



• The Loosely Woven group performing at the Dungog Baptist Church Hall last Wednesday night.

# Wizardry? Absolutely!

By Ken Rubeli

We can all look back on a concert where we felt it a privilege to be in the audience. Was it Peter, Paul and Mary? Or INXS? Or Blood, Sweat and Tears? Or perhaps it was Caleb Skips Chemistry? And what about Loosely Woven at that incredible three-hour concert that had the audience spellbound in Dungog in April 2007?

Loosely woven.... Picture the humble Baptist Church Hall with every seat filled and a few standing at the

back. Picture, last Wednesday night, 30 musicians on the stage and filling the space across the front wall-to-wall. Picture the big presence of Sonia Bennett from Sydney (whose voice could fill an opera house) belting out "I Ain't Gonna Marry" with the line to silence all diet-followers: Big fat mama with the meat shakin' off her bones, Every time she shimmy, babe, the skinny women weep and moan! Picture a string quartet on

that little stage bringing the audience almost to tears with the soulfulness of the Scottish-style lament "Ashokan Farewell". Picture a whole hall-full of people, with every instrument hushed, singing in multi-level harmony the slow, spine-tingling chorus of "We Will Stand by the Shore". Picture an audience pinned to their seats at the confrontation of "I Ain't Afraid" shouted out by Loosely Woven leader Wayne Humphries in a passionate argument

against war in the name of religion. So was it worth a \$5 donation for the Cancer Council and the repair of the Dungog High School piano? That's the way it is for Loosely Woven - they do it all for nothing and they help the places where they perform. Not only that, but they involve local performers too. Ask Kerry Hile, or Helen Rubeli or Liz Stuckings if they'll remember for a while the experience, in a full hall, of singing sweet harmonies

backed by the Dungog Warblers in full blast, and Georgina Clark how it feels to sing descant with Liz the unaccompanied verses of "Stand By The Shore" with a hundred people raising the roof in the choruses. What an opportunity!

Add to all that some slapstick theatrics, some dressing up and buffoonery, and dazzling instrumental support from guitars, a harp, flute, recorders, tin whistle, djembe drums, accordion, concertina, piano, fiddles, string base, two cellos and even the spoons: an astonishingly rich night's entertainment.

Will Loosely Woven be back? Well they had a hugely enjoyable night themselves, loved Dungog and the warmth of hospitality here, and just might be begging to return. And while the Baptist Church Hall was the perfect venue this year, the word will get around and next year Loosely Woven will surely fill the James Theatre. Just imagine the power of those a capella choruses then!

This year's concert raised more than \$600. Big thanks to Pauline Cambourne who set the ball rolling for the Loosely Woven visit, and to Helen Rubeli who pumped the Warblers up to standard.

Together they were the driving force behind the success of the whole event. Bravo! And we'll see you at Loosely Woven next year, won't we?

Oh, by the way, thinking of special memories of concerts.... Some time in the future when we have a new pantheon of internationally famous singers and rock bands there'll be doddery old members of Loosely Woven who'll say "Caleb Skips Chemistry?"

Oh we remember them when they were starting out. They were in the audience when we played Dungog in 2007!