From the Principal

I spoke to our school community about important gender issues on International Women’s Day this year. I thought I would share part of this with our alumni and supporters. It discusses my personal views with the aim of contextualising this for young people.

This week we celebrated International Women’s Day. Anyone who saw the ABC’s Q&A on Monday night would have seen a lively discussion about whether women leaders should claim to be feminists or not. I find this conversation interesting, as in my mind all fair minded people would now describe themselves thus. I was lucky enough to be taught by proud feminists at my own secondary school and come from a family of strong, intelligent and sensible women.

At Richmond High School in the 1970s Ms Batrouney, Ms Barter, Margot Penaluna, Robyn Clarke and Sally Cheah all had a massive influence on me. They demonstrated in their actions, quality teaching and intellect their equality to any male teacher. I am also lucky enough to have had wonderful female mentors, Gina Panebianco at the National Gallery of Victoria, Alison Carroll at Asialink and Sylvia Kolarik here at VCASS. Each of these women demonstrated leadership skills that assisted me in developing my own.

My own grandmothers Eileen Simpson and Rosina Richardson did not benefit from educational opportunities as they may now. They were bright and saw themselves as equal and spoke to me about the way men should work with women and behave socially towards them. My mother Judith Simpson, who though did not get the education she deserved, never doubted that she was as capable as any man and counselled me to have equal and respectful relationships with women. She used to tell me to ‘not be like one of those useless men’.

I am lucky to work in a profession where many leaders are women. Hilary Bland, Heather Thompson at The University High School and Dr Toni Meath at MacRobertsons High School, all have impacted on me and demonstrate wonderful role modelling to others. Women teaching in our school inspire me with their contribution.

For me it is as simple as the fact that I believe, know and expect my daughter Ava Simpson is equal to any person and should be accorded her rights as a person regardless of gender. I know as a male and father she is as capable as anyone and I personally do not understand how any father of a daughter in 2016 could not describe themselves as a feminist.

This day is about celebration of women, and this is why I have mentioned the names of all the women above. Women’s rights is not a concept, it is about people. It is about showing young women that they can be anything they want to be and achieve what they set out to do. In terms of every student being able to achieve their dreams as long as we as teachers and their parents are their advocates and supports. In particular International Women’s Day represents a great opportunity for all members of the education community to be recognised as the role models they are for the next generation.

This International Women’s Day I want to celebrate our Australian suffragettes in particular. If there is any group of women in history I deeply admire it is them. They had the vision of a better world where all citizens contribute equally. They also knew that society could only be improved by women’s participation being equal. Ironically the two devastating world wars in the 20th Century gave the evidence of this as women were finally allowed in non-traditional roles over that period. The suffragette women were incredible and fought for the opportunity for women to have a political voice. Suffrage, or the right to vote, is something that Australians have not always been able to take for granted. In 1902, Australia was the first country in the world to give women both the right to vote in federal elections and also the right to be elected to parliament on a national basis. These people improved our world.

From a personal perspective I look forward to the day when feminism is invisible and we can all participate in society as equal with no discussion, no thought, no compromises – we are not there yet. As gender variations and marriage equality becomes more typical and same sex attracted and transgender peoples demand their rightful place in society it only gets more complex but also better. This is the world I want my daughter to be in. In this environment she can be amazing, anyone can be amazing.

We have an opportunity in 2016 to refresh this view of women and peoples. Perhaps we need modern suffragettes to deconstruct feminist history and put it in the post-modern and post-feminist framework. My feeling is this is due, so that advances made are held, and new advances made.

This International Women’s Day I want to pay tribute to the contribution of all the women in our school make and ask all of our wonderful students to be modern suffragettes regardless of your gender.

Keep and eye on our web page, in mid April we will launch our new web page. This will be our web 5.0 and our first since 2009. Watch out for it, it is very beautiful.

Also you Instagrammers should follow @vcasecondaryschool. We have well over 500 followers and they get to experience our ‘day in the life’ approach to marketing in 2016.

We have been lucky to have a number of alumni coming in to say hello. This week I saw Nicole Croker (now in New York) and Michael Ramsey (back from ADT). We love seeing you, so please do not hesitate to come by.

COLIN SIMPSON

Incorporating “What’s on”

03 8644 8644 03 8644 8699  57 Miles Street, Southbank 3006 Victoria Australia  victorianarts.ss@edumail.vic.gov.au  www.vcass.vic.edu.au
Alumni Ruvarshe Ngwenya and Karla Tonkich are about to tour Australia in the new production of **WE WILL ROCK YOU!** Congratulations to you both from all at VCASS!

Don’t miss out. Go see our two fab alumni.
LATISHA SPARKS—DANCE ALUMNI

Congratulations Latisha on becoming the newest member of Sydney Dance Company. A fantastic achievement! Below are images of Latisha in her last two years at VCASS 2011 and 2012 (her graduate year), in VCASS productions of Tim Harbour’s ‘Carmen and Jose’ and Matthew Thomson’s ‘The Firebird’.

Latisha Sparks

Born in Perth, Latisha began dancing with the Gall Meade Performing Arts Centre at the age of 4. In 2010 she moved to Melbourne to attend the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School (VCASS), where she was awarded the Anne Wooliams Scholarship, and received her RAD Saba Seal in her final year of secondary schooling.

Latisha then decided to further her contemporary studies at The New Zealand School Of Dance (NZSD). In Wellington. Graduating in 2015 with her Diploma in Dance Performance, a major highlight of her time at the school was being invited to work and perform in the Metamorphosis Summer Residency in Mexico with Iritae Ansia.

During her studies at VCASS and NZSD, she has worked with guest choreographers Tim Harbour (Carmen and Jose 2011); Matthew Thompson (The Firebird 2012), Ursula Robb, Lina Limosan, Craig Barry, Douglas Weight (Rapt excerpts), Mahlia Johnstone (Trigger II & World Of Wearables awards show), Ross McCormack (Tango Festival 2016- Premiere), Thomas Bradley (Cordial of Entry), Sarah Foster Sproull (PAX) and Iritae Ansia (Metamorphosis 2015).
MASON KELLY—DANCE ALUMNI

Congratulations Mason on your ‘front cover’ of Dance Informa.

Kyle Page, artistic director of Dancenorth, talks 2016 season

Mason Kelly of Dancenorth. Photo by Amber Haines
BERTA BROZGUL—MUSIC ALUMNI

Berta Brozgul will be returning to ANAM in Melbourne this week, after six years of study at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. She obtained both the Bachelor (soloist) and Master (soloist) degrees with highest honours. Congratulations Berta from everyone at VCASS.
Alumni James Bowers and Matthew Hoyne were both part of the *Emerging Jazz Festival* in Melbourne from 21st to 28th February 2016.

JAMES BOWERS AND MATTHEW HOYNE—MUSIC ALUMNI

Wendy Bowers perform songs drawing from places such as the great American songbook, bluegrass traditions, songwriters such as Joni Mitchell and Burt Bacharach as well as their own compositions. Hear heart-on-sleeve music that is a reflection not only of the songs and lyrics they interpret, but the unique space created by the audience and venue.

**WENDY BOWERS**

8PM JC  $18/15/10

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**MATT HOYNE & ARLENE FLETCHER TRIOS**

See Matt Hoyne and his trio work through originals and not-so-standard standards. Arlene Fletcher’s trio features originals and arrangements influenced by Brad Mehldau, Avishai Cohen, and an interwoven tapestry of stories shared by her band.

**MATT HOYNE & ARLENE FLETCHER TRIOS**

8PM JC  $18/15/10
Claire Lyon as one of the beautiful ‘Jerry’s Girls’ performed in the production in Melbourne in November 2015.
Congratulations to both Jesse Homes and Tristan Gross who are both with the West Australian Ballet. Go VCASS!

JESSE HOMES

Supported by Sinek Lee Foundation.

Jesse started dancing in Adelaide at age three at the Barbara Jayne Dance Centre. He moved to Melbourne at age thirteen and continued training part time at the Australian Ballet School. He then continued his training at Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School and completed his VCE academic studies. In 2014 he graduated with a Diploma in Dance from the New Zealand School of Dance. His highlights include performing in Andra Santos’ Nostalgia in the Genesis season and Jayne Simeulders Cinderella in his first year with West Australian Ballet company.

TRISTAN GROSS

Supported by guests of the 2015 Black & White Ball.

Tristan began dancing at age 6. If his sister could start his Taekwondo classes then he could dance! He attended Beaconsfield College where he won the Performing Arts award in Grade 6. In 2006 he was a dancer in the Closing Ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. In Year 7 he started at the Victorian College of the Arts secondary school (VCASS) on a full time Dance Scholarship. Following completing Year 10, he returned to his old school, Beaconsfield. After just one term he decided that if he was to dance it had to be full time so he left school and completed that year at Danceworld with a Certificate IV in Dance. However needing more classical ballet he auditioned for the National Theatre Dance School with Beverley Fry for the next 3 years.

In 2013 he received the Jocelyn de Cardi memorial award for most improved diploma student. And in 2014 received his Advanced Diploma in Elite Performance in Classical Ballet and in 2015 did a post graduate year consolidating his performance skills. He performed lead roles in Giselle, The Nutcracker, La Sylphide and Cinderella consolidating his partnering skills with many pas de deux roles.
Congratulations to Adam on his leading role as Kassim in the new Disney Musical production of *Aladdin*, and joining him in the cast are Mitch Fistrovic and Emily Keane. VCASS congratulates you all!

**ADAM JON FIORENTINO • KASSIM**
Born and raised in Melbourne, Adam has forged a luminous international career on the musical stage. He played the role of Bert in *Mary Poppins* at the New Amsterdam on Broadway and won a legion of fans on London’s West End when he starred as Tony Manero in *Saturday Night Fever*. Adam featured as Young Ben in Stephen Sondheim’s *Follies* at the London Palladium. At the start of Adam’s career he was in the ensemble of the hugely successful Australian musical *The Boy From Oz*, about the life and career of showman Peter Allen. Adam played Chuck in *Footloose – The Musical* for GFO-SEL at the Capitol Theatre, Sydney. Adam’s television credits include the roles of Simon in *All My Children* (ABC-United States) and Matthew in *30 Rock*.

**EMILY KEANE**
An accomplished dancer and singer, Emily trained at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School (VCASS) and at Dance Factory. She played the role of Cassandra in the Asia/World Tour of *Cats* for Really Useful Group in 2008-10 and again in Korea, New Zealand and Australia in 2014-15.

**MITCHELL FISTROVIC**
Born and raised in Melbourne, Mitchell as a dancer and singer has appeared on stage and television in numerous musicals, concerts and award ceremonies. Mitchell appeared in the ensemble of *Hugh Jackman – Broadway to Oz* and in the musicals *Strictly Ballroom* for Global Creatures/Bazmark, *Wicked* (GFO), *Nala* in *Mary Poppins* (Disney/Cameron Mackintosh) and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (The Production Company). As a dancer, Mitchell has worked with Jessica Mauboy, Vanessa Amoroso, The Black Eyed Peas and *Australia’s Got Talent*.

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Disney

*Aladdin*

**BROADWAY’S NEW MUSICAL COMEDY**

Opens August 2016
Congratulations to Nicholas and the Affinity Collective. Please help if you can and support Nicholas in this wonderful opportunity!

FROM NICHOLAS WATERS - To Head of Music Michael Sargeant

I am writing with some exciting news. Affinity Collective Quartet has recently been awarded part-funding from the Australia Council for the Arts for a six week Creative Development Tour to the UK and Germany during April and May this year.

We leave Melbourne at the end of March and our first stop is London, where we have arranged mentorships with the Brodsky, Doric and Belcea Quartets, and a performance through the Boas Trust. We then travel to Germany for mentorships in Berlin and Hanover with composer Brett Dean, the Noga and Kuss Quartets, and performances in Berlin.

To help us raise the extra funds we need for our tour, I have registered our project with the Australian Cultural Fund’s Creative Partnerships program. You can read more about Affinity Collective’s profile and project on the Australian Cultural Fund website, where there is also a short video of our 2015 Season Highlights. Donations over $2 are tax-deductible and can be made on the attached form below, or directly through this link:


I wonder if there might be a possibility of sharing this with the VCASS community?

With best wishes,
Nick
0425 786 459
www.affinitycollective.com
www.facebook.com/affinitycollective

Affinity Collective Season Opening and Overseas Tour Farewell
7pm Tuesday March 22, ANAM Hall, South Melbourne
Music by Beethoven, Britten and Vasks
More information and booking: www.affinitycollective.com/concerts
EDWARD POPE, CHARLES HERKES and MILES LEE—DANCE ALUMNI

Congratulations to 2015 Dance graduates who are now in the Queensland Ballet’s Pre-Professional Program. Miles Lee, Edward Pope and Charles Herkes. Some fantastic photos of Edward Pope and Charles Herkes in a March photo-shoot for QB 2016. Miles is in the group photo below, back row, third from right. Huge congrats to all three wonderful gents!
CLARE MOREHAN—DANCE ALUMNI and HALL OF FAMER
And ELEANOR FREEMAN, GEORGIA SWAN, HARRY DAVIS—DANCE ALUMNI

Clare Morehan Principal, Eleanor Freeman and Georgia Swan Company Dancers and Harry Davis Young Artist, all looking fabulous in Queensland Ballet 2016.
Alinta Chidzey—Hall of Famer and Dance Alumni

Alinta has been very busy with an amazing line up of leading roles, what an inspiration. Congratulations to a well-deserving lady.

Alinta with the cast of ‘CURTAINS’ and chairman of the Production Company Jeanne Pratt (in centre)
KIRRAH THOMPSON—VISUAL ARTS ALUMNI

Congratulations to Alumni graduate 2015 Kirrah Thompson on her recent feature of work in an exhibition StArt Up: Top Arts 2016 at the National Gallery of Victoria’s Ian Potter Centre. The exhibition will run through to July 2016. Kirrah’s work ‘Weeping Woman’ is featured with 48 other works selected from 2500 entries.

Portrait of art’s future

Allison Worrall

Almost 70 years after Picasso painted The Weeping Woman in France, she came alive in a different form on Thursday in the heart of Melbourne. Emerging artist Kirrah Thompson unveiled her photograph of a model painted with the abstract face of Picasso’s masterpiece.

Thompson’s work was selected to feature in an exhibition showcasing the most innovative artwork from VCE art and studio arts students.

The exhibition, StArt Up: Top Arts 2016, is on display at the National Gallery of Victoria’s Ian Potter Centre through to July. It features 49 works, selected from more than 2500 entries.

Thompson’s photograph of a woman, painted green and purple, with false eyelashes on one side of her face was one of many that impressed VCE judges and can now be enjoyed by the public.

The students selected to have their work featured in the exhibition are widely recognised as being among the top artists of their generation.

Their art contains powerful messages, such as Mahalia Kluwer’s one metre-high altar dedicated to Paris Hilton, a piece designed to highlight the way celebrity worship has replaced religious practice.

Among the 49 works are not only paintings and sculptures, but photographs, films, multimedia projects and large-scale drawings.

In a painstaking creative process, student Rosemary Duffy injected paint into bubble wrap for her portrait Grace, which appears like a pixelated digital image in larger-than-life size.

This year’s exhibition marks the 22nd year NGV has presented the outstanding work of VCE students.

Rosemary Duffy (main) with her work Grace. Emma Ferris with Marble Memories (left), Kirrah Thompson with Weeping Woman after Picasso (above), and Alexandra Trueshway (top) with Forecast Deprivation. Photos: Penny Stephens
SAMUEL PEREIRA—DANCE ALUMNI

Samuel Peirera has recently been featured in a Styleconception.designart exhibition called ‘H33.7 Dance and Fashion’ in Innsbruck. Below in the company image, Sam is in top row second from left. Go to TanzCompany on FB to see some fantastic photos of their amazing performances.
Congratulations Ben Brown and THE TAP PACK on their recent shows at the Arts Centre. Go Ben!

The Tap Pack

BOOK NOW

Arts Centre Melbourne presents

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BEN BROWN—DANCE ALUMNI
SPECIAL NEWS—VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM IS MAKING ITS MARK INTERNATIONALLY!

PRAISE JEONG—CURRENT YEAR 12 VISUAL ARTS STUDENT

VCASS artist flying high
Victorian student Praise Jeong had no idea that painting the image of a Chinese model would get her shortlisted for the 2016 Saatchi Gallery / Deutsche Bank Art Prize for Schools, against more than 22,000 entries.

Painting by Praise Jeong—oil on canvas
FROM THE EDITOR…..

What a start to 2016—Wow! Our alumni have been very busy. It is so wonderful to now be able to include in this newsletter graduates of the Visual Arts Program at VCASS.

I know in a couple of years time we will be keenly watching both our Visual Arts Graduates and Theatre Arts Graduates and celebrating their achievements alongside the Music and Dance alumni.

Quite a few alumni are ‘coming home’ to teach at VCASS, our newest addition to part time staff is the wonderful artist/pianist Louisa Breen. Louisa is a VCASS Hall of Famer, and her achievements are fantastic. She continues her professional career as a Concert Pianist and now teaches and accompanies our music students. What a wonderful inspiration she is for our students to work with.

Rohan Browne dance alumni and Hall of Famer has been regularly taking classes while our Jazz teacher Tanya Mitford is on leave. Joining Rohan has been another dance alumni taking jazz classes, Nathan Pinnell. Last week we had Paul Malek dance alumni and Hall of Famer come in to take year 12 and year 8 contemporary dance classes, which our students loved. Also last week another dance alumni Nikki Croker has been visiting her Australian family, friends and VCASS on a trip from her current home in New York, USA.

Remember, please keep in touch, either on FACEBOOK or email me directly—purcell.jenny.m@edumail.vic.gov.au

Warmest wishes

Jenn Purcell

[Alumni pictured below from left to right:—Louisa Breen, Rohan Browne, Nikki Croker, Nathan Pinnell and Paul Malek]
VCASS HAS 4 ‘STREAMS’ OF SPECIALIST ARTS STUDY—DANCE, MUSIC, THEATRE ARTS AND VISUAL ARTS
Visit VCAst Facebook Community page and VCAst Dance Information

https://www.facebook.com/groups/103962046306147/   VCASS Community Page
https://www.facebook.com/groups/487249558045877/   VCASS Dance Information Page