

## MURRAY CONSERVATORIUM

*In April 2006, the Albury & District Historical Society marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Murray Conservatorium with a meeting at the Conservatorium building, corner of Dean and Olive Streets Albury. We were fortunate to have as our guest speaker one of the first staff members of the Murray Conservatorium, Miss Wilma Friedlieb, who spoke of the beginnings and the evolution of the Conservatorium. Following is an edited transcript of the address, from the May 2006 Bulletin number 457.*

In 1976, Riverina College of Advanced Education at Wagga was showing interest in expanding to Albury. As part of the expansion, RCAE proposed forming a music school. Graham Stocks approached me and asked if I would be interested in teaching. We began teaching with Adrian Wintle, organist, Peter McCallum, violin, Jane Frost, flute and myself, voice. Ronald Bannister who was director at RCAE Wagga, came down each week.

We worked first in an old house on the corner of Olive and Guinea Streets. It used to be the Albury High School's boys' hostel and was very much worse for wear. Nevertheless it served our purpose and we got on with teaching.

In 1979, RCAE made a submission to the Board of Governors and the NSW Minister for Education seeking to establish a 'Conservatorium of Music' in conjunction with the 'Sydney Conservatorium.' The proposal was approved and this led initially to the establishment of the Riverina Music Centre with teaching centres in Albury and Wagga. A single Board grew out of an interim board with committees. Ronald Bannister was director based in Wagga, and John Ross associated director located in Albury. Graham Stocks was deputy director and Joy Stocker (who was deputy mayor of Albury) was also on the board. Graham and Joy had done a great deal towards seeing the eventual establishment of the Murray Conservatorium at Albury.



In 1983 the Conservatorium left the old hostel and moved to the present location at the corner of Dean and Olives streets. This imposing building was far from new, being even older than the hostel. It was built as the Telegraph Office in 1886 and in 1913 became a Trade School and more recently a Technical College and Museum. It was, however, a building with potential. With 'room to move' and a staff of brilliant musicians, we thought we had started. Teachers included Cheryl Lewis, violin; husband Greg teaching trombone, trumpet and tuba; Roger Pell, guitar; Aurora Flores, piano; Roman Tucewicz, piano and musicianship; Lyn Potter pre instrumental; and Eve Steglinski, flute. Director John Ross was and still is, a very talented musician. He

encouraged concerts and recitals as often as possible with tutors and students performing. Our students responded well and benefited greatly. Some have gone on to quite big things. John Ross also encouraged us to get extra qualifications. I went to Melbourne University once a week for 12 months and obtained a degree in 'advanced teaching.'

During the time I also did some private teaching. Muriel Sampson had asked me to teach with her. We had a lovely lot of young singers many of whom performed with the Delamotte Singers. There was a lot of outside work and opportunities to perform. Nowadays there doesn't seem to be as many opportunities with television and the like. There were lots of ballets and things people were given a chance to perform. My students did quite well.

Norm Azzi was one of a number of excellent accompanists supporting our singers in Albury. Norm wrote a lot of music for the young ones, all in harmony and, gave his time very willingly. Jean Belt was another very fine accompanist, also Elaine Buchhorn and Glenys and Jack Carter.

Madame Tija Savickis was another well known singing teacher during the sixties and seventies. Her group put on a number of musicals including "The Student Prince," "The Desert Song," "Show Boat" and "Oklahoma."

The Albury Music Theatre also put on some good shows, very interesting shows, mainly amateur, but up to a professional standard. Neil Case was the director of most of those shows including "The King and I," "Carousel" and "Fiddler on the Roof." Performances of the "The King and I" were seen by 4000 people. Among the singers I remember from this time are Margaret Rouse, Joan Lord and Zelma Chick.

My active period as a teacher at 'the Con' was from 1976 - even though it wasn't the Conservatorium then. It was a wonderful experience and a wonderful lot of musicians to work with. When I look at the work the Conservatorium is doing now, the new instruments they are teaching; their choir and orchestras I congratulate them. I hope they continue to get better and better and have excellent results, and I think Albury people should be very proud of the Murray Conservatorium.