

Director of Music 2024-2025 Report, SAPPS Music Society AGM 2026

It is with much pleasure that I present my report for the **2025 program and concert series**.

Once again, our team has risen to a challenge and produced '**Stars in the Arena 2025**' with a spectacular outcome. Changing up the choir model to 1 part school choirs who swap parts but sit on the one side, for the larger mass choir (as seen in WA Massed Choir Festival) proved very successful. Thank you for the amazing commitment of the PSMF Family – the choir teachers and accompanists and the many volunteers, who come together to make this unique Primary schools' choral program a display of excellence in the Performing Arts.

The Repertoire was specifically chosen for the Arena, Adelaide Entertainment Centre (AEC) and worked SO WELL - ALL songs were favourites.

The Commissioned Work took the form of "*Old Music, New Life*" – bringing back favourite songs written especially for us from CWs since 2000, and sending them out to another generation of students – such well written songs given new life!

- ❖ **Life without Sport** – a much-loved unison song – Glyn Lehmann 2007.
- ❖ **Dance Craze Crazy** – 2-part song - Glyn Lehman 2005 – we added choir choreography plus troupe dancing. 
- ❖ **The Bee Bop** – the kids loved it all over again as it highlighted the importance of bees and our environment - Robyn Habel 2016 - featuring 2 soloists – rap and scat in front of the orchestra.
- ❖ **Won't Look Down** – John Schumann 2009, John McDouall Stuart songs - positive message, featuring 3 soloists in front of the orchestra.
- ❖ **Jetman-Take to the Sky Medley** – a combo of two songs from 2014 by Paul Jarman – the kids sang with energy and GUSTO and once again loved these songs.
- ★ **The concert began with the 7-minute Walk on Intro** – composed by Leonie and played by the orchestra - enabling 1,300 students to walk 'onto stage', which then segued into **Let Me Entertain You** featuring hosts who introduced the choir, orchestra, troupe, conductors and accompanist. Bravo Leonie!
- ★ **Learning to Fly** – featured 2 soloists on the deck, by Australian pop group Sheppard. 
- ★ **Come Together** – connection to First Nation Peoples – 2 soloists – one singing in Gamilaraay, both on the deck, choir added choreography as sourced from WA Massed Choir Festival + Robert Taylor on yidaki.
- ★ **Advance Australia Fair** – reintroduced the Alto part for the Anthem in two parts.
- ★ **Rubber Duckie** – Annie Kwok's fun arrangement of the Sesame Street classic - PLUS kazoos, bubbles and a big yellow duck – a winner!!
- ★ **Lunar Lullaby** – Beautiful song, slightly modified for our choir and featured a wonderful string arrangement by Julian Ferrarato for the orchestra.
- ★ **Flashdance (What a Feeling)** – featured the Troupe and their 2 soloists, + choir choreography. 
- ★ **J'entends Le Moulin (I hear the Windmill)** – choir and piano only, 1 soloist + some lyrics in French language – the kids loved it!
- ★ **Put a Little Love in Your Heart** – a classic song from the late 60's – arranged by Ed Fairlie with choir choreography plus soloist.

- ★ **You're the Voice** – another 'goldie oldie' brought back from 2004... sourcing and adding young pipers from the community was a spectacular finale to the show.
- ★ How good to include **8 songs by Australian + local composers!**



AEC Concerts

The **4 concerts** were amazing, with very positive responses from students and audience.

A 'feast for your eyes' with incredible visuals – colour, lights, screens, dance, choreography, costumes....

Every concert had **choirs of at least 1,200**. We had access to the AFC sound team who worked hard to get us what we wanted, and created a balanced choral and orchestral sound to the high standard we require for a 'choral concert'. The **Orchestra, Troupe and Hosts** were ✨'stars' every night, the **soloists** and **choreography leaders** were confident and well prepared, the **guest artists** made great use of the satellite stages on the Arena floor.

Down stage opportunity for students - **Auslan Signing Choirs** for Advance Australia Fair, managed by Heather M again – well done! They 'filled' the Arena floor with their beautiful orange t-shirts and smiling faces as the national anthem was sung. Extremely impressive!



Thank you - Rohan Yates, Natalie Bond, Tahlia G, Andrew Johnston, Jo Casson, Addi and Taylor Schwartz (and Oscar and Lara....). Thanks to Mark Oakley on lights this year - great collaboration with Jo.

The **Choir** arrived at the AEC and headed straight to the foyer, for photos, and then settled into their small 'home base', which they returned to after rehearsal for their meal break prior to the concert.

Soloist warmups were held in DR #5 and brought across from the choir side of the AEC by a soloist steward.

Orchestra roomed in Legends Lounge, **Troupe** in DR #1 and #2.

Students are at the centre of all that we plan and create – there are many busy families who support their students in all that we offer. Well done and thanks to everyone we collaborate with for providing so many South Australia students the opportunity to participate in and experience a high-quality music and arts performance.

Hosts, Orchestra and Troupes

These teams continue to provide opportunities for students to strive for excellence in ALL areas of the arts.



- ★ The **8 hosts** sparkled on the deck, in the middle of the choir, and were very well prepared and professional.
- ★ The **orchestra** conductors rehearsed their two teams at separate sites, only coming together for full day workshops and offsite rehearsals. This combined team of 79 players were so well prepared, and played confidently to accompany the choir.
- ★ The orchestra standalones were Funk Medley, and Forever Autumn - War of the Worlds. These two pieces were rock solid – congratulations!
- ★ Another first - the orchestra + troupe dancing to the Funk Medley – very cool!
- ★ The **Troupe** joined the choir and filled the Arena space in colourful costumes for Let Me Entertain You, Flashdance (What a Feeling), Dance Craze Crazy, and You're the Voice.

Choir Teachers and Accompanists

We trialed a new choir model – each choir learned one part and was allocated to either side 1 or side 2 of the choir. Each school selected their choice for the 4 Concerts prior to Conference 1 in Feb. After allocation of concerts was completed, we then divided the schools into balanced sides, sent out email notifications by week 4, so each school could begin to learn their side's part for each song.

Each school choir learned either the soprano or alto part, alternating for every song down the concert repertoire – the sopranos sang odd numbered songs, altos sang even numbered songs. Students were not restricted to only ONE part all year but experienced and sang the high and the low notes of both parts.

Thank you to the Choir teachers and accompanists + school support staff and volunteers who embraced this new model for 2025, we appreciate your understanding and enthusiasm - thank you and congratulations!!



Resources

The SAPPs Choir, Norwood PS and Unley PS assisted with the [recording process of the 2025 repertoire](#). Thanks to all staff and students for their preparation, and time in the studio, and Glyn Lehmann for recording and editing. Thanks to Jonny who puts our music on the App, Terry for thoroughly checking the orchestra scores and Natalie setting up echo tracks in the app.

The [App, website and Songbook](#) are outstanding resources for our students and teachers. They are high quality and engaging. We received many entries for The [Songbook Cover competition](#) and the winning student from Cowandilla PS really did capture the feel of the 2025 repertoire in their cover illustration.

Yay for our amazing Team:

- ★ Irene – [our Manager who walks the walk AND talks the talk, and gets it done!](#)
- ★ Cathy – [ADoM and SAPPs Choir Conductor extraordinaire.](#)
- ★ Kristin and Regina – the fabulous [office gals!!](#)
- ★ Felicity and Caroline – outstanding [accompanists](#) to choirs and orchestras
- ★ [Michael M + Michael A and team - Susan and Lisa, Kate and Katie](#) – awesome!
- ★ [Maria and team – Charlotte and Kathleen, Toby and Andrew](#) – dazzling and dynamic!
- ★ [Heather and mentors](#) – Spectacular comperes who were so well prepared on 'la deck' – bravo!
- ★ [Anne and 6 concert managers](#) – 'Keepers of the choir' from foyer to stage – just 7 minutes to load the stage with 1,300 students – the process was finessed from rehearsal to concert EVERY day – well coordinated teamwork!
- ★ [Chad](#) - IT support, Stars on Stage + the new Journey to Performance vision (+ Heather too).
- ★ [Heidi](#) – relatively new to the team but working with Sponsorship and Marketing.



★★★To everyone, thank you and BRAVO★★★

Conference One - always a wonderful 2 days.

The [Expo](#) was held on the Thursday, a successful event once again.

[Mark O'Leary](#) flew in from Melbourne as guest presenter and shared amazing choral techniques and ideas – he took us through warm ups, singing games, and taught us *Lunar Lullaby* and *J'entends Le Moulin*.

On Friday afternoon he led a really exciting choral session and all teachers left inspired and ready to work with their choirs.

Country Conferences – held at [Whyalla, Naracoorte, Monash and Pt Pirie](#). We love visiting our country teachers to spend the day singing and teaching the repertoire and choreography with them. MANY of them are not able to attend the two days in Adelaide so really benefit from our one day with them.

Combined Choir Rehearsals – Week 3 to week 8, two 1½ hour sessions per day. Well attended and plenty of time to teach and travel to host schools. Only a few who do not fulfill this requirement.

‘Sing the Repertoire’ session – held at Unley PS in week 4, term 1 for choir teachers and accompanists to focus on songs or aspects of the repertoire.

Conference 2 – Term 2, Friday, week 1. Another great day spent on repertoire polishing and conducting. We set up the teachers to enter the Auditorium to the 7-minute walk on intro and be seated on THEIR choir side, just like the students were to do for concert. This was really exciting to see this done by the teachers and for them to experience what we were going to do in the concerts.

The composers of [Old Music, New Life](#) songs visited us to share their love of music and some context for their song. (all except Paul Jarman).



Choir Assessments – Term 2, weeks 1-8. All Adelaide schools were visited to provide structured feedback according to the Choir Rubric. The Assessment Team included Stacey S, Lisa J, Kendall H, and Tanya F, Liz C, and Sarah P – thank you for your work in schools!

Soloists – Auditions in Term 2 week 6, after pre-audition solo workshops, followed by Term 3 masterclasses across two different weeks, with particular songs being run each week. The masterclasses had an [earlier time of 1pm-5pm](#) for both days, and it worked very well. Students from the one song came together to meet each other and connect prior to concerts. [Susan Ferguson joined Mark Oates](#) to upskill the students in presentation, stage presence and confidence. So fortunate to have these experts work with our students.

Choreography Leaders – only 1 student per school, per side selected from auditions. They stood on the conducting podium with Cathy and I to help lead their specific songs – AAF, Come Together, Dance Craze Crazy, Flashdance (What A Feeling) and Put a Little Love in Your Heart.

A Conducting Masterclass was held at Klemzig, term 3, Friday week 3, for choir teachers and regional conductors to rehearse, refine, and conduct the 2025 repertoire. We had 5 teachers attend, from experienced to quite new, but all eager to learn and practice.

Offsite rehearsals – Week 5 – [Held at the Theatre of the AEC](#). The troupe and orchestra rehearsed Monday afternoon with a half build of the Arena satellite staging and orchestra pit. This was then dismantled for the two days of half day rehearsals with the concert choirs + orchestra – a ‘flurry’ of 1300 students entering and exiting within a 3-hour time slot – well organised by Anne and her team of concert managers. A very short and intense time to polish and practise all elements of the concerts. Sound, Lighting, Stage manager and assistant, videographer all visit to get a sense of the show. Two full on days loaded with solid rehearsal time and information for the concert day rehearsals.

Regional PSMF – Country choir visits for Adelaide Affiliates + remote schools along with regional workshops in weeks 9-11. Kangaroo Island, Southeast, Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Port Pirie, Murray Lands and East of Ranges. The Riverland are self-sufficient and run their own cluster rehearsals. The Port Augusta and Eyre Peninsula Regions again had no affiliations and did not have concerts. The Northern Metro ran a 2-concert

series back at Trinity College in the Hewitson Theatre, Southern Metro held 2 concerts at the Revival Fellowship Church.

Term 3 - the Southeast received another visit from Cathy for the schools / students attending Adelaide and Robyn went to KI for another rehearsal with their 50-voice choir.



The SAPPS Choir

The SAPPS Choir has had another outstanding year – performances included the ANZAC Day Dawn Service, Guest Artist at the AEC, singing at DfE gigs, Adelaide City Council Lighting of the Christmas tree, and recording. Excellent opportunities for students in such a variety of venues around Adelaide.

[Congratulations to Cathy, new assistant conductor Michaela, Cheryl, Jo and Chad.](#)

A wonderful year of high-quality singing and performances - [a talented showcase choir for the PSMF and the Department.](#)

Year 3-4 Class Singing – repertoire and ideas are still available on the website for Teachers to access.

Collaborations –

- ✦ Uncle Moogy – Smoking ceremony and welcome at AEC.
- ✦ Robert Taylor played the Yidaki for Come Together and inspired the soloists he was presenting with.... Looking to continue this relationship!
- ✦ Eisteddfod Choral competition – sponsorship by PSMF, award presentation.
- ✦ Adelaide University – offering university students sessions with our choir teachers in schools.
- ✦ Western Australia Massed Choir Festival associate affiliate, Cathy, Leonie and I visited in November 2024 to observe one of their concerts and a rehearsal day. Great to see another ‘similar’ festival and which subsequently informed the model used for the Stars in the Arena concert series.
- ✦ UNESCO – inclusion of logo in Songbook and website, and promotion on social media.
- ✦ Participation in [Make Music Day in the City](#) – Gawler Place – June 20 – interested schools and teachers ‘flashmobbed’ a choir in the city centre and performed 4-5 songs.
- ✦ Support from Charissa (Modbury Heights) and her daughter for teaching of Advance Australia Fair Auslan Signing – including their language in the festival.
- ✦ Attending Curriculum and Learning Directorate Staff meetings and Curriculum meetings.
- ✦ ABC 891 Interviews with Afternoons (IS) and Saturday morning (RF) during AEC concerts.

Professional Development, events, community concerts and conferences –

- ✦ Young Adelaide Voices concerts, Catholic Music Festival, Regional concerts Riverland, Murray Mallee, Southern and Northern, Exploring the Arts SA Curriculum, WA Massed Choir trip to Perth, various online classes,

Congratulations on a really successful year of engaging students in the ‘Stars in the Arena’ concerts, and artistic excellence through choral music. ♥ Thank you to everyone involved - in any way great or small! The PSMF continues to provide awesome performance opportunities for students to learn and thrive..... thrive and prosper..... and achieve the highest of outcomes.★

Robyn Filmer, February 2026.

