

To: Clive Jackson  
for FOTOPS newsletter

From Max Cooke

REPORT FROM MAX COOKE ON THE  
SPRING PIANO SCHOOL 2015  
HELD AT GLENFERN - SEPTEMBER 28, 29 AND OCTOBER 1

The Spring Piano School has for many years been organised and administered by Robert Chamberlain, who has done a great deal to support and help young pianists. This year, Robert was involved with music events overseas, and could not participate in the Spring Piano School. Darryl Coote and I, not wanting to see the benefits of this event lost, decided we should try to organise this year's event. I suggested a new format, with the idea that it could be run more simply than the larger events in past years. Basically, we had fewer group activities and we provided individual lessons for each participant. This idea appears to have worked well, and the students who attended the School have reported favourably.

Each student attended two masterclasses every day, and each student received daily, one x 30-minute individual lesson with one of the teachers of the School. The Masterclasses were intended to interest not only the person playing at the piano, who would obviously learn a great deal, but the class was also intended to involve the listeners, who would learn about the music, about the ideas of interpretation, also about the techniques involved in realising the intentions. One student commented: "I particularly liked ones where there were lots of humour (silly sentences and jokes) and also questions to the audience". Another student commented that she "...thoroughly enjoyed the SPS, because I got to improve my piano skills but also meet inspiring people". There were many similar comments, which showed that the young pianists really understood what we were trying to do.

Darryl Coote and I, as organisers, did some of the teaching and took some of the classes, and we were supported by a fine group of invited teachers, some of whom took classes, and all of whom gave individual lessons. These participating teachers were: Betty Vergara-Pink, Robyn St George, Kevin Suherman and Lachlan Redd. It was an impressive group.

The School was held over three days, two classes in the mornings for the Junior group, during which time three of the students at a time could attend individual lessons. On the third day, every student performed in a concert before the other students and parents. The standard at this concert was very impressive. Bernie Capicchiano, Managing Director of Bernies Music Land, gave a presentation on Schimmel and Bernstein pianos, with each student receiving a show-bag of promotional material. We are appreciative of the sponsorship provided by Bernies Music Land, in terms of the provision of a Bernstein upright piano and two digital keyboards.

The Senior group had a similar programme held in the afternoons. Lachlan Redd and Kevin Suherman delivered the individual lessons, because the numbers were fewer. The Seniors had also a successful concert to conclude their event.

As in past years, the Team partners are appreciative of the generous sponsorship from the Friends of the Team of Pianists. This sponsorship has been applied to \$2,000 worth of scholarships, each one valued at \$150 or \$200, thus enabling the Spring Piano School to be more affordable to some of the student participants and providing encouragement to them. Ms. Pat Sablyak, President of the Friends of the Team of Pianists, attended the final recitals and presented scholarship certificates to the recipients.

Max Cooke, October 2015