

Festive: The Brandenburg Orchestra, including Veronique Willing, Paul Dyer and Roberto Keryakos, are performing *Noel Noel*

Celebrate the season with the sound of music, writes **Alex Lalak**

WHETHER you are looking for a traditional way to celebrate Christmas this year or are keen for a festive twist, the arts community is offering plenty of ideas to fill you with cheer this month.

"Quite often people get hit with the whole ideal of giving at Christmas, and that's wonderful, but also it's good for people to realise that sometimes in order to give, you need to first stop and think about what the world is about," Australian Brandenburg Orchestra (ABO) artistic director, Paul Dyer, says.

"At Christmas, it's like everyone in Sydney suddenly stops and takes a breath and they come to these concerts to enjoy the moment."

Dyer is something of an expert on the topic of Christmas concerts, having performed one with the ABO each year for the past decade.

Dyer decided to do something different for the 11th year of the orchestra's *Noel Noel* concerts so this time it will take on a distinct South American flavour. The idea for the Latino theme came from listening to

music that made Dyer realise that, thanks to the Spanish colonists, there was a strong link between baroque, which the ABO usually plays, and South American music.

The result is a spicy, sultry take on Christmas music that Dyer is certain the orchestra's loyal fans are going to love.

"It is going to be emotional, passionate, theatrical and colourful," Dyer says.

"When you listen to this kind of music you feel this wonderful sense of warmth and I hope it will really hit people in the soul."

One of the most popular features of the *Noel Noel* concert series is that it gives the orchestra a chance to play many different venues around Sydney and in Newcastle.

There is also a stop at the ABO's usual home, the City Recital Hall in Angel Place.

Dyer, who will have a set of orange maracas on hand when he conducts, loves the fact these concerts attract such diverse audiences.

"It's not the Myer Music Bowl television spectacular, but it's not intended to be, it's more intimate and a chance to be reflective," Dyer says.

"It attracts a lot of younger people who just want to feel something, light a candle and be with their friends, like any church at midnight mass on Christmas Eve. It's kind of a bonding thing."

The Opera House is a hot-spot for Christmas shows, hosting four very different events, including Sydney Philharmonia Choirs' annual performance of Handel's *Messiah* and Opera Australia's regular festive offering, *Christmas At The House*.

Christmas shows

