

Local handbell choir featured in new children's music book

Christmas is just around the corner and once again we have a selection of seasonal books to enjoy and share with our families.

Artist Frances Tyrrell, who brought us her beautiful version of *The Huron Carol* a couple of years ago also illustrated *The Worker in Sandalwood* (Lester, \$18.95hc, ages 7 and up), a story by the late Marjorie Pickhall, which was first published in 1914.

The tale takes place in 19th century rural Quebec where Hyacinthe, a carpenter's apprentice, is ordered by his cruel master to spend Christmas Eve in the shop in finish a sandalwood chest.

A stranger mysteriously appears and offers to help Hyacinthe complete his task, but in no ordinary way.

Joy to the World (Lester, \$18.95hc, all ages), 12 Christmas carols selected from around the world by Maureen Forrester, are accompanied by Frances Tyrrell's watercolour paintings of contemporary scenes: young members of the Grace Anglican Church Memorial Handbell Choir in Milton, children at Toronto's Scott Mission daycare, and other children making snow angels and skating on a creek. The carols are arranged for easy-to-play piano music.

In Sarah's Secret by Robert McConnell (Napoleon, \$8.95pb, illustrated by June Lawrason), a young girl informs her family that the huge snowman she made on their front lawn parties with other snowpeople in their neighbourhood, but they don't believe her.

Perhaps her snowman only intended Sarah to witness the magical

BOOKS FOR KIDS

with ESTHER CALDWELL

transformation. She realizes that their secret is a precious Christmas gift.

Originally published in 1972, Jack Richards' *Johann's Gift to Christmas* (Groundwood, \$6.95pb, illustrated by Len Norris) is back in print. Johann is a young mouse who lives in a church in the Austrian mountain village of Oberndorf.

Johann loves listening to the organ music, but finds the church offers little food. In fact, he becomes so hungry that he begins nibbling the leather of the organ bellows, eventually causing so much damage that no sound comes from the organ. The organist and pastor hastily collaborate on a piece of music for guitar and choir.

That new Christmas Eve carol was Silent Night. If it hadn't been for that starving mouse...

Margaret Wild brings us a story from Down Under. *In Thank You, Santa* (Scholastic, \$13.95hc, illustrated by Kerry Argent, ages 4-8), Samantha writes Santa a note from Australia, thanking him for his gift. Santa replies and soon the two be-

come constant penpals and good friends.

By the time the next Christmas comes round, Santa has no difficulty granting Samantha her unselfish wishes that will bring happiness to others.

Meanwhile, back on the Canadian prairies, a warm wind has blown into town and in Rudy Wiebe's *Chinook Christmas* (Red Deer College Press, \$14.95hc, illustrated by David More), nine-year-old Eric races through puddles on his bike. He and his sister go shopping for a Christmas tree and later that night they return home to find an anonymous gift on their doorstep.

Resentful of her new stepfather, 13-year-old Andrea in Claire Mowat's *The Girl from Away* (Key Porter, \$12.95hc, illustrated by Malcolm Cullen, ages 8-12) is sent to a village in Newfoundland to spend Christmas with relatives while her parents honeymoon in Florida.

Reluctant at first to be among people she doesn't know well, Andrea soon finds herself participating in the traditional mummering. She also joins the villagers in helping a beached pilot whale get back out to sea.

With her new experiences behind her, Andrea returns to Toronto more accepting of her stepfather.



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