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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS, EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY (ISSUE 37) October 2014
NEW PIANO HITS RIGHT NOTES

Former State governor Malcolm McCusker and his family have generously provided a Fazioli grand piano for a new generation of WAAPA students, 24 years after he and his late father, Sir James McCusker, donated the university’s original grand piano.

“In 1990 my father, the late Sir James McCusker, and I were very pleased to donate funds to WAAPA for a grand piano. We recognised the importance of students at the high level of WAAPA having a first-class instrument on which to hone their talents,” said Dr McCusker. “I am delighted to repeat that gesture as WAAPA has become a world class academy.”

Now, thanks to the generosity of the McCusker Charitable Foundation, WAAPA’s music students are able to practice and perform on the new $250,000 Italian grand piano. Fazioli pianos are entirely handcrafted from red spruce cut from Italy’s Val di Fiemme, the same forest where Stradivarius gathered wood for his violins. Over a period of three years, the timbers are transformed in a laborious process that includes a natural drying period that takes between six months and a year. Paul Tunzi, WAAPA’s piano technician for 27 years, travelled to Sacile in Italy to personally inspect the pianos at the Fazioli factory. Tunzi enlisted the expertise of Fazioli founder, Mr Paolo Fazioli and Italian concert pianist Alessandro Taverna – who spent a day playing three shortlisted pianos – to help select the piano that would be most suitable for WAAPA’s demands.

The Fazioli piano chosen for WAAPA displays a versatility and flexibility which means students will be able perform a range of musical genres on the piano, from classical to jazz.

“What we were looking for is a piano that can be very ‘diverse,’” explained Tunzi. “It’s very difficult for a piano to play jazz and then do intimate solo work and then be a concerto piano as well. That this piano does this very well is why this piano is truly remarkable.”

Mr Tunzi then endured a nervous wait as the piano was flown from the Fazioli factory to Singapore and then Melbourne, before being trucked across the Nullarbor to Perth.

The acquisition of the Fazioli grand, which was made possible with logistical support from Rob Cowell at Snadens Pianos, follows the replacement of 53 upright pianos in 2009 in partnership with Yamaha, which are used in day-to-day teaching and learning.

“The students are the beneficiaries of this very generous gift and they are hugely excited by the look and sound and feel of this particularly beautiful piano,” said WAAPA Director, Professor Julie Warn. “We can look forward to some wonderful concerts, knowing that the support of the McCuskers has made this possible.”

ACCLAIMED VIOLINIST JOINS WAAPA

VIRTUOSO VIOLINIST ALEXANDRE DA COSTA SET TO TAKE UP POSITION AT WAAPA AS HEAD OF STRINGS

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In August, WAAPA hosted a showcase recital by the acclaimed Canadian concert violinist as a prelude to his taking up the position of Associate Professor of Classical Performance at WAAPA next January.

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HELPMANN HAUL

THREE WAAPA GRADUATES HONOURED AT AUSTRALIA’S PRE-EMINENT LIVE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY AWARDS

The talents of graduates Charmene Yap, Verity Hunt-Ballard and Dean Bryant were recognised at the prestigious 2014 Helpmann Awards, held on August 18 at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney.

The annual awards acknowledge distinguished artistic achievement and excellence in the many disciplines of Australia’s vibrant live performance sectors.

At this year’s ceremony, WAAPA trained dancer Charmene Yap was honoured with her second Helpmann Award. She won Best Female Dancer for her role in Sydney Dance Company’s 2 in D Minor as part of Interplay. Her previous award was presented in 2012 for her performance in SDC’s 2 One Another.

Yap, who joined SDC in 2010, will be part of the company’s Louder Than Words season in October and will make her choreographic debut with Do We, a piece for the SDC’s New Breed season at Carriageworks in November.

Verity Hunt-Ballard, a 2003 Music Theatre graduate, also received her second Helpmann Award this year. She won Best Female Actor in a Musical for her performance in Sweet Charity. She previously won both a Helpmann and a Green Room Award in 2011 for her title role in Mary Poppins.

Her other stage credits include Shane Warne: The Musical Concert, Jersey Boys, The Rocky Horror Show, Eureka, Virgins, After the Beep and Metro Street, for which she won a Theatre Critics Award for Best Female Performance. In 2013 Hunt-Ballard made her television drama debut in the ABC series The Doctor Blake Mysteries.

1999 Music Theatre graduate Dean Bryant won Best Direction of a Musical for Sweet Charity.

Bryant, who has previously won two Green Room awards and a Sydney Theatre Award, has a string of writing/directing credits for cabarets and musicals to his name including Prodigal, which had an off-Broadway season, Josie in the Bathhouse, and In Vogue: Songs by Madonna, among many others.

As a director, Bryant’s work includes shows with the Melbourne Theatre Company, The Production Company, Red Stitch Actors’ Theatre and he is the assistant director (under Simon Phillips) of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert, currently being reproduced all over the world. Bryant recently directed his own musical Once We Lived Here at the Kings Head Theatre in London.

It’s been 30 years since WAAPA’s Music Theatre course first opened its doors to aspiring performers. Its graduates are employed in every major commercial musical throughout Australasia and it has produced stars such as Lisa McCune, Eddie Perfect, Lucy Durack and Melissa Madden Gray (aka Meow Meow).

So it seems only fitting that WAAPA should be chosen to host the 2015 Conference for the Musical Theatre Educators’ Alliance (MTEA). Themed ‘Australasian Overtures’, this will be the first time the conference has been held in the southern hemisphere.

On learning of WAAPA’s hosting the 2015 Conference, Hugh Jackman sent this endorsement: “Having been fortunate enough to work in musical theatre all over the world, I know the value of learning from other performers/directors from different cultures, with different approaches. What a great idea to get Music Theatre students, professionals, and educators together in the one place at the one time. Go WAAPA!”

The MTEA’s annual conference brings together international musical theatre educators to share ideas about curriculum, recruitment, production, and professional placement. It is also an opportunity to unite the Alliance with key professional theatre artists in their respective fields.

The Conference will focus on building bridges and broadening horizons for musical theatre across all languages and cultures, with a special focus on Asia. It will offer presentations, workshops, discussions, and entertainment of interest to teachers of acting, singing, dance and voice, and will feature key Australian and international educators and artists.

“As a writer and director both in Australia and the UK, I am always delighted when I see WAAPA graduates appear at auditions, they are invariably talented, enthusiastic and wonderfully trained,” said Ben Elton, patron of the 2105 Conference. “Living in Fremantle WA I am fortunate that I get to see WAAPA student shows and never cease to be impressed by the high professional standards achieved by all departments. Great theatre careers begin with great training which is why I believe it is highly appropriate that WAAPA is hosting this important conference and I am proud to be its patron.”

The Conference will run from 20-23 June 2015. Further details regarding the program and speakers will be announced later in 2014.
FROZEN’S ELSA COMES ALIVE

GEORGINA HAIG TAKES ON THE REAL LIFE VERSION OF ONE OF DISNEY’S HIGHEST PROFILE CHARACTERS

Georgina Haig has joined the cast of the TV fantasy drama Once Upon a Time as Elsa, the Snow Queen of Arendelle, from the 2013 Disney hit animation movie, Frozen.

Haig plays the live-action version of Disney’s animation film ‘star’ as part of a storyline in which the Frozen characters appear in the TV series Once Upon a Time.

The series, produced by the Disney-owned ABC Studios, is a fairy tale mash-up, and features contemporary versions of other famous Disney characters.

“It’s great fun but also a big responsibility, which makes it slightly overwhelming,” writes Haig from Vancouver, where she is currently based. “I’ve been hugely helped though by an amazing team of hair, make up, and costume personnel. I think I just wanted to really capture the essence of what made her such a beloved character to begin with.”

Haig, who graduated from WAAPA’s Acting course in 2008, is best known in the US for her role as Henrietta ‘Etta’ Bishop in the science fiction series Fringe. Back home in Australia, she played Michael Hutchence’s wife Paula Yates in the Seven Network’s television mini-series INXS: Never Tear Us Apart, which aired earlier this year. In October, she will appear in the Australian black comedy feature film, The Mule, starring Hugo Weaving.

Haig is currently starring on US television in the CBS network legal/police drama Reckless, which began airing in Australia on Network Ten at the beginning of October.

“I loved working on Reckless,” comments Haig. “We shot in stunning Charleston, South Carolina, now one of my favourite cities in the world ... It was hard work, long hours and often 100% humidity, even in the middle of the night. But the character of Lee Anne was so interesting. She is a disgraced cop suing the Charleston police depart for sexual harassment. She had so many secrets and complexities to her.”

LES MIS PACKS GRADUATE POWER

The acclaimed new stage production of Les Miserables, currently playing at Her Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne, features 16 WAAPA graduates in its cast, with five playing lead roles.

Simon Gleeson, who graduated from WAAPA’s Music Theatre course in 1998, plays the starring role of Jean Valjean – following in the footsteps of another WAAPA graduate, Hugh Jackman, who played the role in the 2012 feature film.

Gleeson has notched up a long list of screen and stage credits, both here and in the UK, including a lead role in Love Never Dies, Mamma Mia!, Shout, Joslon, and Chess, among many others. He has also performed on the West End, in the television show EastEnders, and in plays for the Melbourne and Sydney Theatre Companies.

“Simon Gleeson is dazzling and vocally breathtaking in the role,” wrote Cameron Woodhead in his review for The Age. “He’s a compelling presence. The soul-crushing resentment at his imprisonment is sung with tormented force. And the sainthood he finds once his chains are broken ascends to the sublime, heaven-sent falsetto of Bring Him Home – his plea to spare a young life caught amid the storm and stress of the barricades. It is perhaps the show’s finest moment.”

2003 graduate Patrice Tipoki performs the role of Fantine. Tipoki was most recently seen on stage alternating the role of Elphaba in the hit musical Wicked. She also played Nala in Disney’s The Lion King and understudied Killer Queen, Scaramouche and Oz in the Australasian tour of We Will Rock You.

1990 graduate Lara Mulcahy is playing Madame Thenardier. Mulcahy has appeared in countless stage, TV and film productions including three Baz Luhrmann films, Strictly Ballroom, Moulin Rouge and The Great Gatsby. Mulcahy won a Green Room Award for her performance in Mamma Mia!

Two 2012 graduates are playing the other female lead roles. Kerrie Anne Greenland plays Eponine and Emily Langridge, who was recently seen in The Production Company’s Gypsy, performs the beloved role of Cosette.


After its season in Melbourne, Les Miserables will continue on to Perth’s Crown Theatre in January 2015 before transferring to the Capitol Theatre in Sydney in March 2015.
WAR SERIES SHOWCASES WAAPA ACTORS

WAAPA GRADUATES AND CURRENT STUDENTS FEATURE PROMINENTLY IN FIRST WORLD WAR TELEVISION SERIES

The War That Changed Us, a four-part drama/documentary series which aired on ABC1 in August, boasted a number of WAAPA students and graduates in its cast.

Produced by Electric Pictures and shot in WA, the series uses a blend of personal testimony, drama, expert analysis, location filming and archival footage to tell the story of Australia’s involvement in World War I through the lives of six Australians.

Current 3rd Year Acting student Jane Watt played one of the lead characters, Army nurse Kit McNaughton. Three of the other six main roles were also performed by WAAPA graduates: Virginia Gay played internationally famous political campaigner Vida Goldstein; Alexandra Jones played Eva Hughes, who established the Australian Women’s National League; and Tom Milton took the role of anti-conscription activist Tom Barker.

In addition a number of WAAPA graduates and current students had supporting roles in the series, including Holly Drydoff, Jonny Hawkins, Joel Horwood, Henry Hammersla, Felicity McKay, Alexander Mugford, Harry Richardson, Adam Solis and Ben Sutton. 1996 graduate Alison van Reeken played the role of Kit’s mother and Watt’s fellow classmate Stephanie Tsindos played Ida, Kit’s best friend.

Although Jane Watt was only in her second year at WAAPA when she auditioned for the role of Kit, her performance caught the attention of the makers of the series.

“Drama director James Bogle went through an exhaustive casting process watching many auditions but Jane Watt stood out immediately to all of us,” said series writer and director Don Featherstone. “She exhibited a wonderful empathy with the character immediately. We sent her audition to the ABC Commissioning editor Phil Craig for approval and his response was ‘Jane is absolutely shining’. We couldn’t believe she was only a 2nd Year WAAPA student.”

Watt described working on the series as “just the most incredible experience”.

“I am so grateful to have been able to be a part of it. In saying that, it was of course pretty daunting. I really felt like I was flying by the seat of my pants for a lot of it. But the entire cast and crew were so supportive and encouraging that if I ever felt worried I could always count on them for advice.”

“I could not have done what I did without my training,” said Watt. “I was only just finishing second year at the time of filming and although I had technically completed our fundamental acting training, I was still yet to really touch on film. But because I had done two years at WAAPA, I discovered it, of course, all the same. Film is a technical, visual medium and there are different tools and skills required for stage versus screen but at the end of the day it’s all acting. So I just had to relax and know that it was just another play. It was just another scene. So I took all of the lessons I’d learnt, put them into action and trusted that deep down I knew what I was doing.”

Penelope Cashman, a repetiteur at Adelaide’s Elder Conservatorium, was also impressed.

“The students and teachers from Adelaide with whom I attended were all utterly inspired and I hope to attend any future Festival with an even larger contingent. WIASF had a spirit of warmth and positivity that contributed much to the experience. I cannot thank you enough for bringing these world-class teachers to Australia and providing us with such an inspirational opportunity. I hope it is the first of many.”

Planning for next year’s event, scheduled for 26 June - 4 July, is already underway with Dr Johnson set to return with acclaimed UK vocal coach Mary King to lead a celebration of the songs of Robert Schumann.
Four Indigenous WAAPA Graduates Are Making Their Mark in Australian Theatre, Film and Television

From November 15-20, WAAPA’s Aboriginal Theatre cohort will celebrate the completion of their one-year, full-time course by performing Richard Frankland’s Conversations with the Dead in the Enright Studio.

Director Rick Brayford has been Coordinator of the Aboriginal Theatre course for 14 years and is the recipient of the Neville Bonner Award for Indigenous Education for his contribution to Indigenous performing arts.

“WAAPA’s Aboriginal Theatre course caters to applicants with interest across the music theatre spectrum of acting, dance and singing,” says Brayford. “Each year students travel from regional and remote areas of Australia to study in the course. This creates an ensemble of dynamic cultural mix.”

Many graduates have gone on to establish solid careers as professional performers. Others have spring-boarded off the course to win highly competitive places for higher level training in major performing arts schools such as WAAPA, NIDA, VCA, NAISDA Dance College and the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts.

Shareena Clanton, who stars in the Australian television drama series Wentworth on Foxtel’s Soho Channel, is one such graduate. After completing the Aboriginal Theatre course, she then successfully auditioned for WAAPA’s three-year Bachelor of Arts (Acting) course.

Since graduating in 2010, Clanton now has a string of theatre and television credits to her name, earning her four award nominations. This year she was nominated for a Logie for Most Outstanding Newcomer and an Astra Award for Most Outstanding New Talent. In 2012 she was nominated for an AACTA Award for her performance in the ABC series Redfern Now and for a 2011 Sydney Theatre Award for Best Newcomer for her role in the Ensemble Theatre’s production of My Wonderful Day.

Clanton has recently finished shooting her third season of Wentworth.

Shari Sebbens, Meyne Wyatt and Shaka Cook also started their actor training in WAAPA’s Aboriginal Theatre course, before going on to win coveted places at NIDA.

After starring in the 2012 hit Australian film The Sapphires, Shari Sebbens won a 2013 Logie Award for Most Outstanding New Talent for her role in the ABC television series, Redfern Now. She has also starred in the ABC series The Gods of Wheat Street and in the Australian film Teenage Kicks. Next up for Sebbens is BMMM, a six-part ABC comedy series about the trials and tribulations of an Aboriginal community radio station, due to air late this year or early 2015.

Meyne Wyatt recently joined the cast of Channel Ten’s Neighbours, with his first episode as Nate Kinski airing in August. This makes Wyatt the first indigenous actor to join the main cast of the soap opera since it began in 1985.

“Meyne is an exceptional young award-winning actor and very much on the radar of casting directors,” said Neighbours series producer Jason Herbison in a recent interview. “We feel very privileged to have him join our regular cast. From his first audition, we knew we had found the best actor for the role.”

Originally from Kalgoorlie, the 24-year-old actor has appeared in the ABC’s award-winning television series Redfern Now and in the film version of The Sapphires. He has also enjoyed film roles in Tim Winton’s The Turning and in Strangerland, which stars Nicole Kidman, Joseph Fiennes and Guy Pearce.

A highly-respected stage actor, Wyatt has won critical acclaim in Peter Pan (Belvoir 2013), The School for Wives (Bell Shakespeare 2012), Bloodland (Sydney Theatre Company 2011) and Silent Disco (Griffin 2011), for which he won a Sydney Theatre Award for Best Newcomer.

Shaka Cook grew up in the remote township of Tom Price, in northwest Western Australia. Like Wyatt, he followed his year at WAAPA with a further three years of training at NIDA.

Since graduating in 2012, Cook has performed the part of the puppeteer-pelican figure in Barking Gecko’s adaptation of Colin Thiele’s much-loved novel, Storm Boy and appeared in the ABC television movie based on Peter Temple’s acclaimed novel, The Broken Shore, which aired in February this year.

In July, Cook took the title role in Barking Gecko’s stage adaptation of Craig Silvey’s novel, Jasper Jones. David Zampatti, in his review in The West Australian, described Cook as “magnetic”.

These talented actors – Shareena Clanton, Shari Sebbens, Meyne Wyatt and Shaka Cook – are just four of the many indigenous performers who have begun their creative journey into the Australian performing arts scene through WAAPA’s Aboriginal Theatre course.
PLAYING SOLDIERS
2012 GRADUATE TRAVIS JEFFERY HAS ENJOYED A RUN OF SOLDIER ROLES IN THREE DIFFERENT FILM AND TELEVISION PROJECTS

When Travis Jeffery recently finished filming in the Nine Network’s eight-part television series, Gallipoli, the 2012 WAAPA graduate had played his third soldier role in just over a year.

In August Jeffery appeared as Corporal Len Keogh in the six-part television series, ANZAC Girls, which screened on ABC1. In December he will be seen in the Angelina Jolie-directed feature film, Unbroken, in which he plays Jimmy, a Scottish prisoner of war in World War II.

Then in April next year, audiences will see him as Henry Stewart [Stewie] Watson in Gallipoli, which is due to be telecast on the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign.

So how does the young 25-year-old actor feel about his run of soldier roles?

“I’ve really enjoyed being a part of each of these productions. Even though they’re all very different, there is always a lot of heart that goes into making anything of this genre. It’s been very humbling learning about the history and what the men and women had to endure during their time serving.”

Jeffery is particularly enthusiastic about his most recent project, Gallipoli. “The content of the role was really satisfying to work on, the director was awesome, the cast was supportive and fun and the crew was great,” he says. “Not to mention it’s a beautiful story, written incredibly well. It’s been an honour to be part of telling such a special story.”

And then of course there’s the experience of having worked with one of the world’s most famous actors, Angelina Jolie, who produced and directed the upcoming war drama, Unbroken. The film, based on a non-fiction book, tells the story of Olympic athlete and World War II hero, Louis Zamperini.

“Angie was great to work with,” says Jeffery. “The atmosphere she created on set was brilliant. It was such a relaxed, happy place to be. She was a great director; her passion in bringing Louis Zamperini’s story to life was incredible.”

“Before I met her I was a little bit terrified because I had no idea what to expect, but honestly she is one of the most gentle, beautiful people I’ve ever met, and she made working on Unbroken a great experience.”

Also starring in Unbroken is another WAAPA graduate, Jai Courtney, who plays Hugh ‘Cup’ Cuppernell. Courtney has received international attention over the last two years for his roles in the feature films Jack Reacher, A Good Day to Die Hard, I, Frankiestein and Divergent. In addition to upcoming film roles include Kyle Reese in Terminator: Genisys and Lt. Col. Cecil Hilton in The Water Diviner.

The epic nature of Unbroken, which covers Zamperini’s life before and during World War II, meant that Jeffery didn’t get the opportunity to work alongside Courtney. “The hair and make up team said that every time they got to a new part of the film it was like shooting a completely different movie,” Jeffery explains. “Jai was playing a pilot and I was a POW, so sadly our paths didn’t cross.”

Jeffery has recently signed with a US management company and is keen to start exploring the American market. In the meantime, he’s got a few short films in the pipeline and is back on the audition circuit.

Of his time at WAAPA, Jeffery says: “The great thing about studying at WAAPA is we learn and are exposed to so much. Each teacher, each class, each play brings us something completely different. During my time I was able to experience a hell of a lot, and each experience helped me become a better actor.”

FANFARE FOR THE FAN
THE STORY OF AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN A LONELY MAN AND AN OSCILLATING FAN TAKES OUT BEST SHORT FILM AT THE WA SCREEN AWARDS

Over 500 filmmakers, celebrities, media and screen industry representatives turned out to celebrate the best in Western Australian screen production at the 2014 WA Screen Awards, held at the State Theatre Centre of WA in July.

The WA Screen Awards is the premier celebration of West Australian screen culture, celebrating excellence and achievements in feature film, short film, web series, music videos, television production, documentary and games.

The Fan, written by and starring 2000 Acting graduate Ben Sutton, directed by Antony Webb, produced by Emilia Jolakoska and with original music by Ash Gibson Greig, won awards for Best Short Film, Best Direction and Best Original Music. In the lead-up to the WA Screen Awards presentation night, The Fan had received a record-breaking nine nominations.

The Fan tells the story of a lonely man who forms an unlikely friendship with an oscillating fan which appears to be alive. Rather than create the fan using CGI, the filmmakers recruited internationally renowned WA theatre-maker and puppeteer, Tim Watts (The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer, It’s Dark Outside) to bring a custom-built fan to life. Watts was dressed head to toe in a green suit so that through extensive visual effects work during post-production, he could be removed completely.

The film had its world premiere at the Palm Springs International Shortfest in California in June.

Sutton, who works as an actor, comedian and presenter, appeared in the recently televised docu-dramas Wadjemup and The War that Changed Us, as well as Zak Hilditch and Liz Kearney’s Cannes-selected WA feature film, These Final Hours.

When asked what was next for him after The Fan, Sutton said recently: “I’m staying true to the ‘doing a lot of stuff’ moniker. More live stand up and improv shows, writing and performing online content for SBS, amongst others, and writing my next short film which I plan to direct.”

Another film with WAAPA connections that took out line honours at the WA Screen Awards was Broken, which won Best Student Film. Broken was written and produced by 2007 graduate Brett Dowson, who is currently studying at the WA Screen Academy, and featured WAAPA Acting students in its cast.
SHINING IN FINALS
POST-GRADUATE OPERA STUDENTS MAKE THE FINALS OF AUSTRALIA'S TOP OPERA COMPETITION FOR YOUNG SINGERS

Two of WAAPA’s post-graduate opera students were among the five finalists chosen for this year’s International Foundation for Arts and Culture (IFAC) Australian Singing Competition, held at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on 30 August.

The IFAC Australian Singing Competition is the richest competition for opera and classical singers aged 26 years and under. While the premier award is the Marianne Mathy Scholarship, valued at $50,000, the competition awards each finalist a number of outstanding prizes.

Post-graduate student, soprano Corrine Cowling was presented with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama Award (which provides fees for one year’s postgraduate study at the Guildhall School in London) with the Clark & Associates Prize worth $5,000, and the Universal Music Australia Prize of a collection of classical CDs.

Last year, in her final year of undergraduate study, Cowling was awarded the 2013 inaugural Dame Mary Gilmore Award for the most promising overall final year female student.

“It’s hard as a student to be studying in a learning environment and to see the light at the end of the tunnel and see a professional career,” says the 24-year-old. “But through this competition my eyes have been really opened to the possibilities that are a lot sooner than I thought, which is exciting, very exciting.”

Soprano Samantha Clarke won the Leverhulme Royal Northern College of Music Award (which provides fees for one year’s study at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester) with the Phoebe Patrick Award, worth $3,000, the Nelly Apt Scholarship, valued at $8,000, to attend the International Arts Institute in Israel in July 2015, with airfares and living expenses included; and the Christine Leaves Award, which provides 30 hours of publicist consultation, business and promotional planning.

“Having the experience of the Australian Singing Competition has been just so rewarding and inspirational,” says Clarke. “This is my first major competition and everyone has been so lovely, so supportive. I love the way they treat you, not like a young singer ... they are genuinely interested in what you want to do, where you plan to go, it’s a nurturing environment because it is a competition for young singers but in that same respect you’re treated like a professional even though you’re not there yet.”

Making it through to the semi-final stage of the competition was a third WAAPA post-graduate student, 21-year-old soprano Amy Manford. She was awarded the Radzyminski Family Prize, which provides French tuition at an Alliance Française Centre in the singer’s home city. At WAAPA, Manford won the Michelle Robinson Award for most outstanding first year recital and was recently awarded the Barbara MacLeod Scholarship, worth $10,000, to further her musical studies. She also recently won the Open Aria and Open Musical Theatre sections of the Fremantle Eisteddfod.

All three students are currently studying for postgraduate diplomas under WAAPA’s Head of Classical Vocal Studies and Opera, Patricia Price.

THE MUSIC MAKERS

WAAPA continued its annual tradition of presenting the world’s greatest oratorios in the beautiful surrounds of St Mary’s Cathedral in Perth when The Music Makers was performed on 7 August.

“This is the only WAAPA performance each year where all of the students in the vocal department perform together,” said Musical Director, Kristin Bowtell. “So it’s fantastic because you get all the classical vocal students from every year and from every course – that’s six different cohorts of students from the Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Bachelor courses – performing together and they all learn from each other.”

The classical vocal students performed with WAAPA’s wind and brass students, accompanied by WAAPA’s Coordinator of Classical Music, Stewart Smith, playing St Mary’s impressive 104-year-old grand organ and WAAPA’s Coordinator of Brass, Brent Grapes, on trumpet.

Guest soloist for the evening was mezzo-soprano Caitlin Cassidy, a WAAPA graduate and now member of WA Opera’s Young Artist program. This was one of the last performances Cassidy gave in Perth before she headed to Mannes College in New York to undertake a Professional Studies Diploma.

The program included the beloved motets of Bruckner, a rare performance of the Ave Maria by Franz Biebl and a complete performance of Sir Edward Elgar’s much-loved oratorio The Music Makers.

“I was introduced to The Music Makers a few years ago by [Head of Classical Vocal Studies and Opera] Patricia Price,” said Smith. “At the time she was very keen to do the work but cautious about how difficult the score was and I was happy to wait until the singers had more experience singing together. I’m glad we waited. The end result was a polished and moving experience and was a major milestone for the Classical Music department. Conductor, Kris Bowtell, was an inspiration to everyone.”
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM TAKES OFF

WAAPA’S PRODUCTION & DESIGN STUDENTS REAP THE BENEFITS OF AN INAUGURAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Two WAAPA students are on the way to fulfilling their dream of working on Broadway, thanks to Nomad Two Worlds, Minderoo Foundation and the Jackman Furness Foundation for the Performing Arts (JFFPA).

Stage Management student Christabel Fry and Props and Scenery student, Michelle Betts, recently returned to Perth from a two month internship at the prestigious American Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.) at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The A.R.T. is a leading force in American theatre, producing ground-breaking work. In recent years it has received a number of Tony Awards for productions by its Artistic Director, Diane Paulus.

The two WAAPA students worked under the supervision of Paulus and other creative professionals on the musical Finding Neverland, which had its world premiere at the A.R.T. in July. The musical, with music by English singer-songwriter Gary Barlow and choreography by Emmy Award-winner Mia Michaels, will open on Broadway in March 2015.

Based on the Miramax motion picture by David Magee and the play The Man Who Was Peter Pan by Allan Knee, Finding Neverland follows the relationship between playwright J. M. Barrie and the family that inspired Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up, one of the most beloved stories of all time.

The internships, sponsored by JFFPA and the Forrest family charity Minderoo, are expected to be the first of a number of opportunities that will be made available to WAAPA students over the next few years as Nomad Two Worlds and A.R.T. join forces with JFFPA.

Founded by internationally acclaimed Western Australian photographer Russell James, Nomad is a global art collective and socially conscious enterprise working with Indigenous and marginalised communities around the world.

Nomad and the A.R.T. are in the early stages of developing an original live theatrical show, to be developed between Perth and the USA. The internship program is the first step in what is hoped to be a long and mutually beneficial relationship between WAAPA and the A.R.T.

WAAPA Director, Professor Julie Warn, said: “This is a wonderful opportunity for WAAPA students and I know Christabel and Michelle relished their time working on Finding Neverland.”

Christabel Fry, who also received financial assistance from the Friends of the Academy, said the internship at the A.R.T. had been invaluable. “My dream has always been to work on Broadway and this internship has brought that dream closer,” she said. “I will now take the knowledge and skills I have learned back to WAAPA and I believe it places me in good stead to go on and have a successful career.”

Christabel believes the skills and training she has gained from her WAAPA course gave her an advantage in the internship, as she was singled out for jobs and trusted with confidential tasks and information. “I was able to make myself useful and I didn’t have to be taught everything from scratch or have it all explained to me; I was able to be proactive. The Production Stage Manager treated me as a stage management PA thus enabling me to do a range of jobs and be directly involved in the production, in addition to observing the whole process.”

“I got to ghost the show crew backstage during dress rehearsals, listen to the call, liaise with different departments and staff members on behalf of the stage management team, help with the bump-in at the theatre and the preparation for technical and dress rehearsals, and I was also able to help create and update paperwork for the stage management team. I was also able to observe some of the differences in stage managing and working in theatre in the US as compared to stage managing and working in theatre in Australia.”

“I was able to glean so much from such a talented, experienced group of people that have created this show. I am very fortunate and so grateful to have had this opportunity.”

Michelle Betts was similarly appreciative of the benefits of her internship. “Working on Finding Neverland was an amazing experience and reinforced my aim of becoming a multi-skilled mechanist and props maker.”

Christabel and Michelle were joined by a third Australian intern, NSW rapper Corey Webster who interned in the Sound Engineering Department.

JFFPA, which was launched in May, will assist WAAPA to continue its world class training by providing funding and advocacy support to attract potential students to WAAPA; for scholarships; for visiting artists and artists in residence; for performance and productions; for collaborative opportunities and relationships; to showcase WAAPA; and for the specialised training of Indigenous students.

SECONDMENT NEWS

As part of their final year, WAAPA’s 3rd Year Arts Management students have undertaken secondments with companies throughout Australia and overseas. These secondments sometimes result in a job offer, as happened to Caitlin Brass, who is now Education Officer at Bell Shakespeare and Alexandra Cook, now Executive Assistant and Philanthropy Coordinator at the WA Ballet. 2013 Arts Management graduate Liam Mangan was offered the position of Program Coordinator at the Sydney Theatre Company after his secondment there. Here is a snapshot of this year’s secondments:

Sophie Bates - Prime Cut Productions, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Summer Bonney-Tehrani – Perth International Arts Festival
Kate Branson – MTA Records, London
Caitlin Brass – Bell Shakespeare
Alexandra Cook – WA Ballet
Kelsey Douglas – Titan View
Helen Dwyer – Musica Viva, WA
Caitlin Gilmour – Carriageworks, Sydney
Jysae Hair – Country Arts WA
Bridget Healey – Musica Viva, Victoria
Katherina Lambetsoo – Opera Australia
Ryan Lewis – Opera Enterprises
Samantha Martin – Raindance Film Festival, London
Lois Mitchell – Luckiest Productions, Sydney
Tara Thillainath – RGM Artist Group.
In the June mid-year break, a group of 31 students from the 2nd and 3rd Year Jazz course spent two weeks in Europe, attending summer school in the Czech Republic and performing at the Terni Jazz Festival in Italy. The students were accompanied by WAAPA’s Head of Dance Nanette Hassall, who is the current chair of the Committee for Creation and Presentation (WDA Asia Pacific), and Dance Lecturer Kim McCarthy.

The WDA Global Summit, which this year was held from 6-11 July, brings together hundreds of students, teachers, performers, presenters, scholars and administrators from around the world for six days of masterclasses, choreolabs, performances, presentations and panels.

The WAAPA tour group included 3rd Year Diploma students Gabriella Campisi, Kendal Davis, Jessica Evans, Kealy Fouracre, Tyler Finn, Olivia Heyworth, Cassandra Kift, Emily King, Danika Sayce and Breanna Skews, and BA students Scott Elstermann and Alexander Perrozzi. The students were accompanied by WAAPA’s Head of Dance Nanette Hassall, who is the current chair of the Committee for Creation and Presentation (WDA Asia Pacific), and Dance Lecturer Kim McCarthy.

The students participated in workshops and performed Kim McCarthy’s work Till the end... in the final showcase. Commissioned for the WDA Global Summit, Till the end... was first performed in May this year as part of WAAPA’s dance performance season, Kora.

In her online site Thinking Dance, Lyn Matluck Brooks wrote that the WAAPA piece was one of the standout[s of the Summit. “I also appreciated Kim McCarthy’s modern ballet work Till the end... for a large group of students at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. It’s hard to make student dancers look good in ballet at all – let alone en pointe – as McCarthy did.”

After the festival the students travelled to various cities in Europe to attend dance workshops and performances.

EUROPEAN JAZZ JAUNT

of Music, Associate Professor Graham Wood and Senior Music Lecturer, Jamie Oehlerls.

The two-week summer school was held at the New York University (NYU) Prague, situated in the heart of the famous central European city. Each day the musicians rehearsed with lecturers from the European jazz scene, and attended workshops and performances. When on breaks, the students were able to explore Prague, considered one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

The students also travelled to Terni in Italy to perform at Collescipoli, an ancient hamlet perched on a hill overlooking the city. The

AUSSE JAZZ PIANIST WOWS THE YANKS

TAL COHEN, WHO IS STUDYING IN THE USA FOR HIS MASTERS DEGREE, HAS TAKEN OUT ONE OF AMERICA’S TOP JAZZ PIANO COMPETITIONS

Graduate Tal Cohen was named winner of the 2014 Detroit Jazz Festival Barry Harris National Jazz Piano Competition in August.

Originally from Perth, Cohen is currently attending the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami as part of the Henry Mancini Institute, completing his two-year Masters degree under the mentorship of Martin Bejerano.

Cohen’s winnings earned him a generous cash prize that he says will go towards a new recording which he is planning to produce in New York City with mostly American musicians.

The prize also took him to the Detroit Jazz Festival, held over America’s Labor Day weekend from August 20 to September 1, to perform in a trio setting with legendary musician and jazz bassist, Robert Hurst and drummer Nate Winn.

“The experience playing in the festival was amazing, huge crowds gathered for every gig,” writes Cohen, now back in Miami where he has just commenced his second and final year of his Masters course.

“The response for my performance was overwhelming and the support was like nothing I experienced before. Robert Hurst is one of my favourite musicians of all time and the privilege of getting to play my music with him was second to none.”

Earlier in August, Cohen beat out other jazz pianists from across the country when he was among three finalists selected to compete in Detroit in the two-day finals at The Dirty Dog Jazz Club and Cliff Bells Jazz Club.

During his time in America, Cohen has had the opportunity to play with drummer Jeff ‘Tain’ Watts, John Daversa, and Grammy Award-winning trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard.

The 2014 Detroit Jazz Festival Barry Harris National Jazz Piano Competition is named in honor of Detroit-born jazz piano legend, Barry Harris, whose artistry, recordings, and willingness to mentor have made him a legend to generations of jazz musicians.
LINK IN EUROPE

On June 20, LINK Dance Company set off for its annual overseas tour to spend four weeks in the European dance scene.

The eight members of LINK – WAAPA’s postgraduate dance company – were joined on tour by 3rd Year BA dance student Scott Elstermann, LINK Artistic Director Michael Whaites and two Production students, 3rd Year Lighting student Tim Baker and 2nd Year Stage Management student Megan Van Der Weide.

Unfortunately this year the company’s scheduled overseas performances, firstly at the International Theatre School [ITS] Festival in Amsterdam and then at Montpellier in France, were cancelled due to funding cuts to the Festival and French workers’ strikes. However, as Artistic Director Michael Whaites says, “We still managed to see lots of good performances, participate in workshops and perform Natalie Allen’s work LAB S to an appreciative crowd of 2000 people in Vondelpark in Amsterdam at the end of the tour.”

The students then spent two weeks taking workshops and classes independently in Berlin, Vienna and the UK.

Here four of the dancers describe the trip:

Amsterdam

“We had found out a week before we left for the tour that the ITS Festival held in Amsterdam had lost part of their international funding and as a consequence we were no longer able to perform at this event. However we made use of our time in Amsterdam by taking class at Henny Jurriëns studios. The class we participated in was of contemporary style and based around cardio work, which was just what we needed after sitting on a plane for over 14 hours. At Henny Jurriëns we also had the opportunity to have rehearsal time and work on our current development with Michael Whaites for our October season of Surge. It was great to be able to rehearse in a different space looking out over the roof tops of Amsterdam to get the creative juices flowing.” – Aimee Brown 

Montpellier

“Montpellier is a gorgeous little city in the South of France and each year in June and July, Montpellier hosts Montpellier Danse Festival which invites companies and artists from all over the world to perform in the festival. LINK dancers had the privilege of seeing iconic works by some important choreographers.

All the dancers were blown away and deeply inspired by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Yabin Wang’s Genesis performed at Le Corum theatre. The dancers were able to attend a free class hosted by Angelin Preljocaj’s assistant the day before they saw Preljocaj’s Empty Moves at the Theatre De L’Agora, an abstract and thought provoking work.

The LINK dancers were excited to participate in a free class with Wayne McGregor and his Random Dance company members during which we had the chance to interact with both Wayne and his dancers. McGregor’s Atomos was performed for a full house the following day at Le Corum theatre; it was a high energy neo-classical work that displayed some breathtaking aesthetics. The Linkers also watched Emanuel Gat’s Plage Romantique at the Cour De L’Agora, an open air theatre. Unfortunately the rain interrupted the show but nevertheless it was an exciting and lively performance.” – Rachel-Olivia Forster-Jones

Back to Amsterdam for workshops and LAB S in Vondelpark

“In early July the company travelled back to Amsterdam to take part in The Henny Jurriëns Foundation Amsterdam Summer Intensive program in cooperation with the Julidan’s Festival. As part of HJS company dancers took part in a number of different workshops such as Gaga movement technique, Idan Sharabi and Dancers, Wim Vandekeljugbus / Ultima Vez, Itzic Galili Repertory with Elisabeth Gibiat, Inner Core with Helder Seabra and Akram Khan Movement and repertory with Andrej Petrovic. Being a part of the Summer Intensive was an amazing opportunity to explore and experience a diverse range of styles by leading European (and other) choreographers. It was also inspiring to work in a professional atmosphere with dancers from all over the world.

On July 18 LINK performed one of their May season works, LAB S choreographed by Natalie Allen, in Vondelpark’s Open Air Theatre, Amsterdam. This performance was a highlight of the tour for me! We were all overwhelmed by the number of people who came to watch. It was a thrill to perform in front of a European audience and be so greatly appreciated – the hype after the performance was invigorating.” – Zoe Wazniak

Impulstanz

“After performing in Amsterdam, some of the Linkers made their way to Vienna for Impulstanz. Every year, over July and August, dancers from all over the world meet in Vienna for the festival, participating in any selection of the dozens of workshops held by Impulstanz. The workshops are taken by a number of prestigious dancers and choreographers in a variety of styles, including classical, improvisation, ballet and repertory, as well as other styles such as jazz, hip hop, and even butoh.

The LINK Dancers were there for the first week of the festival, and took part in Kristina and Sadé Alleyne’s Dynamics, Rhythm and Texture workshop. The two sisters are Akram Khan dancers and took an athletic, fun class that had all of us sweating and smiling. The class started with strength and cardio, went on to some technique then some improvisation, and finished with some repertoire. The dynamic duo was positive and encouraging, making the class challenging and fun, a highlight of the tour.

The festival vibe was really cool, with hot pink bikes for hire, ice pools to soak sore muscles, and a small cafe with healthy, home made food for lunches. With hundreds of dancers attending the workshops there was no shortage of friendly faces and the festival staff were always happy to help. There were performances on every night, Impuls parties to get to know other dancers, and a list of auditions on the notice board. A cool vibe, and a great way to immerse yourself into the dance scene in Europe, LINK wished we could have stayed the whole month.” – Emily Malone

FAREWELL

Professor Kerry O. Cox, ECU’s recently retired Vice-Chancellor, was farewelled after more than eight years in the top job. Professor Cox held the firm view that success as a university comes when you connect with your community – a sentiment which WAAPA holds dear.
IN THE SPOTLIGHT

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT’S BEEN HAPPENING ON STAGE AT WAAPA

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

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