WHAT’S NEW AT THE CON IN 2012?
Welcome to 2012, even though the first term of the school year is over. Welcome to students continuing from last year, to new students, and to 4 new schools participating in our expanding Music in Schools program. You are all doing yourselves a power of good!

NEW RESEARCH JUST LIKE THE OLD!
As you may know, music and the arts in general are a powerful driving force when properly applied to learning. There are at least forty years of irrefutable research from the US, Europe and South America about improvements in literacy and numeracy, school attendance and student wellbeing – simply by the introduction of a music program.

And if we needed further proof, the research has finally been undertaken in Australia – by The Song Room program which works with schools in Victoria for between 6 and 18 months, for as little as an hour a week!

The research project looked at 10 schools with similar socio-economic backgrounds. 4 had no program from the Song Room, 3 had just started with the Song Room and 3 had had Song Room participation for a longer time. They looked at the impact of the Song Room program on 370 Year 5 & 6 students.

I’ve attached a brief summary of the report:

• Benefit overall - schools participating in the Song Room long-term, performed better than those who had it for a short time, who in turn were better than those who didn’t have any music.
• Literacy – schools without Song Room had an average of about 85% of students above the national minimum for Y5 literacy, those who had Song Room programs had 100% above the minimum.
• Grammar and Punctuation – schools that didn’t have Song Room programs had 13% below the national minimum; Short-Term Song Room schools saw that reduce to 9%, Long-term Song Room schools to 3.5%
• Attendance – schools not participating had a little over 12% absent, whereas those with Song Room had between 4 and 6% absent on Song Room days.

We don’t need more research - all the evidence says music and the arts in general are integral to learning. Billions of dollars have been thrown at literacy and numeracy programs and Australia still going backwards. Urge our policy makers to put their money into a proven model – one that can be bought for a song!

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
Welcome to new teaching staff! We must be doing something right as there is increased demand for our services. We love providing the highest quality tuition for our students and increased work opportunities for our expert teachers.

Some goodbyes and hellos…
Farewell to Jill Aitken, the Office Administrator for many, many years. A big thank you to Jill for her unstinting service, she has earned her retirement.

I am also leaving after four pleasurable and rewarding years to pursue my freelance writing career. My thanks to all students, parents and staff for their generous support.

We are pleased to welcome Lydie Boyd as the new Finance/Office Manager. Matt Hill will be the Acting Director until the Board appoints a new Director. Things are changing but the Con is well positioned for a long and prosperous future.

ISSUE 1 MARCH/APRIL 2012

NEW RESEARCH JUST LIKE THE OLD!
Music Department News

New Mid Year Entry Certificate III in Music Course

There are exciting things in store for the VET courses in 2012-13. Preparations are underway for a new one semester, mid year entry Certificate III in Music course. This course will act as an extending bridging course for a revamped Diploma of Music course in 2013. Students will have classes in music theory, aural, business, ensembles, music technology, songwriting, studio as well as individual instrument/vocal lessons with our practicing industry professional teachers.

VET FEE HELP

We are currently applying for VET FEE HELP that will enable students studying the Diploma of Music in 2013 to get a HECS style loan to cover the course fees. We are aware that the full fee paying option is difficult for many students and we are looking forward to offering an alternative for students in 2013.

Articulation Agreement with Southern Cross University

We are also pleased to announce an articulation agreement with Southern Cross University. Students completing the Diploma of Music at the Northern Rivers Conservatorium will be able to gain the equivalent of one year’s credit for study towards either a Bachelor of Music (Majoring in Music Industry Studies) or a Bachelor of Arts at SCU.

Call out for Con Alumni Stories

We are very keen to hear from past NRCAC graduates. Some of our 2011 crop are heading to Europe in the coming months and others are pursuing further study in Melbourne. We’d love to hear what other past graduates are up to - send an email to the address below and tell us where your Con qualification has taken you!

For more information on the Certificate III in Music and Diploma of Music courses contact Matt Hill (ph: 66212266 or email: matt@nrcac.edu.au)

Flamenco Guitar Workshop beamed to Wagga Wagga

On Wednesday 28 March, 13 lucky guitarists participated in a Flamenco guitar workshop at the Con with Brisbane based guitarist Andrew Veivers. Andrew demonstrated some stunning right hand techniques and inspired all present with his considerable knowledge of this rich Spanish tradition.

The evening was also made memorable by the inauguration of our recently installed video conferencing facilities. Jeff Donovan, Associate Director and Head of Strings and Guitar at the Riverina Conservatorium, was beamed in from Wagga Wagga and able to play along with the aspiring Lismore guitarists.
Wendy Turner went to this yearly festival where piano teachers from all over NSW meet to listen to speakers who are inspiring in their knowledge and demonstrations of teaching piano. She thought some of the things they talked about would be relevant for parents of children learning the piano.

The first session was given by a piano teacher of immense experience, who spoke about developing good piano techniques right from the beginning stages and how these develop through the AMEB repertoire.

The second session was given by Elissa Milne, who has studied piano teaching and written many attractive pieces for young children. Her focus was the beginning stages of piano teaching. There are many factors which contribute to success. One of the main features was her description of the culture of music in the family. The more successful students have other family members playing music, access to print music other than the music they are learning, recorded music, going to concerts, seeing people playing other instruments, and access to an instrument. Youtube has become a popular way to see performances, too, and as students advance, they are able to hear many different performances from all over the world, of the works they are studying.

The teacher then needs to work out if the child is ready. Is the student aware of their own body, knowing left from right, how to sit with good posture, able to process information, able to count and know their basic letters and numbers, understand the concepts of up and down in pitch and in space?

Ms Milne asks if parents have an aim with the music studies. Is it to produce a concert pianist? (Unlikely). Music skills lead to a better emotional intelligence and other skills that will develop in other areas of learning that will prepare their child for life. Even if they do not become stars they will be successful in whatever else takes their attention.

Christopher Norton Workshop, Brisbane January 2012.

I also attended this workshop given by the composer Christopher Norton who writes pieces in a popular style with backing tapes. He gave us concrete ideas on how to teach students how to improvise. This is an essential skill for students who want to play with bands, now so popular in our education system. His books are sold all over the world and his music has a place within the broader repertoire of music taught.

Wendy Turner
Community Studies News

The Piano Party.

The piano party for primary aged school children was held on March 25th.

We had a story about the origins of the song, Mary Had a Little Lamb. They children all received a copy of the story. About twenty children then showed their amazing skills on the piano, playing a great variety of music.

We had music party games, reading and playing rhythms, listening to pitch and showing how it went up or down, listening to consonances and dissonances (some call it smiley and yucky sounds) and then we had party food and chatting. The children who play piano normally learn in isolation and it is great to hear others and get to know other young players. Thank-you to admin staff for their help and to Lynne Crompton and Matt Hill for helping on the day.

Wendy Turner

---

NRC Youth Jazz Orchestra meets Mullumbimby High School

On Friday the 16 March the Northern Rivers Youth Jazz Ensemble visited Mullumbimby High School. In three concerts to over five hundred primary and high school students they proved to their peers that playing music is cool after all. A fine ensemble, an enthusiastic audience and the welcoming school created a wonderful atmosphere for these concerts. The Conservatorium hopes to attract more music students to the new Lighthouse Valley tuition program, including the combined Lighthouse Valley cluster schools band. Currently specialised tuition is available at Ocean Shores Primary, the Pocket Primary, Brunswick Heads and Mullumbimby Primaries as well as Mullumbimby High Schools.