

Vale Dennis Brain



Dennis was born in Temora and lived in Ardlethan until his family moved to Canberra when he was six. Here he showed a keen interest in music and was given piano lessons paid for by his grandparents.

In 1964 his family moved to Narrandera where he continued music lessons with Sister Chanell from the local convent and was also helped by Rose Ianno from Leeton. After moving back to Canberra, he furthered his musical education at the Canberra School of Music, studying with Alan Jenkins and William Herbert and gaining his diploma. He also gained his AMEB AMusA and LMusA diplomas during this time. Further voice development was undertaken with Eleanor Houston and Pat Davey.

In 1976, Dennis was awarded a scholarship to study music in Germany. This included two months at the Goethe Institute learning the German language at Schwabisch Hall in Bavaria and then Lieder at the Music Hochschule in Cologne with Professor Hecker.

At the completion of this scholarship, he returned to Canberra to resume his musical studies, teaching piano and voice and contributing in a number of ways to the Canberra musical scene. During this time, Dennis was also appointed as an AMEB examiner, later becoming an AMEB (NSW) Diploma examiner for many years for both piano and singing.

As a teacher of piano, voice, and musical coach he was always in high demand, teaching students from Preliminary to Licentiate, with an impressive number of Diploma recipients amongst his ACT students. Dennis had an extremely strong work ethic - he was never forced to practice and expected the same from his students.

The love of music he nurtured in those he taught, adjudicated and examined will ensure that Dennis's memory is always with us.

Canberra accompanist and friend, Jenny Kain, and AMEB Federal and Diploma examiner and AMEB (NSW) Board member, Lyn Morgan, share their recollections of their friend and colleague.

Jenny Kain: “Dennis was an extremely talented musician and educator – in particular, his sight-singing abilities were astonishing. He did so much to enrich the music community in the ACT. He was always completely generous and non-competitive with his peers, offering his time and expertise whenever needed for workshops, masterclasses or at ACT Music Teachers’ Association events.”

Lyn Morgan: “I had a particularly close friendship with Dennis. We both began examining around 40 years ago and found ourselves scheduled to examine on a week-long tour to Newcastle. Dinner each evening and most lunchtimes were spent together and we became close friends. It was Dennis whom I called to take over a country tour of mine when the death of a close family member meant I had to return suddenly to Sydney, and when we were examining Diplomas in Canberra he was the real Sir Galahad, offering me his woollen scarf when I felt the extreme cold of a Canberra winter! Dennis was a great cook and host, and derived great pleasure from his garden, but above all, his deep love of music persisted throughout his life. He had a rich baritone voice and I recall spending many happy hours at musical soirees at his home. Dennis's musical legacy can be seen in the vast numbers of successful voice and piano students he trained, and he will never be forgotten. Rest in peace, dear friend.”