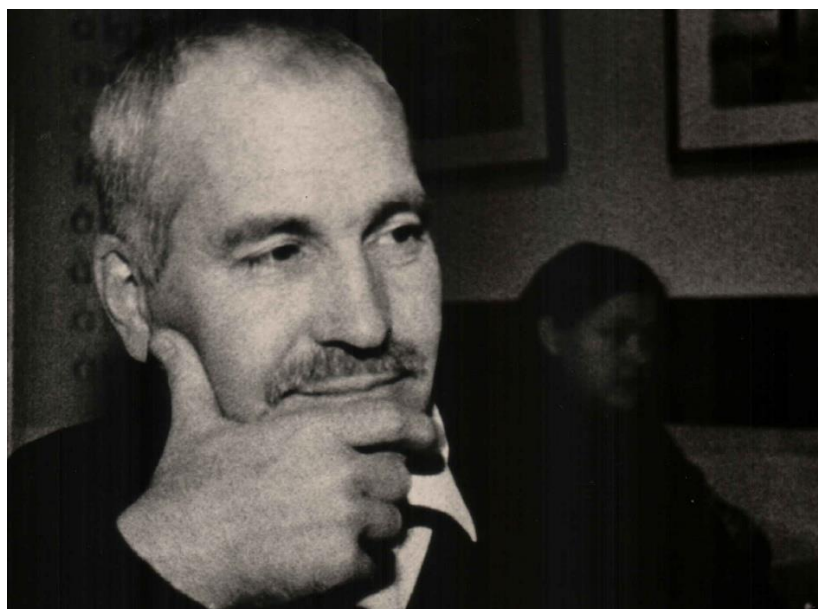


JAZZ CO-ORDINATION HAS CHANGED AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

by Bruce Johnson*

[This article was published in the Jul/Aug 1998 edition of JazzChord]

When I was invited to stand as President of the Jazz Co-ordination Association of NSW in 1989, I thought of it as a compliment, but the acceptance of which would make little difference to anything. At that time I shared the widespread scepticism about the value to jazz of institutionalised infrastructures, invoking the facile bar-room cynicism in which 'street-cred' dictated that one stood back from engagement with cultural power blocs, and got on with the real business of just playing jazz. Ten years on I see things very differently. Not only is it clear that jazz should intervene to give itself a voice in the public arts consciousness, but that it can do so to outstanding effect.



Bruce Johnson: not only is it clear that jazz should intervene to give itself a voice in the public arts consciousness, but that it can do so to outstanding effect... PHOTO CREDIT PETER SINCLAIR

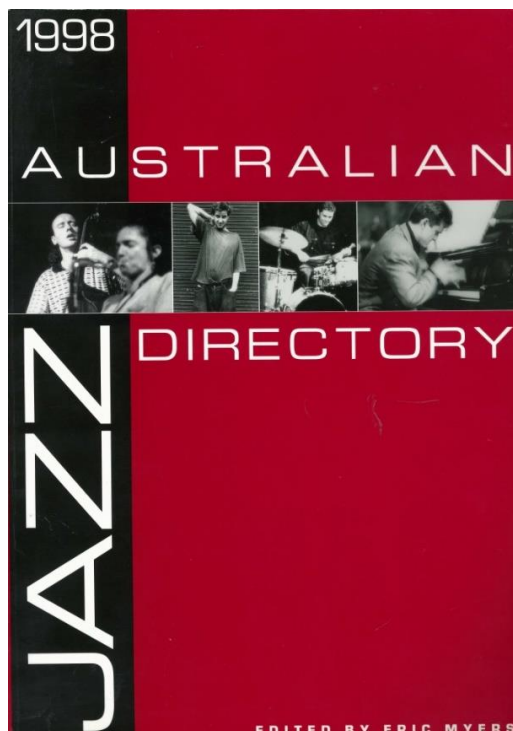
Why should jazz intervene? Simply: cultural empowerment. My increasing involvement in arts policy bodies at state and commonwealth level confirms that things we believe in don't survive just because we believe in them. They do so because people do something about it. The side that fights harder will win, right or

** When he wrote this piece in July/August 1998, Assoc Prof A J B (Bruce) Johnson was a University of NSW academic; chair of the Australian Jazz Archive National Council; a professional jazz musician; author of the Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz; and a member of the Music Committee of the NSW Government's Arts Advisory Council.*

wrong. In seeking a share of available arts funding, each music sector is understandably concerned with its own interests, and securing as much privilege as it may. Why are some music organisations so much more privileged than the jazz sector? It is not because they service more clientele, because they don't. It is not because they employ more musicians, because they don't. It is not because their music resonates most harmoniously with the condition of Australian life in the twentieth century, because it doesn't. It is not because it is 'better' music. 'Better' is not an absolute. The notion of what is 'good' music is constructed by those who have achieved cultural authority.

Other musics are privileged because they negotiate vigorously with public awareness and support bodies. Jazz will remain underprivileged while its community glories in its own exclusion. It will remain underprivileged until its members insist, with persuasive arguments and evidence, that jazz be given a place on its own terms in public debate and policy. This involves going beyond anecdotal consolations to self-critical, well-informed, historically and culturally founded arguments.

Some years ago I had a discussion with a friend in the jazz community who complained that the National Jazz Co-ordinator had direct control over Australia Council funding for jazz, which was why certain sectors received nothing. I pointed out that the Jazz Co-ordinator had no such access, and there was no actual documented evidence of predispositions against one jazz sector on the part of either the Co-ordinator or the Australia Council. He responded by saying he didn't want to know that. This is just an extreme instance of a common victim mentality: jazz sectors suffer neglect because of a prejudice elsewhere, rather than because of its own disinclination to put some work into research and lobbying. And if there is a prejudice elsewhere, who is going to change it, if not ourselves?



The 1998 Australian Jazz Directory: a publication which has been applauded beyond the jazz community...

And this takes me to the other premise at the beginning of this article: that we can intervene to make a difference. Having studied music and arts policies closely over the last ten years, I believe that the National Jazz Co-ordination Program has been the most decisive force in the national jazz community since the inauguration of the conservatorium education programs in the early seventies. Through *JazzChord*, the Jazz Co-ordination Association plays a significant role in researching, documenting, and publicising the significance of jazz in Australian cultural life and providing a national forum for Australian jazz. This has been enhanced by the publication of the two editions of the *Australian Jazz Directory*, incorporating comprehensive information on all aspects of Australian jazz - publications which have been applauded beyond the jazz community.

JAZZCHORD

NEWS & INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL JAZZ CO-ORDINATOR

EDITION No. 42

ISSN 1039-7795

JUL/AUG 1998

Christine Sullivan in Finals of Monk Competition

by Eric Myers

The Melbourne singer Christine Sullivan rang our office recently in a state of some excitement. That day she had received a telephone call from the USA, indicating that she had reached the semi-finals of the 1998 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition. The Competition will be held on September 24, 1998 at the Baird Auditorium, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Christine rang to say thanks for urging her to enter the Competition, and for sending her a copy of the application form.

Shelby Fischer of the Thelonious Monk Institute has informed *JazzChord* that Christine will be one of 12 singers who will participate in the semi-finals, with five to be selected for the final the following day, on September 25.

There are eight women and four men, and their ages range from 20 to 64. There are two non-Americans: Christine from Australia, and a female vocalist from Italy. They will be accompanied by a rhythm section that includes Norman Simmons (piano), Rodney Whitaker (bass) and Grady Tate (drums).

The Competition carries a first prize of USD20,000; second prize \$10,000; and third \$5,000. All other finalists receive \$1,000.

Originally from Tasmania, and now living in Melbourne, Christine Sullivan has released three albums on the Larrikin label: *It's About Time*, *Live at Mietta's* and *Here and Now*.

Australian jazz artists have had considerable success in the past in the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz competitions. In 1987 ex-Sydney musician Fiona Bicket was placed third in the final of the piano competition; Fiona now lives and works in New York.

In 1991 the ex-Sydney alto saxophonist Andrew Speight was placed equal third in the final of the saxophone competition (which was won by the then unknown Joshua Redman). Andrew is now director of jazz studies at Michigan State University, where he's been on the



Christine Sullivan: she will join a number of Australian jazz artists who have made the finals of the Thelonious Monk Competitions over the years...

COURTESY LARRIKIN RECORDS

faculty since 1992.

In 1992 Sydney's Andrew Dickeson, courtesy of an 'out-of-round' grant from the Australia Council, participated in the semi-finals of the drums competition. In 1996 Andrew Speight again made the finals of the saxophone competition and, according to the Melbourne writer

Adrian Jackson, who attended the event, was exceedingly unlucky not to make the final three. (See Adrian's report in *JazzChord*, Feb/Mar, 1997). In 1997 the Sydney trumpeter Phil Slater was the only non-American among the 15 finalists who played off in the trumpet competition.

JazzChord joins the rest of the jazz community in wishing Christine Sullivan all the best for September, 1998, as she carries the flag for Australian jazz.

Judy Bailey declines membership of Music Fund

The Sydney jazz pianist, composer and educator Judy Bailey has declined an invitation from the Minister for Communications, the Information Economy and the Arts, Richard Alston, to serve on the assessment committee of the Music Fund of the Australia Council.

As reported in the May/June, 1998, edition of *JazzChord*, Judy was one of three new appointments announced recently by Senator Alston, the others being Michael Hannan and Helen Rusak.

Judy had been invited to succeed the well-known Adelaide saxophonist and academic Sylvan (Schmoc) Elhay.

Judy has expressed legitimate concern that the necessary but nonetheless stringent conflict-of-interest guidelines which now operate at the Australia Council may disadvantage individual artists for the period of their participation in the committee. Judy's appointment was for three years.

At time of writing, no replacement appointment had been announced by the Minister's office. *JazzChord* trusts that Senator Alston will see fit to appoint an Australian jazz artist or administrator who has broad knowledge of the various jazz communities around the country, and who would enjoy the confidence of the Australian jazz community.

JAZZ RESEARCH

JazzChord would like to publish brief information on jazz research being undertaken by scholars and enthusiasts in Australia. All jazz researchers are invited to send a short synopsis giving details of what they are working on. Please send such information to: *JazzChord*, Pier 5, Hickson Rd, Millers Point NSW 2000.

What's Inside

CO-ORDINATION & JAZZ CULTURE 2

ALLAN BROWNE: STILL SWINGING 5

ALEX FRAME, GRAEME BENNETT 6

CLUB JAZZ SCHOLARSHIP 10

JAZZ ON THE INTERNET (X) 12

EXPATRIATES' CORNER 13

JAMIE FIELDING'S 3-CD SET 15

Through JazzChord, the Jazz Co-ordination Association plays a significant role in researching, documenting, and publicising the significance of jazz in Australian cultural life and providing a national forum for Australian jazz...

The current health and vitality of the jazz community owes a great deal to the Association's continuing stimulation of muscular debate, and its encouragement of projects involving performance, audience development, education, research and promotion. Initiatives through the jazz co-ordination program, usually undertaken in co-operation with key enthusiasts in the jazz community, have produced substantial achievements in infrastructures that are larger and more effective than individual initiatives. For example,

- * The creation of organisations such as the Sydney Improvised Music Association (SIMA), Music Now, Sydney Women In Music, the Canberra Jazz Initiative.

- * Assistance to the Jazz Co-ordination Associations in Vic, Qld and WA;

- * The inaugural Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) award for Most Performed Australasian Jazz Work in 1985 (won by the Sydney pianist/composer/educator Judy Bailey).



Pianist/composer/educator Judy Bailey won the inaugural Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) award for Most Performed Australasian Jazz Work in 1985, after the Jazz Co-ordination Association lobbied for such an Award. This is a shot of her receiving her award from Graeme Bell... PHOTO COURTESY JAZZ MAGAZINE

* Through initiatives by two of its executive committee members, the inauguration of the Midsummer Jazz in The Domain concert in 1985 in Sydney, and is now part of the annual Festival of Sydney.

* Through initiatives by two of its executive committee members, laying the groundwork for the establishment in 1990 of the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz & Blues, now widely regarded as Australia's most important jazz festival, and the National Jazz Piano Competition (now the National Jazz Awards);

* the formation of the lobbying body, the National Jazz Alliance, in 1993;

* Through initiatives by two of its executive committee members, establishing in 1997 the Australian Jazz Archive within the National Film & Sound Archive, and the Australian Jazz Archive National Council;

* Numerous initiatives in the international arena, including touring mechanisms which have established international profiles for dozens of individual musicians, and have generally raised the overseas consciousness of the Australian contribution to the jazz tradition;

* The considerable influx of funds from the Australia Council into jazz projects throughout the 1980s (from well under \$100,000 per annum around 1980 to almost \$500,000 a decade later), which have mainly fed into performance-related projects;

* Vigorous lobbying which has increased jazz representation on policy and funding bodies, and gradually increased media coverage of the music.

There is not space in this article for an inventory of the specific outcomes of these initiatives. In terms of the overall culture of Australian jazz, however, what matters is not so much the trees as the forest. Above all, these initiatives represent the most significant institutional empowerment of jazz since its arrival in Australia 80 years ago. The Jazz Co-ordination Program has established jazz as a significant presence in Australian society and the arts. It has produced a voice which speaks with precision and measured authority on matters of policy. It has shown that jazz can develop imaginative policy programs and yet retain its integrity as a 'street' or grassroots music. It has shown that jazz can cross the 't's and dot the 'i's, keep careful books, maintain uniquely detailed databases, evolve effective business plans for performance, touring, festivals, sustain an internationally admired journal, set up the country's first genre-specific music archive, negotiate constructively with all levels of government... without compromising itself musically. It can set up organisational models which are admired and copied by other music sectors: the NSW Jazz Co-ordination Program is currently the acknowledged model for the organisation musicNSW, an infrastructure for the rock community currently being set up by the NSW Government's Ministry for the Arts.

It is not simply the way the jazz community is perceived from the outside, but also within itself. To lobby, to secure funding, to set up infrastructures, requires the articulation of strategic plans and philosophical positions. It is a tedious business, having to construct arguments for what we have always taken for granted. Through applications to the funding bodies, individual musicians are forced to define themselves and their aspirations. Through policy papers and mission statements, the Jazz Co-ordination Association has been forced to articulate the role of jazz in

Australian society more comprehensively than at any time in its history. In policy meetings, I am constantly struck with how much more clearly our representatives understand our role in contemporary Australia than other music groups who have been able to coast on unexamined traditions. The developments sketched in the foregoing have stimulated intense reflection and debate within the community, requiring us to work out exactly why we do matter, revisiting, reinvigorating, reinventing ourselves as a community.



Bruce Johnson: the National Jazz Co-ordination Program will continue to be essential in providing a site for the constant rejuvenation of jazz as a force in Australian music...PHOTO COURTESY OXFORD COMPANION TO AUSTRALIAN JAZZ

Because socio-economic and cultural contexts are constantly altering, I believe the National Jazz Co-ordination Program will continue to be essential in providing a site for the constant rejuvenation of jazz as a force in Australian music.
