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Uliana says course must be retained



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Sewell family in Highlands reunion



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Bundanoon braces for Highland Fling



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POWER OF SONG: Composer Andrew Ford conducted the combined community choir of the Southern Highlands as they performed *The Singing Quilt*. Photo by Roy Truscott

Cheers, tears for our song

By Claire Mitchell

MORE than 400 people struggled to hold back tears on Saturday during one of the shire's biggest and most successful community projects *The Singing Quilt*.
 Composed by Andrew Ford and performed by a mass choir of 106 local singers, the unique work moved audiences as it recounted the stories of those who call the Highlands home.
 "It was a really special occasion that touched everyone because it was about our home," organiser Jenny Kena said.

The afternoon concert sold out and many of those who were turned away sat outside the Bundanoon Memorial Hall and listened anyway, while others returned that evening for the almost sold out second concert.
 "For a community event to be so popular you have to turn people away, you know you're doing well," Ms Kena said.
 Ford interviewed 11 Highlands residents about their experiences and used their words as the lyrics for the piece. The music was provided by Canberra percussion ensemble DRUMatiX and seg-

ments of the interviews were weaved into the piece as a backing track.
 DRUMatiX and Canberra choir Can Belto also played their own sets during the concerts.
 "I can't tell you how it sounded," Ford said.
 "When you're out the front standing on a box, waving your arms around, trying to make sure everyone comes in at the right time and worrying what you're going to do about that person who came in a bar early, you don't really get the opportunity to just listen."
 But considering the work

moved people to tears and prompted the audience to demand five curtain calls, the crowd response spoke for him.
 Both concerts were recorded for CD but Ford said how they are distributed will depend on the quality. He also intends to send the score to choirs in other communities, to ensure the mammoth production gets to live beyond its one day of performances in Bundanoon.
 "The reason it was so emotional for us was that it was our story being sung, it was about people we knew, and it was just beautiful," Ms Kena said.

"But the Southern Highlands is only specifically mentioned once so the tales told could apply to other places and you could imagine the voices were describing any number of regions.
 "The story of a community, of Aboriginal people who's family owned the land, of people born there, of people arriving from overseas - it's not just the story of the Highlands, it's the story of Australia."
 ■ See pages 24, 25 and 26 for more photos from *The Singing Quilt*.

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