

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

If one would say that this music [Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite*] is bad, cacophonous, that no person with a differentiated auditory organ can listen to it...

- Leonid Sabaneyev, Moscow, December 25, 1916 – written before the performance was cancelled.

## Christmas in April?



Conducted by Christopher Allan

Featuring

Anna Sandstrom – soprano

Glenn McKenzie - counter tenor

Paul McMahon – tenor

Christopher Richardson – bass

With Christ Church Camerata

Sunday 21 April 2013

At 2.00pm

Great Hall Newcastle University

## A challenge... Can Newcastle do it?

Emma Ayres, on her morning show on ABC Classic FM, spoke about the formation of the Newcastle Youth Orchestra. Perhaps I'm putting words into her mouth, but I think that she presented a challenge to the people of Newcastle. Is the city losing the vibrant artistic energy it once had?

The Newcastle Youth Orchestra program aims to inspire emerging young performers through live orchestral music. It wants to establish a strong and vibrant critical mass of orchestral activity in Newcastle. It promises to motivate emerging young performers through a diverse and challenging repertoire of orchestral music and provide high-quality orchestral training in a stimulating, safe and rewarding environment.

To do so it needs money – \$20,000 for the basics, and about \$180,000 for its first year's operations. Their appeal resulted in pledges of just over \$5,000.

To put this into some sort of perspective, the match fees paid to an average first grade rugby league player for two matches would cover the basics, and his fee for the season would cover the costs of the NYO for a year.

Don't get me wrong – I enjoy football – and sports in general. I just think that a youth orchestra is worth at least one footballer. I'm absolutely positive that the orchestra will make a contribution to the district that at least equals that of a sporting team.

Funding for the arts generally is shrinking, whether it be for the formation of a new orchestra, for our choir, for art schools and galleries - and so on.

The Hunter has a proud record of sporting prowess, and this is well recognised and funded by both government and private enterprise. The

## VARIETY PUPPET CONCERT



By Bruce Rowland

Also featuring **Waxing Lyrical**

Adamstown Uniting Church

Corner Glebe & Brunker Rds

**7.30pm Saturday 4 May 2013**

Hunter Academy of Sport has been going for 25 years, and is now the largest regional academy in Australia, with more than 550 young sports people in 28 different programs. Isn't it reasonable to expect that we have an equal number of talented young artists, in multiple disciplines, who will bring equal credit to the Hunter if given appropriate encouragement?

A recent survey rated this city fairly high in the rankings of liveability. Surely a city as prosperous as Newcastle can raise enough money to establish a youth orchestra?

Take a look at [www.nyo.com.au/](http://www.nyo.com.au/) - the NYO website. They deserve your support.

As, by the way, do we!

With your indulgence, I'll digress for a moment. I want to tell you about Haydn and his puppet operas.

In September 1773 the Empress Maria Theresia visited Eszterhaza Palace, the preferred residence of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. He didn't really like Vienna, so he built his summer palace at the location of his seasonal hunting lodge. It had 126 rooms and two separate theatres - one for opera, one for marionettes.

He employed Franz Joseph Haydn, who could compose for both theatres. Esterhazy loved marionettes, and the Empress attended a performance of Haydn's puppet opera "Philemon and Baucis".

The earliest known puppet operas were Venetian burlesques staged at the Teatro S Moisè from 1679. There were puppet theatres in Paris and London during the 18th century, but interest declined, although the late 19th century brought a resurgence in several countries.

The Salzburg Marionette Theatre is celebrating its 100th birthday this year. It employs 12 puppeteers, trained in a wide variety of trades and professions. Their publicity tells us "The puppeteers' training, which takes place exclusively in the theatre itself, demands just as much time and perseverance as learning to play a musical instrument. All this effort pays off when you have the pleasure to actually see one of their performances, and you feel as if you are suddenly part of the magic."

I have DVDs of two Mozart operas – *Così fan tutte* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Particularly interesting is one of the special features, showing operations behind the scenes. To be able to see the skill of the puppeteers is amazing.

Which brings us, at last, back home to Newcastle.



*Do you recognise anyone in this photo?*

In the 1960s, Peter Scriven and his Tintookies were a household name in Australia. In a year-long tour of Australia they played to more than 180,000 people. This led to the formation in 1965 of the Marionette Theatre of Australia. In 1966-67 the company, with two and a half tonnes of equipment, toured India, Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia.

Journalist Ron Saw said of the tour that "... it would win seven or eight hundred thousand times more [hearts] than some pot-stricken politician peering at a water buffalo." He was referring to the objections of those who thought that the money could have been better spent on "fact-finding" tours by politicians.

One of the puppeteers was Bruce Rowland, pictured above with other members of the company. See if you can pick him!

Bruce went on to form the Newcastle Marionette Theatre in 1972. During the 1970s and 80s a repertoire of ten productions was developed with around 150 marionettes. Many of the productions were performed at the Young Peoples Theatre in Hamilton, and the marionettes have since been exhibited at the Sydney Opera House, Maitland City Art Gallery and Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.

Some of those marionettes will be brought back to life when Bruce presents "Variety Concert" in a fund raising concert for the choir on May 4 this year. This is a unique opportunity to enjoy the artistry of a master puppeteer and puppet maker, showcasing the talents of numerous puppet musicians, from concert pianist to raunchy nightclub singer.

More details in a future issue. Put the date in your diary now. Audience numbers will be limited, and this concert will sell out.