

# Barrier Reef Orchestra Annual General Meeting 2023

## President's Report

The Barrier Reef Orchestra (BRO) successfully attained, for the first time in 2022, a Townsville City Council Sponsorship and Partnership Grant, focusing on boosting Townsville's art and cultural experience. This was a significant increase in income (\$32 000). A second grant was successfully gained in March 2023 (\$50 000) ensuring the Orchestra can cover its costs throughout each year, thereby allowing BRO the opportunity to look forward to what it envisions for the future rather than just "falling over the line" for each concert.

The first concert for 2022 had been held prior to the 2022 AGM and it was pleasing to see the audience numbering 420, which equalled that of the previous concert. However, subsequent audience surveys and member discussions, identified the need for BRO to develop strategies to promote itself to the wider community and reach out to a younger demographic to assist in boosting audience numbers.



*Barrier Reef Orchestra, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Civic Theatre*

The second BRO concert of 2022 titled "Slavonic Splendour" completely filled the Sir George Kneipp Auditorium, (JCU). Many attendees verbally congratulated the musicians and expressed how much they loved the concert. One lady told the orchestra manager "This is my first concert, but I'm coming to every concert you have from now on!"

This concert saw the return of Theodore (Ted) Kuchar to conduct the orchestra, injecting his enthusiasm and excellent communication skills. He stirred the committee into action. Ted met with The Vice-Chancellor of JCU, Simon Biggs, suggesting a relationship be formed. The committee followed up on this introduction and has put in place an in-kind sponsorship agreement with JCU offering the use of Sir George Kneipp auditorium in return for JCU marketing BRO to future students. Ted also secured high profile publicity on both television and print media, promoting the June 2022 concert. In addition, he met with Jenny Hill, Mayor of Townsville, and commenced relationships with

potential philanthropic contributors. Ted's demonstration of his initiative and drive gave the committee confidence that progress was achievable and, with the generous contribution from Nita Vasilescu, Theodore Kuchar was invited to be the inaugural Barrier Reef Orchestra Artistic Director.

Theodore (Ted) replied to this invite is as follows:

"I am deeply touched and honoured by your generous invitation to become the Artistic Director of the Barrier Reef Orchestra and proudly accept this title. Please inform the members of the orchestra and the governing committee that I will do my very best to deliver upon your expectations and further enhance the organization's immense accomplishments of its first 20 years of existence."

The committee voted to engage an appropriately skilled person to assist them in the development of a Vision. In September 2023, BRO engaged the services of Joanne Keune on a sessional basis. Joanne has substantial experience in law in Australia and the United States, complex project management, finance, public relations and research. She has extensive knowledge and highly developed grant writing, editing and public speaking skills. Joanne is a long-term resident of Townsville and is passionate about helping BRO to progress. Joanne has worked on numerous indigenous projects and held the position of General Manager of Dance North from 1997 – 2000. Joanne immediately started on improving the orchestra's presence in the wider community by producing a television promotion for BRO's third concert in 2022, along with the marketing of the Christmas package where purchasers could buy tickets to 2023 concerts and give as Christmas gifts. Joanne has assisted BRO in building a relationship with the Arts Council and submitted the 2023 Arts Queensland Showcase Grant Application in March, which should ensure BRO can engage Theodore Kuchar as Artistic Director throughout 2024 and 2025.



BRO has been collaborating with The Australian Festival of Chamber Music (AFCM) since 2015. This has been in the format of a stand-alone concert in Queens Park, held during the Festival week and featured BRO with three soloists engaged by AFCM. However, 2022 saw the introduction of a new format titled "Garden Festival" with numerous artists invited to perform across the duration of the Festival, with the location being adjacent to the Civic Theatre. BRO once again performed the Sunday afternoon concert, including three soloists from AFCM, but to the disappointment of the much smaller audience was limited to a one-hour performance.



*Barrier Reef Orchestra, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022, AFCM Garden Festival*

BRO successfully performed their final concert for 2022 in October at The Civic Theatre, conducted by Warwick Potter, having an audience of nearly 600, being a collaboration with The Townsville Choral Society (TCS). Warwick specifically arranged a combined orchestral and choral piece for the finale being Coldplay's Viva La Vida which received a standing ovation.

Warwick has just returned to conduct BRO's March 2023 concert titled "Music in March" which also had an audience of nearly 600. This audience number is positive feedback for our promotion and marketing. Although a similar audience to October 2022, it was without the support of friends from TCS, which definitely bolstered numbers in October.



*Barrier Reef Orchestra and Townsville Choral Society, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2022, Civic Theatre*

I was elected President in mid-2020 just as the pandemic was taking hold preventing BRO from performing until October 2021. We then were able to celebrate our 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary with eager musicians and an appreciative audience who were both craving for live performances again in Townsville. During this performance hiatus, the committee focused on developing a strategic plan which has been invaluable to strengthening our grant applications.

I cannot give enough thanks and appreciation to the hardworking committee which stayed unchanged throughout this period. Neil Renison has donated hundreds of hours to his role as Honorary Treasurer both in maintaining the BRO book keeping to a high standard and to the countless extra hours required to develop a budget for each of the Grant applications submitted. The secretary's role is wide, encompassing many skills which Janet Askern performs to a high standard, but it is Janet's knowledge, communication and mediation abilities which saved us all on many occasions. Janet is stepping down from the committee. Andrew Ryder was not only a musician in the orchestra and assisted with conducting when asked but also served as Vice President, liaising with Joanne and Ted regarding the recent Arts Queensland Grant. On behalf of all of us I wish Andrew and his family the very best with his recent health issues as he steps down from the committee.

All other committee members have spent many hours volunteering in their own duties and are greatly appreciated. These include Judy Hunter; Billie Saint-Rang who is stepping down from the committee but has agreed to continue her specialist role maintaining the BRO scarves/ties; Geoff Ward who has developed excellent relationships with the ABC, Townsville Bulletin and Community Information Centre, boosting our publicity before each concert : Monika Ward, membership officer, who is also stepping aside as her time is directed towards her teenage children's extra-curricular activities; Noel Price who manages the instruments and transport logistics. BRO Orchestra Manager, Sally Frewen-Lord, also deserves our gratitude and big thank you as she quietly works tirelessly in the background to ensure each concert is a great success.

This committee is keen to see a "Friends of BRO" group developed. It has become apparent that such a group will be essential to unloading committee members from some volunteer tasks prior to each concert

Thank you to you all. I am proud to see the position BRO is currently in and wish the next committee the very best as they work with Theodore Kuchar, BRO Artistic Director, for the future of BRO.