

The IAJE Jazz Train on track in Malaysia

Australian students taking part in clinics with clinicians from America, Singapore, and Australia at an international music conference in Malaysia—this is surely a positive sign that IAJE is starting to live out its mission statement in the international arena. It all happened at the International Society for Music Education (ISME) International Conference in Kuala Lumpur in July, 2006, at which IAJE organised the 'jazz track'.

It started with a brief planning meeting in David Caffey's Presidential Suite at the Conference in Long Beach in 2005, when it was agreed that the overall project would be best run out of Greg Carroll's Education Office. I volunteered to give a clinic as Australia is, comparatively speaking, on Malaysia's doorstep, and it seemed appropriate that our President Elect and now our President, Chuck Owen, should lead the team in order to liaise with the ISME hierarchy, and who better to also present a clinic. I was coming to the end of my time as the Board Representative for Australasia and the prospect of IAJE flying the jazz flag in this part of the world seemed like a really good idea. Also on a personal level, the recently elected President of ISME, Professor Gary McPherson, had unselfishly given me my very first 'jazz education resources' when he, myself, and Pat Crichton had all played together in The Will Upson Big Band in Perth in the late 1970s. Many of you will recognise Pat's name as my predecessor on the Board and also as the former IAJE International Treasurer. Gary McPherson's prestigious standing in the academic world of music education included a period spent studying with David Baker at Indiana University. Gary had helped to sow the 'jazz education seed' in me and it would be pleasing to thank him and to tell him in person that it had taken root and that I have also had the privilege of getting to know David Baker during our six years on the Board together.

Part of my job in Perth, Western Australia, is directing 'honour jazz bands' for showcase concerts, and in 2005 I put together an early music ensemble, playing traditional music in a New Orleans, Chicago, and Swing style. Being aware of the Conference in Kuala Lumpur, I decid-



Dr. Gene Aitken works with students during a session on starting and maintaining an instrumental jazz component in schools.

ed, with the support of a very supportive group of parents, to audition to perform. Once this was successfully completed, it seemed like a good idea to centre my clinic round the musical management of this ensemble and the music that it was playing. Greg Carroll liked the idea and his cunning brain also latched onto the notion that having a young student group at the Conference, now known as The Perth Youth Dixieland Orchestra (PYDO), would also prove useful for other clinics. E-mails were flashing across the globe and, seeing the advantages of my ensemble working with both Greg and someone I was yet to meet, Dr Gene Aitken, I readily agreed. Gene, who is currently and conveniently based in Singapore, would work with the entire group and Greg would work with the Rhythm Section. The 'jazz track' would be completed by some other joint clinics and clinics presented by Chuck Owen and Kim McCord. Things were falling into place.

More e-mails and fund-raising, July had arrived and we were in Kuala Lumpur. Our hotel was conveniently situated a short walk from The Convention Centre and the impressive Twin Towers that are now at the heart of the City. My clinic was first up on the Monday, and as the room filled, I noticed that some of the delegates were staff and students from Mount Lawley Senior High School in Perth, Western Australia, where I had indeed used those jazz resources given to me by the ISME President. And, so, another circle was coming full swing that had included starting the first jazz course in the State at this school, Mount Lawley Senior High School, and my subsequent journey with IAJE. As the music spilled out into the corridors, it became standing room only, and, as we looked out onto a sea of cameras, it suddenly seemed as if it had all been worthwhile.



Brian Copping looks on during his clinic at the International Society for Music Education (ISME) International Conference in Kuala Lumpur.



The Perth Youth Dixieland Orchestra (PYDO) with (L-R) Gene Aitken, Brian Copping, Chuck Owen, and Greg Carroll.

The scenario for the other clinics was very much the same. Greg Carroll presented a session on IAJE Education and Outreach Programs, Greg and Gene gave a joint session on Starting and Maintaining an Instrumental Jazz Component in schools, then Greg gave the most detailed session on the internal working of the Rhythm Section Ya Dig? Well that was the title. Larger than life, funny and informative, Greg held the audience captive for the entire session. I knew Dr. Gene Aitken's work by reputation only but I was not disappointed. Quiet and unassuming at first, Gene is the consummate professional as he, too, took things with the entire Perth Youth Dixieland Orchestra to a level of detail that one had to witness to believe. The impact of both clinics has had a lasting impact on the ensemble and it was a privilege to have been part of this.

There was time to relax and 'hang' with very special IAJE friends at the Malaysian Evening Concert and then it was back into performances and more clinics. Our new President gave a most polished and informative clinic on Deconstruction, Reconstruction and Revision: Creative tools for the jazz composer, while upstairs Kim McCord presented one of her excellent sessions on Strategies for Teaching Jazz Improvisation to young children. It was indeed a shame that some of these clinics were on at the same time.

It was time to say goodbye. We were now off to different parts of the world, but part of the IAJE Jazz Family had come together briefly in Asia to spread the word to delegates who were enthusiastic and supportive of our message. David Caffey had provided the vision, Chuck Owen followed through with his leadership, and Greg Carroll made it all happen. Gene Aitken and Kim McCord lent their expertise and I was just pleased and proud to end my time on the Board on such a positive note in my part of the world.

Until we can stage full-scale Regional Conferences around the world, this sort of partnership may well provide an interim opportunity for our association to make its presence felt. In fact, one of The Perth Youth Dixieland Orchestra's performances in Kuala Lumpur was to promote the National Australian Society for Music Education's (ASME) Conference in Perth in July 2007. IAJE in Perth is again organising the 'jazz track' and members of Beaux J Poo Boo – Lou Fischer, Shelly Berg, and Steve Houghton – are packing their bags. Here we go again.

—Brian W. Copping

Brian W. Copping served for six years as the IAJE Australasian Board Representative. He remains on the Resource Team and is currently Chair of the National Australasian Advisory Committee. He is Jazz Coordinator for The School of Instrumental Music in Perth, Western Australia and is active in the jazz scene as a player, leader, and arranger.



New web site offers professional advice and resources for teachers

The Piano Technicians Guild has unveiled The Piano Learning Center (www.ptg.org/learningCenter/) as a one-stop location full of materials for piano teachers to help students expand their joy of playing and understanding of the piano.

Included on the web site are downloadable lesson plans and worksheets along with online games and activities that focus on how a piano creates sound. Designed for all ages, the activities feature everything from animations of a piano hammer striking a string to a build your own origami piano.

"We've found that piano students usually know less about how their instrument works than students of other instruments," said Kent Swafford, RPT, president of the Piano Technicians Guild. "The Piano Learning Center gives teachers resources that offer variety beyond the traditional piano lesson format and helps students understand how they are part of a wonderfully complex instrument."

The web site also offers a comprehensive guide to purchasing a new or used piano to help teachers motivate students and parents to purchase a quality acoustic piano.

"We've developed a lesson plan specific to this in the Buying A Piano section," Swafford said. "It should help teachers explain the differences in pianos and why cost is only one of the factors parents and students should consider."

Also included on the web site is information covering all aspects of piano maintenance, resources for finding qualified technicians, and more than 500 links to piano-related web sites. Marketing materials for teachers, including coloring books and posters, are also available for purchase.

"We want teachers to provide us feedback about the web site content," said Bob Russell, RPT, who helped develop the site. "We will continue to expand and evolve the Piano Learning Center to make sure teachers have the resources they need."