Message from the Chairman

Some years ago, I had the privilege of chairing a working group that had as its objective the establishment of a ‘conservatorium without walls’ that would enrich opportunities for quality music education and performance across the New England. This Annual Report outlines the substantial progress NECoM has made in realising this vision.

NECoM’s programs include a vigorous Early Childhood music program, instrumental teaching, beginner string ensembles, a beginner woodwind program, four choral groups, The Armidale Youth Orchestras, the Armidale Symphony Orchestra, the New England Youth Sinfonia, guitar ensembles and recorder ensembles.

NECoM provides curriculum support for schools across the New England. It provided 58 scholarships in 2009, organised many workshops and master classes, hosted the Australian Youth Orchestra chamber music camp, organised a wide range of concerts and developed a campus in Inverell. NECOM also provides quality music for the graduation ceremonies of the University of New England.

NECoM is able to achieve significant leverage of the instrumental tuition provided by its salaried staff through the activities of 56 Music Educator members. In the 2009 Review of the Regional Conservatoriums program, the Committee gave a resounding endorsement of the NECoM model by recommending that ‘regional conservatoriums strongly consider the viability of wholly or partially adopting the New England model to ensure long term sustainability’.

2009 was a year of change for NECoM. Wendy Hudidleston performed the role of acting Director during first term. Corinne Arter then resumed her role as Director to the end of the second term. Corinne deserves great credit for her dedication to the development of NECoM over five years. Julie Croft was appointed as NECoM’s first full-time Director in July, 2009 and has hit the ground running to develop NECoM’s Strategic Plan for the future. She has also been very successful in winning additional grants to fund NECoM’s growth.

The financial report shows that NECoM achieved impressive growth to achieve an annual turnover of around $800,000 pa in its sixth year. Within the next three years, NECoM expects to operate from four campuses across the New England and increase its outreach to around 7,000 participants including the students of Music Educator Members.

I wish to thank my fellow Board members and the staff of NECoM for their great individual and collective contribution to NECoM’s goals, the many Government and private sponsors of NECoM and our clients who have given this fledgling Conservatorium such outstanding support.

NECoM has also benefitted greatly from the unwavering support of our local member, The Honourable Dr. Richard Torbay M.P.

“NECoM achieved impressive growth to achieve an annual turnover of around $800,000 pa”

Dr P.A. Rickards OAM
Chairman
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2009 has certainly been a year of growth, change, challenge and achievement for the New England Conservatorium of Music. The youngest of the NSW Regional Conservatoriums, it has experienced a period of exponential growth since its inception in 2003 and this year again witnessed program development and expansion, with increased numbers of staff, students, curriculum support programs, workshops, masterclasses and performance opportunities for students and professional musicians alike.

NECOM has been sailing through colourful but calm waters with three distinctly different people at the helm. Acting Director Wendy Husband steered the vessel admirably in Term 1. Wendy is a well known music educator and musician of excellence who has contributed to the musical richness of Armidale over many years. She stepped into the role with aplomb, not missing a beat with the organisation of the multi-faceted Year 10 and HSC Workshops and masterclasses with pianist Roberto Cominati and string pedagogue Elizabeth Morgan. New staff members were welcomed to NECOM: violin and viola teacher April Kelson; the new conductor of the Youth Orchestra, Warwick Dunham; Belinda Niemeyer to lead the Mini Singers and Inge Southcott to direct the New England Singers.

Wendy implemented two important innovations - supplementary workshops for the Instrumental Program students, and sessions with a professional accompanist for every Beginner String Program student. We thank Wendy for her very significant contribution.

Director Corinne Arter returned to keep the vessel well on course in Term 2 while a new Director was being recruited. I would like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of Corinne Arter to the development of NECOM, to which the article in this report is a fitting tribute. NECOM has continued to benefit from Corinne’s expertise in her part time role as Program Manager.

I arrived from the horrendous humidity of Darwin to the chilling cold of the New England in June. My background in music education and arts administration has been broadened in recent years to include working in Afghanistan for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and in the Northern Territory to provide food security for remote indigenous communities. These experiences have given me a fresh perspective on the central place of music in all cultures.

NECOM plans to enlarge its footprint across the New England, commencing with the expansion of the Inverell campus. In 2009 a Community Building Partnership grant was secured to develop the site. Together with a twenty year lease from the Department of Education and Training this will place the campus on secure foundations for future growth. Successful funding applications this year to the Ian Potter Foundation and to Arts NSW will also enable major program development in 2010.

You will read in this report about the many achievements of NECOM throughout 2009. These achievements are underpinned by instrumental and choral teachers of excellence and by quality program design and implementation. I have been impressed by the level of support provided to individual students to ensure that they are given every opportunity to move with ease and enjoyment along their musical pathways. Our successes are also due to a very small but extremely dedicated administrative support team led by Faewyn Goyen. My gratitude is extended to Arthur Rickards for his ongoing enthusiasm, advocacy and vision for NECOM. To students, parents and the New England community, thank you for supporting NECOM throughout 2009, another vintage year!

Julie Croft
Director
Early Childhood Music

Throughout 2009 NECOM’s Early Childhood Music Education Program Mini Minstrels continued to introduce children from 4 months to 8 years to the world of music. Seventeen classes each week were conducted by early childhood music specialist Belinda Niemeyer, one of these being a family class.

The program has been carefully designed with an understanding and acknowledgement of early childhood developmental stages. It develops music skills including singing, chanting, movement and musical memory. The listening and auditory skills covered include inner hearing, improvisation and the playing of tuned and untuned percussion instruments.

The Mini Singers choir, conducted in 2009 by Belinda Niemeyer and fellow music specialist Sarah McNeall, gave children from Kindergarten to Year Two the opportunity to sing in a vocal ensemble of extremely high quality. Weekly rehearsals developed the choir’s repertoire and the children’s capabilities, culminating in performances at the Armidale Eisteddfod, events within the community and end-of-term NECOM concerts.

Instrumental Tuition

2009 saw NECOM continue to provide quality instrumental tuition in violin, viola, cello, flute, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon and oboe to children and adults, with numbers of students reaching 233. The Conservatorium provided teachers of excellence in these areas: Marian Barford (violin); April Kelson (violin, viola); Eleanor Streafeld (cello); Nick Negerevich (woodwind); Zana Clarke (violin). Each year, instrumental music learning is greatly enhanced by associated instrumental music programs and the level of quality input from teachers. 2009 was no exception. For example, with the Beginner Strings and Beginner Woodwind programs, in addition to the regular ensemble rehearsals and performance opportunities, teachers attend and assist with school performances in which their students participate. Progress of students’ individual and ensemble learning is closely monitored and discussed at fortnightly instrumental teachers meetings and any teacher/learning issues are immediately addressed. Teachers maintain close liaison with parents and school music teachers and contacts and parents receive a comprehensive report on student progress each semester.

Beginner Strings Program

The 2009 Beginner Strings program, conducted by experienced string teachers April Kelson, Marion Barford and Eleanor Streafeld, gave 92 children of all ages the opportunity to learn a stringed instrument. The introduction in 2009 of one individual session per term with NECOM accompanist, Madeleine Lawrence, was a valuable complement to weekly individual and group tuition.

There were extremely high levels of student participation and parental involvement in Beginner Strings and studio concerts, workshops, the Armidale Eisteddfod, and AMEB and Trinity exams.

The first Beginner Strings concert was held in June. This concert showcased the work of the group classes and therefore had an ensemble focus, giving young children the opportunity to experience a group performance first-hand and observe older children exhibiting confident performance skills and etiquette. The repertoire performed was clear evidence of the program’s success.

The September solo concert gave students an opportunity to improve their stagecraft, performance and communication skills in a formal concert setting. The large number of students involved necessitated two separate concerts which proved to be a successful approach. At the conclusion of each concert the Beginner Strings staff treated the students to a performance of an advanced yet accessible work, and this was very well received by the children and their families. All performances were well-rehearsed and executed, reflecting the hard work of both students and teachers.

Beginner String Ensembles in 2009:

Super Smart Semibreves (Violins and cellos)
Cool Crotchets (Violins)
Cool Crotchets (Cellos)
Mini Minims (Violins)
Mini Minims (Cellos)
“Versatility of repertoire was a highlight of the concert”

Beginner Woodwind Program

Throughout 2009 the Beginner Woodwind program, led by highly-experienced teacher, performer and AMEB examiner Nicholas Negerevich, offered individual and group tuition to sixteen aspiring young woodwind players. Weekly ensemble rehearsals and lessons culminated in two concerts, showcasing the program’s strong positive effect on the standard of woodwind performance amongst Armidale’s youth.

Students of the program performed in the Armidale Eisteddfod, workshops and AMEB and Trinity exams. In September a concert of solo and ensemble items was held. Fifteen young players gave impressive performances, accompanied by Sheila Guymenr and conducted by Nicholas Negerevich. The repertoire covered a variety of musical styles.

Students from the Beginner Strings and Woodwind programs combined for the first time in the 2009 December Christmas Concert. The encouraging and celebratory atmosphere of this concert gave less experienced students confidence to perform and the opportunity to experience the robust sound of a massed instrumental ensemble.

Choral Program

The 2009 Choral program comprised 124 students in four choirs:

- Mini Singers (Kindergarten to Year 2), conducted by Belinda Niemeyer, assisted by Sara McNeall and accompanied by Lou Nano;
- Cantilena Singers (Years 3 – 6), conducted by Rowena Tall, accompanied by Wendy Huddleston in First Semester and Naomi O’Hern in Second Semester;
- Cantilena Folk Group (Years 5-6 by audition) conducted by Rowena Tall and accompanied by Wendy Huddleston in First Semester and Naomi O’Hern in Second Semester;
- New England Singers (secondary school students), conducted by George Torbay and Inge Southcott in Term 1, and conducted by Leanne Roobol and accompanied by Rebecca Simon in Terms 2-4.

The experienced and professional staff facilitated an extremely high standard of vocal and ensemble work in all choirs. Their performances at NECOM concerts, the Armidale Eisteddfod, the annual Celebration Concert in Sydney and a variety of community events were consistently remarkable. Organisers of these events certainly value the support of the choirs and their conductors, and many positive comments have been received from members of the public.

The 2009 NECOM Choral Concert in September involved all four choirs. Versatility of repertoire was a highlight of the concert, as was the showcasing of vocal abilities of children of all ages. All performances achieved excellence in musicality and presentation, reflecting the success of the Conservatorium’s Choral program.

The Cantilena Singers were provided with an opportunity to share their exceptional talent with the Sydney community at the 2009 Celebration Concert. Listeners were highly impressed by the children’s focus and the quality of sound produced. The experience of singing items both as Cantilena Singers and as part of a massed choir was beneficial to the musical development of all members, and a significant achievement for the 2009 NECOM Choral program.

At the end of the year Cantilena Singers and New England Singers explored a new approach to the annual Christmas Concert, performing at the ‘Sing for Your Supper’ concert at a local restaurant. After the concert, the acoustics of which were described as exquisite, choir members and their families enjoyed a meal at the restau-
rant. This concert helped to raise community awareness of the work of NECOM and its ensembles, showing Armidale some of the delights of the 2009 Choral program.

Instrumental Ensembles

The Armidale Youth Orchestra and the Armidale Symphony Orchestra are community-based orchestras with a long history of excellence in fine music. These orchestras amalgamated with NECOM in 2007 and now form the upper tiers of a comprehensive orchestral training program at the Conservatorium.

The Armidale Youth Orchestras Report

2009 was a year of new beginnings and consolidation for The Armidale Youth Orchestras (TAYO), with the Armidale Youth Orchestra (AYO), Armidale Youth String Orchestra (AYS0) and Armidale Youth Wind Ensemble (AYWE) adopting their new collective title.

Warwick Dunham was welcomed as paid conductor to the AYO for the period 2009-2011. This position was initiated and developed by previous committees with NECOM’s assistance. The long-term nature of this position aimed at providing stability for the AYO and encouraging growth in smaller sections of the orchestra.

The committee also welcomed April Kelson (AYS0) and in Term 3 Gerard Larkins replaced Chris Garden as conductor of AYWE. All showed great commitment to their groups throughout the year as they developed an understanding of their ensembles and their players’ abilities. Chris’ work with the organisation over recent years was much appreciated.

The year commenced with a workshop at Sawtell organised by Wendy Hudleston and conducted by Mal Hewitt. A large number of families were in attendance and enjoyed the opportunity to make new friends and support their children in music making. Families from as far as Ballina and the Sunshine coast regularly subscribe to this workshop. Sixty five players were in attendance in 2009.

Performance opportunities for all groups throughout the year included the annual garden party fundraiser (raising over $3000), the Armidale Eisteddfod, the Term 2 Twilight Concert, and the annual Gala Concert in November. The Gala Concert was a wonderful showcase of the depth of musical abilities of the AYO, AYSO and AYWE, with the concert raising approximately $1500.

In addition the Youth Orchestra gave a Walk through the Orchestra concert at Lazenby Hall. This free concert was performed to over 900 school children and teachers and was extremely well received by two audiences. This was a great opportunity for the players to perform to their peers and to a full house. As well as being of educational value, the concert lifted the profile of the organisation, encouraging other young people to take up musical instruments. Warwick Dunham conducted the “walk through” and interacted with the audience. Without the assistance of NECOM these concerts would not have been possible.

The AGM was held in October to assist with forward planning for 2010. Suzie Wright was voted in to continue her role as President and Berenice Scott continued as Secretary. Brian Ostenfeld retired as treasurer, greatly thanked for his meticulous work; Neil Glen was voted into the position for the coming year. NECOM moved to take over some of the AYO administration responsibilities for 2010, the AYO committee being grateful for this assistance.

Throughout 2009 TAYO was in a sound financial position. However, if a tour was to be undertaken additional financial support would be needed to avoid dipping into consolidated revenue. The committee decided at its June meeting to increase fees in order to more readily cover costs. Fees for 2010 were set at $150 for AYO and $100 for AYSO and AYWE, with a $20 discount for siblings, assisting with cost recovery for music and the paid conductor position. It is hoped that fee increases can be minimised in future years.

Membership for 2009 was AYO (44), AYSO (24) and AYWE (11).

Suzie Wright
President
Armidale Symphony Orchestra 2009 Report

“Presenting an eclectic and thoughtful mix of music”

Concerts Performed this Year
The Armidale Symphony Orchestra (ASO) was involved with five major musical events including our usual series of three concerts. All have been extremely successful.

The orchestra began its 2009 activities by participating in the Armidale Music Foundation’s twelfth annual choral weekend performing Elgar’s Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands under the expert tutelage of conductor Rick McIntyre, choral director Paul Holley, string tutor Errol Russel and brass tutor John Kellaway.

The first in the concert series, conducted by Wendy Huddleston, with Inge Southcott as soloist and also featuring Fiori Musicali, included works by Schubert, Borodin, Mahler, Tippett and Bernstein. The central work on the program was the Kindertotenlieder by Mahler with Inge Southcott as soloist.

The second (2 performances), conducted by Bruce Menzies, was presented jointly with the Armidale Musical and Drama Society and was entitled A Night at the Opera. As usual this kind of performance proved to be very popular with the audience, and although more tables could have been sold for the Saturday evening dinner concert, the Sunday afternoon performance was full to capacity and some people had to be turned away at the door.

The third, conducted by Graham Maddox was particularly well attended. Program details included Delius: Summer night on the river and To be sung of a Summer night on the water (sung by Fiori Musicali, conductor Wendy Huddleston) & also by Delius; Bruce Edward Miller: “ Spirits of the mask” concerto for flute and orchestra, with soloist Gerard Larkins; Mendelssohn: Six Songs to be Sung Outdoors Op. 59 Nos. IV, V and VI (Mendelssohn); and Beethoven: Pastoral Symphony.

The final performance for the year was an innovation for the orchestra in which Ian Slater conducted a selection of Christmas carols in the Centro Shopping Centre as a fund raiser in support of the Uniting Church’s Christmas dinner. The orchestra thanks the management of Centro for the opportunity to contribute to the life of the Armidale community in this way.

General
The ASO is delighted with its new rehearsal room. It has excellent acoustics for rehearsals and the convenience of being able to leave the room set up for rehearsals is excellent. Access for cellists, bass players and the tympani is enormously enhanced. The orchestra thanks NECOM’s previous Director, Corinne Arter, for putting in train the process to make this a reality.

The ASO is concerned about the funding granted to the Friends of the Teachers College FOTC for restoring the sprung floor in the rehearsal room and how this will affect our future use of the space. It appears a waste of resource to respring a floor and then cover it with carpet. Funds of this nature are needed elsewhere in the building.

The ASO supports efforts by the FOTC to finally install a lift in the building. This is long overdue and should be advanced as quickly as possible. ASO President, Maurice Anker has written a letter in support of their application.

The Armidale Symphony Orchestra web site www.arm-symph.org is well developed and maintained by Colin Sholl. All sorts of material including program details, items of a historical nature and future plans are placed there.

As usual, several members of the orchestra were involved in productions by other performing groups, including HMS Pinafore with ADMS and Into the Woods with the Armidale Playhouse.

David Gee
ASO Member

New England Youth Sinfonia
Comprising a number of advanced young NECOM string players, the 2009 New
England Youth Sinfonia was testament to the achievements of local string teachers. With a number of outstanding performances at the Armidale Eisteddfod, a concert with local choral ensemble Fiori Musicali and internationally-renowned organist Warwick Dunham, and inclusion in the 2009 Armidale performance of Handel’s Messiah (the Sinfonia’s concertmaster was privileged to play the 1st violin solo in the production) this group of talented young musicians reflected the strength of Armidale’s musical community.

New England Guitar Ensembles

In 2009 the New England Guitar Ensemble, led by accomplished local guitarist Steve Thornycroft, consisted of eight members. An events-based group comprising a selection of local guitar teachers, this ensemble promoted live art music through its various public performances throughout the year.

The New England Youth Guitar Ensemble, a group of young guitarists guided by skilled educator Chris Purcell, raised the standard of guitar performance amongst Armidale’s youth considerably.

Both ensembles held a highly successful mid-year concert on July 5th, presenting an eclectic and thoughtfull mix of music.

The New England Youth Guitar Ensemble participated in a Beginning Improvisation workshop with Chris Purcell in Term 3, Markets in the Mall busking later in the year, as well as holding a November concert and performances at large public events in Armidale.

Recorder Ensembles

The NECOM-affiliated recorder ensembles, Fontegara and Ribatutta, were conducted during 2009 by Robyn Parker, a teacher of excellence. With regular rehearsals, performances and master-class participation, these two groups continued Armidale’s strong recorder tradition.

Curriculum Support for Schools

During 2009 NECOM provided support for school music programs through the following initiatives:

The Armidale Music Teachers Association (AMTA), an organisation comprising secondary music teachers from the Armidale district, continued in 2009 to promote music education within the region. AMTA is part of NECOM and acts as an advisory group to the Conservatorium in the development and implementation of curriculum support programs (see AMTA report).

The Primary Armidale Music Teachers Association (PAMTA) is another affiliated organisation of NECOM and also has an advisory role. The Association was formed in 2008 with the aim of supporting local K-6 music teachers. In 2009 PAMTA consisted of twelve primary music teachers and met once per term at various venues. Each meeting had a professional development focus aimed at building the capabilities and confidence of primary educators along with time to discuss current events such as the Armidale Eisteddfod and combined school music concerts. The group was convened by Rowena Tall an experienced Primary music educator who moved to Armidale in 2008 to take up a position at St. John’s Junior School (NEGS). Rowena identified a lack of support and appropriate professional develop-
The aim of the association is to promote music education within the region and to be a voice for music educators in the wider community.

The 2009 Junior orchestra two day workshop in July gave students in years 3-8 the opportunity to perform in a full orchestra, an experience rarely seen in regional primary schools. The workshop, headed by highly skilled conductor Ann Phelan, attracted 98 participants representing 26 schools in the New England, North Coast and North West regions.

2009’s Armidale String workshop gave primary-aged musicians (up to 4th grade standard) an excellent opportunity to develop their ensemble skills. This workshop, culminating in an afternoon concert, was attended by 83 students in total.

NECOM programs in 2009 assisted classroom music teachers in furthering their professional development, offering workshops for the development of long-term skills. The year featured workshops by renowned music educator Deidre Rickards for general Primary teachers, training them in basic skills to enable them to confidently present music activities with their classes.

In 2009 NECOM provided ensemble support for schools, assisting school groups through the contributions of NECOM specialist instrumental teachers. Such ensembles included string orchestras, string quartets, cello ensembles, wind ensembles and classroom string programs.

2009 saw NECOM continue to provide instrumental teaching of an exceptionally high standard within schools. Most of the individual lessons in string and woodwind instruments were held on the school premises within school hours in twenty one schools.

NECOM provided a highly-valued venue for local HSC performance exams, with access to concert grand pianos for accompaniments. Regular HSC performance evenings were held throughout the year for students to familiarize themselves with the venue.

NECOM’s AMTA co-ordinated the Armidale Eisteddfod Composition sections, providing children with an opportunity to receive valuable feedback on original works they had generated as part of classroom music programs. Eminent Australian composer Stephen Leek adjudicated the compositions, of which there were over 120, and presented a tutorial on compositional skills that enhanced the music curriculum. Many local HSC students used this program to workshop their HSC compositions, an opportunity rarely afforded in other regional areas.

Armidale Music Teachers’ Association Annual Report – 2009

The Armidale Music Teachers’ Association (AMTA) is an organisation comprising secondary music teachers from the Armidale district of NSW. The aim of the association is to promote music education within the region and to be a voice for music educators in the wider community. AMTA amalgamated with NECOM in 2005.

In 2009 AMTA helped to organize or promote the following activities:
- The Year 10 Music Day
- The HSC Music Days
- The Armidale Eisteddfod
- The annual Celebration Concert at State Sport Centre

The Year 10 and HSC Music Days are an initiative of AMTA. However, in 2009, the organization of these days has passed to NECOM with advice and assistance from AMTA. These days were a great success and attracted attendance from many students from across the New England and North West regions. AMTA would like to acknowledge the tireless work of Wendy Huddleston in the organisation of these days. These days were of great value to students and teachers alike as they drew on the expertise of presenters who are professional performers and acknowledged music educators as well as a great wealth of local experience and knowledge.

AMTA had a major input into the Eisteddfod committee with regard to the running of both the choral and band sections of the Armidale Eisteddfod. Members of AMTA
acted as section secretaries for various events and stage managed the evenings. AMTA members continued to support the eisteddfod through participation and promotion. AMTA was also the organising body for the composition section of the eisteddfod and organised the composer workshop as part of this event.

AMTA supports the annual Celebration Concert held at the Sydney Town Hall (this year the NSW Sports Centre at Homebush) by providing singers and instrumentalists. With the support of NeCoM we were able to hold the pre-rehearsals at the conservatorium and thus provide a central venue for students to attend.

AMTA now recognises that much of the organisational work it has done in the past is now being absorbed into the operations of NeCoM. It has therefore decided to concentrate its energy and resources into areas which promote music education and to be an advocate for music education in the future, especially with regard to the upcoming National Curriculum and the role of music education in the future.

Stuart Pavel
President

Scholarships & Bursaries

Fifty eight scholarships for NeCoM students were funded in 2009 by the NSW Department of Education and Training. Scholarships consisted of a series of master classes from professional musicians, general workshops and a ticket to one Musica Viva concert. Forty eight bursaries were awarded in 2009 for NeCoM students from low income families, 33 funded by the Aberbaldie Foundation and 15 funded by the Department of Education and Training. Bursaries helped students who might not have been able to continue with their musical education without some financial help. Up to 50% of tuition fees for private 30 minute lessons or up to 50% of program fees were covered for eligible students.

Scholarships and bursaries were awarded to students of NeCoM's Music Educator Members as well as to students in the Instrumental Tuition Program.

Workshops

Scales Party

March allowed 30 children receiving instrumental tuition through NeCoM to increase their understanding of and enjoyment in playing scales. Learning to sing and sign the major and natural minor scale, using Solfege and Curwen hand signs, they were able to better recognise patterns in scales. This allowed the children to feel less inhibited about playing scales on their instruments, a significant achievement.

Elizabeth Morgan workshop

In 2009 NeCoM was extremely lucky to have procured the services of string pedagogue Elizabeth Morgan for a weekend workshop in March. Elizabeth, a senior lecturer in violin at the Queensland Griffith University, spent two days in - servicing NeCoM string teachers whilst providing performance advice to advanced young string players.

Paul Holley choral conducting

The 2009 Paul Holley choral conducting workshop assisted primary and secondary school teachers in improving their understanding of choral work with youth. Paul’s friendly and engaging manner allowed all participants, irrespective of their experience within the area of choral conducting, to benefit from the educational experience.

Ensemble Offspring workshop

On June 27 the vibrant members of Ensemble Offspring - Damien Ricketson, Claire Edwardes, Jason Noble, Bree van Reyk and James Cudd-eford - assisted Armidale students in their exploration of 20th Century music through an interactive workshop. The depth of involvement for the participants was impressive, with the visiting ensemble not only providing exposure to unusual music, but giving advice on some of the students’ original compositions. This workshop was an
excellent opportunity for young composers to explore contemporary genres including avant garde works by Damien Ricketson himself as well as John Cage and John Zorn.

French Horn development program
Throughout 2009, Robert Johnson of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra assisted local French horn players with his expertise. The program encouraged significant growth in the number of young French horn players in Armidale, whilst also giving older and more experienced players the opportunity to refine their performance skills on the instrument.

With two grants from Regional Arts NSW (a CASP grant and an Art Start grant) Robert was able to travel to Armidale for five weekends throughout the year. To be able to work with and learn from a musician who has been part of prestigious ensembles such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra was an absolute delight to the French horn players of the New England region.

Alexander Technique workshops
From 14-16 August NECOM facilitated Alexander technique workshops with specialist Susan Allen. Musicians of all ages benefited from the insight Susan gave into the way the body is used to play various instruments, and how one might best perform without straining the body. Exploring this internationally recognised technique, the workshop was a useful and educational experience for participants.

Creative Music workshop
Gillian Howell’s (Melbourne Conservatorium of Music) November workshop gave 22 young music students the opportunity to develop compositions from initial rhythmic ideas, sharing developments with their peers at every stage of the creative process. Centring on the idea of group composition, all individual compositions were edited by the children and combined into a collective work.

This workshop was a unique opportunity for students to work with a music educator, well known for her expertise in this specialist area, to collaboratively develop a composition using unfamiliar techniques. The performance of the resulting work at the concluding concert was testament to both Ms Howell’s abilities and the students’ and participating teachers’ willingness to explore unchartered musical terrain.

Tom Abbott Jazz workshop
Thirty four young jazz enthusiasts attended Tom Abbott’s jazz workshop in November. Receiving expert individual and group tuition on their instruments from eight tutors (including Abbott) the workshop enabled participants to develop their jazz performance and improvisation skills in a friendly and supportive environment. The concluding concert of improvisation and standard works illustrated the increased understanding and enjoyment of jazz performance the workshop gave the participants.

Brew Guitar Duo workshop
In November of 2009 NECOM was host to Canberra guitar duo, Brew. Young guitarists, in particular members of the New England Youth Guitar Ensemble, workshoped a number of ensemble pieces with the duo then performed them for fellow guitarists. The expertise of the visiting ensemble lifted the participants’ standard of performance and musical expression.

Masterclasses

Roberto Cominati masterclass
March saw a group of young pianists perform in a masterclass presented by Roberto Cominati, an internationally-renowned Italian concert pianist. With an impressive range of repertoire, Roberto was able to assist all students in improving the performance of their chosen works.

Brew Guitar Duo masterclass
Working with young NECOM guitar scholarship holders in November, the Brew duo provided these students with the opportunity to gain insight and new perspective into the performance of various solo works. Pieces selected by the scholarship holders were drawn from

“scholarship holders were treated to an intense yet delightful musical experience”
exceedingly different musical styles, ensuring both participants and audience members learned more about the use of the guitar across the musical spectrum, combined with the deep level of technical knowledge the duo imparted to NECOM’s young guitarists.

**Piano masterclass with Gil Sullivan**

NECOM was privileged in November of 2009 for Australia’s only full-time performing concert pianist, Gil Sullivan, to hold a masterclass. Young NECOM piano scholarship holders were treated to an intense yet delightful musical experience, with Sullivan’s focus on ensuring their chosen works flowed as pieces of music, rather than mere collections of notes. Students found Gil to be of particular help with regard to their works’ difficult sections, and in helping them to improve their rhythmic and general pianistic skills.

**Vocal masterclass with Peta Blyth**

Five students attended Peta Blyth’s Inverell vocal masterclass, giving them a great opportunity to receive performance feedback from a well-known professional. Blyth’s constructive criticism was found to be very useful in light of the students’ preparation for vocal exams.

**Masterclass with New Sydney Wind Quintet clarinetist, Frank Celata**

Celata explored many important aspects of successful clarinet sound production in his masterclass with NECOM’s talented young clarinetists on September 13. The participants found it a very positive and motivating experience, learning much from viewing one another’s playing and performance techniques.

**Recorder weekend with Hans - Dieter Michatz**

During September of 2009, Armidale’s young recorder players were treated to several hours of workshops and private masterclasses with Hans - Dieter Michatz, teacher at the Sydney Conservatorium and leading exponent of Australia’s world-famous recorder scene. All participants gained valuable insight into recorder technique, whilst simultaneously feeling a sense of accomplishment in the improvement they made during the masterclasses.

**Flute masterclass with Bridget Bolliger**

After a magnificent recital by the New Sydney Wind Quintet in September of 2009, the internationally acclaimed flautist from the Quintet, Bridget Bolliger, held a flute masterclass. Six player participants and a number of others in attendance benefited from Bridget’s helpful, informative and professional approach to both teaching and playing.

Participants felt it would be wonderful if Bridget were able to return to Armidale in the future, being very eager for another masterclass and private lessons with this brilliant flautist.

**Lyon String Trio masterclasses**

The Lyon trio, comprising outstanding string players Julien Dieudegard, (violinist, France), Nathan Braude (violist, Belgium) and Martin Smith (cellist, Australia) shared their musical ideas and expertise with young NECOM string scholarship holders in fascinating masterclasses.

Despite some minor communication difficulties, Julien was able to quickly assess young violinists’ individual strengths and weaknesses and offer concise, practical advice, often illustrated with a humorous anecdote. His manner of interaction with the students was refreshing, as was his excellent musicianship and obvious passion for the violin. The participating violists found Nathan Braude helpful and understanding in his insight into the depth and complexity of the pieces performed. Martin Smith worked with the young cellists on repertoire ranging from Bach to Rachmaninov, bringing a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm.

All students’ performances were markedly lifted through these sessions, and through observing the trio members’ approaches to problem solving NECOM string teachers were also able to glean insight and inspiration.

**Australian Youth Orchestra Chamber Music Camp**

The 2009 Australian Youth Orchestra chamber music camp was proudly hosted by NECOM. The camp was an opportunity for a select group of the finest aspiring young chamber musicians
“Being in Armidale has been an incredible learning experience for the (AYO) quartets.”

Members of the Armidale Symphony Orchestra and Armidale Youth Orchestra were treated to private concerts by the Goldner and Yarrowyke Quartets in lieu of their normal rehearsal times. Furthermore, four free concerts were presented for the Armidale community. All concerts were extraordinary in the maturity of musical interpretation and the level of virtuosity achieved by such young players.

The Australian Youth Orchestra’s CEO Colin Cornish thanked NECOM for their collaboration. “We love coming to Armidale”, he remarked, “the facilities and atmosphere at the Conservatorium are wonderful… we would like to come again.”

Chamber Music in Schools Outreach Program

During 2009 the NECOM Trio (Eleanor Streatfeild, cello; Nicholas Negerevich, flute; Sheila Guymr, piano) toured small primary schools in the Narrabri and Inverell districts. With student attendance ranging from 8 children to 140, the Trio adjusted their approach slightly corresponding to the audience size, and the sessions were thoroughly enjoyed by all participants.

The tours followed on from successful in-service days for primary school classroom teachers, run by highly experienced musical educator Deidre Rickards. One of the outreach program’s innovations was actively encouraging classroom teachers to collaborate with the Trio in presenting the program. At each school, the teacher read introductions to each of the pieces, explained musical concepts drawn from the NSW Music Syllabus and guided the students’ participation in the presented musical activities. Similar preparatory sessions and follow-up concerts were held for Armidale primary school teachers and students in association with PAMTA.

The Trio felt it was important to bring live chamber music to isolated students, many of which had never experienced the joy of listening to a live ensemble: the wish to continue and expand the program in future years was just as strongly expressed by the Trio members, together with encouragement for NECOM’s facilitating another similar ensemble to broaden the program.

NECOM Inverell continued in 2009 to provide quality musical services to Inverell students. As a result, the standard of music education within the area progressed substantially. The appointment of an administrative assistant helped the campus to run more smoothly, allowing for expansion of the campus’ activities.

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Inverell’s 2009 classes consisted of Mini Minstrels
(Early Childhood Music), Music Makers (a group for the disabled), choir rehearsals, and woodwind and vocal tuition. Under the expert leadership of Ros Fuller, Mini Minstrels thrived, calling for the expansion of classes, purchase of new instruments and professional development networking for the teacher.

Workshops on piano with Sheila Guymer, flute with Nicholas Negerevich, clarinet and saxophone with Graham Evans and guitar with Steven Thorneycroft were held throughout the year. These activities assisted students greatly in their musical education and performance technique and their responses to the sessions were extremely positive.

The August fundraising concert (attended by 60 people and raising $400) featured local teachers, groups and students, and assisted in raising the profile of the conservatorium within the Inverell area.

November saw the successful 4th annual Sapphire Sounds concert in Inverell. The particular featuring of the newly-formed NECOM Inverell Choir gave the local musical community a sense of achievement. Also in November, Early Childhood Music teaching workshops were held for local day-care teachers by Brisbane-based early childhood music educator Kath Lloyd. Teachers were inspired to use music as both an educational tool and an expressive, creative medium. Participants travelled from as far as Guyra and Tamworth to attend.

Peta Blyth
NECOM Inverell Coordinator

Farewell to Corinne Arter

Corinne Arter put the New England Conservatorium on a successful footing during her five years as Director, Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay told guests at a farewell function on Friday 19th June.

“Corinne has made an outstanding contribution, bringing NECOM from a position of only two students and no programs or activities to the current position of 537 students, more than 2500 program participants and six full-time and 18 part-time staff” the MP said. “Under her leadership, she worked with her board and staff to establish a Conservatorium without walls involving local music teachers and providing services such as specialist workshops, business management, advertising, teaching venues, masterclasses, scholarship and bursary assistance and concert venues for studio concerts. She also guided the development of an outreach program at Inverell which now has a campus and part-time co-ordinator.”

During her five years, Corinne instigated an instrumental tuition program, a tiered choral and ensemble program, including four choirs, beginner programs for strings and woodwind, the New England Youth Sinfonia, an early childhood music education program and an extensive workshop program for both students and teachers. In this period, a number of community organizations amalgamated with NECOM, including the Armidale Music Teachers Association, the Armidale youth String orchestra, the Armidale youth Ensemble, the Armidale Youth Orchestra and the Armidale Symphony Orchestra.

NECOM Chairman, Dr. Arthur Rickards paid tribute to Corinne Arter for her achievements as Director and “her dedication and persistence in building a quality organization based on solid music education structures”.

Armidale Express, Wednesday June 24th, 2009

Concerts & Events

Ensemble Offspring concert

Ensemble Offspring’s captivating concert on June 28 featured modern works by (or inspired by) American minimalist and experimentalist composers Reich, Glass and Cage. The virtuosity of all ensemble members and the musical sensitivity displayed allowed the full impact of the works to be experienced by the audience, the content of which challenged them to question the boundaries of music and dare to think more openly about sound.

Violin and Piano recital

Two of Armidale’s outstanding musicians presented a wonderful recital in February of 2009. Violinist Errol Russell, a former long-time member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and highly accomplished pianist Deidre Rickards combined
“the content of which challenged them to question the boundaries of music”

NECOM Chamber Series

Nicholas Negerevich and friends

In 2009, accomplished performer and flute teacher Nicholas Negerevich featured in the year’s first NECOM Chamber Music Series concert, The Flute in Context. The program exhibited the stylistic versatility of the flute, and included music from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including South American tangos and Irish jigs. Nick was joined by an impressive array of musicians; Eleanor Streatfeild (cello), Sheila Guymer (piano), clarinettist Ben Sindel, guitarist Steve Thornycroft, Sarah Christopher (double bass) vocalists, Rowena Tall and Leanne Roobol, flautists Wendy Champion and Gerard Larkins and Celtic harpist Judy Hinch. The encouragement given to students through hearing their instrumental teachers perform was of great import. Proceeds of the concert were donated to NECOM, with the money used to purchase a soprano saxophone.

Duos concert

July’s NECOM Chamber Series concert featured NECOM educators Chris Garden (clarinet), Wendy Champion (flute), Sheila Guymer (piano) and Tom Ryan (recorder student). The diverse repertoire and high standard of performance evoked a warm response from the audience, who thoroughly enjoyed this excellent performance.

Halloween concert

2009’s October 31 concert featured highly accomplished local guitarists and guitar teachers Steve Thornycroft and Chris Purcell. A diverse repertoire was presented including rarely performed, contemporary works.

The NECOM chamber Music Series was held in the Conservatorium’s Auditorium.

A Perfect Start for Spring

In September of 2009 NECOM teachers Sheila Guymer and April Kelson collaborated in a delightful concert consisting of virtuosic works for piano and violin. The two performers displayed a masterful depth and palette of sound in a variety of styles, making for a dramatic and highly enjoyable performance.

NECOM Soloists Series and the Armidale Spring Music Festival

Over three concerts in September of 2009, several of NECOM’s advanced students performed their AMusA and LMusA programs in public concerts, in preparation for their upcoming diploma exams. Furthermore, as a joint project between NECOM and University of New England’s Music Department, a four-day Spring Music Festival featured UNE and NECOM students in concert, accompanied by Sheila Guymer. The Festival also showcased superb performances by local guitar duo Ephen Stephen, Indian classical musicians Adrian McNeale and Bobby Singh and a thrilling jazz concert by saxophonist Grant McCalfe and friends.
UNE Graduation Ceremonies 2009

The Conservatorium is responsible for the music of the six University of New England graduation ceremonies split between April and October each year. Musicians of the highest calibre are engaged for these ceremonies and come from far and wide to perform. Weather permitting, the lawns in front of Boolimimbah are the setting for these grand occasions, thereby providing yet another challenge for acoustic instruments and their masters.

This year a selection of background guitar music played by Stephen Tafra and Matt Nolan preceded the official opening of the ceremonies when John Kellaway (head of Brass at Newcastle Conservatorium) and Deidre Rickards (Armidale accompanist of many years standing) provided majestic fanfares for the procession of professors, academic staff and dignitaries as they entered and took their places on stage.

Just prior to the presentation of degrees there is a “musical interlude” when our soloist shines. Shelli Hulcombe and Lexi Hutton were our soprano soloists for this year’s ceremonies. They are both ex-Armidale schoolgirls. Shelli is a soloist based in Brisbane and has recently been appointed as teacher of voice at the Brisbane Conservatorium, and Lexi been accepted into the masters of vocal performance at the Royal College of Music in London.

After the degrees have all been awarded, the singing of the University Anthem, Guadamus Igitur, is followed by more ceremonial fanfares on trumpet and organ for the dignitaries and graduates to process out as the ceremony concludes.

We are very grateful to all our musicians who continue to provide music of the very highest standard for these graduation ceremonies and are thereby wonderful ambassadors for NECOM.

Eliza Scott's success in Orange violin competition

In November talented young violinist Eliza Scott of Armidale participated in a competition for school-age violinists in Orange. An astounding achievement for someone of so young an age, she won both the intermediate section (the prize consisting of $500 cash, a $250 gift voucher for Landers Music and a solo performance in an Orange Regional Conservatorium public concert) and the major prize, a John Wu violin valued at $2,500.

Such a phenomenal achievement by a young player was testament to the high musical standards in the Armidale community and the dedication many youth displayed throughout the year in their musical studies. Eliza’s achievement also reflects the growing status of NECOM as a centre of excellence in music education.

Music Educator Members

The NECOM model embraces the concept of being a ‘Conservatorium Without Walls’ whereby local music teachers become affiliated as Music Educator Members and access an extensive range of services provided by the Conservatorium as well as contribute as contracted employees in many of NECOM’s programs. NECOM’s 56 Music Educator Members provide quality tuition in vocal and instrumental music, musicianship and theory to around 1250 students. This is in addition to the 2,500 NECOM program participants.

The following range of services was offered to Music Educator Members and their students in 2009:

• professional development through attendance at workshops and masterclasses;
• advertising – NECOM Newsletter, website;
• teaching venues – access to studios for hire;

NECOM Board of Directors

Dr Arthur Rickards OAM (Chairman)
John Brady
Robyn Driscoll
Neil Eigeland
David Gee
Wendy Huddleston
Dr Bruce Menzies OAM
Sue Metcalfe OAM
Stuart Pavel
Jenny Sholl
Professor Jennie Shaw
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- Concert venues for studio concerts;
- master classes for their advanced students;
- workshops for their students, beginners to advanced;
- access to NECOM ensembles for their students to enrich their learning;
- bursaries for students of families in financial difficulty;
- scholarship assistance for their advanced students;
- additional employment opportunities in NECOM programs, for example, many Music Educator Members have been employed by NECOM in 2009 as:
- conductors of ensembles and choirs;
- accompanists;
- tutors at orchestral and ensemble workshops.

ARCHER, Cathy
B.Mus Ed (Newcastle Con.); Performer
Certificate in Voice - Trinity College;
Classroom Teacher
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BARFORD, Marian
B.Mus Violin/Viola
Beginner to Advanced
Tutor – NECOM Beginner Strings Program
Ph: 6775 1289

BLYTH, Peta
B.Mus (Hons) BA Dip Ed L.Mus.A (Piano) Voice
ARCM (London) (Voice)
Voice - Inverell based;
Clarion Singers; concert and opera artist; adjudicator
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BRADLEY, Robyn
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All grades beginner to advanced; Accompanist (intermediate to advanced)
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BROWN, Dave
BA(Mus), Dip.Ed(SecondMus)
Brass - All instruments at all levels, happy to teach to other regional centres via video-conferencing.
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CHAMPION, Wendy
B.Mus (Hons Perf) Aust.Inst.Music
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Piano/Musicianship - (all grades)
Singing - Beginners, AMEB
Grades or AMEB Singing for Leisure' syllabus.
Moree Only
Ph: 6772 7945
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DAVIDGE, Sharon
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AMEB Exam Preparation
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MMus (Solo Piano), Mmus (Acc. comp.)
Piano, Theory, Music Craft, Accompaniment.
All ages and levels welcome. Also taught at Sydney Con. &
Melbourne Uni.
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Web: www.thelaguymer.com
outreach@necom.org.au

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HILL, Jennifer
MTA NSW Accredited Piano/Theory/Musicianship
All Grades. Inverell only
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HARPLEY, Robert
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Beginner’s Guitar
Introduction to guitar; basic notation, tablature. Popular styles, all ages
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McLANAHAN, Mary
Piano - Inverell only
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McPHAN, Greg
BA, DipEd, PhD, A.MusA & L.MusA
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McPHAN, Jenny
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MICHELS-THORN, Cecile
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Cert. Musicianship (Frai)
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cmichels@laapt.net.au

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NIEMEYER, Belinda
Cert IV Assess/Wkpkg Train, Dip Chil-
dren’s Services
NECOM Early Childhood Music Program.
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PARKER, Robyn
Recorder - Beginners to advanced.
Camerata and Ribatutta Recorder Ensembles
Ph: 6772 7976

PULLEY, Laurie
OAM,BA, B.Fac,M,FCSSMe,DSME,
Beginners to advanced; instrumental ensembles, orchestra, baritone soloist; classroom music, Armidale String Quartet
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PURCELL, Chris
Music - Classical and Blues; Director – New England Youth Guitar Ensemble;
Director - Vocal Chords Choral Group.
Ph: 6772 3265
### Financial statement

#### Profit & Loss
Six Months to 31 December, 2009

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