



EMERITUS PROFESSOR JANET DELPRATT AM, BSc MDipMus Doctor of the University



Janet Elizabeth Delpratt was born in Palmwoods in 1935, the third daughter of fruit farmer, Maurice Delpratt and his wife Mary, and showed early signs of her future performing arts career when she sang “The Kookaburra” in the Maroochydore State School’s end-of-year concert at the age of five.

Before Jan’s sixth birthday, the family moved to Warwick where Jan’s interests expanded to include swimming and hockey. However, the connection with the performing arts remained through membership of the synchronised swimming squad, the Aquacades Water Ballet.

At Warwick State High School, Jan excelled academically and won school colours in both swimming and hockey, but also undertook AMEB exams in piano and became known as a talented young singer, performing in variety concerts presented by the Girls’ Friendly Society and for events such as Scouts Week, Empire Day and Trafalgar Night as well as for

Warwick High and for the St George Society of which her father was president.

When Jan achieved the highest Junior examination result of any student in Warwick in 1950, she was awarded a bursary from the United Grand Lodge of Queensland. Two years later, she was the School Captain and won the Lodge’s Sir Leslie Wilson bursary for university study.

As an 18-year-old studying for a science degree at The University of Queensland, Jan not only sang in the University choir but was given her first major solo role in the oratorio, Bach’s *St Matthew Passion*. After graduation, she took up full-time music studies at the Elder Conservatorium within the University of Adelaide before returning to Queensland in 1957 to study at the then newly established Queensland Conservatorium (now part of Griffith University). In 1961, she was the first Conservatorium graduate to be granted a Master Diploma of Music.

During her period as a student at “the Con”, she won numerous prizes, including the state finals of the ABC Concerto and Vocal competition, and began to establish her reputation as an oratorio and recital singer, going on to perform with most of the principal orchestras in Australia during her career. Her contribution to Australian music included numerous world premieres as well as works by Queensland composers commissioned for her.

After further study in London, Jan joined the staff of the Conservatorium and taught there for the rest of her career, including 18 years as Chairman of the Vocal Department and three years as Acting Director. In 1998, she was awarded a Personal Chair in Singing for excellence in teaching, the first such appointment at an Australian university, and in June 2007 was admitted as an honorary Doctor of the University, the honour being presented by fellow Zontian, Leneen Forde, who at the time was Chancellor of Griffith University. In April 2015, to honour Jan on her 80th birthday, the Conservatorium staged *Jan Delpratt: A Celebration* featuring many of her past students.

As a teacher, Jan inspired generations of students, giving master classes in New Zealand, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia, and being chosen as one of just seven teachers from around the world for the third International Congress of Voice Teachers. She also adjudicated at various competitions, including the Herald Sun Aria, and helped establish the Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing (ANATS) as well as serving as Federal President for six years.

For her achievements, Jan received an Advance Australia award in 1985, and in 1989 was made an Inaugural Fellow of The Women's College within The University of Queensland where she had been a resident as a student. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia in June 2009 for service to the performing arts and to music education, an honour which was conferred during a Griffith graduation ceremony in the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Jan served on the Council of The Women's College, committees for Musica Viva and the Australian Music Examination Board, and the Board of Trustees of the Queensland Performing Arts Trust. Her contribution to Zonta since joining in September 1981 included service as President (1986–1988) and an active role in the club's long-standing Woman of Achievement Award which was offered from 1981 to 2009.

Apart from her life in music, Jan took a great interest in her family history and, with her sisters Barbara and Catherine and their families, made a significant contribution to the John Oxley Library when they donated the letters written by their father, Maurice George Delpratt, during his time as a WWI Prisoner of War in Turkey after being captured at Gallipoli. The collection was digitised by the library in 2012, making it available to all. Maurice Delpratt had been one of 13 children raised on the Delpratt family farm in the shadow of Mt Tambourine and became one of the first pupils to attend The Southport School where he was later employed as a housemaster and teacher. He left teaching in 1910 and worked on the family property before enlisting in the 5th Light Horse Regiment. His brother, Bertram Barnard Delpratt also served in WWI and survived.