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Transcript of an interview with
Sue Kingham

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SLWA Perth Jazz Oral Histories - 05 - Sue Kingham
Interviewer: Adam Trainer
Recorded 5th September 2023

Adam Trainer

This is an oral history with Sue Kingham recorded at the State Library of Western Australia on the 5th of September 2023. The interviewer is Adam Trainer. Sue, can I please start with your full name and your date of birth? Although I believe we have a story about the name, or your multi-names?

Sue Kingham

Well, I think it may surprise some people. My legal name is Ann Susan Kingham. That's not my maiden name. My maiden name was Messack, and I was never called Ann. My dad kept calling me Sue, little Susie, and everyone called me Sue. And so I was very confused. And then my mum made it worse by, for some reason calling me Sarah Jane. So I go by Sue.

Adam Trainer

How long have you gone by Sue?

Sue Kingham

When I was young, I used to go, "I want to be Ann, I want to be Ann." And then I would be Ann for a week. And then I'd be Susie. Bit confused.

Adam Trainer

Well, I'll stick with Sue.

Sue Kingham

Thank you.

Adam Trainer

Just to keep things clear and easy. And whereabouts were you born Sue?

Sue Kingham

I didn't tell you my birth, did you want to know my birth date?

Adam Trainer

Yes, let's hear your birthdate.

Sue Kingham

Let's hear that. Because I'm dying to tell you. Which is 9th of December 1959.

Adam Trainer

And where were you born?

Sue Kingham

In St Ann's in Mount Lawley, which is now Mercy.

Adam Trainer

So, have you always lived in Perth?

Sue Kingham

Actually, yes.

Adam Trainer

And growing up, what was your, did you live in a musical household?

Sue Kingham

Sort of. Sort of lived in a musical household. My mum played piano as a kid, but probably the most wonderful thing from me and my family was that we had an uncle who played guitar and at family events he would bring his guitar and a book full of lyrics of popular songs of the day and especially at Christmas. And we would all sing and there'd be harmonies and that, since I was little. So that was really, really, special. Yeah.

Adam Trainer

And do you think that was formative for you in terms of your interest in music?

Sue Kingham

Oh, gosh, absolutely. And then in those days, neighbourhoods were like picket fences, and there were lots of kids. And so we used to do backyard concerts and playing footy, the like, the pickets got, you know, broken. And so we could slip in and out of each other's backyards. And we used to do concerts and I don't know, just wherever you had around you dress up in and do comedy spots and whatever and ask the mums and the kids, and then take a coin for the missions or something, and then give them cordial and biscuits. So that was also an inspiration.

Adam Trainer

So performance was a key part of your life from a very early age.

Sue Kingham

I just loved singing and I would just, like any chance I got, I had this tiny little record player. I got singles first of all, and just would sing and just sing and sing and sing and copying singers. And just because I just loved it, I never thought of, I don't know, maybe I thought I wanted to perform, but I was just engrossed in singing.

Adam Trainer

So when did it start to take a more formal aspect? Did you learn music at school or was there other formal music education?

Sue Kingham

No, we tried a little bit, that was myself and my two brothers all did guitar together, but my older brother was way better than me. And I thought, nah, damn I'm not competing, I'm going to sing. Yes. And then when I was about 13, finally I got some singing lessons. And this lady, Betty Hatford Carter, who was like a well-known opera singer, I think here. She was around the corner from us. So it was not the sort of music I wanted to sing. No way. I really knew I wanted to do, I wouldn't even called it contemporary. I wanted to do Pop. But I still think that I got some valuable stuff from

her. There's a book called Vaccai, which does really great exercises for intervals and little songs to do that. So I think that really helped. But a lot of the songs I just couldn't stand. So it's something, yeah.

Adam Trainer

So you got that technique, vocal technique, to a certain extent?

Sue Kingham

Kind of. Yes, but definitely not really a classical technique because I just never wanted to sing classical. Yeah, I just loved various songs that I realised over the years, like, wow, that really is kind of jazz. Things like 'Rainy Night in Georgia,' Brook Benton, you heard that one?

Adam Trainer

I can't recall that one off the top of my head.

Sue Kingham

Anyway, I mean, I was pretty young listening to that on my transistor and I just really loved it. I still love singing it. And then things like, what else did I love? Some Carpenters and Roberta Flack and. you know, that sort of thing. Yeah, but anyway, so I did some singing at school, but they weren't great big musicals and things like that at schools at that time. Right. So I was maybe singing at church stuff in that, you know with a choir. And I did play guitar for some of that, which was interesting and which was pretty simple. So I could actually do it. But I didn't pursue it. So when I left high school, then I actually did a BA in Fine Arts at WAIT, which is now Curtin and then I was like trying out for different bands and I got into, first of all, I got into this original band called Childe with an E and we were doing some originals and preparing to do gigs and things, did do some things up north and that sort of thing. But it sort of fell apart after two years. And it was a great experience because we were recording and so I was getting the experience of being in a recording studio and doing harmonies and singing lead and that sort of thing. There were two female singers, so that was a great experience and particularly all the things you shouldn't do.

And then I got into - - I auditioned for, there was a band, Dave Warner from the Suburbs put together - - called Sensational Sixties, which was all costumes and characters of the era of the sixties and the seventies. So that was an amazing experience, and it gives like four or five nights a week in the huge pubs of those times. So those times you'd fill up, but you'd fill up the Herdsman or the Nookanburra you would pretty much get 900, 1,000 people. Herdsman, the Raffles venues like that, they were just full, packed. It's pretty amazing. Yeah, that was a great experience. I was like Lulu singing 'To Sir With Love' and I was Susie Quattro but pretending I could play bass and Grace Slick and that sort of thing. So that was really cool. That was really interesting. And I loved it. And I was doing a day job at the same time. Nothing to do with art. And then I got married. Do you want to know the rest of it?

Adam Trainer

Absolutely, yeah this is great.

Sue Kingham

Okay well, and my husband at the time. We're not together anymore, Mike Kingham, he was a guitarist in another band around that was big at the time.

Adam Trainer

What was that band?

Sue Kingham

Flash Harry. Anyway, just after we got married, we heard about the jazz course that was going to happen at the WA Conservatorium of Music in Mount Lawley, which is now WAAPA and he was going to go for it and I thought, oh I might go for that. And look, I had heard some jazz. My girlfriend at her grandmother's house, her grandmother had a Reader's Digest record and album, and it had Ella Fitzgerald singing 'How High the Moon.' And that's the first time I ever heard Ella and the first time I ever heard scat. And it just absolutely blew my mind. Seriously, it just blew me away. And so then I started to investigate jazz and I was seeing some stuff around town and getting interested in a Sydney singer called Kerry Biddell, who had a really great history as a vocalist. She passed some time ago, but she was wonderful and PJS brought her here too, so I did a couple of her songs and I actually got in and that was the start of the Jazz course. So I was there at the very beginning of it.

Adam Trainer

You were part of that first cohort?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, the first cohort.

Adam Trainer

And your husband at the time as well.

Sue Kingham

Yeah and I was the only girl and the only singer, so that was a wild experience.

Adam Trainer

Did that happen - - that there were more opportunities for you if you were the only female - - and I'm assuming you were singing as opposed to focusing on an instrument?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, I was singing, but I had to study everything else as well.

Adam Trainer

Sure, did that mean that there were performance opportunities that came your way with WAAPA bands, obviously, WAYJO followed on from that fairly shortly thereafter.

Sue Kingham

Yeah, that definitely gave me the opportunity to be in WAYJO and there was no one else singing. So like, yeah, that's true. When there were concerts and things, I was lucky. I mean it was full on. That course was like three years crammed into two and most of the students were already quite mature and just wanted to fill in gaps like people like Alan Pithers and Lenny Parker, maybe Robbie Passano. A whole lot of

people that were already out in the scene and so, true story, I didn't know any theory, but I studied it, after I got in, after I auditioned. I'm sure. I know that you have to know a lot more than I did, but I could sing.

Adam Trainer

So you crammed the theory?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, crammed the theory. But they were rushing through those arranging classes and things like that. And so I had to work really, really, hard. But I got there. I got there, but it was it was really hard. But it was it was fantastic. It was such - - it was so creative too for me to have to try and scat. And yet that was so traumatic at first because every time I tried to do it, I would go red. Irish Heritage here and then I'd go red before I had to scat because I knew I'd go red. And then I was like, Oh my gosh, you just give up or you just ignore it and you just keep going. And then I did that and I'm glad I did that. And then it just went away. I don't know when it went away, but it went away.

Adam Trainer

And you feel being around performers who were obviously pretty seasoned – and this is something that other people have mentioned too – that these people were fairly established already and were gigging and had experience in the jazz scene, you obviously had performance experience, but it was in a different style.

Sue Kingham

Totally.

Adam Trainer

Do you feel as though being in that cohort with those people who had had that experience was beneficial in terms of, I guess, exposing you to what the scene was about, what jazz was?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, it was, lucky in a whole lot of ways in that it certainly was and because of that, because of joining WAYJO, so many things happened that was just fantastic. So for me with WAYJO, it started in 1983 and Don Gomes was a piano player and he also sang. So he did a few songs, but he wasn't really the singer. So I got to be that. And for me, I was asked: "What would you like to sing?" And guess what I chose, which is 'How High the Moon.' And then there was a brilliant arranger conductor. He was Channel Seven's musical director, I think, Will Upson. And so Pat asked Will Upson, who was actually on the board, I learnt, of WAYJO to do an arrangement of that Ella Fitzgerald live in Berlin recording which was, hey you know, I was really biting off a whole lot there. But that was fantastic. And I - - that is so lucky to be asked what you would like to sing. And that happened for the whole couple of years that I was actually singing with WAYJO. So part of that you have to scat. Ella's first part of her solo with the sax section. So, I really had to do my work.

Adam Trainer

But it feels as though that is often what WAAPA has provided for its students is, not so much throwing them in the deep end or trial by fire – to use a couple of cliches – but

really getting them to aim high and providing them with the support to reach those heights.

Sue Kingham

Yes, you also have to find it in yourself, you know, because with that - - it just ties me into 'How High the Moon,' really, because we are in the second year - - we were asked to - - we had the opportunity to sing with Don Burrows, not to sing, to play with Don Burrows for an ABC special and they came to WAAPA and they brought in their cameras on the wheels and that sort of thing. It was full on ABC studio basically with a live audience. And I knew that was coming up. That was my second year in the course and my teacher at the time, I felt terrified about it, actually. I didn't want to make an idiot out of myself or ruin it for the band. And I did three songs, I think, in that. And so I asked my teacher for help and my teacher just said for the performing thing and how I can get on top of the nerves that I had and the anxiety I had. And he just said, you've either got it or you don't, which really was not helpful at all, you know? So then you have to just like fall back on yourself and go looking for resources. So there was no internet, but they had a library. So I went to the library and I found this book by Patti and Jerry Coker, and they had lots of things on - - they were from LA and they had lots of things on improvising and that but they also had a chapter on visualisation.

And so I was like, what's it saying is that, it described it really well in a very kind of hippie way, but that you had to imagine where you would be and see yourself, see yourself getting through it, see yourself doing something that you'd hate to do, but still being okay. And you sort of get the idea and really just sing through it and pretend you're there. So I used that. I used it because I was desperate and I had some weeks to do that. And it really worked and I've seen the video. I have it now and I saw it on TV a few years after it because it aired in 1987 and it was good, you know, it was good. I don't look nervous. And I was able to look at the audience who were very intimate. It was a really intimate audience. That was a huge challenge, really was. And I just kept using that technique to keep growing those skills.

Adam Trainer

Do you feel as though that performance was a turning point for you?

Sue Kingham

Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. And then we got to go to Edinburgh and Aberdeen. So this is a good story for WAYJO. So at the time I think it was around about America's Cup time, those few years after that. Where people were giving crazy money for sponsorship and the board and I wasn't administrating then so like the board got, arranged a deal with the Hortons from Leeuwin Estate and for \$60,000 at the time to take, for WAYJO to go to these festivals at the Aberdeen International Youth Festival and the Edinburgh Arts Festival. It's Edinburgh, I can't remember the exact name but the Edinburgh International Edinburgh Arts Festival or something like that. And for that we had to do another opportunity. Ten performances over the years for their big concerts that they started to have. So the first one I think was in '85 or '86. '85 it was and it was the Leeuwin estate, right? Do you remember those times? And the first one was the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and we supported all those acts in return for the \$60,000, which is just still so amazing to get the experience of, for those huge audiences and to support amazing acts. You know, there was a Berlin State Orchestra

one year. There was also, WAYJO supported actually played with James Morrison and who else was there? Can't remember now. Andrew Firth, maybe. I can't remember.

Adam Trainer

So let's stay on the Edinburgh and Aberdeen Festivals before we sort of cycle back to what was happening here at that time. What do you remember about those touring opportunities?

Sue Kingham

So many things. The first time I ever caught a plane internationally. So that was like a great experience. So many things, like our first concert was at Wigan on the way up to Edinburgh and they had the Midlands, I think it was a Midlands Youth Jazz Orchestra and unfortunately we didn't get to see them, but we played with them. I'm pretty sure that was the same band we played with them in Edinburgh, no Aberdeen, so that was great. We were billeted out with band members. So that was a fun experience, crazy experience. The only thing I remember there is that, you know, Australia, we have showers, but they had baths and on the second floor the water doesn't - - so I had to - - how could I wash my long curly permed hair in a bath? That was pretty interesting. Kind of dunk yourself. But then we went up to Edinburgh and I think we did a few concerts and in between getting to Edinburgh and one of them was an outdoor festival and the Midlands Youth Jazz Orchestra they also played and we played separately and because it was a combined act, I'll tell you about that in a minute. But it was an evening and it was sprinkling quite - - it was steadily sprinkling. So thinking about Perth, no one would be there and we wouldn't be standing on that stage. There was no roof on that stage like no covering. And so we wouldn't be doing that. But it was packed and there were fireworks and we just got lovely sprinkling water us the whole time, which is wild.

Adam Trainer

That might have looked good, a sprinkling of water and the fireworks going, might have been a nice look?

Sue Kingham

I don't know, because I was on stage, you know, maybe not for the fireworks. I can't remember that bit. But yeah, so that was wild. Then we played in the big park at the bottom of, underneath the Edinburgh Castle. Edinburgh Park. So that was, that was memorable. Not a huge audience, but that's the way those things go. But just seeing Edinburgh was incredible. And then we went to Aberdeen and that's where it was really quite special. The venue was near the sea and the theme of the Aberdeen Festival was that of youth, festival of youth, it was that called the Sea and so Wayne Senior, who was on the staff at WAAPA at the time, an arranger, used to be an arranger over New Zealand I think for a TV station. And he wrote an original arrangement called 'Four Seasons.' It was about seasons in WA and it was written for two jazz orchestras. And so the Midlands Youth Jazz Orchestra had been working on it, and the two came together in this huge venue and that happened. So that's pretty amazing. It was recorded, I think. I'm pretty sure. So WAYJO would have to dig down for that one. And we also performed just as WAYJO there. Yeah. So that was amazing.

Adam Trainer

So what was the performance, what was the material that you were performing other than that particular show that you mentioned, the 'Four Seasons' one?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, well, the arrangements that I'd been singing for ages and the arrangements that WAYJO had been playing and so much of that stuff, which is on the album we did in 1985 as well, maybe that was '86, but anyway, we also did an album, which is a cassette.

Adam Trainer

And is that drawing from the sort of the broad history of jazz across all of the various sort of different iterations to give the WAYJO students an education on all the different styles?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, I imagine. I mean, I was a student then too, but I was lucky to be able to go put my quirky things up there and have a choice of what I wanted to sing. Yeah, which was good.

Adam Trainer

So, thinking about - - obviously you mentioned that diving into this WAAPA course, and joining WAYJO shortly thereafter was a real sort of introduction to jazz - - I guess, for you. How about the sort of broader jazz scene, were you were going out and seeing shows at that time?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, absolutely. I just feel like I'm lucky that I got there and I actually did like jazz. So that's the absolute truth. And I loved it. And the more I got, the more I loved it. Everything down to the bebop stuff and that which is, you know, my parents couldn't quite figure out what that was about. But, you know, so I do consider myself lucky there. But yeah, absolutely. Particularly the PJS because that was a Monday night, regular Monday night, there were so many things going on to me that was a really fertile ground and different acts around the place. When I first started at WAAPA I was listening to Birdland. I absolutely loved. Seeing Helen Matthews and her group and wow, off the top of my head there were just so many things. But also we had acts that came and visited the Con at the time and North Texas State One O'Clock Lab Band that was absolutely gobsmacking. I'll never forget that. And different artists actually and it goes for WAYJO, because when we had artists come over there, sorry, need a little drink. They got to play with WAYJO, too. So in live concerts, so who did we have?

Adam Trainer

So a touring artist would come - -

Sue Kingham

Yeah, sometimes, yeah.

Adam Trainer

They'd play, say a PJS show, and WAYJO might be the backing band?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, maybe, or they'd just come and do a masterclass. But then WAYJO started to bring people over and say it would be James Morrison and then that would become a concert. But that particularly happened for, see so, moving it along a bit. Well there's two directions I can go - -

Adam Trainer

That's okay we can circle back.

Sue Kingham

Okay. So out of WAYJO, as it started to progress and I actually, I was too old to be in it from 1986 after Edinburgh right? So I actually took on some of the administration of which there was no real administrator. So that was 50 bucks a week. We also created the Concert for Schools. So I can't remember exactly what year that was maybe '87, '88 something like that. But that was at the Perth Concert Hall and we would bring someone with a name. So I know that James Morrison came. I know that Andrew Firth came, Suzanne Wylie sung one of the concerts with James Morrison, people like that. And then fill the concert hall with students. That also brought huge opportunities for them. And out of that also sprung a professional band called Jazz West Big Band. Did you know about that one? Oh, good, yes. So that meant that some of the musicians who were getting older and obviously could play in that could play in Jazz West Big Band. So that was truly being in the right place at the right time too. Because I got to sing with them as well. Yeah.

Adam Trainer

Can we talk a little bit about, seeing as you've mentioned it, your role at WAYJO as the administrator? What was that about? What were you required to do and what did that role entail?

Sue Kingham

It's insane really.

Adam Trainer

Given the small amount of funding that you had?

Sue Kingham

Was that even funding? I don't know. But eventually it became funding and then it got better. But it was never huge, but well, particularly organisation as in contacting because email wasn't a big deal then either, right? So back in the dark ages, so you're like sending letters home and do they actually make it to the parents? Because some of them were quite young and that sort of thing. So keeping those sort of details, but also arranging for gigs and coordinating with that and the PA and all that and do they have all their T-shirts and they were ordering in music stands that had WAYJO written on them and really so many things all that. That's actually a lot. And then within, it was only a few years, and then they started to get another band and they eventually had three bands. And there was also looking after sponsors because I think it was Commonwealth Bank first and it was Town and Country and then eventually ANZ and I don't know who they've got now. I should know, but I don't really, not off the top of my head, So eventually we went for a grant from the Australia Council, Department for the Arts, Healthway I think it was Department for the Arts and Healthway said they had more funding for that because actually my position was to also look after Jazz West

Big Band and the Jazz Choir when they did concerts. And I was getting 150 a week for that. And it's just that, you know, I liked it, I enjoyed it. And it was I had to learn on the spot and there was no course at the time for arts administrators, as there is now. So, I had to sort of make it up. But what was I going to say? Oh, you know, trying to be a musician and make some money. You had to do other things. You have to multitask. You just can't do love gigs and make enough money to live. So we were both, me and my husband, were both first being as versatile as possible, teaching, you have to do your love gigs and then you have to do your money gigs and you just have to separate your brain like that.

Adam Trainer

And so what were the love gigs for you?

Sue Kingham

The love gigs. So of course, anything to do with WAYJO and that Jazz West Band, anything like that, because you didn't get paid. But also we put together a few bands. One was called Cabissa which was a five-piece band, and it was more jazz fusion. So things like repertoire, sort of like Yellowjackets and Chick Corea's Elektrik Bands. There were instrumentals in it and there were also some originals. We started to get into some originals. There was also vocal things of Dianne Reeves and Pattie Austin and Urszula Dudziak from Europe and all sorts of things. Tania Maria, some Latin stuff. So that was one.

Adam Trainer

Sure. And were the originals in that band written by the band?

Sue Kingham

No, just my husband Mike and I. Just a few. And then because then we are also started Hothouse. So that was a 14-piece big band, inspired by my trip over to Sydney for the Australian singing competition and seeing Supermarket, which was amazing, amazing. We had nothing, oh, we did have Manteca, but I sort of missed seeing Manteca. I saw them on TV, sorry Manteca, wish I had. But I just absolutely fell in love with bands because I already loved horn sections. So that band was a five-part horn section and full bass drums, guitar, keyboards and also percussion like Gary Ridge was our first, oh, no, he wasn't, but he was there for a long time. Gary Ridge, percussionist and four singers, so two backing vocalists, and a male singer and me doing the lead female so that was brilliant.

Adam Trainer

Really big arrangements then?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, yeah, done by Mike. And I copied them, and he copied them but I was good at copying music too. That was another thing we did to make money, copying music for people like WASO and also Greg Schultz.

Adam Trainer

So you'd be copying by hand?

Sue Kingham

Yeah.

Adam Trainer

Wow. No photocopying?

Sue Kingham

I don't know if they photocopied it later. Because they had those things then.

Adam Trainer

Sure, you'd write it, you'd write out arrangements.

Sue Kingham

No, hand do it.

Adam Trainer

And then pass them on to them and then what they did from there?

Sue Kingham

Yeah the originals.

Adam Trainer

Who knows how they would circulate it?

Sue Kingham

Well they played them.

Adam Trainer

Yeah. Sure.

Sue Kingham

That was money. But jobs you had to do overnight or something.

Adam Trainer

Sure.

Sue Kingham

Yuck.

Adam Trainer

Let's talk a bit about Hothouse, what was that a band about musically?

Sue Kingham

Musically, so still a kind of fusion thing, but a real mix of stuff like Tower of Power - love them, and Earth, Wind and Fire. And we had a great arrangement of Conga because that just went off and the horn section liked it too. They used to dance through the crowd doing that and just, wow, all sorts of things. Incognito, Al Jarreau arrangements. Just odd songs that were really interesting to us and the band loved it. And this was a love gig for sure. We had a residency at Charles for about seven months and it actually got started because we went for an Australia Council grant to do a concert with Cabissa and Hothouse there and that was a big success. And then from

there we got a Wednesday night and the band knew that we were taking the door and paying whatever costs they were and they get whatever split 14 ways equally right.

And so it was interesting some weeks and it wasn't very much money, but people, they came for the love of it, they played for the love it and we had a lot of followers and it was great and we did, actually Hothouse went for 13 years and did many gigs that were for concerts, council concerts like for the International Jazz Festival here. Supported James Brown at the Entertainment Centre, which was hot, was brilliant. James Brown came out in his rollers just to watch us. So that's my only claim to fame. And then we also did functions, so we changed the repertoire up a bit, maybe bump backing vocals or something if they couldn't afford it. And that was good money, you know. So that's what I mean. You have to sort of do both things. I don't know if you have to do that now. I imagine you do or else you go and do something else and you teach or you teach more at schools or just have a completely different job, which sometimes is good for the brain, you know?

Adam Trainer

You mentioned there being a bit of difference between the repertoire that you do with the love gigs versus the corporate shows? So that stuff you were doing was it a little more contemporary?

Sue Kingham

Definitely more contemporary, dance stuff. You had to do dance stuff, you had to do dinner stuff and but there would be like awards nights and things like that, tourism awards or all sorts of things like that. Yeah.

Adam Trainer

And when you were doing the love gigs, were you writing originals with Hothouse as well?

Sue Kingham

We did some originals, yes, definitely. Yeah.

Adam Trainer

How did originals go down versus standards?

Sue Kingham

They went down on the Hothouse gigs really well, yeah.

Adam Trainer

Do you feel as though at that time that there was more original composition starting to happen, that you were hearing it more or that it was becoming a bit more of the scene versus people playing standards?

Sue Kingham

Well, yeah, I guess so, I mean, because this was the days of Graham Wood and Carl Mackey and they were in the band here and they were writing original stuff. To do it for a big band is huge and that's not saying that what they did is just qualifying that for a big band. But I think that's the nature of the jazz musician, you know, like they want to create their own. So I think that was definitely happening and it's still happening.

Adam Trainer

Was composition being taught at WAAPA?

Sue Kingham

Well, definitely arrangement skills. So I don't think there was, well, not when I was there and I was teaching there. So a lot of it was about getting through the material and learning and getting deeper into jazz and more complex, chord progressions and styles and all that sort of thing. But I think by the time they ended up having a degree, that would be where more original stuff was coming in, correct me if I'm wrong, so it was evolving.

Adam Trainer

Sure. I was just wondering whether there was a connection between WAYJO, WAAPA, giving these younger jazz musicians the opportunity to really study and whether getting those arranging skills translated to people wanting to play their own music a little more.

Sue Kingham

Absolutely. Absolutely. You know, it just got better and better, because everything got better. The course got better. The course definitely evolved. It's now quite - - something quite different from what I know. And those musicians who went through WAYJO, they got better and then they started to get teaching degrees. So it took a while before you could do year 11 and 12 and actually study jazz and contemporary music and get your ATAR or, I think they still call it that.

Adam Trainer

I believe so.

Sue Kingham

Doing jazz music and contemporary stuff. Now they've got musical theatre as well. So that all took a while. But still that is a scene evolving, isn't it? To me, I think that there are individuals who, out of all of that you've got the passion for it and know that it's going to be hard going and know that they're probably not going to make a lot of money, but they're going to damn well try, which kind of what I was about too. And I mean, you just got to have that dream and you just got to have that passion. So I suppose they're there. But as the talent got better and better and the quality of musicians did and started going overseas, of course, which you kind of have to do. Yeah, I mean, it is better here, but you can't do it just here. Particularly because it's just a niche genre.

Adam Trainer

What do you mean by it is better here?

Sue Kingham

Than it was.

Adam Trainer

Oh, I see.

Sue Kingham

Yeah, that's what I mean. I mean, it is better here now than it was, I think.

Adam Trainer

Just in saying that it is better here and I perhaps I sort of misinterpreted to think, yeah, this place is better to be than elsewhere. Obviously we've got a very comfortable lifestyle here. We've got great weather. But I imagine also as a fairly small city and a very isolated city, there's a great sense of community too.

Sue Kingham

There is but it's frustrating for you because there was also in the nineties, we, me and Mike, we went to the States and we were in L.A. That was a grant, he got a grant to study at GIT, Guitar Institute of Technology in Hollywood. Right. And that was such a fantastic experience and then you'd see some of the amazing players like Pat Metheny. I actually did see Pat Metheny at the Greek. So that was a big concert. But then there were other really great players who would just be at a little venue and they probably got 50 bucks if they were lucky for the night, like recording people who worshiped them, like Abraham Laboriel at the Baked Potato, this tiny place, which was like the place you really wanted to go because, wow, it was hot, hot things going on there. But there it was actually - - we were earning better here then. And even though it wasn't great, but then they would there. They still had to do the teaching and all that and they were session players, a lot of them like Larry Carlton, those kind of people, you know. But still you got to see so many. I saw Chaka Khan there in a Little Club, a club like not a great big venue, and that was mind blowing. And then going to New York, imagine I can just imagine lucky Kate, good on her, because that would just be so exciting to study there. Yeah.

Adam Trainer

But it sounds like for those who were at the level that you were studying here, there were more opportunities than there might have been for those at peak level in a far more competitive environment like LA.

Sue Kingham

Yeah, I imagine you're right.

Adam Trainer

Yeah. If we can circle back a little bit to WAYJO, you obviously talked about your role as administrator and the time as a WAYJO member or student. How did you see, because you were there from the very start, how did you see it evolve and change and grow as an organisation?

Sue Kingham

Well, of course when you start administrating, you get this other, look at it from another side. And I think a big part of it, it's going: Yeah, I have to, mention is Pat Crichton because he was such an inspiration. He was like an ideas man. And sometimes these ideas and you think really? But just go for it and they would come through. Even going to Edinburgh, that was one of them, but I wasn't on the board then. Not the board, the committee. Well I wasn't even on the committee because I was employed. So, when I was on there, the committee were, there were more parents than there were musicians because I'm sure Garry Lee was on the first one. Like Ron Mackey, you know, father of Carl and John. John went to, John Mackey went to and Edinburgh and also another

lady called Lee Kelly, her son Travis was playing sax and she was just fantastic. And I have a feeling, I hope I'm right here, I think that Ben Vanderwal's dad was on the committee at some point. But parents investing in it, that was really good too. And we also had Anne Conti who was a newsreader and a personality around the place. And she loved the band and lived down the road and was in the committee and she actually MC'd the first few concerts for schools. So see, it just kept on like rolling over and just getting bigger and bigger.

Adam Trainer

So its presence was sort of starting to grow within the community?

Sue Kingham

Absolutely. I mean, very quickly anyway, because the very first, when I was there, we were doing things like we got flown up to Karratha to open the gas line and, you know, there were gigs like that that we got. So it was pretty amazing really.

Adam Trainer

Absolutely.

Sue Kingham

It's amazing. It's got to 40 years now, which is I mean, it's fantastic, you know.

Adam Trainer

So how long were you involved as administrator or broadly, with WAYJO?

Sue Kingham

Well I think I was administrator until 1994 when I had my first child. No, yes, 1994. Sorry. And so let's figure that out. Let's do the maths. So 1984 to '94, oh, about ten years. There you go, that's not hard.

Adam Trainer

And so then you took a break to be a parent?

Sue Kingham

Well, I was still gigging and trying to multitask, but it was just too much the WAYJO stuff as well. And so then they - - I just had to it was just far too much, couldn't do it. So yeah. So still and teaching. Teaching and one daughter and then another one few years later. So that all happened. Yeah.

Adam Trainer

How have you found juggling having a family with being a gigging musician?

Sue Kingham

Very interesting. Still had Hothouse and that stuff going on at the same time. Gigs and teaching and teaching from home too. So. And multitasking and you know, sort of parenting, improvising as parents.

And so wow, I'm thankful for babysitters and so it's huge. But you do it. You just do it. Yeah, but things changed when my marriage stopped working. Let's say. And so then when it got really tough and because, you know, my daughters were nine and 12 and

so that was hard. And that's when I stopped being able to do gigs. It was just it's just all too much for a while there did a little bit, but yeah, sorry.

Adam Trainer

How long did you take a break for?

Sue Kingham

Well, gosh, I did a little bit here and there, but I really I didn't do a lot, but I kept singing and I kept teaching and I got really involved with the Institute for Vocal Advancement before that speech level singing. So I'm also incredibly passionate about singing and technique and really learned heaps through those organisations. I've been with the Institute for Vocal Advancement since 2013. And I absolutely love what I do.

Adam Trainer

Can you talk a little bit about, a little bit more about that organisation?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, well, it's actually an organisation that trains singing teachers. And I've done a heap of studies like probably 13 years to get to where I am in it and I'm called an ambassador and a mentor teacher. That means I've done all those years and ambassador means I can teach the teachers. But the thing about that organisation is it's singing technique has changed a lot over the last, say, what, 7 years?

As science has started to catch up with what's actually happening in the voice, still can't see exactly everything because it's hard to get things down there when you, you know, like when you're actually singing. But we know a whole lot more now and so that's been really interesting. The master teachers who look after the education in that organisation are constantly evolving the education and refining it and changing the courses to kind of better suit different categories of people who want to be teachers. And it's just it's a really wonderful organisation. It's international. I went to many conferences overseas for that and of course, that all stopped with COVID. Then we learn how to do it online, as everyone did. And yeah that's been fantastic and huge and that's a big part of my life because I just love it. I love helping people get their voices together and of all types and ages.

Adam Trainer

So are you sort of the representative of that organisation within Perth?

Sue Kingham

No, I have been, I was, I passed that on to one of the other teachers. But I was for many, many, years and brought a lot of those master teachers here. So I did that for about 10, 13 years. I'm sounding very old.

Adam Trainer

So bringing them out to run workshops or to - -?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, they would come, they would go around the world in the beginning and they would come and like work with the teachers and I have a studio at the back of my place and they do that with the teachers who are learning in the community. And also I

was lucky to be able to use the facilities at WAAPA, all right. So they would do masterclasses there and get people in. I'd have to do all the advertising and all that. So all the stuff I learned from WAYJO and from Hothouse and running bands, I could use for that. And so they'd come and to be educated in person is fantastic. I mean, that was such a luxury. And then they'd come back later in the year and test and more education.

Adam Trainer

Well, speaking of education, you taught at WAAPA for over two decades. How important do you feel WAAPA is to the local jazz scene, for example? And obviously that, I imagine would have changed over your time as a student there to being a teacher.

Sue Kingham

Oh, I think it's immensely important. It's incredible I'm really interested to see what they're doing now because I believe that what you can do is plan your mixed genres, which to me, that's what jazz is about. It's always borrowed and used, it's what people hear and it's about creativity. So I haven't seen any kind of results from that just because I haven't gone and seen them and I think they only started this year. But I'm going to be watching that because I just think it's fascinating and that's good, That's different, of course. Yeah. It's very important.

Adam Trainer

How about the theory and the practical or musical side of things versus preparing people for careers in music or thinking about how to actually be a professional musician?

Sue Kingham

In terms of?

Adam Trainer

In terms of what you learn at WAAPA or what being at WAAPA is about?

Sue Kingham

See, I don't know what it's about now.

Adam Trainer

Well I guess for you as a student and a teacher, not necessarily from a contemporary perspective but when you were there.

Sue Kingham

When I was there?

Adam Trainer

Yeah.

Sue Kingham

Oh, well, it was just a whole other world for me then. But now as a teacher, I know a lot because I've got some students who are like in the industry and wanting to know more about the voice and wanting to care for their voice, wanting to know and trying to get

into the industry, kids in high school doing musical theatre or something. And they want to know how to get on stage and beat the nerves to perform and that sort of stuff. And I definitely have a lot of input to give them just to share with them about how to make it work out there. But still, it's still a different time.

Adam Trainer

Do you mean how to make it work when you're on stage?

Sue Kingham

All sorts of levels, say on stage how to make it work.

Adam Trainer

Fitting into your life?

Sue Kingham

Particularly for the on stage and how to look after voice and how to maintain that, because I really have students into all sorts of different genres. So that makes it interesting. And also just sometimes, you know, how you manage your life while you're trying to multitask, all that stuff. But all you really want to do and you wish you were paid for it is to just sit down and be creative and jam with people who you're trying to create stuff with. I mean, I still would like to do that. It's pulling me. I still want to do that.

Adam Trainer

And I feel like that's a lifelong pull that'll likely never stop, right?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, I think so. I find myself, now I feel like I still want to write songs. Yeah. There's always so many things going on in your life.

Adam Trainer

I don't think that pull to create ever goes away.

Sue Kingham

No. And that's a good thing. Yeah. I think you just got to do what you love.

Adam Trainer

Yes, absolutely. Well, the only other question I had for you is just thinking about whether these are your influences or people, individuals that you feel have had a significant contribution to the scene because part of what they're trying to do is - - is celebrate not only these organisations - - but the people who've driven them or the people who've driven the jazz scene. And you've obviously mentioned a number of names already. But who do you consider are your major influences or broad influences on the West Australian jazz scene? Firstly, from a musical perspective.

Sue Kingham

Musical.

Adam Trainer

The way that others have approached the question is thinking about who have been the really significant musicians, those who maybe have succeeded or have had global careers, but it doesn't necessarily have to be. You can tackle the question from however, whatever, perspective you'd like.

Sue Kingham

Influence on me?

Adam Trainer

Who are the people that have influenced you? Who are those people?

Sue Kingham

Who are they? Golly gosh.

Adam Trainer

We mentioned Helen Mathews.

Sue Kingham

Definitely, definitely, yeah.

Adam Trainer

So what do you think of Helen's, how would you I guess sum up Helen's contribution to the scene?

Sue Kingham

Helen was, you know, before me and just really I feel like she obviously she had that passion and she wanted to do it and did it and that, I'm just being kind of first. I mean, I'm sure there were probably other people around also, June Smith, she was fantastic and taking chances and trying to bring it to the community. All those things that Helen did that was really amazing and definitely an influence because all the things that she did definitely had input into all those organisations too. And PJS. And she gave me the opportunity to sing for the Ladies of Jazz from 1985 year after year. And because I didn't have a great singing teacher, Pat put me in touch with Helen and we met up and she gave me really good information and good feedback. And so that was really good. Yeah, so definitely Helen I think Pat Crichton, I admire him and it was good working with him and he really, maybe he's been forgotten sometimes I think, but he really contributed so much to what was happening. And then you get other people.

Adam Trainer

Sue, sorry, just so that we can clarify Pat was essentially in the artistic director role at WAYJO?

Sue Kinghamh

Yeah, and sort of head of the course when it first started for many years.

Adam Trainer

At WAAPA?

Sue Kingham

Yeah, yeah. And then also then people like Graham Wood, I mean, so tragic. He was such an amazing player. And not that I got around to all the gigs or anything, but I totally admired him and loved having him play whenever he played in one of our bands. Who else? People like Carl Mackey and Troy Roberts, who I really admire. And that's really doing it. Living the dream and making that work. Wow. So you meant back here though. You know who else was great for me with Garry Lee, I have to say, because Garry also in the early days, he was a tutor there too, and he gave me lots of opportunities to sing in bands with him. So lucky me.

Adam Trainer

I guess just to go back to Graham, obviously the contribution of building an entire venue that was dedicated specifically to jazz.

Sue Kingham

Oh yeah, the Ellington, absolutely.

Adam Trainer

And we were talking a little earlier off camera. About that change I suppose from having that big weekly night that the PJS ran to there. Then being this venue that was dedicated to jazz seven nights a week.

Sue Kingham

Yeah.

Adam Trainer

And obviously that's been a fairly key sort of shift I suppose. And doesn't necessarily need to be framed in terms of a positive or a negative, but I guess just different opportunities for gigging for musicians. Maybe it's perhaps a little more diverse and a little more sort of spread around in terms of venues now.

Sue Kingham

In other venues?

Adam Trainer

Yeah.

Sue Kingham

Yeah, there's a bit of that happening. I do feel that over the last few years I actually got to even do a gig there this year, which was amazing, a whole night by myself. So that was great. But I am, I've been like really blown away by what Ellington has achieved really, and how it gives artists that are really happening today somewhere to sing. Not sing, but play.

Adam Trainer

Either/or.

Sue Kingham

Either/or, yeah, and it is diversifying more. And that's probably a really healthy thing too. I mean, and also there's the Duke of George, I find that does a similar thing. So I think they're great, it's really healthy. I like that for sure.

Adam Trainer

That diversification that you mentioned, obviously I feel as though perhaps jazz is maybe sitting alongside other genres a little more than perhaps it had previously.

Sue Kingham

Yeah, not so exclusive. But then you see, like you go to something, as I said, I went to give Chris Foster a plug. His trio's performance on for release of his album right, on Saturday. And it was just packed and they're all jazz fans, so you can still do that there, which is really important that you can do that there. And then they might be followed with a dance act or a funk act or something, which is, I think is all healthy and I like all sorts of music. So it doesn't bother me.

Adam Trainer

Well, in a sense. it's kind of coming full circle in terms of your very multifaceted interests in music and influences in music. That feels like a logical place to finish. Unless there's anything else that you would like to mention or think we need to add that we've missed.

Sue Kingham

No, I don't think so. I think we've dived deep in there, yeah.

Adam Trainer

We have indeed and it's been a great conversation. So thanks very much for your time, Sue.

Sue Kingham

Thanks for the opportunity. Thank you.