

"There is rhythm in chaos—even within the cacophony of the mind." - Shaun M. Thomas



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## Santa swings...

A guide to our Christmas concert – something for everyone

***"It's true, Christmas can feel like a lot of work, particularly for mothers. But when you look back on all the Christmases in your life, you'll find you've created family traditions and lasting memories. Those memories, good and bad, are really what help to keep a family together over the long haul."***

**- Caroline Kennedy**

Whatever Christmas means for you, we know that you'll find our Christmas concert will be memorable. From the traditional to the modern, from Beethoven to Brubeck, we've chosen a program that all the family will enjoy.

Every number has a story, and we've gathered a few of them for you.

### For the traditionalist :

Did you know that *Jingle Bells* was originally intended to be sung for American Thanksgiving? It was copyrighted as *One Horse Open Sleigh* on September 16, 1857.

It is also the first song to be broadcast from space, on December 16, 1965. The crew of Gemini 6 reported seeing a red-suited astronaut in lunar orbit and serenaded mission control, with bells and a harmonica they smuggled aboard their spacecraft.

*We Wish You a Merry Christmas* dates from the sixteenth century, when the wealthy gave gifts such as figgy puddings to carolers.

### For climatologists :

The best selling song of all time – *White Christmas* – may lead you to dream of snow while we swelter in the Australian heat. Guinness estimates that Bing Crosby's version sold 50 million copies – well ahead of *Candles in the Wind* 1997, Elton John's tribute to Princess Diana, second highest seller with 33 million copies. Bing

***I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was six. Mother took me to see him in a department store and he asked for my autograph.*** - Shirley Temple

and Christmas come in third, with his version of *Silent Night* selling 30 million copies.

Another classic, *The Christmas Song*, was written in a heatwave in 1944 by Mel Tormé and Bob Wells. "I saw a spiral pad on [Bob's] piano with four lines written in pencil", Tormé recalls. "They started, 'Chestnuts roasting..., Jack Frost nipping..., Yuletide carols..., Folks dressed up like Eskimos.' Bob didn't think he was writing a song lyric. He said he thought if he could immerse himself in winter he could cool off."

Tormé's version of the song was never a best seller, but he owned the publishing rights, and referred to it as his "annuity". You may know it better as *Chestnuts Roasting by an Open Fire*.

***Christmas in L.A. is weird. There's no snow.  
It's not even cold.  
- Ellie Goulding***

#### For the lonely:

For many, Christmas can be a lonely time.



*Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* manages to be happy and sad at the same time. Hugh Martin wrote it for the 1943 movie *Meet me in St*

*Louis*, which tells the story of a family devastated by the news that they are about to move to New York, leaving all their old friends behind. Esther (Judy Garland) tries to console her young sister Tootie (Margaret O'Brien) with this song – you can view this memorable scene on YouTube – use the link in the accompanying email.

The original lyrics were a bit too sad for Judy and the film's director – her future husband – Vincente Minelli.

O'Brien reminisces : "... about a week before we were to shoot the scene where Judy sings it to me, she looked at the lyrics and said, 'Don't you think these are awfully dark? I'm going to go to Hugh Martin and see if he can lighten it up a little.'"

Martin initially balked at changing the words. "Judy was saying, 'If I sing that to that sweet little Margaret O'Brien, they'll think I'm a monster!' And she was quite right, but it took me a long time to get over my pride. Finally, Tom Drake [the young male lead], who was a friend, convinced me. He said, 'You stupid son of a b—! You're gonna foul up your life if you don't write another verse of that song!'"

Martin relented, but still the song didn't become a standard – until Frank Sinatra persuaded Martin to 'jolly it up' a little – he wanted to include it in his Christmas album *A Jolly Christmas*. The resulting version became a hit, but

you still hear different versions. Linda Rondstat sings both versions of the key line – a reviewer notes that this "manic-depressive compromise between the muddled and the ministerial might just capture Christmas best of all".

*Don't Get Around Much Anymore* was written by Bob Russell and recorded in 1947 by Duke Ellington with vocals by Al Hibbler – regarded as the standard – although Ella Fitzgerald's version in 1956 is highly regarded.

It's the story of a jilted lover who prefers to stay home alone rather than return to the dances and nightspots which remind him of happier times.

#### For the Irish :

Robbie Williams made a hit with *Angels*, which was written by Dublin-born singer-songwriter Ray Heffernan. He says "Irish people are warm and genuinely hospitable and we seem to be going back to the old custom of sitting around a table drinking tea and telling stories – and we are certainly renowned for our storytelling!"

Drinking tea? Well – we're sure that you'll enjoy our version of this song.

#### For Kiwis :

*The Earthy Choir* was written by New Zealand born Christopher Norton.



In *Limelight* Magazine, Richard Tognetti points out that the Gamelan originated about 1000BC in the court music of Cambodia, which is some 1600 years before Gregorian chant gave birth to the musical tradition that flourishes today.

Norton's song poses an interesting question : how to make the heaven's ring with the news of Jesus's birth when so many instruments 'haven't been invented yet'? There's a danger that our stamping and shouting and clapping 'will terrify the sheep – but we musn't, because the baby in the manger is fast asleep. Sssh!'

#### For Mozart lovers :

The Terence Koo Trio will perform *Blue Rondo*. In the late 1950s Dave Brubeck recorded his signature album, *Take Five*, in which he experimented with different time signatures. *Blue Rondo a la Turk* is principally in 9/8 time, and is in typical rondo form, in which the theme recurs throughout. Brubeck based it on a traditional Turkish rhythm (*karsilama*) – hence the original name.





Mozart's *Rondo Alia Turca* is the third movement of his Sonata 11 for piano K. 331, and is often regarded as the origin of the theme. It's not. Brubeck says "I should've just called it *Blue Rondo*, because the title just seems to confuse people."

#### For Beethoven lovers :



*Joyful, Joyful* is based on the final movement of Beethoven's final symphony – Symphony No 9 – often known as *Ode to Joy*. This was a poem written by his friend Friedrich Schiller which inspired him. Beethoven was almost totally deaf when he composed this masterpiece. When it was first performed in Vienna in 1824, the soloists had to turn Beethoven around so that he could observe the thunderous applause.

Our version has been adapted by Roger Emerson and arranged by Mervyn Warren, and featured in the movie *Sister Act 2*.

***Let's be naughty and save Santa the trip.***  
- Gary Allan

#### For those who sometimes feel like giving up :

When Haven Gillespie showed Fred Coots the lyrics to *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*, Coots wrote the music in a 15 minute ride on the New York subway. No publisher would touch it – it was a 'kiddie' song and therefore uncommercial. Coots showed it to Eddie Cantor, who also turned it down. But Cantor's wife Ida liked it, and so in 1932 he included it in his radio show and it became an instant hit. Thanks Ida!



In 1957, some may recall, Pat Boone revived another Coots song – *Love Letters in the Sand*, written in 1931.

#### For lovers of Calypso :



In 1956 Jester Hairston wrote a calypso song he called *He Pone and Chocolate Tea* for a friend's birthday. It was never recorded. When he was requested to compose a new Christmas song for

Schumann's Hollywood Choir he wrote new lyrics for the tune, changing the name to *Mary's Boy Child*. Harry Belafonte heard it, liked it, and asked if he could include it in his album *An Evening with Harry Belafonte*. An edited version was released as a single and reached #1 in the UK in 1957.

#### For stompers :

I'm not certain what a stomper is – a Brisbane group called *The Swamp Stompers* play dirty slide guitar blues with heavy grooves, and promise to make you shake, make you move!

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.

***I think it's important not to grow up too fast. I'm 26 now, and I still can't wait for Christmas Day. The inner seven-year-old isn't buried too deeply in me.***

**Laura Haddock**

#### For grown-ups

Unfortunately, we all tend to grow up, so here's a *Grown-Up Christmas List*, written by David Foster and Linda Thompson-Jenner.



Nigella Lawson says that "On the whole, I prefer Christmas as an adult than I did as a child." This one's for you, Nigella.

***The worst gift that I ever gave a girl was a suitcase for Christmas. As in, 'I can't think of anything to give you, but here's a new suitcase.' Afterward, I was like, 'What were you thinking, idiot?'***

**Jensen Ackles**

#### For Jazz afficiandos :

The Terence Koo Trio and Lisa Kinna have some special treats in store for you!

*Moanin'* is a Bobby Timmons composition that led to the soul jazz style of the 50s and early 60s. It was the greatest hit of Art Blakey's career – he was the first musician to record it.

*Eye of the Tiger* was the title track of the movie *Rocky III*, commissioned by Sylvester Stallone, who wanted a song about a fighter. That's what it's about – making your dreams come true and overcoming adversity to get what you want in life.

So there you are! Surely something for everyone!

Sunday December 15 at 2pm in the Great Hall. A great way to start the Christmas season swinging!

***Did you know that Christmas Day is absolutely the best day to fly? It is. No crowded airports and crowded planes. I always flew to Australia. That's what Christmas was for me - a plane journey to the next tournament.***

**- Monica Seles**



*All That Jazz - Marilyn Miller\**

\* Thanks to Marilyn Miller for permission to reproduce this painting, which I spotted at an art exhibition in Wollombi recently. It captures the spirit of jazz in the 1920s and 30s. Thanks also to Trevor Burndred for preparing the image for printing.



This is the cover of our soon-to-be-released CD, recorded in Christ Church Cathedral and featuring more than an hour of the choir's best performances.

Christopher Allan writes "This recording represents the concert repertoire undertaken by the Choir over many years. The Hunter Region's premiere choral organisation is known for performances of the major classical repertoire and, in recent years, for its collaboration with alternative music makers in genres such as Jazz, Rock and Roll, Swing and Gospel. The Choir has also traditionally sung Christmas music, a genre that is beloved by both the choristers and their audiences. The music contained on the CD is therefore a culmination of many years of work and experience."

Hopefully the CD will be available at our Christmas concert, and on our website. We'll provide more details in our next issue.



"I know what I really want for Christmas.

"I want my childhood back.

"Nobody is going to give me that. I might give at least the memory of it to myself if I try. I know it doesn't make sense, but since when is Christmas about sense, anyway? It is about a child, of long ago and far away, and it is about the child of now. In you and me. Waiting behind the door of our hearts for something wonderful to happen. A child who is impractical, unrealistic, simpleminded and terribly vulnerable to joy."

- Robert Fulghum

**To all our readers  
A Very Merry Christmas  
and  
A New Year full of music**

*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](mailto:newsletter@newcastleuniversitychoir.com)

For more about Newcastle University Choir, go to [www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com](http://www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com)