

The Nelson Civic Choir is pleased and proud to present a Review of their last Concert - “Joy to the World, A Seasonal Celebration”, in Nelson Cathedral before last Christmas. Linda Sparrow, a Nelson-based writer supporting the arts, music and dance scene’ is the reviewer:

Community Choral at Christmas

Making Music & Joy an Annual Tradition – Nelson’s Best Community Concert

Nelson Civic Choir and Orchestra – ‘Joy To The World – A Seasonal celebration’ Saturday December 3rd 2022, Nelson Cathedral

Think about this: When was the last time you felt pure joy? Not fleeting joy but the sustained kind that gives you happy feelings for days. For me it was December 3rd when, along with 350 others, I attended what I assumed would be another enjoyable Christmas concert at the Nelson Cathedral. Instead, the **Nelson Civic Choir** and Orchestra delivered an unforgettably powerful gift to the Nelson community.

Perhaps the holiday season glee was heightened by the fabulously blingy Christmas trees crammed into the foyer. Maybe it was the flurries of families with excited kids filling the seats, or how the late evening sunlight filtered through the cathedral’s giant stained glass windows scattering rainbows over the floor and walls. Whatever glorious combination was casting its spell, the audience was open to it and the stage was set for memory-making. It was then that our internationally renowned musical director **Jason Balla** and his superbly trained choir opened a bag of musical magic and let it loose.

‘**Joy To The World - A Seasonal Celebration**’ was crisply divided into two parts, each designed to carry listeners up and through a range of emotions. The first half showcased cleverly chosen excerpts from Handel’s ‘Messiah’. Balla, an Oxford University music graduate with a wealth of global experience and a knack for swiftly connecting with an audience, introduced it with a brief history lesson.

Did you know that ‘Messiah’ has only one named character in it – The Angel? I didn’t! Balla explained that in 1741, librettist Charles Jennens gave Handel an especially dramatic biblical story that had just one identified character. Back then, this was an unusual and radical idea for Handel but, genius that he was, he accepted the challenge and produced what has become one of the world’s most beloved oratorios.

The choir and orchestra deftly executed 10 excerpts including the overture, choruses and solos. The audience, kids included, was spellbound - that irresistible force of musical talent delivering the familiar, always-compelling Messiah soundtrack.

After a brief intermission the music selection in the second half transported us through Mozart's '**Laudate Dominum**' with our Angel soprano soloist **Caroline Burchell** ethereally wafting her silver sound over the orchestra, choir, around the granite pillars and into every corner of the cathedral. Then it was time for some old-fashioned everybody-join-in Christmas carols and seasonal music. Encouraged by Balla to participate and raise the cathedral ceiling, the audience lost any inhibitions and sang its heart out!

The choir, aided by City of Dunedin organist **David Burchell**, gave its all too, lifting their collective voices into a crescendo that carried down the cathedral steps to Trafalgar Street – a musical gift for all the latecomers who'd missed out on a seat but who sat outside in the car park and heard it anyway.

Nelsonians are so lucky! The Nelson Civic Choir and Orchestra, under the direction of new-to-Nelson Music Director Jason Balla, has found a fresh and exciting voice. And the kind of fun intriguing musical programmes typically found in some of Europe's larger musical and cultural centres is now available to us right here.

Let's all support these kinds of community events provided by the community and for the community as this kind of transformative musical experience is a game-changer. It enhances Nelson's cultural menu and our community overall. I hear there are some exciting concerts planned for 2023. Don't miss them! This Christmas concert sold out weeks in advance so get yourself on the Nelson Civic Choir mailing list www.nelsoncivicchoir.com

Bring the kids. Make some memories. Feel the joy.

So Come Join Us!

We are actively looking for new and enthusiastic members to join our choir and as the current Chair of Nelson Civic Choir, I would like to invite anyone with an interest in choral music to come and join us at **7pm on Tuesday evenings at the NCMA (Nelson School of Music building)** at 48 Nile Street, Nelson 7010. Anyone interested please email: Kay Hunter, our secretary, at secretary@nelsoncivicchoir.com or Elizabeth Williams, Chair of Nelson Civic Choir at chair@nelsoncivicchoir.com

