

## **Hearts in Harmony community music day Sept 2011 at ACU**

### **Report by Heather McLaughlin**

This was a wonderful day of music-making which highlighted socially inclusive activities for all ages for a wide range of people from the community as well as hundreds of students from ACU. The presenters were all excellent, and the whole feeling of the day was extremely positive and inspiring.

During the day, I spoke with the following diverse people enjoying the music sessions:

- an older man from China who came from the Atherton Gardens high-rise housing, with little English, who happily joined in singing and dancing with your students
- a primary music teacher who drove from Geelong with her two young sons for the day
- a male ACU nursing student from China who tried the piano accordion and beamed in delight the whole day at the music activities
- a young mother who told me that the Community Choir led by Susie Davies-Splitter is the high point of her week
- a retired man who came from Bayswater, who has begun singing this year for the first time and came at the suggestion of his Ringwood singing teacher (his previous career: massaging race-horses!)
- a dance teacher who has started leading a choir in a primary school who was 'blown away' by the music workshops and the welcoming approach of all presenters
- a young man (ex-engineer, who now writes children's books) who says he can't sing but wants to, and joined in session with interest
- many families with young children, some of whom came to sing in the "Mini-maestros" choir
- a SOSE lecturer from ACU who sings in the Community Choir
- a mother and 10 year old daughter from Box Hill who asked "How can we do more of this?".

All sessions - from Jane Coker's singing sessions, Audrey Fine's multicultural dance, Peter Vadiveloo's drumming, Susie and Phil's singing, and Jon Madin's amazing array of marimbas and invented instruments - had people of all ages and backgrounds participating in relaxed manner.

The ACU student volunteers who assisted with the unloading of instruments and many other tasks were impressive in their willingness to help.

This type of workshop is an excellent way to show ACU to a broader community, and is a demonstration of the interest of the university to engage in multi-faith and multi-generational activities. My warmest congratulations to the Australian Catholic University for demonstrating a deep interest in community engagement.

Please pass on to Susie Davies-Splitter my encouragement and admiration. Your institution is fortunate to have such a warm-hearted and passionate member of staff in the music department, with such broad personal skills and experience. The students must benefit from her positive approach, which is exactly what we need to spread more into schools.

Yours sincerely,

Heather McLaughlin  
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Board member, Community Music Victoria  
Vice-President, VOSA (Victorian Orff Schulwerk Association).