

Cacophony

Issue 29 May 2013

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



with

The music of...

Frederik Chopin

Paul Nero

Ruggero Leoncavallo

Robert Schumann

Giacomo Puccini

Guiseppe Verdi

Performances by...

Herman Sherman

Daniel Klompen

Pagliacci

Pierre Tortellini

Madama Butterfly

The Duke

Swinging Suzie

The vocal talents of...

Waxing Lyrical

Christopher Allan

Rosemary Saunders

Jennifer Barnes

Paul Bevan

featuring the artistry of
Master Puppeteer Bruce Rowland

7.30pm Saturday May 4 at Adamstown Uniting Church

Tickets \$25. For credit card sales call Anne Stephens on 4954 8781- other sales John Mills on 4952 3608

Seating is strictly limited, so advance ticket purchase is essential.

Please note: Parental guidance recommended - not for young children.



Three of our featured artists:
Pagliacci, Pierre Tortellini and the Duke (Rigoletto)

Wikipedia lists 21 different types of puppet! Our concert features marionettes, which are string puppets suspended and controlled from above by the puppeteer.

As you can see, Pierre Tortellini plays the cello. You'll also see Herman Sherman on piano, Daniel Klompen on violin, with vocal performances by Pagliacci, Madama Butterfly, the Duke and Swinging Suzie.

Needless to say, directing the activities of such a diverse group of talented artistes requires great skill. Master Puppeteer Bruce Rowland created and manages this group.

As mentioned in our previous issue, Bruce learned his art with the Marionette Theatre of Australia, with Peter Scriven and his *Tintookies*. Subsequently Bruce formed the Newcastle Marionette Theatre, with a repertoire of ten productions featuring some 150 marionettes.

This concert is a unique opportunity to experience the return to the stage of some of these wonderful characters.

Cacophony spoke to some of the performers, and asked about their planned contribution to the concert.

"It's not easy, being a jazz violinist," says Daniel Klompen, "and it's even harder when you're a marionette. You have to be able to swing.

"I'm sick of people telling me that the violin is suitable only for Bach or barn dances. It's a legitimate jazz instrument, and Paul Nero was a brilliant jazz violinist. He wrote *Hot Canary*,

which is what I'll be playing. There's more to life than classical music you know."

Swinging Suzie agrees. "I'll treat you right," she says - a reference to her hit single *Treat Him Right*, which she'll perform for us.

"I wanna tell you a story every girl oughta know" says Suzie. "Madama Butterfly could take a lesson from me."

"Sempre un amabile, leggiadro viso," commented The Duke. When asked to explain he would only say "*La donna e mobile* - you listen, you learn. I may be a marionette, but I don't have a wooden heart."

"Did you know that Enrico Caruso was the first recording artist to sell more than a million copies of a recording - his 1907 performance of *Vesti La Giubba*?" Pagliacci was looking more than usually happy to be singing what many believe to be the most stirring aria in opera. "I'll put on my costume, and I'll powder my face, because the people pay to be here, and they want to laugh. It's a bit tragic for me, though. Inside, I'll be crying."

When George Sand first heard Chopin's *Polonaise in A*, she wrote to him "'The inspiration! The strength! The vigour! There is no doubt that such a spirit must be present in the French Revolution. From now on this polonaise should be a symbol, a symbol of heroicism!'"

"It's one of Chopin's best pieces, and it requires exceptional skill and great virtuosity, quite difficult for a puppet," says pianist Herman Sherman. "But I promise I'll do it justice."

"The pieces in folk style absolutely beguiled me with their freshness and originality," wrote Schumann's wife Clara. Cellist Pierre Tortellini loves them too. "They may be short, but they're quite substantial," he says. "I like their humor, boldness, and audacity."

"I'm an Australian marionette, singing an aria in Italian, set in Japan," Madama Butterfly told us. "It's my small contribution to multiculturalism. I'm looking forward to this concert so much! It will indeed be a fine day! You'd be a dummy to miss this."

Swinging Suzie offered a final word of advice. "Leave the little ones at home," she said. "I'm er... a little uninhibited!"

Also featuring...

Waxing Lyrical



*Waxing Lyrical -
Christopher Allan, Rosemary Saunders, Paul Bevan,
Jennifer Barnes*

Vocal quartet Waxing Lyrical will be well known to our audience. Christopher Allan is our Musical Director, following Jennifer Barnes. All have featured as guest soloists with the choir, and their talents will certainly enhance your enjoyment of our variety concert.

The group can be counted on to present a wide range of styles and genres which are fresh and relaxed in nature. They perform music from the mediaeval to the present day, incorporating classical jazz and popular works.

Baritone Christopher Allan is not only our

Musical Director, but is also Head of Vocal Studies at the University of Newcastle Conservatorium. He has performed or recorded with Opera Australia, Sydney Philharmonia, Pinchgut Opera, Cantillation and Opera Hunter.

Tenor Paul Bevan is a well-known radio presenter for ABC1233 and has performed with Newcastle Gilbert and Sullivan and Cantillation, while maintaining a busy media career.

Soprano Jennifer Barnes runs a busy music studio and has performed with Opera Australia, State Opera of South Australia, Opera Queensland, Sydney Philharmonia and Opera Hunter.

Mezzo Rose Saunders has performed with The Song Company, Cantillation, Sydney Symphony Orchestra Chorus. She is currently exercising her barista talents at her newly acquired café in Annandale, and, we understand, is getting off a plane after an overseas gig and rushing back to Newcastle just for this concert.

Proceeds from the concert will support the ongoing activities of the choir, and we are most appreciative of the continuing support of these talented artists.

A few more words about puppets

Puppetry is an ancient art. Aristotle, who lived from 384 BC – 322 BC, wrote “*The movements of animals may be compared with those of automatic puppets, which are set going on the occasion of a tiny movement; the levers are released, and strike the twisted strings against one another.*”

Puppetry probably originated in India, almost a thousand years B.C., where stick puppets were used to play out Indian epics like the Maha-Bharata and the Bala-Ramayana.

The art flourishes today – in our society largely on television. In fact American ventriloquist Paul Winchell observes “Children are so used to seeing puppets that when they see a real ventriloquist they don’t understand it.”

Perhaps the best known puppet show is *The Muppets*, although founder of the show Jim Henson says “When I was a kid, I never saw a puppet show. I never played with puppets or had any interest in them.”

Italy is probably the birthplace of the marionette. These early puppets were used to describe

morality plays to a largely illiterate audience. Behaviour that would be considered lewd or inappropriate if undertaken by human actors was acceptable in marionettes. For some this may bring to mind the satirical movie *Team America : World Police*.

In Cambodia, *Sbaek* is shadow-puppet theatre using figures made from buffalo and cow skin, and is a traditional art form. In Siem Reap I saw a wonderful performance of *Sbaek Touch* (literally “small leather”), which was originally performed from village to village, telling ancient and contemporary folktales with comic characters.

In Vietnam, the Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre in Hanoi is well worth a visit. Performances reflect a tradition that dates back to the 10th century. The puppets are built out of wood and the shows are performed in a waist-deep pool. With fireworks!

This is your opportunity to enjoy a concert that is both ancient and modern, international and totally local, illustrating some of the wonderful talent we have in the Hunter.