




COVID-19  
RECOVERY PLAN  
2021-2022

# COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN 2021–2022



Musica Viva's COVID-19 Plan, a summary of which we are delighted to present here, outlines the company's return to live performance in schools, in concert halls and in the community. The Plan celebrates the resilience of our musicians, our artform, our teachers, our staff, our volunteers and other members of the Australian chamber music sector, all of whom have been profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Planning in uncertain times presents many challenges. To ensure a thorough and comprehensive blueprint, a working group composed of Musica Viva staff from all over Australia was convened in early July 2020. With expert external guidance provided by colleagues at Social Ventures Australia, (and meetings with the Board of Directors and the company's senior management teams) the working group guided a comprehensive review of the challenges and opportunities Musica Viva faces over the period 2021/2. A final Planning document was presented to, and ratified by, Musica Viva's Board of Directors on 24th September.

This summary of the larger Plan presents Musica Viva's key commitments, our view of the key drivers affecting our work and our Strategic Priorities. A fuller version of the Plan is available upon request.

# KEY COMMITMENTS

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## AUSTRALIAN MUSIC



Under our new Artistic Director Paul Kildea, we will expand on Musica Viva's long tradition of commissioning Australian works and employing Australian musicians to create a new way of presenting chamber music – an Australian way – which we will take to the world through collaborations with international festivals and other overseas presenters. This new artistic direction (delayed but not derailed by COVID-19) is based on our deep, long-standing connection to local artists across Australia and expresses our belief in the country's unique role as an incubator – the perfect place to develop new ideas away from the glare of major international music circuits in North America and in Europe.

## FIRST NATIONS COLLABORATIONS



Our Plan also celebrates Musica Viva's long-standing connections to First Nations communities, stretching back to 1970. Most recently, schools nationwide have been learning about childhood games played in Torres Strait Island cultures with Wyniss, our second First Nations Ensemble to be developed in collaboration with NAISDA. In 2019, thousands of children received a live music lesson from the members of Wyniss while their teachers benefited from a term's worth of teaching materials and ongoing, online professional development.

## SUPPORTING MUSICIANS AND THE CHAMBER MUSIC COMMUNITY



Chamber music is a highly collaborative artform and the challenges we face as a sector are too complex for any one organisation to work alone or in isolation. Therefore, as an organisation which has partnered and collaborated with individual artists, ensembles, communities and sister organisations for decades, we are well placed to provide support in these difficult times.

Most recently, Musica Viva, as one of the largest employers of Australian musicians, has found ways to offer as much work as possible through our rapid conversion to live online school classes which employed musicians while also providing children with access to music. In other partnership work, Musica Viva provides technical support, office space and subsidised studio rates to other arts companies and gathers opinion and facts from the chamber music sector to inform our advocacy agenda.

# KEY COMMITMENTS

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## INCREASING ACCESS

Created by refugees and driven by a commitment to equal access to chamber music for all, Musica Viva is determined to increase our reach, deepen our impact and diversify our audiences, our staff and our governance structure. Musicians working in our schools programs – and the students who attend them – represent many of the cultures which together make up contemporary Australia. Competitors in this year's inaugural Strike A Chord reflected the future of chamber music and its audiences.

Musica Viva also intends to expand access to music to more of Australia's regional and remote communities. As the only arts organisation with staff based in most States and Territories, we are already a major presence outside the cities and have the largest private music education program in the country. Additionally, we present Australian musicians in regional towns in NSW, with aspirations to expand this aspect of our work to the other States in 2021 and beyond. We will seek out opportunities to work with communities who have been particularly impacted by COVID-19 or other challenges such as bushfires.

## EXPANDING OUR DIGITAL PRESENCE

Our recent and rapid conversion to digital platforms means that, where we are unable to present live music, we can present access to excellent performances digitally. Digital platforms are also used to provide professional development for teachers and audience engagement and development products for our concerts program. Our digital platforms will also be used to reduce physical or financial barriers in accessing both our education and live performance programs.

## STRONG GOVERNANCE

These commitments to excellence and access are made possible by a robust governance structure and a long history of excellent stewardship of resources. Though reserves have been substantially reduced by an almost-complete cancellation of live performances in 2020, extensive financial modelling indicates our ability to weather the further difficulties expected because of the continuing pandemic. The degree to which we will be able to expand our work, and fully engage in the aspirations set forth in this Plan is uncertain, but we are confident that – with support from government and our other funders – we will be able to continue our commitment to the music, musicians and audiences of Australia.





The inaugural Strike A Chord Competition, live-streamed with our partners from the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall from various locations.  
(photos by Keith Saunders)

# KEY DRIVERS

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## ARTIST EMPLOYMENT

Musica Viva has a long history as one of the major employers of chamber ensembles and individual musicians in Australia. The company engages over 150 musicians each year across its education, concerts and artist development activities. Therefore, a key driver is to create more opportunities to provide artists with work while also continuing to provide employment for our staff teams at offices around the country.

As confirmed by both the ABS and the many anecdotal reports we continue to receive, artists and small ensembles (the backbone of the chamber music sector) are amongst the people whose opportunities for employment have been most severely affected by COVID-19. With performances cancelled, composition contracts placed on hold or project development plans suspended, artists face an even more uncertain future when subsidies to individuals and companies end. Early in the pandemic, Musica Viva established an Artists Fund dedicated to providing artists with continuing employment (from refunded ticket donations). However, as consultations with artists and arts companies conducted for this plan have confirmed, we expect a considerable increase in demand on both the Fund and MVA's ability to continue as one of Australia's largest employers of musicians in 2021 and 2022.

## MAINTAINING ARTISTIC VIBRANCY

As mentioned, Musica Viva is in a stage of exciting change with the arrival of a new Artistic Director, supported by a new leadership team. In addition, Musica Viva in Schools (MVIS) seeks to build on several years of increasing artistic innovation which introduces several new Australian ensembles into schools each year. The company is committed to maintaining momentum as we return to live performances but also to accelerating engagement in our increasing expertise with digital to deepen impact and broaden reach.

## ENHANCING STAKEHOLDER & AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Musica Viva has a long history of close contact with all stakeholders, from subscribers (many of whom have been attending concerts for decades and for whom music is a connection to their culture and to communities) to donors and sponsors. Ensuring that our supporters remain connected to us – and to music – is a key consideration.



# KEY DRIVERS

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## MAINTAINING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

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MVA's ability to maintain organisational capacity made possible the rapid re-deployment of staff to create digital alternatives across all programs. Remote working practices have strengthened the opportunity to deploy staff efficiently where their skills are most needed operationally. Our capacity to continue to respond to dynamic conditions and to local needs and opportunities is dependent on this capable and adaptable workforce.

## INVESTING IN INNOVATION

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Musica Viva will continue to invest in, and seek new support for, new ways to achieve its vision. For example, in 2021 MVA will appoint a multi-disciplinary artist, Judith Nangala Crispin. As Artist in Residence in 2021, Judith will explore the digital medium as an artform and work across the company to encourage a cross-disciplinary approach that supports Paul Kildea's vision of inventing new ways to make chamber music an even more profound exchange between audiences and musicians.

Additionally, funding will be sought (from federal emergency arts investment amongst other sources) to significantly expand Musica Viva's overall digital capacity. This will allow us to not only enhance our current programs but also to enact Paul Kildea's vision of Musica Viva as a content creator – including in the digital realm.



Above: Artist-in-residence Judith Nangala Crispin (photo by Kerrie Brewer, Canberra Weekly)  
Left: Artistic Director Paul Kildea (photo by Keith Saunders)

# KEY PRIORITIES

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## SUSTAINING THE REACH AND INCREASING THE IMPACT OF OUR PROGRAMS

Sustaining the reach and increasing the impact of our programs in a time of need for our sector and community. Though already known internationally as a major presenter of chamber music and as a leading provider of music education, MVA aspires to become known as a global leader in creating innovative chamber music and acknowledged as a leader in creating innovative methodologies for using music to inspire creativity in children. We are actively seeking new ways to present the artform to increase our national and global presence, produce new income streams and create new ways of experiencing chamber music by:

- Continued delivery of live in school performances where possible, and digital when not.
- Continued expansion of Residencies in schools, and Accredited Training for teachers
- Commissioning of Australian works and international collaborations to co-create new works
- Supporting greater opportunities for artists and emerging artists to collaborate and work across MVA offerings

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## LOCALISING OUR PRODUCT OFFERINGS

Localising our product offerings to respond to the differing needs of communities across Australia. Musica Viva will seek to extend its regional tours, community residencies and other projects beyond NSW and into other States by;

- Increasing focus on local ensembles to deliver live concerts.
- Developing digital resources that prepare local centres for upcoming regional tours by contextualising performances. Engagement with regional centres will also include residencies with MVA artists and opportunities for community engagement wherever possible.
- Building on our long association with presenters, conservatoria and communities in Regional NSW with tours enhanced by digital products.
- Utilising an extensive audit of local artists and venues undertaken at the start of the pandemic to inform the need to 'swivel' to local performances as COVID-19 continues to disrupt travel.

# KEY PRIORITIES

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## INCREASING THE DIVERSITY

Increasing the diversity of our artists, programming, organisation and audiences to reflect contemporary Australia.

- MVA has a long history of engagement with First Nations musicians, exemplified by its creation (with colleagues at NAISDA) of two ensembles in the MVIS program. To deepen this engagement into a more meaningful and ongoing collaboration with the wider communities of First Nations People, MVA formed a Reconciliation Working Group earlier in 2020, submitting a RAP to Reconciliation Australia after consulting with a number of First Nations artists and colleagues.
- MVA will also seek out opportunities to co-create new work with First Nations artists in an artist-led activity
- Expand on the opportunities provided by Strike A Chord - MVA's new national high school chamber music competition. This year's inaugural event attracted over 100 groups representing over 400 musicians who largely reflect the face of contemporary Australia. Drawn from many cultures, the artists demonstrated a common commitment to chamber music, a unifying theme we will focus on to develop talent, build careers and enthuse a new generation of music lovers and concert goers.
- Commission a review of all internal policies to ensure that they reflect best practice on diversity in the workplace
- Diversify our audiences. Musica Viva provides access to chamber music at almost every stage of life; this span of programs (as well as our unique position as the only national music company with staff based in most States) provides us with many opportunities to broaden access to chamber music for audiences that reflect the country's future. To do this, we will build on our recent successes in attracting family, student and other audiences.



Photo: Ensemble Wyniss performing at North Kal.

# KEY PRIORITIES

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## DELIVERING OUR PROGRAMMING ONLINE

Delivering our programming online to provide more opportunities for connection. As well as development of regionally-focused initiatives, we will invest in work created specifically for the digital medium, livestream main stage concerts and continue the development of all aspects of Discover Musica Viva, our new online suite of podcasts, webinars and performances. We will also expand or continue:

- Digital delivery of teacher resources and professional development
- Digital resources to increase the impact and reach of regional touring
- Expansion of our new digital programs MVIS Online and Discover Musica Viva
- Creation of new artworks specifically for the digital medium

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## ENHANCING OUR EFFORTS TO LEAD AND BUILD CAPACITY

Enhancing our efforts to lead and build capacity in the Australian chamber music and music education sectors. A successful, sustainable chamber music sector requires a healthy, vigorous, well-supported and well-trained population of Australian musicians and creatives. Therefore, we will:

- Build networks and collaboration across music organisations, teachers and teaching institutions, artists and sector professionals;
- Seek partnerships with other music education bodies to expand professional development for generalist and music teachers
- Identify new opportunities to engage artists and expand our Artist Development programs;
- Make Strike A Chord, high-school chamber-music workshops and tutorials, an annual event;
- Provide inspirational access to international stars for masterclasses with tertiary students, and our flagship FutureMakers program;
- Support mid-career and senior members of our artistic community;
- Consult regularly with artists and arts companies to inform new MVA initiatives;
- Strengthen our advocacy with key decision makers on behalf of both musicians and music education.





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