State Manager’s Message

We are almost halfway through 2010 ... how time travels fast! Closing dates for the AMEB’s final examination series of the year are approaching. Please check the 2010 AMEB (NSW) Teachers’ Handbook for dates, codes and fees, or look on our website www.ameb.nsw.edu.au

We congratulate your elected representatives who will serve on the AMEB (NSW) Board in 2010 and 2011. They are:

- Private Music Teacher representatives – William Clark, Rita Crews, Anne Harvey
- Private Speech and Drama representative – Victoria Clancy

Thank you to those teachers who nominated but were unsuccessful for these positions. We do appreciate your willingness to contribute to the AMEB and we look forward to receiving your nominations again in future years.

By the time this newsletter is distributed, the first ever NSW candidates will have sat for their P Plate Piano assessments. This fabulous new syllabus for early learners has been developed by the AMEB Federal office and we look forward to welcoming your piano students for a non-graded assessment with written feedback provided by an AMEB examiner.

As usual, keep your eye on both the Federal and NSW AMEB websites for important information regarding syllabus news, workshops and enrolment information.

P Plate Piano

P Plate Piano is off to a flying start, with workshops held across NSW in the past six months, providing teachers with the opportunity to meet with Elissa Milne and hear first-hand how pieces were selected for the P Plate program.

The pieces chosen by Elissa Milne for inclusion in these three books cover a rich array of musical concepts. In addition to the 18 pieces in each book, fun activities and extra information are also included to develop musicianship, general knowledge and keyboard skills. Elissa demonstrated many of the pieces, offering strategies for engaging the student’s imagination, whilst working towards a realistic first step in the examination process and a lifelong love of music.

To sit an assessment, students select and perform three pieces from the book they are studying. There are no prerequisites, additional requirements, sight-reading, aural tests or general knowledge. The first assessments have taken place in New South Wales during the First Metropolitan round of exams in both Sydney and regional areas.

Young P Plate Piano student Dawei Yuan (6) commented that the pieces are ‘good fun to learn and get my imagination to think about the pictures and the music’.

Surprisingly, it is not only young children embracing this new pilot program but also students beginning piano studies as teenagers or mature-age students. One adult student commented that a non-graded first assessment ‘took the pressure off and allowed me to simply enjoy the learning process’.

A young teacher (21) said, ‘P Plate Piano offers an opportunity for students to play in exam conditions when they may not be quite ready for Preliminary exams. The pictures and layout are attractive to young pupils and some of the pieces are challenging, requiring ranges and techniques not normally used in tutor books.’

Patricia Weekes is an AMEB (NSW) examiner as well as a teacher preparing candidates for P Plate Piano assessments. She commented, ‘My young students are enjoying it very much. The pieces are great fun to play and provide choices about whether to play high or low octaves and even at times the choice of what notes to use. This opens students’ minds to the creative potential of music. Important aspects of technique are being developed even though the students don’t notice!’

USEFUL LINKS

Federal website www.ameb.edu.au
P Plate Piano www.pplatepiano.com.au
Online exams www.amebexams.edu.au
Speech and drama students shine

The Annual Diploma Presentation Ceremony this year was held on Sunday 14 March, with over 200 Diplomas awarded to musicians and 35 to Speech and Drama students.

Interestingly, our five chosen performers blurred the lines between music and speech and drama. Pianist and FMusA awardee Nicholas Young has an impressive history of successful AMEB exam results behind him, 15 of which were for Speech and Drama examinations. Our two Speech and Drama performers both chose a piece with a musical theme. Michelle Carter (ADPA awardee and violinist) presented a moving poem about hearing the strains of a didgeridoo while travelling abroad and Rebecca Wong (CSCA awardee and pianist) delivered a whimsical excerpt from Punch magazine examining the curious naming system for classical compositions.

Marian Arnold from ABC Classic FM presented the opening address, sharing with the Diplomates the joy music has brought to her life both as a performer and radio presenter.

March examiners’ meeting

The Annual Examiners’ Meeting was held at The Scots’ College on Saturday 27 March 2010. AMEB Examiners in Speech and Drama and all musical instrument categories gathered ahead of the first examinations for 2010 to ensure that all examiners were aware of any syllabus changes affecting their category before the commencement of the First Metropolitan examinations for 2010. It also provided an excellent opportunity for examiners to share ideas and discuss the various challenges of the examining process.

Brian Plummer, a child psychologist, and music teacher Margaret Cooper, gave a very informative lecture touching upon strategies for assisting anxious candidates, with candid footage of music students discussing their examination experiences. Acting State Manager Maree Lucas spoke about the importance of running examinations to time, which is often a major challenge for examiners given their tight examining schedule.

Examiners were also encouraged to complete a questionnaire to suggest ways in which teachers and their students can do their part to ensure that examinations run to time.

Some of their suggestions can be found in the box on the opposite page.

Closing dates approaching!

Friday 11 June
- Closing date for August Written enrolments
- Closing date for Second Metropolitan Practical enrolments for music, speech and drama, with enrolling postcodes 2000–2109
- Last date for transfers between Second Metropolitan period date bands

Friday 18 June
- Closing date for all Diploma enrolments

Friday 30 July
- Closing date for Second Metropolitan Practical enrolments for music, speech and drama, with enrolling postcodes 2110–2999
- Closing date for second Country Period practical enrolments for piano, speech and drama in Canberra, Newcastle and Wollongong
- Closing date for CPM and percussion exam series

Retirement tribute for Peter Walmsley

A memorable concert was held at Sydney Town Hall on 30 April, celebrating the career of Peter Walmsley OAM. The concert featured a piece entitled Fanfare for Peter Walmsley, written in Peter’s honour by Barker Concert Band Director and fellow AMEB examiner, Brendan Collins.

Peter has spent 35 years at the helm of the Band program at Barker College, during which time Barker achieved countless top placings in national and state Band Championships and a recent Gold Medal in the Yamaha Band Festival. As the Director of Bands and conductor at Barker College, Peter has inspired generations of Barker students to follow their musical dreams, and his tireless efforts have placed Barker College in an enviable position on the music scene for his lucky successor.

Luckily for AMEB (NSW), Peter has assured us that he will continue in his role as AMEB (NSW) Brass Advisor and senior examiner, sharing his musical expertise with AMEB brass candidates for years to come.

Staff news

We congratulate our previous AMEB (NSW) State Manager Neal Crocker on his recent permanent appointment as the Head of Student Support and Appeals with the Office of the Board of Studies. Maree Lucas continues in the role of Acting State Manager until a permanent appointment is made mid-2010.

AMEB (NSW) welcomes Samantha Gnaden, our new Administrative Officer (Systems). Samantha’s experience with a variety of systems and her customer service skills as a supervisor with Singapore Airlines will stand her in good stead as she tackles the task of supervising the huge volume of examination scheduling each year in New South Wales and the ACT.
MUSIC: Count Us In

The Level 8 studios were abuzz with creative energy on Tuesday 4th May as a team of talented teenagers and their professional mentors worked together to write some important songs for the Music: Play for Life program.

Music: Play for Life provides information, advice and inspiration to encourage more Australians to begin – and stick with – their music-making journey. The campaign encompasses all ages, all genres of music and all levels of player, from beginner to professional. It is an initiative of the Music Council of Australia, in partnership with the Australian Music Association and the Australian Society for Music Education.

With funding support from the federal Department of Education, the campaign’s Music: Count Us In project gives principals, teachers, parents and students from tiny rural schools to big city schools a focal point for discussions about the value of music in our schools. Last year the initiative involved more than 350,000 students, teachers and parents from over 1200 schools around the country, learning, rehearsing and then performing the same song at the same time to celebrate the importance of music learning. The songwriting workshop for this year’s song was held in the new AMEB studios at Clarence Street, Sydney, the perfect environment for creative brainstorming.

Together with three mentors: multiple Golden Guitar award winner, Melinda Schneider, Bluesman Paul Greene and songwriter/producer Audius (Delta Goodrem, Jessica Mauboy), nine high school students from around Australia worked in groups to compose three unique songs. Renowned Musical Director John Foreman [a talented AMEB (NSW) AMusA graduate himself] came along as program ambassador and producer.

John is now working on the recording of each of these songs and they will all be available shortly through the website below, arranged for a variety of performance scenarios from ukulele groups to string ensembles, orchestras to choirs. Look out for the performance of the showcase piece on the culminating performance date of Thursday 2nd September 2010, or better still, visit their website www.musiccountusin.org.au to learn how you and your students can become involved. Participation and support materials are FREE. Visit www.musicplayforlife.org

Helpful hints from examiners

- Plan your trip to the examination venue well in advance and allow plenty of time.
- Ensure that you (or your teacher) clearly write either Aural Tests or Sight Reading on your Notice of Examination if you are sitting for an examination in a ‘For Leisure’ syllabus.
- Have all of your music (originals, not photocopies) ready before your name is called.
- Instruments should be out of the case and tuned before your name is called.
- Any pencil marks providing information relating to general knowledge questions must be carefully erased before your examination time.
- Place markers on the correct pages to help you find your pieces quickly.

In addition, examiners had some good advice about how exams (and examiners) should be perceived by candidates:

Don’t assume

Examiners are invariably also teachers themselves so they appreciate your efforts in preparing for your exam and they do want to see you do well.

If your examiner asks you to cut a piece short or tells you that your second extra list piece need not be presented, don’t assume that this is due to a poor performance on your part. It is far more likely that they have made this request due to time constraints or because your examiner has already heard enough of your program to form their examination assessment.

After the exam – don’t take a ‘bad’ result personally

Examiners can only assess your performance and fulfilment of the syllabus requirements on that particular day, not on your general standard as a musician or your musical potential. Your performance on the day may not accurately reflect your overall musical ability, so don’t obsess about or place too much importance on a single exam result.

Focus on the comments given rather than the grade given. Work with your teacher to be better prepared for your next exam or learn to manage your nerves more effectively in your next assessment. Many talented performers (and perhaps even some teachers and examiners in their youth!) have stumbled in exams or performances on their path to greatness. Nevertheless, those who respond with a positive attitude, dedication, strength of character and a love of their craft will take the necessary steps to address their problem areas and ensure future success.

Exams needn’t be scary

Parents and guardians should ensure that they don’t transmit their own anxiety about examinations to their child. Be sure to provide unconditional support before the exam and encourage your child in a positive way regardless of the outcome.

The above tips are an excerpt from a more detailed document offering advice about exam preparation. This useful resource can be downloaded from the Teacher Support section of our website www.ameb.nsw.edu.au
Winners of 2009 AMEB (NSW) Shields

Private Teacher Pianoforte Category
Preliminary to Sixth Grade
Jacqueline Sharp
Private Teacher Pianoforte Category
Seventh Grade to Licentiate
Neta Maughan AM
Private Teacher Instrumental/Vocal Category
Preliminary to Sixth Grade
Melissa Hoile
Private Teacher Instrumental/Vocal Category
Seventh Grade to Licentiate
Jocelyn Edey Fazzone (Woodwind)
Alex Todicescu (Strings)

Private Teacher Written Category
First to Fourth Grade
Australian Music Schools Randwick
Private Teacher Written Category
Fifth Grade to Licentiate
Helen Lowry
Private Teacher Speech Category
Preliminary to Fifth Grade
Victoria Clancy
Private Teacher Speech Category
Sixth Grade to Licentiate
Schools Category
Victoria Clancy
Sydney Grammar School

Written exam information session

On 7 March, AMEB (NSW) headquarters hosted two very well-attended workshops for teachers interested in learning more about the changes in the written syllabuses from 2010. Dr Rita Crews, AMEB (NSW) Written Syllabus Advisor, presented an informative three hour workshop covering the following three topics:

Written examinations

- The need for familiarity with the syllabus requirements was discussed. The current year’s Manual should always be consulted as there are often subtle changes made to the written syllabuses.
- The Memory section has changed for Grades 1–4 of Theory and Grades 1–3 of Musicianship. Folk songs need no longer to be written out from memory – instead candidates will be asked to recognise a few bars of one or more of the folk songs studied.
- Do not assume that the marking scheme is the same for every type of question at every session. For instance, half marks may not be awarded in a question worth one mark. It also cannot be assumed that nine separate actions are required in a 9 mark question.
- Full marks are given if a question appears on a paper that is not in that particular syllabus.
- The function of rests was discussed and examples of adding correct rests in various metres were given.
- The common faults in harmony writing were explained, including: key, chord and modulation recognition; voice leading errors; incorrect use of resources from a higher grade etc.

Dr Crews then gave this final piece of advice: ‘If you are concerned about marking, please contact the office within the specified time limit. Examiners are only human and glitches can sometimes creep in – but you don’t need to be ANGRY! Every query is addressed and an appropriate response given. Remember, the examiner can only mark what is there regardless of what your student might recall and relate to you after the exam.’

New grades for the Music Craft Syllabus

Grades 5 and 6 comprise Level 2 of Music Craft and this level gives an excellent grounding in advanced musical skills. In particular, Grade 6 should be seen as an appropriate introduction to undergraduate work in a tertiary institution.

The layout of the publications follows the familiar layout of Level 1, and as with the previous grades, two CDs are included for each grade to supplement the aural component with appropriate exercises. A bibliography at the beginning of each workbook gives an overview of available literature that supports the learning concepts of each grade. Each lesson in a workbook begins with a list of resources that direct you to appropriate support material for those exercises.

Greater detail regarding the main components and an in-depth description of Grades 5 and 6 can be found in the Teacher Support section of the AMEB (NSW) website.

Online exams

It is anticipated that On-Line Exams for early grades of all written syllabuses will begin in NSW later this year. Jon Adams from WebEd, the company engaged by Federal AMEB to initiate these exams, spoke about the procedures for entering and attempting the exams in an on-line environment.

The system requirements, security measures, examination practicalities and supervisory requirements were all discussed at length.

A more detailed report of the workshop content can be found in the Teacher Support section of our website: www.ameb.nsw.edu.au