



## 2020 – unprecedented!

We began the year with such high hopes. Our program was planned and we were looking forward to hosting the visit of the Victorian Wends in May. Our newsletter was distributed early in March with details of our proposed program.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic started to threaten us in Australia. I consulted with Betty Huf, the President of the Victorian Wendish Heritage Society, and we decided that we had to cancel the proposed tours in May. Within a few days the Australian government had introduced strict restrictions on life in Australia. And the rest is history! All our planned events for the year were cancelled. You will have heard the term ‘unprecedented’ used many times this year.

Six months have now passed and restrictions have started to ease. Our committee has met recently and decided that we can now safely hold a meeting of our members. So here are the details:

Our **next meeting** will be held on **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 2 pm**. There will be two speakers: Dennis Jenke and Debra Burke. Dennis will tell the story of his Wendish ancestor (Jenke), and Debra will talk about her trip to Lower Lusatia last year. The venue is the Glynde Lutheran Homes hall at **22 Avenue Rd, Glynde**. All welcome. We will be observing the rules relating to gatherings. When you arrive, you will need to sign in. Social distancing will be observed.

We have decided to postpone the AGM to next year. If you have already paid the 2020 subscription, this will be credited to you for the year 2021.

The **Friends of Peters Hill Church** have also arranged their next meeting. It is on **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October** at Peters Hill Church. It begins with lunch at 12 noon, followed by a church service, followed by their Annual General Meeting. If you are attending the lunch, please note that there will be no shared food and no hot water will be supplied. Bring your own food and drink.

We hope that we will see many of you at these meetings.

Lyall Kupke  
President

### Committee

We have had some resignations recently from the Committee due to health and work reasons: Eric & Ruth Fiebig, and Matt Dutschke have resigned. We welcome any nominations of replacements by anyone who is interested. Please tell any committee member.

The current committee is:

President: Lyall Kupke	Vice-President: Brian Hennig
Secretary: Pauline Burger	Assistant Secretary: Ruth Walter
Treasurer: Leona Coleman	
Extra members: Marie Brazier, Barbara Day, Lorraine Kempf.	

## Sympathy

We express our sympathy to the family and friends of members, who died recently:

Richard Kruger

Elizabeth Rouch (in Victoria)

Bernie Eckert (former member)

## Rentsch Family Reunion and book

In our last newsletter we advertised the launch of the Rentsch Family book to be held on the first weekend in October 2020. Of course this was unable to be held.

However, the production of the book has gone ahead and it is expected to be published by the end of the year. Nevertheless a Reunion cannot be held at the moment.

To obtain a copy of the book, please follow the information on the order form below.

### ORDER FORM

#### “Rentsch Family in Australia – 1851 - 2020”.

Name (s) .....

Contact details, e.g. Address, email, mobile, phone.....

.....

**Cost: \$70 + \$12 postage** (if required)      No. of Books.      .....

**Total Cost**      .....

#### Payment Details:

Cheques payable to: “Rentsch Descendants”

Postal Address: Monica Rentsch, 170 Sharrocks Lane, Croxton East, Victoria. 3301.

EFT Payments to: Rentsch Descendants. BSB: 704942 A/C No: 154552

Please reference your name and email a copy of your form to: [rentschdescendants2020@gmail.com](mailto:rentschdescendants2020@gmail.com)

It is anticipated that the Rentsch Book will be published by December 2020.

Apart from ordering the book through the post, we hope restrictions will be eased by then and we can set up some distribution centres in Victoria.

In South Australia books will be available for collection from Ruth Walter.

For any queries, email [rentschdescendants2020@gmail.com](mailto:rentschdescendants2020@gmail.com)

Phone contacts: Monica Rentsch, 0438 735 239

Ruth Walter, 0435 211 606.

# Inspired by Wendish Composer, Korla Awgust Kocor

by Shelley A Spencer

I write this article while listening to the Oratorios of Wendish composer, Korla Awgust Kocor (1822-1904).

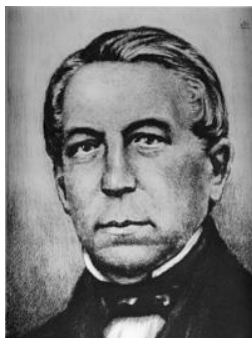
His deeply impassioned music with its expressive lyrical melodies inspires me greatly as a composer, so much so, that I composed a sacred work for brass band called "A Wendish Prayer" and submitted it to an international composing competition and won 3<sup>rd</sup> prize.

My work was a reflection on the prayer said by the Wends before they left Germany for Australia: "God grant that we, protected from all danger, reach the shores of our hope."

My composition was premiered in Brisbane in 2019 under famous Scottish band conductor, Russell Gray. (I was also awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for my technical test-piece for band "Saul"; 1<sup>st</sup> prize went to a music professor in Melbourne.)

In January, the Sorb newspaper *Serbske Nowiny* published a feature story on my compositions and interest in Sorb music. The article relates the story of my first composition, a tone-poem for brass band called "Diaspora", which depicts, in music, the Wendish emigration to Australia and the Barossa Valley, written after my composing professor, Dr Anthony Ritchie, (New Zealand's most prolific classical composer) suggested I look to my Wendish heritage to find my compositional voice.

As I researched Wendish music, I discovered Kocor, who formed a collaboration with poet Handrij Zejler (1804-1872), and set many of his poems to music. Together, they endeavoured to promote Sorb culture through music and poetry, particularly around the time of the great Revolution in 1848 (after which many of our ancestors came to Australia).



Handrij Zejler

Zejler wrote the words to the Sorb National Anthem, "Beautiful Lusatia", and Kocor set it to music, choosing, very unusually, a minor key, creating a very slow, melancholic and impassioned anthem. The Anthem was then first performed at the first Sorb singing festival in 1845 in Bautzen, a tradition started by Kocor himself to promote the Sorb culture.



Korla Awgust Kocor

Kocor then composed the first of his Oratorios, "The Sorb Wedding (Sorbische Hochzeit)" in 1847, and then followed a cycle of Oratorios on the seasons, based on 4 of Zejler's epic poems. "Spring" is probably the most beloved Oratorio, even today, with many lyrical, passionate melodies, my favourite being "Sweet Youth" (Ślódka młodość).

Kocor also composed many lively folksongs from the poems of Zejler, including my favourite, "W jadnej Ruce Hanku".

I'm aware of the sacrifice our Wendish ancestors made to start a new life in Australia, and the words of their Anthem remind me not to squander the opportunities afforded me:

"Oh, may from thy womb appear,  
People that the world holds dear,  
Worthy of eternal memory!"

[Editor: Shelley is a member of our Wend/Sorb Society of SA. Congratulations go to her for her successful composition.

A CD of the Spring oratorio by Kocor is available (see page 4).

Other CDs of Kocor music are available from the Domowina ([www.domowina-verlag.de](http://www.domowina-verlag.de)).]

# For Sale

## Books from Germany - in English:

- *The Sorbs of Germany* - \$10, plus \$3 postage
- *Upper Lusatia* - \$15, plus \$3 postage
- *Bautzen* - \$12, plus \$3 postage
- Korall & Schwikart, *Journey through the Spree Forest* (in English with lovely pictures) - \$35, plus \$10 postage
- *Five Centuries: The Wends and the Reformation* - \$40, plus \$10 postage

## Also the best books about the Wends in Australia:

- Burger, *The Coming of the Wends* - \$12, plus \$3 postage
- Nielsen, *In Search of a Home* (second edition, hard cover) - \$40, plus \$10 postage

## CDs:

- *From Wendish to German to English (A Journey into Wendish Culture, History & Language)*
- This marvellous CD has been produced by the Texas Wendish Heritage Society. It contains English narration, German and Wendish singing by a German choir performing at Texas in 2002, talks by noted Wendish (Sorbian) historians Dr George Nielsen and Gertrud Mahling (Trudla Malinkowa). George Nielsen talks about Wendish migration to Australia. *A real treat!*  
Cost = \$30, plus \$3 postage

## New CDs:

Cost \$10 each, plus \$3 postage

- Kocor, *Naleco* (Spring). [Majestic oratorio, with memorable, joyful and folk-like themes]
- Zahraj nam rejiku (*Sorbische Folklore mit Sprjewjan*) [Lively folk music, instrumental and vocal work]

**NEW - Flags** (small, on a stick) \$5, plus \$3 postage

## Calendars:

I will take orders for Calendars for 2021 – with scenes from Lusatia.

These are really beautiful, and they make great Christmas presents. You must order *straight away*, so that we can get them from Germany before the end of the year.

Cost = \$20, plus \$10 postage

**Contact** Ruth Walter, 43 Clifton St, Prospect SA 5082, (tel. 08 8269 7168, mobile 0435 211 606),  
email: [ruth.walter43@gmail.com](mailto:ruth.walter43@gmail.com)

Please make cheques or money orders to Wend Sorb Society of South Australia,  
or email Ruth for Direct Debit (EFT) details.

*We welcome any contributions to this newsletter. Please send them to the Editor at the address below.*

This newsletter was published by the **Wend/Sorb Society of South Australia Inc.**

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