

# THE YEAR IN CAPA



## Creating and Performing Arts (CAPA) Coordinator's Report

The Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) Department has enjoyed a year of refreshment and excitement. In February, we welcomed a new visual art teacher, Ms. April Croft, to our team and she has inspired the students to create some remarkable art works this year. We also welcomed Mr. Jason Kohlman, who has been sharing his knowledge and passion for Media with the Year 9 and 10 students.

Students studying the Arts are always keen to share their devotion 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 both semesters, the CAPA Department held an Arts Showcase for students from Years 7 to 12. This event exhibits the work of our Visual Arts, Media, photography and Graphics students, whilst providing a wonderful opportunity for the performing arts students of Dance, Drama and Music to perform for a live audience. Through these occasions our student tech team also had the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the industry of lighting, sound, photography and videography. These were wonderful evenings and enabled the Merici community to see the work of so many of our extremely talented students. The Showcase nights are a real celebration of the talent and imagination of the creative and performing arts students here at Merici and it is evident how much they value sharing this with their friends, families and peers.

We were extremely excited to announce in Semester 2 our Musical for 2023. After the success of *Matilda* in 2021, we were keen to keep this momentum going, providing further opportunities for students to perform and build their talents in the Arts. Auditions were held in Term 4 and we were blown away with the talent we have here at Merici. With that being said, we hope to see you all at *Alice in Wonderland* next year.

Ms. Alison Fogarty, Creative and Performing Arts Coordinator

## Dance

### *"Dance is Art in motion" – Unknown*

Years 9 and 10 Dance students focused on developing their technique in Jazz and Contemporary styles this year. Throughout both of these units students have been exploring how to compose using the elements of dance and creatively apply choreographic devices. Students demonstrated through their Performing Arts Process Diaries their knowledge and understanding of these styles, exploring pioneers like Fred Astaire and Martha Graham. This is key for students to develop their capacity to appreciate the Arts through written form. A highlight for our students was their final creation task, where they were able to explore their own identity and develop a creative work that expressed this, in a style of their choice. It was great to see the Year 9s and 10s working harmoniously to create an inclusive and productive dance space to learn from one another.

The Year 11 and 12 Senior students completed units that focused on creativity and communication in dance. In Semester 1, students explored change makers in dance through a contemporary lens, developing their foundational technique and creating compositions on topics that affect young people in 2022, for example mental health. The Semester 2 highlight was Dance Festival. This student-driven unit is an opportunity for students to showcase their knowledge of choreography, production elements and how to collaborate to ensure it all comes together as a polished end-product. A challenging but rewarding experience for all. The class

developed the theme of "Home?less", which explored the constant state of transience as a homeless person, how this can affect individuals and the importance of community.

From our Senior class we have a number of students who will continue their dance journey at Dynamite Studios Australia (Queensland) and Transit Dance (Melbourne). We wish Terre, Emily and Mia every success as they pursue their love and dance talents in full-time Dance studies in 2023.

We are proud that we can offer such an innovative and engaging Dance program to every student here at Merici.

Ms. Alison Fogarty, Creative and Performing Arts Coordinator and Dance Teacher

## Drama

*"Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it".*

Bertolt Brecht

One of the most rewarding parts of being an Arts educator is seeing students take a basic foundation, whether it be a script, a theme or an idea and work it, shape it, mould it, sometimes throw it out and start again to create a polished performance. The process allows students to develop and showcase their ability to take risks, work together as a team, overcome challenges and realise a potential they often never knew they possessed. 2022 delivered a year of budding performers keen to develop their craft.

The year started with the Year 9/10 Drama and Senior Drama classes participating in this year's ACTup Festival, exploring the theme of *Freedom and Restriction*. After working with an industry professional and creating a brand new 10-minute performance inspired by this year's theme. Every student had the opportunity to perform on the Canberra Theatre stage for other schools participating in the festival. There were some exceptionally strong performances from both classes. The Senior drama class was invited to perform their powerful physical theatre piece *'Exit Sign'*, which explored the freedom and restriction in various relationships on the Playhouse stage as part of the main program, performing in front of a public audience.

Semester 2 saw the Year 9 & 10 class explore the idea that site-specific theatre occurs in a specific location and is not always transferable to another site. This type of theatre often involves audience interaction and participation or viewing the action from unusual vantage points. Site-specific work allows students to expand their experience with play building and process drama; it introduces concepts of adapting to surroundings, considering audiences, managing audience expectations, teamwork and personal development. Much political, event-based and street theatre is site-specific; Augusto Boal's and Bertolt Brecht's manifestos are often personified in site-specific work.

The Senior class shifted their focus to First Nations Australian drama practices, Political Theatre and Documentary Theatre, where they were to create a 4-minute video as part of the History Makers Video Challenge run by the National Museum of Australia. The class chose to look at defining moments in our own city Canberra; each student took on the responsibility for one of the key areas of production. We rounded out the semester with Verbatim Theatre and the play *'Embers'* by Campion Decent, highlighting the effects of the 2003 'Black Friday' bushfires in Victoria's North East and Gippsland, based on interviews with residents of the region.

This year, we continued to see students follow their passion for performing outside the classroom. Year 12 Drama student, Emily O'Mahoney, was chosen to voice the character of Sophia in the children's audio tour for the National Museum of Australia's exhibition of Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors and Heroes and was also

signed with Buckland & Gun Management on their Sydney books as a professional actor. While Year 11 Drama student and 2023's Arts and Culture Captain, Sophie Blackburn, performed in Canberra Youth Theatre's production of DAGS.

Our Year 12 Drama students, Isabelle Dunn and Emily O'Mahoney, have been busy preparing for their auditions for various theatre courses around the country. I wish them all the best as they continue their journey in this space and look forward to seeing where their journey, love, and passion take them in the world.

Ms. Carly Johnson, Drama Teacher

## Media

*"Your life experience is a moving picture, of which you are a writer, director, performer, producer and critic" - T.F Hodge*

2022 was another exciting year in Media Studies. With the introduction of a new senior framework, the Senior students got to explore new units of study, offering a refreshing take on the role of mass media in our lives. In Semester 1, we looked at 'Creativity in Media', considered the range of techniques that filmmakers use to engage with audiences, and express their own personal style. In Semester 2, we looked more closely at how ideas are encoded in media products, and how media communication can resonate with audiences. The senior students demonstrated their creativity and persistence throughout the production process of their major assessment items, and their final short films were polished.

In years 9 and 10, the students spent a semester studying photography. We explored the ways photography can be used to inform and entertain, and we learnt about the functions of a camera, as well as the rules for image composition. In Semester 2, we covered film. The class considered how techniques, such as camera movement and editing, shape our understanding of what we see on screen. By the end of the year, the students produced a short film, drawing upon all of their knowledge of cinematographic techniques.

It has been an enjoyable year exploring the various facets of the media. It is always wonderful to see the creative work of the media students, and I couldn't be more prouder of them for their efforts.

Mr. Matthew Reynolds, Media Teacher

## Visual Arts

*"Art is not what you see, but what you make others see." - Edgar Degas*

Starting a journey into Visual Art opens the students up to appreciate the world around us. Welcoming Year 7 and 8 into Visual Art for a semester brings them an opportunity to experiment with colour mixing, lino cutting and ceramics, and hopefully find some budding artists among our juniors.

The artists of Year 9 and 10 explored, dissected, and experimented across the semesters. In Semester 1, students unpacked Cubism and Street art through a portfolio of Cubist works and finished off with their skateboards, a bold success at showcase.

In Semester 2, the artists took to the books and altered texts in a Dada and Surrealist manner before bringing it all home with a French Australian inspired Murka Mora dreaming doll. Through their exploration this year, the

students explored traditional and contemporary artists considering a repurposing of materials to create their artwork.

As the Seniors stepped into the art room in Term 1, they explored what contemporary art is, and how artists were and always will be change makers. Students presented large scale artworks in response to the world around them and considered the themes of Peace, Security and Conflict. Jumping into the second semester the senior artists had many experiences outside the classroom. Firstly, with an excursion to see 'Rauschenberg & Johns Significant Others' Exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia and then off the Megalo Print Studio in Braddon, not once but twice to build their major works – an etched print in response to the theme of Female Empowerment and a large-scale Screen Print for Mrs. Masters office in response to Merici's core values.

Rounding out the year, the Year 7 and 8 students participated in an International Ursuline project designing a 5cm x 5cm tile to be sent to the Saint Ursula Grammar School in Salzburg, Austria as part of their school entrance hall mosaic. To celebrate the work completed by our artists, we were lucky to showcase major works at the CAPA Arts Showcases where the students' work was placed on display to celebrate and shared with friends, family and the Merici community. A tremendous effort by our wonderful artists working studiously and creatively all year round.

Ms. April Croft, Visual Arts Teacher

## Music

*"Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable" - Leonard Bernstein*

Music at Merici has continued to grow in 2022, with three courses being offered in the Senior school and an Elective Music Program for Years 9 and 10. Merici musicians have had the opportunity to expand their skills and make music in the classroom setting, analysing, composing and performing a diverse range of music.

The Year 9/10 elective class explored Musicals, Jazz, Fusion, and Program Music. The girls have performed for each other showing support for both new and experienced performers. The class performed at the Arts Showcase evenings and Open Day, singing a variety of music including 'Seasons of Love' from Rent.

The BSSS Senior Music T, A and M courses all moved to a new framework this year which emphasised continuity across the Arts subjects. The girls studied a diverse range of music under the topics of 'Creativity in Music' and 'Communicating Meaning in Music'. Class and assessment tasks explored areas as diverse as Protest Music, Minimalism, and the music of Sibelius and Karl Jenkins. The girls have composed for a range of instruments and voices with some of their music, which was also used in both Drama and Media productions at school. Performance skills have also been developed and it has been pleasing for the girls to perform for a "live" audience at the Showcase evenings in both semesters.

Ms. Nicola Bartasek Music Teacher

## Merici Vocal Group 2022

The Merici Vocal Group, encompassing students from Years 7-12, has enjoyed building back up again after the challenges of lockdowns and restrictions over the previous 2 years. We have loved leading the congregation at College Masses again this year as well as having some opportunities to perform to the school community.

We continue to explore contemporary and traditional music in 3 parts, performing an arrangement of 'Lovely' by Billie Eilish at the Semester 1 Arts Showcase Evening. To support the development of international mindedness and to celebrate language acquisition at Merici, we have also begun exploring a more international repertoire and aim to learn songs in different languages, beginning with the beautiful 'Vois sur ton Chemin' from the touching French film *Les Choristes*. We hope to continue growing our group of singers, developing our skills and building bonds over a shared love of music. We will relish the opportunity to get out into the community for more public performances in 2023.

I would like to thank Ms. Jaki Kane, our accompanist, for always supporting us and congratulate Laura Harris and Jessica Reeve for being our student accompanists.

Ms. Clare Freeman, Vocal Group Facilitator

## Merici Wind Ensemble 2022

This year the Merici Wind Ensemble have been rehearsing on a Tuesday morning. We have played a wide variety of music in different styles including film scores, classic hits including La Bamba, highlights from classical favourites and of course show tunes.

The group has performed at the Merici Open Days and Arts Showcase Evenings in Semester 1 and 2 and worked with the string girls to form a combined group for the Christmas picnic.

The group has continued to show their flexibility and determination as performers and have greatly improved their sight reading and performance skills throughout the year.

Ms. Nicola Bartasek, Wind Ensemble Music Facilitator

## Merici Guitar Ensemble 2022

This year, I had the privilege of being involved with the Merici Guitar Ensemble, AKA the Guitar Group. However, this name is a little misleading. In actuality, the guitar group is open to all students with a love of music. While predominantly made up of guitarists, the group also includes drummers, bassists and pianists. Our practice sessions run during lunchtimes on Wednesdays, and it's an opportunity to work on a piece we have been practising, experiment with a new riff, or even try out a new instrument.

Our members have had the chance to showcase their extraordinary talent during lunchtime Pop Up performances and performed a cover of the Goo Goo Dolls' 'Iris' for the Arts Showcase Evening, to an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. I am incredibly proud of the group, for their passion for music and performing, and I wish to invite any budding musicians to come along and say hello next year!

Mr. Matthew Reynolds, Guitar Ensemble Facilitator

## Merici String Ensemble 2022

The group started the year by learning to play Warlock's Capriol Suite 'Sword Dance', a fun and energetic piece that brought up images of 'pirates'. This was followed by repertoire that included Irish fiddle music.

At the end of Semester 1 the group performed at several events including the Merici Open Day, School Mass and the 2022 Merici Arts Showcases. In Semester 2, the girls explored popular music including 'Here comes the Sun' by the Beatles and a 'How to Train your Dragon Medley'. In Term 4, the girls collaborated with the Merici Wind Ensemble to perform at the Christmas Family picnic and the final Arts Showcase for the year.

Ms. Shirahni Mudaliar, Strings Tutor

## Performing Arts

*"The arts push us to new frontiers of innovation. They open our eyes to new ways of seeing, thinking, and doing. And they are a means for creating the world we all want to live in, where everyone has access to new opportunities and the chance for their dreams to be realized." -- Jane Chu*

Mrs. Nicola Bartasek and Ms. Alison Fogarty teach the performing arts curriculum to our Year 7 and 8 students. Within this unit students experience Dance, Drama and Music. This very practical unit sees students learning all about the elements of dance, drama and music and then applying this knowledge through creation and performance activities. This allows students plenty of time to practise and refine their technical skills, whilst utilising their creative brains.

Tasks included students collaborating 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 various instruments. 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.

Ms. Alison Fogarty and Ms. Nicola Bartasek, Performing Arts Teachers

## Photography

*We are moved by photographs; we look at the same image and see something completely different.*

Like all ARTS subjects, Photography allows students to express themselves creatively, and to make connections with their own thoughts and feelings that are not easy to put into words. Looking at the work of others allows students to see the possible and experience the unknown, it also allows them to empathise. This was made clear when we visited the National Photographic Portrait Prize at the National Portrait Gallery earlier this year. We were introduced to images that were joyous, celebrations of family and self, others were more challenging, revealing subjects who were experiencing loneliness, illness, systemic racism or gender inequality. All made us think and many made us feel. This year we have been extremely creative with our photography, capturing and manipulating images to make something quite abstract. We have been responding creatively to the works of many famous photographers, some super-contemporary and others, old masters. We have also spent time trying to capture powerful, technically skilled, images that communicate meaning. The more images we take, the less satisfied we are, however, we have a real sense of achievement when we see our photographs displayed around the school and understand all that has gone into the process. Photography isn't easy but it is tremendously rewarding.

Mrs. Virginia McLeod, Photography Teacher



## Design and Graphics

*Design is integral to our lives, everything we use began as a design problem.*

The buildings we live and work in, the suburbs, roads and parks we enjoy, the devices we use to listen to music, the tools we use to live our lives, the tools that are used to save our lives, the cars we drive, the restaurants we visit, the signs we look at, the clothes we wear, all are the result of a design process. Design has the power to improve the way we live. Design education introduces the relationship between form and function, it teaches that less is more, it stresses the importance of a sustainable and ethical approach, students are taught to employ conceptual and critical thinking and to problem solve, they are challenged. The sense of achievement they feel when they come up with an original design solution is rewarding. They experiment, they refine, they act on feedback to improve their solutions and they are always learning. Good design makes a difference, it has the ability to change the way people think, to change the direction people take, to influence what people buy.

The girls have risen to these challenges this year and have produced spectacularly impressive work. Each girl created, printed, cut and refined 52 unique cards, each with their own original design based on their research into the Bauhaus. The design process was essential to the success of this project and the portfolios that accompanied the pack of cards was testament to this. The girls also had to design the pack, print it, cut it out, make it up then fit the 52 cards into it. This was frustrating at times, but it brought out the perfectionist in the students. Every pack of cards is distinctive, and each is quite beautiful. The girls are now in the process of branding a small 'handmade' business and designing a market stall. The challenges continue.

Mrs. Virginia McLeod, Design and Graphics Teacher