

*Serendipity*  
the choir

# Christmas Cheer

Music Director - Kerith Fowles



**Saturday 24 November, 4pm**  
*Bowral Uniting Church Hall*

**Friday 30 November, 6pm**  
**Saturday 1 December, 4pm**  
*Bundanoon Memorial Hall*



*"Like the fading of a beautiful sustained note, or that magical silence following a fabulous performance, a loss as significant as Richard Gill cannot be adequately explained or understood," concludes the obituary from the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra, which Richard founded.*

Serendipity:the choir was greatly honoured when Richard (a long-time friend and mentor of our music director) accepted the position of patron of our ensemble. Sadly Richard, whose life was a powerhouse of energy and constant work, never managed to visit us as a conductor or even listener. But he was always generous in his support and encouragement of our humble country community choir.

His contribution to Australia as musician, teacher, advocate and inspirer is irreplaceable. We honour his life and memory, and dedicate this concert series to him.

VALE RICHARD GILL.

## THE PROGRAM

Christmas Is Coming	Warner/arr. Wilberg
Silent Night	Mohr/Anglea (Gruber)
Fum Fum Fum	Catalonian carol, arr. Wilberg/Fowles
No Room	words & music Gray
from "A Ceremony of Carols"	Britten
(i) Balulalow	Wedderburn (James, John, Robert) <i>Solo:</i> Michele Nobbs, Fiona Petterson
(ii) This Little Babe	Southwell
Lully, Lulla, Lullay	trad. carol / Stopford
Throw Open Your Shutters (a festive madrigal)	Bernon
Gaudete!	Piae Cantiones 1582, arr. Engelhardt

### ~ INTERVAL WITH REFRESHMENTS ~

Beata Es Virgo Maria	Gabrieli
Let the Heaven Light Shine on Me	trad. spiritual, arr. Hogan
Patapan Fantasia	Monnoye, arr. Snyder
The Little Road to Bethlehem	M. Rose/Head
Hanerot Halalu	trad. Hanukkah song, arr. Mayo
Ding-a Ding-a Ding	words & music Gilpin
Sleigh Bells	Ukrainian folksong, arr. Rentz
We Wish You a Merry Christmas	trad., arr. Johnson

Balulalow

(rendered in modern English)

Oh my dear heart, young Jesus sweet, prepare your cradle in my spirit.  
And I shall rock you to my heart and nevermore from you depart.  
But I shall praise you forever with sweet songs of your glory.  
The knees of my heart I shall bow and sing the true lullaby.

This Little Babe

(rendered in modern English)

This little Babe, so few days old, is come to destroy Satan's fold;  
All hell quakes at his presence, though he himself shakes with cold;  
In this weak unarmed guise he will surprise the gates of hell.  
With tears he fights and wins the field, his naked breast stands for a shield;  
His battering shot are a baby's cries, his arrows the looks of weeping eyes,  
His martial ensigns are cold and need, and feeble flesh his warrior's steed.  
His camp is pitched in a stall, his defences just a broken wall;  
The crib is his trench, haystalks his stakes; his soldiers are shepherds;  
And thus, as sure his foe to wound, the angels' trumpets sound the alarm.  
My soul, join Christ in the fight, stay by the tents that he has pitched.  
Within his crib is surest protection, this little Babe will be your guard.  
If you will foil your foes with joy, then flee not from this heavenly Boy.

Gaudete!

(sung in Latin)

Rejoice, rejoice! Christ is born of the Virgin Mary: rejoice!  
It is now the time of grace that we have desired;  
Let us devoutly return songs of rejoicing.  
God has become man, and nature marvels;  
The world has been renewed by Christ who is King.  
Therefore let our song now resound in purification,  
Let it give praises to the Lord: salvation to our King.

Beata Es Virgo Maria

(sung in Latin)

Blessed are you, O Virgin Mary, who gave birth to God,  
who believed that all has been fulfilled in you that was said of you.  
Behold, you have been raised up above the choirs of angels.  
O pray for us now to the Lord your God.

Welcome to *Serendipity*: the choir's 2018 Christmas programme ... and if the abundance of potential presents in shops still hasn't convinced you that the festive season is around the corner, then this concert will! By way of reminder, we open with "Christmas Is Coming", that traditional English ditty, though in Mack Wilberg's arrangement the simple rhyme becomes increasingly frenetic, much like the run to Christmas itself. If a change of pace is needed, then Michael Head's "The Little Road To Bethlehem" is sure to provide some peace on earth. In this arrangement, Head's simple yet elegant piano accompaniment with its gentle bell chimes is reworked for full choir, and the effect is still as magical as the original vocal solo.

Bells feature prominently in any Christmas piece, and in some pieces that's just about it. In "Sleigh Bells", we are reminded of a European winter and the jingling of bells on horses' harnesses as we dash through the snow. In "Ding-a Ding-a Ding", the crescendoing clamour of the carillon is imitated by *Serendipity*: the choir's gentlemen – but maybe you guessed that might happen from the title!

Of course, Christmas is the time for tradition and traditional carols. But sometimes even much-loved carols need a little metaphorical polish and a fresh coat of paint. Five in today's concert fall into this category. "Gaudete" is one of the many carols from *Piae Cantiones* (a collection dating from 1582). Using its original melodic line, Michael Engelhardt develops the carol into an increasingly complex work of appropriate exuberance. Similarly, "Patapan Fantasia" takes a traditional Burgundian melody and weaves a percussive and rhythmically gymnastic vocal accompaniment around the tune. Taking a text from the 1591 *Pageant of Shearmen and Tailors* that told the Christmas story, Philip W) Stopford's "Lully, Lulla, Lullay" is a lullaby whose gentle rocking belies the gruesome fate that awaited the Holy Innocents. Only a short trip down the road from Burgundy takes us to Catalonia, where Wilberg puts a new spin on "Fum, Fum, Fum!" (While we are unsure exactly what "Fum" means, it is obviously a jolly sentiment!) Finally, what does one do with a text and tune that are so closely entwined as to be inseparable? One answer is to hint musically at the original while establishing a new melody to those well-loved words.

And so it is with Peter Anglea's "Silent Night", a new take on a much-loved carol whose gentle reference to Franz Gruber's original tune cleverly spans the gap between new and old.

This concert doesn't omit the totally new either, and Ruth Morris Gray's "No Room, No Room" contrasts the disparity – or possibly good fortune! – between the spaces at inn and stable for Jesus' birth, because the stable needed to fit animals, shepherds, kings and the odd angel or two! Madrigals have been traditional choral works for many centuries, and "Throw Open Your Shutters!" is a truly festive, yuletide madrigal that features – you may have guessed it – more bells!

In keeping with *Serendipity*: the choir's tradition of mixing mainstream classical music with more relaxed musical forms, this concert also features two more classical works. The first is "Beata Es Virgo Maria" by Giovanni Gabrieli. Gabrieli was fascinated by the acoustic opportunities afforded by the Basilica San Marco in Venice, and this work separates the upper and lower voices, contrasting and blending them in imaginative ways to give the Latin text maximum impact. Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* was written at sea in 1942 as Britten made the perilous wartime journey home from the United States to England. With the horrors of a German U-boat wolf-pack never far away, the sweetness and innocence of the collection of carols makes a stark contrast. From this collection are taken "This Little Babe" and "Balulalow", arguably the loveliest and most beautiful pieces from it.

Bringing home the Christmas message and the promise of salvation is "Let The Heaven Light Shine On Me", a spiritual arranged by that master of the form, Moses Hogan. And because the festive season is also one for other faiths, we haven't left them out – "Hanerot Halalu" is a setting of a traditional Hanukkah song, celebrating the placement of lighted candles in the window. As another concert draws to a close, there is little left to be said except "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" ... and don't forget the figgy pudding!

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# THE PERFORMERS

Kerith Fowles  
Ann Clipsham

*CONDUCTOR*  
*PIANIST*

## *SINGERS*

Andrea Skrt  
Bert de Hosson  
Brian Goodes  
Cathy Hughes  
Desley O'Farrell  
Emma Llewelyn  
Eric Conley  
Fiona Petterson  
Fran Bosly-Craft  
Georgie Hurba  
Gill Dunstan  
Graeme Whisker  
Graham Warner  
Greg Oehm  
Heather Bone  
Ian O'Farrell

Ian Perkins  
Jan King  
Jane Irwin  
Jean de Hosson  
Jean Long  
Jo de Light  
Judy Coverdale  
Karen Granger  
Lorelei Tait  
Louise Cassidy  
Meg Herbert  
Michele Nobbs  
Min Aistrophe  
Richard Bosly-Craft  
Rob Dunstan  
Rose Conley