

A melange of interesting notes and the promise of things to come

In England, for some weeks before Christmas, children sing Carols in front of the doors of a town or village, hoping to be rewarded. Unfortunately they usually know only one or two carol verses and these they sing very badly.

- The Oxford Junior Companion to Music.

Christmas...

...and All That Jazz

Christmas Rewrapped

A CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATION WITH
NEWCASTLE UNI CHOIR
AND FRIENDS

Conductor **Christopher Allan**

Soprano **Susan Carson** | Lakeside Brass

Accompanists **Ann O'Hearn** - piano, **Peter Guy** - organ

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UNIVERSITY
CHOIR

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Tickets - Adults **\$25** Concession **\$20** Students **\$15**

Tickets available at **MacLean's Booksellers Hamilton**, **Music Solutions**
Warners Bay, through **Stickytickets**, on our website or by phoning **4954 8781**

Would you like to join the choir? Details on the website
www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com



Most composers include instructions for how their piece is to be sung – usually called the tempo marking - and it helps if you speak Italian. We'll be singing *O Leave Your Sheep* 'com moto e sempre ritmico', which means 'with motion and always rhythmical'.

Sometimes the instructions are in German or French, just to keep us on our toes. John Rutter, being very English, asks us to sing *King Jesus Hath a Garden* 'brightly', but reverts to Italian when he wants us to sing 'dolce' (sweetly), or 'legato' (smoothly). Even 'rall poco a poco' when he wants us to slow down a bit, gradually.

Peter Gritton's tempo marking for *Follow That Star* is 'Slightly stompy', which is not in my glossary of musical terminology. But it's fun to sing, and I know exactly what he means. He's one of the contemporary British composers whose works we'll include in this concert.

Gritton has sung with many vocal groups and has toured the world with the close harmony group The Light Blues. He has composed two musicals, provided backing tracks for Sting, written arrangements for The King's Singers and

directed choral workshops around England and in Europe. He is rapidly becoming known as a leading figure in choral publications.

In 2005 the BBC commissioned him to write a football cantata. *Pitch Perfect* involved 1000 London school children, the BBC Singers and BBC Concert Orchestra. Peter conducted the premiere himself at the Wembley Conference Centre.

In his early career, Karl Jenkins (*Lullaby*) was a jazz musician, playing saxophone, keyboards and oboe. He co-founded the jazz-rock group Nucleus, which won first prize at the Montreux Jazz festival in 1970. In 1973 he participated in a live-in-the-studio performance of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells for the BBC.

As I mentioned in the previous issue, Will Todd has been heavily influenced by jazz – he's an accomplished jazz pianist and performs regularly with his own trio.

The first time I heard Susan Carson sing, it was with the Dungeon Big Band. She's a great jazz singer, as well as being able to woo us with classical performances – she has sung three of the most challenging soprano solos with the choir – *In trutina* and *Dulcissime* from *Carmina Burana*, and *Glitter and be gay* from *Candide*. It's great to have her joining us for Christmas!

We've rewrapped Christmas in contemporary music that swings, without compromising the Christmas spirit and tradition.

Of course we've included some old favourites, to encourage you and your family to sing along! So bring the family, and celebrate the joy of Christmas.

Christmas does tend to bring out the worst in some people. The *Oxford Companion to Music* grumps: "During the later nineteenth century the singing of carols in England, which had long become a matter of door-to-door visitation, tended to be degraded into a petty beggary: in every district little children in groups paraded from door-step to door-step, from the end of November onwards, building up a Christmas fund by the extortion of what may very fairly be called 'hush money'".

Sir Thomas Beecham, well known for being a grumpy old man, opined that "Brass bands are all very well in their place – outdoors and several miles away"

Obviously Sir Thomas never heard Lakeside Brass! These local musicians impressed us last year, and they'll do it again this Christmas.

One piece in particular was so popular with the choir and with the audience that we're doing it

again this year – *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Not the traditional version, but an adaptation for brass band and choir that features the music of Scheidt, Purcell (or was it Clarke?), Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Rossini, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Gershwin, and Copland. That's value!

Speaking of the twelve days of Christmas, Time magazine calculated the costs of all those maids a-milking and lords a-leaping – 364 items in all - at \$101,120 .

From darkness -

The music of Terezín

Last week on ABC Radio, Graham Abbott discussed the works of five Jewish composers who were imprisoned in the Terezín ghetto during World War II.

Recently I wrote about Terezín, because our good friends the Waratah Girls Choir performed *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* at our June concert. The work celebrates the children of Terezín, and the Waratah Girls performed this work in Terezín on December 1 this year.

Abbott writes "The idea of 'the power of music' has been around since the ancient Greeks. The ability of music to move us, to heal us, to 'soothe the savage breast', has been much written about.

"But in the Czech ghetto of Terezín, the power of music was demonstrated on a whole new level...

"The vibrant artistic life of Terezín bears testimony not only to the amazing people held there but also to the way in which music (and the other arts) made life bearable in a place where hunger and disease saw 16,000 people die in one year alone...

"I want to discuss music by five composers who were imprisoned in Terezín. It's not only a story of loss and 'what might have been', but also a story of irrepressible talent and of our need for music to enrich our lives."

That, I think, is an important message at Christmas time. It's a time to find the joy in our lives, and how joining together in making music can create that joy.

So come and join us - sing along, tap your feet, bring the family.

From all of us in the Newcastle University Choir, a big thank you for your support, and our very best wishes for the Christmas season and the coming New Year.