

Lorraine Héту Manifold



I imagine going for a walk and counting 60 kangaroos! Lorraine Héту Manifold says the creatures are gorgeous and come within a few feet when she explores an Australian forest reserve near her home.

Born in Canada where her father was an orchestra conductor, Lorraine grew up surrounded by music. She took piano and violin lessons and sang in a choir. During college, while volunteering at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel, she realized that she wanted a musical career. She returned to Canada to study music at the University of Ottawa. Then she earned a Master's degree in the U.S. in vocal pedagogy—the science of teaching people how to sing. Lorraine now lives with her husband, Alan, in Melbourne, where she teaches music and conducts choirs of kids and adults with laughter and joy.

Q: What did you like best about singing in a choir as a kid?

A: I started singing in a choir when I was 11 years old, and it was just so much fun. The friendships I think that we made, just learning about singing. Just singing brings you joy, really . . .

Q: What are important qualities for successful musicians?

A: Hard-working . . . Determination . . . Humility is wonderful in the musical world, because so much of music nowadays is . . . about obtaining glory. It's all about their personality . . . versus really offering singing as a service to humanity . . . to touch their souls and to bring them happiness.



Left: Lorraine was eight years old when she started going to Bahá'í classes. Right: At age 11, she sang in a choir in Belgium. She's second row from bottom, sixth from left.

Q: What was the most challenging experience for you when you were a kid, and how did you handle it?

A: [My parents'] divorce was one of the most challenging things I ever went through, because I kind of lost both my parents at the same time. My father left, and then my mother kind of became depressed, so she was, you know, kind of out of business for a whole year. So basically, my sister and I were pretty much on our own, taking care of ourselves . . . I had to write an essay [for school] . . . I kept stalling and stalling . . . I think finally the school wrote to my mother . . . And then my mother helped me, and then I was happy . . . We survived. As everybody does.

Questions and
Answers with an
Inspirational Bahá'í



Left: Lorraine conducted the choir in the first Australian Sacred Music Festival in Sydney in 2015 at the Bahá'í House of Worship. Right: Lorraine and her husband, Alan

Q: Why did you choose to serve at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel?

A: I felt like my life was in two separate areas . . . my regular life . . . [and] my Bahá'í life . . . I didn't know how to bring them together . . . My mother [said], How about going to Haifa to serve? And I just really liked the idea . . . It was so wonderful, because it was like a spiritual university for me . . . I prayed a lot. I went to the shrines. I read. The first year, the only books I read were Bahá'í books . . . I just really grew in my understanding of the Bahá'í Faith.

Q: What do you like best about being a team leader?

A: I'm a bit of a clown sometimes, and so when I'm conducting a group, I get to be silly or make jokes. And if there's a mistake, we kind of make a joke about it, to laugh about it. At the same time, we work hard, and we try to improve. And everything is done in a spirit . . . of friendliness.

Q: What's your advice for kids who would like to be choir conductors?

A: It's important . . . to know about the singing voice, so . . . study singing . . . Study piano as well, because piano is excellent as a conductor, to be able to accompany the choir . . . or just play the notes so that they could hear them . . . Study conducting . . . It's amazing the change of sound you can get out of a choir by learning how to use your hands to get the sound you want.

A lot of people think conducting is just beating the pattern, you know, and just giving 1, 2, 3, 4. But if you put 10 conductors in front of the same choir and repeat the same phrase, you will get 10 different sounds out of the choir because of what the conductor is emulating consciously or unconsciously . . . Conducting is . . . a study. It's a science. It's an art.

Q: How does giving encouragement affect a choir?

A: The only way to get the choir to try to get to a higher level is always by encouragement and pointing out the good things they've done . . . Our little muscles in the vocal tract are just so miniscule and so sensitive to our emotions. If you're really sad or angry, you tighten up inside in the voice . . . Or if you're really happy and excited, then it opens up . . . The sound changes just by changing the muscles inside . . .

Q: What's your wish for *Brilliant Star's* readers?

A: Follow your dreams and work hard at them . . . Sometimes we dream about following our dreams . . . Or we don't dream, and we just go along . . . It helps you to become a happy person when you're actually doing . . . [what] you enjoy, *and* . . . what's going to bring you your income at the same time. It's the best combination.