



Hearts in Harmony – music that gets to the heart of the community

When Australian musician, composer and Orff practitioner, Susie Davies-Splitter, co-wrote a song called *Hearts in Harmony*, she had no idea that it would lead to the founding of a thriving music charity. Here, she tells us about the ethos behind Hearts in Harmony Community Music.

How it all began

The ideas for Hearts in Harmony began with a song my husband and I wrote some years ago and developed as part of my work at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in Melbourne where I was working as a music lecturer in the School of Education. My role was divided into three parts – teaching, research and community engagement which included the *Hearts in Harmony* programmes.

The first programme was a community choir formed in February 2010 for the ACU students and staff. In 2011, students were able to continue their participation with the added bonus of it forming part of their community engagement. We opened up the membership and weekly rehearsals were held at Atherton Gardens public housing estate in Fitzroy behind the

*Let's all join hands as one
No matter who we are
Together, we make a difference
Each a shining star
For all of us are equal
And this we must believe
Together, we can fly
With our Hearts in Harmony*

university. The membership included people from Africa, India, Pakistan and China, many of whom came from non-English-speaking backgrounds, having arrived in Australia as refugees and asylum-seekers.

In addition to the choir, three community music day events took place at ACU during 2010 and 2011. Attendance included approximately 150 ACU students (mostly

pre-service teachers), 70 adults and 70 children (0-12 years) at each event plus a team of volunteers. The philosophy was to embrace the words of the song and provide inclusive musical experiences for all in a joyful environment.

At the end of 2011, I was honoured to receive the ACU National Staff Community Engagement Award where I was given A\$5,000 to put towards a charity of my choice.

A charity that provided musical events and projects seemed like the perfect fit. And so, sponsored by this grant money, a not-for-profit organisation, Hearts in Harmony Community Music (HHCM) Inc., was launched on 22 April 2012 at the beautiful

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El Sistema Youth Orchestra at the Federation Square concert on 22 April 2012



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BMW Edge venue in Federation Square, Melbourne. The full-day event, entitled *One Voice, One Song*, was followed by a second event, *Everyone Sing*, in November 2012. Both events were sponsored by Federation Square and the City of Yarra.

What is Hearts in Harmony Community Music?

Hearts in Harmony Community Music's vision is to build healthy communities through inclusive music for all ages, abilities, faiths and cultures and to raise awareness of the importance of active music-making in schools and communities around Australia. HHCM's mission is to implement sustainable music programmes that build capacity and social capital, develop positive connections, enhance health and well-being and embrace

diversity in a fun, engaging and non-threatening environment.

Led by committee-appointed artistic directors and governed by a Committee of Management, HHCM's membership consists of a dedicated group of volunteers who bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Programmes

In 2013, our programmes consist of community choirs, community music days and music outreach for schools and aged care facilities. Each full day community music event involves practical workshops led by experienced educators and artists in some of the following: singing, folk dancing, playing instruments such as African drums, marimbas, wacky instruments or ukuleles. These events also have a concert that features an inter-generational massed choir and 'All In' sing-and-play to a well-known tune.



Playing an echo cello in a workshop

Planning is in the pipeline for new programmes including *Music Moves* (a

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Hearts in Harmony Community Music Concerts

One Voice, One Song – 22 April 2012

Two hundred people attended the *One Voice, One Song* massed choir rehearsal at BMW Edge in Federation Square, Melbourne. This was the first time that different member groups of the inter-generational choir had rehearsed

marimba groups, El Sistema Youth Orchestra, Zhang Wei who played a hulusi (Chinese flute), Warren Wills who performed at the piano and the inter-generational massed choir.

The choir performed three beautiful

Everyone Sing – 11 November 2012

Over 200 choristers participated in the *Everyone Sing* concert which took place once again at the BMW Edge in Federation Square, Melbourne. The inter-generational choir consisted of school and community choirs plus families from three generations and residents from Emmy Monash Aged Care facility. Choristers ranged in age from four to 94!

Other performers included the Greensborough Primary school's marimba group, Gladstone Park Primary school's violin ensemble and GTR (Good Times Roll) band.

The choir performed *Iparadisi* (African), *Sesere eeye* (Torres Strait Islands), conducted by Mark O'Leary, and *Down under in Australia* (written by Susie and her husband, Phil). The 'All In' finale combined the choir, all the other performers and some workshop attendees who performed *Wimowey* accompanied by djembes, marimbas and ukuleles.

Hearts in Harmony's next concert will take place on 6 October 2013 with Guest Conductor, Richard Gill OAM (Medal of the Order of Australia).

Susie Davies-Splitter



Emmy Monash Aged Care residents in the massed choir at Federation Square

together. These included 11 different groups from schools, adult community choirs and church groups plus a number of families.

The concert began at 1pm and featured GTR (Good Times Roll) band, Pinewood and Greensborough Primary schools'

pieces – *Siyahumba* (African), *Al Shlosha D'varim* (Hebrew), conducted by well-known choral conductor, Mark O'Leary, and theme song, *Hearts in Harmony* (written by Susie and her husband, Phil), the latter with Auslan (Australian Sign Language) signs.

Testimonials

HHCM day events

'Thank you so much for inviting Beaconhills to take part. The kids had an absolutely sensational time. We would definitely love to be part of an event such as this again. The students are still talking about the workshops. The parents who attended the concert were also all delighted. We had a wonderful day and are very pleased to have been provided with such an awesome opportunity.'

Tiffany Farlow, music teacher at Beaconhills School

'Thank you for putting together a special community music-making day that the whole family could be engaged with and involved in. Everyone in my family from my 13-month-old to my 60+ mother got something out of it. We are looking forward to the next one!'

Katie Hull-Brown, parent and music teacher

'The inter-generational massed choir was an amazing finale to an inspiring and uplifting day of music-making, happiness and joy. It made my heart sing! Congratulations to all involved and I look forward to being an active participant in future events.'

Louise Downey, past-principal and school teacher

'The recent massed choir event at Federation Square organised by Hearts in Harmony Community Music brought an incredible opportunity for a group of our choir members to sing as equals amongst others in a very special public performance. It was a very meaningful and affirming experience for the elders of Emmy Monash and for me personally as an aged care arts practitioner.'

Pamela Bruder, Life Enrichment Programme Coordinator, Emmy Monash Aged Care

'Quote from one of my Greensborough Primary students yesterday when asked if she enjoyed Sunday: *It was super, super, super, super, super awesome!*'

Heather McLaughlin, music teacher at Greensborough and Pinewood Primary Schools

'I experienced the true meaning of community music. I was witness to the joy and energy that comes from communication through the arts and I felt the uniting tie of music as it connected me with new and wonderful people.'

Bree Monks, 4th year B.Ed student, Australian Catholic University



The massed choir at Federation Square

HHCM choirs

'What I love about the choir is that it is so inclusive. Anyone can come into the choir and make music with us and the standard of music created together is immensely satisfying. I leave each week feeling invigorated and uplifted and convinced that the most potent way of enjoying music is to participate in making it with others.'

Jillian Gundermann, choir member

'Wednesday rehearsals with Hearts In Harmony Community Choir have become a highlight of my week. When the harsh realities of life get me down and simple tasks feel like a huge effort, choir practice is always an effective antidote. Joining Hearts In Harmony was one of my best moves this year!'

Emily Muschol, choir member

'Our choir is very inclusive. I am a new mum. I have been bringing my baby to rehearsals for a few months now. Not only does it get me out of the house but I get to meet lovely people and do what I love to do which is sing!'

Louise Rogers, choir member

'Being an older person and an incomplete quadriplegic, I joined the choir with much trepidation earlier in the year. However, my anxieties were pushed aside because I was made very welcome and feel very much part of the group. I enjoy the new friendships, the repertoire and performances. Being a quadriplegic, the singing and exercises we do each week help me with my breathing, thus preventing chest infections. Susie, you are a good leader too.'

Cheng Pheng Ng, choir member

'I'm a big fan of music and also love singing; the Hearts in Harmony Choir offers a terrific opportunity for me. All of the members are friendly and the atmosphere is quite relaxing. The choice of songs reflects the multicultural features. I like the opportunities for performance as well; it's fun to participate, absolutely worth the effort.'

Zhang Wei, choir member

All programmes

'I have been a member of the Hearts in Harmony Choir and have participated in the Hearts in Harmony community music days. Susie's passionate belief in the power of music and the arts to build individual and community confidence, growth and connectedness is matched by her creativity, compassion and skill in building individual mastery, collective performances and joyful celebration.'

Helen Butler, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Australian Catholic University

'Susie has been an exemplar in her creation of many initiatives during the past few years, through the Hearts in Harmony Choir and community music days, to bring people together through the joy of music. Her musical talent, passion for social inclusion and creative energy have combined to develop meaningful relationships and experiences. Susie has offered countless volunteer hours to the development of Hearts in Harmony, welcoming of participants, strengthening community relationships and making a positive impact. She is an extraordinary woman and her endeavours are to be congratulated and celebrated.'

Mary Campbell, Relations Coordinator, Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, Australian Catholic University



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Kids playing marimbas in a workshop

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volunteer music trip to Thailand to work for one week in an orphanage) and *Music Stage* (inclusive music and theatre holiday programmes and family camps for disadvantaged young people).

We use an Orff-Schulwerk-based approach and philosophy across all programmes. Founded by German composer and music educator, Carl Orff (1895 -1982), and his colleague, Gunild Keetman, Orff-Schulwerk is a unique music learning approach designed for all. Orff's ideas focus on the fundamental unity of music, including speech, singing, movement and instruments, and encourage creative expression and joyous music-making.

School music education in Australia

The literature highlights that a large percentage of Primary and Secondary school students around Australia miss out on or receive poor-quality music education. The National Review of School Music Education (NRSME) suggested that as few as 23% of Primary state school and Catholic school students could access a meaningful music education whereas 87% of Independent school students had the benefit of meaningful and ongoing music learning (Pascoe et al., 2005).

Despite evidence from teachers, principals and policy-makers in Australia that school music education is valuable and essential, pre-service teachers continue to receive inadequate training within undergraduate degrees.

The heart of the matter

Given the grim statistics above, through participation in HHCM community-based music and outreach programmes, we hope that pre-service and general class teachers can build confidence in creative music and movement education and successfully implement this into their future classrooms. We also hope that children and adults can find a forum for self-expression as HHCM aims to enrich lives through the joy of music and unleash each individual's potential to be a creative and compassionate human being.

*Together, we can fly
With our Hearts in Harmony*

Hearts in Harmony on Facebook

www.facebook.com/HeartsinHarmonyCommunityMusic

Hearts in Harmony on YouTube

<http://youtu.be/1bxuaZDj0oI>

ACU Hearts in Harmony Community Music Day on YouTube

<http://youtu.be/Q8UOQQvGulA>

References

Pascoe, R., Leong, S., MacCallum, J., Mackinlay, E., Marsh, K., Smith, B. et al. (2005): *National review of school music education: Augmenting the diminished*. Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian Government, Canberra

About the author

Susie Davies-Splitter is a music and movement educator, Orff practitioner, musician, award-winning composer and twice Past-President of the Victorian Orff Schulwerk Association (VOSA). Susie and her husband, Phil, have their own business, Welcome to Music, providing resources for Early Childhood and Primary teachers. They also present music sessions for pre-schoolers, artist-in-school programmes, concerts and teacher workshops around the world.

Welcome to Music www.welcometomusic.net

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Susie Davies-Splitter will be presenting at *musiclearninglive!Asia* which runs from 23-26 October 2013 at MAX Atria @ Singapore EXPO. www.musiclearninglive.asia