Talents inspired by festive feast

JANE HARPER

CHRISTMAS may still be months away, but there is a decidedly festive buzz among Geelong's talented artists. Nearly 200 artists and craftpeople from the nine Geelong groups are putting the final touches to exquisite creations that will feature in Melbourne's popular annual exhibition, Christmas at the Johnston Collection.

"It's an inspiring project for everyone to be involved in and we've been working on our pieces for over a year now," said Geelong Embroiderers Guild leader Lyn Hughes. "There's definitely creative talent in our area and it's an enormous challenge to create works based on the story given to us by the Johnston Collection."

Groups involved include the Embroiderers' Guild of Victoria (Geelong Branch), Geelong Textile and Fibre Artists, Trolley Dolly Cloth Doll Club, Country Women's Association, Geelong and District Porcelain Painters, Leo-pold Lace Makers, the Third Wednesday Group from Bannockburn and Birregurra, Geelong Patchwork and Quilters Guild, and the Coastal Textile Group.

The talented artists and craftworkers have created items ranging from Christmas tree decoration and a nativity scene to quilts, calligraphy, lace and ceramics. We Three Kings of Orient Are: Christmas at the Johnston Collection opens on November 4 and runs until February 26.

The Johnston Collection House Museum is open Monday to Friday and some Saturdays. To book a tour, call 9415 2515.

Brilliant Black Dyke shows Man U class

JANE HARPER

In retrospect, it seems a weird way of spending a lifetime - puffing air down a piece of brass tubing. I was born into it, I suppose; being brought up in a Baby Family brings certain expectations.

The pianist, immortalised in the Oscar-winning film Shine, sits on stage as he joyfully made his way through a program of Beethoven, Mozart, Rachmaninoff, Liszt and Chopin.

Helfgott greeted the audience's enthusiastic applause for the pieces with a grin and a shrug off, cutting through the size of the large concert hall to create an intimate atmosphere. It was an uplifting and engaging performance guaranteed to gladden the heart.

TOP BRASS: The Black Dyke Band.

This fabulous outfit performed at Deakin's Costa Hall on Thursday, joined by Australian brass virtuoso James Morrison. It started as Black Dyke Mills Band, but when the industry slipped it lost its mills, kept the Black Dyke name and moved on from its working-class roots.

The band has won more championships than you could hide a trombone in. It's the Man O' banding. In concert, the band displayed all its fabulous attributes - unanimity of approach and attack, stunning sounds loud and soft, unbelievable virtuosity and technique from sirenens and soloists alike and an ability to astonish, inspire and entertain.

Wonderfully led and compared by Dr Nick Chidley, it presented original brass music, orchestral triumphant bars, bal­lads and swing interpreted with wit and fun.

Helfgott was the solo on the cake, showing yet again his exceptional mastery of all the brass instruments and his im­mortal brand of music­al humour.

Morrison was in top form, and like me, obviously relished a night out with the beautiful Black Dyke.

DIARY

Cottle's on show

HELEN COTTLE: National Gallery of Victoria tutor Helen Cottle presents a collection of her own pieces at the Glendinning House Gallery, 6 Dyke St. Cottle uses acrylic and mixed media to transform everyday views into dynamic works.

The exhibition opens on Sunday with a demonstration from 1:30pm, the gallery is open 10.30am to 4.30pm from Wednesday to Sunday and on public holidays.

FLOOR TALK: Geelong Gallery in Lt Malop St will present a 20-minute lunchtime floor talk on the Nora Heysen Light and Life exhibit, presented by her nephew Chris Heysen tomorrow at 12.30pm.

EMERGING MUSICIANS: Geelong Grammar School's Emerging Musicians VCE recital takes place on Sunday, September 6, at 3pm in St Paul's Anglican Church, Laraobe St. The recital will feature vocalist Peppe Leggeri, Alex Newman on cello, violinist Vitaly Gavoor, baritone Hunter Rogers and pianist Taylor Retke. Tickets cost $10 at the door, with proceeds for maintenance of historic listing buildings.

PETER PAN: Geelong College's production of Peter Pan, runs at the college's Costa Theatre, in Apathia St, Geelong West, from Thursday to Saturday at 7.30pm, with a 2pm Saturday and a 9.30am Sunday. Tickets are available only online at www.trybooking.com/BDZ

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Back in running for new award

JANE HARPER

ACCLAIMED Geelong theatre company Back to Black is in the running to add yet another accolade to its string of awards.

The group, made up entirely of professional actors with learning disabilities, has been short-listed for the Kit Denton Fellowship for its new work Ganesh vs The Third Reich.

The work, which is in development under artistic director Bruce Gladwin, explores cultural and political themes, such as the theft of symbols, iconic rituals or behaviour. The piece follows George's journey through nationalism, globalization, religion, spirituality and pop culture.

The $35,000 annual Kit Denton Fellowship was created in 2007 to honour the work and memory of Geelong author, poet and lyricist Kit Denton.

The fellowship aims to promote challenging and innovative work in performance writing by providing the recipient with a financial and practical support to enable a new writing project.

Fellowship will be announced on August 28.