

An excerpt from the May 2007 edition of the Yamba Historical Museum's Newsletter:

LOOSELY WOVEN - BUT TIGHTLY KNIT

When you're invited to a concert and told that entry is by donation, you don't have high expectations. But how wrong we were! The concert at the Golf Club on Sunday April 15 by a group called Loosely Woven was one of the finest performances to come to Yamba in many years.

Loosely Woven is a group of musicians based in Sydney's Northern Beaches who organise and perform free acoustic concerts each year - just for the fun of it! They accept no payment or expenses, but instead provide a community group (in this case, PYHS) with a fund-raiser, as well as a thoroughly memorable concert. Much of their material is original, and all of it (apart from the keyboard) is acoustic. As their compere Wayne Richmond says, we have become so used to hearing entertainment transmitted through the membranes of a loudspeaker that we have forgotten the pleasure of hearing vocal cords vibrate, woodwinds resonate and strings quiver.

Loosely Woven is an ad hoc group - its membership is constantly changing according to who is available and where they're heading. (For instance on this tour they had locals from Dungog, Tamworth and Grafton as well as Dorothy Collins' son Kevin Murray and his wife Glenys and her daughter Helen Tucker - and a cameo performance from Dorothy herself.) Yet their professionalism meant that after just one afternoon rehearsal they could perform superbly as a tightly knit group.

Because they are an acoustic group there is often a 'folky' and ethnic feel to their music - from Ian and Sylvia's "four Strong Winds" to the traditional American "the Barnyard Song" and the haunting South African "Senzenina". We also had some traditional Irish fiddling with "The King of the Fairies" and "the Wind that Shakes the Barley", and a wonderfully slapstick "Gendarmes' Duet".

But for us the highlights were the original compositions. Years ago Gary knew a poet called Denis Kevin's who lived in the Blue Mountains and called himself Australia's 'Poet Lorikeet'. Sadly Denis died in 2005, but his partner Sonia Bennett, who set some of his poems to music, is a member of Loosely Woven, and she performed several of his songs with great power and passion, notably "Wollemi Pine" and "The Valley of the Waters". Another member, Ian Hamilton, set Henry Lawson's "Break O' Day" to music and brought it to life with his sensitive performance of it.

There was a strong Yamba connection too. Clyde Collins' "I Love Iluka" was performed by a duo including Dorothy's daughter Helen, and Dorothy's daughter-in-law Glenys sang the beautiful "Last Tree on Rapa Nui" written by Dorothy's son Kevin. But the show-stopper was a recitation by Dorothy herself of "Rindercella", a clever (and demanding!) retelling of the Cinderella story featuring multiple 'spoonerisms'. Who will ever forget Rindercella "slopping her dripper"? Bravo Dorothy!!

Contributed by Gary and Barbara Whale