

Home : Parish & School News : Sandhurst alive with the sound of music!



Sandhurst alive with the sound of music!

Monday 30 May 2011

Music has always been an integral part of the Catholic faith; a way to teach, a way to learn, a way to rejoice. Now students in the Sandhurst Diocese are discovering a new-found excitement and passion for singing through an innovative partnership.

Ms Phil Billington, Director of Catholic Education Sandhurst, said that she has long held the belief that "the Arts are integral to human development and especially within Catholic schools". It was with this belief, along with a desire to awaken and develop "the God-given gifts of our students and teachers", that she set out to develop a unique choral arts program for the schools in the Sandhurst Diocese.



In 2009, Ms Billington met with the Directors of a3– Australian Arts Alive, a branch of the Australian School of Performing Arts (ASPA), and together they developed a program to provide song and movement workshops, culminating in a final, massed 'Festival of the Sacred', for all grade 5 and 6 students and their teachers in the Sandhurst Diocese Best known for their Australian Girls Choir and Aus Girls Dance programs, ASPA has been delivering exceptional performing arts education, both in Australia and overseas, for 27 years. By engaging a3 to work in Sandhurst's schools, CEO Sandhurst have provided their students with the opportunity to access specialised music and dance education. Teachers have also been equipped with the skills and knowledge to continue to build sustainable performing arts programs at their school and to incorporate the arts into other disciplines.

The program consists of popular and sacred songs, fun and high energy dance routines, along with games and activities to develop the students' performance skills, confidence and teamwork. Dr Kevin Messer, Principal at Holy Rosary School in Heathcote said: "The impact of the choral program on the 5/6 students at Holy Rosary, Heathcote has been extraordinary. We have examples of students coming to school when they could have had a day off because they didn't want to miss out on the session, students whose demeanour has become totally animated during session times. As one student summed it up in conversation: 'They make singing fun'."

As well as a new-found love of singing, students have also experienced growing confidence, teamwork and a sense of shared achievement. Research also suggests that singing in a group helps to improve cognitive function, language skills, spatial awareness and reduces stress and wards off depression.

Sally Gawley, a tutor from a3 said: "The kids' ability to learn and memorise lyrics, use their faces to tell a story, focus on a conductor and stand confidently on stage have all improved from the first year of the program – it's incredibly rewarding to see them perform at the Festival of the Sacred at the end of the term's work".

The response that teachers and a3 staff have had from students has also been overwhelming. Tom from St Mary's in Myrtleford participated in the first year of the program and told a3: "I could say thank you a thousand times for what you did. I have never had so much fun in a music lesson...You taught me how to sing and dance in a fun way."

After the success of the program's first year, CEO Sandhurst committed to the continuation and growth of the choral arts program with an even greater emphasis on building teacher capacity and student performance standards. Students were extended with more challenging repertoire and choreography, as well as vocal solos and speaking parts, while teachers had the opportunity to conduct one of the groups.

Managing Director of ASPA, Nicole Muir, said: "The partnership between ASPA and CEO Sandhurst has realised our long-held dream to take our non-traditional, highly engaging approach to choral music into schools. The teachers and students of Sandhurst have embraced us with open arms and, as we enter year three, we are thrilled by the mutually rewarding nature of this dynamic program. News of the success of this program has spread to other diocese and CEO Sandhurst is seen to be leading the way with the creation of this strategic partnership."

By forging this strategic partnership with ASPA, CEO Sandhurst is now in its third year of offering an unique, enriched learning experience for its students and teachers and Ms Billington could not be more delighted: "Staff and students are alive with the experience! It has re-ignited the Arts in our schools. a3 are exceptional partners - exceptional standards of

KAIROS DIGITAL EDITION	HARTBEAT
PERSPECTIVE	GOSPEL REFLECTIONS
FILM REVIEWS	BOOK REVIEWS
WHAT'S ON	SUBMIT A STORY



delivery, open to our needs and our ideas - an extraordinary partnership that is life-giving for all involved!".



cam.org.au

Tel: 03 9926 5677

Archbishop

- [Biography](#)
- [Coat of Arms](#)
- [Homilies](#)
- [Pastoral Letters and Messages](#)
- [Hartbeat](#)
- [Charitable Fund](#)
- [Bushfire Appeal](#)

Church in Melbourne

- [About Us](#)
- [Bishops](#)
- [Parishes & Mass Times](#)
- [Boundaries](#)
- [Facts](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Catholic Faith

- [Sacraments](#)
- [Church Teaching](#)
- [Church Documents](#)
- [Faith Education](#)
- [Catholic Heritage](#)
- [Prayers](#)
- [Reflections](#)

News & Events

- [News & Events](#)
- [Melbourne News](#)
- [Parish & School News](#)
- [News](#)
- [What's On](#)
- [What the Pope said](#)
- [Kairos Digital Edition](#)
- [Media Room](#)

Parishes

- [Contacts & Mass Times](#)
- [St Patrick's Cathedral](#)
- [St Francis'](#)
- [St Augustine's](#)
- [St Mary Star of the Sea](#)

Staff Access

- [Outlook Webmail](#)
- [CAM Online](#)
- [Parish Online](#)
- [Secure Share](#)
- [Service Desk](#)

Links

- [Organisations and Movements](#)
- [Education](#)
- [News Services and Publications](#)
- [Health Care](#)
- [Welfare Services](#)
- [Television & Radio Links of Interest](#)
- [Australian Catholic Bishops Conference](#)
- [Catholic Church in Australia](#)
- [Vatican](#)