

[A] "terribly cacophonous thing" – Giacomo Puccini on Richard Strauss's *Salome*.



For  
your diary  
2012



Sunday April 1  
St John Passion  
J S Bach  
Conducted by Peter Brock

Sunday June 24  
with  
Waratah Girls Choir  
and Cathedral Choir



Sunday October 24  
Jazz Concert  
with Terrence Koo

Sunday December 9  
Christmas Concert



"Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything."

– Plato

Who me?  
Sing in a choir?



Paul Keating is reputed to have boasted of being able to listen to Mahler and read a book at the same time. I can't do that. Either I miss the music, or I lose the plot of the book, or both.

I'm writing this the day after the choir started rehearsing Bach's *St John Passion*, which you'll be able to hear on Palm Sunday.

When our program is announced, I like to buy a CD to familiarize myself with what I'm about to sing. Sometimes I like what I hear, sometimes I'm not very impressed. But the rehearsals begin, and everything changes. Suddenly the music is alive, it's my music. I hear things I've never heard before, feel things I've never felt before.

What a great privilege it is to belong to a choir!

Last year I rehearsed with the choir a fairly difficult piece. It was hard work, but there's a real sense of achievement when it all starts to come together. Then I found that I would not be able to sing in the final performance. People asked me if I was disappointed – all that work for nothing.

No way! I'm glad it happened that way, because now I know for certain that it's the voyage that matters, not arriving at the destination. I was able to sit in the audience for most of the concert before leaving early. I got to enjoy the best of both worlds.

I first joined a choir in 2005. I couldn't read music, and I must admit that I did my share of 'goldfishing' – miming the difficult bits. I certainly would never have passed an audition. The Sydney Morning Herald reviewed our performance: "... those who braved the cold were rewarded by a performance handsomely crafted, beautifully prepared and brilliantly performed."

I was hooked. The only problem I had was that I couldn't be in the audience to hear me – I still have that regret from time to time.

Which leads me to this conclusion: The best way to enjoy music, by a country mile, is to perform it.

Listening to a recording whilst reading a book is not for me – not if I'm serious about the music. Giving the music my undivided attention is a bit better – especially if it's a work that I have sung.

I've always thought that reading a score whilst listening to a performance is somewhat pretentious, so it's something I only ever do in the privacy of my own home. Maybe some day I'll be brave enough to do it in public.

Listening to a live performance is great – once again, enormously enhanced if I've sung it.

But... rehearsing something for weeks, hearing it come together, then the actual performance, and

experiencing the audience reaction – that's a real joy!

So – join a choir. I still can't read music, but I can follow it. It's exhilarating. I would still probably fail a serious audition, but now I'm told (occasionally) that I have quite a good voice.

They say that seventy is the new fifty, so I'm rapidly approaching middle age. My only regret is that I didn't start doing this sooner.

If you'd like to join us, we rehearse every Monday night from 7pm to 9:30, usually in the Great Hall at the University. For more information go to our website: [www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com](http://www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com) - or just turn up to a rehearsal. You'll be most welcome!



## Did you miss our Christmas concert?

Traditionally there can be a sameness about the choral celebration of Christmas. A nice sameness – it's a time to remember traditions – and joining together to sing popular carols, or perhaps to participate in enjoying Handel's *Messiah*, is part of our culture.

In 2011, the Choir decided to bring you the gift of some less well-known Christmas music, and what an enjoyable journey it was!

It wasn't recorded – copyright laws make it difficult – but here are some performances of some of the pieces we sang, on YouTube. Just cut and paste the links to your browser and enjoy.

*Twelve Days of Christmas* is traditional, but not when performed like this, with a brass band and lyrics that are a bit different: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y53BcoLNxIY>

Benjamin Britten's *A Shepherd's Carol* is quite an unusual carol. Richard Bannan, Paul Bevan, Rose Saunders and Jennifer Barnes joined the Choir in our performance. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fs5eFm2-0mE>

Richard Bannan was the soloist when we sang Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRtBVYYMW4>

Just the thing for an Aussie Christmas: Gustav Holst's *In the Bleak Midwinter*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs9-Sxf9j4>

Waxing Lyrical and Richard Bannan performed this beautiful piece by Peter Cornelius - *The Three Kings*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2dNKv48WJQ>

Chilcott's arrangement of *The Gift*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TO12wAa3dH0>

Waxing Lyrical presented *A Maiden Most Gentle*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UuvAHjQYKk>

Enjoy!