

CREATIVE

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AGENT OF CREATIVITY

JESSICA'S EVE A ROLE MODEL FOR KIDS



SYDNEY SALVATION BRASS SET FOR DEBUT PERFORMANCE



By **ESTHER PINN**

There's a new band in town. It's called Sydney Salvation Brass and the band expects to make its official debut before the end of the year.

The band is the brainchild of Major Keith Hampton, who says its aim is to increase the visible presence of The Salvation Army in the wider Sydney region.

"It's a ministry opportunity and a bridge to the future," said Major Hampton, who will lead the band.

"Salvation Army corps bands are finding it more difficult to provide enough players on their own. We can be there to help when this vital outreach becomes available to The Salvation Army in various parades and celebrations."

The band, which will comprise Salvationists across the Australia Eastern Territory, is planning to participate in the 2015 Sydney Anzac Day celebrations.

"It's for those people who work, who can't be in the Sydney Veteran's Band, who rehearse during the day, or the Sydney Youth Band (SYB) which is aimed at our young Salvationists," said Major Hampton.

"It will also have a flow-on for members of the SYB when they graduate in age to the next stage in their banding."

Major Hampton hopes the band will complete four engagements each year and is open to invitations, especially from country corps. He is also eager to support programs such as Just Brass, a music development program for young people across the territory.

Getting the band off the ground has been a labour of love for Major Hampton. After landing a Fellows Program Aged Care Plus scholarship in 2012, he travelled to London and New York for research purposes.

He made connections with Dean Farrer, bandmaster of New Jersey's Salvation Brass, a contemporary brass band for The Greater New York Division, and Dean Jones, leader of a band in the United Kingdom, also called Salvation Brass and Territorial Music Director [for USA East], Bandmaster Ron Waiksnoris.

"They are doing something similar to what I was looking to start," said Major Hampton. "and were all very helpful in forming this band with their advice and mentorship."

Sponsored by the Australia Eastern Territory's Creative Ministries Department, Major Hampton completed the Australian Band and Orchestra Directors Association Conductors Summer School earlier this year.

Sydney Salvation Brass will be using the *March and Hymn Tune Arrangement Music Books and Scores* commonly known as the Rainbow Book, donated by the Hampton family in memory of Keith's father, the late Salvation Army band leader, Danny Hampton.

Throughout his life, Danny was always a committed band and songster member as well holding numerous leadership positions in the United Kingdom and Australia.

As the band begins its ministry, donations towards the establishment costs can be made by contacting Major Hampton at keith.hampton@ae.salvationarmy.org

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Jessica's Eve a role model for kids



Photo: Shairon Paterson

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BRAD MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH MUSIC

By ESTHER PINN

For Brad Lucas, playing music is a privilege. As a performer, he says it's his role is to tell a composer's story through the notes written on the music sheets.

"The composer is actually putting themselves on the page," he explains, "and as a player you get to tell their story."

Brad (pictured) has always been fascinated with music. Since he was six years old he has been playing brass instruments. Not a surprising choice, given that he watched his father play in the Port Macquarie Salvation Army Corps band every Sunday. He started with the tenor horn then moved to the cornet and finally the euphonium, his instrument of choice.

The 21-year-old has this year been appointed conductor of the Sydney Youth Band, a Salvation Army brass band for young people.

It's a challenging prospect, he says, but one he feels ready to embrace, drawing on the skills and experience he has gained through his music degree studies at the Sydney Music Conservatorium, where he majored in performance with euphonium.

Now closing in on his four-year degree, Brad says he has enjoyed every moment and has been given opportunities to play in professional orchestras, including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and performing a musical quartet.

"It's awesome," he says. "You get to go to uni each day and just do the one thing that makes you the happiest."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

While music is a big part of his life, Brad has also applied for medical school and would like to pursue a career in medicine.

But he says he made the right choice to study music first.

"It's always been kind of the plan to do medicine but I had to do music first. I knew I would regret it. I'm super happy that I've done it."

Brad's attraction to joining the Sydney Youth Band was not simply about finding another outlet for his musical talent. He joined the band in 2009, travelling once a week from Port Macquarie to rehearse for the band's tour to Papua New Guinea. >>>

the.BIG picture



Photo: Shairon Paterson



ABOVE: Brad is passionate about helping Sydney Youth Band members develop their potential. Photo: Shairon Paterson

"The really cool thing was seeing how music could make such a difference to people," he says, referring to the 2009 tour.

It was being part of something with a higher purpose, that motivated him to stay.

"For the youth band, it's very much that we realise that these pieces were written for the glory of God – so it is worship when we play.

"There are countless other groups you could join if you wanted to play music. They're really good and you'd have a great time and there's no reason you can't do that, but for SYB (Sydney Youth Band) it's something different."

And by different Brad means their practices. The Sydney Youth Band's rehearsal experience is much different to a normal band practice. While they spend time practising songs, part of their

rehearsal time is devoted to sharing.

The young people are encouraged to talk about their testimonies. Through these sharing times, they have built a tightly knit community, says Brad.

"We will stop for a bit ... and just share about what's going on in our lives and the difficulties we're going through and the stuff that we're trying to work through with God.

"The rest of us don't get up and try and fix it. It's a place where we can come and vent ... and then we have a prayer time [for what] people have brought up."

FUTURE PLANS

Brad says he takes the responsibility of leadership seriously and is particularly passionate about helping the other bands members develop their musical skills.

"My goal for next year will be to try to get in guest conductors so they can do workshops. A majority of the people would never get the opportunity to play under [professional] conductors. I think it would be musically beneficial to do that."

Brad is taking over from former Sydney Band Youth leader Josh Mann, who has been part of the band since its inception. He is working with two of the band's founding members, Jonathan Lang and Lieutenant Peter Gott – Sydney East and Illawarra Divisional Youth Secretary – as part of the group's leadership team.

Living in Sydney, Brad also plays in Sydney Congress Hall's corps band.

The Sydney Youth Band played at Rockdale Corps in September and is making plans for further performances in 2015. □

SALVOS A BIG HIT AT WARWICK FESTIVAL



One song was all it took for Warwick Corps to make its mark at the town's popular Jumpers and Jazz in July Festival.

The winter festival has been held annually since 2004 in the south-east Queensland country town and has continued to grow in popularity, with a combination of vibrant music and quirky art attracting large crowds.

Lieutenant Steve Spencer said Warwick Corps' involvement had been 12 months in the planning, with Salvationists from around the south-east Queensland division and Brisbane-based barbershop quartet Blindsight lending a hand.

The Salvation Army's main involvement was in the "Stroll and Swing" program, which features dozens of musicians busking for the crowds on the Saturday of the festival (July 26).

"By the time that Blindsight had finished their first song in the street," recalls Lieut Spencer, "a great number of people had gathered to hear their wonderfully blended voices and to watch their antics. At the end of their second song, event organisers for the town were enquiring of their availability to attend next year."

Blindsight were followed by the vibrant performance of a 14-member Salvation Army "big band", assembled specifically for the festival. It was the group's first official engagement and Lieut Spencer says their energy drew people from other groups playing a block away.

"Such was the impact of the band that the gathered crowds provided shelter to the band when the rain started to fall. They had won the hearts of the crowd," he says.

An invitation was given out to the crowd to join the group for the "Sing & Swing at the Salvos" concert later that evening, which drew more than 160 people.

Several members of the band gave a short testimony during the concert and the congregation was invited to return to the corps the next day for the Sunday morning meeting.

"As people left the building, we were asked 'Where can we purchase their CD?'" says Lieut Spencer.

The original idea for Warwick's involvement came from corps member Sharnelle Buckmaster, who suggested that The Salvation Army should be a part of the festival.

"Sharnelle, as event coordinator,

took on the challenge of bringing the corps' vision to life," says Lieut Spencer.

"From the very beginning, we identified that we wanted to empower people within the division to provide them with a different form of ministry experience. We were not content to 'go it alone'."

The corps invited Sam Creamer, from Carindale Corps, to create a "big band", utilising the musical talents of Salvos from around the division. Blindsight were enthusiastic to also be part of the outreach vision.

"We saw this as the perfect opportunity to interact with the community on a one-on-one situation and to spread the gospel," says Lieut Spencer. "Our corps folk wanted to be able to talk with those who would gather to hear the music and to invite them to know Jesus.

"It is indeed an honour and a privilege to walk alongside people as they embrace their ministry talents. It is our hope and prayer that Warwick Corps will be able to provide opportunities in future Jumpers and Jazz in July festivals and we welcome the involvement of others in reaching out through this avenue of ministry."

ABOVE: Warwick Corps took to the streets in July for the annual Jumpers and Jazz Festival as part of the "Stroll and Swing" program, attracting crowds to their evening concert, featuring a newly created divisional big band and Brisbane-based barber shop quartet Blindsight. Photo: Samantha Creamer



AGENT OF CREATIVITY

PLAYING THE ROLE OF EVE IN THE THREE-MEMBER AGENTS OF T.R.U.T.H CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT GROUP COMES EASILY FOR JESSICA POUTAWA, WHO SHARES HER HEART FOR KIDS MINISTRY WITH CREATIVE REPORTER ESTHER PINN

Photo: Sharon Paterson

"I COULD TELL THE AGENTS OF T.R.U.T.H ARE THE REAL ROLE MODELS IN SOME OF THE YOUNG KIDS' LIVES."

Jessica Poutawa is quick to suggest she isn't creative. As the territorial children's ministry resource developer, she enjoys writing programs for children's ministry events and organising rosters. But only a few minutes further into our interview she comments, "I like teaching children in a creative way." Realising what she has just said, Jessica pauses for a moment before laughing. Maybe for the first time, she realises how creative she really is. But one thing is certain – she is definitely brave.

Kids at heart
Together, Jessica's creativity and bravery have helped her in providing effective ministry programs, and she can see her confidence growing to share God's love with children and their leaders. When Jessica was approached to "provide care for the children" at Commissioning, her response was "I don't babysit". So for the first time, at last year's Commissioning, instead of sitting in the main meeting, children had their own specifically-designed program. Jessica says she saw this as an opportunity to teach kids about the purpose of Commissioning. Each child completed five different challenges and at the end was commissioned as an Agent of T.R.U.T.H.

– but kids, they're real and they share everything with you."
For eight years Jessica worked in Maitland, Jessica juggled her two passions – being a children's pastor on weekends and a childcare worker during the week. Eventually, Jessica says, she reached a point where she struggled to complete both roles. "I wanted to share about Jesus and you can't do that with them (referring to her childcare job) ... I was [also] the children's pastor but I couldn't spend all my time doing that. "I loved doing it (childcare) but I wanted to do more with the Salvos because that's what I was passionate about."

Have you ever wondered who was dressed as the Agent of T.R.U.T.H character Eve at last year's Commissioning? It was Jessica. Being in a character costume is hot, hard work and requires you to be fit. Try dancing in a full body suit while not knocking over a child due to limited vision – it's a challenge, she says. Jessica explains that her creativity comes out when she's planning or implementing children's programs. She refuses to simply sit the children down, sing a song and preach a message. Rather, she uses an activity to teach children about Jesus. "For example, after each challenge when doing a scavenger hunt, I'll do a two-minute talk and link it to what the children are learning that lesson," explains Jessica. "Or I encourage the children to do role plays ... [I use this] to tell a story from the Bible so children remember it. That's probably one of my strengths."

"It was pretty much what the adults do in Commissioning, but I changed it so it was applicable for the kids."
While Jessica has only been involved with the Agents of T.R.U.T.H for a short period of time, she says they making are huge impact in their ministry to kids. "I've only ever been Eve at bootcamp ... but I had some of the young ones come up to me and hold my hand. I could tell the Agents of T.R.U.T.H are the real role models in some of the young kids' lives." When she's not donning the white wig and lycra suit, she's writing the leader's manual for the Agents of T.R.U.T.H Self Denial Appeal. Jessica says working with children has been a life-long passion, with her love for kids ministry growing from her time working voluntarily as the children's pastor for Bonnells Bay Corps, on the NSW Central Coast. "Kids are just so real," she says. "You get what you give with kids. They're not fake. I guess for me I learn so much from them. They have amazing questions to ask and it's a real relationship. "Sometimes you get some people who don't share everything with you

Desire For unity
Eighteen months ago, Jessica moved to Sydney to work for the Salvos. She now has the space to do what she loves – from organising children's programs to mentoring children's leaders. She is in her element. Jessica says she views her role as the link between the church and the children. Jessica desires to see unity – whether that's incorporating more kid-friendly elements into the adult Sunday church service or training the Army's future children's ministry leaders at Youth and Kids Ministry Conference. She believes in investing into children because it's the critical age to introduce them to Jesus. "A lot of people who go away from God come and say, "I used to go to church when I was five and I remember learning about Jesus in Sunday School." She continues to volunteer as a children's leader at Ryde Corp where she attends with husband Jason, who is the territory's Youth Liaison Officer. For Jessica, her greatest joy as a children's leader are the opportunities she receives to make a difference in the children's lives. And if that means dressing up in a costume, then she's more than willing. □

MANLY'S heavenly FEAST



A MONTHLY MEAL AT MANLY SALVATION ARMY IS SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, WRITES **JULIA HOSKING**

It's 6pm on the first Thursday of the month and the kitchen at Manly Salvation Army New Life Centre is a hive of activity. Volunteers of all ages – the youngest is seven – are setting the tables, arranging flowers, stirring gravy and finalising the pork roast ahead of the 6.30 pm meal.

This is FE@ST – Friends Eating At Salvos Together – a monthly meal whereby 60 or so people from the community of Sydney's Northern Beaches gather for food and friendship.

"We wanted to have a big banquet, like a Babette's Feast, to celebrate all the blessings God has given us," explains Captain Brett Mitchell, Associate Corps Officer.

Guests take their seats at tables adorned with tablecloths, silverware, drinks, bread rolls and – tonight – applesauce. After grace, volunteers

wander the room serving out plates of pork with crackling and veggies piled high. The room is quickly filled with the sound of talking and laughter.

"It's the kind of feast we will have when we get to heaven, except we are having it now, here on earth," says Captain Louanne Mitchell, Corps Officer. "Who doesn't love a roast meal, which includes dessert?"

"It's a wonderful place," shares Graham, who has been attending FE@ST for about four months. "There's a lot of warmth and love here."

About half of the guests also attend the free community lunch that Manly offers daily. Others range from friends of the volunteers to people who've come through welfare.

"It is a gathering of God's people," says Louanne, "Those who choose to follow Jesus and those who are still deciding; those who are employed, those who are not; those who own their own home and those who are sleeping rough. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, everyone is welcome and treated equally."

Intentionally, there is no segregation at the tables. After serving out the meals, the volunteers take their seats around the room.

"I pray before the meal that Jesus

is present at every one of the tables," says Brett. "We want the people who are helping us to engage with people and show love, show compassion, listen to them and befriend them."

It's not just the guests who benefit from these interactions, as Lisa Sinclair, a volunteer of two years, has found.

"I love the people who come in here," she says. "They come from all walks of life; it's taught me I can't just assume things about people, they've all got a story to tell."

Gospel in action

FE@ST began simply, with just four evening meals a year tied to themes such as Christmas in July. In 2010, however – acknowledging that 90 per cent of their ministry is what happens during the week – Brett and Louanne decided they wanted to do something more regularly.

"Some of our guests would not feel comfortable entering a church but they feel comfortable enough to come to FE@ST, enjoy a meal and hear about God's love for them and the good news of Jesus Christ," says Louanne.

"I now think FE@ST is our most valuable Kingdom-building activity," adds Brett. "For me, sharing the Gospel is about declaring and

ABOVE: Manly Salvation Army's monthly Fe@st meal is a celebration of God's blessings, says Associate Corps Officer Captain Brett Mitchell. Photo Shairon Paterson

ABOVE RIGHT: Volunteers and guests share the meal together.

demonstrating God's love."

The "declaration" of the Gospel at FE@ST may occur through discussion at tables, other times it's through song or a brief talk about a topic such as eternity, freedom or belonging.

"The expression of that Gospel is in the time and commitment of everybody there who's got faith," says Brett. "We've now got guys who were once really prickly that have moved over the last four years to standing up and sharing that prayer's an important part of their life."

For Marj, who is a Christian, FE@ST forms part of her journey with God. "[It helps me] keep on growing and renews my thoughts to keep on walking with the Lord," she says.

In March 2012, a FE@ST evening celebrated the hanging of a piece of artwork Marj created in Manly Salvos' art therapy class – 93 people attended, the most on any occasion.

Family event

Robyn Osborne and her family have been volunteering regularly at FE@ST for four years. The family attends a local Ruach Church, but sees Manly Salvos as their "second church". Robyn's daughters help with cooking and setting up, her son and husband enjoy chatting to people, and Robyn

helps with "whatever is needed" – cooking, cleaning, playing guitar or engaging with guests.

"We were interested in FE@ST being more than just the feeding part," says Robyn. "It's also an opportunity for a message and sharing of faith together."

"We've prayed with people and it's amazing how many times they come back next FE@ST and say, 'We prayed about this thing and this is what happened.' We see faith in action, which is really great and encouraging."

**"I now think
FE@ST is our most
valuable Kingdom-
building activity"**

In order to allow volunteers to serve and help parents enjoy an evening out, FE@ST involves a kids club after the main meal. About 15-20 kids aged seven to 14 meet for activities – such as movies, games or craft – and a brief scriptural story.

"I introduce the story a little at the beginning to give us a direction and then again at the end to tie it

in together," says Sharon Marshall, Children's Ministries Coordinator for the Northern Beaches Hub (Dee Why and Manly corps).

"We're engaging with kids in a fun way and trying to express God's love to them through word and action," says Captain Brett Mitchell.

FE@ST is also a family event for Amal* and her four children. Amal first met Louanne through the welfare services of the corps.

"I'd been living in a refuge with my four kids," says Amal. "I came here for a little bit of help. Louanne said, 'You should come to FE@ST, because once a month, you get to not have to cook for four kids.' I thought, 'That sounds awesome.'"

"I'm on my feet now but I still like to come. My two little ones go into the kids program (see sidebar), so it's a little bit in touch with them knowing about Jesus and having a nice time, and my two older kids help in the kitchen – they get to chat with adults, which opens their eyes up."

"It's a nice social thing that doesn't cost money for me. The people are so kind and generous. It's a beautiful, loving spot to be here. I walk in and always feel good." □

*Name changed for privacy purposes

MOUTHPIECE FOR GOD

AS AN ACCOMPLISHED TRUMPET PLAYER, LIEUTENANT PETER GOTT COULD HAVE PURSUED A SUCCESSFUL MUSICAL CAREER, BUT GOD HAD OTHER PLANS, WRITES **ESTHER PINN**



When Lieutenant Peter Gott was in high school he dreamed of playing his trumpet on soundtracks for famous films.

"[I would have] loved to play things like *Star Wars*," he laughs.

While that particular dream did not become a reality, Peter says God gave him many opportunities to be successful in the music industry.

"I feel like a lot of those dreams, I got to play out."

In the eyes of the professional music industry, Peter made it. Working as a freelance trumpeter, he performed with high-profile musical groups, including the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra and the Sydney Lyric Orchestra, spending many evenings playing at the Sydney Opera House.

While Peter says he enjoyed every moment, he had a yearning for more. He knew God had bigger plans for his life that went beyond a musical career.

"I always felt it was somewhat temporary," says Peter, referring to his musical career. "When I was going through uni, I felt God put on my heart a sense of full-time ministry someday."

In 2009, Peter entered The Salvation Army School For Officer Training with his wife, Lieutenant Rebecca – who are serving as the Sydney East and Illawarra Divisional Youth Secretaries – and started to retire from a full-time music career.

"Even when we went to college my music career was doing really well. I was playing with a lot of friends and getting some good opportunities but at the same time I knew I was doing the right thing," he says.

Peter says performing is an exhilarating experience particularly when playing with a 50-plus-member orchestra.

"[When] you're playing your part well within the overall team, there's something really satisfying about that."

But for Peter the experience

"I see myself being a part of the voice of the future and a part of the opportunities to reach the future generations."



of worshipping God is way more satisfying, leading him to play in various Salvation Army brass and rhythm bands and co-ordinating a number of worship teams.

Worship experience

"I was leading worship at a music camp years ago. It was just me on the keyboard and we were singing a song.

"I remember I had my eyes closed and I didn't know what was going on. I opened them and looked around and nearly the whole camp was in tears or in groups praying, huddling together.

"I had the sense that God was really active in that moment and for me that's always been a really powerful image. It wasn't about me ... God just took control of that moment and some powerful things happened.

"For me, the great thing about worship, is there's a great unity when we do it ... and when you do focus in on God, there's nothing that can stand against you. The one who deserves worship is the one true God. I certainly [see] the power in that and the need to point people towards that."

Peter's musical beginnings stem from his Salvation Army background. When he was about five years old, he remembers asking his father, renowned musician Barrie Gott, if he could learn an instrument. Watching his father play every Sunday at their corps, it was something he aspired to.

"Growing up in a family where

music was all around us, it was just something you did. It was part of life," explains Peter.

When Peter turned seven he was given a cornet. Soon after, he started learning the piano. In was in the United States that he began developing his musical skills, while his family were attending Pasadena Corps in Los Angeles.

When he was 11, Peter and his family moved back to Australia and attended Sydney Congress Hall where he continued to sharpen his skills.

Now a Salvation Army officer, worship is still a priority for Peter. Songwriting is just one avenue he would like to pursue to bring about the message of Jesus.

For Peter, it was never about choosing music over officership. His passion lies with spreading the love of Christ. Rather, music is just one avenue where he can share the gospel.

"I see myself being a part of the voice of the future and a part of the opportunities to reach the future generations.

"I certainly see being a disciple of Jesus and being an agent to bring God's kingdom to the here and now [to be] a message that's really strong and my heart is to communicate that in any way I can."

Mentoring role

As part of his role as divisional youth secretary, Peter is also the executive

officer for the Sydney Youth Band. Back in 2002, he was one of the instrumental people who helped form the band. Now, his role is to support the leadership team.

"It's a bit surreal coming back and being involved from this angle," he says. "Just trying to help the guys see the initial vision and the opportunities that lay before them."

These days Peter prefers to pick up a guitar or play piano instead of a trumpet when leading worship.

"I don't have a strong desire to play my trumpet as I used to ... but that's part of the journey I've been on. It's nothing against brass playing or anything like that. It's where my passion lies now," he says.

However, without his brass background, Peter admits he wouldn't be where he is now musically. His years of experience playing the trumpet have given him the skills to write songs and arrangements for worship.

Whatever role Peter finds himself in as an officer, he says his main goal is to keep using his musical abilities to build the body of Christ. □



Esther Pinn is a staff writer for Creative

ABOVE AND LEFT: Lieutenant Peter Gott was energised by his early career as a freelance trumpeter but always knew that God had a broader plan for his life. Photos: Shairon Paterson

THE POWER *of* VOICES RAISED *for his glory*

HURSTVILLE SONGSTER **CAROLYN HIDE** SAYS A LIFETIME BEING PART OF SINGING GROUPS HAS ONLY REINFORCED HER BELIEF THAT THERE IS POWER IN A CHOIR LIFTING PRAISES TO GOD

A revelation came to me the other day – I don't know what it is like to *not* be part of a choir.

From the age of seven, I began singing in the Hurstville Singing Company. I have been a member of a songster brigade for more than 40 years (it doesn't seem that long and I don't feel that old!).

I have always wanted to sing. I can't say that I am the most talented, by any stretch of the imagination, but how I love to sing of Jesus!

My family were a part of the group of women who started the Hurstville Songster Brigade 75 years ago. It is part of my heritage but, more than that, it is part of who I am.

The question of whether traditional groups, such as songster brigades, are relevant in contemporary worship has been debated for some time. So when I recently stumbled across a series of articles from well-known musicians from across the United States, speaking positively

of the place choirs have in churches today, something resonated within me.

These respected musicians are rethinking the trend of abolishing choirs as they realise the power a choir can contribute to a worship service.

Tide turning

In the Salvation Army, there is an appreciation that songster brigades, no matter how big or small, can be used to introduce new songs and bring people closer to God through some very powerful lyrics written by inspired musicians.

We are also now starting to see iterations of songster brigades in corps where the "traditional" look may not suit the worship community, such as the Glebe Community Choir, Selah Soul Sisters and Carindale's HIS (Harmony In Song).

I believe the tide is now turning. It can be very powerful hearing multiple voices singing praises to God, whether in a cathedral or

in your local corps building.

Carol Cymbala, from Brooklyn Tabernacle choir, shared in a recent article: "While praise and worship songs help our hearts go vertically up to God, a choir singing to an attentive congregation can fulfil another purpose God has for his people. Some inspired songs should be horizontal in delivering much-needed messages to the body of Christ and the strangers among us."

Choirs have been in existence for thousands of years. The Old Testament has many references to choirs singing in the temples and even leading the army of Jehoshaphat into battle.

The history of choirs and their contribution to church services is a fascinating story and one that is too lengthy to detail here. The one thing that can be said is that choirs are a portal which God has used, and still uses, to his glory.

Do you know the song that the angels sang? "At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him." (Luke 2:13-14, *The Message*).

Why should we, in this century, be the generation to stop this powerful

form of praise and adoration? God has given the language of song to us as an instrument to praise him. If we have the correct perspective and attitude, God can use our talents, not only to praise him, but to spread his message of love to those who stop to listen to the words we sing.

Common purpose

I have now come to the realisation that being part of a choir is more than contributing to our worship every Sunday.

Every week, when we come together, it's not just to practice, but to meet as a group of committed Christians to encourage each other, have opportunity to pray together and receive blessings from the words we sing.

I freely admit there have been times when my enthusiasm for being a songster has waned, but it was not until I had a short break in service (due to family reasons) that I understood the importance, for me, of being part of a larger group of devoted choristers.

This can be such a wonderful avenue of fellowship where, no matter the age, from 16 to 85, we all have a common purpose, to sing to the Lord a new song and bring

the message of salvation to those who hear the words we sing.

One of my favourite sayings is, "There is a song for every occasion" and, to the amusement of my family members, I start singing words of songs from just a phrase that is spoken.

And then there are words of choral pieces that come to me, time and time again, as inspiration and encouragement, even in the darker times in my life.

I continually call on the words of one particular song I learnt many years ago as a songster when I lack the motivation to continue the journey, "Lord, let me serve, Lord, let me follow, Give me a place and a purpose to fill; Teach me to serve, Teach me to follow, Use me to do Your will!"

Each time these words ring in my thoughts, I get back the passion for what God has called me to do.

And, once again, my heart sings, for my Saviour, God.

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT):

The Hurstville Singing Company recording at the radio 2CH studios in 1966; the original corps songster brigade in their formation year of 1939, under the leadership of Violet Morgan (second row, third from left); the brigade which toured New Zealand in 2001; a group of songsters which performed in Goulburn in 1950; the brigade which toured Singapore in 2011.



BRIGADE KEEPS DIANE'S FAITH *on song*

AS HURSTVILLE SONGSTERS CELEBRATE 75 YEARS, THEIR LONGEST-SERVING MEMBER, DIANE HILL, SHARES SOME MEMORIES WITH **JULIA HOSKING**



“I am grateful we’ve still got a songster brigade in this era when there are not so many around,” says Diane Hill (pictured above), Hurstville Songsters’ longest-serving member, during the month of the brigade’s 75th anniversary. “I am a very enthusiastic songster – and I don’t apologise for that. But it’s only because of what it’s done for me through the years: many songs have moved me to a point where I’ve reassessed my life.”

The Hurstville Songster brigade was inaugurated in August 1939 under the baton of Violet Morgan. Fourteen women formed the brigade, with men formally permitted in 1958. Today’s brigade – under the leadership of Julie Townsend – has 41 male and female members and is still an integral part of regular Sunday worship at the corps.

“Julie and Gaylene [Millar, deputy songster leader] are committed to choosing music that fits the theme of the meeting,” says Diane, who became a soprano songster in January 1960. “I’ve seen people moved while we’ve been singing, many, many times.”

In addition to blessing the Hurstville congregation, the brigade has earned a sterling reputation

through its tours around Australia and overseas. The first international trip was in 1985 to New Zealand and western USA, under the leadership of Dr Ron Smart.

“The American tour had some huge highlights,” says Diane. “We were in Seattle, singing a song called *Give Me Jesus*. I recall seeing Ron looking at the cross, which was behind the songsters. As we were singing, the tears were streaming down his face. It is such a strong memory for me whenever I sing that song.”

A somewhat more recent tour – in 2001 to New Zealand under the leadership of Gaylene Millar – also had a profound impact on Diane.

“On Easter Sunday, we were in Palmerston North and there was a procession with a large cross being carried in and out of different churches, finishing up in The Salvation Army,” she remembers.

“As the cross came into the building, we were singing *Wondrous Cross* and – I’m emotional just thinking about it – we were up to the line: “That were a present far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all’.

“It was truly powerful. There was

hardly a dry eye, and I know there are songsters who still talk about that weekend. That’s probably one of the highlights of my songster experiences.”

Throughout her time as a Hurstville Songster, Diane has witnessed many changes: the repertoire has grown to include modern music as well as older Salvation Army songs, choreography sometimes features when they sing, and songsters are now expected to memorise the songs for special programs.

“Learning the music off by heart is a bit like learning scripture off by heart,” says Diane. “You’ve got it for life. We’re also encouraged to look at the audience rather than always the leader, so we can communicate the words to them.”

As Diane approaches her 55th anniversary with the Hurstville Songsters while they celebrate 75 years, neither Diane nor the group show any signs of slowing down.

“I have so many times been blessed, or brought to a place of clear understanding of God’s love through the music of the songsters,” she says. “Being a songster has been a vital part of my worship.”

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): Brigade member Rachel Townsend; one of the newer members of the group Samantha Furka and former long-serving member Margaret Packer cutting the 75th anniversary cake; the album cover of the record released around the time of the 1985 United States tour; former and current members of the Hurstville Songsters combine for an item during the 75th anniversary weekend; current members performing over the anniversary weekend. Photos: Carolyn Hide



SONGWRITER SHARES SKILLS AT CALOUNDRRA WORKSHOP

Christian songwriter David Willersdorf, well known for songs such as *Let Your Presence Fall*, held a songwriting workshop at Caloundra Corps on 27 July.

About 15 aspiring songwriters from Brisbane, Nambour, Carindale and Caloundra took part in the workshop. Caloundra Corps community support worker Stephanie Hobbs said the participants felt encouraged to pursue songwriting.

"He really empowered people by saying, 'Treat yourself like a songwriter. You don't have to have a title to be a songwriter. Give yourself permission to be a songwriter'. It was nice to be affirmed. It gave them a lot more confidence to get out there."

Stephanie said David offered practical tips for approaching songwriting.

"If you're a creative person you might have often thought about it (songwriting) but might not have known where to start."

Some of the tips included finding a writing partner, writing down a lyric or melody straight away, knowing your audience when writing, not using Christian clichés, using simple lyrics and using the copyright symbol when writing a song.

For Stephanie, the tip she found most helpful was considering the range when writing and whether it will be too high or low for the congregation to sing. Prior to the workshop on the Sunday, David led worship at the corps' service which saw about 120 people attend.

"We had double our normal attendance," said Stephanie.

Stephanie said she hoped to hold more songwriting workshops in the near future.

– Esther Pinn

Since February this year, Granville Corps have been running regular worship nights called "Songs of Our Faith", with all songs taken from The Salvation Army songbook.

An invitation is extended to all Salvationists to either bring an instrument or Salvation Army songbook and join in for an hour of singing and Bible readings. Musicians who bring instruments form a composite band for the evening.

The songs and readings are based around a different theme for each worship session, such as "joy" or "salvation". The event was named "Songs of Our Faith" to celebrate songs of the past and note their relevance for today.

"The songs that we sing are taken from our songbook and are the songs that have inspired and instructed us as we have grown in faith over the years and they still have the power to inspire us now," said Lieutenant Jon Cory, Granville Corps Officer.

The 24 August meeting featured a composite band of 20 and the attendees came from eight different corps, along with members from the local community. The latest meeting was held on 28 September.

"Such visitors find themselves in the company of dedicated Salvationists who are ready to encourage them in their faith journey," said Lieut Cory.

More than 180 people attended Wollongong Corps' "Music Through the Ages" concert, presented by Parramatta Citadel Band on 2 August.

In line with the theme, the Parramatta band took the audience on a historical musical journey, opening with *The Pioneers* march and closing with the *Goldcrest* march, conducted by Glen Kuiper, musical director.

In the first half, pieces included a Scottish march, *Highland Cathedral*, *Thankful* sung by Graham Ainsworth, a cornet solo by Mark Roberts of the hymn, *This is My Story*, later joined by Mitchell Kuiper.

The song list included pieces from the 1950s and 1960s, such as *Love Medley* and *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*, with another cornet solo by Mitchell.

The second half began with *Pastime in Good Company*, followed by a group of younger players performing *Abide With Me* and then a nostalgic version of the song, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, arranged by Mark Roberts. *Guardian of My Soul* led the way for a short message by the Parramatta corps officer, Major Alywn Robinson.

There was something for everyone at the concert, including a performance of *Monsters Inc* for the children.



GEOFF BULLOCK SHARES WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AT GOSFORD

Gosford Corps delved deeper into worship thanks to a visit in early August from Christian songwriter Geoff Bullock.

"We didn't want to call it a concert because it wasn't that. It was a night for people to come in and join in worship," said Captain Adam Couchman, Gosford Corps Officer.

Well-known writer of songs such as *The Power of your Love*, Geoff led worship with a number of his own songs and explained his songwriting process.

"A lot of people really enjoyed the opportunity to sing along with the author of some of the best known songs of the past 20 to 30 years which have gone all over the world and

become really popular," said Captain Couchman.

"Something very different about that is getting a new sense of the meaning of the songs. He'd gone back to some of the songs and adjusted them ... and it was really interesting to hear from the author of songs and how he's re-considered them over time."

About 200 people attended the Saturday evening event (9 August) followed by another 170 people at the Sunday morning service. Many from the corps attended along with other local Christian churches and the members from the community. Both Gosford Corps' band and songsters joined in with Geoff during each worship session.

– Esther Pinn

The Salvation Army's Just Brass program – a musical development course for children – has been successfully implemented at Grafton Corps.

Major Colin Young, the corps officer at Grafton, said he introduced the program earlier this year as part of the corps' outreach program.

"When I got to Grafton, they already had a junior musos program underway,

so all I did was overlay on top Just Brass, which has worked brilliantly," he said.

"We had a lot of brass instruments sitting idle up in the cupboard and so we wanted all of those kids who had already learnt some music to be playing. We had to do a bit of work on some of the instruments, to be made ready to be used, then we identified some kids in our other programs and got a ministry underway."

The Just Brass program has given

schoolchildren (Years 3 and 4), not only the opportunity to learn an instrument but to play in a Salvation Army band and develop leadership skills.

The corps recently received a grant of \$5000 to purchase 18 new brass instruments for Just Brass and have also been able to repair another 18 brass instruments for the program. The corps is also developing a partnership with a local school to establish the program there.

RAYMOND TERRACE HOST MORNING OF ENDLESS PRAISE



Contemporary Christian singing group Endless Praise led the Sunday morning service at Raymond Terrace Corps in early July.

After the success of last year's visit to the corps, the group was invited back. About 50 people came out to hear Endless Praise perform a collection of their worship songs and listen to a few of the group's personal testimonies.

"[They] certainly [had] beautiful harmonies and tones," said Raymond Terrace Corps Officer, Envoy Ron Petterson. "We certainly enjoyed them. The congregation thought they were fantastic. They had great voices, great songs and great messages within the songs."

Envoy Petterson said they planned for Endless Praise to visit the corps annually.

Endless Praise has been ministering to churches throughout Australia for the past 30 years.

Creating the opportunity to explore non-traditional forms of connection with God was behind Forster/Tuncurry's Worship Express event on 6 September.

"With new disciples in our congregation I wanted to provide an opportunity to explore different ways to worship and connect with God so they could find their own unique expressions without feeling as though they had to conform to the norm," said Captain Jodie Pethybridge, the corps officer.

"It was also for those who have been disciples for some time and are looking for ways to further enhance their understanding of God and their ability to connect with him."

Guest presenters on the day were Louise Mathieson (music), Talitha Haggard (dance), Jodie Pethybridge (presence of God) and Bev Wilson (art), who encouraged the 12 participants to get practically involved in each session.

"We wanted to give people time to recharge, think through what they've just learnt and connect with others on the discovery journey," said Jodie.

"There was really good feedback throughout the day.

"Especially in regard to the art, I felt people were surprised with just how creative they actually were and what God gave them to work with."

The event was promoted to churches in the Forster/Tuncurry area as well as corps throughout the division.

"We are hoping that people connect or re-connect with our Creator and get a fresh sense of the depth of God's love for us and then respond to that wholeheartedly," said Jodie.

The Salvation Army's Hurstville Band was "truly a gift" to the Uniting Church in Australia's 37th anniversary celebrations, said event organiser Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, the church's Multicultural Consultant for NSW/ACT.

Billed as an Ecumenical Multicultural Service of Thanksgiving, the celebrations were held at Sydney Town Hall on Sunday evening 22 June, the same date and venue for the UCA's inauguration in 1977.

The event featured rich cultural and denominational diversity in artistic presentations. Uniting Church congregations from across Sydney attended, along with members of the public.

Rev. Dr Brian Brown, Moderator of the UCA's NSW/ACT Synod, presided over the service, assisted by Elders from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

Hurstville Salvation Army Band, led by bandmaster Steven Reay, inspired the anniversary crowd with a range of contributions including *Spirit of Joy* (Tom Rive), *Godspell* (Barrie Gott), *Land of Song* (Norman Bearcroft) and *Soli Deo Gloria* (William Himes).

Accompanied by the band, Jonathan Lang moved many in the crowd with his sensitive rendering of the cornet solo *The Prayer* (arr. Ian Jones).

Other contributing groups included the Fiji Parish Choir; Korean Presbytery Choir; Tonga Parish Choir; Cabramatta Vietnamese Choir; youth choirs from Mascot, Fairfield and Auburn; the Methodist Ladies College School Orchestra; and the Knox Grammar School Pipe Band.

"Thank you for the brilliant contribution you made to our Anniversary Service," Ms Tahaafe-Williams told Hurstville Band afterwards. "You made a huge difference."



Hurstville band member Jonathan Lang performing at the United Church's Ecumenical Multicultural Service of Thanksgiving at Sydney Town Hall.