

## THE CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

The Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) Department have enjoyed a very productive year despite the restrictions of COVID-19 lockdown. In February, we welcomed a new visual art teacher, Ms. Holly Bray, to our team and she has inspired the students to create some remarkable art works this year. We also welcomed Ms. Stacey Kernaghan, who has been sharing her knowledge of media with the Year 9 and 10 students.

Students studying the Arts are always keen to share their passion and enthusiasm for their subjects at College events such as: 'Be a Merici Girl' days, the College Open Day, and many other community events throughout the year.

At the end of the first semester, the CAPA department held an Arts Showcase event to exhibit the work of our visual art students and to provide an opportunity for the performing arts students to engage with a live audience. This was a wonderful evening and enabled the Merici community to see the work of so many of our extremely talented students. We had visual art and photographic images displayed and there were performances by the music students, the vocal group and the Year 9/10 and Senior Dance classes. It was a real celebration of the talent and imagination of the creative and performing arts students.

Students from all the Arts classes were able to develop their technical and expressive skills in the College production of Roald Dahl's *Matilda The Musical Jr*, and it was extremely rewarding to see how much the students benefitted from this collaborative experience.

### Dance

Mrs. Liza Laird and Mrs. Laura Pearce continue to share the Dance classes at Merici. The Year 9/10 Dance classes have been studying Musical Theatre and Contemporary dance styles this year, and they thoroughly enjoyed exploring in depth, the themes and issues evident in some of the more modern film and stage musicals. They have also been developing their knowledge of composition devices and experimenting with their own choreography in contemporary dance. The Senior Dance class studied world dance styles in the first semester, and they found the Russian Cossack dance from '*The Nutcracker*' ballet very challenging, but also a lot of fun! We were also very fortunate to have a guest teacher, Liz Lea, to visit our class and she generously shared her knowledge and expertise of Classical Indian Dance with the students. The seniors also explored the many ways in which Dance is represented in the media: social media, advertising, reality television shows, movies and much more! They then produced their own dance movies, paying particular attention to lighting effects, camera angles and special effects to enhance their routines.

### Drama

Ms. Carly Johnson has been leading the Drama Department for two years now, and this year the students were able to participate in some live theatrical experiences. Year 9 and 10 Drama explored the world of puppetry and mask. Using shadow puppetry and silhouettes, the girls performed the Encounters – Way of the Cross at the whole school Easter Liturgy. Through the exploration of mask work they developed a piece of theatre and performed at

the 2021 ACTUP Student Fringe Festival at the Canberra Theatre embodying this year's theme of 'The New Normal'. We were visited by teaching artist Goldele Rayment who helped support the development of the pieces. Performing in front of a live audience in a large auditorium is a completely different experience to that of performing in a classroom and these large-scale productions contribute substantially to developing their acting skills and increasing their confidence.

Meanwhile, students in Senior Drama learned about lighting and sound, modern and postmodern pioneers and the contributions that both lighting and sound have in the theatre community today. Individually, they created a work that saw them design their piece's lighting, soundscape, costume, set, and staging.

The switch to remote learning in Term 3 and 4 saw some interesting challenges and in true Merici fashion, the girls rose to the occasion and embraced the IB learner attribute of being open-minded in their newfound learning environment.

This year also saw students follow their passion for performing outside the classroom. Emily O'Mahoney, a Year 11 Drama student, had a significant role in a play performed by the Canberra Youth Theatre at the Courtyard Studio: 'Little Girls Alone in the Woods' written by Morgan Rose. Emily also featured on the posters advertising the production.

Sophie Blackburn, Year 10, performed in Budding Entertainment's production of 'Be More Chill' and Mikayla Nutt, Year 7 also performed a monologue in Budding Entertainment's Canberra Youth Acting Awards.

### **Media**

Mr. Matthew Reynolds has continued to lead the Media classes and the Year 11 students collaborated to create a TV advertisement encouraging people to get the COVID-19 vaccination. This was largely inspired by an advertisement created by the Victorian Arts community and the government's 'arm yourselves' campaign. Artists all around the world have been particularly hard hit by the many lockdowns and restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Our Year 11 Media students devised the script, planned the camera shots, organised props and created a film timeline. The advertisement was shot on location around the College. Ironically, the students were unable to complete the postproduction due to the COVID -19 lockdown!

The Year 12 students are busy creating their end of year video for the farewell assembly. These are always entertaining and so we are very keen to see the finished product.

### **Music**

2021 has seen Music as an elective continue to grow and Mrs. Nicola Bartasek leads the Music Department with enthusiasm and professionalism.

Year 9 and 10 Music has continued to focus on performance with students spending much of their time singing and playing in both small group and class ensembles. Repertoire from *Film Music, Australian Music, World Music* and *Rock* has been explored as the students gained confidence in their music skills. The class performed at Grandparent's Day at the start of Term 3 singing "Diamonds" by Rihanna with many girls singing for the first time as part of a choir. Music students also performed several pieces at the Semester 1 Arts Showcase. The Music class also supported the Merici Open Day activities performing pieces as parents and future Merici girls toured the school – stopping to have a chat about music at Merici and enjoying the live music on offer. The girls have also continued to develop their own creative ideas, exploring the music software and hardware available in the Music room and enjoying the newly upgraded Apple iMac screens which enable them to see their composition notation work clearly.

In Year 11 and 12, Merici's senior class embarked on the study of Australian Music and Music in Media. The students have been developing their composition skills, with song writing being a particular favourite. The students continued to perform for each other and develop their skills while online during remote learning.

Both elective classes have continued to be supported by our school accompanist Ms. Jaki Kane, who's musical experience as a performer, teacher and conductor have been of great benefit to the girls.

Many staff members enjoyed a classical concert performance of Mozart, Greenaway, Bruch and Beethoven at The Q Theatre in Queanbeyan where our own Mr. Matthew Reynolds was performing the cello with the National Capital Orchestra. A man of hidden talents!

### **Photography and Design and Graphics**

Ms. Virginia McLeod decided, after nearly 20 years at Merici, many of them spent in leadership positions, to transition towards retirement by going part time. This year she taught two senior subjects, Photography and Graphic Design. To stay in step with the new courses, she has added to her repertoire of skills by learning the basics of CAD, SketchUp and Revit. Our students are now able to study introductory Architecture and Interior Design along with Graphic Design. The girls thrive when given new challenges and produce exceptional work. The Photography students have been able to experiment with the equipment we have in the lighting studio. They are mastering different lighting configurations enabling them to take a variety of carefully crafted portraits that reveal the essence of their sitters.

### **Performing Arts**

Mrs. Nicola Bartasek, Mrs. Liza Laird and Mrs. Laura Pearce all teach the performing arts curriculum to the Year 7 and 8 students. During one semester the students experience Dance, Drama and Music and collaborate to create their own interpretation of a fairy tale with a modern twist. They also have opportunities to perform songs and dances from other cultures and to experiment with learning the ukulele. These tasks require imagination and resilience, they help to develop their communication and problem-solving skills and encourage them to take risks with their performances.

## Visual Art

Year 7 and 8 are introduced to Visual Arts for one semester. During this time, students learn the importance of Visual Arts throughout history. Students are given the opportunity to experiment with colour mixing, painting, lino cutting and printing.

Year 9 and 10 students planned, experimented and executed the use of various 2D and 3D mediums to explore the theme 'Change' in the surrounding environment. Through the study of traditional and contemporary artists students developed an understanding of how change in nature can be interpreted in art and sourced as inspiration in their artmaking. Seniors in Semester 1 were inspired by landscapes and how they can be portrayed in Visual Arts. Students explored the Modern Masters of Art and developed painting skills with various mediums. Their final artwork was inspired by the theme 'Landscapes in between' where each student was asked to reflect on a landscape with which they have an emotional connection.

Merici College was lucky enough to host two 'Art from the Heart' sessions this year. This was a teacher directed art workshop where students, staff, families and carers could come together to spark their creative flare. Each participant had the opportunity to focus on a still life setting or recreate an image of their choice using acrylic paint. It was a wonderful evening, and we all enjoyed the delicious refreshments provided by our lovely Hospitality team.

Ms. Holly Bray also runs a weekly Art Club which is open to all students during lunch time for those who want to learn and develop new artmaking techniques. We were all thrilled that Kirana De Schutter in Year 8, was a finalist in a national competition run by the National Gallery of Australia. She painted her own beautiful interpretation of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*.

There has been substantial research conducted on how the Arts contribute to mental health and well-being during lockdowns and this was evident during the lockdown in Term 3 when we encouraged all staff and students to participate in a CAPA activity week, including daily quizzes, drama re-enactments, photography and visual art challenges and TikTok dance routines. The week was a lot of fun.

The students studying Arts subjects are lucky to have the opportunity to engage in creative tasks that they can complete at home to help stave off the feeling of isolation that has been so hard to avoid this year.

We are very fortunate to have such passionate teachers in the CAPA department who are experts in their particular field. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all the creative and performing arts staff: Mrs. Susan Anderson, Mrs. Nicola Bartasek, Ms. Holly Bray, Ms. Carly Johnson, Ms. Stacey Kernaghan, Mrs. Liza Laird, Ms. Virginia McLeod and Mr. Matthew Reynolds. I am privileged to work with such an inspiring and creative team of teachers.

Mrs Laura Pearce  
Creative and Performing Arts Coordinator