

"Music is a therapy. It is a communication far more powerful than words, far more immediate, far more efficient." – Yehudi Menuhin

As we draw nearer to our finale, I want to take a moment to reflect on the year that has been in Music at MGSC. What a remarkable twelve months it has been.

Our Strings program, now in its second year of planned expansion, has continued to flourish and we are getting closer to our long-term goal of establishing a full Symphony Orchestra. This vision is not just about numbers on a page or instruments in an ensemble, it is about creating new opportunities, broadening musical experiences, and bringing together our diverse talents in one united sound. Full orchestras do not just happen. Bringing together the Strings and instruments from the Concert Band will bring a new set of challenges and exciting opportunities.

Just as society continues to change, so too must our Music program. We are proud that approximately one in four students at MGSC leaves class each week to attend an instrumental music lesson. We celebrate that in this school, learning an instrument, including being able to read, write and communicate through music, to be able to work with students across year levels who are bound by a common interest and are here tonight, demonstrating the result of those 40 minutes each week in a different learning space.

The research says that they are doing something that stimulates areas of the brain like no other activity, something we as music teachers and musicians ourselves, have always known. They are building relationships and a community within our school unlike any other. The variety of ensembles on offer continues to grow, some carefully shaped by our staff, and others imagined, initiated, and led by the students themselves. This balance between teacher-guided and student-driven groups adds to the vibrancy, adaptability and space for student agency and we are keen to see more of it.

Later this year, MGSC will celebrate 70 years of girls' education. Music will play a central role in those celebrations, just as it does in the life of the College each day. These milestones remind us of the traditions we honour, while also challenging us to look forward and ensure that the opportunities we offer today equip our students for the world they will enter tomorrow.

Last year, I spoke about the work of Dr Anita Collins, whose research continues to remind us of the extraordinary impact of music education on learning and wellbeing. Music is not just about playing an instrument, it is about strengthening memory, language, and problem-solving, while fostering creativity, confidence, and resilience. These are qualities that spill well beyond the music rooms, shaping the way our students learn, think, and interact with others.

At MGSC, the decision to place the Enhancement Program side by side with the Specialist Music Program reflects our deep belief in the value of music for all students. For our junior learners especially, the early years are crucial in developing the skills, discipline, and curiosity that will carry them forward, not only as musicians, but as thoughtful and capable young people.

It is a wonderful opportunity, and also a responsibility we take seriously: to nurture every student's potential and help them find their place in music, whether as performers, creators, leaders, or passionate listeners.

As we continue to explore ways to grow and the range of musical experiences, we are sustainably able to support, I would like to acknowledge the work of our senior students.

As you all know, it is a requirement by the region and the College that all students learning an instrument participate in one of the larger ensembles. This is so much more than being about something you have to do or *'it's good for you so just do it'*. It's about building a culture of teamwork and coming together to produce something that is really good, together. It is another opportunity for us as educators to impart a little more to your child but even more importantly, it is where the senior players lead, they encourage, they show the younger students the Mentone way or how it's done. Without them at the top in our senior groups, there are

no senior groups, we cannot achieve the level of complex music that you have heard tonight without the years of learning and practice and taking the lead.

The Symphonic Band is one of the highlights of my week, bright and early on a Wednesday morning, we warm up with chords shifting between major and minor tonalities, we discuss dynamics, texture, balance and key signatures and the importance of reading them. We learn to read music and listen to others and consider the role of different instruments and the role of each player at different times in the jigsaw puzzle. We do not just play the notes!

These are the elements of music. They are the core of music and of the Music curriculum from Year 7 through to VCE music. Teaching through performance is the most productive and engaging learning space and so even when it feels like there are a million other things you need to do, going to rehearsal and working together to produce something that we can share with others is one of the most beneficial and rewarding human experiences we can have.

Tonight was not the result of *"quick, learn this song because we have a concert"*, but rather the other way around. We have worked hard to produce something we want to share with others. None of this would be possible without the extraordinary commitment of our staff, who bring both professional expertise and genuine care to every rehearsal, lesson, and performance. Nor would it be possible without you, our parents and families who support, encourage, and cheer from the audience with such enthusiasm.

Finally, to our Year 12 students, we thank you. Whether you have pursued VCE Music, sung in choir, played in a band, created your own group, or simply joined rehearsals for the love of it, you have contributed something lasting to our program. Your leadership, your persistence, your resilience to continue when it gets hard and make mistakes and take risks, and your joy in making music together will remain part of the story of MGSC Music long after you leave. Thank you to:

Yolanda Kang- *Performing Arts Captain*
Erin McClements
Casey Maughn
Alyssa Righetti
Tess Simmons
Aidan Fallows
Estelle Morgan-Banks
Teneal Arthur
Allegra Pera
Alicia Bartholomew

Yasmin Carabott
Nicole Curry
Sophia Raz
Danielle Roldan
Tahlia Soliman
Jessie Ingliss
Eva Staude
Keira Vernakovski
Katherine Gooda

So before I hand back to Yolanda to introduce the Finale, tonight, as we celebrate what has been achieved and look with excitement toward what is still to come, I thank you all for being part of this journey. Music connects us; to ourselves, to one another, and to something larger than us all. Thank you