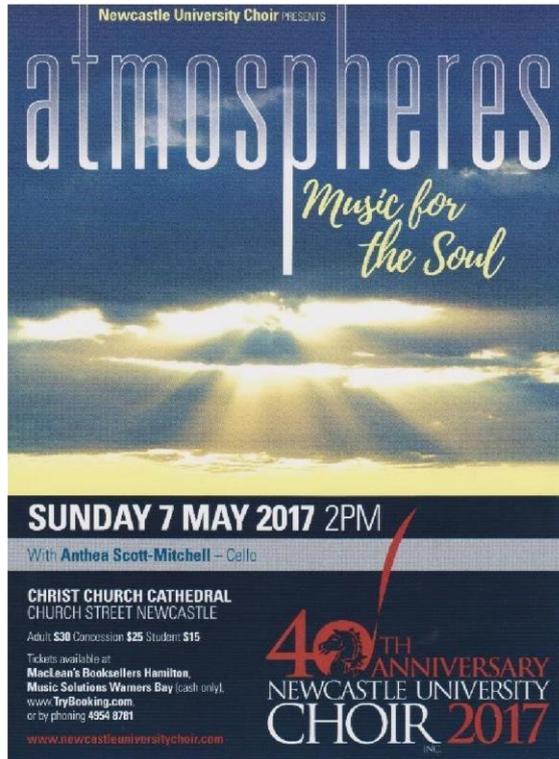


Cacophony

Issue 55, April 2017



On **Sunday, May 7, at 2:00 pm**, in Christchurch Cathedral, the Choir will present its first concert in our 40th Anniversary year, ***Atmospheres: Music for the Soul***. There is something magic about this title, especially for your editor, who has taught climatology and atmospheric science for his entire career. With excellent leadership from our Music Director, Dr Christopher Allan, and outstanding support from Newcastle's outstanding cellist, Anthea Scott-Mitchell, attendees can expect a joyous and uplifting experience. Tickets can be obtained by calling 49548781 or from www.trybooking.com.

What better place to start our *Atmospheres* journey than with the sun rising above the horizon on a glorious day. All good

introductory atmospheric teaching courses start with the sun. Eric Whitacre, a contemporary American Composer, wrote *i thank you God for most this amazing day* in 1999, revised in 2009. The text is by e.e. cummings, and focusses on the glories of “leaping greenly spirits”, “a blue true dream of sky” and “the birthday of love and life”. The work paints a choral picture of a start of a wonderful day, and thanks God for its creation.

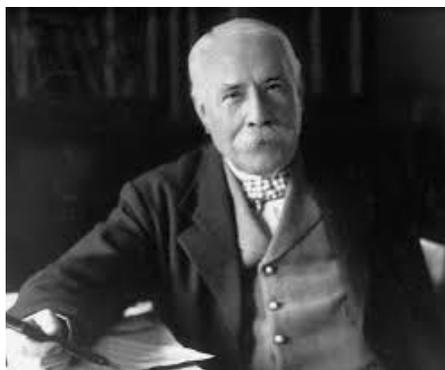


John Rutter, a prolific contemporary British composer, also provides a sunlight masterpiece. *Hymn to the Creator of Light* requires a double choir. The words by Lancelot Andrews (1555-1626) and J Frank (1618-1677) incorporate visible light, the sun's rays, the flame of fire, and the glory of Lord's creation. The scientific understanding is a little different nowadays, but the glory of it all is the same.

Atmospheres incorporates more than just the visual spectacle of light from the sun. The choral works move across a range of musical atmospheres. John Tavener (1944-2013) is a well-known English composer of a wide range of religious choral works. In our concert we sing two of his compositions, *The Lamb* and *Song for Athene*.

The Lamb is based on a poem by William Blake and the dedication is “for Simon’s 3rd Birthday”. The allegory of a lamb is often applied to the Christ Child, and in this piece is also applied to Simon. “Little Lamb, who made thee?” Who gave thee life, bid thee feed, gave thee soft woolly clothing, and a tender voice? These questions apply to both children, in an atmosphere which is tender and loving.

On a sadder note, *Song for Athene* was written in memory of Athene Hariades, a lover of acting, poetry, music and the Orthodox Church, the influences of which can be felt in the music. *Song for Athene* was sung at the funeral of Princess Diana, a wellknown but tragic public figure. The atmosphere presented is one of peace and serenity. “May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest”. But still there is the joy of “prepared rewards and crowns” and the music soars at the end with ‘resplendent joy in the Resurrection”.



Edward Elgar is arguably Britain’s most famous choral and orchestral composer. He composed *Enigma Variations* for orchestra in 1898, and the first performance, in London, was an instant success. The most well-known tune is the adagio variation (IX) *Nimrod* (a mighty hunter), which was created as a choral arrangement by John Cameron, set to the text of the Requiem Mass. Here we return to the idea of light, but this time eternal light (lux aeterna), forever and in perpetuity, within the atmosphere of eternal rest (requiem aeternam).

Morten Lauridsen adds an atmosphere of mystery and wonder to the concert. His version of *O Magnum Mysterium* was first performed by the Los Angeles Master Chorale at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in 1994. The Latin text affirms the adoration of the Blessed Virgin and “God’s grace to the meek”. To create the proper atmosphere, the choir must express its profound inner joy through seamless changes in tempo and vocal volume.

Last, but not least, is the atmosphere of melodic fun. *Past Life Melodies*, was written by Australian composer Sarah Hopkins in 1991. The whole purpose of this 11-part work is melodic harmonies. Much of the music sounds like a choir vocal exercise, but the ‘hums’, ‘ahs’, and ‘yeahs’ must be in tune. Score instructions include “with great breadth”, “joyous and liberated”, very open and expansive feel”, emphasising the needed tone of the work. In the middle of this comes a sudden harsh chant, ‘Nair Nair Nair Nadula Nair’, repeated over and over, which is in stark contrast to the atmosphere of melody. From my American heritage, and returning to the concept of the physical atmosphere, this chant reminds me of an Indian tribal dance for rain.

Thus *Atmospheres: Music for the Soul*, encompasses a wide range of concepts, all of which are designed for both audience and choir enjoyment. The acoustics of the Christ Church Cathedral add extra overtones to the music, promising very satisfying music for the soul.

.Howard Bridgman, Editor

Vale Peter McCloy founding editor and long-time editor of Cacophony. Peter sang in the choir for many years, he loved the choir and the joy singing gave him.

Remaining 40th Anniversary Choir Concerts for 2017

6 August: *On Stage*, Harold Lobb Hall, Newcastle Conservatorium, and

13 August at Singleton Civic Centre

10 December: *The Creation* by Joseph Haydn. University Great Hall.

Join us for the Choir's 40th Year Celebrations!