



LYCO NEWS

This bimonthly newsletter is for members of the orchestra community. We welcome your articles, news, contributions and all suggestions. For items, including musical coming events, please email Newsletter@lyco.org.au

In this edition

2020 is a year of musical milestones. It is the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth and the centenary for Isaac Stern, Charlie Parker and Ravi Shankar.

It's also the 30th anniversary of Tasmania's Residential Summer String Camp. This special summer newsletter brings you images, insights, and ideas from String Camp conductors, tutors, the TSO chief, and more from the big event.

THE LAUNCESTON
YOUTH AND
COMMUNITY
ORCHESTRA (LYCO)
EXISTS SO THAT PEOPLE
OF ALL AGES AND
MUSICAL ABILITIES CAN
ENJOY PLAYING
ORCHESTRAL MUSIC
TOGETHER

PASSING THE BATON: LYCO's Musical Director Margaret Hoban, on the gift of generational change at the String Camp

At the 30th Residential Summer String Camp celebratory dinner, Margaret told 150 campers "After 30 years, you might wonder why I am still here?"

"Well it's still teaching me. I am still learning things. Every student who comes to this camp, musicians unfold and force me to think. And, as much as I might want something, it doesn't necessarily happen in the time I would like it to. So I keep going, because every camper teaches me, every camper challenges me, and every camper charms me. An amazing place to work and thank you all.

"Five years ago we had a celebration that talked about where we came from and how it started. This time we are talking about going forward. This is a celebration of what is to come. What I have done is only built on what I have learnt from the extraordinary musicians I have worked with, who took me under their wing and saw something in me, when I didn't believe in myself. It's also been built on the extraordinary brave people who were able to challenge me and say 'Margaret, that wasn't good', and other really important stuff.

"I have learned it is love that drives music. You can punish people, you can threaten people, you can coerce people, you can bribe people, you can reward people and they will never learn do the amount of work it takes to become a musician. The only thing that does is that we love our instruments and music, because it takes a lot of work, and that's at any stage. Many of you might say that you haven't learned very much, but you are for example, artists and doctors and mothers and retired, and you are all extraordinary people who say let's take up an instrument. That's huge, huge. We are full of awe.

"Then there is a generational thing. We keep passing it on. In the last few years an extraordinarily wonderful thing has happened. Kids who started out as little tackers at this camp have grown up and they are just naturally taking on the roles they are good at in the camp. This moves me beyond belief, that I've been a vector for the people who taught me to the people who are taking it on for the future.

"We have a large number of tutors and they are picked very very carefully by me for quality, and that is people who are excellent musicians and will work with anyone who wants to hold a violin or viola, cello or bass, and that's a special quality of person. Thank you all to the admin people, thank you to the camp parents, thank you to Camp Clayton, and thank you to all the campers..... all the people who make it happen. I have a vast guilt for this monster that consumes hundreds of hours of voluntary time from people. I cope thinking they do it for the same reason I do which is they love doing it."



TSO BOOSTS RESOURCES AND CONNECTIONS IN NORTHERN TAS

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra chief executive Caroline Sharpen joined the 30th Residential Summer String Camp for a day, to listen in and experience the remarkable event. In her first year as chief executive of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, the Hobart-raised musician and administrator has been asking how the TSO could support what she acknowledges is “incredible work and leadership in community music-making on the North West Coast and Launceston”. The answer will see some TSO resources reallocated, to bolster its presence in the north.

“We made a tough decision to cease our Symphony Under The Stars concerts in Hobart for a number of reasons,” she said. “One primary driver is to free-up time in the schedule, and a lot of money, so we can better live up to our remit as Tasmania’s orchestra, and build a deeper presence here where so much is happening. Where there are string programs like Stringalong and the RSSC, we’ll enable our musicians to be there to tutor and support, and give a sense of trajectory.”

An initial series of focus groups in Burnie and Devonport mid-2019 posed the question ‘how can the TSO best support what you are doing?’. Caroline Sharpen says it’s clear turning up on the bus for a concert didn’t cut it. “They want us to really show up. So we made the decision about Symphony Under The Stars, and freed up time in the calendar to be here more. For example, the Cradle Coast Orchestra bite off ambitious repertoire and just have a crack at it. They might have half the forces they need. Now we’re looking at TSO musicians being part of rehearsals of orchestral or band repertoire, where groups really need some support.”

However, Caroline Sharpen is keen to avoid the pitfalls in imposing on other musical groups. “We have a real aversion to swooping in and saying ‘Hi, we’re the TSO and we are here to help’. It doesn’t go well. This is bottom up, and if there are gaps and things the orchestra can do to add value, then that’s what we’re up for. What you are doing is really unique and wonderful”, she said.

Caroline Sharpen sees several benefits arising from increased contact. “We have the professional end of the musical continuum engaging and supporting and nurturing, and providing a destination or a goal in mind. If you look at a group like the TSO, there are 47 musicians who have learned from some of the finest teachers in the world, who learned from other finest teachers, who learned from the composers themselves. So if you think of the intellectual capital that resides in an organisation like the TSO, we have a duty to pass that on.

“We are focusing on Symphony Under The Stars in Launceston and honouring that commitment to the north. In Hobart we have a big side-by-side rehearsal for any players at about grade six and above. This year we’ll aim to put on a bus from Launceston and, if there’s interest, from Devonport or Burnie too.”

In return, Caroline Sharpen is requesting strong support for the TSO’s northern activities and concerts. “It makes it easier to fund the travel, and allocate the time, when we know people care and want the musicians here. And when we are here, we will stay longer. Fly-in fly-out really doesn’t work. When we have residencies here, which are about training and development with teachers and school students, there will be some mini-TSO concerts for little kids and parents. If you can help to make sure they are really well supported, that would be fantastic.”

UNLEASHING KIDS' UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

Before three-time RSSC Conductor, Mary Sorlie, starts every orchestra rehearsal, she asks her players to shake hands with each other and say “it’s a pleasure to make music with you”. Only then does the playing begin.

It’s just one of the ways Mary’s orchestral players discover the exciting experience of really connecting and playing together well. “I like to have lots of activities, or I should say, ways in which we can achieve a very high level in a rehearsal,” she said. “You can’t be too scattered in a rehearsal, but having a couple of goals, like maybe ‘today we’re really going to focus on listening’, so what does that actually mean? I just keep trying to fill my ‘tool box’ with different ways to keep completing and rounding out the musicians with the skills we need most. And that is listening in an orchestra. That is number one, listening,” Mary laughs.

As a young violinist playing in the regional youth orchestra in St Paul, Minnesota, Mary was inspired to complete conservatorium performance studies and become a professional orchestral player. Later she discovered the joy of music teaching and education. Today, Mary leads an El Sistema-inspired music program in St Paul and conducts the youngest musicians in the Greater Twin Cities Youth Orchestra, where she first learned to play.

“So it’s where this journey will take us. You have a fairly high bar and you figure out ways to complete the student with aural skills, physical skills, musical skills, and even social skills, so that they reach that bar. The potential for kids is endless. The performance then, that’s just like the cherry on top. That’s extra. Concerts are never the end game, it’s the process,” Mary said.

“When you are on a performance path, it seems to be all about where you end up. For me, instead, it’s the journey and the process along the way. I want students to gain skills at a really high level. I want them to be challenged.... maybe a little bit out of their comfort zone, and to do things they didn’t even think that they could do. And to do it in a community too, not alone. That’s different from teaching and learning in the studio. You can learn all the repertoire, but if you are not with others in a section, that’s missing out on life. You live in the world with others”, Mary said.

In teaching and conducting, Mary Sorlie says it’s a mistake to think kids aren’t capable of doing as much as they can. “Then we put barriers on what they can do. I am learning to not do that. Little kids, or younger students or beginners don’t even know what they can or can’t do. So why would we tell them they can’t do something? We just have to try it instead.”

Mary says it’s similar for advanced students and adults, who may fret about what they think they can not do. “I say, ‘what’s the worst thing that could happen if you play out of tune? There is no worst thing. There is no worst thing!’ We just need to trust ourselves. We just need to go ‘OK, so what if I make a mistake?’ Absolutely nothing horrible will come from that. There is nothing wrong with trying. I think the older we get, we kinda tighten down on what think we cannot do. I think we should be unafraid to try new things. Totally unafraid to try something you never thought you could do, even outside of music, because it will feed into that. We are remarkable creatures. We just forget that. We shouldn’t limit ourselves,” she said.





Photography: Gail Shepherd www.apurplehat.com

HOW THE RESIDENTIAL STRING CAMP COMPLETELY CHANGED MY LIFE...

When String Camp cello tutor, James Anderson, arrived at his first camp in 2007 aged nine, chasing bandicoots and late-night games in the stadium were memorable fun. But James says his first camp provided an even more indelible memory and an unforeseen catalyst for musical growth.

“I remember coming and doing an audition at the start of the camp. I was placed in the Preludio orchestra with Margaret [Hoban] as my conductor. I got on pretty well until Rosemary Evenhuis took us for a tutorial and we weren’t playing very well. I wasn’t playing in tune at all, so she put stickers on my cello finger-board. I was furious. I was so embarrassed. She even made me keep them there for the final concert of the camp. That made me think ‘next year I am going to come back and get into the next orchestra with no stickers on’”.

Twelve months passed, during which James joined the Cradle Coast Strings, with Lynne Price and string camp veterans like Jim Thompson. “I really got to know about the skills required for playing in a group”, James Anderson said. I also practiced desperately, in order to get into the second string camp orchestra when I auditioned in 2008.”

That determination was rewarded. James was catapulted into the first String Camp orchestra under conductor Willem Van der Vis. “I remember being just completely blown away,” James said. “I was out of my depth, but I needed to be, and by the end of the week, I was absolutely in love with it all. I don’t think I ever really took a backward turn from there. We had fantastic String Camp tutors every year: Zoe Knighton, Brendon Conroy, Jo St Leon, and many more... They were all legends to me, and I was so eager to do anything they wanted me to do inside the orchestra room.” James admits at other times, he found a few rules to flout.

Only a decade after his first Summer String Camp, James returned to tutor at the RSSC. “For a while, I didn’t really know what to do, so I wrote notes after every cello section rehearsal that I led. Gradually I uncovered my role. That was basically just to keep being myself. At the camp, you see parents and children where, all of a sudden, the roles are reversed. The children pick things up so quickly, sometimes leaving the adults for dust. All of the roles flip on themselves and everyone is on equal terms. That’s one thing I really love about it,” he said.

James says another unique aspect is the emphasis on sight-reading music at every camp. “At this camp we never hand out practice copies beforehand. The hope is that everyone is going to be sight-reading, and going through that same journey of discovery together. It’s something about the RSSC that I haven’t experienced anywhere else. That team-discovery has a lot to do with the sense of achievement and belonging that you get from this camp and community.” James says it’s something he would argue is worth keeping in the years ahead.

However, James Anderson admits he can’t predict what’s likely to happen anywhere at String Camp at all. “Even with Willem conducting (now I’ve been playing with him for years), you genuinely never know what is going to come out of his mouth. He always catches you by surprise. So there is always newness and invention. That’s another good thing I love. We’re always living a little bit on the edge. That’s why I do think the camp will evolve.”

WILLEM VAN DER VIS ON PARTICIPATION

“I remember the first camp I came to in 1993 at Marist College. The view, ferries sailing across, and sunsets: just marvellous stuff. We slept on camp stretchers with other tutors in a dormitory, and it wasn't that great, in that sense. And we had food poisoning for a while!



“We ended up coming here [Camp Clayton], which was marvellous. I saw a comet here one night. Do you remember bop-something or other? Bebop? No, Hale-Bopp! I almost didn't go out to look at it. I thought ‘oh yeah...’ Then I couldn't believe it. No wonder people admired it!

“I used to wonder what it was about making music, sitting around and making noises and feeling great. What was going on? Compare going out for three hours to watch a concert and playing in a concert: two vastly different experiences. You feel much more wonderful, you feel empowered, you feel elevated when you have partaken in something creative. Watching a concert is great too, but there is something about participating that's even better.

“One thing so marvellous about playing in an ensemble with a whole packet of unusual people when they're doing similar things: there's one part and then another, and another, and the conductor brings it all together. You become part of something much greater, and contribute to that. It's just fabulous. You feel really uplifted.

“Music enlivens things like sensitivity, creativity, emotions, excitement, fun, sharing, and all of those social values. Also, I feel as people turn inwards a bit more with mobile phones, it's really important that people have outflow too. In balancing my life, I find I'm always treading a fine line between inflow and outflow. When it is balanced, I feel more like a complete being. I think one of music's major roles is to harmonise yourself, and help you tune in with who you really are. You develop your confidence. You are sensitive to the needs of others, playing in an orchestra.

“I think on a personal journey we are heading to more freedom, and part of that is love. If you love what you do, you never need to work a day in your life. If you love something you are free. Also, if you love something there is no room for fear. The opposite of fear is love. As the most famous composer, Mr Bach said, and I have this written down at home, but I haven't quite got it here:

‘The power of music is to uplift and nourish the soul
for the glory of God’”

EVENTS

Saturday 15 February 3pm. Chamber Music Concert with Alexandra Harris (violin), Clare Corban-Banks (viola), Sarah Cabrol-Douat (piano) Launceston City Baptist Church. <http://bit.ly/385f4Em>

Monday 17 February 5.30 - 6.30pm. UTAS Community Music Program information session for woodwind, brass and percussion players or anyone interested in learning. Newnham Campus room A107. <http://bit.ly/2vVhozy>

Saturday 22 February 10am – 3.45 pm. Tasmanian Music Teachers Association 65th Conference: whole body learning. (Registrations close February 14) Hodgkin Hall Hobart. <http://bit.ly/2OtCMT2>

Saturday 22 February 2pm. Virtuosi Tas Jonathan Békés (cello), and Ying Ho (piano), present music by Beethoven, Beach, Tcherepnin and Chopin. Holy Trinity Church Launceston. <http://bit.ly/3blyNBW>

Saturday 22 February 7pm. Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Symphony Under the Stars. City Park Launceston. <http://bit.ly/2UA9DJR>

Sunday 23 February 2pm. Virtuosi Tas Jonathan Békés (cello) and Ying Ho (piano) Encore! present music by Beethoven, Beach, Tcherepnin and Chopin. Lifeway Baptist Church, Devonport. <http://bit.ly/3blyNBW>

Thursday 12 March 8 pm. Australian Chamber Orchestra. Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven. Earl Arts Centre, Launceston. <http://bit.ly/36za9dh>

Saturday 14 March 9am - 4pm. TASME, the Society for Music Education presents a band and ensemble strategies workshop with Rob McWilliams. Launceston Christian School, Riverside. <http://bit.ly/31yu77a>

March (date TBC) Australian Strings Association Chamber Music Day Oatlands. <http://bit.ly/39gfAiV>

Saturday 21 March 7.30 pm. Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra presents Vaughan Williams The Lark Ascending, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Saint-Saens. Albert Hall Launceston. <http://bit.ly/2OBZFDE>

Friday 26 June 7.30pm. LYCO Mid-Year Concert. City Baptist Church, Launceston. <http://www.lyco.org.au/calendar/>

Friday 3rd - Sunday 5th July. LYCO Winter Workshop. <http://bit.ly/2UnpiMY>

INTERESTING ARTICLES

Resound: replacing musical instruments lost in the bushfires. <http://bit.ly/3bnWERd>

Plenty of pitches: why A is 440 hertz. <https://go.nature.com/31uYotY>

Beethoven - an icon at risk of overexposure? <http://bit.ly/318kqMo>

Beethoven's dream: the composer wished for a cure for his hearing loss. Research could make it a reality. <https://go.nature.com/2NB151v>

This Is Your Brain on Music. <http://bit.ly/2Nv9m6n>

Is a Sad Song Sad for Everyone? <http://bit.ly/2uWW217>

Field noise podcast - Episode 1 Vibrational patterns - making sound visible. <http://bit.ly/2QF1BzX>

Before you let your child quit music lessons, try these five things. <http://bit.ly/2Os1pA0>

The bow makers documentary - the story of the most important instrument you've never heard of. <http://bit.ly/2rDIPMr>

How important is happiness for effective practising? <http://bit.ly/30RkeEHE>

We hope you've enjoyed this newsletter. If you have any ideas for the coming edition, we welcome your articles, contributions, news and all suggestions. Please contribute items, including musical events to: Newsletter@lyco.org.au



LYCO acknowledges the generous support of the Tasmanian Community Fund

LYCO would also like to acknowledge the support of Barratts Music.

The Residential Summer String Camp is supported by Tasmanian Mountain Waters.