Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre Inc.

Annual Report 2012 - 2013

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The Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre Inc. (NRCAC) is a non-profit incorporated association. NRCAC operates under the authority of state and territory legislation for the regulation of vocational education and training. NRCAC is a member of the Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums and receives funding from the NSW Department of Education and Communities.
NRCAC Board

Chairman: Donald Burgess
Secretary: Brendan Ware
Treasurer: Peter Hughes
Members: Matthew Hill
         Arthur Beavis
         George Thompson
         Melissa Hughes

Staff Representative: Julius Hofstetter

NRCAC Personnel

Administration

  Executive Director: Anita Bellman
  Student Administrator: Janene Brooks
  Finance & Office Manager: Lydie Boyd
  IT & Web Support: Andy Downer

Building and Grounds

  Ben Goldsmith
  Bob Taylor

Music Department

  Head of Music: Alicia Charleston

Community Studies

  Community Music Co Ordinator: Zoe Abbott
Chair’s Report

At the end of my second year in the Chair of the Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre (The Con) the situation looks generally good. The past year has been one of much good news both financially and musically. Financially the Con has been in the black and musically the Con goes from success to success with such events as Bangalow Choral Festival, DEC Regional Music Camp and the Northern Rivers Youth Orchestra Workshop. The Board approved a new 3-year Strategic Plan to set the direction for The Con's future development.

The major issues facing The Con in the past year have been the replacement of key staff and the cost of maintenance on The Con's building. The Executive Director has settled into her position much to The Con's benefit. After some initial issues the staffing of Financial and Office Manager is resolved and the Con can move forward with confidence. So it is with enthusiasm I look forward to working productively with the senior administration staff.

The building maintenance issue is still troubling, however progress is being made with repairs and improvements to the physical infrastructure. Thanks in part to a significant grant from the State Government and the support of local member Thomas George in securing the grant. Also The Con contributed to the maintenance from its internal funds including those raised by the Music Marathon. However the ongoing need to maintain an old building remains and points to the need to establish ongoing sponsors and patrons for The Con. Refurbishment of the building is required to make it a more pleasant environment and to enhance its revenue earning capacity.

The Board of The Con has changed over the last two years with all new Directors except for the current Treasurer. The Board's new Directors coming from different background to the previous Directors will and have in turn introduced new perspectives on The Con's future and potential. The current Treasurer provides the essential link to The Con and the Board’s history. There will be a review of the Board's role during the next 12 months including the consideration of a more active role in securing the financial future of the Con.

What does the future hold for the Con over the next 12 months? The administration of The Con is improving and more will be undertaken to make best use of the abilities and interest of the administration staff. The acquisition of a new database system will, if it meets expectation, lead to greater efficiencies and ease the workload on the administration staff. The Board needs to engage in financial planning to ensure that funds are allocated to meet the most critical needs of The Con.

I also look forward to the Board's role in the ensuring the continuing enhancement to the quality of The Con's community music education program including many more performances by The Con's student.

Donald Burgess
Chair, NRCAC
Executive Director’s Report

As Executive Director of the Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre, I acknowledge the Widjjabal People of the Bundjalung Nation, Traditional Custodians and music makers of the land on which the Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre operates, and pay tribute to the unique role they play in the life of this region.

The events of the past twelve months at the Northern Rivers Conservatorium have had all the elements of a great Opera – toil, anticipation, trials & tribulation, heartache, excitement, triumph and victory. All with a rich and varied soundtrack provided by our students, teaching staff and guest artists.

As one of 17 regional conservatoriums across NSW, the Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre is a member of a very strong association – the Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums (ANSWRC). This association is able to work together for the betterment of quality music education, lifelong learning and engagement in the arts in regional communities across NSW. Our funding through the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) Regional Conservatoriums Grant Program is essential to our operations. However, I am pleased to report that as each year passes, the proportion of our Conservatorium’s total income represented by this funding becomes smaller as our overall income through the expanded delivery of quality music education increases.

Big news for the Northern Rivers Conservatorium was the successful outcome of our application to become a VET Fee-Help provider. This is rather a “to do” as NRCAC has now joined the ranks of only 40 Registered Training Organisations (RTO’s) across NSW to share this status (there are more than 5,000 RTO’s nationwide). What it means for us in practice is that the Academy Music Department now has a viable future as Diploma students are able to off-set their tuition fees through the ATO. Newly appointed Head of Music, Alicia Charleston, has risen to the challenge of re-building this arm of our operations. Alicia is a graduate of Southern Cross University and returns to the area after serving as Head of Popular Music at JMC Institute in Melbourne.

Our status of VET Fee-HELP provider brings with it additional administrative, compliance and reporting requirements that have provided our staff an opportunity for much learning. The installation of a new data-base system Enquiry Mate for Trainers has proved an invaluable tool and has been especially tailored to assist in our reporting to the Department of Education & Communities.

The Northern Rivers Conservatorium was very proud to take on the administration and presentation of the North Coast Regional Music Camp in 2013. Funding from the DEC and support from the Regional Arts Coordinator, Peter Piaud, have made this camp possible for more than a decade. This year 65 high school students from between Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads converged on the Lake Ainsworth Sport and Recreation Centre to take part in three days of non-stop music making. Students received expert tuition in clarinet, flute, saxophone, trombone, trumpet, percussion and voice. Megan Lipworth who works with the DEC Arts Unit in Sydney proved to be an inspiring, exacting and dynamic conductor. The Finale Concert was a huge success with all performances wowing the audience of proud parents and family members. Student feedback based on the quality of tutors, musical learning and experience in the ensembles and elective choice rated the 2013 Camp a customer satisfaction score of 93%!!

Projects funded through the Arts NSW Regional Conservatoriums program contributed to the cultural vibrancy of the Northern Rivers Region. “Jazz Unlocked” masterclass series shared the Ken Stubbs method of improvisation based on years of practice, performance and research proved informative and inspiring. In partnership with NORPA “World Stages” delivered a celebration of cultural diversity in the Northern Rivers through food, music and performance bringing together high calibre local artists with national and international performers. “In Harmony Choralfest” was presented in both September 2012 and May 2013. “Australian Voices” headlined the event in 2012 with “The Idea of North” wearing that title in 2013. As an event totally devoted to singing in harmony, the sense of community engagement, inclusion and the beautiful shared experience of vocal harmony always imparts a sense of peace and joy in participants and performers alike. We are also in the initial stages of the creative development partnership with NORPA on the original and locally produced work “Tom Foolery” with Shenton Gregory as composer and former NRCAC Director Janis Balodis a co-writer.

Delivering our services in a beautiful heritage building has it’s charms and challenges. A successful application for funding through the Community Building Partnership Program with the support of our
local state member Thomas George enabled essential capital works to be undertaken. With scaffolding hugging the northern wall, repairs to the roof and repainting of all the windows, eaves, guttering & downpipes was undertaken. The roof repairs facilitated the reopening of a teaching room, allowing us to work to full capacity. Also undertaken with the assistance from the monies raised in our inaugural Music Marathon was the repainting of the Blue Room Studios. Sadly, our partnership with the YWCA Pulse Café was brought to an end due to the emergence of a substantial & costly plumbing issue rendering the kitchen not suitable for commercial purposes. NRCAC is proud to have been able to provide the commercial café space to the YWCA free of charge since 2010 and wishes this project every success into the future.

The Northern Rivers Conservatorium enjoys many successful partnerships across the region including with NORPA, Lismore City Council, Lismore Makers Market, Mad Matters Choir, Lismore City Concert Band, Arts Northern Rivers, Arts NSW and the Department of Education and Communities. Running in tandem with the Lismore Makers Market, 11 Cushion CONcerts were presented, showcasing local and original work from more than thirty acts. We were extremely lucky to welcome to our Concert Room stage, internationally acclaimed mandolin player Mike Compton. Mike is best known for his work on the soundtrack to the film “Oh Brother, Where art Thou?” for which he won a Grammy Award.

Staff and students of the Northern Rivers Conservatorium were devastated by the tragic death of our beautiful violin teacher, Stephanie Joseph at the start of 2013. Stephanie was an extremely talented musician and teacher and her passing hit our Conservatorium community very hard indeed. A tribute to Stephanie is included in full further in this document.

The Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre Inc. operates under the watchful eye of a Board of Directors who give generously of their time to execute their duties. In the past twelve months, the Board spent countless hours working together to produce our Strategic Plan for 2013 – 2016. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our Board of Directors for all the time they give to our organization. I farewell with thanks Paul Archer, Amanda Breese and Mark Norris and welcome warmly George Thompson and Melissa Hughes.

Hearty thanks must be given to our administrative team including Lydie Boyd, (Finance Manager), Janene Brooks (Student Administrator), Ben Goldsmith (Technical Assistant) and Robert Taylor (Groundsman) who diligently keep things ticking away on a day-to-day basis. Congratulations to Zoe Abbott (Head of Community Music) who has done a truly outstanding job with the Community Music and Music in Schools programs. We welcome to the team Alicia Charleston (Head of Music) who has valiantly taken on the task of reinvigorating the Academy Department. A special thanks also to Andy Downer who sunk his IT teeth very effectively into the task of marrying windows and mac operating systems for the installation of our new database system.

I extend whole-hearted congratulations and thanks to our teaching staff, students, families, fans and friends who make our Conservatorium the vibrant, varied and remarkable place that it is. Music has the ability to really change lives and truly enliven communities. We are extremely fortunate here at the Northern Rivers Conservatorium that our reason for coming to work each day is the provision of quality music education.

Anita Bellman
Executive Director
Music Department Report

From July 2012 to June 2013 the Academy Music Department ran two VET courses, Diploma of Music and Certificate III in Music.

The Certificate III, 2013 had zero attrition and the student cohort enjoyed a series of specialist Masterclasses presented by industry professionals including internationally acclaimed percussionist and composer Michael Askill. Academy Teachers also presented at the North Coast Careers expo and delivered two field trip days for Year 10 Elective Music students from the Lismore Community of Schools covering music technology, ensemble playing and instrument specialisation.

Certificate III in 2012 had 13 students enroll with 5 students graduating. Out of these 5 graduate students two continued their studies into the Diploma in 2013. Highlight of 2012 was the acceptance that NRCAC can provide VET Fee Help for the Diploma in Music course.

The inclusion of VET Fee Help for the Diploma course allows more equitable access for customers. It has widened this access to now include all socioeconomic classes opportunity to VET music education at NRC. VET Fee Help will provide more funds to allow more quality teaching, opportunities and support for customers and the continuation of VET courses at NRCAC.

I took on the role of Head of Department from Andy Downer from the 6th February, 2013. The focus in February was to attract more enrolments and advertise the opportunity of VET Fee Help for community inclusivity to music education.

The Diploma course saw 21 auditions with 18 places in the Diploma being offered. Semester 1 started in the first week of March with 15 full time students and 1 part time student. There was only one withdrawal before census year long units.

Whilst these courses already had been developed and aligned with the current Training Package CUS09, further editing was implemented to align to the AQTF standards to create a more progressive level of achievement from Certificate III to Diploma.

The Diploma course is performance based. It develops skills and knowledge to excel in developing a successful career in the music industry. Areas addressed include contemporary ensemble chart reading, composition, performance, increased hours in the studio and music business classes. The increase in studio time for the Diploma students means they are able to work with the equipment longer and develop their skill set for the ever changing music technology framework. Music Business allows the student to delve deeper into the current platforms and business opportunities present in the music industry environment.

An articulation agreement with SCU in 2011 is still current. This allows graduates of the Diploma a credit transfer into second year of study at SCU. The exception to this agreement is in regards to applications for the Performance stream where an audition for entry is also required. There are several Diploma and Certificate III students whose goal is to study at SCU.

The majority of the students enrolled are mature aged who are returning to study. They face challenges and stress in re-entering education and performance based study. As a cohort the students performance skills are at a higher level of entry than their music theory and technology skills. Added support classes and one on one meetings with students to address these areas have improved their comprehension, competency and productivity level.

The majority of Diploma students have submitted all Assessments for semester 1 and have attended on average 85% of class.

General observations to improve student learning include literacy and time management skills. There is also scope to source additional support for mental heath strategies for study. Overall the majority of Diploma students are motivated and enthusiastic creating a supportive music community in the Academy.

Student feedback so far has consisted of verbal face to face and email responses only from the Diploma students. The majority of students have responded favourably and commented on the high level of delivery and professionalism shown by the staff as well commitment to student supportive learning.
2013 has seen improvements in facilities for students such as music equipment and upgraded Studio A, to current industry platforms and access to industry events such as the APRA Songwriting Workshops and Lismore City Council performance opportunities.

The second half of 2013 looks promising for inclusion of the Certificate III course. Having the two courses running side by side encourages the potential for the department to grow and foster more opportunities to the community in regards to quality music education.

The outcome is to improve the facilities and produce a high calibre of student with a diverse level of skills and knowledge relevant to starting their professional career in the music industry including transferrable skills in many facets of their life. This includes pathways into further study and a strong bases for networking and professional opportunities.

**Alicia Charleston**  
**Head of Music**

Head of Music Andy Downer congratulations Certificate III student Jax Fiddes on her graduation.

Certificate III Graduate Ceremony

Certificate III Students show casing their skills at Open Day.
Community Music Report

The Community Music Department provides quality music education to all members of the community through individual & group tuition onsite at the Conservatorium. Numerous events are held throughout the year to engage the community, and a growing Ensembles program and Early Childhood Music program meets a range of needs. We also provide tuition during school hours through our Music in Schools program. We attract excellent tutors, and thriving enrolment numbers has seen many new additions to the staff this year.

Events supported by the Community Music department include concerts, workshops, and Open Day. Following are description’s of the year’s most notable events.

Northern Rivers Youth Orchestra – 10-12 July 2012 – over 50 students from across the region converged during the school holidays for orchestral workshops culminating in a performance at SCU’s Whitebrook theatre under the musical direction of the late Stephanie Joseph.

Spring Gala - 15 September 2012 – A beautiful concert was held at the Workers’ Club auditorium showcasing some of the finest musicians from the Community Music Program.

Open Day – 3 November 2012 - Held in conjunction with the monthly cushion concert, amongst the makers’ market, Open Day 2012 saw the building buzzing with people on self guided tours, taking aptitude tests, and enjoying the outdoor concert that included Community Studies & Academy students, as well as the Staff Ensemble. Over 20 new enrolments were received on the day.

Music Marathon – 23 March 2013 - Our highly successful fundraiser for building maintenance – 160 students and teachers collected per-minute sponsorship and contributed to a ten hour non-stop concert, raising almost $5,500.

End of term concerts were held in terms 4 and 2 (Spring Gala for term 3, and Music Marathon for term 1), and many students were supported by their tutors to successfully engage in AMEB and HSC examinations as well as some outstanding results in the Lismore Eisteddfod.

The Ensembles program is growing, and in addition to previously existing ensembles (Children's Choir, Little Strings, Cello Group, Adult Guitar Ensemble, Youth Guitar Ensemble, Youth Jazz Orchestra) we have added new ensembles in 2013, namely Junior Level Youth Jazz Orchestra, Young Strings, and Open Strings.

These ensembles have been free of charge for Conservatorium students thanks to the donation by an anonymous benefactor: Little Strings with Fleur St Vincent Welch, Youth Guitar Ensemble with Ryan Enns, Junior level Youth Jazz Orchestra with Julius Hofstetter.

The Early Childhood Music Program is thriving under Rochelle Wright’s coordination. The Tuesday Lismore classes involve two separate sessions for 1-3 & 4-5 year olds. Wednesday at Bangalow has the same structure, however the cohort for the older group is inconsistent, and staff are considering offering that time slot to the local home-schooling community.

The ECM staff have also devised and delivered Professional Development Training for Children’s Services staff, and are currently planning a similar training session for Primary School teachers of Early Stage 1 students.

In addition, ECM staff have been traveling to several children’s centres to deliver in-house ECM classes to the students there.

The Music in Schools program sees more than fifteen Conservatorium tutors deliver individual and small group tuition to over three hundred students in schools across our region. In addition we also have ensemble programs running in some of our participating schools.

Bangalow PS, Bexhill PS, Byron Bay Community Primary School, Dunoon PS, Lismore Heights PS, Mullumbimby HS, Ocean Shores PS, and Tregeagle PS.
And new programs have been introduced as follows:

Coorabell PS, where a customised school band program for Stage 2 students learning guitar, drums, and keyboard in small groups and joining together to perform common repertoire.

Bangalow PS, where a before-school Drum Band to accommodate students who could not fit into individual lessons, and those who wished for group playing opportunities.

Lismore Heights PS provided school funding so that all stage two students could have weekly percussion classes with Yvonne Dengate. This culminated in a fabulous performance at the end of term two, in which every child was enthusiastically engaged, and in perfect time.

There have been some changes to staffing in Community Music and Music in Schools this year. We have welcomed new teachers in Michael McCabe (Strings), Heidi Chappelow (Strings), Brigid Crouch (Strings), Jarrod Snowsill (Wind & Piano) Joy Scheeren (Wind), Andrew Jans Brown (Guitar, Bass, Piano, Drums & Voice), Belinda McKenzie (Strings), Yvonne Dengate (Percussion), Jake Dominey (Drums), Phil Blackman (Drama), Jo Rigby (Voice), Laurie Green (Brass)

Whilst our new strings teachers have been employed to fill the gap left by Stephanie Higgs' passing, and Phil Blackman has replaced Ajita Cannings as Drama teacher, the rest of these appointments reflect the continuing growth of both the Community Music and Music in Schools programs.

This growth is better accommodated with the refurbishment of Ensemble Room Three, and with the exception of Fridays, most teaching rooms are in use every afternoon and evening of the week. The Community Music Department regularly seeks feedback from all stakeholders, and responses suggest that our ability to provide quality music education far exceeds the expectations of the community.

Zoë Abbott
Community Music Coordinator

Treasurer’s Report

The association reported a surplus of $13,318 after non cash charges of $17,892 depreciation and $23,409 increase in employee provisions.

The association revenue has increased as a result of increased enrolments and the granting of the VET Fee Help facility for the Diploma Course. It is hoped that with VET FEE Help and tighter control of Community Studies debtors that the Association’s financial position will continue to improve. The current receivables $189,884 ($17,630 - 2012) reflect the recognition of VET FEE Help fees due, Grants and accrued fees and should not be construed as a dramatic increase in outstanding fees. The increase in receivables is also reflected in the reduction in the cash balance as payments were made to deliver the required services.

The association is committed to maintaining fiscal discipline with in depth costing of all activities and maintaining balanced budgets. Regular reporting and budget reviews ensure that control is maintained throughout the year.

The management and staff should be congratulated for the result which was achieved under difficult circumstances.

Peter Hughes
Treasurer
We remember, celebrate and farewell our beautiful and immensely talented violin teacher Stephanie Joseph who passed away in tragic circumstances on 9 January 2013.

Overwhelmingly Stephanie was loved as an exceptional teacher, a musician of great talent and a woman of generous spirit, cheeky humour, energy, passion, style and beauty.

Stephanie loved and delighted in her students. As a teacher she was unfailing in her strive for excellence and an incredibly hard worker who travelled great distances every week to deliver violin and cello lessons. Stephanie herself starting learning the violin at a very young age and in fact couldn’t remember not being able to play the violin. She did say that when she was around 8 or 9 it suddenly dawned on her that she could play the violin and she didn’t quite know how that had happened.

Stephanie’s talent as a musician was inspiring and it was always such a joy when our Mark Bromley and Steph would play together. Her vision and hard work manifested in the 2012 Northern Rivers Youth Orchestra – an amazing event for young musicians across our region.

Family, students, friends and staff gathered at the Conservatorium in February to pay tribute to Stephanie with musical performances, wonderful cakes (Steph was an amazing cook!). A book of memories, drawings, poems was put together by those who loved her. The following words are from Stephanie’s students Alex Martin.

“Stephanie was a beautiful person who shared her special gift of music with so many people. She was someone who I, and many others looked up to. She is truly irreplaceable and will always be remembered, not only in our hearts, but in the music she brought to life in those she taught and who she touched with her gifts and talents.

I am so thankful that I had the honour to be taught by Stephanie over the past three years. I learned so much from her and we had a lot of fun as we played together. Some of my favourite moments I shared with Stephanie were as we played Celtic duets together, and we would add more and more expressions and articulations to the music as we played, over-emphasising the Celtic essence of the pieces. We would try to hold back laughter as we kept playing, but we never could. I will hold these precious memories in my heart always.

Though we have said goodbye to Stephanie, her music lives through those she has taught. Each time I pick up my violin, I will remember her.”

*The tide recedes but leaves behind bright seashells on the sand.
The sun goes down, but gentle warmth still lingers on the land.
The music stops, and yet it echoes on in sweet refrains.....
For every joy that passes,
something beautiful remains.
Those who visited the Con....
From the top: Curly Cousins at Cushion Concert
The Fabulous Mike Compton thrilled us with his music and humour.
Nadoc Week Cushion Concert - Local Indigenous Talent drew a big crowd.
Newton Wolf was a real treat for the Conservatorium Community.
Tony Coiffet restored our beautiful Grand Piano.
Michael Askill world class percussionist gave a workshop at Open Day.
Gala 2012 Showcased our amazingly talented students & teachers.

Offsite Events...
DEC North Coast Music Camp
Choralfest starred the truly brilliant,
The Idea of North.
Open Day
Lynne Compton accompanying her students
The Teachers band, featuring, Anita Bellman, Heidi Holland, Imogen Wolf, Wendy Turner, Jeremy White and Adam Gardiner.
The gorgeous Childrens Choir.
Our Amazing Zoe Abbott, Head of Community Music ...
Julius Hoffstetter and his Youth Jazz Orchestra.
Vox Caldera filled the Concert Room with their soothing sounds.
North Rivers Youth Orchestra 2012
A three day workshop (left) led to a spellbounding performance (above).

Much needed building maintenance took place in this year.