



Musical animals like a dream come true

MARY POWIS

MUSICIANS in the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong had their faces painted to look like jungle animals when they performed music composed by Wahroonga's Jean Bunton for the 2008 Hong Kong International Arts Carnival.

"They were happy to enter into the spirit of the occasion," Mrs Bunton said.

"The conductor was dressed as a lion and we had a trunk for the elephant. It was so much fun, and audiences loved it."

Mrs Bunton was commissioned by the orchestra to compose a musical based on a jungle theme.

"It is every composer's dream to have a commission of this kind," she said. "I was so pleased to be associated with the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong which is known for its innovative programming."

Her composition, *The Magic Jungle*, is a 60-minute piece for chamber orchestra, narrator, two children actors/singers and a singing monkey.

Through a series of adventures, Max the Monkey takes two children, Rosie and Jim, to his home in the magic jungle.

Here they discover that every animal can play a musical instrument: the hippo plays the piccolo, the baboon plays the bassoon and the snake plays the oboe.

Australian Leanne Nicholls, who has been living in Hong Kong for 20 years, played the oboe and the bad snake became a good snake when she played the perfect "A" to help the orchestra find the right note.

"*The Magic Jungle* with narration, music, songs and special effects gives children as young as three-year-olds an introduction to the orchestra," she said.

Mrs Bunton, originally from England, lived in Hong Kong for 23 years before coming to Australia 10 years ago.

She has worked as a writer of educational books for children and, after arriving in Australia, studied music at the University of Western Sydney.

Currently, she is working on a Doctorate in Composition with Dr Bruce Crossman and Dr Diana Blom.

Last year she collaborated with the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong in a CD recording titled *Sing the Sounds of English*,

"The CD is a collection of 27 songs which contain all 44 phonemes of the international phonetic alphabet," she said. "The songs are designed to help Chinese children learn English pronunciation in a fun way."

Conductor Bill Connor, who orchestrated *The Magic Jungle* was composer-in-residence of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra from 1996 to 1999.

British singer Matthew Hale was the narrator and Chili Wong was Max the Monkey.

Now Ms Bunton is working on another composition, *Megan and her Ebike*, and on her thesis *Imaginative Music for Chinese-speaking Children*.



SO MUCH FUN: Jean Bunton's composed *The Magic Jungle*. Above: the cast in Hong Kong.