



13 February, 2013

Ms Kerry Riseley
Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Education and Training Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I am making this submission by invitation of the Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee, on behalf of Melbourne Youth Music, a long term strategic partner of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

If you are not already familiar with our program and our proud 45 year history, Melbourne Youth Music (MYM) has, since 1947, been inspiring young people to reach their potential through music, unleashing creativity and empowering tomorrow's leaders through dedication and teamwork. We achieve these goals by offering music education programs that build students' confidence both as performers and as future leaders in the community.

Melbourne is justifiably proud of its reputation as one of the world's great cultural cities. Our thriving local arts scene represents a community of concert-goers, philanthropists and professional arts workers. Crucial to sustaining this is the engagement of current and future generations of young people.

Each year, more than 1000 students take part in one of our programs, it is estimated that more than 30,000 students have now participated in our program, a substantial number today fulfil vital roles as leaders in business, arts and the music education community.

In 2012, we provided approximately 1,400 hours of tuition to students aged 7 – 25 years, with participants benefitting from social and team working skills developed through our program.



The Melbourne Youth Music program also:

- Increases youth involvement in the arts and raises the status of music education in Victoria - having a positive impact on music in schools and the community
- Supports productive partnerships and networks within Victorian music organisations, between musicians, schools and other education facilities and the Victorian community
- Improves curriculum support services for Victorian schools in an instrumental and specialist advisory capacity
- Improves equity of access, participation and engagement in music education for all students
- Creates positive public awareness of youth, increases youth involvement in music and more broadly an appreciation of the arts in Victoria.

Based on conservative estimates, our 2013 program will impact on the lives of more than 1500 families and over 4500 Victorians will interact directly with us as participants, program staff or as volunteers. Each year MYM student ensembles present more than 40 public concerts and workshops, which develop and showcase the talents of young Victorians, combined attracting more than 12,000 audience members.

This substantial level of community engagement significantly raises the status of music education in the community. It all starts right here at Melbourne Youth Music! We play a leadership role in collaborating with education and music partners to ensure that a high quality music education is available for all students in Victoria. Our dream is that music is embraced and celebrated in Victoria, since it is instrumental in building community and developing the best in young people.

We believe that raising the status of music education in the community will have a positive impact on the quality of music in schools. We provide flexible learning options beyond the classroom environment. Our programs have been designed to reflect the priorities of the Department of Education's student learning, student engagement and wellbeing, and student pathway and transition initiatives.

Evidence supporting music education in schools

International and Australian research shows that a music education effects the emotional, physical, social and cognitive growth of students. Music education contributes to both instrumental and aesthetic learning outcomes; transmission of cultural heritage and values; and of students' creativity, identity and capacity for self-expression and satisfaction.

"The arts are windows on the world in the same way that science helps us see the world around us. Literature, music, theatre, the visual arts, the media, architecture, and dance reveal aspects about ourselves, the world around us, and the relationship between the two."

Charles Fowler, Every Child Needs the Arts (2009)

As a specialist music education organisation, we provide extension education experiences for music students from schools with existing music programs, enhancing the learning experiences of many top ranked VCE students. In addition, our programs provide a student training ground for higher-education institutions such as the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and the Australian National Academy of Music.



Only a small proportion of Victorian schools have designated programs for gifted and talented students or dedicated instrumental music programs. Music programs are an ideal extension education activity for gifted students. In her work with gifted students, Dr. Linda Silverman (Director, Institute for the Study of Advanced Development and Gifted Development Center, Denver Colorado) identified a number of traits displayed by gifted students including:

- rapid learning ability
- excellent memory
- long attention span
- perfectionism
- high degree of energy
- wide range of interests
- keen powers of observation
- vivid imagination
- high degree of creativity
- shows ability with numbers

These traits are displayed by students who excel in music and are likely to take part in music education. Through music education programs, gifted students find a place where they will be able to work at a higher level than other students in their own classroom, or students of their own age.

Current provision of music education in Victoria

While there are examples of excellent music education in Victorian schools, some students miss out on effective music education because of the lack of equity of access, differences in quality, and the poor status of music in schools.

With increasing pressures on school budgets and on curriculum learning time in the classroom, a significant number of Victorian schools have no music programs for students. This is attributed mostly to the high operating costs of music programs and the availability of high quality teaching staff. In some schools, music is taught by a range of teachers, some without qualifications in music or education.

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools

Our program structure and organisational beliefs are built on the principals that an effective music education will:

- Inspire young people to reach their potential
- Empower tomorrow's leaders through a commitment to excellence
- Unleash creativity through dedication and teamwork
- Create a sustainable arts future in Victoria
- Build an enduring sense of community

Our vision for the future provision of music education is in three parts:

- Increase the status of music education in schools and the community
- Encourage effective partnerships between music education providers
- Support flexible learning options outside of the classroom



1. Increase the status of music education in the community

Melbourne Youth Music recognises that communities play a vital role in an effective music education and believes that raising the status of music education in the community will have a positive impact on the quality of music in schools. Parents and caregivers have an important role in valuing and supporting the music education of students.

Working in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, our cultural legacy contributes to continuing future generations of arts professionals, arts audiences, and importantly arts philanthropists in Victoria.

2. Support flexible learning options outside of the classroom

It is important to maintain support for flexible music education options outside of the classroom. This is necessary given the complex needs of students, the growing awareness of the importance of combining adult and vocational education principles with conventional teacher-centred, classroom-based pedagogies, and the importance of preserving connections between disengaged youth and education. Music education opportunities beyond the classroom become increasingly important given the pressure on teachers in schools to deliver core subject areas such as literacy and numeracy.

Central music education resources outside the classroom offer targeted programs from beginner through to pre-professional musicians. This means that no matter what the level of skill, there is a program to suit students. Within this structure, the needs of participant are supported by specialist staff who respond to the individual needs of students. Tiered music education structures have individual learning outcomes reflective of the different stages of student development. Student progress is able to be assessed as they transition from one level to another, building on prior learning experiences.

Flexible learning options also assist students in making the transition from secondary music training into tertiary institutions and in the advanced stages, transition from tertiary training into life as a professional musician. This can be achieved by providing support for students to connect and network with the community of education facilities across Victoria.

3. Effective partnerships between music education providers

Melbourne Youth Music works closely with the community of private music teachers and Victorian schools and tertiary training institutions to ensure that our programs are meeting the developmental needs of individual students to complement and enhance, rather than compete with existing music training programs. This kind of interaction is critical to ensure effective use of resources.

Many of MYM's specialist music educators are drawn from Victoria's professional ensembles such as the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and the Australian Army Band Melbourne and from the state's leading school and tertiary music education institutions.



Structured, collaborative projects between music training institutions give students access to a range of enriching experiences. Rehearsing and performing alongside other students, as well as opportunities to work with leading exponents of music help students understand the challenges and rewards of music and the arts.

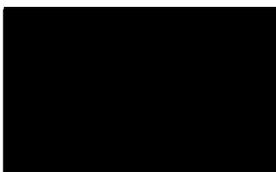
Our program continues to provide a platform where colleagues can share valuable knowledge and best practice. We encourage greater information exchange and openness between all stakeholders but particularly amongst music teachers. As a resource for teachers, MYM provides a platform where colleagues share valuable knowledge. This is achieved through:

- Recruitment of VIT-accredited teachers or qualified trainers
- Provision of information in relation to students' needs and backgrounds
- A range of vocational training options
- Facilities and equipment for hands-on learning activities
- Partnership and outreach activities
- Regular data collection on achieved student learning and feedback to staff
- Interaction between staff and with guest educators and professional networks
- Formal and informal interaction between staff and students from schools across Victoria and around the world
- The exchange of information about professional development events and innovative teaching materials

On behalf of this inquiry, we offered student members, parents and music educators the opportunity to share their perspective on how the MYM program interacts with current music education in Victorian schools. Selected comments have been collated on the following pages.

I congratulate the Victorian Government on the initiative to investigate the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victoria. I would be delighted to provide you with any further information or assistance to facilitate your inquiry, and I look forward to hearing the results of your findings in due course.

Best regards,



Chris Clark
General Manager
Melbourne Youth Music



Student and parent feedback

"As a professional music educator and conductor at Melbourne Youth Music, it has been my privilege to engage in music-making with a diverse range of students who come together on a Saturday morning. Many students travel from all around Victoria for this special experience. One may ask why?

There are many reasons, but probably the most significant one is: this program is not offered in any school to the same extent and it is a good and fun activity. The children engage in the development of their skills and are tutored by experts on their specific instrument. Schools in Australia do not have the allotted curricula time in the overall curriculum pie. Numeracy and literacy are core subject areas and there is an emphasis in many schools on sport. In many schools, music is tacked onto the end of some major curriculum plans. The Melbourne Youth Music program is action in advocating Australian educational change for the better.

Music is a unique art form and is a multi-disciplinary subject, which requires exceptional coordination, a highly developed intellect and also has many advantages in promoting social interaction, self-confidence and many other important virtues.

There are many professional musicians who have been fortunate to have the benefit of experiences playing with Melbourne Youth Music ensembles. There is no doubt that MYM has been a springboard for Australian musicians and the development of their careers. Perhaps the most important issue that MYM addresses is to stimulate children who have a special interest in music. This is an opportunity for children to interact together in a climate of common ground. A safe place where children can and are pursuing their dreams!"

Kieran Casey
MYM Conductor, 2009 - 2013

"I applied for Melbourne Youth Music after hearing about it from my teacher and one of my friends at school. MYM was such a higher standard than the band at my school, and my school band only had about 25 members, so lots of instruments were missing...MYM had a full clarinet section, with 4 or 5 players on each part and all the instruments!...I look forward to attending each week, being around others that are there because they want to be part of a good ensemble, not just because they are part of the school music department. There's a sense of achievement each week after rehearsal.

Working with our Conductor and the tutors is great - they've taught us to focus on all the little things, not just playing the notes. I love how much we've improved this year. We have to blend with everyone, into one sound. I understand now how all the different parts work together.

I've been able to use the skills learnt at MYM in my VCE performance pieces, since joining the band I feel as though I'm playing more musically - not just playing the notes...I've even been able to help my younger sister with her Tenor Sax playing at home using some of the techniques I learnt from our conductor. I'll be able to apply the leadership skills I've learnt this year as Band Leader, and my experiences to running a music program and conducting a school band in the future."

Jessie Cutler, age 18
MYM member 2009 - 2012



"My daughter Catherine, who is now in Grade 4, started violin in Prep as part of her primary school instrumental program. I think the program was unusual for a state government primary school even then. It provided free group lessons and a weekly ensemble rehearsal. Unfortunately the free lessons and the ensemble section of the program were unable to continue this year due to lack of funding. I feel ensemble playing is a really important part of learning an instrument, the 'team sport' of music if you like.

Catherine started in MYM at the end of last year and we decided to enrol her in the Saturday Ensemble Program again this year. We come down from Warragul on a Saturday, a number of parents also travel considerable distances to be there. The MYM program provides a package that we would not have access to locally, and I am more than willing to travel to be a part of it.

I think the program is unique (or unusual) in that it brings together a critical mass of motivated players, a number of staff experienced at working with and mentoring young players and considerable physical resources in terms of practice space and music. It is a fantastic program, it is great to see the improvement in the ensemble each time they perform. The staff (conductors, tutors and administration) relate really well to the kids and provide a fun, interesting and engaging program.

I continue to be amazed by what kids are capable of musically and have enjoyed watching them develop. When you consider that most of the children in Catherine's ensemble are still in primary school, I think they are doing a fantastic job."

Jen Williams
MYM Parent, 2010 - 2012

"MYM has offered me so many opportunities that I would otherwise have no chance at accessing, especially living in Ballarat, to meet with fellow musicians of my own age and skill level. This was a unique experience for me in that such a gathering of like-minded people proved a friendly and supportive environment, especially as most of us were facing the same issues at around the same time and could be counted on to lend an ear or a hand. Furthermore, MYM offered a calibre of musicianship that I could challenge myself with, developing my own musicianship and orchestral skills.

I believe that the bringing together of young musicians and young conductors is especially important; we are the next generation of up-and-coming professional-musicians-to-be and to develop such a close relationship at a younger age will benefit us throughout the rest of our lives.

Local music programs of similar type in the Ballarat area are limited. The school music program is quite basic. While the school's symphony offers a wonderful opportunity to play amongst peers of a similar age, it is incomparable to what MYM offers, drawing many acclaimed conductors from all over the world, is unparalleled coupled with a wonderful support team and quality musicianship.

MYM is my release – I look forward to all week at school. Taking two unit 3/4 subjects in year 11 as well as the other four 1/2 subjects proved to be quite stressful – particularly when it came to exam time. MYM offered an escape, where I could spend a few hours just enjoying myself. I believe that this had a direct effect on my studies; this program gave me something to look forward to and offered balance in my life. I feel lucky to have experienced this."

Alana Minchenko, age 17
MYM member 2005 - 2013



"I began my association with the MYM program as a violinist at the age of 5 years old. I progressed through the ensembles all the way up to the senior Melbourne Youth Orchestra. I had 13 years of service as a student and now continue my association as a casual tutor.

It is my belief that my years in MYM as a student provided invaluable musical education, especially in my formative years. I came from a school that did not have an orchestra, so MYM provided an excellent platform for me to further my musical education and knowledge at a very young age. It also provided me with an extremely valuable avenue to discover more about my chosen instrument and the wonderful repertoire that exists for young musicians. Along with this it was a fantastic social outlet where I could socialise with other young musicians, something that is very important in the fostering of a healthy learning environment. In fact many of my closest friends today, I met while in the program all those years ago.

Throughout my student days with MYM, I was provided with valuable knowledge and skills that have helped shaped me into the successful professional musician and educator that I am today. The knowledge shared by staff and students alike is something truly unique and I am yet to find another organisation such as MYM that provides this opportunity.

The development of young players at an early age is of the highest importance, as the earlier we begin to train our musicians the more likely they are to not only continue with their instrument, but it is also essential in the development of their whole person.

In my role as a Tutor for MYM, I am privileged to witness another generation of young musicians grow and learn about their chosen instrument along with learning vital ensemble skills and a broader appreciation of music.

The expertise and knowledge of my colleagues and the drive and passion of all staff involved with the program continually enables the young musicians in MYM access to many of Melbourne's leading educators and to find regular inspiration to continue with their musical education.

The success of many of the senior ensembles run by MYM are shown by the strength of the early educational opportunities provided in the junior level ensembles. Educating young children is a privilege and an honour that all members of the MYM staff are very thankful and pleased to be given."

Nathan Scerri
MYM Alumni & Tutor