

Armidale Symphony Orchestra President's Report - 2021
AGM 21st March 2022

Like 2020, 2021 was a year with many COVID-19 interruptions. With lockdowns and restrictions placed on community ensembles during the year, the Armidale Symphony Orchestra was still able to present 2 very successful and contrasting concert programmes. The first concert for 2021 was the Mothers' Day concert conducted by Mr. Bruce Myers with soloist Dr. Sheila Guymmer. The repertoire for this concert included Kats-Chernin's *Moon Feather Magic*, Mozart's *piano concerto K466* and Schubert's *5th symphony*. The first rehearsal for this concert was way back in March 2020. Having been postponed a year, rehearsals finally started in February 2021 with the Mothers' Day concert falling in a mostly restriction free month.

Audience capacity restrictions were relaxed shortly before the May concert from 75% capacity to 100% seating which enabled us to increase our audience size. However, fixed seating was to become mandatory and as we had only sold general admission tickets via trybookings, help on the door from David Rowe on the day was invaluable to log where people were seated to comply with the restrictions. Eventually, the concert proceeded and I'd like to thank Bruce and Sheila and concertmaster Joanna for their patience on the day and for an excellent concert programme. Well done!

Later in 2021, our scheduled September 12th concert and November 20th/21st concerts were interrupted by the snap August 2021 lockdown and following restrictions. After the return from lockdown in Armidale, some travel restrictions from Sydney to regional areas remained and the ASO committee unfortunately had to postpone the proposed NEBB/ASO Concert to early 2022, which was to later canceled due to December 21/ January 22 Omnicron wave of the pandemic. Hopefully we will see collaboration with the Big Band in the future.

In lieu of the postponed NEBB concert in November, the Spring concert programme was scheduled in its place. Needless to say, we had learnt from our May concert seating challenges, and had drawn up a fixed seating chart for people to book via Trybookings. There was still a chance the concert could have been cancelled with many COVID cases still circulating throughout the Armidale community, however most people had been fully vaccinated and luck would have it that no orchestral members were infected before the concert. On the afternoon of November 21st 2022, the ASO performed Mozart's Overture *Die Entführung aus dem Serail, K.384*, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and also featured soloists Eliza Scott and Emily Thompson who performed the Vivaldi four seasons concertos with outstanding musicality.

While 2020 and 2021 were tough to navigate and feature concerts, I hope that the remainder of 2022 will stay clear from COVID restrictions and allow us to present a full calendar of concerts. I hope to see the Orchestra continue to attract advanced students who also play in the Armidale Youth Orchestra and I would encourage the orchestra to continue to host dress rehearsal concerts inviting school students, foundation music students and their families the day before our usual Sunday performances. Thank you to all of the ASO members who contribute with their time each Monday to rehearse, to the conductors who give their time to lead rehearsals, to Joanna Fairs Wu for undertaking concertmaster duties in 2021 and to the outstanding ASO committee members who give up their time to help steer the orchestra.

Sincerely
Robert Jackson
ASO President 2020-2022