

Tania:
找到你的聲音，
找到你的嚮往

A Melbourne Singer MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Interview with Tania de Jong, Soprano

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Throughout the ages singing has played an important role in bringing people together as well as being a tool for healing. Tania de Jong, a well-known Australian singer, has put this knowledge into action in Melbourne. She is the founder of *Creativity Australia*, which creates and supports community choirs. In doing this she has recognised her dream of helping others through singing.

BY PHILIPPA RAYMENT

NL: To start sixteen choirs is really quite extraordinary. What inspired you to do this?

TDJ: I've always liked choirs, and I think that the way that voices of so many different backgrounds and ages with different stories come together as ONE to celebrate in song and in harmony, really you can't beat that feeling. We wanted to integrate very diverse people, from CEO's to asylum seekers, from thirteen to 90 year olds, people from 25 nations from all different walks of life who come as many voices and leave as one harmonious voice. It's quite special.

NL: How does singing help people?

TDJ: There is a lot of evidence around the benefits of singing. Some of the very well known benefits are things like it improves your blood flow, your heart. Then there are all the psychological benefits, having great self-esteem and confidence, being more productive because you feel more energetic and learning how to work as a team. There is now new research showing the benefits of singing in groups to our brain plasticity. Singing literally can change your brain for the better!

In the case of Natalie from Cameroon who we helped find a job, it's a sense for her of finding herself, so that she comes to the choir and she is validated and she feels that she's part of something bigger. So she's able to transcend some of the really huge issues in her life that she's faced; like her sister was massacred in front of her eyes and she brings up her sister's child. There are many people in our choirs who have suffered incredible tragedies that we couldn't even imagine,

and who this choir is, it's like a beacon of hope, light and joy and it is really a tool for wellbeing and social inclusion of course.

NL: What has been the greatest influence in your life?

TDJ: For me, probably my grandmother. You know my grandmother invented the first foldable umbrella in 1929 in Vienna and she manufactured that for ten years until 1939 when the Nazis came. My family being Jewish, were very lucky to escape - very lucky to be here, and she was then forced to sell her patent. We could've been billionaires. But I guess the point is she came to Australia with nothing. She and my grandfather, and my mum who was about one month old at the time - they rebuilt their lives from nothing.

NL: So what drives you in your life? What is your passion?

TDJ: Inspiring people to find their voice, so my mantra is very much that. The vision of *Creativity Australia* and in our *With One Voice* programme is to inspire people to find their voice. Your voice is symbolic of who you are, so when you find your voice, you find your purpose. So for many people when their voice is silenced, due to it might be discrimination, lack of self-esteem and depression whatever it is, there is something silencing them that is stifling their potential in life. So it's wonderful when you see people start using their voice.

NL: Have you got any major events planned in the future?

TDJ: We are presenting another WITH ONE BIG VOICE concert on December

2nd at Melbourne Town Hall with the sixteen choirs!

And I am producing Creative Innovation 2012 28-30 November at Sofitel Melbourne On Collins which features over 40 of the world's most influential thinkers and innovators. Also my group Pot-Pourri is celebrating 25 years in 2012 so it's a big year.

To join *With One Voice* choirs or help support the programmes go to: www.creativityaustralia.org.au

This story may be viewed on NTD with the following link:

http://english.ntdtv.com/ntdtv_en/news/asia/2012-05-01/a-melbourne-singer-makes-a-difference.html#video_section

PROFILE *Tania de Jong*

Aside from her passion for encouraging people to sing together in her *Creativity Australia With One Voice* choirs, Tania herself is a renowned soprano, a successful businesswoman and social entrepreneur, a motivational speaker, holds a Law degree and is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts. She is also the Founder of Creative Universe, The Song Room, Music Theatre Australia and Pot-Pourri. Among her many awards, is Member of the Order of Australia, for her services in creating music and art programs for schools and communities.

Photo courtesy Tania de Jong