

News

Rakaia river inspires composer

By Elfreda Gers

An emerging North Shore composer was given the opportunity to showcase his music on a grand scale earlier this month.

Rakaia, a work by Ryan Youens, was premiered by the Auckland Symphony Orchestra on August 5.

Youens's inspiration for the piece came from driving over the Rakaia River bridge regularly.

"It made me think, 'Gosh, this is an awesome river. I've got to write something about the Rakaia'."

He says his music depicts the river's 150km journey on a stormy day from its origins in the Southern Alps to the Pacific Ocean.

The 24-year-old was asked to write a piece by the orchestra's conductor, Gary Daverne.

"I wanted a piece of music that fitted with a river theme," he says.

"It needed to incorporate a lot of percussion and had to be between four and five minutes long."

Youens had only three weeks to compose the piece. "There

were a few sleepless nights, but I got there in the end."

The orchestra initially struggled with the difficult piece.

"We don't play a lot of new music," says Daverne. "But once they came to terms with it, they enjoyed it."

Feedback has been positive. "The audience loved it," says Daverne.

"One woman came up to me saying she had tears in her eyes, it was so beautiful."

Youens has also received a steady stream of comments since the performances.

Composition lecturer at the University of Otago Anthony Ritchie says although Youens's style was initially conservative, he was willing to try new things and managed to branch out considerably.

Ritchie has high praise for Youens.

"Ryan has a passion for his work which marks him out as a real composer and not just a dabbler."

Daverne agrees.

"He can work with the orchestra and tell them what he has in mind.

"He's very talented."

Charity bookstore goes global

By Elizabeth Allan



PHOTO: AMY CAMPBELL

An online bookstore that gives 100 per cent of its profits to charity is set to go global after a successful first year in New Zealand.

All proceeds from Good Books go to Oxfam, an international agency that combats poverty and provides disaster relief.

Good Books founder and managing director Jane Cherrington says her sights are firmly set on the international stage as the brand approaches its first birthday.

"We're going to have multiple languages and currencies and an international domain name," she says.

Oxfam relationships manager Kathryn Beckett says Good Books "could go huge".

But it has taken a while for people to understand all the profits go to the charity, she says.

"People need to see or hear about it a few times before they take it on board - they think it sounds too good to be true."

Dr Cherrington gave up her job as a business consultant to run Good Books and now has a team of five project-based volunteers.

With distribution companies in the UK and US, Good Books currently has more than two million titles.

Dr Cherrington says she chose Oxfam over other charities because it focuses on sustainable development in communities.

IN THE GOOD BOOKS: Dr Jane Cherrington.

New research shows coffee is healthy

By Chloe De Ridder

Contrary to what some people may believe, coffee is good for you, according to a new study.

Food researchers from the Agriculture and Life Sciences Division at Lincoln University conducted research on various commercial coffee drinks over three months.

They found the drinks con-

tained several compounds known to have antioxidant properties.

Project leader Alaa El-Din Bekhit says the key finding of the research was the health benefits coffee can have.

"Coffee is a very important source of antioxidants."

Antioxidants are an important part of our diet, supplementing our daily needs and optimising our health, he says.

"We drink coffee on a regular basis.

"It's part of our daily activity and it's important to know what is contributing to our health."

Although the study shows the health benefits of coffee, Dr Bekhit says there are good and bad sides to it.

"Caffeine can still be a burden on the nervous system," he says. "Moderation is the key."



PHOTO: NEW ZEALAND COFFEE FESTIVAL

FRESHLY BREWED: A silver fern on a cafe latte made at the New Zealand Coffee Festival.

Coffee festival brews winning baristas

By Caralise Moore

The New Zealand Coffee Festival set the stage for awards and competitions last weekend.

The familiar aroma of coffee beans permeated the Alinghi Base at the Viaduct Harbour, where the Latte Art Competition, the Trans-Tasman Barista Challenge and the New Zealand Coffee Awards were held.

Manawatu barista Andrew Feldon won the 2007 Latte Art Competition.

He had to make a cappuccino, cafe latte, cafe macchiato and one designer beverage of his choice in five minutes.

A panel of judges awarded marks to coffees with good taste, speed of preparation and latte art.

Feldon, who runs a coffee cart on the side of SH1 in Sanson, took home a \$2000 prize.

Event organiser and *Cafe Magazine* editor Michael Guy says: "He was within time and obviously impressed the judges."

"Hopefully next year we can send the winner to the World Barista Championships. But we still have a few things to do before then."

A cocktail event on Saturday night was dedicated to announcing New Zealand's finest coffee roasters and blends.

More than 200 blends of coffee were judged by a team of 11 international and local coffee experts.

The supreme award for the highest scoring coffee went to Toasted Espresso on Auckland's North Shore.

The Da Vinci Trans-Tasman Barista Challenge hit the main stage of the festival on Sunday, when the Cafetto Black Cups took on the Australian Baristaros.

Teams had to produce 10 piccolo lattes, 10 regular cafe lattes and 10 designer lattes in 15 minutes.

The Baristaros took out both heats but the Black Cups have another chance to even the scores in Adelaide later this year.

"In the first round the Aussies were clearly winners, but the second one was pretty close," says Guy.

The fourth such annual event highlighted New Zealand's growing cafe culture.

"We were over the moon about the turnout. On Saturday we reached capacity," says Guy.

"Next year we will need more coffee roasters there to cope with the crowd."

"New Zealand has 150 roasters, the highest number of roasters per head of population in the world. It shows we are passionate about it."