



st mary's women

JESSICA GETHIN (Walker '97) Conductor



"Working with major international artists from a diverse range of musical genres has been exciting, challenging and rewarding."

By the age of ten I decided that all I wanted to do was become a professional musician. I started life at St Mary's relatively late, joining the School as a Year 10 student. I remember being overwhelmed in my first week by the huge number of opportunities offered. A combination of passionate staff with the best facilities and an established extracurricular programme allowed the School to cater for each student's individual strength, mine being music. I remember being very proud taking on the inaugural role of Year 12 Music Prefect (formerly school Music Captain), a position I enjoyed seeing my sister, Sophie, also a musician, take on four years later.

Orchestral conducting is one of the most misunderstood art forms. While the musicians already have the notes, pitches and rhythms notated on the music, unifying the interpretation of 70 musicians and inspiring them beyond their limits is what really creates magic. As a conductor it's not about showing what to play as much as how to play it. Imagine a fine artist using red paint. The colour red has so many variables in shade, texture, hue, intensity, opacity, direction, flow and volume; these are all options I see with each different sound. It takes many years of study to attain the skills of communicating all these factors non-verbally through a universal sign language, as well as having a solid understanding of the techniques associated with each instrument and the history of all the composers.

I've been fortunate enough to travel the world with my work, and I love the immense pressure of being in the recording studio one day, then an opera pit for a month and then touring on stage with a concert the next. Working with major international artists from a diverse range of musical genres has been exciting, challenging and rewarding. I am passionate about fostering a new image of classical music in our community, making it approachable and accessible, believing music should be experienced and not just heard. Being one of very few female Australian conductors in the country means I am in a minority in this industry, a factor which I have chosen to feel inspired by instead of challenged. St Mary's helped me to gain confidence, teaching me that anything and everything is possible.

