

# North Queensland Recorder Society Newsletter

## October 2011

### Next Play Day

The next play day will be on **Sunday October 30th at St Joseph's School, Mundingburra, 2.00 – 4.30.** The leader for the day will be **Heather Coleman.** Heather has selected as her theme "The Journey." This year has included Playdays, the Weekend Workshop with Barbara Jerjen, the Recorder Romp, the Eistedfodd, and musical adventures in various consorts and other combinations of players. We would like to celebrate this year's journey by revisiting some of these experiences and Heather will encourage us to continue the journey with something new as well.

Please bring recorders, music stands, something to share for afternoon tea and a gold coin to assist with the expenses of the day.

### Christmas Busking

We intend to have a busking session at Cotters Market just before Christmas and hope to settle on a date at the October Play Day. The busking is just for fun and proceeds are given to charity. If anyone has a favourite charity, they are welcome to put it forward at the Play Day as the one we will support this year.

### Arts and Culture Strategic Action Plan, 2011 -2014

The Townsville City Council has released the *Arts and Culture Strategic Action Plan, 2011-2014.* The North Queensland Recorder Society participated in the consultation process and is mentioned on page 7 of the plan as an example of community cultural development activities.

Strategies that could be relevant to NQRS include:

- Foster and support lifelong learning, mentorship and creative opportunities for the Townsville community
- Build the capacity, relationships and resourcefulness of professionals and non-professionals in the arts and cultural sector
- Foster communication about cultural planning between Council, the arts and cultural sector, schools and the community
- Raise the profile of Townsville as a centre for arts excellence in Queensland
- Encourage constructive arts criticism
- Build capacity in the arts and cultural sector, and the community, to foster cultural sustainability
- Develop partnered programs that add value to the arts and cultural profile of Townsville and the region

There is also mention of exchanges with Townsville's sister cities and programs that link Townsville with localities along the Overlander Highway - plenty of food for thought if anyone is keen on putting a project together.

### Notes and Queries

[Malcolm Tattersall](#) is once again entertaining and helpful.

### A Recorder for Christmas?

I received an email from dorothy509@hotmail.com a week ago, asking about what kind of recorder to buy her Significant Other for Christmas. She was not a musician herself, she explained, but her SO was an enthusiastic amateur player and she wanted to support his interest. That is all she told me, so I had to cover all options in my reply. Here it is:

Dear Dorothy,

It is good to hear from anyone who, like you, wants to make the world better by adding another recorder to it. I can understand your bewilderment about the range of choices you were confronted by when attempting to choose an instrument - there are far more kinds of recorder than of violin, piano or any other common instrument. However, we can simplify the issues quite quickly by considering them under three major headings: size, material and style.

## Size

Most school children and many adults begin on a 'soprano' or 'descant' recorder, about 30 cm long, but that is just one member of a large family. The four most common members are soprano, alto (about 45 cm), tenor (60 cm) and bass (90 cm). The longer they are, the lower and (I mention this because you will be living with the one you buy) sweeter and less penetrating the sound.

Anyone who can play soprano can play tenor immediately, so long as their hands are big enough, because the music is written the same way. It is not written quite the same for alto or for bass, so changing to or from these two takes a little longer; but it is not too hard and repays the effort since most of the really good solo music is for alto, and bass players are always especially welcome in any group.

The instruments smaller and larger than these four are uncommon. If I were you, I would not even consider the little sopranino or garklein (as I said, you will be living with the one you buy!), and anything larger than bass is well out of chrisie pressie price range for most of us.

## Material

Realistically, there are only two choices, wood or plastic, and the budget often dictates the choice. Prices for plastic altos start at \$45 and go up to \$80 or \$100, while wooden altos start at \$300 and go up to \$1500 for factory-made instruments and \$3000 plus for hand-made instruments - again, not chrisie pressie prices.

But don't worry: a good plastic recorder is, in fact, a good recorder and is far, far better value for money than any of the cheaper wooden instruments. If your SO is at a stage where his plastic recorders are limiting his performance, your best option is to give him some form of gift certificate (\$1000? more?) and encourage him to do the shopping personally, since instrument choice at that level is very much a matter of individual taste but asking one's SO for approval to spend that much money on one's hobby can be ... difficult.

## Style

The form of the recorder changed somewhat from century to century and all of these historical styles are available as (at least) factory-made wooden recorders if not as plastic instruments. If you browse the catalogues you will find 'baroque', 'renaissance' and 'transitional' instruments; possibly 'medieval'; and 'modern'.

That said, the vast majority (including almost every plastic instrument) follow a slightly modernised interpretation of the baroque style, with its sharply tapered bore and relatively narrow windway. A renaissance or transitional style is a pleasant alternative, with its wide bore, somewhat stronger lower

range and crisper attack. The Mollenhauer 'Dream' is a modern design based on that wide bore style and is great in folkly roles.

## Conclusions

You will probably end up looking at the best plastic recorders in a size that your SO does not possess. That means the top models of 'name' brands, with Yamaha and Aulos at the top followed by Dolmetsch, Jupiter and the rest (down to cheap Chinese knock-offs of Yamaha, which I wouldn't even consider unless I wanted a cheap bass), with a plastic 'Dream' soprano (neither the alto or tenor come in plastic) as a good but quite different top-end alternative.

The Yamaha 302 or 312 series and Aulos 500 and 700 (Haka) series are quite comparable, and the Dolmetsch Nova series are good; I used to recommend Zen-on 'Bressan' altos, too, but they seem to have vanished from the scene. 'Wood-grain' finishes, incidentally, are purely a matter of aesthetics; they can be more attractive when new but do eventually wear and scratch off.

Availability can be a problem, whatever you're looking for (unless it's an entry-level soprano). Orpheus in Armidale (<http://www.orpheusmusic.com.au/>) is one of few Australian shops to carry a comprehensive range.

So there you have it. I'm sure you will make a wise choice - anyone smart enough to transliterate her surname into Arabic notation for an email address should be fine with most of life's little challenges.

## Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held **early next year**. The Committee is always interested in ideas for new activities or suggestions for improving the Society.

Heather is planning to step down as President at this AGM so if you would like to be a little more involved in your Society, this might be the time to come forward. It is not a very arduous task as we are a small and co-operative organisation but we do require someone to nominate for the position.

## Membership Info & Society Contacts

Please visit our [Home](#) page for information.

*Newsletter compiled by Jean Dartnall*

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