

BIOGRAPHY - MIKE NELSON

Piano - Composer



Michael Nelson was born in Perth, Western Australia in 1949. He began his career as a musician at the age of 16 years. From 1974 to 1979 he was based in London U.K. where he worked as an arranger / musician and, for about two years, toured Europe, Great Britain and Southern Africa with the British group '5000 Volts' including appearances on the BBC's Top Of The Pops, the Royal Albert Hall and the London Palladium.

From 1985 to 1990 Mike was employed by Edith Cowan University to help establish Jazz Studies at the Western Australian Academy for the Performing Arts. In 1990 he was awarded the W.A. Department for the Arts Creative Development Fellowship in order to further his development as an orchestral composer. His 'Sonata for String Quartet' was performed by the Australian String Quartet in 1993 and broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. His 'Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra' was recorded by the W.A. Symphony Orchestra in 1996.

Mike has lectured in Jazz Studies at Edith Cowan University (1985 - 1990), Australian National University (2000 - 2003, including a time as head of department) and University of Western Australia (part time, 1990 - 2000).

Mike's jazz quartet represented Australia at the 1988 Indian Jazz Yatra and in 1990 he was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to take a jazz quartet back to India to conduct master classes and

concert performances. His jazz compositions have been recorded by the Australian Broadcasting Commission on numerous occasions and his CD album 'Celebration' was recorded at the A.B.C. in 1989.

While in Canberra, he contributed a chapter to the compilation publication 'Music In The 21st Century'. As an accompanist, he has worked with Milt Jackson, Mark Murphy, Bob Barnard, Joe Newman, Lee Konitz, Debbie Reynolds, Holly Hoffman, Shirley Bassey, Jerry Lewis, Richie Cole, Don Burrows, Bob Bertles, Johnny Nicole, James Morrison, John Farnham, Peter O'Mara, John Surman, Danny Moss, Ricky May, Holly Hoffman, Red Rodney, Keith Stirling, Birnie McGann, Tom Baker, Marie Wilson, John Etheridge, Sue Cruikshank, John Hoffman, Phil Wilson, Clare Martin and Dale Barlow.

Mike currently lives in Perth, Western Australia with his wife and two children. In 2005 he was commissioned to write a crossover piece for string and jazz quartet as part of the 'Jazz Meets Mozart' celebrations. Following the performance he was later commissioned to expand the piece to a full orchestral version which was subsequently performed by the Dubai Philharmonic. In 2006 he attended college and gained a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering. In 2010 he published the novel 'Musos' and is currently working to finish a jazz methodology 'Craft of Jazz Piano'.

Mike is now retired but continues to work with a variety of ensembles and is active as a composer and arranger.