

by Vida de Voss • photograph Contributed

# A FATHER'S *Legacy*

**PARENTS DO NOT ONLY PASS ON THEIR DNA; THEY ALSO PASS ON THEIR LOVE AND THEIR VISION.**

It is 1970. The man in bed is sick once again. This time they fear the end may be near. "Promise me", he demands. He is asking her for the impossible. Should he fall away there were simply too many mouths to feed. She would need to come home to work. But Evy makes the promise. "Besides, you cannot not do it; I had already announced it in *Die Taak*. As the editor of this community newspaper, Richard Alcock was free to write about a future he might never see.

Evy had completed two years of her teacher's diploma when her father asked her to specialise in music with the focus on singing, piano and classroom music. He gave her a deposit for a piano, with the news announced in *Die Taak* and the words "even if it is the last thing you do for me" ringing in her mind, Evy had her course set before her. She had to complete her studies. When she returned home for

the June holidays, her father had a confession to make, "You don't know, but I phoned your lecturers. They say you are the best student in class." His jovialness soon turned serious when he began talking to her about choir training.

In February 1972 Richard Alcock passed away. But only after he had mentored Evy in choir training. Founder of the "Houmoed" choir and the Windhoek Congregational Church choir, Richard also played the piano. Music ran in his family, for most of his siblings sang in the former choir and their father was a violin and organ player, and a seasoned choir conductor. Richard's South African bride, Maud, also had a beautiful voice. But, he forbade her from his choirs as her voice would not be tamed to blend in with choral singing. Her singing was kept to life around the house, especially in the early morning hours when, to the sleeping children's distress, their mother would open windows – be it summer or winter, and would sing heartily. She loved classical songs and ballades. Together, this couple passed on



**RICHARD AND MAUD ON THEIR WEDDING DAY**

music to all ten their children. With the limited time they had during 1970 and 1972, Richard not only trained Evy, but often required of her to stand in for him when he was too unwell.

Richard did not know, but all his children would emerge as choristers. While Evy was the only one who received piano lessons, all the children emerged with singing talent. The Alcock siblings were known to sing at various gatherings, especially weddings. Without any formal training, Benjamin, himself a singer, learned to play the piano and guitar on which he often accompanied his eight sisters. Except for Evy and Ben, the only other sibling to play an

instrument is the youngest brother, Larry. He taught himself to play the piano and the guitar.

Evy and Ben went on to found the Agape Choir that consisted of family and friends. This choir died a slow death as the siblings gradually became occupied with their own families. By 2005, Evy went back to each of the siblings and thus was born the Maranatha Singers, consisting of siblings, in-laws and friends. This choir would eventually grow to become a community choir and beyond that a choir performing nationally and internationally.

To date, Maranatha Singers has had three South African tours as well as tours



MARANATHA SINGERS

EVY GEORGE

to Germany, Switzerland and Hungary. In 2009 the Namibian Directorate of Arts commissioned Maranatha Singers to represent Namibia at the second Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, North Africa, where 8000 artists from the African continent displayed their various cultures through music. Through her exposure as assistant director of the Namibian National Symphonic Choir and work-

one big rehearsal, another dress rehearsal and then perform! Imagine the goose bumps. You grew up in sandy Rehoboth and today you are one voice amongst 2000 others whose lives may be as different to yours as snow is from dust. Despite the dreamlike quality of your experience, your pinch confirms your presence where you are thrilling a crowd of foreigners whom you share

lem. Despite having become nearly completely deaf in her one ear, choir members know she catches a false note with the quickness of a chameleon's tongue.

The Alcocks are truly an incredibly musical bunch. A survey of Richard's children, his grandchildren and great grandchildren show that three children play three different kinds of instruments; 13 of 29 grandchildren play

standing achievements that should be highlighted: one of the grandchildren was accompanied by the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra as solo pianist at the tender age of 10 and another has excelled in his Eisteddfod piano performances. This grandson, Learoy, was one of 3 musicians that were chosen for a performance in Seattle, Washington State. While music has been the fo-

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ing with Alexander Fokkens, internationally renowned conductor from South Africa, Evy and many of the Maranatha Singers became familiar with oratorios. Oratorios are large-scale classical compositions for orchestra and voices, typically on a sacred theme. When the opportunity thus arose, Maranatha Singers was capable of taking part in the 2014 mass-scale musical extravaganza that took place in Budapest, Hungary where about 2000 participants from around the world would have

the language of music with. In June 2018 Maranatha Singers is off to an oratorio in Paris where they will perform Händel's Messiah.

While natural ability enabled Evy and her siblings to give expression to their father's dream, it was commitment and countless hours of rehearsals that saw the materialising of Richard's dream. It not only meant giving up on much-prized Sunday afternoon naps, for Evy in particular; it meant overcoming a hearing prob-

seven instruments, of which a few have done exams and two performed internationally as solo musicians; 11 grandchildren have sung in choirs including the South African Youth Choir, World Youth Choir and University of Stellenbosch Choir and eight of these 11 have specifically sung in the Namibia National Youth Choir. Evy's oldest daughter has founded her own choir with her musician and singer husband. Two of the great-grandchildren are learning the violin. Two out-

cus, it should be added that there are numerous dancers amongst all three generations of Richard's offspring from advanced ballet dancers, tap dancers and liturgical dancers as well as dance teachers and one choreographer. There are also visual artists and an award-winning drama teacher and an award-winning drama student.

This family clearly had no shortage of talent. Would this story have been different had Richard Alcock not passed on the baton? ♀