

Martin Wesley-Smith
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To Russell Hilton-Smith
Performing Arts Board

July 21 1989

Dear Russell,

I've been asked to let you know my reactions to the 39th IV Choral Festival commission for my piece **Songs of Australia**:

I have nothing but praise for all the people involved with the commissioning and performance of this work. I had close contact during the composition period with Steven Schaeffer, and was thus able to sort out any potential problems immediately. I was given as much freedom as I wanted, any assistance that I required, and lots of encouragement. I was invited to attend rehearsals, and had many sessions with the conductor of the work, Ben MacPherson. The choir was fantastic: keen and enthusiastic, they poured tremendous energy into the work with the result that under the circumstances the performance was as good as it could possibly have been (reasons for the occasional foul-up can be attributed to a combination of factors, including [1] it is a big piece (35'), and in parts quite difficult; [2] although the choir was good, it was an amateur choir, with some members having had very little previous choral experience; and [3] rehearsal time was necessarily limited).

I have no complaints. Would that all commissions went as smoothly as this one did!

Yours sincerely,

MWS