



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS  
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair), Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Mark Parton MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the cessation of the Music  
for Colleges course

**Submission Number: 19**

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Canberra  
Symphony  
Orchestra

Nicholas Milton AM  
Chief Conductor & Artistic Director

30 May 2019

The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Education,  
Employment and Youth Affairs,  
Legislative Assembly for the ACT  
GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT

**Re: Inquiry into the cessation of the Music for Colleges course**

The Canberra Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is pleased to submit this response in support of the Music for Colleges course (H Course). The CSO is making this submission to clearly state that music in Canberra is a complex ecosystem in which the H Course has been a vital part for many years, inspiring musicians of all backgrounds to see music as a viable career option.

As the professional orchestra of Canberra, and the largest performing arts organisation in the region, the CSO provides a pathway for development and employment of early career and established professional musicians. The CSO plays a vital role in Canberra's community through its delivery of high calibre performances of symphonic masterworks, through to direct engagement with the community through outreach programs and large scale events presented free to the public.

CSO orchestral performances employ between 60 and 80 part-time musicians of professional standard. It is well known that CSO musicians who went to school in Canberra also took part in the iterations of the H Course since its inception. This equates to hundreds of musicians whose careers in music were nurtured, shaped and encouraged because of this course, and its cessation is of some concern to us.

Of these musicians, the majority live in Canberra, and contribute to its culture in their daytime work places. Many have gone on to have careers in music teaching, passing on their knowledge, experience and techniques to the next generation of Canberra musicians.

The CSO acknowledges the expertise in delivery of the course through the ANU for a generation, and that a significant amount of time and money will be required to re-establish the support structures and breadth of musicians that form the foundation of this course. The CSO supports a prudent and sustainable approach by continuing the course through the ANU, enabling pathways which constitute tertiary music study and professional practice in performance, composition, education, music scholarship and arts management.

The H Course plays a crucial role in providing affordable, quality tuition with access to professional musicians, exposure to tertiary studies and employment opportunities for those students less privileged or who could not access it otherwise. Providing this pathway ensures the next generation of professional orchestral musicians and music advocates for our city.

Level One, 11 London Circuit, Canberra City  
GPO Box 1919, Canberra ACT 2601  
02 6247 9191  
cso.org.au

ABN: 42 705 136 058

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Based on evidence the CSO has sought from its professional musicians, the H Course (Classical stream) has been distinguished from disparate College-based music courses, which need to cater for the diverse range of students wishing to undertake music study, by the following:

- It serves young musicians who have already achieved an advanced level of executant skills (appropriate to age and experience), or show the potential to rapidly acquire these in a supportive environment
- It offers significant motivation for students through intensive peer learning with like-minded students
- It exposes such students to the tertiary environment and viable music career opportunities
- It offers the opportunity to learn from the best instrumental or composition teachers and participate in music-making by playing alongside more advanced students and staff
- It supports learning in performance and composition with advanced music literacy development (through music theory, aural training and historical/cultural context)
- It assists students to be successful in auditions for places in tertiary music schools, a priority for a viable music career.

That the H Course has had a profound impact on the lives of many professional musicians is exemplified by a few examples, sought as part of the CSO's preparation for this submission which relate to our orchestra.

**Respondent 1:** *Exposure to the University early on, access to excellent teaching, having to prepare for performances that were taken seriously, getting the opportunity to play with the uni orchestra*

**Respondent 2:** *The benefits I found were countless, and I can say with confidence that it is the reason I pursued music. The course provided a means of connecting with students from other schools who were passionate about music, which drove us all to try harder and do better, and also gave us the opportunity to play music together. We were challenged by the content which covered so many areas of music that were beyond standard secondary education (especially public education). I managed to learn more in 2 hours a week than I ever could have learned in school thanks to wonderful teachers. The course also gave us exposure to people who had found a career in music and to see what possibilities were out there.*

**Respondent 3:** *High level musical education, chance to connect with like-minded peers, regular expert advice from professional musicians.*

**Respondent 4:** *It was invaluable to have the opportunity to learn from teachers of such high calibre. At that age and when even considering studying music further into university and adult life, it is vital to have guidance from experienced professionals. To also be surrounded by students who are likeminded and also keen to extend themselves was an important asset to the course. This also enabled us to learn and perform real chamber music - there are no schools in ACT which have a wide enough range of instrumental players for this to occur otherwise.*

**Respondent 5:** *... The course was of enormous developmental benefit to students of ALL instruments and Voice -- not only those who had the intention of pursuing Tertiary performance courses and further careers as performers, but also as a basis for sound practical training for avocational musicians, and ensembles such as CYO etc ...*

**Respondent 6:** *It was hugely beneficial for my life. To be given the opportunity to have weekly music classes at a very advanced level with likeminded peers was extremely valuable. Unfortunately the level cannot be as high at standard high schools due to people with diverse musical backgrounds and skills, so this was something that me and my colleagues really needed. Also having individual instrumental lessons with top teachers was fantastic! I am now a*

*professional musician working with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and I credit the Type One course with pushing me to go down this path.*

The CSO acknowledges that this evidence is based on those respondents with careers in 'classical' music performance, but is aware the Jazz stream has also nurtured a generation of outstanding professional jazz musicians. They now form the core of Jazz music-making in Canberra, but many have national and international careers. For some students, the H course also opened pathways to improvised music-making across genres and in commercial sectors of the music industry (film, media, entertainment, bands and popular music).

The eco-system of music-making in Canberra is dependent on developing and nurturing outstanding musicians from a young age. The CSO is integral to that eco-system and has been seriously affected by the recent decline in opportunities and support for advanced musical training in the city.

The H Course provides a platform from which young musicians can explore and develop a lifelong career in music, contributing in meaningful ways to our community. The CSO is of the firm opinion that the H Course should be continued and funded adequately by the ACT Government. The ANU has demonstrated the successful delivery of the course and is best placed to provide this ongoing, vital opportunity to Canberra and the region.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Thomas', written in a cursive style.

Rachel Thomas  
Chief Executive Officer  
Canberra Symphony Orchestra