



Cacophony

Issue 53, July 2016

*The last 52 issues of **Cacophony** have been edited by our erudite long-time member, Peter McCloy. We have been challenged, informed and amused by his scholarly research into the works performed by the choir, and have gained great insight into the works which has enriched the performances for both choristers and audience members.*

To our great sadness, Peter has retired from this role and has moved to Queensland to be close to his family. We can only congratulate and thank him for his service to the choir and wish him the very best in his new life.

ANZACS – A Generation Lost in Legend Sunday, 14 August 2016, 2.00 p.m. Great Hall, University of Newcastle



Newcastle University Choir is privileged to have been invited by the composer, former Newcastle resident, Janet Jennings and by Creative New Zealand to perform a new work of commemoration entitled **ANZACS – A Generation Lost in Legend**.

Janet Jennings is one of New Zealand's leading composers for voice. Her PhD studies in composition were assisted by a doctoral scholarship from the University of Waikato and a Fulbright scholarship allowing for travel and study in the United States. She lives in Hamilton and is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Waikato.

Janet has provided the following insights into her work.

During these WWI centenary years we have been confronted with facts and numbers that are difficult for us to comprehend and that call us to make acts of homage and remembrance. By the time the Gallipoli campaign ended in January 1916 more than 130,000 men had died: at least 87,000 Ottoman soldiers and 44,000 Allied soldiers, including more than 8700 Australians. Among the dead were 2779 New Zealanders, about a sixth of all those who had landed on the peninsula.

ANZACS – A Generation Lost in Legend is the first large-scale musical setting of New Zealand war poetry. The composer, Janet Jennings, compiled the text from poems written during, and subsequent to, World War I in a work that gives voice to the ANZAC soldiers who served during WWI and provides the opportunity for their voices to be heard by audiences in Australia and New Zealand.

The composition and preparation of the work was partially funded by Creative New Zealand (NZ's national arts development agency) as a WWI Centenary Project for initial performances in Australia (Newcastle University and St James' Church, Sydney) and in New Zealand at Auckland Cathedral's ANZAC event in April 2017. The poetry is set to music for SSATBB choir, soprano, tenor and baritone soloists, brass quintet, violin, organ and percussion.

The text tells a story beginning retrospectively with an extract from Mike Subritzky's poem *ANZAC – The Legend*:

*I can still hear cannon firing
in the distance of my mind
and the sound of battle
high on Chunuk Bair
and the fading calls for 'Mother'
from the dying wounded men:
and the dead on Lone Pine ridge
and Sari Bair*

Mike Subritzky writes from personal experience. A retired professional soldier born into an old New Zealand military family, he is a Veteran, as are three of his sons.

He has an international reputation and his work appears in numerous books and anthologies. His poetry and verse is often read on New Zealand's National Radio on ANZAC Day. He is the first New Zealand poet to have his war poetry read at Westminster Abbey (2004, by Lord Freyberg), and the first Kiwi poet to be read at ANZAC Corner (The Honourable Russell Marshall), Hyde Park, London.

The narrative moves back in time with an extract from the same poem (*ANZAC – The Legend*) that describes the mustering of troops from regional centres in New Zealand:

*They came from Alexandra
And gold towns on the coast
while others worked the gumfields in the North
the scowman and the drover
the farmer and the clerk
each signed up for a shilling and a war.*

The naivety of the young soldiers, and their fervent belief in the cause (frankly difficult for us to understand), is conveyed by two poems written in a young woman's autograph book by New Zealand soldiers leaving for the front in 1914, concluding:

*And ever when we hear old England's call,
We'll rally round the flag & fight full well
And for the Empire give the best we can
Our fiendish foes to quell*

We are starkly reminded of the destination of many of these young soldiers in a further extract from Mike Subritzky's *ANZAC – The Legend*:

*They were kitted out in Trentham Camp
and sailed away at dawn
on HM Transports bound for morning tide.
Then, they came ashore in April at a place called ANZAC Cove
And there in bloody battle
thousands died.*

The poems from the autograph book reflect the overtly optimistic and patriotic attitudes typically expressed in early WWI poetry. The poem that follows them was written by Donald H. Lea shortly after the war and plunges us into the reality and the horror of the experience. He served in France and the Western Front. In 1916 he was gassed in the trenches and, according to his wife, never recovered from the trauma of his experience. The poem calls us to "... make entreaty for/ Stretcher-bearer heavy laden/With the bitter fruits of War".

A commemoration follows (words by Mike Subritzky):

*Distant Gallipoli remains forever
in this nation's memory.
That time of great conflict
And noble blood sacrifice
of young New Zealand men, and Australians ...
ANZACS
a generation lost in Legend;
who laid down their lives for King and Empire on foreign soil.*

The work concludes with a plea for peace in the form of a Christmas Carol – *December Dreamtime* (words by Mike Subritzky).

It has been my intention in setting this poetry to music to create the world of the texts for the performers and their audiences. The music exists in order to communicate the words. We can look forward to a performance at Newcastle University where the music enhances and intensifies the experience of the poems.

For more about the Choir go to <www.newcastleuniversitychoir.com>

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1. Bring your Concert Card to the "**Anzac - A Generation Lost In Legend**" concert on Sunday, 14 August and have it validated at the Validation Desk in the foyer.
2. Bring your card to the "**Christmas At the Movies**" concert on Sunday, 4 December and put it in the Concert Card box in the foyer.

The winner will be drawn at the concert.