

FROM THE ARCHIVES

MUSIC AT GRAMMAR

Music has always been part of School life. During Mr Rowland's thirty-five years as Headmaster (1904-1938), every Friday afternoon was given over to singing. Mr Rowland would usually lead the singing and the emphasis would be on school and patriotic songs. Although there were no individual music lessons for the students, there was a School choir. During the tenures of Mr Whight, Mr Logan, Mr Blank and Mr Daniels music was, to a certain extent, side-lined predominantly due to financial reasons.

During Mr Morwood's tenure (1976-1992), Music was introduced as an elective subject in Years 9 and 10 and a fine choir was established. A full-time music teacher was appointed and one classroom was given over to music lessons. This room was situated on the top floor of what is now the F.D. Sim Building. School musicals flourished under the directorship of Mrs Glennys Perry. The music for these productions was provided, largely, by students, staff and past students and local musicians. Three memorable School productions took place in the 1980s. They were: *The Mikado*, *HMS Pinafore* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Much of the music for *The Mikado* was played by a group of boarders from Papua New Guinea.

When Mr Fairley became the Principal in 1998 one of the first tasks he set out to accomplish was to foster a culture of music in the School. Firstly, under the guidance of Ms Cathie Neil and then Mr Samuel Blanch, music has developed into a vibrant and integral part of School life. A reflection of this development of music can be seen in the number of staff now employed in the Music Department. During Mr Morwood's time at the School there was one full-time Music teacher: at the end of 2016 there were four curriculum Music staff and eighteen co-curricular Music teachers in the School, each with their own area of expertise to teach the students.

The current Music programme comprises three overlapping spheres, Curriculum Music, Ensembles and Instrument-Vocal Tuition. In the Junior School all students receive several Music lessons each week, while in the Middle School Year 7 students attend a Music class each week. Music as an elective subject is available for students in Years 8-12. Music is also offered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma in the Senior School. The skills learnt in the classroom are then applied in the sphere of Ensemble participation and it is in this area particularly that music has proliferated.

A dedicated Music Centre (formerly the North Ward Bowls Club) was opened in 2001 and refurbished and expanded in 2015. This extension has a state-of-the-art classroom/performance space and a Music Library. The fully air-conditioned Music Centre now includes two grand pianos, electronic keyboards, computers with the latest music software, class and rehearsal spaces and teaching studios. Much of the equipment such as large instruments and choir risers was provided with funds generously donated by the *Black and Gold* Supporters.

From one choir and a couple of small rock bands in the mid-1990s, music in the School has grown exponentially. The School can now boast ensembles which include: Junior School, Middle School and Senior School choirs, Middle School Boys' Choir, Senior Girls' and Senior Boys' Vocal Ensembles, a Symphony Orchestra and a String Orchestra. There is also a Big Band, a Concert Band, a Chamber Music Group and clarinet, flute, cello and classical guitar ensembles. To supplement these groups individual lessons are also available for students wanting to improve their skills in either the strings, piano, voice, woodwind, brass and percussion sections of music.

Music students are given every opportunity to perform regularly in front of an audience. On the School scene they perform soirees and recitals each term, they perform at important School events such as the ANZAC Day Service, Cum Laude Ceremonies and Speech Night and weekly School Assemblies. Our students perform at the annual 'Grammar Sings' Concert, the annual Instrumental Ensembles Showcase Concert, Eisteddfod participation and participation in performances at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. The School has, for some years, been a sponsor of the Festival and the music students gain great benefit from being tutored by some world-class musicians.

Our Music students have also had the benefit of touring and singing interstate and overseas. In 2010 they toured California where the choir sang at the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco and St Thomas' Church in Hollywood. They also had the honour of been accepted to perform on the stage in their own concert at Disneyland. In 2014 the choir performed at Christ Church of St Laurence, Sydney, St Luke's Mosman in Sydney, Sydney and Royal Melbourne Children's Hospitals, St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne and Parliament House, Canberra.



School Choir 1928



One of our current School Choirs

MR SAMUEL BLANCH & MR BILL MULLER
Director of Music School Archivist