

# Life - Death – Life

## Joy Conolly

### Brilliant music to shepherd the process

Inspiration, love and brilliant musicianship combined recently in the seamless joining of the aesthetic, spiritual, psychological, environmental and physical spheres at a Rainforest Concert performed at Chillingham in the hinterland of Murwillumbah.

The sudden and untimely death of Ian Oliver led his wife of twenty two years, Hilary Langford, to wonder how she could create a suitable memorial to her gentle, private and compassionate partner who was fiercely protective of the environment. Not long before Ian's death they had purchased 93 acres at Limpinwood in the Tweed Valley with the intention of re planting the area with rainforest trees. This was something he and Hilary had already done on their 21 acre property at Chillingham. Their dream was to restore their new property to its natural habitat. These recently acquired acres at Limpinwood, named after Richard Wood whose job consisted of harvesting the local cedar trees and who walked with a limp, hence the name Limpinwood, was to form part of an animal corridor between Limpinwood Nature Reserve and Wollumbin National Park.

However, faced with the trauma of his loss, and her need to continue her working life, Hilary felt the task ahead of her to carry out their dream, to be daunting both physically and financially. Carmel Kaine, Professor of Violin at Queensland Conservatorium of Music, who has a country house in Limpinwood, attended a service to commemorate Ian's life. At this service, Chillingham residents and others offered to carry on the Rainforest Project and Carmel asked Hilary if she would like a fund raising concert to purchase the many trees needed for their dream to come to fruition.

Carmel's daughter Katharine plays the bassoon and is a member of the Linos Wind Quintet which is becoming widely recognised as one of the leading young British ensembles of its kind. The name 'Linos' was taken from the son of Apollo who was credited with the invention of harmony and rhythm. They were due in Australia to play at the Tyalgum Music Festival in September.

The quintet is comprised of five young musicians, all multi award winners in their own right as well as many achievements as a group:

Juliette Bausor, flute  
Daniel Bates, oboe  
Christopher Richards, clarinet  
Katharine Willison, bassoon and  
Richard Steggall, French horn.

They formed the quintet in 2001 whilst they were studying at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. The ensemble won the Ivan Sutton Chamber Music Prize which was shortly followed by a tour to Milan. The quintet performs regularly around Britain and abroad. Recent performances include an evening recital for the City Music Society in the Goldsmiths' Hall, as well as recitals in the Rye Festival, the Adur Festival and the Polesden Lacey Festival. Other engagements include a concert in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust and a recital for the Musicians Against Nuclear Arms.

It was at the Teenage Cancer Trust concert that others, including Carmel Kaine, Katharine Willison's mother, joined them and where they played the Schubert Octet. The experience was so thrilling that Christopher Richards, clarinetist from the Linos Quintet, suggested it would be great to repeat it all again in Australia. Thus were the embryonic beginnings of the Rainforest Concert featuring the Linos Wind Quintet and augmented by the Limpinwood ensemble, Carmel Kaine and John Willison on violins (parents of Katharine), John Curro, viola and his son, Daniel Curro, on cello. John was an original member of Limpinwood Ensemble which was formed by Carmel and John shortly after they moved there from England in 1990. The ensemble was very successful and led to them suggesting an annual festival and so the Tyalgum Music Festival was born and has been both well attended and lauded ever since. The Linos Wind Quintet were guests at the 2003 festival and were sponsored by the support of ABN AMRO Bank, The Vandervell Foundation and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Initially it was thought to hold the Rainforest Concert in Hilary's wondrous home amid breathtaking 360 degree views of the Numinbar Valley, Springbrook escarpment, Lamington National Park escarpment and Mt. Warning. As well, her home is among over 5000 newly planted rainforest trees and perched high overlooking the small community of Chillingham. Invitations were issued with no real expectation of the amazing response. However, it was soon clear that the numbers wanting to attend would not physically fit into Hilary's home (to say nothing of how cars could negotiate the steeply curved road after dark and manage to park clinging to the side of the mountain). To avoid disappointment the venue was changed to the Chillingham local community hall.

For those unfamiliar with the area, Chillingham is a 20 minute drive through beautiful countryside, west from Murwillumbah in northern New South Wales. Although the surrounding area is vast, the township itself boasts two stores and sixty houses and the residents have set an example of how small communities can support and encourage

each other. The local hall used for most community gatherings has never before hosted a classical musical event. And how that hall responded with acoustics to die for! Built of the hardwood from the nearby area and milled locally (perhaps felled by 'Hopping Dick' as he was affectionately known). It is the least likely looking venue for such musical brilliance as was produced that night.

During the day volunteers scouted around collecting chairs as the hall only owns seating for 35 people and it was estimated that approximately 100 would be attending. Huge sprays of flowers, leaves, and palm fronds coupled with three cloth hangings of rainforest scenes were hung behind the players. Two large candelabras each with many lit candles graced the 'stage' and the room was transformed. The musicians did not perform on the usual stage but rather on the floor of the hall with the audience in a surrounding semicircles thus, in one stroke, adding to the feeling of participation and intimacy.

The program for the concert was a Mozart *Flute Quartet*, Finzi *Oboe Quintet* and the Schubert *Octet*. To say the audience was enraptured is an understatement. Some magic happened that night which had to be experienced to be believed. The musicians were all brilliant and donated their time to the fund set up to buy rainforest trees in Ian's memory.

As a special surprise to a member of the audience, Gerard Brophy, a Brisbane based internationally respected composer, the Linos quintet also played his composition *Choro pra Linus*, a work commissioned by the Tyalgum festival which was held the weekend just prior to the Rainforest concert. The audience was not satisfied with one encore. To placate their insistence, the Quintet played The Charleston from Norman Hallam's *Dance Suite* which was a wonderfully fitting finale. Australian audiences are often reluctant to confer a standing ovation but this audience rose en masse for a rousing applause almost lifting the tin roof of the 'concert' hall.

Supper at interval was supplied by the many excellent cooks in the area and was fit for royalty. Without a doubt an excellent evening for all those lucky enough to be there. What better way could there be to raise over \$3000 than experiencing wonderful music brilliantly performed. All funds raised will be spent on rainforest trees. Two planting days were planned, one has already happened with many arriving with spades, shovels and a much needed mechanical auger. The day was a huge success with lots of laughter supplying a different kind of music to encourage and support the planters.

From the very first, the project has been altogether inspired and the trees will be helping us breathe for many generations to come, to say nothing of the animals who will be able to move from one national park to another through the corridor this property provides. The augmented chorus of birds, nature's music, will ring throughout the valley.

At a time when the world is becoming increasingly de-personalized it was a privilege to be involved in such a venture and to witness the workings of a small community. How excellent it would be if this idea could become one of our ways of resolving grief while at the same time returning Australia to some of its former glory. Truly a seamless joining of all the realms that go into making our cyclical journey through this complex but wondrous life.

**Joy Conolly is a psychologist in private practice. The death of her second husband five years ago led her to learning music for the first time, which has turned around her life. Currently she is playing the clarinet and singing with groups as well as researching the psychological and health benefits of music making.**

#### PULL QUOTE

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