

ENTERTAINMENT



MCSO VIOLINIST
ROSEMARY EYRES
STEVEN
MCNICHOLL

Refreshed return to stage

After five months back in the country, Rosemary Eyres is well settled in; so well settled in that she's about to perform in her second concert with Manukau City Symphony Orchestra. She was a violinist with the MCSO in the mid-1990s when an opportunity to work in Papua New Guinea arose.

"It was a very interesting experience working with the women in prison in PNG. Since more than 55 per cent of them were illiterate, teaching them to read and write became a big part of how I helped them," she says.

Although literacy took up a major chunk of her time in PNG, Eyres managed to keep in touch with her music by teaching expatriate Kiwi children the violin and piano.

When she moved on to China, where she has spent the last six years teaching English, Eyres was introduced to a traditional Chinese stringed instrument, the guzheng. "The music in China is based on do-re-me, using numbers one through to seven, and the bar lines

are placed at the appropriate places without using musical staves. I'm having to relearn how to read Western music again."

This weekend Eyres and the MCSO stage the *Eroica* concerts. "I'm very impressed by the standard of the orchestra. They have improved by leaps and bounds since I've been away. Having Uwe Grodd as conductor has really paid off."

The concerts, inspired by Beethoven's *Symphony No 3*, feature mezzosoprano Helen Medlyn singing Mahler's Ruckert-Lieder.

Eyres, who lives in Pakuranga, says the first time she heard a violin played she loved it instantly and wanted to learn to play. "When I was told it was one of the hardest musical instruments to master that basically sealed the deal."

■ MCSO *Eroica* concert, TelstraClear Pacific Events Centre, Dec 6, 7.30pm, Dec 7, 2.30pm. Tickets: ph (09) 379 7979 or see www.TicketDirect.co.nz

Summer songs on the lawn

Family comes first for homegrown opera star Geoff Sewell who'll tour here in the New Year, writes *Sharu Delilkan*

For Geoff Sewell's homecoming tour he has decided to offer eight high school choirs, from each city he visits, the opportunity to perform with him on stage. The founder of the opera quartet, Amici Forever, will also offer the chosen choirs a one-hour master-class that includes learning and performing with Sewell and some of the biggest opera stars of the West End, Broadway and Europe who make up Sewell's company, Incognito Artists.

Sewell's debut solo tour is one of the many doors that have opened since he left Amici Forever in 2006.

"At the time people thought I was giving up the music industry," he says. "What they didn't realise was that Amici was born off the back of the company, Incognito Artists. I basically was wearing so many different hats and playing with so many different balls — something had to give. It was a huge decision but I realised fame and fortune don't mean a jot if it affects your family."

Leaving Amici when it was enjoying international success came about because Sewell's daughter, Sienna, now five, was diagnosed with autism which meant she needed stability and a routine.

With Amici, Sewell sold more than two and a half million albums worldwide, was nominated for a Classical Brit award and performed sell-out concerts around the UK, Europe, the US and the Asia-Pacific region. The group has sung for the Queen, Princes Charles, Princes William and Harry, Nelson Mandela, several Prime Ministers and other artists.

Earlier this year, Sewell released his first solo album, *Believe*, which went straight to number two on the New Zealand charts, holding the spot for a couple of weeks, and stayed in the top five for six weeks.



FOR GEOFF SEWELL, THE SINGING NEVER STOPS

On the tour Sewell will sing one of the song's from the album, *Sienna's Song*, which was written by his wife, Simone.

"It's a difficult one to perform because it's so emotional. It's virtually impossible to sing it all the way through without breaking down. It's going to be doubly hard to keep it together, especially since both my daughters, Sienna and Elizabeth, will be in the audience."

■ Geoff Sewell and Incognito Artists' summer tour, Villa Maria Estate, 118 Montgomerie Rd, Mangere, Feb 28, 7.30pm. Tickets: ph 0800 842 538 or see www.ticketek.co.nz

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