

# Chatswood email from parents and teachers

## Previous to premiere

---

17 Sep 2005 1.03pm

Hi Raph/Mr Hultgren,

Gavin Staines is encouraging some of the students to email you to help inspire you for your composition. As a parent of six sons who have all played in Chatswood High's bands I told Gav I would also try and give you some insights.

A bit of background - Our eldest son began playing trumpet at Roseville Public school in 1986 and his brothers have all followed suit - two trumpeters, two tuba/ trombonists a sax, and the last one left at Chatswood high , a percussionist. They have also played in SSSWE , The Olympic Marching Band and three of the 5 who have left school still play in the City of Sydney Wind Ensemble. The point of all of this is that as a family we have collectively watched, listened to and played an awful lot of music!

Ralph Hultgren compositions I have to say are right up there as family favourites. They have all played "Hornets Nest" not only at Chatswood but at SSSWE and City of Sydney Band, and particularly for the Tuba players and trumpeters it's such a great piece. (My saxophonist also tells me it's fun for them too!) People still remember our 25 year old tuba player when he was at school playing that piece. It was "his piece" to many people.

The first time I heard "Masada" I was absolutely blown away. I remember Gavin saying after the first performance that he still hadn't quite worked out how to conduct it - but it just got better and better. I'm still filled with anticipation if I see that piece on a program. As a High school teacher (unfortunately just a geography teacher not a music teacher), I love watching the faces of the kids in the band as they play a piece such as Masada. There's not time or space to be distracted - the piece requires total concentration and you can see kids who in other situations might be easily distracted focussing totally on the music - a wondrous thing.

A little about the band at Chatswood from my perspective. The kids are a real mix of cultures and personalities sharing that bond of music. The kids are tolerant of differences between them and are, and always have been a team regardless of whether they are in year 8 (as our last son is) or year 12. They can take a bit of a relaxed attitude but Gav gets them going with the promise of tours, concerts, compositions(yours!) and other treats that appeal to teenagers. They rise to the occasion when need be.

I hope I've given you just a little help to inspire you - it must be difficult to compose something like this. We look forward to the World Premiere of your piece - just put in some good bits for the percussionists!

Regards,

Rosemary Brown

(Brown City All Stars)

---

29 Sep 2005 7.46pm

Hey mate my names Sean Fernandes and i play trumpet in the chatswood high school bands. I heard your writing a new piece for our band which is bloody awesome. I was in the band when we toured europe last year and we played masada and that piece got us into the finals. Any composition along the lines of that piece would score well with me, i loved masad and hornets nest was good as well, but masada's got to be the best piece ive ever played. Yeah well thanks for given us the honour and yeah, my input probably didn't do shit hahahaha but oh well.

Hve a good one mate. Sean

---

6 Oct 2005 10.50pm

Hey Ralph,

Hey I'm in the CHS concert Band and play 1<sup>st</sup> Alto. I have played both Masada and Hornets Nest and I honestly think they are some of the best concert band pieces I have played, because they are so full of energy. One of the main points is that all the instruments get some melody, and because I played the Bari Sax for three years I know that t can get really repetitive, so it was refreshing playing your pieces. Personally, playing the alto I find that in so many pieces we have exactly what the 1<sup>st</sup> clarinet has except usually an octave lower, and it means that you feel as if you aren't needed, so its good when we are playing something completely different. I think each instrument has certain aspects which the player can do better, and in the piece it would be good to be able to emphasize these and show them off. Other than that its also interesting when there are different interchanging time signatures, like the dance feels in minor keys (like in Masada and Hornets Nest).

Looking forward to hearing it.

Kim H

---

22 Oct 2005 3.36pm

Hi, I'm Geoffrey Ward (in Year 11), and I play 1st Horn with the Chatswood High Band.

I've enjoyed playing Masada and Hornets Nest with the band - (as 3rd Horn).

Apart from doing the usual "...*please* give me a decent part" grovelling, I'd better give you an idea of why I enjoyed playing them.

- I get to play with all different band members - not just the usual trumpets/saxes
- each part is important, and you feel that it needs to be there, not just filling out the texture/ volume level
- it's great to hear different sound combinations, and different ranges: in the opening of Masada I played the 4th part (because I could). In a lot of music we play, most of the parts don't go into the lower register - more often than not using the high register which isn't that fun on the chops during Gavin's 100 hour rehearsals.

Geoffrey

---

**Post premiere**

---

9 Apr 2006 4.48 pm

Ralph,

I wanted to say something to you last night but there were too many people around you. So I'll say it now. The piece that you composed for the Chatswood students certainly forces them to raise their level of performance and not be complacent. This can only add to their skills as musicians and challenge them to seek to constantly strive for a better sound. It was a dramatic piece in which led me to visualise the scenes of war & triumph you described as part of your inspiration as well as admiration for Joshua the man. A fine piece of music which I hope will be added to many performers' repertoires & we can always say not only did we hear it for the first time, but our kids performed it for the first time ever. Thanks very much putting so much into the commission and achieving something which the kids enjoy playing & the audience is keen to hear!

Claudete ( mother of Evan, percussionist)

(Claudette Rones)

---

9 Apr 2006 10.02pm

Hello Ralph

I would like to thank you for the time and effort you have put into creating "Joshua" for our school band. We really enjoyed the performance last night and thought the composition evoked just the right atmosphere and told the story through music. I had tingles down my spine at the beginning listening to the trumpet solo and also the flute solo near the middle. My daughter (Lauren) plays first clarinet in the band and she has enjoyed working with you and appreciated the time spent working with year 12 on their compositions.

Thanks again for your dedication to music and young people.

Jenny Tuck

---

10 Apr 2006 10.36am

Hi Ralph

I was at the Chatswood High concert on Saturday night (son Ben plays the trumpet) and just wanted to congratulate you on "Joshua". I thought it was a great piece of music, especially the way the different sections of the band were brought out and the images it brought to mind. The grandparents also loved it.

Thanks for writing it for the school.

Kind Regards

Rachel Herbert

---

10 Apr 2006 3.17pm

Dear Ralph

I have been to many school concerts, because my son is one of many players in Chatsoowd High School ; but if they haver play so good, that was saturday night. They play it brillhantly, conducted by a brillhant person and thank you for writing it to.

Many many thanks for saturday night.

EvaF

(Eva Fernades)

---

10 Apr 2006 8.36pm

Dear Ralph,

I would like to express my thanks for your wonderful contribution in developing the musicianship of the students of CHS and especially my daughter, Louise.

Louise plays bassoon and her enthusiastic feedback from spending time in the composition class and the opportunity to own a piece of music was worth every chocolate we bought for fundraising.

She actually liked your humour the most and recited every joke you told! !!!!!

So once again thank you. It was a joy to listen to students play with such passion and enthusiasm and receive such recognition for their efforts and ultimately your recognition.

regards,  
Clare Kristensen

---

11 Apr 2006 7.40am

Ralph,

Thank you for a wonderful evening and congratulations on a marvelous piece of music for the school.

I feel that I should try to explain the behaviour of the audience after Joshua was played.

My theory is that most of the audience are Sydney Morning Herald reader and that they saw this article in their paper in the morning:

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts/all-clapped-out-over-endless-ovations/2006/04/07/1143916715012.html>

Tough luck - you deserved a standing ovation.

I was particularly impressed by your handling of the earlier Sunday session with the band. I was in the audience at 5pm primed to take one of your trombones to his semi-final of the local futsal competition. Your performance held the trombone and the futsal team (with 4 players instead of 5) narrowly lost and could not proceed to a final they were expected to win.

Thanks again..

....Bruce White

---

11 Apr 2006 7.45am

Hello Ralph,

We are parents of one of the oboe players in Chatswood High School Concert Band and we were present for the world premiere of "Joshua". We wanted to let you know how fantastic we thought it was. The music told his story well and having been acquainted with Joshua for some time I was sitting recalling many things about him as the music played. It is wonderful to hear such a complex piece reflecting a life and a faith, because both life and faith are complex and a mystery.

Thankyou for all your work and interest in our kids. We deeply appreciate your passion to educate and expose our children to music that is demanding and something to reach for. That goes way beyond the music and is a life lesson.

We had the opportunity to bring our elderly parents that night as well and they literally hadn't heard live music for years and they were absolutely knocked out! Isn't it wonderful to be knocked out at 86!!

So bless you for all your efforts and may your pen continue to flow!

Regards

Bill and Narelle Nielson

---

11 Apr 2006 10.24am

Dear Ralph and Gavin,

As a parent (of bassoonist Lucy Browning) and a part-time musician/composer (of pop rubbish, not serious stuff like yours!), I want to thank you both very much indeed for the magnificent Chatswood High concert the other night - and especially for the world premiere performance of "Joshua".

The concert was simply a delight - both the Concert Band and Stage Band are reaching an extraordinary standard under your expert guidance, Gavin.

"Joshua" was engaging from its first haunting trumpet to its final triumphant crash. You could sense the rise and fall of emotions, the battles, almost hear the sand whistling across the desert. Beautifully constructed, soundly played and expertly conducted.

My partner Julie Browning shared my enthusiasm for the concert and the new piece and wishes to send her heartiest congratulations as well.

You've both worked enthusiastically on your art - and better than that, you've shared and fostered the same kind of enthusiasm among the kids.

I'm sure your God would be very pleased with both of you guys for the fine work you've done.

Best wishes & cheers,

Stafford Sanders

Ph. (02) 9334-1823; (m) 0412-070-194

---

12 Apr 2006 9.06am

Hello Ralph,

Just a quick email from a Chatswood High parent (of Riley, trombone player) to say how much I enjoyed your new work. It is exciting and moody and entertaining. I'm glad you gave us the handout about the the biblical allusion to Joshua - I had wondered before that if it was an ode to a favourite friend (or dog!). Knowing that it is about that particular Joshua makes the piece all the more exciting. My son enjoyed the piece, finding it challenging and "good" (praise from a 14 year old!).

Well done.

Regards

Lynette Hoare

---