1915 Started life in 1915 as the NSW State Conservatorium of Music – one of Australia’s first conservatoriums. Its inaugural Director was Belgian conductor and violinist Henri Verbrughen, who convinced the government of the day to fund Australia’s first full-time orchestra (Conservatorium Orchestra), and introduced the first quartet-in-residence. Enrolments in the first year numbered 320 single study students and a handful of full-time students. They graduated four years later with a diploma.

1919 A specialist High School was introduced in 1919, establishing a model for music education that straddled secondary and tertiary and community sectors – a template that remains to this day.

1920 The Conservatorium Orchestra remained NSW’s main orchestra throughout the 1920s, being joined at the helm by the ABC Symphony Orchestra (later the Sydney Symphony Orchestra).

1935 In 1935, the Con added to its professional associations with the founding of the Conservatorium Opera School, an initiative of Con Director Dr Edgar Bainton.

1948 Under Sir Eugene Goossens (Director from 1948 to 1955), the Con produced opera works including Verdi’s Falstaff and Othello, Wagner’s Mastersingers and The Valkyries and Debussy’s Pelléas et Mélisande, which many experts contend helped attain world class status for the organisation.

1957 Between 1957 and 1971 (under respective Directors Sir Bernard Heinze and Joseph Post), the Con expanded its number of salaried staff, opened a branch Conservatorium in Newcastle and added buildings on the northern and eastern sides of the Francis Greenway-designed edifice (formerly Governor Lachlan Macquarie’s stables and servants’ quarters).

1962 A major shift in the Con’s educational profile occurred in the period 1972-1982. Director Rex Hobcroft ushered in degree programs and a broad visiting artists program, paving the way for a “Music University” comprising performance (both classical and jazz), music education, composition and musicology.

1982 Substantial structural change ensued during the tenures of Directors John Painter and John Hopkins (1982 to 85 and 1986 to 1991 respectively), Principal Professor Ronald Smart (1992-94) and acting Principal Professor Ros Pesman (1994-95). These included amalgamation with the University of Sydney; a major review of operations and funding; and the development of a new leadership regime.

1997 The pressing issue of the future permanent accommodation for the Conservatorium – a key recommendation of the Operations Review – moved from discussion to action in 1997 with the decision of the Carr Government to fund a significant upgrade of the present site.

2005 Began multi-year scheme to bring leading world performers and scholars into Faculty. Introduction of comprehensive professional ensemble programs, Conducting program and PhD in performance. Led by Dean and Principal Kim Walker, an historic merger of the Music Department and the Conservatorium was accomplished, forging direct links between scholars and performers.


2008 The introduction of a new internationally-benchmarked UG curriculum with nine new degrees - including BA and Honours program as well as DMA.
FACT SHEET

THE CON

Website
www.thecon.com.au
www.music.usyd.edu.au

Location and Facilities
The Con, on Macquarie Street, is located in the centre of the Sydney CBD’s cultural precinct – bordered by the Royal Botanical Gardens and within eyeshot of the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge.

The world class facilities include more than:
- 153 teaching studios,
- 150 pianos,
- Five recital halls,
- A library with 100,000 scores, 30,000 books, 12,000 CDs/DVDs, 12,000 vinyl recordings, print/electronic journals, microfilms and internet streaming.

Additional offices are housed in the Seymour Theatre, adjacent to the main campus of the University of Sydney.

Mission
The Sydney Conservatorium of Music is a cultural catalyst inspiring the study, research, creation and performance of music in all its forms.

To prepare gifted students of all backgrounds and nationalities for a professional career in music.

To prepare students for artistic, innovative performance and scholarship at the highest level of excellence.

To foster lifelong commitment to music and culture and to provide enjoyment and enlightenment to all people.

Curriculum
The Con has comprehensive degrees in Performance, Composition, Jazz, Music Education, Musicology, Conducting and Pedagogy, from undergraduate through DMA and PhD levels.

Emerging fields include Audio and Media, Early Music, Piano Tuning and Orchestral/Ensemble Professional Preparation, Vocal-Piano Pedagogy.

The 16 study units embrace: Arts and Cultural Inquiry; Brass; Composing and Music Technology; Conducting; Ensemble Studies; Jazz; Keyboard; Music Education; Musicology; Opera; Organ; Percussion, Strings; Vocal; Woodwind; and Arts Music.

Enrolments in 2007 totalled 865 full-time tertiary students and 3,000 pre-tertiary students from 23 nations and all States of Australia.

Part-time graduate enrolments are encouraged, and research students account for almost 20 per cent of all students.

The Open Academy hosts some 2,800 pre-tertiary students, making it one of the biggest of its type in the world. Some 88 per cent of students – some as young as eight years old - progress into tertiary music study and the profession.

The Con has some of the highest learning and teaching scores at the University of Sydney.

It is the only Australian faculty to host two Fulbright Scholars (in 2006).

Programs provide for 4,000 students to perform in concerts in Sydney, across NSW and internationally (Asia, Europe and the USA).

Masterclasses frequently bring world-class artists and scholars to SCM.
Staff

Teaching and administration staff (full-time, part-time and temporary) totals some 350, servicing 16 academic and performance units.

The majority of teaching staff members are leaders in their fields of performance, composition, music education and musicology.

Many have close associations with leading Australian cultural organisations, including the Sydney Symphony, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Opera Australia, Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Australian Brandenburg Orchestra.

Concerts

The series now numbers in the order of 1000 free and ticketed events, including:
- Monday Evening Cocktail Hour Recitals
- Wednesday Lunchbreak Concerts
- Sensational Sundays recitals by faculty, students and guest artists
- Conductors’ Series
- Jazz in the Café series
- Performances by two orchestras, baroque ensemble, contemporary music ensembles, jazz ensembles, wind band, two choirs and Opera
- Three operas in the Music Workshop
- Open Academy Concerts

The Opera unit has given more than 600 performances of over 150 different works in five languages.

The Con was not only the birthplace of Australia’s first opera series, but over the years its student projects have spawned some of the nation’s most prominent ensembles - Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra and Musica Viva.

Alumni

Graduates of the Con can be found in many major performing ensembles and teaching academies throughout Australia and the world.

They include some of Australia’s most respected and admired musicians, including:

Leadership

Kim Walker became Dean and Principal of SCM in 2004. Since 1994 she has been a full tenured Professor in leading research universities where she has held several leadership roles, including at Indiana University: Director of Arts and Cultural Outreach in the Office of the President; Associate Dean of Research in the Office of the Vice-President for Research; Associate Dean in the Office of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculties; and Director of “Arts Week”.

Ms Walker spent 20 years in Europe performing, directing festivals and teaching the highest level international students. During that time she worked with many of the finest orchestras and leading conductors.

She is one of the world’s foremost woodwind performers, and as a scholar has produced 23 solo recordings for DECCA, GALLO, Regent and Collins; published editions with Musica Rara and has more than 70 unpublished works in world libraries.

She was educated at the Interlochen Arts Academy; the Curtis Institute of Music; the Conservatoire de Musique de Geneve, obtaining the 1er Prix de Virtuosite; the Basel Scuola Cantorum for the study of early music; and the Stanford Graduate School of Business EPNL program.

Her articles and lectures on bassoon repertoire, historical reed-making, and contemporary bassoon repertoire are highly regarded.

Funding

- NSW and Federal Government Grants
- Fees and subscriptions
- Individual Donors
- Corporate sponsorship

Guided Tours

Tours are conducted on Wednesdays from 12.30pm.