

Special arts programs highlight Christmas celebrations across the country

Many of Canada's cultural institutions are reflecting the spirit of Christmas in a variety of special events and programs this year.

Music, films, exhibitions and even candlelight castle tours are all included in the special offerings that Canadians are enjoying as part of the spirit and tradition of the Yuletide season.

The Vancouver Art Gallery of Vancouver, British Columbia, is ringing with the sound of live music throughout December, with performances by some of the city's most talented artists.

The gallery's Christmas festival of music involves a series of informal Sunday afternoon concerts.

Presenting music from the Renaissance period through to the light classics, the artists include: North Shore Chamber Orchestra, the British Columbia Boys Choir, the Norman Madrigal Singers, the Arcadelt Consort, piano duo Joyce Rawlings and Don Stagg, harpist Heidi Krutzen, pianist Dorothy Huang, and violinist Anita Molaro.

Star of Bethlehem

The Christmas Star, a film presented as an annual feature at the Royal Ontario Museum's McLaughlin Planetarium in Toronto, portrays the night sky as it would have been at Christ's birth and examines theories about the star of Bethlehem. This is the fourth version of the family show that has been presented every year since the Planetarium opened.

The search for an explanation of the star of Bethlehem, recorded in St. Matthew's



Illustration from *The Hockey Sweater*, 1984. The acrylic on masonite paintings for the book by Sheldon Cohen are on display at the McCord Museum in Montreal.

gospel, is almost as old as the New Testament itself. Over the years nearly every kind of celestial phenomenon — comet, meteor, supernova or planetary conjunction — has been suggested.

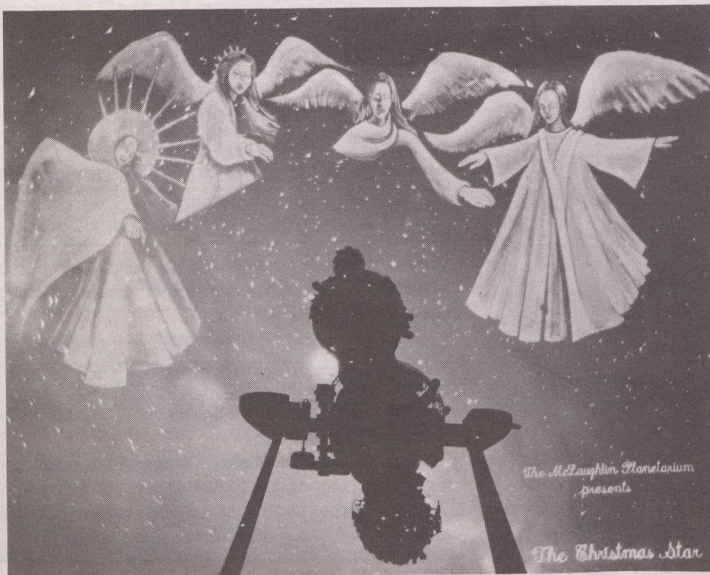
"Despite all our advances in astronomy we can never be sure what the star of Bethlehem was," says McLaughlin Planetarium producer John Kenny, "but myth, miracle or actual occurrence, it remains as an emblem of Christmas."

Dolls and hockey

Exhibitions in museums over the festive season vary greatly, from *Dolls: Most Prized Possessions*, at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, to *The Hockey Sweater* at the McCord Museum in Montreal, Quebec.

The exhibition, *Dolls: Most Prized Possessions*, suggests the Christmas dreams of young and old, girls and boys, and collectors, both amateur and professional, who delight in the imaginative world of dolls. The show features dolls from many areas, along with their houses, furniture and clothing.

The Hockey Sweater exhibition includes the 13 award-winning paintings by the National Film Board filmmaker Sheldon Cohen that are in the book of the same name written by Roch Carrier. This is a classic and popular story of the small town boy's hero-worship of hockey star Maurice Richard, who played with the Montreal Canadiens, and his despair when a department store sends him a Toronto Maple Leaf's



A scene from *The Christmas Star* being shown at the Toronto Planetarium during the Christmas season.



Inside Dundurn Castle, Hamilton, Ontario where Christmas activities include tours and treats from the kitchen, the butler's pantry table is set.