Federal focus

Congratulations to South Australia for achieving 125 years of continuous examining with AMEB. It is fascinating to reflect back on the many thousands of candidates that must have been examined over those years. All those nerves, dreams, tears and excitement! It emphasises the importance of AMEB as an influence in the musical life of Australia over such a long period of time.

We are looking forward to the release of new Double Bass and Flute syllabuses at the end of this year. For the first time Double Bass will have a Technical Work Book and Grade Books (Preliminary to Grade 4) and Flute has been extended to have new Grade Books from Preliminary to Grade 6. Flute will also have a new Technical Work Book and Sight Reading Book. The release of the new Flute syllabus will see the eventual withdrawal of the Flute for Leisure syllabus that has been on trial in SA for some time now. An important brief of the committee overseeing the Flute review has been to include repertoire that has formed part of the For Leisure syllabus and we are confident that users of the new syllabus will be delighted with the available selection of repertoire.

Print music is in a state of change at the moment. Increasing online sales and the strong Australian dollar is putting enormous pressure on print music retailers. The outcome of this is that some retailers are choosing to withdraw from print music altogether. Other retailers are choosing to hold minimal stock and only getting books in based on customer orders. We would like to reassure you that all books being used in a current syllabus that is available for examination are in print and available. AMEB (SA & NT) are making books available to you through their office in the University of Adelaide. You can come in and buy one or order over the phone and they will mail it to you. At the moment they don’t hold all books in stock but they hold the more common ones. If there is sufficient demand they will carry more books to meet your needs.

Federal Office is investigating the possibility of establishing an online store to contribute to the availability of stock and ease of access.

Online examining may have only been around for two of South Australia’s 125 years but it is becoming an important part of that fabric. All Theory Syllabuses are now available for online examining up to and including Grade 3 and we expect this to increase to Grade 4 by the end of the year. Take up is continually increasing and, if you haven’t tried it yet, we recommend that you give it a go. One of the features of online examining is that unlimited practice exams form part of the purchase – the cost of which in South Australia is less than the equivalent traditional written exam. It’s cheaper, more convenient and the children love it!

If you’re a busy music teacher who never quite has time to get to theory at the end of your lesson you will be pleased to know that online courses are now available for Grades 1 and 2 Theory of Music. Each topic has an individual lesson and each lesson has multiple tests. There are numerous teacher tools that allow you to oversee and help your students. Go to www.amebtheory.edu.au for more information.

Bernard Depasquale,
General Manager, AMEB Federal Office

Diary of a string teacher

...Only one more day to go. Last lessons all round – Grade Preliminary to 8. I am sure they are well prepared. I have done everything to help them, smoothing the way to the best of my ability. I have made sure that their instruments are clean, their bows rosined. I have organized the accompanist and the students have rehearsed and even had a chance to perform their pieces at my little house concert. (They loved the chocolate cake.) I have patiently taught those tricky fingerings for the melodic minor scales for the 100th time, practised those aural tests, quizzed the students on their general knowledge, listened to those studies and pieces all the while checking that we have adhered to the objectives outlined for each level. I have encouraged, enthused and sympathized, both with students and parents. My job is almost done, however there are still a few last minute checks that I need to make before I send the candidates into the examining room. I know, from years of experience, not only as a student, teacher but also as an examiner, that these seemingly small tasks can facilitate the smooth running of the AMEB exam, ensuring a relaxed student and a happy examiner. They are as follows.

A is for Adjustors. I need to check that the adjustors/fine tuners are not wound down so far that they are drilling through the belly of the instrument. They need to be oiled and able to be wound in both directions for those last minute tuning adjustments in order to deal with different temperatures and differing pitches of the pianos in the examining rooms. How many times have I as an examiner spent 5 minutes of valuable examination time readjusting the set up of the strings? This proves to be nerve-wracking for candidate and examiner alike.

M is for Markers. I must make sure that the markers on the fingerboards and necks have been removed for all grades above Preliminary.

E is for Erasers. I must ensure that all markings are removed from the music that relate to General Knowledge. This means all key changes, translations of musical terms, explanations of composers, musical periods etc.

B is for Being Prepared- armed with all examination slips, technical work forms, and if the student is in Level 2 and above, I must ensure that they have the accompaniment score available for the General Knowledge, not just their own part.

Wendy Heiligenberg,
String Teacher and AMEB Strings Advisor and Examiner

AMEB office hours
In 2012 the AMEB office has moved to new office hours:
Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am-5pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays the office opens from 1pm – 5pm
It is expected that this will allow some uninterrupted administrative processing and faster turnaround of examining materials.

Change of telephone number
The AMEB telephone number is now (08) 8313 8088