



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

AUSTRALIAN MUSIC EXAMINATIONS BOARD CENTENARY MORNING TEA

Tuesday 15, May 2018

Professor Barry Conyngham AM, Chairman, and Board Members of the Australian Music Examinations Board

Specialist Examiners and teachers,

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their elders past and present and to any elders here with us this morning.

Tony and I would like to welcome you all to Government House for the Australian Music Examinations Board's centenary celebration.

Since I have been Governor, I have been fortunate to be involved in many centenary celebrations.

Some, of course, relate to milestones of the First World War, including the anniversary – just a few weeks ago – of the second battle at Villers-Bretonneux, when thousands of young Australian soldiers fought so heroically, but at such a high price in loss of life.

How heartening that, at that time of destruction and sadness – for the world and for Australia – the beauty of music could so aptly reflect the goodness that remained in the world.

On 15 May 1918 – 100 years ago to the day – the Australian Music Examinations Board became a federal entity.

Of course, it was not the start of the teaching of music in Australia, and it certainly wasn't the start of the love of music in the State of Victoria.

One hundred and twelve years ago, in 1906, Australia's oldest symphony orchestra, our beloved Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, performed its first public concert.

By that same year, the University of Melbourne had established a Chair of Music, and then arranged to operate a public examinations scheme (in conjunction with the University of Adelaide).

Today, a century later, the AMEB offers a system of graded examinations encompassing close to forty subjects in music and speech.

And across that century, it has ignited and nurtured the passions of millions of young Victorians, and young people across the nation, to learn, to play and to listen to music.

As in other parts of Australia, there is barely a street across Victoria that hasn't heard scales or sonatas practised in anticipation of an AMEB examination.

Almost one million Australians have enrolled for AMEB exams over the last decade alone. And it currently supports music education in more than 20,000 schools and private studios.

Startling statistics. The more startling, when we note that, over the past 100 years, an estimated seven million or more examinations have been conducted.

And so, AMEB has benchmarked the achievements of musicians at every level. It has provided goals for study, feedback on progress and the recognition of excellence for those millions of Australians.

How has it sustained such long-term success? Well, I think that, like all successful organisations, whilst it has stayed true to its core mission, the AMEB has also evolved with the times.

The teaching offerings have expanded as our love of music has adapted to new styles and new approaches so that, for example, courses are now offered in musical theatre, as well as in drama studies and speech, and there are 'leisure' syllabuses to compliment the traditional examinations.

May I say that AMEB's contribution to the life of our nation, goes much further than music.

We know from research that learning a musical instrument helps children – and adults – in so many ways.

It assists with wiring the brain for the study of mathematics and statistics, by teaching us to recognise patterns. It helps in the learning of second languages, grammar and reading.

And it teaches us something fundamental about humanity. About the wider meaning of life, about perseverance and discipline, and about beauty.

So, it is a pleasure to have this opportunity to say 'thank you' to all those involved – for their work, their expertise and their service to the community.

I would like to acknowledge Professor Barry Conyngham AM, for his hard work as the Chair of the Board of Directors.

I would also like to thank the board members who give their time and energy to the organisation. With federal board members based in the Universities of Melbourne, Adelaide and Western Australia, the AMEB has ensured its roots remain in the leading conservatoria of our nation.

I would like to thank each and every music examiner, for their professionalism, patience and kindness as they listen to children playing their hearts out. And thanks to every teacher for the inspiration and preparation you provide to them.

Thank you too to the parents who transport, pay for, cajole, nag and suffer through the early days of their little ones' musical journeys. Thanks to you, we continue to grow fine musicians in this country, and engender a love of all the art-forms supported by the AMEB.

That leaves me only to wish AMEB the warmest and happiest 100th birthday.