



We asked some of our longstanding staff to write for a Special Newsletter in our 35th year.

Schools are the sum of their students. Students at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School (VCASS) are easy to respect, not only for their commitment and success as young people but because they are wonderful to work with, as leaders and major contributors to the vibrancy of the Southbank Arts Precinct as well as in their careers as they unfold.

Those of us in the arts know the power of our work, but sometimes, while other successful secondary schools plough ahead with a single-minded mathematics and science focus, with sport and/or musical theatre as co-curricula activities, our success is underestimated and a little misunderstood.

In 2012 we are difficult to ignore as we are one of the most flourishing schools in Australia for more than just our specialist program, and we have the hard data to prove it.

Great educators know it is not just data though and schools are multi-layered places. My vision is that this is an outstanding place to be and that every day we are *excited* to be here working together, loving what we do and supporting each other. It is also my view that teaching is a deeply human experience and a school must harness this.

Back in 1977 it had been an aspiration of the then VCA Director, Lenton Parr, that the Victorian College of the Arts should have a secondary school where students who had potential in music or dance could have their talents nurtured, regardless of socio-economic factors. VCASS still embraces this value.

The history is captivating. When I read through the archives to see notes written by Principal Jack Pitt and Director Lenton Parr as they map out their school and explore, debate and discuss the myriad of issues its establishment raised, I can sense their excitement.

I am amazed at what they achieved and it is still hard to believe VCASS came into being in just three short months. The other interesting thing has been the shared participation in debates and changes in the delivery and financing of secondary and tertiary education.

The former Dean of VCA Dance, Anne Woolliams, and the Dean of VCA Music, John Hopkins, were passionate about the training of secondary-age students and we try to live



up to this passion, working hard to never compromise our artistic values. We also do not compromise our role as an educator and this has enhanced our recent success.

In recognition and honour of these founders of our school, VCASS names its three most prestigious awards after them. The Senior Academic Award is 'The Lenton Parr Award', the Senior Dance Award is 'The Anne Woolliams Award' and the Senior Music Award is 'The John Hopkins Award'. These awards are hotly contested and popular with students.

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Caption: Mr Simpson welcomed one of our founders Professor John Hopkins to the school in 2012

Mr Simpson, School Captains Bella Scott and Jacob Edmonds 2012



2009 saw our independence from the VCA and a move from the Southbank site we shared for most of our 30-year history. In June 2009 we relocated to our new facility which ranks among Australia's finest school buildings and was awarded an international prize from the OECD in 2011. The support of the Victorian Government and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has been critical and recognises our hard work and integrity and the necessity to train in the arts from a younger age. Our key sponsors, The Invergowrie Foundation, Robert Salzer Foundation and The Austral Salon continue to support these wonderful young people developing in the arts. We thank them sincerely.

We need to acknowledge the enlightened leaders in the Technical School Division in the 1970s, the ongoing and serious commitment of various governments from the left and right and those tireless music and dance educators who gave us their very best and kept our passion alive. Thank you to our students and alumni who spread our message and the parents who trusted us with the education and training of their children.

In 2012, our 35th year, our school is stronger than ever. As Head of Dance, Tim Storey's articulation of our 'Dance Artistic Vision' has been a lightning rod for dialogue in the school and challenges dance trainers to think about training in a modern context. The Head of Music, Michael Sargeant, has presided over a 20% expansion of our music students which means for the first time our enrolment in music meets international benchmarks. Head of Academic Studies, Paul Nucci, continues the transformation of our approach to academic studies and the Head of Student Services, Neil Adam, continues to deliver a highly focussed student support package. The Assistant Principal, Hilary Bland, and I continue to articulate our vision for the school and what others can learn from us, and we plan increasingly to make an impact on other schools. Our staff remain impressively committed and hardworking and their focus on our Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles is exemplary. Teachers are a school's lynch pin.

In this 35th year I want to celebrate our principals: Foundation Principal Jack Pitt, Graham Goetz, Acting Principal Alistair Gunn and Sylvia Kolarik. Schools are the sum of their students but leaders create the environment where the equation works. The finest schools have a history of outstanding leadership and we are no exception.

Mostly, though, I want to salute the magnificent arts of dance and music, the wonder we see each day in our students' eyes and our joy in bringing these things together and watching it flow through the years. Bravo VCASS, three cheers, Bravo!

Colin Simpson
Principal 2004-



School History

Founding principal Mr. Jack Pitt said: *"It had long been a cherished ambition of Lenton Parr's that the VCA should have a Secondary School where students who had talent or potential in music or dance could have their talent developed, regardless of socio-economic factors."*

At the time of the proposal to form the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) Secondary School the education system as a rule did not generally take up the challenge of music and dance so the Founding Director Lenton Parr (Artist and Director of the National Gallery School) used his contacts in the Education Department to move the idea forward and together with the support of Mr. Len Watts, Director of Technical Education got the go ahead in 1977 to start the school.

The school opened in 1978 and got under way well. The music program was organised by Keith Field and June Ralfe, who taught music. In dance Jan Stripling and Patty Cox looked after things and dance classes were held at the Ballet Victoria Studios in Fitzroy. The academic staff was drawn from excellent teachers Jack Pitt knew from South Melbourne Technical School. The VCA staff were very supportive of the secondary school and were instrumental in its success. In particular the Founding Deans of the School Dance and Music, Anne Woolliams and John Hopkins were dedicated to the training of secondary age students.

In the late 1970s the Australian Ballet School was taking students from the age of about fifteen to receive highly specialised classical training. Ballet Victoria had gone into receivership and there was an obvious need for another outstanding dance training institution in Melbourne. The needs of talented music students were also not being met and the establishment of the secondary school was a key part of developing music in Australia.

In 1980 the school moved to 'Lanes Motors' in Sturt Street before returning to the portables at the VCA. Even Sir Roy Grounds' former offices at the National Gallery of Victoria were used for teaching. In 1981 a closer relationship was formed between the college and the school when the school was incorporated as a Secondary School under the umbrella of the VCA – as a fifth school of the College. At this stage the name was changed from the VCA Technical School (VCATS) to the VCA Secondary School (VCASS).

In 1985 the 'Elizabeth Murdoch Building' was refurbished by the Education Department and the secondary school was given office and teaching space in that building. 1993 saw the removal of almost all the portables and in 1997 the secondary school moved next to the stables. The Department of Education and the Victorian Government approved a permanent and substantial building on Miles and Moore Street Southbank for the VCA Secondary School in 2004. The new school was occupied in July 2009.

The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School is proud of its contribution of the artistic and cultural life of Australia.

An Exciting, Creative and Idealistic Education Endeavour by Liliane Cummins

Back in 1977, and certainly before that date, discussions had taken place between the Education Department of Victoria and the visionary Director of the VCA, Lenton Parr. It had long been Lenton's dream to have a secondary school attached to the VCA, for the training of young, talented dancers and musicians. The vision and aim was of a school where students with talent and/or potential could have this further developed, regardless of socio-economic background, combining the necessary training and a sound general academic education.

This vision began to be realised in late 1977, when the 'go ahead' was given by the then Technical Schools' Division of the Education Department. Mr Jack Pitt, then Principal of South Melbourne Technical School, and deeply involved and interested in the Arts, was appointed the first Principal of VCATS: Victorian College of the Arts Technical School. The technical school model was seen as ideal, as it allowed the training in specialist subjects, eg plumping or sheet metal, and in this case, music or dance!

It was a time of hope and ideals. Anything seemed possible, and in the event it was: after an intensive four day Seminar at the Diplomat Motel in St Kilda, where staff met and discussed the aims of the School with Lenton Parr, Len Watt (then head of the Technical School Division), John Hopkins, Keith Field (respectively Dean of and Senior Lecturer in, the Music School), Tony Delves (Director of the CAE and a previous Principal of the progressive Huntingdale Technical School), Gerry Tickell, a leading educationist, and Jan Sprirling (formerly of the Stuttgart Ballet and a Senior lecturer in Dance at the VCAs temporary premises in Nicholson Street), among others. It was an exciting educational venture we were embarking on, and the sense of commitment and excitement was almost palpable at this stimulating Seminar, where we considered the sorts of courses and issues pertinent to the Secondary School were about to establish.

It was at about this time that Anne Woolliams was appointed as the first Dean of Dance. Anne had been Artistic Director at the Australian Ballet and was a distinguished, gifted and highly respected teacher. With John Hopkins, Anne Woolliams and Jack Pitt at the helm, and a team comprising dedicated, enthusiastic staff and students, the school was in dynamic hands.

One of my strongest memories is the sense of total involvement and of 'ownership' felt (or so it seemed to me) by those involved with the school. We wanted it to be a success; staff worked hard and willingly to establish the very best courses possible, backed by the ever present support of Lenton Parr and Jack Pitt, the later working energetically to establish buildings, to forge ever closer links with the VCA and much other support.

I believe that Jack knew the mettle and resourcefulness of his staff, many of whom he had requested to join him at the VCATS. After all, resourcefulness was necessary: when the School officially opened there were no buildings,

classrooms, books or blackboards. Classes were held in the Orchestral Studio, in VCA rooms, and in the Nissan huts that dotted the Campus at that time. I well remember holding Literature classes under the big tree in front of the Grant Street Theatre, students would, for a short time, be reading from books kindly lent by nearby schools.

The sense of commitment of students and their parents to the school was strong and really quite moving. Here was a wonderful venture which fulfilled a need in the community, but it was untried and yet to prove itself. It concerned itself with quality of the highest order, with 'excellence' in three very demanding areas, Music, Dance and Academic achievement. Yet enthusiasm and faith in the school were enormously strong and hard, stimulating work by administration, staff and students was willing: there wasn't time or inclination in this context, for anything else except to make it all a vivid success.

The models for the School were the top institutions of its type overseas and nationally: the Royal Ballet School, the Yehudi Menuhin School, the Conservatorium High School in Sydney. But, of course, the VCATS – later VCASS (Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School) – evolved its own culture and atmosphere and produced performers of the highest calibre, some of whom can be found in the major national and international orchestras, dance companies and ensembles such as the Netherlands Dance Company, the Royal Ballet Company, the Royal Danish Ballet, Meryl Tankard, Sydney Dance Company, the Berlin and the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra and the Australian Chamber Orchestra among many others.

As is natural, over time staff changed but, on the whole the aims always remained the same. We moved location several times: in 1979 to Sturt Street, then back to the Campus in about 1984, when we were housed in the Matron's House (of the old Police Hospital), Roy Grounds' former offices in the National Gallery and several portables.

We moved again in 1986 to the 1926 building on St Kilda Road, occupying part of the second and third levels as well as portables. By that time, Mr Graeme Goetz was appointed Principal. Currently classrooms are located on the third level of the White Building as well as "H" Block, the old Sculpture studios. Excitingly, planning for a new building on the "H" Block was launched by Mrs Sylvia Kolarik, the then Principal, who worked energetically to make this long held dream a reality for the next century!

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The contribution made by the Secondary School has been enormous, and continues to be impressive: not only do VCASS students do well in Arts related areas, but they also achieve excellent results academically, gaining entry into the major tertiary institutions such as Melbourne and Monash Universities among a host of others.

It was a privilege to work with the young artists of tomorrow who will, and already sometimes do, express, reflect and enrich our environment in tangible and intangible ways. The subtleties about our world, about human emotions; the 'sub-plots' of existence and of life itself can be rewardingly and sometimes sublimely expressed by a creative dancer or musician, trained and educated by the best teachers that are available. The history and course of the Secondary School reflect the greatest commitment to education generally, to Music and to Dance. It has made, as already affirmed, an enormous and a significant contribution, and all who have been connected with the VCASS have felt it to be special. And indeed it is!

**LILIANE CUMMINS, FOUNDATION STAFF MEMBER,
SENIOR ENGLISH AND LITERATURE TEACHER UNTIL 2002**



VCATS Concerts by Alistair Gunn

It is good that we are again mounting major concerts at well-known public forums. During the 80's to early 90's we used initially Melba Hall, then the Robert Blackwood Hall for our major public concerts.

These were well attended by more than just VCAT(S) family and friends. Up until the refurbishment of the National Gallery, we gave 2 major (1.5-2.00hrs) concerts per year there on Sunday afternoons. They were always very well attended. We also presented several concerts at the Concert Hall including a 'schools concert', conducted by John Hopkins and another where our orchestra was used for a TV and tourist promotional video for Victoria's 150th anniversary.

The orchestra provided a significant amount of music for a VCA/VCASS dance performance at the PlayBox theatre, including the Shostakovich 'Festival Overture' - very technically demanding. Some of the other orchestral works I remember included Dvorak 8th Symphony, Rachmaninov 2nd piano concerto, Rossini 'Thieveing Magpie' and Brahms 'Tragic' Overtures, Elgar 'Coronation Ode', Mozart sinfonia concertante for violin & viola and Chaminade concertino for flute & orchestra (a tribute to female composers). The choir under June Ralfe was always stunning. The Alumni I meet from this time, often see this as the actual musical high point. The reverence they pay her speaks for itself.

However, finding a viable and appropriate performing venue over times has often has been very difficult.

I think that moving to Melbourne's premier concert/recital centre was a great (and bold) move which will do much to project VCASS onto the public arena.

I congratulate all students and staff for this significant achievement.

**ALISTAIR GUNN, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AND ACTING PRINCIPAL
1993**



A Reflection of the Dance Program at VCASS during the 1980s by Janne Blanch

VCA Student 1981 and 1982, Staff member 1983 -

My association with the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School began at the beginning of 1981 following my retirement as a Senior Soloist with the Australian Ballet. I had worked with the Founding Dean of the School of Dance, Anne Woolliams when she was the Artistic Director of the Australian Ballet and was greatly impressed by her passion for dance. In particular, I admired her ability to nurture and teach dancers of all ages. As I was eager to undertake my teacher training under her guidance, Anne invited me to join the 2nd year of the Diploma of Arts (teaching) offered by the VCA School of Dance.

At this time VCASS was closely aligned to the VCA with Years 10 – 12 working with Tertiary students in the main building and Years 7 – 9 and academic classes conducted in the then Mercedes building in Sturt Street.

As a student I learnt so much not only from Anne herself, but also from wonderful mentors including Nanette Hassall who introduced me to the world of contemporary dance, Helen Cameron, an incredibly insightful educationalist and Elaine Rae whose unique sense of humour made the study of the children's training syllabus a lasting experience. These wonderful teachers also taught in VCASS.

Under the guidance of Anne, Helen and Elaine, I taught current Leading Teacher Steven McTaggart amongst other prominent alumni such as Greg Horsman who went on to become the first Principal of the The Australian Ballet to have originated from VCASS.

We were surrounded by the vibrancy and artistic energy of the VCA and its surroundings. All students attended orchestral concerts at the School of Music, then under the direction of John Hopkins, walked down to the police stables to watch the horses being trained – Anne thought their training wasn't dissimilar to the training of dancers!

Year 11 and 12 students were taken to the National Art Gallery next door for lectures in the History of Art with Janet Prideaux and all enjoyed the close proximity of musicians, actors and painters who often came together at various places around the campus to practice their particular art.

Following graduation in 1983, I was offered the position as Artistic Assistant to Anne Woolliams which gave me the opportunity to teach across all levels from the children of VCASS through to the VCA degree students, in addition to rehearsing and choreographing works for performances and assisting with the administration of the School of Dance.

Maintaining contact with the industry has always been of prime importance and throughout these years the School enjoyed a wonderful array of artists visiting for lectures or workshops. Among many in the early years were Graeme Murphy, the great mime artist Marcel Marceau, dance critic Jill Sykes and Flamenco artist Jose D'ueta.

In addition, Anne Woolliams often coached Principals from the The Australian Ballet in the John Cranko works at the School of Dance studios. This link to the company at this time and the diverse artistic environment of the VCA provided an invaluable inspiration and experience for the young VCASS students.

An important entity linking the VCA and VCASS during the 1980's was the 'Vic Arts Dance Company', consisting of year 11 and 12 students and those from the Tertiary course, who travelled throughout Victoria performing and conducting workshops for country children. This link was further enhanced by the opportunity for VCASS students to enter the Diploma course with advanced standing.

Year 11 students were able to enter the first year of the Diploma in Dance and year 12 entered at the second year. The transition of VCASS students into the VCA continued with the instigation of the degree programs in the mid 1980s, although VCASS students were now required to complete year 12. As all staff taught in both the VCA and VCASS programs continuity of training was ensured.

Anne Woolliams was unique in her ability to involve herself fully in the running of the VCASS and VCA courses with equal enthusiasm. Following her retirement in 1987, the new Dean of Dance Garth Welch, followed soon after by Jonathan Taylor, appointed Coordinators of the VCASS Dance Program preferring to focus their energies on the expanding degree and post graduate programs.

The VCASS dance program emerged into the 1990's under the direction of Tim Storey whose energy and artistic insight continued the vision of our founders.

Thirty five years later, in our fantastic new facility, and separated from the VCA, I am still inspired by the depth of talent evident in the students that VCASS attracts and privileged to have the opportunity to work alongside a Principal and staff who continue to uphold the values of the School and are united in their desire to produce a dancer who maintains their artistic individuality and is equipped to pursue the diverse range of options that the dance community has to offer.

JANNE BLANCH, DECEMBER 2012



Reflections on VCASS by Mary Jo Kelly

In late December 1999 I was appointed as VCASS Assistant Head of Music to commence in January 2000. I then headed off on a 5 week music tour to Cuba only to find on my return that since my appointment and the start of the new millennium, the Head of Music had resigned. There I was completely fresh to the role and the school and without a boss. The Assistant Principal at the time, Alistair Gunn stepped-in to guide and support me.

It was a day-by-day initiation, made more difficult by the fact that my office was located in the VCA Music School and Alistair was on the 3rd floor of the Elisabeth Murdoch building. Alistair was wonderful and we bumbled along with the help of Katina Kondos teaching classroom music, Ian Harrison teaching musicianship and choir and Anne Lewitzka accompanying.

In 2000, VCASS music had one office and no administration staff. I remember during that first semester that as well as the normal load of running a busy music department and teaching, I needed to do all the office work. The old adage, ignorance is bliss proved true. I was happy, if very stretched. This was a school with a wonderful spirit, with students who were motivated, engaged and with eager and open minds. Elizabeth Mitchell, VCA Senior Lecturer of Keyboard was appointed as Head of Music for term 2 and eventually in term 3, William Howard was appointed in a permanent position. We gained another office and Toni Lalich was appointed to two days accompanist and music administration for a day and a half and we were rolling.

VCASS has progressed in many ways not the least of which is how we get to concerts. A decade ago it required driving the battered VCA truck to external gigs and battling with lowering down and lifting up the back ramp. I don't think I ever admitted to anyone before about the night I returned back from St John's Chapel to find the harp perilously close to the back door as my knots hadn't held and the back door had started also to lift. There is a reason we now book removalists.

The very first concert that I was involved in organising was the May Ensemble Concert, which in those days was held at South Melbourne Town Hall. Along with the usual orchestral item conducted by Marco van Pagee, I presented the inaugural 'Latin Ensemble' featuring wailing solos by Eamon McNelis on trumpet. Although the Principal, Sylvia Kolarik and others appeared to be enjoying it, Marco exploded on hearing this devil music in the hallowed halls of ANAM. We now wisely separate these ensembles into different events.

When I started at VCASS the annual 'Iwaki Music Concert', which has now graduated to the Melbourne Recital Centre was held in the ABC Iwaki Auditorium on a Sunday afternoon as part of the VCA/ VCASS Open Day. The students performed to an audience who kept coming in and out as they visited different events in and around the campus. One of Sylvia Kolarik's and William Howard's lasting legacies was their aspiration to raise this concert to a

benchmark of excellence and in having the ABC recognise this and agree to record these annual concerts for their 'ABC Young Artists' program.

Being on a university campus had its advantages and disadvantages. The school was unavoidably less regulated as the students' classes were held all throughout the large campus. Yard duty was challenging in such an environment. The students mixed with tertiary students, lecturers and the public and were expected to behave as adults. The secondary students practised next door to tertiary students and undeniably were inspired by them. The biggest downside, however, particularly for the music department was the difficulty in sharing facilities. Much valuable time was wasted in setting up and breaking down equipment. For example if we did a technical run of a major concert in the morning it would have to be dismantled for tertiary ensembles in the afternoon and then re-set before the evening concert. It is interesting to observe that in recent years the mix of music students has slowly changed from having most of its entrants coming in at year 10 and above, to having the majority of new students now coming in at year 7. The current more secure environment has made this possible and progressively puts more demand on places at higher levels.

With the raising of the profile of the annual Iwaki Music Concert the quality and presentation of performances has improved year by year. The major highlight for me was the 25th Anniversary Gala Performance presented at Hamer Hall in 2003. This was truly an amazing collaboration by the dance and music departments. The stunning finale, the Vivaldi "Gloria", was choreographed by Tim Storey and had the entire student body on stage. It feature an alumni orchestra the combined music school choir and all the dancers. Another highlight was year 12 music student James Rushford's composition, "The Collapse of the Fourth" a contemporary work, which arose out of workshops with senior dancers and musicians and choreographer Anna Smith. Yet another was Barbara Warren-Smith's popular show tunes dance extravaganza accompanied by the 'Big Band' players and VCASS principal singers. It was a magical evening summed up best by Aura Go a then final year piano student. Aura, now a nationally acclaimed pianist and conductor and currently studying at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, was only in the choir for the concert. Long after the concert had finished Anne Lewitzka, Toni Lalich and I were doing a final check of the rooms backstage and we found Aura and her friend Elena still in the Green Room. Before shooing them out, we asked them why they were still there when everyone else had gone. Aura said simply, " We just don't want the night to end".

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Reflections on VCASS

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The VCASS music program has gone from strength to strength over the years and it has been immensely rewarding to see so many students leave here full of confidence about their future and to hear later of their many successes. In 2004 I took over as acting Head of Music when William Howard resigned. Michael Sargeant was appointed Head of Music in 2005 and that same year Claire Preston also joined the music department.

I look forward, in the future, to reading Michael's reflections on the journey in the future that continues to unfold under his clear thinking and empathetic leadership.

MARY JO KELLY, ASSISTANT HEAD OF MUSIC

Heather Leviston (aka Ms Lev) 35 years later...

Can it really be so long ago that we gathered for the first time to celebrate the opening of an important new school: the Victorian College of the Arts Technical School? The brainchild of visionary artist, Lenton Parr, VCATS was created to nurture the talents of secondary school students who displayed an aptitude for music and dance. As a school of the VCA, a smooth pathway would be provided into tertiary education and the VCA could be assured of students who would be given the best possible training in their chosen discipline. A crucial element of this was the fact that this training would not be restricted to those who could afford it, but would include those who merited it.

After three and a half decades the value of Lenton Parr's vision has been thoroughly tested and justified. With the merging of the Technical and Secondary divisions of the Department of Education, VCATS became VCASS and our students entered a new competitive arena of academic excellence.

Even before the school doors opened, it was a commonly held belief that an educational institution that devoted so much time to specialist training must have a poor standard of general education. Those who held that opinion have now been proved wrong – repeatedly. For me, it has been a joy to teach in an institution where the arts and academic studies are equally prized.

Many of our students have risen to the top of their fields both here and overseas, but a recent example of success perhaps personifies the capabilities of VCASS students. In October of this year Brenton Spiteri won the highly prestigious Herald Sun aria. Here was a boy from Altona, who became dux of the school, School Captain and an outstanding young tenor with a bright future.

Apart from being a student in my English and French classes, Brenton put up his hand for the inter-school debates. As Debating Co-ordinator, imagine my delight when Brenton and his fellow students Luke Forbes (dancer)

and Nita Rao (singer) reached the final round for the state; here were VCASS students who had successfully debated against some of the top government and private Victorian schools. It took intelligence, flair and stamina to achieve that goal. It also took supportive parents. So many VCASS parents have gone out of their way to help make the school what it is today. At some graduation ceremonies I am as sorry to lose close connections with parents as much as with the students.

VCASS gives students and teachers rich experiences. The laugh-till-you-cry 'Red Faces' performances at the school camp have rubbed shoulders with activities that challenge students (and teachers) to overcome fear and self-doubt. The annual school picnics, formals and many extra-curricula activities provide opportunities to strengthen the ties between members of our school community.

Above all, for me personally, the musical life of the school has been the most profoundly enriching. In particular, a performance of a Telemann concerto in the Sturt Street incarnation of the school provided possibly the most transcendent experience of my life. The joint music-making of Elizabeth Sellars and Simon Fordham on violin and Emma Black on oboe was a revelation. It is no wonder that all three, and others in that group, have gone on to have important careers.

We can feel confident that even those students who do not choose to follow a career in the arts have had an opportunity to nurture their talents and share important experiences. The passion for the arts, which informs life at VCASS, continues to spread out into the wider community making it spiritually richer. For that I will be forever grateful. No wonder it has been hard for me to retire!

HEATHER LEVISTON, DECEMBER 2012



Emma's Story

Just arriving from New Zealand with my family to start a new life in Melbourne I decided to apply for a few jobs and one of them was at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School. I was so excited and also nervous when I received a phone call to come in for an interview Judith Gardiner was the first person to welcome me at the door when I arrived for my interview.

I started working at VCASS on the first day of term 1 in 1988 with just myself and the Bursar in a tiny office at the VCA Campus at St Kilda Road. The first Principal I worked with was Graham Goetz and he had an office next door. It was a weird set up at the VCA building because our office was downstairs and the rest of the staff were on the 2nd floor above us. It is a luxury where we are now comparing to what we had in those days.

I have been working with four different Principals in my time with the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School. Mr Graeme Goetz was my first Principal until he decided to take up an early retirement package. Alistair Gunn stepped in and took over as our Acting Principal while we advertised for a new Principal.

The next Principal was Sylvia Kolarik. Sylvia came in with some fresh ideas and decided to do some renovating in our office and expanded the office staff from 2 to 5 people. There were lots of changes during Sylvia's time, not only in administration but whole school structure. Sylvia managed to persuade the Department of Education to build a new school for us and that was a very good move. Unfortunately Sylvia decided to retire before we made the move to our new school so Colin Simpson was selected and placed in the Principal role. I have been so lucky and blessed to work with so many wonderful Principals and staff in my time at VCASS.

We should never forget the most important people at VCASS are the talented students who make our job possible. I have been to weddings, christenings and birthdays during my time at VCASS. I have enjoyed every minute working at the school and I am glad that I made the right decision when I accepted this job.

EMA YANDALL, 1988

(And how lucky were we that Emma accepted this job!)



School Council Gift to Commemorate 35 years

All staff, students and council have received this special memento of our 35th Celebrations.



VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS SECONDARY SCHOOL—A LEADING GOVERNMENT SCHOOL AND EDUCATOR AND TRAINER OF YOUNG TALENTED DANCERS AND MUSICIANS
THE ACADEMIC SCHOOL FOR THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET SCHOOL, GYMNASTICS VICTORIA, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CIRCUS ARTS, DIVING VICTORIA AND TALENTED TENNIS STUDENTS
 PRINCIPAL COLIN SIMPSON—ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL HILARY BLAND—HEAD OF ACADEMIC PAUL NUCCI
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