

[Of Liszt's *Hungaria*]... Let the conductor... give instructions to each player to produce every discordant sound that is in the range of his particular instrument, and let the cacophony continue for half an hour under the title of *Lunacy* or *Moonstruck*. – Era, London, February 25, 1882.

Putting Christmas back into Christmas



The only surviving manuscript of *Adam lay ybounden*
- in the British Library.

I'm glad we're not doing Handel's *Messiah* this Christmas. Not because everybody else is doing it. Not because it's an Easter oratorio, not Christmas at all. I'm glad because it's given me the opportunity to discover some quite beautiful Christmas music that I've never heard before.

Music that ranges from the 15th century to the 21st, featuring works by some well known composers, and by some not so well known.

If Michael Hussey is Mr Cricket, John Rutter is Mr Christmas, and of course we'll be singing two of his works. Benjamin Britten is well known; we'll be singing *There is no Rose*, one of the pieces with 15th century origins.

Karl Jenkins is fairly well known for his *Armed Man*, but he also wrote a Christmas *Lullaby*, with words by his wife, Carol Barratt.

Peter Warlock is the pseudonym of Philip Heseltine, known not only for his music but also for his somewhat outrageous lifestyle. Under his own name Heseltine made a significant contribution to the scholarship of early music. We'll sing his version of *Adam Lay Ybounded*, which dates from the early 15th century.

According to his biographer, Philip loathed Eton, "with its hearty adolescent bawling of Victorian hymns in an all-male college chapel". We promise to do better than that!

Peter Sculthorpe has always been inspired by Australia in his compositions. Reviewer Roger Covell speaks of "Sculthorpe's persistence with the principle of a single big idea: a deliberate, repeatedly emphasised identification of his music with Australian landscape, feeling and legend." As the *Guardian* reported: "Sculthorpe is more than a major Australian composer, he's a major composer".

His *The Birthday of thy King* was written in 1988 for the choir of King's College, Cambridge. This is a challenging piece!

"My music is about bringing people together - jazz musicians and church choirs; top class professional musicians and enthusiastic community music-makers; brass bands and opera singers; children's choirs and wonderful organ sounds," says Will Todd, another British composer. We'll present two of his Christmas works – *Every Stone Shall Cry* and *The Christ Child*.

Todd is greatly influenced by jazz, which is evident in his most famous composition, *Mass in Blue*, often known as the Jazz Mass.

Kenneth Leighton was one of the most distinguished of British post-war composers; over 100 compositions are published, his work is frequently performed and broadcast both in Britain and abroad. *O Leave Your Sheep* is his adaptation of a traditional Flemish tune.

Of course you will be invited to join us in some traditional favourites.

Soprano Susan Carson will join us, as will the Lakeside Brass, pianist Ann O'Hearn and organist Peter Guy.

Christmas Rewrapped! Sunday 9th December in the Great Hall, 2pm.

Tickets from Sticktickets, McLeans, Music Solutions, or www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com.

A Celebration Concert



Artarmon Primary School Choir 1952

It's always a pleasure to sing in a big choir in a special venue, an opportunity some members of our choir took up a few weeks ago. The occasion was the 20th Anniversary Celebration Concert, which featured the combined choirs from primary and secondary schools with adult choristers from choirs around the state. I didn't count, but I believe there were about 700 voices in all. The venue was the Sydney Town Hall.

The first half featured the choirs of various primary schools. In the second half we all combined to sing *Zadok the Priest* and selections from *West Side Story* and *Carmina Burana*.

The concert culminated in the presentation of a cheque for \$40,000 to the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

Musical Director Mal Hewitt writes : It has been a unique part of the Celebration Concert experience that primary and secondary kids get to sing with adults in great choral repertoire. A sad symptom of the current state of choral singing in primary and secondary schools is the belief that kids will only sing pop music. That, of course, is utter rubbish! We proved otherwise on Sunday – a teacher from Armidale described her students singing *Carmina Burana* all the way back along George St to their Youth Hostel near Central.

Choral concerts for school children have a long history. Perhaps the first was on December 7th, 1939, in aid of Polish refugees. The concert featured a combined flute band made up of some 300 performers under the direction of Victor McMahan. The leader of this band was Master Donald Burrows – a name I'm sure familiar to jazz fans. School music was the starting point for many fine musicians, and it is sad to see music disappearing from school curricula.

I was born a few years after this first concert, but Victor McMahan was still around when I made my

(fleeting) musical debut in the flute band and the choir of Artarmon Primary School. As you can see by the choir photo, music was an important activity, and we performed regularly at various eisteddfods and other festivals.

In 1992, the Department disbanded the Public Schools' Concert Committee and in the following year, the first of the Annual Celebration Concerts was organised and presented by a newly established *Celebration Concert Committee* (which included many of the past members of the Public Schools' Concert Committee) as part of the Sydney Opera House's twentieth birthday celebrations. This marked the start of a new era of quality concerts with 1,500 past and present school choral and instrumental performers joining together in celebration of the achievements of more than 500,000 student performers involved in the previous series that lasted more than fifty years.

Now the committee has reluctantly decided it is time to 'call it a day', after raising more than \$200,000 for children's charities, the two main beneficiaries being Stewart House Emporium and The Children's Hospital at Westmead, and providing wide-ranging quality music performance opportunities and experiences for more than twenty thousand students in that time.

What a pity to see government funding excluding such important activities. Buildings are very nice, but so is what goes on inside them, and our children are capable of performances of great quality when given the chance.

It does emphasise the importance of community based choirs like the Newcastle University Choirs, which give our community the opportunity to become involved at many levels – from primary school to international performances.



In the old days, it was not called the Holiday Season; the Christians called it 'Christmas' and went to church; the Jews called it 'Hanukkah' and went to synagogue; the atheists went to parties and drank. People passing each other on the street would say 'Merry Christmas!' or 'Happy Hanukkah!' or (to the atheists) 'Look out for the wall!'

- Dave Barry, "Christmas Shopping:
A Survivor's Guide"

Oh, for the good old days when people would stop Christmas shopping when they ran out of money.

- Author Unknown