

2013 Symphony Australia TSO Composers' School - Student Testimonials

There are few truly enlightened music education programs in Australia and it makes me incredibly proud to have taken part in such an important example. From my experience, it is clear to me that the ability of the TSO's Composer's School, shepherded by its organisational staff, is that it can offer unparalleled access to the collective experience of a highly professional symphony orchestra and the advice of composers at the spearhead of contemporary music in Australia, which, I believe, gives this program international significance beyond its budget level. There is no better way to learn the craft of orchestration than this. (Andrew Howes, student 2013).

Having just completed the Symphony Australia TSO Composers' School, I can't imagine how anyone could write for orchestra without undertaking this sort of experience. There is an abstract sense of the complexity in orchestral writing, but its only through this sort of vital experience, with an immediate feedback loop, that a composer can find solutions and understand this complexity. There is also the significant benefit of developing confidence in interacting with a professional orchestra that can only come with practical experience. The management of the school was highly organised, and the selection of tutors and conductor excellent. The tutors were able to provide strong opinions, and also to clearly articulate the reasoning for their suggestions. However they also avoided being dictatorial and ultimately left musical decisions up to the composer. There are not enough programs of this importance and calibre for composers in Australia. (Ian Whitney, student 2013)

I'm not sure it's possible for me to overstate the importance of a program like the Symphony Australia TSO Composer's School. I can only speak for myself but in the one week I spent in Hobart I probably learned more than in a whole year of conservatorium study. It wasn't just time spent with the fantastically accomplished and accommodating tutors but from everyone in the TSO organisation. From the conductor, to the section principals, to the back desk violins, to the librarian to the stage hands. Just being around these professionals in their own environment, and in a setting where there was time for them to communicate their feedback and suggestions, was absolutely priceless in terms of both acquiring professional skills and career development. I think it's telling that almost every high-profile working Australian composer today has participated in this program or its predecessors. In a word, this program is ESSENTIAL. (Ryan Walsh, student 2013)

The 2013 Symphony Australia TSO Composers' School was, without a doubt, one of the most productive weeks of my musical life. The school was primarily an opportunity to spend an intensive week exploring all aspects of composition under the close supervision of our tutors. However, it also provided us with a unique understanding of the inner workings of a professional orchestra – knowledge that will be vital if we hope to work as professional composers. Furthermore, the school was a rare opportunity to meet and befriend other young Australian composers, and I have already commenced work on a new project that has arisen as a consequence of contacts made during my week in Hobart. (Alex Chilvers, student 2013)