

Armidale Symphony Orchestra - President's Report for 2007

I have much pleasure in presenting my report for the year ending 31 December 2007.

The past year has been a significant one in the life of the Armidale Symphony Orchestra, which has been contributing to the musical life of Armidale at least since 1945. Now, with the amalgamation of the orchestra with NECOM, there are exciting new opportunities for the future - both musically and administratively - through the cooperative efforts and activities of the various groups associated with the Conservatorium.

The move two years ago of the Orchestra's rehearsal venue from Legacy Hall to the CB Newling auditorium has not been without some pain, however, and there are still some issues to be resolved in this regard. The most urgent need is the provision of more convenient access to and from the building for large instruments and for people with disabilities. This will be one of the major challenges for the coming year.

Our program for 2007 began in May with the ever popular 'Last Night of the Proms' format, with conductor David Gee leading the charge, well supported by vocal soloists Inge Southcott and Rowena Moon and drummers Geoff and James Walsh. As usual, this concert was very well attended and very well received by the audience, who joined enthusiastically in the singing of the more familiar Proms pieces.

In August, Wendy Huddleston and Stuart Pavel combined to conduct two very successful performances of what was quite an ambitious program. The concerts opened with Joseph Haydn's *Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra*, wonderfully performed by visiting trumpeter John Kellaway, followed by the very lyrical *Jazz Suite No. 2* by Dmitri Shostakovich. In the second half of the program, the orchestra was joined by the Armidale Choral Society, the Cantilena Singers, the New England Singers, and soloists Elizabeth Ellis and Sam Payne to present the very moving *Mass of the Children* by contemporary composer John Rutter.

Laurie Pulley next conducted the orchestra in two performances of a Children's Proms Concert. Although less well attended than was hoped for, those present had a thoroughly entertaining time with pieces ranging from *In the Hall of the Mountain King* to *Bananas in Pyjamas*.

The final concert for the year opened with Graham Howard, recently relocated to Armidale, conducting his own composition *Footsteps at Four Creeks*, a highly evocative work based on the composer's reflections of his experiences in the creeks of western Sydney. This was followed by a brilliant performance by Deidre Rickards of Liszt's *Piano Concerto No. 2* with Wendy Huddleston at the podium. The concert concluded with Wendy conducting the highly politically charged *Symphony No. 5* by Shostakovich.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee, the conductors, and others who have helped in various ways to ensure the success of our concerts. In particular, I would like to thank Chris Cunningham for his dedication and support, not just for his duties as secretary, but also for his hard work in drafting briefing papers and documentation relating to the amalgamation with NECOM and other matters. With his support, my job as president has been made so much easier.

Several key members of the committee have expressed their intention not to stand for office this year, and we will of course be operating under a new structure. Nevertheless I am sure there will be many willing and able replacements, and that the Orchestra will continue to build on its successes of the past.

Finally I thank you all for your dedication to the orchestra and I look forward to another successful year in 2008.

Maurice Anker