

Low note: music students no

Anger at cuts which will affect 'real people'



By **MERYLL MILLER**
meryllm
@thechronicle.com.au

THE University of Southern Queensland might be "realising its potential", but Bachelor of Music student Jessica Maskell says it has destroyed her future.

Jessica is angry about cuts to the music program which will drive many of her fellow students to Brisbane, where the Queensland Conservatorium of Music has offered them places.

"The opportunities just aren't here at USQ anymore," she said.

"I'm extremely angry because students weren't given any warning that these changes were going to happen.

"I would like to ask the vice-chancellor to understand that changes might be made because of budgets, but those changes affect real people."

Jessica is in the final year of a degree specialising in voice and had planned to undertake the USQ honours program next year. This extra study, she said, is necessary for any performers keen to get a foothold into a highly competitive industry.

But those plans are on hold. "There is no point in doing the honours program here anymore because it has been changed to a general "creative arts" course (at both degree and post-grad levels) which is not specific to our needs (the Masters level program has apparently been abolished altogether)," Jessica said.

"The USQ has always had a great reputation for the standard of performers it produced — that was one of the reasons so many of us came here.

"I have been approached by the Con to finish my studies

there, and I know many people in my course are considering that offer. Certainly some of the students feel they will be in a better position career-wise if they go."

Sharing Jessica's concern over the introduction of a creative arts course is chief executive and artistic director of Opera Queensland, Chris Mangin.

While USQ and Opera Queensland have long shared a productive relationship, he said that "may not be the case in future".

"I find this news disturbing," Mr Mangin said.

"USQ has done very good work in the past, but they have chosen not to have a conversation with us about this decision.

"In my experience, where there is non-specificity in a course, you prepare the students for nothing. A fleeting connection does not set students up to work in this industry."

USQ's Faculty of Arts associate dean and senior lecturer in music Rhoderick McNeill denied claims that the course changes would result in a lower quality program, or impact on career opportunities for graduates.

"I believe we will be providing a very similar standard to what we've provided in the past," Dr McNeill said.

"Practical elements of the course are unchanged, and now allows for composition and musicality; the main area of change is in music theory. Students will have plenty of opportunities to reach professional standards, particularly in opera."

The mixed messages and confusion surrounding the course changes have left students angry and fearful, according to second year Bachelor of Music student Anna Marangelli.

She said with "subjects being scrapped, staff leaving left, right



Angry USQ Bachelor of Music students (back, from left) Calista Walters, Anna Marangelli, Kaitlyn Orange, Katie Pradal and, front, Amy Seligmann and Jessica Maskell.

PICTURE: NEVILLE MADSEN

USQ had a great reputation. Now the whole place is broken.

— Anna Marangelli

and centre, and classes just not happening", USQ had become an unstable learning environment.

"It's just an absolute joke — no-one knows what's going on, not even the lecturers," Anna said.

"USQ had a great reputation. Now the whole place is broken."

A common concern among students was the possible abolition of productions which showcase USQ to the community, and bring students to the campus.

Creative change to degrees

By **JIM CAMPBELL**

jim.campbell@thechronicle.com.au

A BACHELOR of Creative Arts degree will next year replace the range of specialist degrees offered at USQ.

However, the head of the Creative Arts School assured The Chronicle yesterday that students would not be disadvantaged.

"One degree will house music, creative media, visual arts, acting and theatre and that will replace all the specific, separate degrees that have gone before," Dr Janet McDonald said.

"But people shouldn't panic because we will still cater for discipline-specific students that want to bury themselves in one creative art, but this way they can also study other areas if they choose.

"It's just more efficient," she said.

Second-year stage management student Chris Horne said he was looking forward to the changes next year.

"I think it makes sense," he said.

"If students want to specialise in one discipline they still can, but if they want to try, for example, a bit of visual arts as well this will give them the opportunity to do that," he said.

Dr McDonald also confirmed that the popular Shakespeare in the Park would be running next year.

She said while there had been a lot of mixed public opinion about the course changes, the best way for the public to support the Creative Arts School was to buy tickets and go and see the shows.



Chris Horne

Buy Local Bargain

The Chronicle

20% OFF ALL

• Automatic Coffee Machines
• Irons • Slow Cookers (Store Stock Only)

Harvey Norman

Harvey Norman Electrical, 910-932 Ruthven St,
Toowoomba QLD 4350. Ph: 4636 7300

Offer valid until close of business Sunday May 25 2008, while stocks last, valid upon presentation of this coupon. Original coupon only. No photocopies. Pictures for illustration purposes only.



1231986ayH

Thursday

Harvey Norman

Electrical Deals
Harvey Norman
Electrical
910-932 Ruthven St,
Toowoomba
Ph 4636 7300

Friday

Marlene Studios

Makeup & Beauty
Marlene Studios
Makeup & Beauty
Cnr Spring & Ramsay
St, Toowoomba
Ph 4613 4535

Saturday

MARY RYAN'S

Books & Coffee
Mary Ryan's Books,
Music & Coffee
406 Ruthven St,
Toowoomba
Ph 4632 0800

Monday

Meal Deals

City Golf Club
254 South St,
Toowoomba
Ph 4636 9000

Wednesday

EMPIRE THEATRES

Show Deals
Empire Theatre
56 Neil St
Toowoomba Q 4350
Ph 1300 655 299

what's on near you?
Cinemaotimes
any movie, any session, any cinema

Call 1900 989 100

24 hour cinema session time hotline
for all major and independent movie
theatres across Australia

* Calls cost 88c per min inc GST. Higher from mobiles/payphones. Dialect.

Cut this coupon out and attach it
to the entry form to enter the

FUEL BUSTER

GIVEAWAY

Thursday
22.05.08

1539447adH