

Spring Piano School 2009 - the sixth year!

During the Term 3/Term 4 school holidays in 2009, the *Team of Pianists* held its 6th annual *Spring Piano School*. For three days in late September, 18 Secondary School students, 10 Primary School students plus observers and some parents worked intensively in the renovated historic National Trust property *Glenfern* in East St Kilda. The students consolidated their musical and pianistic skills, polished their repertoire and socialised with their musical peers. Many were preparing for examinations including VCE, others for competitions.

In 2009 the Junior Program (up to Year 7 at school) had students aged from 7 to 13 years. This program focused on the development of skills as well as on polishing repertoire. Tutors and classes for this program were:

- Rebecca Stewart (Guest presenter): *Sightreading Secrets – Challenges to Improve your Music Reading Skills*
- Max Cooke (Team of Pianists) *An introduction to the Harpsichord, Group lessons on Repertoire pieces plus Tone Touch and Technique*
- Darryl Coote (TOP) *Learning and Practice for Young Pianists plus Repertoire Group lessons*
- Robert Chamberlain (TOP) *The Scale & Arpeggio Olympics, Technique Tournament*

The Junior participants also enjoyed recess and lunchtime in the gardens and grounds of Glenfern. Bike riding around the Glenfern driveway was particularly popular. In a recital on the final day, the Juniors performed to their peers and their parents on the *Schimmel 213 Konzert Series* Grand piano in the Drawing Room at Glenfern. Spring Piano School Director Robert Chamberlain was particularly pleased to devise a program for such a large group of bright and lively primary school children.

The Senior Program included many participants who were preparing for their VCE piano performance exams. Senior participants experienced group lessons and masterclasses from Max Cooke, Darryl Coote and Robert Chamberlain, using the *Schimmel 213 Konzert series* grand piano, a *Bernstein Hailun 178* grand and a Bernstein upright piano. Senior Program students also benefited from individual coaching from Chi Zhang and Hsiao-Ni Axtens, both Monash University piano students of Darryl Coote and Robert Chamberlain, respectively. These mini lessons took place using Roland digital keyboards supplied by Bernie Music Land.

During the public recitals on the final day, scholarships were awarded to many participants, in part payment of their tuition fees. The scholarships were funded by the *Friends of the Team of Pianists Inc. (FOTOPS)* and were designed to support the attendance of students from regional areas and to help others too. They were presented by Julie Waters, Vice President of the *Friends of the Team of Pianists*.

Students from many regional areas, as well as metropolitan Melbourne, attended the 2009 Spring Piano School. Students came from areas such as Dookie, Morwell, the Bairnsdale area, the Bendigo area, the Shepparton area, Gippsland, Dromana & Benalla. Particular thanks are also due to members of the FOTOPS committee, who supervised the morning and afternoon teas, and to “specialist bicycle consultant” Greg

Brown, whose bikes, both large and small, were enjoyed by the primary school children!

Bernies Music Land was a most valued piano sponsor, supplying additional specialist pianos and keyboards. Mr Bernie Capicchiano, MD of Bernies Music Land and Musico, gave an interesting presentation which was greatly enjoyed by the participants, as were the Schimmel show bags. One of the students wrote about this in her evaluation of the Spring Piano School:

“It was very impressive to hear the difference the Schimmel soundboard made to an ordinary music box. All the pianos at the School are a dream to play on and without beautiful instruments it would be hard to imagine the beautiful sounds we are all trying to achieve.”