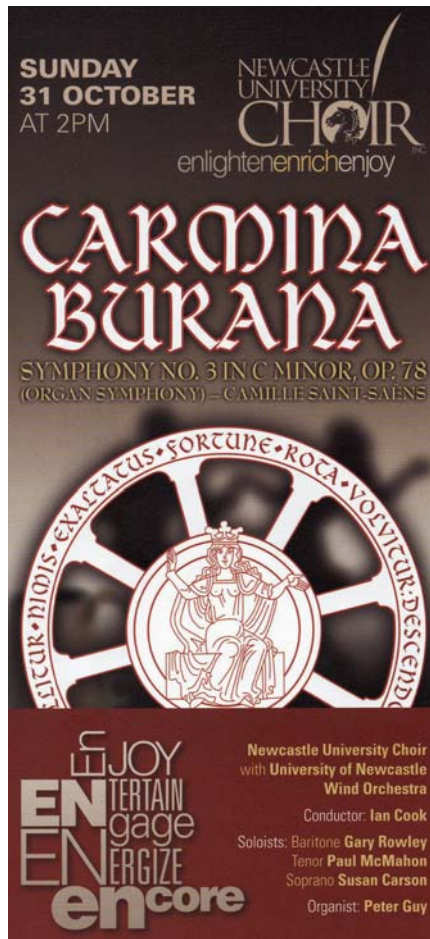


Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is a hopeless failure... the possibilities of cacophony seem to be exhausted.
London Times, March 8, 1897.



Asked to explain the incredible success of *Carmina Burana*, conductor Daniel Harding replied: "There's certainly something mysterious about it... I think it may have to do with the ritual character of the piece and with its primeval qualities... [its] powerful rhythmic forces... appeal to the listener on what may be an instinctive level. The popularity may have a lot to do with *Carmina* being simply enormous fun to play and to sing. It is hugely popular with amateur choirs and orchestras everywhere and is a very rewarding piece to perform."

Saint-Saëns' Organ Symphony

Camille Saint-Saëns' Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, in the words of Paul Serotsky, "is an elemental experience, a mind-bogglingly spectacular work that has a reputation for leaving audiences (and performers, for that matter) breathless in its wake."

This exciting work, originally scored for organ and two pianos, will be performed by organist Peter Guy as a prelude to our

performance of *Carmina Burana*. Peter will be well known to most of us – he is the youngest person to be appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.

Camille Saint-Saëns was born in Paris in 1835. Three years later he could read and write and was starting to show some promise as a composer. By the age of ten he had memorised all of Beethoven's piano sonatas, which he performed for adoring Paris audiences.

The Paris Conservatoire accepted him as an organ student at the age of 13. His '*Ode a Sainte Cecile*' was awarded the

first prize of the Société Sainte-Cécile in 1852. His first full symphony was performed in 1853, and he went on to compose over three hundred works, including 13 operas. In

later years he was the first major composer to write music specifically for the cinema in *L'assassinat du Duc de Guise*, in 1908. Many years after his death in 1921, part of his Symphony No. 3 was used in the score of the 1995 film *Babe*.



He was organist at the fashionable Madeleine Church in Paris for twenty years, and it is probably his virtuosity as an organist that first established his reputation. Franz Liszt declared him to be "the world's greatest organist". It's not surprising that this third symphony is one of his most loved works.

Saint-Saëns himself said "I gave everything to it I was able to give. What I have here accomplished, I will never achieve again."

Above: The organ in the Great hall. More information on page 2.

Introducing our soloists



Sue Carson

Rhythmically unpredictable, its musical content veering from the devotional to the sensual and savage... Carmina Burana technically is a deceitful, incredibly difficult work

Quite a challenge for both the choir and our soloists.

Paul McMahon is one of Australia's leading tenors. He will have the challenge of singing the part of a swan roasting over a slow fire - *Olim lacus colueram* – "Once I lived on lakes, Once I was beautiful when I was a swan. Miserable me! Now black and roasting fiercely!" Not every tenor gets to be the main course!

Bass baritone Gary Rowley gets to be a bit – well – pompous. In the words of my program notes by Michael Moore: "*Dies, nox et omnia* is a rather affected and foppish love song complete with coloratura passages set for the baritone in a mixture of Latin and French, a parody of the chivalrous style." But it gets worse when he continues with his attempted seduction in *Circa mea pectora*.

"In my breast are many sighs for your beauty which distress me sorely," he sings, but the young ladies of the chorus are not convinced, and of course they are right! He lets the cat out of the bag with "may all the gods grant what I have in mind: that I might loose the chains of her virginity." Both men and women mock him, as if to say "It's not working, you'll have to do better than that! Niet, niet, niet, niet!"

According to Christopher Lawrence : "Opera is a dangerous place for sopranos... High voices spend half the night tasting the pleasures of love only

to find themselves dead by the end of the show."

Fortunately the Italians didn't invent opera for a century or two after the frolics at Buren, so there is no need for the soprano to die in Carmina Burana.

Susan Carson is our soprano soloist. Two of the soprano solos are rather wonderful pieces, both very simple, but beautiful and challenging.

In trutina – "In my hesitating feelings, wanton love and chastity oppose each other on the scales. But I choose what I see, and bend my neck to the yoke: such a sweet yoke to which I submit". A beautiful melody, as our soprano considers the possibilities of love.

Dulcissime – "Sweetest one, I give myself to you wholly." She finally surrenders to her passion in an impossibly high coloratura line that reaches D above high C.

Those who heard Susan sing Bernstein's *Glitter and be Gay* at our last concert will have no doubt of Susan's ability to meet this challenge with flying colours!

The organ in the Great Hall is an Ahlborn-Galanti AG3200 62-stop digital organ featuring a 26-channel powered speaker system donated by Friends of Newcastle University.

The organ itself was donated by David Pitt. "I thought I would like to build on the support (of the broader Newcastle community) by offering my skills and experience as a personal donation," David said. "The completion of the Newcastle University Great Hall in 1974 was a memorable occasion. In many ways, it heralded a coming-of-age for the performing arts in Newcastle and demonstrated encouraging support of the broader community."

David is a Novocastrian who, during the late 1960s and early 70s, was active as an organist giving concerts, teaching, and playing at charitable fundraisers, weddings and special conventions. In 1976, he opened a music store in Gosford with the help of Newcastle music identity Vince Millington, which eventually expanded to three stores on the Central Coast with a music school of 600 students. In 1987, Mr Pitts became interested in a new type of classical organ developed in Italy, a digital organ that was to become the acclaimed Ahlborn-Galanti Pipeless Pipe Organ, and he sold his businesses to focus on being their Australian distributor.

The value of the new organ installation is estimated to be \$320 000. The cost of a new pipe organ with a similar specification has been estimated at more than \$1.6 million.

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