The newly established Access Centre of the Elder Conservatorium of Music is introducing a program for beginner string and piano players aged between 6 and 9 years. Tuition will be provided by Elder Conservatorium staff in a small group format.

The program includes both an instrumental lesson and a 50 minute musicianship class using movement-based activities to develop rhythm, pitch and reading skills and promote the awareness of musical concepts such as tempo, dynamics and phrasing.

It is intended that this holistic approach will contribute to each student’s personal growth and assist their progression to further studies. Beyond the initial program, students can continue individual lessons, advanced musicianship and ensemble classes.

Students will be encouraged to take advantage of examination opportunities in both performance and musicianship provided by the AMEB as an indicator of their progress at a time that suits their level.

The Junior Programs are held at the Elder Conservatorium on Saturday mornings during the school terms. Term 4 commenced on 18 October with instrumental lessons at 9am and Musicianship classes at 10am. All music is provided by the Access Centre.

For more inquiries please contact Susie Gold on 8313 0304 or email on susan.gold@adelaide.edu.au

Susie Gold
Administrator, Access Centre
Elder Conservatorium of Music

“A” is for Honours

The AMEB grading criteria for A+ (High Distinction) and A (Honours) require candidates to demonstrate an ‘outstanding’ or ‘superior level of achievement … in all sections.’ Many students presenting for examination perform their pieces very well but appear under prepared in the areas of Technical Work, Sight Reading, Aural Tests and/or General Knowledge. There are, however, many ways in which this can be avoided.

Technical Work

It is advisable to encourage students’ familiarity with a wider selection of scales and arpeggios than those actually required by the syllabus. Of the prescribed parallel keys, for example, relative majors and minors might be added, and/or keys of the selected repertoire. Nearer to the time, ‘exam scales’ may then be polished so that absolute fluency and correct tempi are attained.

Sight Reading

Please note Anna Lester’s very helpful advice on the next page. Remember, sight reading is easily practised in association with the learning of new pieces, where unfamiliar passages can be read hands separately, with the teacher playing the other stave. Much can also be achieved by encouraging students to (1) maintain a strict, slow tempo, (2) keep their eyes on the music (i.e. measuring distances without looking at the keyboard), and (3) start a piece from any given point, thus preventing over-reliance on muscle memory.

Aural Tests

For those weak in this area training should occur regularly, beginning with tests less difficult than those required for the Grade in question. In order to prevent students from believing that they are incapable or inadequate, one might begin by repeating tests which they can easily pass.

General Knowledge

Keys and modulations are best discussed in the early stages of preparation, and should be understood as an integral part of the learning process. In cases where these are explained or written in by the teacher at the last minute, students can experience an aversion to theoretical analysis instead of strengthening their aural perception.

Dr Diana Weekes
AMEB Piano Examiner

2007 Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference Papers Available
Proceedings of the conference are now available online at www.appca.com.au
Part I contains papers by Professor David Lockett, Rodney Smith and Dr Diana Weekes.