

AMEB SYLLABUS LAUNCH SPEECH

David Lockett

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It's sometimes said that young people aren't interested in classical music and that they are unwilling to engage with it. But that has certainly not been my experience. I am constantly encountering people of all ages and all cultural backgrounds who are fascinated by music and who are involved with it deeply and personally.

This syllabus is for them and for all those yet to dip their toes into the water.

A plethora of details come together in a syllabus like this, but underneath all the complexity lies a single aim: to invite people into a rich and personal engagement with music, and to offer them a truly authentic musical experience.

By that I mean, firstly, a gratifying relationship with the instrument itself: a love of its sound and a natural and comfortable physical connection to it. Secondly, I mean a lived experience of the expression and beauty that characterise the language of music.

These ideas underpinned virtually every decision that was made as the detail of the syllabus emerged.

I have worked with many great colleagues over the years, but never have I been involved with a team such as the one behind this particular project.

Firstly, there are my fellow consultants: Angela Turner, Helen Smith, Glenn Riddle and Jeanell Carrigan. Each of these people possesses an amazing level of knowledge, wisdom, insight and experience which they shared generously throughout the process.

Other members of the team included three composers, two performers and a musicologist. It was a joy to work with Jo Kotchie and Kerin Bailey in the development of the technical work. I suspect that candidates will have so much fun with the exercises that they may not even realise how much they are learning in the process. Brett McKern approached each of his sight-reading exercises as a miniature character piece, giving them all an engaging and distinctive mood and colour. And how wonderful that Caroline Almonte and Ian Munro, two of our finest pianists, were

willing to record all the Series 18 repertoire. The last of the contributors was Simon Perry who wrote the enlightened and enlightening hand books.

It was then over to the excellent AMEB team to put it all into shape: David Howell, Jo Crabbe and others responsible for typesetting, proof reading and so on. And on a pedestal all of his own, the grand ring master himself – the AMEB’s Head of Publishing, Steve Hodgson. Steve has the ability to manage the detail while never losing sight of the big picture. He is also a great diplomat – flexible whenever he can be, firm when he must be, unfailingly responsive and seemingly undaunted.

It feels a little odd to be letting go of something which I have lived with so intimately for such a long time. There is a feeling of relief that we finally got there and a touch of trepidation as the syllabus and publications assume their independent lives. But mostly, there is a deep sense of gratitude for having had the opportunity to be part of such a large and important project.

As there doesn’t appear to be anywhere convenient to smash a magnum of Champagne, I will instead launch the syllabus by expressing the simple wish that it and the publications will have long and happy lives and that those who use them will experience enduring joy and reward.

You can follow it all at piano.ameb.edu.au.

David Lockett