Many of you will know that this year marks an important anniversary for ABRSM: it is 125 years since the Director of the Royal College of Music and the Principal of the Royal Academy of Music in London met in secret to hold confidential talks about forming a joint music examination board. Relations between the two schools had been uneasy up to this point, but they agreed to put their differences aside and the rest, as they say, is history! Together they became the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, set up forty-two centres across the United Kingdom within a year and despite the very substantial two-guinea entry fee, attracted 1,143 entries. This says much about the contemporary British enthusiasm for taking music exams, as well as about the assurance, and perhaps cachet, of exams conducted by a board associated with the royal schools of music.

New Zealand was one of the very first countries outside the UK to hold ABRSM exams. In the mood of enhancing cultural exchanges across the Empire, the Prince of Wales himself wrote a letter to the colonies to launch this prestigious new examination system. Again, the rest is history.

By the way, 1889 was also the year in which Charlie Chaplin was born, the year in which Coca Cola was founded, the year of the first air transport (the Zeppelin), the first jukebox (in San Francisco) and the year in which the first camera was patented (by Kodak Eastman).
Calling for ABRSM Grant applications 2015

Each year, ABRSM awards a grant of $1000 to a New Zealand school with the aim of encouraging new musical opportunities for students. To apply, please send a short email or letter to the Auckland office outlining the current music programme offered in the school, and specific details of how the funds would be spent. Applications close at the end of October.

Previous Grant recipients:
2014 Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Nga Mokopuna [pictured], Wellington
2013 Joint recipients: Leeston Consolidated School, Canterbury and Rewarewa School, Wellington
2012 Kaikohe East School, Northland
2011 Palmerston North Girls High School
2010 Kawaha Point Primary School, Rotorua
2009 Mairehau High School, Christchurch

Spotlight on.... Eddie Giffney

It is always good to follow the successes of young talented musicians and one such young artist is 21 year old pianist Eddie Giffney.

Eddie is currently studying for his Masters of Music at Auckland University, majoring in Performance Piano. He studies under Rae de Lisle – with whom he has been learning since age eight – and also learns harpsichord and fortepiano from James Tibbles and piano accordion with Stephanie Poole.

Eddie’s piano path took him rapidly through the ABRSM theory and practical examinations at an early age, culminating in a distinction in his DipABRSM at the age of 15 followed closely by a distinction at LRSM level when he was just 16 years old.

Such was the impression he made that he is clearly remembered, five years on, by one of the visiting ABRSM examiners from his LRSM exam. UK examiner Christopher Seed has just been back in New Zealand on his second tour of examining here. Chris clearly remembers Eddie and indeed remembers thinking at the time “If that’s the standard in this country then it’s going to be a very good tour!”

Eddie has gone on to share his music with various audiences in Auckland including tutoring for the APO’s Sistema Aotearoa programme in South Auckland and performing both solo and as an accompanist.

Recent highlights include a third placing in the inaugural Wallace National Piano Competition, performing Grieg Piano Concerto with the Auckland Symphony Orchestra and the Bach D minor Triple Harpsichord Concerto at the Town Hall. Other performances include Beethoven Concerto No. 1 with Bach Musica, J.S. Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 with St. Matthews Chamber Orchestra and the Chaikin Accordion Concerto at the New Zealand Accordion Championships.

Eddie gained 12th place in the Accordion World Championship in Shanghai, and is the current South Pacific and NZ Open champion on the accordion.

As for future plans? Eddie has auditions in the UK at the end of this year for further piano study overseas in 2015. We wish him all the best.
The Grade 1 journey continues…

Those of you who read these pages regularly will have followed the tale of ABRSM National Coordinator, Heather Gummer, who has been putting herself in the shoes of exam candidates by sitting Grade 1 exams every year on different instruments. Her row of certificates now includes viola, trombone, French horn, oboe and, as of a few weeks ago, harp. And yes, it was another distinction! Congratulations Heather on going above and beyond the call of duty!
Regional events

Christchurch News
Each year, one of our visiting examiners has the pleasure of acting as the adjudicator for the Ruby Hay Scholarship in Christchurch. The Scholarship is an annual award of $1,000 provided from the bequest of the late Miss Ruby Hay, and is made to the entrant who is considered to be the most worthy as a result of a 30-minute competitive solo pianoforte recital. This year’s event will take place on Friday 24 October at St Augustine’s Church. For further information please contact Virginia Rennie (vandmrennie@xtra.co.nz).

Calendar of Events
MENZA (Music Education New Zealand Aotearoa) hosts an online calendar of events that may be of interest to music teachers and students –www.menza.co.nz/calendar. The calendar includes conferences, workshops, concerts, and competitions, so it’s worth bookmarking the page and visiting regularly to see what is coming up in your area.

National IRMT Conference 2015
ABRSM is pleased to support the next conference of the Institute of Registered Music Teachers NZ which will be held in Wellington at the Comfort Hotel in Cuba Street. The conference will run from 15th to 18th January and is entitled “Lilburn and his Legacy: Fostering Musical Creativity”.

Information and contact details can be found at www.irmt.org.nz.

Did you know...

- You can sit an ABRSM exam in 93 countries.
- Women first became ABRSM examiners in 1962.
- The average age of ABRSM examiners is 52.

Heather Gummer
National Coordinator | heather@abrsm.org.nz | (09) 480 1200 x2

Carla Johnston
Assistant Administrator | carla@abrsm.org.nz | (09) 480 1200 x1