

Stage Band 2003

Performances

15th May	Stage Band Concert	Hudson Room Brighton Secondary
16-18 May	Generations in Jazz Heat & Final	Helpmann Theatre Mt. Gambier
30 th August	Art of Jazz Showcase	Town Hall Norwood
2 nd September	25 th Annual Band Night	Gymnasium Brighton Secondary
16 th September	Public Schools Music Festival	Festival Theatre Adelaide
18 th September	Senior School Concert	Elder Hall University of Adelaide
26 th October	Glenelg Jazz Festival	Beachfront Glenelg
30 th October	Valedictory Evening	Town Hall Adelaide

The 2003 Stage Band was the youngest since it began in 1990. The Band consisted of only 1 Year 12 student (Michael Brown, guitar) and 4 Year 11 students. The remainder of the students came from years 9 and 10.

Consequently the band is going through a rebuilding phase and is already showing exciting potential for the years ahead. That said, it was a terrific achievement to be awarded 2nd place in Division 2 of the National Stage Band Awards, the highlight of the Band's year. A complete report of this event is elsewhere in this Annual Music Centre report.

One of the best performances of the year was at the Senior School Concert. The Band was well tuned and played with a rhythmic precision and freshness that promises much for 2004. At this concert, the development of solo improvisation skill was also evident. Other highlights throughout the year included playing alongside U.S giant Bobby Shew at the Art of Jazz, the Glenelg Jazz Festival and being invited to perform at the annual school valedictory.

Michael Griffin

Repertoire

Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise	arr David Wolpe
April in Paris	arr Bob Mintzer
Birdland	arr Michael Sweeney
Take it Easy	Ed Wilson
Well you Needn't	arr Mark Taylor
Blue Train	arr M Sweeney
Milestones	arr M Sweeney
Route 66	arr M Sweeney
The Girl from Ipanema	arr J Berry

Generations in Jazz

Mt. Gambier 16th-18th May 2003

48 stage bands competed in the Stage Band Competition sections of the 2003 Generations in Jazz competition – 28 from Victoria, 15 from South Australia, 4 from New South Wales and 1 from Queensland. This compares with 15 bands in 1998 and 33 in 2001, indicative of the growth in popularity of the event.

In this three-division competition, 10 were in Division 1, 28 in Division 2 and 10 in Division 3. For the third time in Brighton's 10-year participation in Generations in Jazz (which is in its 11th year), Brighton entered two bands. Both bands competed in Division 2. Some of the larger Victorian schools are now sending up to 4 stage bands to this event, revealing a focus and depth in their jazz ensemble program.

Logistical problems continue to dog this growth and the large number of Division 2 bands saw the need for a split division format running two sections concurrently. The top 3 bands from each 14-band section were to play off later in the afternoon at the Barn Palais.

The Swing Band played at the Jubilee Christian Centre at 9.40am on Saturday and despite some early signs of nerves put in a creditable performance revealing a good understanding of the style of each piece. The adjudicator for this section, Tony Gould (a jazz piano lecturer from the VCA in Melbourne) particularly enjoyed the band's very impressive dynamic range the confidence of the soloists and very good support from the rhythm section. His comments included, "You have the potential to be a very exciting ensemble" and "You have the dynamic contrasts well in hand, Now take care of the detail and you will arise to higher levels".

The more senior Stage Band played at the Wehl Street Theatre at 12.40pm on Saturday. The Band was well focused, well prepared and tuned. This was the band's best performance of the year to date. Adjudicator Graeme Lyall, amongst other things a former Channel 9 Musical Director made many glowing remarks. Of the all important set work *Take it Easy*, he noted "...this interpretation was slower than what other bands played, but it sat really well at that tempo." Also "...the interpretation from the trumpet and Alto 1 really

enhanced the laidback feel and their tuning was excellent.” Overall, he praised the band for their style, musicality and range of dynamics.

When the announcements were made for the final 6 play off, the atmosphere was tense and exciting. Three bands were about to be announced from our 14 band section. To a huge cheer, St Peter’s College and Marryatville High School were announced. Then, to our great relief the compere said: “...finally, a band which is no stranger to finals, Brighton Secondary School!” With hearts pumping, we went to the play off.

For the play off, we could choose only one of our own choice works to play with the set work, and settled on our bossa/ballad, *April in Paris*. Most other bands went with a more exciting and louder up tempo choice. We were the final band to play, and found the long wait difficult and tiring. Nevertheless the band played with discipline and maturity. The general feeling from band members however was that other bands sounded really impressive and that it would be hard to get a place.

With such a busy schedule having two bands at different venues and having the final play off, it was unfortunate not to hear much Division 1. In fact the Stage Band only managed to hear Blackburn (who incidentally played their impressive program without music) and the Swing Band saw none. The organisers will address this problem for 2004 as schools want to hear the best bands play.

The Sunday format, although unchanged from previous years seemed more enjoyable than usual. James Morrison entertained the students for 90 minutes with interesting stories, music anecdotes and demonstrations; there was lunch and then the afternoon concert. Some students were tiring due to problems sleeping the night before, but many were captivated by much fine and accessible jazz music. Then it was time for the announcements for the Division 2 prize winners:

First:	NSW Performing Arts Unit
Second:	Brighton Secondary School Stage Band
Third:	St Peter’s College

It was very exciting for the Band and a real accomplishment considering the 11 new positions of the 17 chairs. Lone Year 12 student in the Band, Michael Brown accepted the certificate and \$2000 prize money on behalf of the band. Graeme Lyall said it was a difficult decision between first and second, not least due to the fact that the first two bands were in different sections with different adjudicators. He said that after much discussion, they settled on the NSW band by a solitary point.

Michael Brown gained an individual honour being named in the Division 2 Superband on guitar. Although ineligible for the *Future Finalists*, only open to Division 1 bands, Graeme Lyall commented that he was “...by far and away the best soloist I heard all day. That lad should consider going for the James Morrison scholarship.”

The lowlight of the trip was the accommodation. The YHA "Jail" was sub standard in every respect and is evidence that Mt Gambier is bursting at the seams to accommodate the 1000 plus band members not to mention adults and supporters. The jail – not long out of commission I suspect, was cold, dark and depressing. The cells generally consisted of a bunk bed and open toilet. No chairs, tables, rubbish bins or entertainment devices. The quality of breakfast was mean and the warden was disorganised. It was a credit to the band for triumphing in such adversity!

Particular thanks to Michael Griffin and Billy James for providing the leadership to our bands at Brighton and to Catherine Cooling for her rock solid support.

Ross Irwin Workshop – 8th May

The Brighton Stage Band was fortunate to benefit from the young but experienced jazz trumpeter, Ross Erwin, from Melbourne at a Thursday afternoon rehearsal. Now in his early 20's and playing professionally, as a student Ross held the trumpet 1 chair in one of Australia's best school jazz ensembles. Ross was able to pass on much of his experience to the band, and in particular our young trumpet section.

One point emphasised was that most school bands try and blow too hard to achieve great volume in this style of music. It was pointed out that concentrating on intonation, good technique and a focused tone would do much more for the sound of the band. Within the band, each ensemble must strive for balance. Ross noted that within our trombone section, the 4th chair was too strong and 1st and 2nd needed to project much more. The two most important positions of the band are lead trumpet and drums. The job of lead trumpet is to make the band sound good. Our trumpet one must carefully construct solos within his capabilities. He cannot afford to become a spent force for the sake of the band. Other members of the trumpet section should not play up the octave unless they can get these high notes 100%. The drummer must change his dynamics with the rest of the band.

This was a useful workshop and it was unfortunate that the band was not in full attendance due to ill health and other commitments to gain maximum benefit.

Hopefully Ross will return later in the year and work with the Swing Band.