

consist of French songs: *Nell, Clair de Lune, Aurore, Apres un Reve* and *Mandoline* by Gabriel Faure and *Chanson Triste, L'invitation au voyage, Au pays ou se fait la guerre* and *La vie anterieure* by Henri Duparc.

"These French songs are very impressionistic," Barnett says.

following the composer's directions for tone and tempo. You can't let your ego take over. The composer has used the voice as an instrument to convey feelings and atmosphere."

With her wide experience of many forms of repertoire, what does Barnett like to perform best?

"Well, at the end of the day, I choose an accompanist whom I respect. If he's more experienced than me, I'll respect that. With a younger accompanist I might be more directive. In performance the accompanist will follow the singer – unless they want to be nasty!" she laughs.

performing at presentation opera in vineyard settings. year she sang with the Opera Australia chorus in *Aida* and *Madama Butterfly*.

Barnett's 2008 CD, *Home Bound* was made with David Miller as her accompanist. selection of songs that I love

Medieval music given a new voice

New Carols and Songs for Chaucer's Pilgrims

Wesley Music Centre, November 9.
Reviewer: **Jennifer Gall**

David Yardley's concert on Friday evening provided an important opportunity for Canberrans to hear the lyrics of five carols that have not been sung since the 15th century. Yardley, who is also a fine counter tenor and alto, has recovered the texts for 13 medieval carols and composed new choral settings for each. The Wesley Music Centre suited the repertoire perfectly as a sympathetic space in which to hear these richly varied arrangements. Yardley writes that "The music aims to reflect the spirit of the medieval period in a way to appeal to the modern ear, breathing new life into beautiful, near-forgotten words from history". The concert was also the launch for the CD, *New Carols and Songs for Chaucer's Pilgrims*. The musicians who assembled for the performance were united by palpable enthusiasm for the works performed. Yardley directed the singers to use the room and physical position changes within it to create dynamic interest through the distinctive interplay of voices in each carol.

The event itself was programed to provide an elegant, thoughtful introduction to the music, with Yardley saying that, "In the Middle Ages, carols covered broader territory than they do today, and in this collection there are pieces covering every side of medieval life, from love, death, politics and



David Yardley's carol concert.

drinking, to the major religious festivals of Christmas and Easter".

A Domusday We Schal Ysee, a carol written in the 15th century depicting the end of the world, was an excellent, energetic opening. As the choir entered, voices apparently came from all

directions, surrounding the listeners with apocalyptic imagery and recreating the original purpose of the carol as a stirring incentive to be more vigilant about observing Christian behaviour and saying one's prayers without fail.

A carefully staged entry, the melody entering in the bass part and the upper parts joining in the second verse, made *Blyssid Be that Lady Bright* my favourite of the carols. The medieval texts in praise of Mary are often exquisite, such as the imagery relating Mary's purity to the dew in April in the more commonly known *I Syng of a Mayden*. *Blyssid Be that Lady Bright* is a more exultant, but equally beautiful text.

Soprano Emma Griffiths led the entries with her pure, clear voice in *Man be Glad in Halle and Bour*, providing a pleasing contrast with the male voices. The eight short verses of the carol retell the story of Jesus's life and the variations in the vocal arrangement strengthened the narrative conveyed by the text.

Brynge us Home Good Ale was a raucous contrast to the more restrained tone of the other carols, as a paean of praise to the unassailable supremacy of ale as the cure for all ills, hungers and cravings. The choir threw themselves into the performance lustily, singing as they filed out of the recital room.

■ *New Carols and Songs for Chaucer's Pilgrims* is available from David Yardley: davidyardley.com.au.

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