

Armidale Symphony Orchestra - President's Report for AGM 2013

As the already departed president, it is with a little sadness that I am presenting a report for the year ending 31 December 2012. That said, I have been very humbled by the support and encouragement given by those on the committee and am delighted to report on the year, 2012.

Once again the Orchestra was involved in the Armidale Music Foundation's performance of Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* in B-flat major, Hob. XXII:14, Novello 6. This was a wonderful opportunity to showcase some of the winds in the orchestra and overall gave an opportunity for the orchestra to come together socially and musically over the weekend.

2012 seemed a year of some very challenging concerto repertoire. The May concert, conducted by Bruce Menzies, saw the performance of Wagner's stirring *Siegfried Idyll*. Richard Harvey's *Concerto Antico* with Armidale's own Guitarist Steve Thorneycroft and the delightful *Symphony No. 41 (Jupiter)*; Mozart.

The orchestra lost a very dear friend and committed musician at the beginning of 2012 in Kerry Hawkins. This was an extremely sad and shattering loss of someone who brought so much to our orchestra community.

It was a pleasure to be part of a small sub-committee to create the inaugural Kerry Hawkins Award to be presented at tonight's AGM to honour the commitment and dedication of such a fine musician and friend to all. It is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the commitment of someone in the orchestra and a way to remember Kerry.

We also were saddened by the illness of Mrs Wendy Huddleston who, over so many years, has been so dedicated to the continued development of the orchestra.

Errol Russell stepped in at the last moment to conduct the second concert for the year featuring Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture*, Haydn's *Cello Concerto No. 1* (Eleanor Streatfield – soloist) and Schubert's *Symphony No.6*. This concert presented a well-balanced program and gave the opportunity to work on some finer aspects of ensemble playing throughout all sections. We thank Errol for being able to step in and prepare the orchestra with professionalism.

Following the concerto theme for 2012 Graham Maddox conducted the 3rd concert for the year. This was a varied repertoire featuring talented trombonist Dave Brown, aptly performing with us the David *Concertino for Trombone and Orchestra*. The audience was also treated to some beautiful soloistic, and reflective playing by Dave showing the trombones wonderful expressive qualities. The remainder of the program feature Mozart's *Symphony No. 30* and the challenging Romantic work, Dvorak's *Eighth Symphony*.

This year saw the tidy up of some loose ends with regards to financial arrangements with NECOM. I see it as a positive outcome for the orchestra with

more stability of insurance and support from NECOM staff and admin included in our agreement.

There has been a lot of discussion around how the orchestra, along with the support from NECOM and other local teaching bodies and individuals, can attract more school aged students to the concerts. As an educator I see a real benefit in providing these wonderful opportunities for students in Armidale and the surrounding region. They would have to travel a long way to experience the breadth of repertoire the orchestra provides each year.

Along with this is the opportunity the orchestra gives to many young musicians in Armidale. In studying and preparing focus repertoire for their preliminary and HSC year, these students are given a real advantage. After all there is no better way of experiencing orchestral repertoire than by playing it... I see this as a real asset the Symphony Orchestra is providing our young musicians and one I think should be encouraged.

Chris Cunningham has proposed an exciting new venture with the community orchestra of Lismore. This would give members from both orchestras the opportunity to prepare and perform Beethoven's 9th Symphony. This challenge would be well worth the effort and an opportunity to tackle such challenging, yet rewarding repertoire. I certainly look forward to seeing the developments of this proposal.

The year concluded with the celebration of the leadership over so many years by Mr Errol Russell. A reception was held for Errol at the Old Teachers College as a way of recognising his outstanding contribution to the orchestra over many years.

I would like to thank all the members of the ASO executive for their support, in particular Jacqui Thompson and Graham Maddox for stepping in whenever they were needed. There were many people who guided me and were so supportive when I decided to relinquish my position as president. It showed to me the character and strength of such a wonderful group of people.

Chris Garden