

North Queensland Recorder Society Newsletter December 2010

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held on October 17th. The main business was a decision to incorporate the Society. This offers a number of benefits as outlined in the last newsletter. If you have any questions about this, please contact the Secretary/Treasurer, John Batterham.

The new committee elected at the AGM is:

President - Heather Coleman

Treasurer/Secretary - John Batterham

Minutes Secretary - Patricia Reynolds

Members - Lynn Saunders, Valerie Huston

Non committee help includes Jean Dartnall (newsletter editor, play day organiser and library cataloguer) and Malcolm Tattersall (library host and web master).

Contacts

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The End of 2010

- There was no **Christmas busking** session this year because of the redevelopment work in the City Mall.
- **Eisteddfod Results:** Recorder players did well in the 2010 Eisteddfod. Julia Batterham came first in the Bach solo any instrument other than piano and second in the Woodwind solos, 18 years and under. Sabrina Wightman was Highly Commended in her age group. In the 12 years and under woodwind solo, of the 7 place getters 5 were recorder players. Casey, Bianca, Catherine, Rebecca and Lachlan.
- Thank you to **Margaret Caley** who has been an enthusiastic supporter of the NQRS, including serving as President but is now leaving us for Brisbane. Best wishes, Margaret.

Sneak Preview of 2011

Your Committee is planning for next year. These are the plans to date: a play day in first term, a weekend workshop in second term, possibly a workshop with David Lawrence in third term if it can be arranged to fit in with his commitments with the Barrier Reef Orchestra, a play day in fourth term, and some kind of carol-playing activity to finish the year. We are planning to have a guest tutor for the weekend workshop, which will probably be held in Townsville the third weekend in May.

The next play day will be on March 13th at St Joseph's School, Mundingburra, 2.30 – 4.00. Please note the date and look for more details in the February newsletter.

In case you were wondering ... Malcolm Tattersall has agreed to do a column for each issue of the newsletter about questions that members may come across in their playing. If you have questions that you would like him to tackle please contact the newsletter editor, jeandartnall@gmail.com. Here is his first contribution.

Articulation

In response to a reader's question (Yay! We have a reader!), I will try to clarify the signs used in our music to show how notes are joined or separated. The general term is 'articulation' and it is also used to talk about speech (if you are mumbling, your *articulation* is poor) and about trucks (semi-trailers are *articulated* vehicles).

There are differences in the way articulation is marked or interpreted by different instruments. For instance, string players understand a slur to mean all the notes under it are played in one bow-stroke, which is nearly the same effect as our slur, but pianists cannot slur in anything like our way and interpret a slur as phrasing or as legato playing. For wind players, including us as recorder players, articulation means tonguing. The ratio of sound to silence can vary from 100:0 (slurs) to about 25:75 (staccatissimo).

Our 'default' ratio - 'normal' playing - is *legato*: Start each note with a light tongue stroke and end it with the preparation for the next note so the gap is very short. This 'normal' articulation is not usually defined but the ratio of sound:silence is about 95:5.

How do I know? Marvels of modern science. My notation software lets me set the ratio in its playback preferences and a bit of experimentation showed me that anywhere close to that ratio sounds reasonably natural.

How is it marked? It isn't.

The other common articulations are:

- *Slurring*, indicated by a curved line joining notes of different pitch: Tongue the first one and keep blowing until the end of the last one, moving your fingers when needed. The sound is continuous.
- *Staccato*, indicated by a dot above or below the note head: Tongue each note, and cut it off short, usually about half length. Note that staccato does not normally mean an accent - we don't play louder to make up for the shortness.

Less common, but still clear:

- *Staccatissimo*, indicated by a wedge above or below the note head: Similar to staccato but clipped even shorter, usually to about a quarter of its length.

Finally, the confusing or ambiguous articulation markings:

- *Tenuto*, indicated by a short horizontal line above or below the note head: Sustain the note for its full value (but still tongue it - sound:silence might be 98:2) and/or play the note slightly louder. In either case, tenuto gives the note a slight emphasis.
- *Portato*, indicated by staccato dots under a slur: almost legato but the notes are cleanly separated for clarity (sound:silence about 85:15). Portato is also known as 'slurred staccato', which is about as ambiguous (oxymoronic?) as you can get, and as 'articulated legato', which is nearly as silly.
- *Mezzo staccato*, indicated by either (1) tenuto line plus staccato dot or (2) staccato dots under a slur (which is the same as portato): Shorter than 'normal' (legato) articulation - attack each note firmly and break slightly between notes (sound:silence about 75:25). Also called 'moderately detached' and 'non-legato'.

Articulations from longest to shortest

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp). The top staff illustrates three types of articulation: 1. 'slurred' with a slur over four quarter notes. 2. 'legato' with four quarter notes without slurs. 3. 'portato (or mezzo-staccato)' with a slur over four quarter notes, each having a staccato dot underneath. The bottom staff illustrates three more types: 1. 'mezzo-staccato' with four quarter notes, each having a tenuto line above it. 2. 'staccato' with four quarter notes, each having a staccato dot underneath. 3. 'staccatissimo' with four quarter notes, each having a downward-pointing wedge underneath.

There is so little difference between *portato* and *mezzo staccato* in practice that it is no surprise they are sometimes shown the same way. I suspect that both came to us from string playing, where the difference between them is a matter of bow direction rather than sound.

In all cases, but especially where there are no articulation markings, listen and think and experiment. Articulation markings were hardly used until the baroque and have often been used inconsistently since then!

Membership

Are you a financial member? Memberships are due from January 1st 2011 and can be paid at the first playday.

Benefits of membership include:

- Reduction in fees for workshops and other Society activities
- Access to the Society's library. (Members can receive a copy of the library catalogue as a CD or as an email attachment on request).
- Guaranteed receipt of newsletters.
- Opportunities to be involved in organising and deciding on Society activities

Membership fees: \$15 (Single), \$25 (Family), \$10 (student).

Newsletter compiled by Jean Dartnall

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