



Music in our community

In the 'old world', of about the 15th to 17th centuries, music was seen by the general public as something to be revered, a gift to man, with a mysterious & 'celestial' power to uplift the human spirit.

Gradually it became more of a common entertainment, until in the present generation there has developed quite a large division between so called 'classical' or 'high-brow' music and the 'popular' music which excites the majority.

We, as lovers of the 'classical' genre, have to admit that we have become a minority group. In most of the world's major cities, even in Vienna which is recognised as a home of music and which has nurtured so many great composers, there is talk of a growing change in the balance between the two styles. While major concert venues, hosting established performers, are still attracting large audiences, the smaller community concerts are often poorly attended.

Watching this apparent shrinking of our music public, we must not sit back and lament it, but rather gather our energies and do something about it.

Australian music education, in recent years, has seen decreasing Government funding and the closure of music schools. Very few primary schools still offer music as a subject; Kindergarten and Primary School teachers no longer have to be proficient on an instrument such as guitar or piano; children don't learn to march, sing or play musical games which would develop in them a sense of rhythm or pitch.

So the responsibility falls increasingly on private music teachers to fill the gap – since strangely there is still a steady stream of people, young and older, attracted by music enough to want to be able to play an instrument and experience not only the popular genres, but also the magic of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven.

Students who spend time and effort in learning to play, should be encouraged to share their music as they progress. The AMEB examination system fires their incentive to achieve by awarding qualifications for each 'step to Parnassus*'. Students and parents alike rejoice in a good exam result. As with athletes, young musicians are spurred on to do even better with each step.

Organisations such as Recitals Australia, The Accompanists' Guild and The Eisteddfod Society all offer opportunities for student performance, so Adelaide seems to be 'doing its bit' – but none of these can do it alone – they all need the support of music lovers.

The old idea of suburban amateur music societies would be well worth reviving, if only to provide communal enjoyment. People who enjoy music together feel a special connection and a sense of healthy camaraderie.

Whatever genre, music offers an outlet for emotions which can't be expressed in words, therefore can be understood by all nations. It acts as a bridge across generations and cultures, speaking to rich and poor without discrimination – with no room in it for politics or enmity.

What community can exist happily without it?!

Monika Laczofy
AMEB Federal Examiner and State Piano Examiner

* mountain in Greek antiquity sacred to the muses.