

**REPORT ON MAY MEETING.**

Speaker: Mrs Tania Phillips.

Topic: BlueScope Youth Orchestra.

Mrs Tania Phillips was appointed Manager of BlueScope Youth Orchestra in 1995 and over the last 17 years has accomplished major changes with the orchestra.

Some highlights during her early years was two journeys on the famous 3801 steam train to the south-west and west New South Wales where the orchestra played during the train stops on the station platforms. These informal sessions were well received by the passengers and locals alike. Following these trips a touring programme was organised to visit regional centres in Victoria and cities and towns in Tasmania and New Zealand. This programme turned out to be very successful.

In 2005, after the tsunami hit Indonesia, a special concert was organised to raise funds for the large number of orphans. The Sultan in Indonesia heard about this and invited the orchestra to play in his Compound. A great honour. The last westerners to be invited to the Sultan's Compound were Prince Charles and Princess Diana on their honeymoon in 1982. Alex Darling, then Lord Mayor, accompanied the orchestra. They all were served breakfast in the Compound. This first overseas trip was the start of regular overseas tours to Europe.

The first trip to Europe was to Spain in 2006. The first concert was held in Salamanca, west of Madrid, where they played for 1218 students at an orphanage and received a standing ovation. Then they travelled to the north of Spain, where the Basques live, whose music has a strong celtic influence due mainly to the immigration of the Irish many centuries ago. Ireland is not all that far from north Spain. Here they played at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao after a lot of problems were encountered as they were the first orchestra to hold a concert there. This apparently was a world first. Then they went to France where the orchestra played in a palace followed by a concert in Madeleine Cathedral.

A trip to Italy is planned for 2013. Let's hope that they have as great a success as on their previous trips.

The BlueScope Orchestra celebrated 25 years in 2011. Tania answered some questions from the members present. One concerned the number of boys and their ages. The ages run from 11 years to about 20. The number of boys making up an orchestra for an overseas trip is around 30 plus some adults. Controlling a group of about 35 people can be a headache, but nothing is worse to arrive at a destination to find that 40 pieces of luggage including instruments are not on the same aircraft.

Some of the boys have gone onto studying music at the Conservatory, not only in Wollongong but also in Sydney. From there they would take positions in large Australian orchestras or try their luck overseas. The discipline while a member of the BlueScope Youth Orchestra is a good grounding for future engagements in any profession they choose. Their knowledge of the world picked up during their travels at such an early age also makes them more mature.

In all, Tania's talk was fascinating and those present were taken in by it all. It is a different kind of export which should be more widely supported not only by BlueScope but by other organisations as well.