

MONASH UNIVERSITY NEWS

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Boost for public health

By DAVID BRUCE

A core group of leading Victorian public health research organisations is harnessing the power of its combined skills in research, education and policy to drive the development of health care in Australia.

The new Monash Institute of Public Health and Health Services Research, jointly established by Monash University and the Southern Health Care Network, will draw together five major hospitals, six community health centres, numerous general practices as well as Monash over an area populated by more than one million people.

The institute, which will be located at the Monash Medical Centre in

Clayton, aims to link a number of organisations with complementary strengths, skills and expertise to create an environment where leading public health researchers can exchange ideas and share facilities.

"I hope we can drive the agenda on public health, and health services research, in Australia well into the 21st century."

One of Australia's leading public health researchers, Professor Christopher Silagy, has been appointed director of the new institute. Formerly head of the

Department of Evidence-Based Care and General Practice at Flinders Medical Centre in South Australia, he took up his appointment at the institute this month.

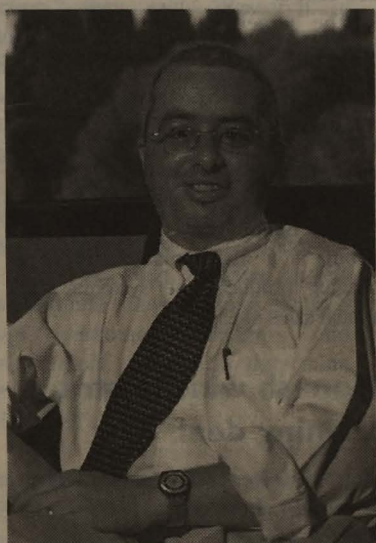
According to Professor Silagy, the organisation and delivery of public health care both in Australia and internationally is undergoing rapid change.

"Increasingly, we are being made aware that we live in an environment where both the demands for health care and the costs of health care are increasing. More and more, the emphasis is being placed on keeping the population healthy and minimising the risk and harm caused by illness, accidents or lifestyle," he said.

"In addition, our large hospitals are being seen as short-stay, high-technology facilities, where patients spend the minimum time before having the remainder of their care delivered in general practices or community health centres. We need to develop effective and efficient ways of providing high-quality services in such an environment.

"There is a great need for national debate and creative solutions to these issues. The establishment of the institute will create a critical mass of intellect and expertise from a broad range of public health and health service researchers. I hope we can drive the agenda on public health, and health services research, in Australia well into the 21st century."

As well, the institute will play a key role in the development of undergraduate and postgraduate medical programs at Monash University and internationally. It will also provide advice to governments on public health and health services policy.



Professor Christopher Silagy: Looking for creative solutions in public health.

Music has no borders

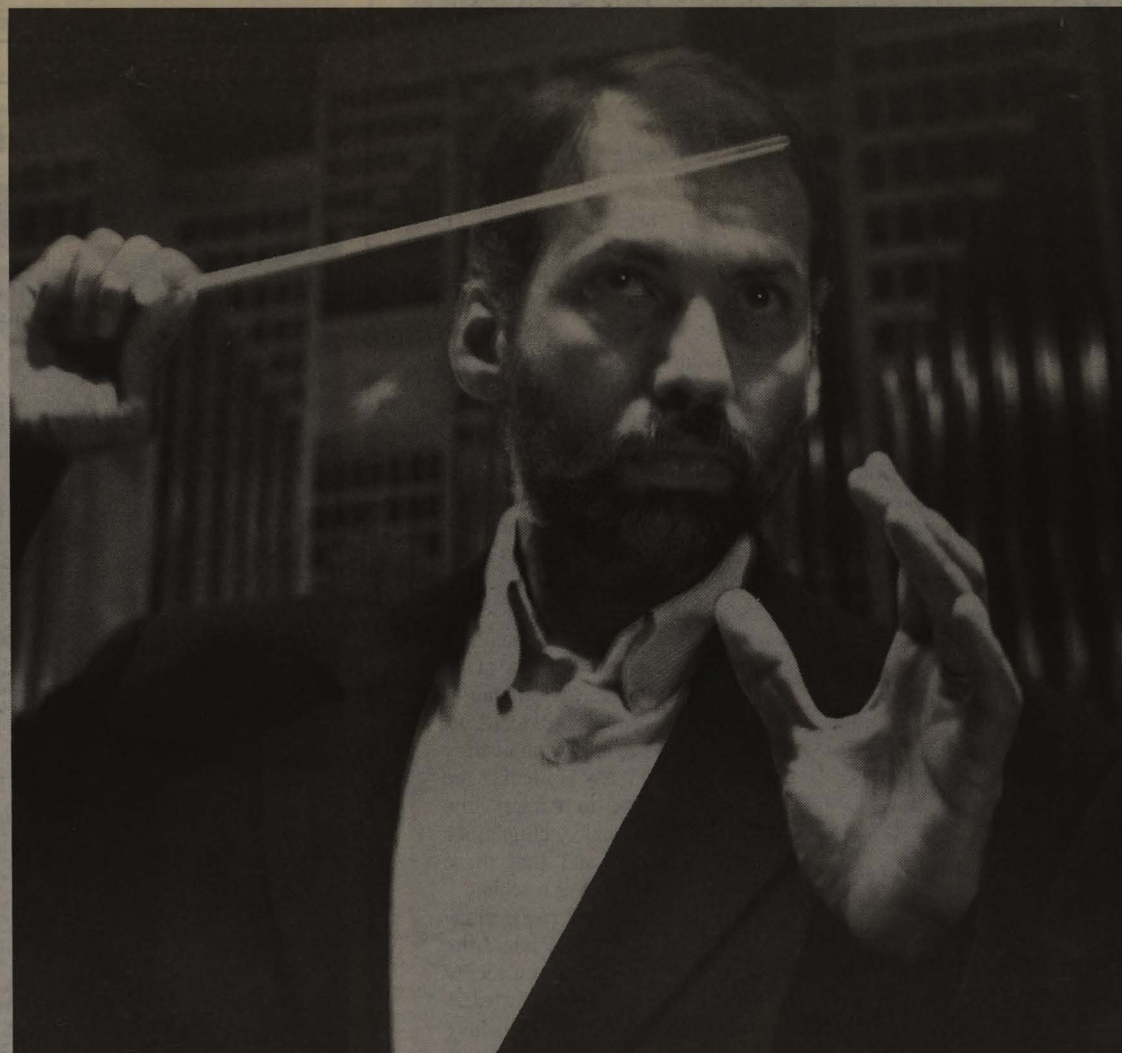


Photo by Rhonda Joyce

By COREY NASSAU

While English is sometimes referred to as the global language, it appears the language of music is more than qualified to join its ranks.

Monash University senior lecturer Andre de Quadros recently had the honour of conducting the Moscow Radio Symphony

Orchestra as part of its 'Music has no borders' series.

The one-night performance, which was broadcast internationally by Radio Russia, is likely to be followed by a CD release jointly sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Monash University.

Mr de Quadros said few academics had had the opportunity to work with a major European orchestra of this calibre.

"One of the most exciting things about conducting overseas is getting the chance to work with an orchestra where a communication barrier exists with the spoken word but not with the music," he said.

Mr de Quadros has also conducted chamber, string and symphony orchestras and choirs in India, Belgium, the UK, Scandinavia, Canada, the US, Germany and Indonesia.

The core groups of the institute:

Monash University

- Centre for Population Health Research, led by Professor Kerin O'Dea
- Centre for Medical Informatics, led by Associate Professor Branko Cesnik
- The Health Economics Unit, led by Professor Jeff Richardson
- Centre for Graduate Studies in Clinical Nursing, led by Ms Anne Nolan

Southern Health Care Network

- Centre for Clinical Effectiveness led by Associate Professor Jeremy Anderson

Other participants

- Monash University's Institute of Reproduction and Development
- Monash University Accident Research Centre

Teaching values – what makes an outstanding teacher?

Computer science lecturer at Monash University Professor Angela Carbone is the recent winner of the Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year Award. Here she explains why good teaching is much more than simply imparting facts.

OPINION

More than 3000 students entered a national competition in which they had to describe, in 25 words or less, "What makes a good university teacher?".

According to the winner, Tim Harrington, "A good university teacher is one who, after decades of education and years of experience, knows better than ever that they are still a student". Although this coincides with my own teaching values, I would go a step further and say that an effective teacher must also inspire good learning.

Good learning involves making links between items of knowledge and the real world, and making multiple links between different aspects of the course. Good university teachers assist students in their learning by creating an environment of trust, where students can interact with their peers so that their misconceptions can be addressed as early as possible.

Good teachers ensure that students of all abilities are stimulated to learn and that their learning goes beyond memorising. They help students construct their understanding by building on the knowledge they bring into learning situations. And they work at enhancing understanding by actively engaging students in the material, developing in each student a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

Good teaching requires an awareness of, and a sensitivity to, the needs of all students. This awareness is usually achieved through good questioning techniques, limitless patience and active listening. Often good teachers extend their teaching concerns beyond the classroom, initiating improvements to the broader curriculum, with a constant review and evaluation of the effectiveness of their methods, products and schemes.

For me, this has led to career-long research, investigation of sensitive issues, and a continual engagement in scholarly activities to disseminate innovations and insights that promote quality learning outcomes.

How do teachers search for ideas and inspiration? A good starting point for new teachers might include a graduate certificate in higher education. This type of course has been introduced by the Centre for Higher Education Development at Monash and is designed to assist university teachers to develop their understandings of student learning, and to acquire knowledge and skills to advance their professional teaching practice.

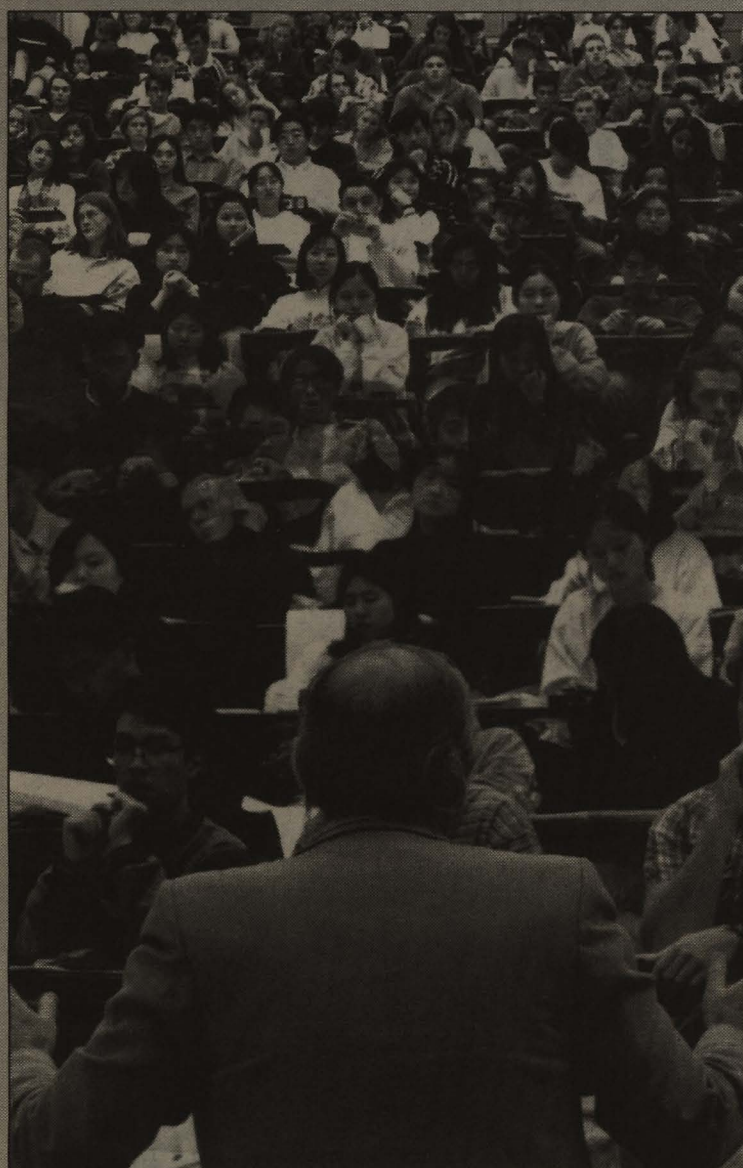


Photo by Richard Crompton

Another way is to stay in touch with the students. Apart from the informal discussions I have with my students about the course and my teaching, I use the Monash Questionnaire Series on Teaching to look for ideas to improve my teaching.

Collaboration is also very useful. Academics often collaborate with colleagues and experts in their field of research, and teaching should not be any different. In 1995, academics in Monash's Faculty of Information Technology collaborated with academics in the Faculty of Education to improve the quality of teaching and student learning in introductory programming. This collaboration, which involved working closely with the students, the tutors and the lecturers, led to a number of initiatives.

"The biggest challenge ... is to produce quality teaching while maintaining high-quality research."

Joining professional educational organisations in their teaching discipline is another way to keep the ideas flowing. Last year, Monash's School of Computer Science and Software Engineering established the Computing Education Research Group. This group is working towards producing a set of teaching resources for Java programming to be used across many subjects, independent of delivery mode. Most members belong to professional

educational organisations in IT, such as the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education, Australasian Computer Science Education, and the Association for the Advancement of Computer Education.

Participating in conferences and working parties that discuss ways and implement plans to improve student learning is also helpful. Monash University has developed a five-year plan titled *Leading the Way*. Part of the plan includes the Learning and Teaching Operational Plan, in which many academics are active members in various working parties. One of the working parties involves building a database of new educational technologies that are being applied in tertiary teaching. I hope many academics tap into the database to explore the possible educational technologies available to them, and that these technologies inspire their teaching.

With the increasing responsibilities expected from academics, the biggest challenge facing university academics is to produce quality teaching while maintaining high-quality research. Producing quality research usually takes priority because that is where the academic's interests lie. As well, promotion has usually been based on research output, even though this may go against the university's policy.

Achieving quality teaching will be particularly challenging for many university teachers as we step into an era in which academics are encouraged to use innovative approaches to teaching, and are rewarded on using new educational technologies to create a student-centred flexible learning environment.

BRIEFS

Agfa-Monash in new partnership

Monash University has signed an agreement with Agfa-Gevaert which will see the university become an international training centre for radiography.

Under a deal signed last month, the company will provide state-of-the-art equipment, including Agfa-developed technology, to Monash's Radiography and Medical Imaging department to equip it as a training and evaluation centre.

The agreement also involves the joint creation of a training course to be delivered by Monash.

As well, Agfa will offer scholarships and take part in joint marketing activities to promote the Monash programs in Australia and internationally.

The Belgium-based Agfa-Gevaert Group is a major manufacturer of imaging products and systems with annual sales of \$5 billion.

Monash wins Telstra training deal

Monash University has won a tender to provide short courses for Telstra staff this year.

The Centre for Telecommunication and Information Engineering, in the Engineering faculty, will run the courses in Sydney and Melbourne.

They will cover subjects ranging from data communications to Internet technology.

Summer is IT

Sixty Year 11 students gave up the beach last month to take part in the Monash IT summer school at the Clayton campus.

The students tackled projects ranging from improving the Met system and building web pages to designing interactive houses and playing the stock-market.

Unisys Australia is contributing \$200,000 over four years to the program, which is being run by Monash's Faculty of Information Technology.

The dean of Information Technology, Professor John Rosenberg, who attended via video conference from Israel, said taking up studies in IT was a student's ticket to "an international career".

Unisys believes the Monash summer school provides IT professionals of the future with an ideal opportunity to begin early training in the industry.

Mekong conference planned

Academics, politicians and senior bureaucrats from several nations will head to Canberra on 22 February for a conference on Asia's Mekong River region.

The Mekong Perspectives Conference has been organised by the Australian Mekong Research Network, a joint initiative of Monash and the Australian National University.

For more details, see the network's website at www.monash.edu.au/mai/mekong/mekong.htm

Get ready to take the plunge



Sink or swim – that's the message of the State Government around water this summer.

You're never too young to take the plunge, as this little swimmer, caught on camera recently at the Doug Ellis pool, is happy to demonstrate.

And tying in with the government's water safety campaign, the Monash University Sports and Recreation Association is continuing its successful Learn to Swim program over the summer months.

Swimming lessons are being held at the Doug Ellis Swimming Pool at the Clayton campus for children and adults of all abilities.

For more information, contact the swimming pool on (03) 9905 4113 or check the website at www.monash.edu.au/sra

Study shows career link

BY JOSIE GIBSON

Most students who enrol for women's studies courses see them as having a direct link to their career plans, according to new Monash University research.

And most of those questioned indicated that they would prefer mainstream employment to jobs in areas such as women's organisations.

The pilot survey of students enrolling in women's studies programs at Monash, Deakin and Otago universities was conducted by Dr Denise Cuthbert and Dr Maryanne Dever from Monash's Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research.

According to Dr Dever, the survey findings help dispel some of the myths about women's studies and perceptions of employability.

"We wanted to learn whether students viewed their enrolment in vocational terms and how directly they perceived the skills and knowledge gained through women's studies as relating to their career plans," she said.

The survey found that while most students enrolled out of personal interest and an interest in women's and gender issues, most perceived some link to career plans. A majority also placed significant emphasis on the transformative element of women's studies, pointing to its role in developing personal qualities such as self-confidence.

For Dr Cuthbert and Dr Dever, this was one of the survey's most interesting findings.

"It confirms our belief that women's studies helps students develop those all-important transferable skills like confidence, communication and interaction," they said. "Research in Australia and overseas suggests that these skills often play a bigger role in determining graduates' employment success than the knowledge gained through their majors."

The survey is the first phase of a longer-term project looking at women's studies, career plans and aspirations.

The next stage involves surveying and interviewing career counselors, personnel managers and recruitment officers to determine levels of awareness and acceptance of women's studies.

"Some students indicated that they expected to meet varying degrees of ignorance and hostility in the recruiting process," Dr Cuthbert and Dr Dever said. "So we need to find out more about what happens to our graduates in the process."

The project has sparked interest internationally. The researchers have already contributed to journals and books in Canada and the US and this semester will present papers in Europe and Hong Kong.

"The international interest is very timely because we're adding an international comparative strand to the research in 1999," they said.

Rescue response times cut in pilot program

Response times to cardiac arrest patients have been cut by about two minutes in the first three months of a pilot program involving Melbourne fire and ambulance services.

The six-month 'first responder' pilot program, introduced last July by the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board and the Metropolitan Ambulance Service, involves the simultaneous dispatch of paramedics and specially trained firefighters to cases of suspected cardiac arrest in Melbourne's eastern and south-eastern suburbs.

Monash University's Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, which has been assigned to assess the program, will now submit an evaluation of the pilot program to a steering committee, appointed by the Victorian Health Minister, Mr Rob Knowles, to oversee the project.

Professor John McNeil, of the Epidemiology department, said firefighters trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), oxygen therapy and semi-automatic external cardiac defibrillation responded along with ambulance to 149 cases of suspected cardiac arrest in the first three months of the pilot program. Defibrillation aims to restore a regular heartbeat in patients who suffer cardiac arrest.

Firefighters were first on the scene in 53 per cent (79) of the cases, with

ambulance paramedics arriving first or simultaneously in 70 cases. Professor McNeil said the two organisations were working well together.

"In the first three months, firefighters were not required to defibrillate a patient; however, they provided oxygen therapy to 30 per cent of the patients, and in 17 per cent of cases they provided oxygen therapy and CPR, plus cardiac monitoring with the defibrillator," he said.

"As a result, the condition of a number of patients improved, and follow-up is progressing to determine whether there has been any resulting improvement in health outcome."

Early results of the study have revealed that delays in summoning emergency services to collapsed patients are relatively common.

"This emphasises the importance of the first steps in the Chain of Survival (early access to ambulance via 000 and early CPR) to give patients the best chance of surviving cardiac arrest," Professor McNeil said.

He said it was too early and the numbers were too small to draw any significant conclusions. "However, the interim results do suggest people are not identifying the heart attack quickly enough and are not accessing 000 quickly enough for the medical help to arrive in time to be effective."

Monash wins world debating title

BY FIONA PERRY

Monash debaters Meg O'Sullivan and Andrew Phillips were uncharacteristically silent when they were declared winners of the recent 19th World Universities Debating Championships.

According to Phillips, the pair couldn't believe they had won.

"Due to the enormity of the event, you tend to lose your sense of objectivity, so we really didn't think we'd won, particularly as we were arguing against our own personal viewpoints in the grand final," he said. "When the results were given, we were in a state of disbelief for some time."

O'Sullivan and Phillips crushed teams from Oxford University and the University of Sydney in the grand final of the prestigious event, held last month in Manila.

It is the first time Monash University – or any Victorian university – has won the world title.

Competing against a field of 200 teams from 100 universities in 40 countries, the Monash duo fought their way through nine rounds of preliminary debates and three finals to reach the grand final.

They had only 15 minutes to prepare a debate against the motion "That this house believes that Netanyahu is the enemy of the peace process".

The hour-long debate, televised live in the Philippines, was opened by President Joseph Estrada.

At a presentation ceremony, the Monash duo was presented with a three-foot carved wooden statue by the Philippine Opposition Leader.



Photo by Elizabeth Dias

Savouring victory: Meg O'Sullivan and Andrew Phillips with their world championship trophy. The Monash duo defeated teams from Oxford University and the University of Sydney to take the title, the first time Monash – or any Victorian university – has won the event.

The victory was doubly sweet for Meg O'Sullivan, who had never debated competitively before and had only taken up debating three years ago when she began her studies at Monash.

"Before the final we were both really nervous, but there was an amazing sense of calm that descended on us about 20 minutes before the motion was released," she said.

"It was enjoyable ultimately, and we felt that we'd done a lot of hard work to get to the grand final. It was a real honour to be speaking in front of all our peers and a couple of hundred people from the international community."

Andrew Phillips was a member of a Monash team which won the prestigious Edinburgh Intervarsity Tournament last year and reached the semi-finals of the 1998 world championships.

In true Monash Debating Club style, the pair is keen to share their world championship experiences with

the younger, less experienced members of the club when it resumes this year.

According to O'Sullivan, she and Phillips partly owe their success to the atmosphere of "love and nurturing" that exists in the club.

"The club runs an extensive training program, where the emphasis is on having fun and learning, not on winning," she said. "Experienced and non-experienced debaters are paired up so that younger debaters can learn from their peers."

Monash has a strong debating tradition, with teams reaching the finals of the world championships for the past four years and winning the Australasian titles over three consecutive years.

Phillips said the Monash team would defend their world championship title next year, "purely for the joy of debating".

Experts link on Net lab

BY DEREK BROWN

A Monash University academic has joined his international colleagues in creating a virtual laboratory on the Internet.

Dr Jacek Stecki, from the Department of Mechanical Engineering, created the virtual lab as a marketing tool for the larger Internet project, Fluid Power Net International (FPNI).

FPNI was formed in 1997 by Dr Stecki and his overseas colleagues as a forum for sharing ideas and discussing recent developments in the field of fluid power. Fluid power is concerned with providing power control for machinery such as earth-moving equipment, aeroplanes and robotics.

More than 18 countries are now members of the website project, which also provides links to professional journals, seminars and workshops.

The virtual lab, which forms part of the larger FPNI web site, will conduct projects in the field of fluid power on behalf of global companies and organisations that use the resources and staff of FPNI member organisations.

According to Dr Stecki, the virtual laboratory has enabled a dispersed group of similar organisations to become more competitive

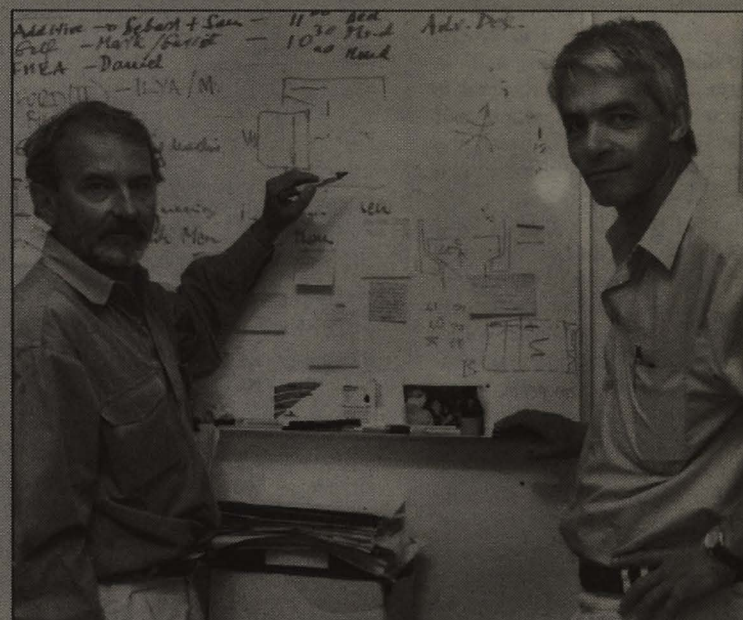


Photo by Rhonda Joyce

Virtual reality: FPNI member Associate Professor Mads Græhl-Madsen, right, from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, confers with Dr Jacek Stecki at Monash's Clayton campus.

and efficient by offering their combined expertise and resources to industry clients from around the globe.

"In our field, there are a number of small laboratories with limited resources. The idea was to combine these smaller laboratories to get a critical mass of people and research in order to compete with larger organisations for projects," he said.

"Using the virtual laboratory, we can also split up large projects between the FPNI members, with each doing a portion of the work simultaneously. We also wanted to push the technology forward, and to do this we needed a place where academics, industry and postgraduate students could talk together."

The virtual laboratory can be found at <http://fluid.power.net>

Music history in the making – the Indonesian connection

By BRENDA HARKNESS

When musicologist Professor Margaret Kartomi encountered the Gamelan Digul, she knew it was rare, but never imagined the extent of its historic significance.

Since this strange collection of Javanese instruments, which is actually a traditional Indonesian orchestra or 'gamelan', was transferred into her care at Monash University more than 20 years ago, she has traced its origins to a New Guinean prisoner-of-war camp and uncovered its Australian link.

"Now that we know more about its history, the Gamelan Digul has become as much a historic symbol as a rare and important collection of musical instruments," said Professor Kartomi, a researcher in Monash's Music department, where the mysterious gamelan has been archived since 1977.

"There are many gamelans in existence in areas practising Javanese musical traditions in Indonesia and Malaysia, including a contemporary one housed at Monash, but the Gamelan Digul is the only one of its kind in the world that we know about. It is both a monument to Indonesia's heroic and revolutionary fight for independence during the 1920s and up until the end of 1949 and a potent symbol of the friendship forged between Indonesians and Australians at the time."

As a result of Professor Kartomi's work, the Music department has secured funding from the Australia-Indonesia Institute, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, to conserve and exhibit the 70-year-old Gamelan Digul.

In partnership with colleagues from the University of Melbourne as well as Indonesian and Australian gamelan experts, a research team led by Professor Kartomi will restore the wood, metal and paintwork of the 19 gamelan instruments and stabilise and strengthen their fragile parts.

Once the gamelan is restored, the team plans to exhibit it in several Australian capital cities and in Jakarta. And Professor Kartomi is documenting its restoration and history in a major study, which she hopes to publish this year through the Indonesian Arts Society.

In what reads like a script for a movie, the story of the Gamelan Digul began in 1977, when the Museum of Victoria called upon Professor Kartomi to identify the unusual collection of handmade musical instruments found in its basement.

A noted musicologist and Indonesia specialist, Professor Kartomi said she immediately recognised the 19 pieces as part of a traditional Javanese gamelan, and agreed for it to be transferred into her care.

She was amazed and intrigued by the simplicity and ingenuity of its design and construction from makeshift materials, which were unlike anything she had seen before.

The instruments were set in an assorted range of timber frames and sound boxes – some made from disused doors and parts of buildings bearing locks and hinges which are still visible today. Most of the instruments, such as gongs and drums, were made from cast iron food bowls, each skilfully beaten and tuned to give the distinctive high-pitched gamelan sound.



Professor Margaret Kartomi and part of the Gamelan Digul.

Drawing on her own research and a network of ex-Digulist prisoners and academic colleagues, Professor Kartomi traced the gamelan to the Tanah Merah (Red Earth) camp for Javanese political prisoners situated on the upper reaches of the Digul River in central New Guinea in the then Dutch-run Netherlands East Indies.

Professor Kartomi estimates the prisoners built the gamelan over a 10-month period under the supervision of a political prisoner, Pontjopangrawit, an expert gamelan maker and musician from Surakata in Central Java. "He had been a well-known gamelan maker and musician in Java before being deported and was remembered by many inmates at Digul for his musicianly skills."

The gamelan ... served as a unifying symbol ... and was probably their only real source of comfort and 'escape'.

The gamelan, she believed, served as a unifying symbol of the prisoners' national pride and was probably their only real source of comfort and 'escape'.

Despite the gamelan's fragility, Professor Kartomi said, the sound and stability of most of the instruments were remarkably good after 70 years, reflecting the skill and care of Pontjopangrawit and the other musicians. Surprisingly, while no two gamelans are tuned exactly alike, its pitch closely resembles that of Monash's own gamelan.

Through her investigations, Professor Kartomi found the Gamelan Digul had arrived, safely packed, in Australia in 1942 when the Dutch brought their Javanese prisoners to

this country during the Japanese invasion of Indonesia.

The prisoners and their gamelan were later transported by train to Cowra, Australia's main prisoner-of-war camp in NSW. At the time, Professor Kartomi said, the exiled Dutch had misled the Australian Government into believing that the Indonesians were pro-Japanese prisoners.

However, she said, the ex-Digulist prisoners had begun their own political campaign. "It started on the train journey through Sydney to Cowra, when some of the prisoners were believed to have thrown a letter from the window which explained that they were not pro-Japanese. Somehow, their letter found its way into the hands of the Australian Railway Workers Union," she said.

After only a few months, the prisoners were released from Cowra and travelled to Melbourne with their gamelan.

"Melbourne's Indonesian community provided support for the political activities of the former prisoners who, working alongside unionists and the Communist Party of Australia, had become freedom fighters for Indonesia's independence," Professor Kartomi said.

Some of the gamelan musicians were housed, at the expense of the Dutch, in the Indonesia House of the Hotel Metropole, at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth streets, in Melbourne, where they presented regular Friday night floor shows of Javanese gamelan music, dance and theatre.

After Indonesia achieved independence in 1945, some of the Digul players returned home, but they left the gamelan behind.

Professor Kartomi said there were still many unanswered questions about the Gamelan Digul.

"Until we uncover more of the clues, we can only suggest that it was a way of keeping the prisoners occupied as well as a means of keeping the Dutch entertained."

Winning ways

By COREY NASSAU

Monash University postgraduate student Stephen Lay has won a major short story award – with a piece which took him only four days to write.

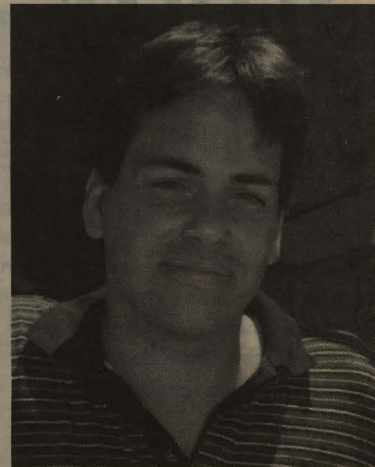
Winning the 1998 *Herald Sun*/Collins Booksellers Short Story Award has made him \$5000 richer and highlighted his creative writing talents, but Stephen's real passion is his history research that will take him to England and Portugal later this year.

When he got his dates mixed up and realised he only had four days to write a short story for the competition, Stephen said he felt "a panic-driven surge of creativity".

His winning piece, 'Power Play in a Game of Fool', centres on the scrutiny placed upon one particular interviewee by his interviewer and was aimed at illustrating a human 'test' situation.

"It's about having a test that you have to do and everyone thinking that you've failed – however, in reality you've actually understood the nature of the test and risen above it," says Stephen.

But while he has discovered another side to his talents, Stephen



Winning author Stephen Lay.

says his PhD research, which focuses on aspects of medieval history, demands most of his time.

"I'm a historian and I've done a lot of writing, some of which I've had published, but my creative writing is really just a hobby because my research is very time consuming," he says.

In July, Stephen heads off to London to deliver a paper at a medievalist conference, and then he will travel to Portugal to continue his research.

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