

Our Albert Hall's 82nd Birthday (and its future)

On 10 March 2010, Canberrans enjoyed a night of free entertainment and lively discussion in celebration of the Albert Hall's 82nd birthday. The evening, hosted by Friends of the Albert Hall Inc in partnership with the ACT Property Group and the National Trust (ACT), began with quiet jazz by the *Sax and the City* followed by the energetic and fun *Jumptown Jammers*.



Jumptown Jammers in full flight

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society presented an elegant and graceful dance display to wistful wind instruments played by Linda and Gary Lieberman, visiting from Ames, Iowa. The *Dolphin Reel* was especially well-received.



Dolphin Reel – RSCDS Canberra

The dancers were followed by the delightful and haunting music of *COZMO*'s 10-piece mandolin orchestra,

which includes several MFS members: Col Bernau, Lea O'Brien, Di Cross, and Kate and Mary Firkins.

The evening moved to a panel session chaired by Peter Lundy, RFD, President of The Friends – with speakers being Peter Lundy RFD, Eric Martin AM, President of the National Trust (ACT), Dr Lenore Colheart, well-known local historian and Vice-President of The Friends, and David Dawes, Chief Executive, Department of Land and Property Services, who spoke about the Hall's refurbishment and the statutory Plan of Management.

Mr Dawes outlined the ACT government's three objectives for the Plan and emphasized that government saw Albert Hall as an important community asset. He gave a welcome commitment to extensive public consultation on the Plan and said he hoped it would be drafted by year's end although it to get it right might take longer. He indicated the Plan would need to address changed demand and while the government would not "throw out" old uses it would be looking for new ones to meet demand. There were comments and questions to ACT officials about water damage, the painting finish and workmanship, hand rails, curtains, acoustics, adjoining public car park, public liability insurance, financial treatment of the Hall, the concept of "adaptive reuse" of the Hall, consultants' qualifications and relevant parcel of public land.

After the panel the Hall was filled with the magnificent sound of the Compton pipe organ of the Theatre Organ Society (ACT) – the first time it had been played publicly in 10 years – and a very special treat. (See front cover.)

For logistical reasons the performers had been chosen for their ability to play acoustically, without needing a PA system. This had an interesting effect –



COZMO

there was widespread comment on how good were the acoustics of the Hall, with the saxophone quartet and *COZMO* being heard clearly throughout the auditorium. (Exceptions to the full acoustic mode were the *Jumptown* dancers who needed recorded "big band" music, *COZMO*'s bass guitarist,



The Panel

and the Scottish wind instrumentalists, all of whom used a mini-PA.)

There was another feature of the Hall that attracted much praise – the beautiful fan-topped multi-pane windows. Because the curtains are down for restoration, the windows were seen in all their naked glory (see RSCDS photo) and the Autumn evening light through them was spectacular.

A "then and now" photographic display provided by ACT Property Group was also a highlight of the night. A great night was had by all!

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped set up the Hall and later clear it, including MFS members Allen Bills and Alan Johnson, and Colin Towns who MC'd the entertainment. More photos are on www.ouralberthall.com

Di Johnstone & John Carroll
Photos: John Carroll