It is quite sobering to think that in 2018 we will celebrate AMEB’s centenary. Achieving this milestone is an extraordinary feat for a not-for-profit organisation devoted to supporting music and speech education across the country. This feat is even more extraordinary when you consider the organisation has remained largely unchanged for the majority of these years. That is true testament to the quality of those who have been committed to our goals and priorities over this time.

It’s fair to say however, that with the exponentially increasing pace of change we experience in the world today, the AMEB may not survive for another century without embracing that change. When you consider that the majority of AMEB candidates in 2016 are second generation digital natives it becomes very clear that we must look at what we do, not through just a different lens, but through multi-focals.

The challenge is to incorporate positive change while maintaining the integrity and quality for which AMEB is renowned – to ensure we do not tamper with the things that are working so well.

While we have moved in recent times to being the world leader in online music theory exams, to releasing musical theatre, to becoming a large genuine music publisher and distributor of print music and to representing other examining bodies in this country, the thing that can’t and won’t change is our reliance on eminent musicians, teachers, examiners and practitioners who through your commitment, give this organisation the reputation we all enjoy. To all of you, I offer my thanks for your support and trust.

I value your company on this exciting journey to ensure our descendants have an even bigger party in 2118.

Mike Tyler
Chair, AMEB Federal Board

Australian Music Examinations Board
South Australia and Northern Territory

On top note

You’re invited to the party

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AMEB subjects


Speech and Drama includes: Drama & Communication, Voice & Communication and Drama & Performance

Contemporary Popular Music includes: Keyboard, Guitar, Bass, Vocal, Drum Kit

Theory includes: Music Craft, Theory & Musicianship, Speech & Performance

And now examining Rockschool!
I have been examining AMEB CPM candidates for a number of years now, but this semester I experienced my first AMEB Rock School London (RSL) exam.

As I am not yet a fully trained RSL examiner, I was asked to oversee the bass guitar grade exam that would be videoed and then sent to Melbourne and on to London for official marking. Rockschool offers both grade exams and performance exams.

At the grade exam an AMEB staff member videoed the exam on an iPad. I was given a script to read from that outlined the exam requirements for the candidate. Each section was clearly laid out for both the examiner and the candidate. Like the AMEB CPM exams, the exam consisted of a number of short pieces, technical exercises, an aural test, a creative improvisation section, a general knowledge section and a sight reading component. There were minor differences in the type of questions asked, but a very similar format is followed. It was clear that the candidate was well prepared for the exam by his teacher, which resulted in a well-executed exam and was reflected in a strong final mark.

Robyn Habel
AMEB Examiner and Trainee Rocks school Examiner

I’ve always liked the philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca because he makes me smile. One of his teaching principles was to expect the worst, and if that doesn’t happen, then rejoice! A little extreme, but it does give you a smile doesn’t it?

As a Speech and Drama practitioner I can also smile at the view he held that Life’s like a play: it’s not the length, but the excellence of the acting that matters.

I’ve been really fortunate recently to experience that excellence of acting in the lives of some adult students with an incredible passion for acting. They come from diverse backgrounds – law, psychology and there’s even an electrician in the mix; yet, they are working for several hours each week to achieve their Associate Diplomas in Drama and Performance. They are skilled and committed performers, willing to take a risk and put it all on the line and play life, with excellence in acting.

There’s no doubt that the AMEB Drama and Performance syllabus is one which asks nothing but excellence. Yet, it is an achievable syllabus! Students learn so much about speech, voice, movement, physicality, literature, history and of course drama! They become excellent at reading prose, verse, drama, essays, diaries and so on. They can show their versatility as an actor and as a person through a great variety of performances, all managed themselves. They become the stage director, set designer, music director and actor in one examination and there is nothing more satisfying in the world for them than to do this with excellence.

At the local branch of Actor’s Centre Australia (ACA Adelaide), students are working incredibly hard to also study Speech and Drama. They have spent the last few months working individually and in ensemble performance to learn about drama, characterisation and most importantly, conveying the emotional truth of stories. In collaboration with Adrian Barnes from the ACA Adelaide we have been able to take a chance and give eight students a chance to really demonstrate excellence of performance as they take the ‘Next Step’ not only within the Actor’s Centre course, but also in doing an AMEB Speech and Drama course, which recognises their skill and prior learning, taking it to a new level, developing talent, fostering talent, watching talent grow and thrive.

It is important to recognise the skills and talents in all our students – to step ‘outside the box’ and see that all experiences of life can contribute to incredible performances, because Seneca was right when he said Life really is like a play and as Shakespeare says “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players”. So we play our own part in helping our candidates achieve excellence and in December at the AMEB Award’s Ceremony, I invite you to take the time to celebrate our adventures and successes.

Louise Borgo
Speech and Drama Examiner and Advisor
Tips for general knowledge

General Knowledge, for some teachers, can be a vexing part of exam preparation.

There is the uncertainty of what level of detail needs to be prepared, how much detail the student will retain, and what and how much the examiner will ask the student. It’s my practice to encourage my own students, no matter what age or level of experience, to understand and be able to explain everything on the page.

For examination purposes the expectations are listed on page xiv of the Manual of Syllabuses. Remember that General Knowledge is not examinable on Extra List pieces and for non-pianists the questions will be taken from the soloist’s part in Level 1 and the accompanist’s part at Level 2.

Examination requirements aside though I tend to teach, as many do, more than syllabus requirements. To begin I find it helpful to have students look at the title of the piece and consider how it is reflected in the music. That helps develop knowledge of not only the meaning of titles, but also what the implications of the title are in terms of musical characteristics, especially the form of the piece. Regarding form, students should also know where sectional divisions are and how they are articulated musically. Some pieces may have two or three sections but might not necessarily be in binary or ternary form. I think this is an important distinction. In grades 2, 3 and 4 students will need to know the form and how it breaks down in terms of sections. However, I have found it helpful to explain set forms as early as possible simply because students encounter them so often.

Knowledge of keys is important, but working through technical work and theory makes the subsequent understanding of modulations, and for example use of modes and pentatonic scales much easier. Even though not immediately examinable I have found it helpful for young students to be taught about scales other than diatonic scales from the outset.

Ultimately of course students need to be able to tell the examiner the nationality and the time in which the composer lived; explain dynamics, time signatures, signs and terms, ornaments and where dance forms are used and a little about the character of each dance. The distinguishing features of the Baroque, Classical or Romantic periods are also eventually examinable together with biographical knowledge of composers and a steady accumulation of such knowledge is very rewarding and more likely to be remembered.

In trying hard to keep students engaged with music it can help tremendously if they have the deeper understanding of the pieces they are playing and that deeper understanding often tends to spring from their general knowledge.

Andrew Raiskums
AMEB Federal Office

The global assessment of strings

So much has been written about string examining methods, hints, strategies and deficiencies so I won’t attempt to add to it. Instead you may find it interesting to see how other countries manage the evaluation system and to ponder their approaches, specifically regarding string syllabi.

In Hungary and other Eastern European countries scales are not part of exams. It is presumed that the teachers check these. The emphasis is on interpretation and musicality rather than technique – which as I said, is “presumed”.

In the UK, scales and arpeggios are a section, but there are no technical exercises, and the scales have equal marking to sight reading. That could be an interesting incentive to improve sight reading. I am usually surprised at how few examinees play in the correct key.

Central music colleges run exams in the USA with a formula of 2 pieces, 2 studies and scales, arpeggios etc., but no exercises.

The pieces in the various syllabi I viewed were very similar to the AMEB in composers and level, with a good mix of traditional and contemporary. The UK and USA use a numbers system marking out of 150 or 100 respectively, but I could find no information on the European marking system.

Playing these instruments is a very traditional skill so it seems logical that the assessments are similar around the world.

Essentially though it is enjoyment that is crucial to our music and it is wonderful to see that in the exam room.

Gabrielle Scherrer
AMEB Violin Examiner

Coming to the AMEB in 2017

Recital Exams in:
Trumpet, Flute and Violin

Teacher Consultation Service

New Prizes:
AMEB Composition Prize,
Student Accompanist Award,
AUSTA/AMEB Orchestral String Student Composition Prize,
AUSTA Grade 2 String Performance Prize
METROPOLITAN ADELAIDE PRACTICAL SESSIONS
(Grades Preliminary – Certificate of Performance)

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<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Adelaide Mar</td>
<td>Mar 18, 19, 25</td>
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<td>Mar 3</td>
<td>Adelaide May*</td>
<td>Mar 18, 19, 25</td>
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<td>Hartley Building July</td>
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<td>Adelaide Sep</td>
<td>Jul 2, 3, 9, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30</td>
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<td>Hartley Bldg Sep</td>
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<td>Aug 1</td>
<td>Adelaide Oct/Nov*</td>
<td>Oct 7 - Nov 12*</td>
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<td>Mature age Nov</td>
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Supplementary Exams, Nov 25/26 (subject to conditions in the 2017 AMEB SA & NT Teachers’ Handbook)

REGIONAL SA PRACTICAL SESSION

| June 9       | SA Country region                                  | Aug 19 - Sep 2 |

NORTHERN TERRITORY PRACTICAL SESSIONS

| Mar 3        | Darwin May                                         | May 20-27    |
| Aug 4        | Darwin October                                     | Oct 6-20    |
| Aug 11       | Alice Springs                                      | Oct 21-28   |

SPEECH PRACTICAL SESSIONS

| Mar 24       | Speech June                                        | June 3-17    |
| July 21      | Speech September                                   | Sep 9-30    |

MUSIC DIPLOMAS

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ROCKSCHOOL PRACTICAL SESSIONS

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<td>May 5</td>
<td>Rockschool July*</td>
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<td>Aug 11</td>
<td>Rockschool Oct/ Nov*</td>
<td>Oct 28 -Nov 4*</td>
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HARD COPY THEORY EXAMS FOR MUSIC AND SPEECH SYLLABI

| June 9       | Theory                                             | Aug 22 & 23 |

* Please indicate on your entry form if you need assistance with a venue.
Please note: There are no central venues available in Nov of the Adelaide Oct/Nov session.

Introducing
Mitchell Bartel

For those who haven’t already met me or spoken to me on the phone, I’m Mitchell Bartel and it has been my pleasure this year to step into the role of Client Services Officer at the AMEB. It seems very appropriate for me to have ended up here, as AMEB exams formed the solid foundation of my growth as a musician, which eventually propelled me into my current career.

I began learning piano at the tender age of four and had my first exam when I was eight. Since then I climbed up the ranks, and earned my Associate Diploma in Piano. In high school, I dabbled in trumpet and also discovered the joys of singing when I joined the Festival Statesmen Chorus. During primary school, I also did Speech and Drama exams, which were a lot of fun and provided another outlet to be a bit wacky!

But the most rewarding part of my musical upbringing was writing my own pieces which incorporated the new musical ideas I was learning as I went up through the grades. Having written music for as long as I have been playing it, I studied Composition at the Elder Conservatorium and graduated in 2014. Since then I have been feeling my way out into the world as a composer and I absolutely love it!

It’s been fantastic so far working at the AMEB, as I get to meet lots of friendly and very talented musicians. Being a part of the music community in Adelaide is exciting and inspires me in my own musical pursuits. But most importantly, the AMEB is a great opportunity for me to give back to those who provided that foundation for me as a child, and it’s an honour to be a part of doing the same for the next generation.

Mitchell Bartel

2017 Information Day
24th January 2017
at the University of Adelaide

Registration Form attached to this newsletter.