

President's Report 2009

by Dr Chrystine Bouffler

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If there is a subtext to the 2009 Festival it must be, in the words of the immortal bard, *All's well that ends well* for thus it has. Despite the problems encountered in bringing it to fruition the 2009 Festival has been another outstanding success.

This year has been a particularly difficult one for the Festival Committee. With the resignation of our Artistic Director in 2008 our Coordinator Alvena Ferguson stepped into the breach and put together what promised to be an excellent program. For many years the government has provided the support that allows the Festival to bring to bring top class musicians to the Camden Haven community at prices that are affordable. Unfortunately government support was not forthcoming this year and, with the late announcement of funding, this created a dilemma for the committee. Given that all musicians had been contracted, cancelling the 2009 Festival did not appear to be a viable option if the Festival was to maintain its credibility.

The committee turned to the community, canvassing businesses and individuals who responded magnificently. The Chamber of Commerce, in particular provided a sizeable donation and together with the Principal Sponsor Aevum Living, benefactor Yvonne Fisher and other community donations made it possible for the Festival to proceed. It is impossible to name all our benefactors but the committee and indeed all Festival goers, owe them a huge vote of thanks. The government did eventually make a contribution thanks to the efforts of our local member Peter Blessing and emails from the community. This has enabled us to clear all our debts including several loans.

The Festival followed the format that has become established – the first weekend devoted to classical music, the second to world music with two intervening concerts during the week. The Festival opened on Friday night with a *Candlelight Fantasia* featuring pianist Daniel de Borah. This was followed on the Saturday with performances by *The Power of Three* and the *Tinalley String Quartet* and on Sunday with the *Young Virtuosi* – Patrick Keith piano and Jingjing Lu Chinese harp. The classical weekend culminated in the performance by the *Sydney Chamber Choir*. All performances were truly outstanding and well received by audiences. More than one person remarked to me that it was one of the best classical weekends they had attended.

The concerts held in Port Macquarie during the week were also successful. The *Arrebato Ensemble* performance on the Tuesday evening was all but sold out. The *Lyrebird Blues Band* which performed at the Blue Water Bar on the Thursday was also well received by lovers of Blues music.

In a new innovation the world music weekend began with an evening concert by the *Blues Point Jazz Vocal Group* at Bago Vineyard. This was followed on the Saturday by the Klezmer band *Chutzpah* and a return to the Saturday night jazz at the North Haven Bowling Club with the *Todd Hardy Jazz Quintet*. Sunday welcomed the popular *Heavenly Lights* gospel trio with the Festival finale, a free concert by *Shiraz Jazz 'n'*

Blues as part of the *Slice of Haven* Food and Wine Festival, an associated event. Also an associated event was the Hastings Valley Fine Art Association's art exhibition *Spirit of the Camden Haven*. *Shiraz Jazz 'n' Blues* also performed as an associate event at the Royal Hotel, Kew on the Friday night. It is particularly pleasing to see other community groups embracing the Camden Haven Music Festival.

The Festival made use of several new venues in Port Macquarie, in particular St Columba's chapel and the CWA room. While there were positives for these venues there were also some problems associated with the fact of using them for evening performances. The use of Bago vineyard at night also presented some difficulties. These will need to be addressed if these venues are to be used in the future. Holding the finale as part of the *Slice of Haven*, in my opinion, did not do justice to the performers or to the Festival. The *Slice of Haven* started at 10am and by 3pm the crowds were drifting away. Those that stayed enjoyed the music but there was not the same 'buzz' usually associated with a Festival finale.

The challenges ahead are great if the Festival is to continue in 2010 and beyond. New sponsorships are needed and while we can always hope, government grants cannot be guaranteed. There is much for the new committee to ponder, not least whether the Camden Haven Music Festival is coming to a natural end. I feel that the year ahead will require fresh ideas and considerable energy and commitment. I no longer feel that I can continue to supply these at the level demanded and for this reason I am standing down from the committee. I will, however, remain available to assist if required.

I wish to thank my committee who have put in so many hours of hard work and, in particular, Alvena who has been both Artistic Director and Coordinator. I marvel at her capacity for organisation and work. I wish the new committee well.