



COMPOSERS CONNECTING COMMUNITY



Early in 2005 the DRMC was invited by the Australia Council to present a submission to be considered for a pilot project for a composer to engage and connect with the communities of the Dandenong Ranges. DRMC is one of three organisations in Australia to be chosen. The Australian Youth Orchestra and The Orchestra Networks of Australia are also hosting a composer to create new Australian music for them.

Our composer, Dr Calvin Bowman was a fortunate choice given that he lives in Olinda which is relatively accessible to the ranges communities for rehearsals and community conversations. Calvin's academic and professional performance experience is exceptional, however, it has been his willingness to work with school and community ensembles that has been so worthwhile. He visited Gembrook, Ferny Creek, Mt Dandenong and Heaney Park Primary Schools to meet the children and talk about the new music as well as the role of a composer and performer. 380+ children from 14 primary schools performed the C.J. Dennis songs at the 'Hillsongs Concert' at Yarra Valley Anglican School, Ringwood on Monday 24 July 2006.

The Ranges Young Strings and their parents had fun meeting Calvin at a pyjama party and at workshops where they too talked about Australian music particularly for young strings. Students in the Upwey High School Symphonic Band welcomed Calvin to 7.30am rehearsals along with conductor Sarah Gill. It has been really interesting to follow the journey of engagement between teachers, composers and students.

'Singularity' an adult *a capella* ensemble worked really hard on this new music with lots of critical debate, challenges and commitment. They believe that their new music is beautiful and they have really appreciated the experience. Calvin has also worked with emerging composers in the community. These include young people and adults.

The Composers Connecting Community journey has been incredibly valuable. We have a whole new generation of little music critics with a first hand experience of the creative process of composition. They have also discovered the work of Australian poet, CJ Dennis. The local professional musical directors and music teachers have enjoyed working with Calvin discussing the work and advising him about the capabilities of school and community ensembles.

The final outcome is four new works, plus four recordings involving the National Children's Choir and an Army Reserve Band, along with performances by community and school ensembles of the Dandenong Ranges. A sensational result for the Composers Connecting Communities Project.