

The Faure Requiem was done and surprisingly well if I might say so. The fact that the organ was about one beat behind everyone else in the In Paradisum was entirely irrelevant. The Music Union Orchestra and Choir performed the Requiem way back in April in St. Paul's Cathedral with soloists Jan Harrington and Roger Wilson. Some of you may remember Jan from IV'75 where she was a member of the Otago Contingent. Our performance was part of a "French Music Festival" organised jointly by Music Union and the University Music Department. The rest of the Festival included chamber and vocal recitals by various Department staff and students. The Festival was the idea of Sydney Mann, the University violin tutor, who also conducts the Music Union Orchestra (how he puts up with it is beyond me!)

During the May holidays some members of our orchestra combined with other local musicians to form an orchestra to play for the Medical Students' Congress which was held in Dunedin. This orchestra was organised and conducted by none other than ex MU president Ben Grey (and heaven only knows where he gets his energy from). By the way this year Ben is relaxing from the stresses of being a med student and is currently on holiday somewhere ... overseas (beyond Aussie folks!) I'm sure he'll find his way back to NZ eventually. Our orchestra continued in the same vein (medical joke!) and has just played for the Knox College (I.E. one of the Varsity hostels) Ball. We supplied mainly Strauss waltzes and all those present seemed to have lots of fun. We had the usual impending disaster when the Music Department swiped our best players for their production of Handel's Xerxes but we somehow survived (it's amazing what people can do when you put the fear of death into them).

A new type of venture for Music Union was the Medieval Banquet which we held in the Camelot Restaurant - a rather small but distinctly period restaurant in Dunedin. Most of us dressed appropriately and we even had some minstrels along to charm our Heartes with Musick. This sort of thing is really quite easy to organise and does a lot to relieve feelings of despondency!

This term the Choir, or rather what's left of it, has combined with the Schola Cantorum (a local city choir of about 100 members) and is rehearsing the Brahms Requiem for performance on August 1. This will be something of an event since none other than Sir David Willcocks is coming down to conduct us. Actually he's mainly going to Wellington but David Willcocks is still David Willcocks even if he has been to other parts of NZ. A marvellous chance for the ten or so TENORS (yes; ten in one hundred) to let it all hang out and be properly appreciated.

And now for some interesting news ... A tale entitled "He was the conductor and She the accompaniest". Sally Hume (another IV'75 goer who this year is Music Dept. Secretary as well as completing a music degree has married (Dr.) Patrick Little - highly esteemed Music Department lecturer and sometime Music Union Choir conductor. Our congratulations to them both!

As for Music Union's future we're having a mini-camp next term as an informal relaxing weekend away from it all before finals hit us. Otherwise we tend to fold up in the third term; how all you people put on major concerts then is beyond me!

Finally Music Union's official address is below. This should be more reliable and more constant than the private addresses which we've used in the past:

Otago University Music Union,
C/- The University Union,
University of Otago
P.O. Box 45
Dunedin, New Zealand.

I wish you all the best of luck (vocal and social) for Canberra. I doubt if any NZers are going but we hope to be back in force next year.

Kind regards from across the Tasman and lotsaluv.

Chris Masters.

TRICKED YOU!

Our 2nd term concert wasn't on the 13th of August at all. NO folks, that was all a big joke (on me mostly) our concert was on the 7th of August sure enough we sang Brahms, but found the Elgar made the work load too heavy. The Elizabethan Melbourne Orchestra is playing for us. That is to say Elizabethan Trust Orchestra, Melbourne. Our soloists are Marilyn Quaith and John Pringle.

I might add that that bumptious beginning was all a front. As much as I sincerely apologise for putting you all on the wrong tram (as they say here by the muddy Yarra Yarra), I wonder what good it will do, since by the time you read this it will all be over anyway!

Shaefacedly, I must confess to a consistent absence from the meetings of our (benevolent?) society; but do not worry, it seems that somehow its been going through its paces satisfactorily. I daresy when this concert is eventually heard there will be rave reviews - of one sort or another. Well if you want and unbiased view, just corner me at IV Canberra and I'll be able to oblige.

Guess that's about it kiddies - the cold has forced us all to practise indoor games (like singing, of course).

See you at IV.

Mandy Boughton (MUCS)

OUR MAN IN STUTTGART REPORTS - on castles, lakes and mountains, the difficulty of congratulating a Hungarian, and the sad lack of compositions for garden hose and guitar.

6.15 a.m. Thursday, 7/7/77 - a propitious date, we hope. What on earth are we doing up at this ungodly hour? A rather haggard Stuttgart University Choir is assembling on platform 15 of the main station - but it's broad daylight, the morning of a cloudless summer day, and we're off to Austria for the 14th annual choral competition; after weeks of traumatic rehearsal it suddenly all might be worthwhile.

12.30 p.m. - after half an hour's halt in Salzburg, the train continues on through fantastic mountain scenery - broad green valleys, little villages, wooded hillsides, and castles and snow peaks far above. Morale is high and squanders itself in bursts of singing - we hang out of the windows belting out test pieces and folk songs from memory, startling passengers at little intermediate stations with sudden bursts of thrilling (!) harmony. We're all appallingly hoarse and windburnt by the time we get to Spittal, but who cares?

3 p.m. - Walking around the town, which turns out to be a very attractive little place set in beautiful mountain scenery, wearing our brand new identification tags (the German flag), feeling foolishly patriotic and eyeing off the opposition, which is equally conspicuous as groups of beflagged sightseers. In town for the choral competition are: Musikstuderendes Kor, Copenhagen; Camerata Vocalis, Tübingen (the other Germans); Suomen Laulu, Helsinki; Gruppo Corale Polifonico, Vicenza (Italy); Akademicki Chór, Cracow (Poland); Uppsals Akademiska Kammarkör (Sweden); Miesany Zbor Bratislavských Učitel'ov, Bratislava (Czechoslovakia); and Franz-Liszt Kammerchor, Budapest. And us. Crumbs, what were we doing here with this lot? It all suddenly seems like unwarranted pretension.

8.30 p.m. Official welcome to the 14th annual choral competitions in the small roofed courtyard of Porcia Castle, a marvellous little Renaissance building in the middle of Spittal which is the venue for most of the singing. We Germans are the only ones who understand the speeches but the Finns and Swedes and Danes and Poles and Hungarians and Czechs and Italians smile politely and clap at appropriate moments. Then the local choir sings - and they're jolly good! - among things, a song from each country represented, in the original language. At the end of each one the choir from that country rises and shows itself to the rest of the audience while Austrian Television films everything enthusiastically. The Italian men look a cheeky lot ... and the Finns seem to be mostly little old ladies. An incredible mixture. But there seems to be no chance of interchoir socialising; every group is quartered in a different hotel and we're rivals, after all, quite apart from the fact that we don't understand each other. So the Stuttgarters go off in a group afterwards and drink and talk far into the night. Afterwards we hear that the Finns went straight to bed to save their voices. Good grief!

Friday, breakfast at 8.30 a.m. - help! - but the hotel we're staying at likes getting the guests out of its hair good and early. Outside it's raining, oh hell. But we have things to do: a 10-minute stage rehearsal in the trade union hall for the test pieces, and another in the castle for the rest of the songs. We overhear a marvellous hand-clapping, foot-stamping folk number from the Swedes who are in the time-slot just ahead of us. They've just come from a 2-week rehearsal camp - cringe. We were still scrounging tenors and struggling with the test pieces 10 days ago.

7.30 p.m. - the folksong prize is competed for tonight, and the choirs are expected to appear in national costume, so there we stand outside the castle giggling at each other in our brand new embroidered Swabian peasant shirts and nervously trying out a few rom-bom-boms and tra-la-las. We're ushered up to a hall full of chandeliers and plush furniture to wait; the first choirs are audible only as faint sounds in the distance. Most people pace the room like caged animals, but the sensible, or the merely exhausted, just flake out on the red velvet chairs till the time comes to go down.

Suddenly we're out on stage in a blaze of TV lights, enthusiastic crowd clapping, tiers of faces peering down from the upper galleries. The judges, four venerable gentlemen from Klagenfurt, Prague, Vienna and Munich, are just visible at their table half-way down the hall. There's a quick ping of the tuning fork for the first number, and we're off - rollicking, fairly rustic Swabian songs in glorious thick dialect, and after their dose of haunting, rather melancholy Scandinavian and Slavic tunes, the Austrian audience at least really seemed to enjoy it. We're now allowed to retire upstairs to one of the overcrowded galleries and hear the rest of the concert - and the standard is terrifyingly high. Shucks, what are we doing here?

10 p.m. - the results are read out. The Swedes have won - to nobody's surprise; Denmark second, Hungary third. But oh help, the list goes on - Cringe. We are almost jubilant to discover that we aren't quite last - we're 7th out of 8th, having just pipped the Italians by a few points. Off to the pub to agonise over the judges' remarks - but after the first few quarter-litres have been put away, morale is restored. Some people came home so late that they find the hotel locked up for the night and have to clamber up to their rooms over the picturesque geranium-laden balconies - great fun.

Saturday 8.45 a.m. - at this appalling hour we are tramping down the main street of Spittal in full evening rig to sing the two test pieces ("Vinea mea electa" by Francis Poulenc, "Zefiro torna" by Luca Marenzio) to the four judges and a small audience. Things are running behind time and we have a chance to overhear most of the others - incredible how differently each choir has interpreted the same pieces, and of course there are eight different pronunciations of the one Latin text! Most of them take the pieces much faster than we have - hope the judges don't hold that against us. The Hungarians are certainly outstanding - a really closely controlled, beautifully tight unity, like one instrument sounding. To our immense satisfaction a few of the choirs don't finish on pitch, and we did - terrible how the desire not to be last in this very classy choral company brings out our nastier tendencies.

12 noon - over lunch we hear the order for the major concert tonight - the judges want us to sing first. Is that good or bad? Much speculation. We decide on a 3-hour rehearsal in the afternoon.

8 p.m. - our big moment; back on stage in the castle, beaming into the TV cameras and crossing our fingers behind our backs that the final chord in our big number comes out clean. We're doing three songs by Hugo Distler; hellishly difficult, but beautiful if they work - and this time they do, pretty well. We retire to listen with increasingly sinking morale to the superb efforts of the others; we were good (for us), but we're not world class. Some of the really first-class choirs such as the Swedes and the Hungarians sing very weird modern pieces - others like the Italians and the Finns cling to good old Bach and Palestrina.

After a long, long wait at the end the judges come out and announce the results; first the detailed comments (for us, some bad and some surprisingly good) and then the prize winners. Budapest first, Copenhagen second, Uppsala third - as predicted, no surprises there. Then the also-rans; we begin to cross our fingers that we won't be the very last. I am writing down the places as they're read out; fourth Finland - fifth, Stuttgart!?!?! I drop my pencil - an astonished "WAS????" rises from the rest of the choir - but we soon recover and start preening ourselves. Fifth out of nine - and in that company! We race out to celebrate in the usual fashion, make life impossible for the other people in the hotel by shouting and drinking and singing all night (ghastly discordant but enthusiastic re-hashes of every singing competition piece) and in particular we develop a new system of counting which goes like this: "neun - acht - sieben - sechs - FUNF!!!!" (cheers, jubilation)... what a night. Needless to say we don't really feel like Sunday morning when it comes round, but it does, as usual.

Sunday 11 a.m. - we're singing in public again, but this time just for fun; the choirs are repeating their folksong programmes (in costume again) in the open at Millstadt, under the thousand-year-old linden tree in the courtyard of the monastery there. Afterwards we go down to the shore and about fifteen of us rent boats and row out into the middle of the lake - cluster together and, feeling inspired by the mountain scenery all around, sing yet again - the sound carries for miles across the water; passengers are hanging over the sides of passing ferries in astonishment. When we get to shore again a local landlord invites us all into his restaurant for free drinks!! - much enthusiasm, and of course more singing. What a day! But our repertoire, not to mention our renowned 5th-place voices, is getting rather thin by the time we've caught a bus back to Spittal (singing) and wandered back to the hotel (singing). The hoarseness and the hangovers and the galloping exhaustion really do create a sort of IV atmosphere!

8 p.m. - Back in the castle courtyard for the winners' concert - Uppsala, Copenhagen, and Budapest sealing their victory with a farewell performance. The Danes surprise everyone with a new work, a superbly sung modern piece which brings the house down - with that they would most certainly have won first prize, but perhaps they didn't dare venture it until now when the pressure's off.

Afterwards there is the first, last and only opportunity to mix with the other choirs at the huge dance. Until now there's been hardly any contact; apart from the stress of rehearsals and performance, the language barriers are just too much. With the best will in the world, how do you wish a Finn good luck, or congratulate a Hungarian? Smiling vaguely is all very well, but it's a little lacking in finer shades of meaning. But the dance breaks down a lot of barriers - the most unlikely couples get together; mad gyrating Danes and prim elderly Czechs, young Italians and stout Finns in formal evening dress. And every time there's a ladies' choice the beautiful Swedish men are rushed off their feet!

Monday, 10.30 a.m. - the trip home begins with the entire choir hanging out of the train windows singing a hoarse and hung-over but enthusiastic farewell to Spittal. A couple of the men who are brass players in another life have bought themselves lengths of green plastic hose on which they blow the most improbable notes; particularly bizarre when the free end of the hose is simultaneously whirled around the head, a sort of cross between tuba and bullroarer. The guitars come out too to fill in the eight hours till Stuttgart - it becomes apparent that the great composers of world history have shamefully neglected to cater for combined hosepipe, guitar and choir, so we are forced to improvise for ourselves. When energy flags, we replay the tape of our various Spittal concerts, which is surprisingly good, and admit with some satisfaction that we're really a bloody good choir after all - until the familiar hills of Stuttgart loom up at about six and the whole adventure is over at last.

Tuesday. Was there a Tuesday?? I seem to have missed it.

Susan Tonkin.
