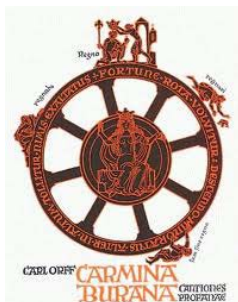


Special Collector's First Edition
Digitally signed by Ludwig van Beethoven!



2pm Sunday 31 October

The Great Hall
Newcastle University

Adult \$30 Concession \$25 Student \$15

With the Newcastle Wind
Orchestra

Conductor: Ian Cook
Baritone: Gary Rowley
Tenor: Paul McMahon
Soprano: Susan Carson
Organist: Peter Guy

Enquiries/Tickets 4954 8781
Lathams Kotara
Music Solutions Warners Bay
or on-line at
www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com

Cacophony?



Cacophony? You can't call a newsletter about our choir Cacophony!
Why not?

It's just not right! You do know what cacophony means?

Yes. It means discordant sound.

And you think that's how our choir sounds?

Sometimes at rehearsal yes, as a matter of fact. But that's not what I mean.

What do you mean?

You know the sound an orchestra makes when it's tuning up? To me that's cacophony. It's like a prelude to something great. Or like my three children. They all learned the keyboard, then one learned the flute, the next the violin, and the third the trumpet, and practice time in our house was certainly cacophonous. But good things came out of it.

So what's that got to do with a newsletter?

I want our newsletter to be a lot of mixed notes between concerts, notes that are individually interesting rather than – well, anodyne. A cacophony of words and ideas about music mainly.

You're stretching it a bit!

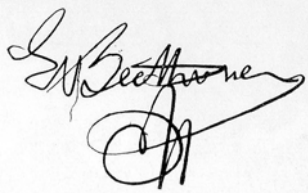
So what. You come up with a better name.

Well... Nothing comes to mind immediately.

Tell you what we'll do. Let the readers have their say. If they like it or hate it. If they have a better idea. Then we'll decide.

OK. If they want a say, they can email their preferred title to
newsletter@newcastleuniversitychoir.com

In the meantime – like it or not – it's Cacophony!



Keep your eye on him; one day he will make the world talk of him. – *Mozart on hearing the 17-year old Beethoven.*

"The entire works of Chopin present a motley surface of ranting hyperbole and excruciating cacophony."
– *Music World, London, October 28 1841*

Carmina Burana

Cantiones profane

Medieval Music



The panel on the ABC's *Gruen Transfer* rated the beer ad as one of the best Australian TV commercials ever. You know the one, it features the tune of *O Fortuna* from Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. It's a very exciting piece of music. Compelling, and both the ad and the music invoke images of the Middle Ages.

I recall that in the 1960s a musical adaptation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* ran for more than two years in Australian theatres. I'd love to see it again – it was delightfully bawdy romp through an aspect of medieval life.

At about the same time I purchased a copy of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* to read on an overseas trip. When I returned to Australia customs tried to seize the book on the grounds of its supposed obscenity – the Dymocks label saved my copy from incineration.

They were interesting times!

Fifty or sixty years before these well-known works, a group who called themselves 'goliards' wrote a group of songs which were collected in an anthology by the monks of the Benedictine abbey of Benediktbeuern in Bavaria. The 250 or so songs came to light in 1803, when the monastery was dissolved, and in 1847 Johann Andreas Schmeller published them as *Carmina Burana*, which means 'songs of Beuren'.

The goliards are thought to have been 'vagantes' (vagrant students, vagabond monks and minor clerics), said to be 'better known for their rioting, gambling and intemperance than for their scholarship'.

These were difficult times. The population of Europe had grown to about 60 million people. Feudalism was breaking down, industry and trade had expanded greatly. But then it all seemed to come to a halt.

In 1347 the Black Death reached Europe, killing about a quarter of the population. The Hundred Year War broke out in 1337, disrupting trade and exhausting the economies of England and France. Most of Europe was affected by civil war, as peasants revolted against their feudal lords, and town workers against the rich merchants who kept them poor and powerless. Severe droughts and floods caused widespread death, disease and famine.

What do young people do in such difficult circumstances? Their minds turn lightly to love, of course!

Carl Orff selected 24 of the Buren songs for his work, but none of the melodies. His intention was to produce a 'scenic cantata' in which words, music and movement worked together as a theatrical production. However, it is as a choral work that it has survived and is usually presented today.

The songs reflect a fairly simple medieval view of life, mingling Christian piety with pagan hedonism, celebrating life, and especially love. Orff's music emphasises the chorus, the orchestral accompaniment is simple and powerful – creating an effect which Grove's dictionary says 'produces music of powerful pagan sensuality and direct physical excitement.'

In our next issue I'll tell you a bit more about this amazing work, and the various people involved in our production.

Meanwhile – put the date in your diary now – in ink! You won't want to miss it!



Carmina Burana consists of 13th century lyrics set to 20th century music. We have little idea what these songs would have sounded like in their original form. They come to us from the Middle Ages, centuries before the Renaissance brought us the music of the Baroque and subsequent eras.

The art of musical notation was in its infancy, polyphony developed only in the 9th century. Plainchant was all the go – unaccompanied music sung in unison.

The violin didn't appear until about 1550, and not in its modern form until the late 18th century. The first piano was made by Bartolomeo Cristofori in Florence about 1700. Theobald Boehm developed the modern flute in the 1830s. About 1650 Jean Hoterre developed the oboe. Adolphe Sax invented the saxophone in the 1840s.

But our modern instruments have ancestors. Listed below are some of them. Our challenge – match the ancestor with the modern instrument it preceded.

Vielle	Shawm
Hydraulos	Sheng
Hautbois	Sackbut
Rebec	Kit
Claviorganum	Celesta
Chalumeau	

Can you match them up? Email your answer to the address listed below – first correct answer will win a CD of *Carmina Burana*.

Cacophony is edited by Peter McCloy on behalf of the Newcastle University Choir, who do not necessarily share the views of the editor. To contribute or to communicate, email us at newsletter@newcastleuniversitychoir.com For more about Newcastle University Choir, go to www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com