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**Australian Story – Monday May 14th,  
8pm, ABC and ABC iview**

## **THE CHOIRMASTER**

Introduced by film critic David Stratton.

A charismatic choirmaster takes a group of women from central Australia to Germany on an unlikely and remarkable road trip.

*“When he suggests things I just think he’s crazy sometimes,”* Rob Borgas, friend.

*“He can teach a song in five minutes, it’s quite astounding,”* Barbara Stuart, wife.

When Morris Stuart arrived in Alice Springs he was at a loose end.



The retired pastor and choirmaster had travelled reluctantly to the outback at the urging of his artist wife.

Not one to stay idle, he walked down the central mall and approached locals to see if they wanted to join a choir. Within a year Morris moulded the 50 amateur singers into a top-notch choir.

Word soon spread to the Aboriginal community and particularly to groups of women who liked to sing. They wanted Morris to turn them into a proper choir too.

But then a remarkable thing happened.

They sang their own songs for Morris, German hymns they'd been taught by their elders, the musical legacy of German missionaries from the 19<sup>th</sup> century who travelled to the red centre.

*"I was astonished when I first heard them singing those songs. It was almost like a central desert secret,"* said Morris when he heard their repertoire.

Then came a crazy idea - what if they took the songs back to the place from where they had come?

So began an unlikely and inspiring trip from the deserts of central Australia to the cathedrals of Germany, a trip that changed the lives of each and every one of them.

Producer Ben Cheshire

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