

## Chorale's Christmas joy at The J By JIM FAGAN

The sound of some of the most beautiful and uplifting carols and festive songs from around the world is drifting from The J right now as Noosa Chorale practises for its duo of "Peace and Joy" Christmas concerts in mid-December.

Eighteen classics, some from Norway, Sweden, the U.S. and U.K, will make the concerts something to remember—a time to remind us of the joy in our lives and to cherish the hope for peace in the world.

From Sweden, comes the gentle "Jul, Jul, Strålande Jul", with its message of the eternal yearning for light and peace. Singing in Swedish has opened up a new challenge but luckily for the choir, soprano Marianne Seldon's native Norwegian has helped to pronounce the somewhat similar Scandinavian sounds.

The contemporary composer Ola Gjeilo is also from Norway but now lives in the USA from where he wrote his gentle, lyrical setting of "Ecce Novum", reflecting the wonder of the Christmas story.

Also, from the northern hemisphere where winter inspires people to seek the light, composer Jacob Narverud brings us his heartwarming melodic style with "Season of Light".

Good cheer and toe-tapping good times come alive in "Holiday Tango" by Greg Gilpin, and even Tchaikovsky gets into the spirit as his "Nutcracker Suite" is borrowed in a rather surprising way.

This is the seventeenth year of the Chorale's Christmas concerts and there is a feeling among choir members who go back a long way that the music selection has rarely been bettered.



Chorale Music Director Kim Kirkman and soprano Paige Allen (Photo: Cal Webb)

Credit for this belongs to Chorale music director Kim Kirkman's partner Paige Allen. Paige sings with the sopranos and is a member of several Sunshine Coast choirs. She was invited by the Chorale committee to put the programme together.

"I have a soft spot for Scandinavian Christmas music and I wanted to keep

the peace theme, and bring in classical pieces but with a new twist.

"The committee also said it was willing to do works in a different language and I thought, 'Ah, finally, a choir that wants to do Swedish' and I became very excited. We are also very lucky to have Marianne".

Paige described the programme as being a mix of "classy works, some gentle, some beautiful and a few in there for a bit of fun. I like a mixture of things in different styles—works that everyone knows but with new life."

And Chorale audiences who love carols like "O Come All Ye Faithful" will, as usual, be invited to sing along with the choir.

*Make sure you get your tickets early for this year's number one Christmas concert—"Peace and Joy"—at The J Theatre on 13 and 14 December.*



NOOSA CHORALE PRESENTS

# PEACE AND JOY

Conducted by **KIM KIRKMAN**

**FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER, 7PM**  
**SATURDAY 14 DECEMBER, 2PM**

THE J NOOSA  
TICKETS \$48  
BOOKINGS 07 5329 6560 [www.thej.com.au](http://www.thej.com.au)

CELEBRATING 30th ANNIVERSARY NOOSA CHORALE

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# Christmas Carol traditions around the world

By CAL WEBB

At the last count, Christmas will be observed by a public holiday in 171 countries around the world, and a further 22 countries observe the day but without it being a holiday.

But of course we don't all do it the same. Different histories, cultures, and religions make for some big differences in how Christmas is observed, whether as a mostly religious celebration or as a wider cultural occasion.

And climate is also pretty significant. Whilst Aussies start making plans for their Christmas barbecues by the water on a stinking hot day, those in the northern hemisphere have already stacked their firewood before the dark days of icy cold winters descend.

But it doesn't matter where you are in the world, there is one universal we can be sure of at this time: people everywhere will be joining in the spirit of wishing peace and joy to all, as embodied in the traditional carols and songs that communities across the world share in singing.

Noosa Chorale's Christmas concert this year will be full of just such delightful merriment, with joyful carols to sing along with, and more poignant ones wishing peace and goodwill in these turbulent times. The selection spans the ages and many of them are sung almost universally.

Where on earth did our well-known Christmas songs and carols come from and when?

Many of our favourite Christmas carols were first being sung hundreds of years ago in the UK, and possibly as far back as 129 AD, at a time when pagan songs celebrating the winter



solstice were being taken over by Christianity-themed hymns.

By the fourth century AD, more and more carols about the nativity were emerging. Similarly, the association of Christmas with feasting and festivity was becoming more prominent over the centuries. One of the oldest carols printed in English is the "Boar's Head Carol" dating from 1521 when it was sung at Queen's College Oxford as Christmas lunch was being carried in.

Despite the attempts by sixteenth century England's dour puritans to ban all things good including singing, and to return Christmas to a time of fasting not feasting, carol singing

would not be killed off. People simply would not stop singing about the joyous message of Christmas and celebrating the season with much conviviality.

The traditional celtic carol "Christmas in Carrick", sounding somewhat more like a boisterous sea shanty than a Christmas carol, is an exuberant tribute to merriment and festivity with tables groaning with "ham and goose and pints o' beer, and whiskey handed round in tumblers".

Whilst there are many carols with a similar

message of joyful yuletide conviviality, there are more still which reflect the nativity story of Christ's birth, and the longing for peace and goodwill to all.

The well-known carol "O Come All Ye Faithful" was reported to have been sung by opposing British and German soldiers across the no-man's land of the World War I trenches, as captured vividly in a letter written home by Private Oswald Tilley:

"First the Germans would sing one of their carols and then we would sing one of ours, until when we started up 'O Come All Ye Faithful' the Germans immediately joined in singing the same hymn to the Latin words 'Adeste Fideles'.



"And I thought, well, this was really a most extraordinary thing – two nations both singing the same carol in the middle of a war....This experience has been the most practical demonstration I have seen of Peace on earth and goodwill towards men... It doesn't seem right to be killing each other at Christmas time."

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Unlike many older Christmas carols wishing simply for peace on earth, Norwegian composer Kim André Arnesen’s hypnotic song “What is Peace?”, the words of which were inspired by the Beatitudes, invites us to reconsider our understanding of peace in a modern context.

Its words assert that “peace is not a silent state” like gentle rain, but rather “peace is fire... and passion”, demanding we fight for it with a passionate strength of will and courage.

Now, do you know who King Wenceslas was, and whether he was actually good? Well, there really was a Wenceslas, the Duke of Bohemia rather than an actual king. He was a good pious Christian who lived from

907 to 935AD, and was known for his acts of charity and ambitious church-building programme. It sure was a shame that his pagan brother Boleslav murdered him.

As well as having the honorary title of King conferred after his death by Holy Roman Emperor Otto I, Wenceslas is known today as the patron saint of the Czech Republic.

The carol’s lyrics, written around 1849 by English hymn composer John Neale, tell us a tale of Wenceslas out and about at the feast of Stephen doing benevolent things, to illustrate the message that those who give charity to the poor will also be blessed themselves. No wonder “Good King Wenceslas” is such a favourite for carollers.

In countries where Christianity has a strong following, local traditions of

music and singing at Christmas time have evolved independently of the original English traditions. In many African countries for example, Christmas eve masses are followed by joyous parades in the streets with carol-singing accompanied by traditional instruments, continuing well into the night.

And if you’ve never heard a Christmas carol with a South American tango theme, or a version of “Jingle Bells” that will knock your socks off, then we suggest you get your tickets to Noosa Chorale’s Christmas concert this year and prepare to be surprised and delighted by this year’s eclectic mix of songs and carols.

Noosa Chorale Christmas Concert: “Peace and Joy”, 13 December 7pm, and 14 December 2pm at The J .

[Click here to book your seats](#)



Christmas concert 2022: Angels and Shepherds



Christmas concert 2021: Silver Bells

The J Theatre is adorned each year with beautiful decorations by soprano Jenny Jackson and team.



Christmas concert 2019: Love



Christmas concert 2017: Peace



## 30 years since Chorale's first concert

As this season's energetic round of the Chorale's full and sectional rehearsals gathers pace and the singers limber up to bring yet another fabulous concert together, it's timely to remember what was happening around this time of year some thirty years ago.

It was 1994 and the new choir's rehearsals were shaping up nicely for their inaugural performance—Handel's Messiah—to be held on 11 December.

The advance media exposure generated enormous interest from locals keen to support classical music coming to Noosa in the form of a sizeable choir and orchestra of local musicians. So much so in fact that the 70 extra chairs brought in for the concert were still not enough and standing room only tickets were sold at the door.

The concert was a smash hit. Writing in Noosa News, local reviewer Liliás Garbett, wrote the first of the glowing reviews the Chorale was to receive over the years. She said, "Sunday night's performance of Handel's

Messiah at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Centre shows what a wealth of musical talent there is in Noosa.

"The local audience was treated to a polished performance, considering it



Noosa Chorale singers and Noosa musicians on stage before the inaugural concert of Handel's Messiah

was performed by an amateur choir and orchestra only formed earlier this year...the Chorale received a tumultuous reception from a packed house."

Read more about Noosa Chorale's history in the book "Noosa Sings: 15 years of classical harmony" by Jim Fagan. Limited copies are available for free from the Chorale.

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