

A Meeting of Minds and a Blending of Voices The Song Company & Conservatorium High School

Students of the Conservatorium High enjoy a close association with many of Australia's best instrumentalists, the performer-teachers who make up the staff of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Being taught and mentored by these teachers is one of the great privileges of attending the Con High. In addition to all the offerings in the Conservatorium, students also have access to symphony orchestras, the opera & ballet orchestra, and a range of chamber music groups and contemporary music ensembles. For the study of instrumental music, this is indeed a happy state of affairs.

The situation is very different, however, for the ever-increasing number of Con High students whose first love is vocal music, the rich repertoire of *a cappella* choral music that is many times more extensive than instrumental repertoire. But in Australia, there really is only one professional *a cappella* ensemble of international standing, The Song Company, based in Sydney.

The Company draws its accomplished singers from across the country; its national touring program includes all capital cities and many regional centres. In 2015, after the long tenure of Roland Peelman, the Company appointed as new artistic director, the acclaimed English composer, Antony Pitts. His fresh ideas, distinctive programming and conducting style have infused new energy and purposefulness into this exceptional vocal ensemble.

<http://the.song.company/> <http://antonypitts.com/>

Under the direction of Réka Csernyik, the Con High's choral program has developed to such a degree that it now enjoys parity with instrumental studies in terms of the level of commitment and the musical demands it makes of our students. The Con High recognises the need for a close educational association with a major *a cappella* ensemble in order to afford our students mentoring and support in their choral and vocal studies comparable to what they receive in the area of instrumental studies.

The Song Company and the Conservatorium High are wholeheartedly committed to the preservation, cultivation, and performance of the great cultural heritage of western choral music. To this end, they have struck an agreement that will afford Con High students, through a wide range of music-educational projects, opportunities to draw on The Song Company's depth of knowledge and its many years of experience working with choristers and young vocal ensembles.

Below are just some of the music-educational activities that will be explored under the agreement between the Con High and The Song Company:

- mentoring of the school's *a cappella* ensembles
- study of selected repertoire scored for children's and adult voices
- joint performances
- co-participation in the Con High's outreach initiatives
- a vocal composition strand in the school's composition program
- development of vocal career paths, additional to the traditional opera/solo options
- expansion of the vocal / choral groupings on offer in Senior Small Ensembles
- engaging with the school's choral / vocal studies in early music, contemporary art music, and historically-informed performance practice.