

# MUSIC – A MUSE TO SEEK

SHARE ON:



— OCTOBER 27, 2015

*Music – A Muse to Seek*

Presented by The Australian School of Performing Arts, Film and Television (ASPA-FTA)

After Last year's *Digital Natives* it seemed impossible that The Australian School of Performing Arts, Film and Television's (ASPA-FTV) Artistic Director Amanda Hardwick could come up with a topic quite so fascinating, fresh and relevant. Yet she has done just that. The universal appeal of music is something we are all cognizant of but how much does music really bring to our existence?

While music itself may seem a broad topic Hardwick wanted to see where it could take her. She explains: 'I love music and I think everyone loves music and the kids always talk about it. Always talking about bands ... They are always listening to it too... I wanted to see what they could come up with in terms of the theme of music.'



So with the theme of music chosen Hardwick thought about what it meant to her and what it might mean to most people. Music as inspiration or as a tool for working out are some simple ways she cites that we may have music in our lives. But she wanted to go deeper than that. Music is something that brings people together, that is so intertwined with our memories that it cannot be separated from them: '... I love this idea that you can pop a song on and straight away you are back in the past ... Ten years ago and you can smell the smells around at that time and it is so intoxicating. So I thought about how music is a muse for us but in a way it couldn't really exist without the human experience.'

Hardwick believes that not only are we dependant on music, often probably a lot more than we realise, but music is also dependant on us: 'We are interdependent. We need it and it needs us to exist. It's cool like that.'

So Hardwick came up with the title *Music: A muse to seek* and set the teachers and students (who are aged between 8 and 17 years old) to work.

The first of the 3 plays being shown, *Family, Friends and a Funeral* is the story of the McPhillip family farewelling their reliable old car Rhonda. What else would you do at a funeral but play music? But which songs? Everyone in the family seems to want something different! Though even as the family argue about which songs to choose they are remembering a shared life through music, even if the actual song choices are contentious.

The second play is something many of us will be relate to. Titled *The Real Workers of Brisvegas: The True Story of a Local Music Store*, it tells the familiar story of a music store that is losing customers and struggling to survive. With so many people downloading music how will the manager turn things around for the store, keep it alive and change the attitude of the disgruntled employees?

It may seem like an unusual topic for such young people. Do they understand what it was like to actually experience shopping for music? Hardwick explains: 'The teacher who wrote this particular script, she is quite young. Online music was a big part of her growing up so it wasn't completely strange for the whole online music thing is like say for myself. But I say to her it was fantastic. Places like HMV ... you were amongst likeminded people ... It was like a little club really.'

So we have young people reminding us perhaps where we went wrong? One day will we regret so readily discarding our LPS and CD's and the experience that was shopping for music? Will they one day want to bring it back? Hardwick agrees and says: 'It would be great wouldn't it? Because they completely get it. When we said things like let's make this part of the stage the music booth they understood what we were talking about. I think maybe it would be reinvented the same way as going to Apple stores now which is definitely an experience. Perhaps it would be going into the store and instead of purchasing something tangible it would be downloading it onto your phone ...'

The third play is a fantasy-like story, *Fish out of Water* which is about the song-less folk who are the underclass in the fairy-tale land of Merryville where everyone else sings well and have a theme songs. Trouble strikes in Merryville and even among the song-less folk themselves when they decide to enter the annual sing-along competition.

Hardwick says this play features the younger children from the school who still believe that anything is possible and this makes this play so special; 'It's really quite beautiful because the students are younger, the oldest is 12. So much joy and imagination. I've always found in that age bracket anything is possible and there are no creative limitations. As they become teenagers you try to remind them – yes it is ok, let's explore and anything is possible. But with these guys it really is.'



The audience may well find themselves rooting for the song-less folk as they try to fit in and find something special inside themselves. We all love a good underdog story. Hardwick is obviously proud of the unexpected ending the students came up with: 'I think there's an interesting moral in the end. It does not turn out necessarily as you would expect reading the synopsis. It's a cool ending. I was really impressed that they didn't go down the route of the general Disney film.'

So we have three plays performed by talented kids taking on the theme of music in 3 very different ways. Given these kids don't remember the music store experiences that Hardwick and I do I couldn't help but wonder about what music might be featured.

Hardwick insists the kids were open to different types of music and (I imagine thankfully for many) did not expect *One Direction* songs to be used. Rather there is an eclectic set of songs including 'You Are So Beautiful' by Joe Cocker. An oldie most of the kids no doubt had little exposure to. Though sometimes Hardwick's reminiscences left the kids perplexed; 'I always say to the students oh this is a great one and they stare at me blankly – what is she talking about?' They have mostly been open to learning.

It could be because the ASPA-FTV is more than just about acting, it is a safe environment for young talented children to be themselves; 'the culture of our classes is one which celebrates everyone and diversity ... the kids are all very unique in their own ways obviously. I always tell the teachers that if you make fun of yourself in class then you give them permission to do that. We make fun of ourselves and our music choices.'

It may be that by now you are as intrigued as I am about how this topic and the plays will pan out. I for one can't wait to see how the song-less folk blossom not to mention what songs Rhonda ends up receiving as her final send off.

So it may not be the usual theatre experience and even Hardwick says they cannot compete with musicals and are not trying to. However the plays will no doubt be an absorbing, powerful experience and one that make us rethink the power of music as a muse for us just as we are a muse for music.

The Australian School of Performing Arts, Film and Television present *Music: A Muse to Speak*  
Cremorne Theatre. QPAC. December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Tickets can be purchased through [www.qpac.com.au](http://www.qpac.com.au) or by phoning 136 246