

TEACHING

1. PIANO

Ross was trained as a concert pianist, his principal teacher having a pedagogical history reaching back to the Russian masters such as Anton Rubenstein and Sergei Rachmaninov. As a pianist he has performed in recital, in concerts, as an accompanist for singers and instrumentalists, and in duo piano works. His repertoire at one stage included piano concertos such as the Brahms' No. 1, the Grieg, the Khatchaturian, Beethoven #3 & 4, and solo works such as Ravel's "Ondine", various works by Liszt (including some of the Transcendental Studies), Chopin (some of the studies, ballades, scherzos, preludes and waltzes), Schumann, Schubert, Beethoven (various sonatas), Mussorgsky (Pictures at an Exhibition) etc.

Before moving to Newcastle from his home town in 1987 Ross and his wife operated a music teaching studio having some 30 pupils. He was instrumental in setting up an arm of the region's Conservatorium of Music in that town to take over his pupils and expand the music base when he left.

Since moving to Newcastle Ross has reduced his involvement with the piano, concentrating more on composing and conducting. Notwithstanding, in April 2007 he and David Fitzgerald gave a recital of complex and extended two piano jazz works by the legendary Dave Brubeck, and the French jazz composer/performer Claude Bolling to audience appreciation.

It is now however, that Ross feels he is able to give back to those who want to benefit from much of the knowledge and experience he has gained in 50 years or so of music making and in his dealings with many exceptional people in and about music.

Tuition is available from beginners to letters.

Pupils have a choice whether or not to take examinations.

2. THEORY & MUSICIANSHIP (MUSIC CRAFT)

As a composer, conductor and performer, Ross has a wealth of experience, knowledge and sensibility regarding the structure of music, not only in the formal requirements of the theory of music, but also in listening and learning.

The AMEB Music Craft Syllabus will be followed as the standard for learning. However, other avenues of learning may be tailored to a pupil's specific needs.

Pupils have a choice whether or not to take examinations.

3. SCORE READING

Apart from the ability to gauge relative pitch from a score with some accuracy, the additional facility of being able to read a score and understand the influence in the palette of sounds available from any one instrument as well as a combination of instruments and the tonal colours chosen by a composer or arranger is vital to any conductor or performer, including orchestral and “session” musicians. Whilst a considerable knowledge can be gained by practical experience (eg playing in an orchestra or ensemble or band), the added benefits of understanding the intent of the work from its scoring cannot be underestimated. For conductors, it is not enough to beat time and give cues, the shaping of the music and the musical palette in a manner the performers can understand and follow is most important.

Ross is able to give pupils an appreciation of what the music is about, the balance, the colour, etc from a reading of the score. This can apply from a duet to a full orchestral setting.

There are some limitations however, in that many experimental and avante garde works are not always possible to comprehend from the written page and Ross would draw the line at making sense of such works other than in a structured rehearsal.

4. COMPOSITION AND ARRANGING

Composing and arranging music are many faceted matters:-

Choose solo, duet, trio, quartet, quintet etc
accompaniment if any, and how it is to constituted
instrumental, vocal, choral
chordal, contrapuntal (counterpoint)
electronic, digital, acoustic
post- modern, post-Darmstadt, minimalist, serial, melodic, filmic, lyrical,
post-romantic, theatrical, musical, music drama, incidental, eclectic,
jazz (and all its forms), pop & rock (in all their forms)

Having decided what forces should be used, it is then important also to know the ranges of the various voices and instruments and what their peculiarities and tonal colours involve, especially pertaining to the composition in hand.

And there is then the musicality, the construct, and the discipline in getting the notes on paper.

Ultimately, both composing and arranging are a very personal journey. Many can imitate styles of others, or can create according to a standard formula, but few generate their own “sound” or individual traits.

Ross can assist budding composers and arrangers in recognising and using many styles of music, and giving them some pointers to “finding their own voice”. This last is a very individual thing, but it is the divide between one composer and another, be it in serious, light or pop music.

Ross as a composer is represented at the Australian Music Centre. For a list of works & materials available go to <http://www.amcoz.com.au/opac/name.aspx?id=216>

For the website of Ross’ major music-theatre composition go to www.fiddeslaw.com.au/ah

5. SCORE NOTATION & NOTATION SOFTWARE

Laying out a score according to established custom or principle is a matter of skill. Depending on the instrumental and/or vocal grouping the layout can change markedly. And many modern scores, including musicals, would appear to have few hard and fast rules.

Pupils will learn the various standard layouts, and those which appear ad hoc, as part of both learning [Score Reading](#) and [Composition/Arranging](#).

Of more importance in this age is the use of notation software. These computer programs enable the user to create almost professionally printed scores ranging from simple piano pieces to complex orchestral scores. In the case of orchestral or ensemble scores, the parts for the various instruments can be produced very simply from the full score.

Ross has familiarity with, and has produced scores and parts using the most popular of these programs, namely *Finale* (<http://www.finalemusic.com/finale/home.aspx>) and *Sibelius* (http://www.sibelius.com/home/index_flash.html). As well he has knowledge and experience of the *Overture* (<http://geniesoft.com/>) and *Igor* (<http://www.noteheads.com/>) notation programs. He is able to advise on the creation of performance software using *Finale* or *Sibelius* with various sampling programs such as the *Garritan Personal Orchestra* (<http://www.garritan.com/GPO.html#feature>), and the *Garritan Jazz & Big Band* (<http://www.garritan.com/jazz.html>). For further comprehensive Garritan information visit <http://www.garritan.com/>

There are other quality sampled or MIDI based instrument collections available from *Native Instruments* <http://www.native-instruments.com/> or (as sampled from the Vienna Symphony Orchestra) the *Vienna Symphonic Library* <http://vsl.co.at/en/65/71/84/10.vsl> or the various suites from *East West/Quantum* <http://www.eastwestsamples.com/>.

Ross has more recently been using and working with **NOTION** performance software - <http://www.notionmusic.com/> - as a mode of realising his own compositions (the main instrument samples are from the London Symphony Orchestra). This software is capable of very easily and realistically playing a score without too much linking of sounds and software. As well it has a facility for playing along with a live dictated beat, allowing it to be used in live performance.

Ross is able to guide students in the use of these programs to realise their music.

6. CONDUCTING

Is it an art or a science?

Does it require a magician?

Does it require charisma?

Does it require discipline?

Is megalomania a pre-requisite?

Does it require a close knowledge and understanding of the music being performed?

Well, all of the above, and sometimes only a little of the above.

Just to beat time and to cue entries is to deny a performance of all the vibrancy that a group of musicians or singers can achieve in the hands of an enlightened conductor.

Singers, dancers and orchestral players need someone to assist with interpreting music for their performance whether in a concert, music-based stage work or oratorio. Whilst they appreciate and respond to good direction, experienced performers and players need much less attention than novices or students. And whilst much can be accomplished in rehearsal, it is often important that the conductor imparts his or her idea of a score by nuance, beat, body language, stick and/or hand technique and facial expression to the performers before him/her. In doing this a balance must be struck between leading and following any soloists or ensembles as well as ensuring the players remain "on song". No small task.

Because he also a composer, Ross has an ability to understand how a score is constructed and the influence that the instrumentation will have on the way it should be performed.

He has proved in conducting various choirs, orchestras, operas, operettas, oratoria and musicals that he has the ability to extract exceptional performances from the singers and/or musicians he is conducting. For a list of performances conducted in Newcastle and environs, please see Ross' CV [here](#).

Aspiring conductors can gain confidence and knowledge working with Ross.

For websites of some shows Ross has conducted go to the Links page [here](#).

ADJUDICATION

Ross is available to adjudicate at or act as a judge for:

- eisteddfods
- music competitions

Having trained and performed as a pianist, and having worked with orchestras from small ensembles to full symphony orchestras, with choirs from 8 to 500 voices, with solo singers of various persuasions including opera singers who are or have been soloists with Opera Australia and with overseas companies, and with staging and conducting opera and other forms of musical theatre, Ross feels competent and able to make a valuable contribution as an adjudicator or judge.

Ross acknowledges he may not be fully competent to judge some of the technical aspects of performance for brass, woodwind, strings or percussion, although as a performer and conductor he has worked with players of these instruments and as a composer he has written for the same, but he believes he is quite capable of appreciating and commenting on the technical capacity and musicality of a performer of the same.

Referees:

Prof Robert Constable	Former Dean, Newcastle Conservatorium of Music, concert pianist, conductor & composer (now in New Zealand). +64 9 940 1250 or +64 211 657 430
Frank Taranto	Adjudicator and AMEB Examiner. 02-6583 9119
Philip Sketchley	Adjudicator, teacher and former Concerts Manager of Newcastle Conservatorium of Music. 02-4943 4655
Mercia Buck	President of: Lake Macquarie Eisteddfod. Opera Hunter, Lake Macquarie Music Society, Lake Macquarie Symphony Orchestra 02-4943 1672
Dr David Banney	International conductor, composer. 02-4952 2330
Margaret Paviour	Vocal/Instrumental Convenor, Goulburn Eisteddfod, 02-4821 2450

ACCOMPANIST / VOCAL COACH

As a pianist Ross has accompanied or partnered:

- singers in recital (operatic, art song, lieder, popular, musicals);
- instrumentalists (strings, brass, woodwind)
- complete operas, operettas & musicals in rehearsal and in performance
- choirs in concert

He has also worked with singers in coaching them for stage roles & in the interpretation of lieder, art song and popular music.

He has also played in chamber ensembles including piano trios, duets & works for two pianos.

His work as a musical director and conductor of opera & musicals has given him an excellent appreciation of the special needs of working with singers, whether he is at the piano or in the orchestra pit.

Ross is available as an accompanist for singers and instrumentalists and as a vocal coach for singers.

One rider – his sight reading is not what it was, so he does need a little preparation time for any engagement !!

CONDUCTOR / MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Prior to him moving to Newcastle Ross already had experience in conducting choirs and stage shows. His experience in these areas has extended to choirs between 8 and 500 voices. He was fortunate on one occasion to conduct *The Song Company* in a performance of one of his own compositions.

In Newcastle and since 1988, Ross, has conducted and/or musically directed opera, oratorio, musicals, instrumental ensembles, orchestras and choirs.

For a list of musicals, operas, oratorio, concerts, choirs, orchestras he has conducted and/or musically directed in Newcastle see Ross' CV [here](#).

Ross is available for engagement as a conductor and/or musical director for any musical discipline in which he has competence.

ADMINISTRATOR / ADVISOR

Ross' background as a lawyer has given him a unique ability to "get the job done", especially in dealing with the administrative side of producing opera, musicals & musical theatre in regional areas.

He is also aware of the many limitations and costs of theatres and concert halls which are available for performances. He has been able to gain access to people with the knowledge to overcome many of the shortcomings of such venues.

For various companies, including, but not limited to *Opera Hunter*, *The Sound Construction Company* and *Shakespeare et al* he has undertaken all or most of the following:

- auditioning of performers;
- calling & heading auditions;
- the engagement of all or most personnel, including performers, orchestra and crew;
- drafting performance contracts;
- drafting rehearsal & performance schedules;
- drafting/proofing of publicity material & programs;
- choice of repertoire & venues;
- booking venues & setting up of same;
- financial controller including budgeting & costing;
- orchestra management;
- promotional activity;
- administration secretary;
- drafting of documentation including newsletters.

Much of this is in the province of an Executive Producer or an Artist Administrator.

The theatre population of Newcastle is aware that if Ross is involved in setting up a production, it will be of the highest possible standard subject to the limitations of budget and venue.

Producers may therefore obtain the benefit of this experience from Ross either as an advisor, or in an engagement to undertake the role(s) of Orchestra 'Fixer', Executive Producer and/or Artist Administrator.

LINKS

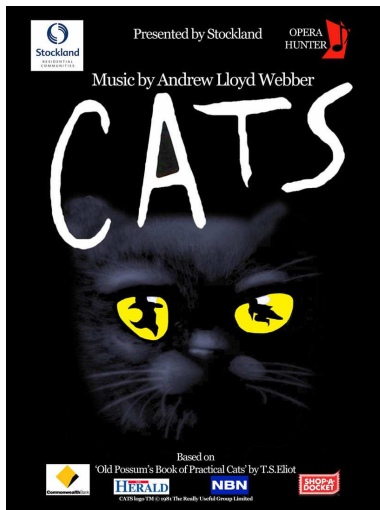
These are websites of some of the shows or productions which Ross has created, conducted and/or musically directed



www.fiddeslaw.com.au/ah



www.fiddeslaw.com.au/tsg
www.fiddeslaw.com.au/tsgallery



www.operahunter.org.au
<http://www.cats.eventx.com.au/index.html>