

Tania de Jong AM

WITH THE LAUNCH OF CREATIVITY AUSTRALIA IN NOVEMBER 2008, AUSTRALIAN SOPRANO, TANIA DE JONG AM, AIMS TO TEACH THE WORLD TO SING IN PERFECT HARMONY.

What is Creativity Australia?

Creativity Australia is a new not-for-profit organisation promoting creativity in individual lives, our workplaces and in our wider community. We create targeted creative programs engaging with the right side of the brain. These programs will not only help people's sense of self esteem, connection and wellbeing, but will lead to outcomes including creative leadership, greater innovation and increased productivity.

What were the driving forces behind Creativity Australia's creation?

I have had many discussions with CEOs, Board members and HR directors who are concerned with the rising incidence of depression. The cost of depression to the Australian workforce equates to around 30 million working days per year at a cost to employers of approximately \$10.11 billion a year. And the national cost of staff turnover to organisations is estimated in the order of \$100 billion annually. The world is out of balance and this social venture is an attempt to address our internal ecology and relationships with others.

Why do you believe an organisation such as Creativity Australia is currently so important?

We believe that unlocking creative potential and addressing our inner environment will help in dealing with major global issues. The barriers are ever present. We live in a world where computers, the Internet image and popular culture take us further away from connecting with one another in a meaningful way. We interact with boxes and screens instead of with one another. Creativity is not a unique talent, yet it was recently said that creativity has become the most universally endangered species in the 21st century. A 15-country research project showed that creative behaviour diminishes from 98% in 3-5 year olds to only 2% by age 25.

What is your personal motivation for Creativity Australia?

I've always been extremely passionate about music, particularly song and the power of the human voice to move people and connect people to one another. There is a lot of international research that has shown the benefits of singing and how it can build new neural pathways in the brain so that even stroke patients and people with



schizophrenia can find enormous improvement in their conditions. So I'm a big advocate for anything that gets people to participate in more singing. I think the whole world should sing. It's that famous song; 'I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony'.

Can anyone learn to sing?

Absolutely. That's one of the key things about Creativity Australia – we are saying that creativity is not a unique talent. We also do not realise that creativity is something we can and should nurture. In Australia in particular, we have this fascination with sport and think that creativity is something that artists do, not us. It's not the case, we all have a creative capacity. In many cases it's just completely untapped and therefore many people are not fulfilling their potential.

Where did your love of and belief in music stem from?

I was brought up in a very cultural environment. My grandfather was a very famous sculptor, my grandmother invented the first folding umbrella and my great aunt

was an actress on the Paris stage. When I was growing up my father used to play a lot of classical music, so I think I developed an appreciation for the classics when I was very young. There's something about classical music that soothes the soul. I think a lot of people love to sing, they're just afraid. But when you do it in a supportive environment with other people, it's amazing the bridges it can build.

For more information phone 03 9682 9686, email tania@creativityaustralia.org.au or visit creativityaustralia.org.au Tania's one-stop entertainment company, Music Theatre Australia, provides over 2000 acts, bands, speakers, MCs and team-building programs nationally. Visit www.musictheatreaustralia.com.au

To see Tania's wonderful group Pot-Pourri in action, order CDs or find out how they can make your next conference, dinner or fundraiser one to remember, visit www.pot-pourri.com.au ■

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