

Lowther Hall

ANGLICAN
GRAMMAR
SCHOOL



All about the girl

The Official Opening of Blinkbonnie House and Dedication of The Mary Thurman Recital Space

2 February 2018 • 6:30pm – 8:30pm





From the Principal

Building projects speak to a future orientation and evoke images of progress and improvement: they require a vision for what is ahead and a confidence to anticipate what will be required by inhabitants who possibly, at the time of conception, do not even exist.

In the case of Blinkbonnie House, the vision began with the 1998 Master Plan, which forecast an expanded centre for early learning. The specific plan to construct a building that would support a contemporary, Reggio Emilia inspired program

for girls in Kindergarten to Year 1 evolved more recently and it has been my great privilege to expand this vision, work with the architects to develop the detail for its design and completion, and to see realised a space which will not only house our youngest learners, but provide purpose built performing arts spaces for our senior girls as well.

The Blinkbonnie House project embodies our core values at Lowther Hall. It involved many people across and beyond our school community working for a common good; it was supported

by a spirit of philanthropy; it both embraces the future and celebrates our past; it demonstrates excellence through effort – in planning, design, construction and fit out; but most of all, it was driven by the goal to create the best possible learning environment for the girls who will occupy it. It has been a joy to be involved with each stage of the project and now to see our students reaping the benefits of this wonderful new space.

Elisabeth G. Rhodes

Ms Elisabeth Rhodes
Principal





History

Blinkbonnie House stands on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and in this land lie the memories of many thousands of years.

The name "Blinkbonnie House" is derived from Blinkbonnie Ladies' College, one of two local schools which combined to become Lowther Hall in 1920. The childlike quality of the name makes it particularly appropriate to describe the part of the School occupied by our youngest learners.



The house at 11 Leslie Road was built in the 1920s by the Elder family as an accompaniment to their larger home located where the Joan M Garde Cultural Centre stands today. (A glimpse of this grand home can be seen in the background of the photo below.)

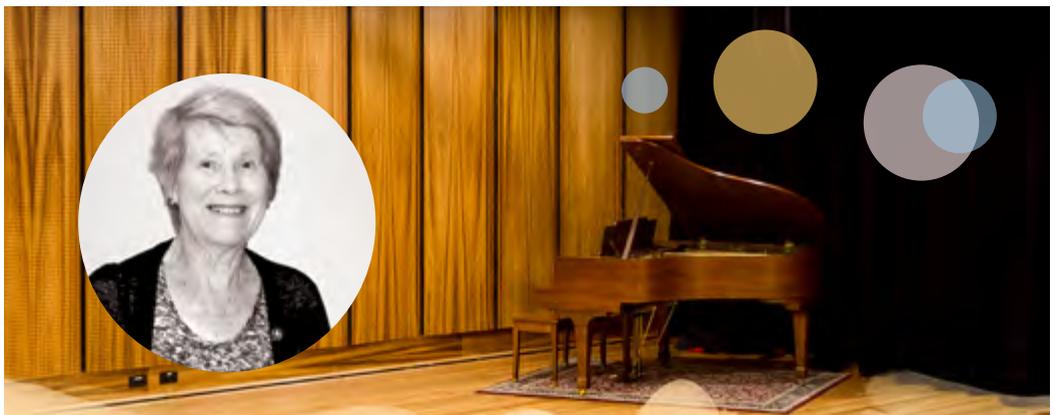
Lowther Hall acquired the property in the 1960s and it became home to our Kindergarten girls. The façade has been retained in the new building and is a tangible connection to the building's past.

In its more recent history an imposing sequoia (or redwood conifer) tree stood in the grounds of the house at 11 Leslie Road and became a significant landmark within the School.

As a reminder of the rich history of this place, the wood of this sequoia tree has been used as an element within Blinkbonnie House. It is featured in the ceiling of the lobby and can also be found in the timber panelling around the reception desk.

Above: Blinkbonnie Ladies College c 1915 **Below:** 11A Leslie Road c 1940
Left: The sequoia tree





The Mary Thurman Recital Space

The new Recital Space is named in honour of Miss Mary Thurman, B. Mus. Ed, B. Ed., M.A.C.E., Lowther Hall Old Grammarian, staff member and generous donor to the School.

Mary Thurman was a student at Lowther Hall from 1936 – 1946, holding the positions of School Captain and Clarke House Captain. She embraced all aspects of school life, participating enthusiastically in classes, performances, school trips and especially the music program. In her final year she was awarded the “Rhodes Prize for the Best All-rounder”.

Mary began teaching at Lowther Hall in 1951, taking piano students whilst studying Music at The University of Melbourne. On completion of her studies she was appointed as a full time teacher of Music, where she worked alongside former principal, Miss Evelyn E (Betty) Sampford to conduct

choirs, teach classroom music and establish a variety of programs and ensembles.

During her career at the School, Mary held positions of Choir Mistress, Leading Teacher, Director of Music and for some years also coordinated Speech and Drama. During this time, she established many of the musical ensembles and traditions that continue in the School today. She officially retired at the end of 1993 after 42 years of service.

Mary was respected by her peers, her teachers, her colleagues and her

students. She inspired many to share her love of music and was passionate in her chosen field. She had high standards for herself and for others and worked hard to achieve them.

Her generosity of spirit and understanding of the School's motto *Non Nobis Solum* (not for ourselves alone) were evident in her daily life and her personal interactions and are epitomised in her significant bequest to the School which has been used to construct this beautiful acoustically engineered space.

Below: Choir with Miss Thurman c 1972





Features of Blinkbonnie House

The spaces in Blinkbonnie House have been designed to facilitate an approach to Early Years education inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach while supporting the acquisition of core literacy and numeracy skills.

Central to this is the image of the child as competent and able to express herself in multiple ways. **Classroom spaces** provide areas for girls to construct and create and **art areas** are incorporated into the classrooms so that concepts investigated in science or history can be explored through visual media. **Mezzanine platforms** provide areas for groups of students to read, converse or consult with staff without the

confines of tables and chairs.

Many construction aspects of the built form are deliberately visible – nuts and bolts, steel structural beams and air conditioning conduits have been left exposed so that they can be used by staff as teaching points for girls to support their understanding in concepts of physics and engineering.

In order to foster curiosity about and exploration of the natural world, **the main section of Blinkbonnie House** (occupied by girls in Kindergarten, Prep and Year 1) is themed to represent “the sky” – first floor, “the land” – ground floor, and “the burrow” – basement, with colour schemes, decals and room names chosen to tie into these concepts. The idea is connected through the mural in

the central stair drum which depicts Australian flora and fauna across these three levels.

The inclusion of a **mini library** (the Tawny Frogmouth Reading Nook) keeps literacy literally at the centre of the activities in this space and will be an area where girls, teachers and parents can enjoy reading together. Year 8 students will act as ‘reading friends’ for their younger peers and will visit on a rotational basis to support the literacy program. The Mathematics program is enriched through the presence of a specialist Mathematics Coordinator and a **designated area for Maths enhancement and support**.

In the Basement, the **multipurpose space**





will house physical education, the perceptual motor program, movement and expression classes, Early Years Assemblies and Chapel and will also be home to the School's Out of School Hours Care service.

A **specialist music room** has also been designed, with a specific carpet pattern to support the formation of a circle for Kodaly vocal work and storage for instruments used by young string players.

The brief for the **outdoor play spaces** (one for Kindergarten girls at the northern side of the building and a larger area for Prep and Year 1 students next to the Cultural Centre) was for them to be "the best back yards imaginable". Each space contains a range of surfaces and textures to explore as well as elements such as water pumps, bridges and streams to evoke discussion

about scientific concepts. There are planters for the growing of veggies as well as a bamboo forest and other sturdy plants which can be used in play. The equipment facilitates the development of upper body strength, coordination and physical activity.

The **boat**, which features in the Prep and Year 1 playground was purchased from the grandfather of Old Grammarian, Stacey Williams (class of 1995) and was lovingly decorated by members of the School's Property Department.

The Performing Arts Basement houses a purpose built Media Classroom and editing suite with lighting, a green screen and desktops to support the creation and editing

of short films by VCE Media students. The new Drama Studio can be used as both a classroom and a performance space and is fitted out with lights and sound equipment. With many students across the school undertaking speech and drama, the inclusion of a classroom for these classes was also included as well as a staff workroom for Drama, Speech and Dance staff.

The Mary Thurman Recital Space is the main feature of this precinct. It is fitted with acoustic panelling and retractable seating, allowing the space to be used for intimate concerts, lectures, year level gatherings and a myriad of other functions. The grand piano in this space was donated to the School by Mrs Rosemary Rhodes, mother of the current principal.



Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to this project. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the following groups and individuals:

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Mr Craig Brown, Mr Brett Hand, Ms Kalynda Davidson, Mr Stephen Roach

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Neighbours and Local Residents

Moonee Valley City Council

Lowther Hall Personnel

Mrs Lisa Ashen, Ms Lauren McKendry, Mr Simon Oldham, Mr Larry Rouse, Mr Pat Rossi

Blinkbonnie House 2018 Staff
Class of 2017 Student Assistants

Current School Council Members

Past Principals and School Councillors

Donors

Lowther Hall Old
Grammarians' Association

Mrs Rosemary Rhodes

Miss Mary Thurman (Old
Grammarian Class of 1947)

Tawny Frogmouth Reading
Nook Book Donors

Mary Thurman Recital Space
Chair Sponsors to date:

- Ms Meredith Angwin (Class of 1980)
- Ms Leanne Backwell (Class of 1978) & Mr Jonathan Backwell
- Dr Lorraine Baker (Class of 1980)
- Miss Joan Black (Class of 1955)
- Mr Lorne & Mrs Ann Cole
- Mrs Valda Terry (Class of 1938) & Mrs Jan Dayton (Class of 1963)
- Miss Evonne Jellett (Class of 1946)
- Prof Judith Kinnear
- Mr Clinton & Mrs Fiona Mills
- Mr Peter & Mrs Natasha Noonan
- Ms Elisabeth Rhodes
- Mrs Anne Saunders (Class of 1958)
- Ms Glenda Shaw & Mr Peter Robert
- Dr Nathan Connelly & Mrs Nicole Starbuck Connelly
- Ms Jennifer Turner (Class of 1972)
- Mr Damian & Mrs Kate Watt

Guests have the opportunity to donate a chair to the Mary Thurman Recital Space or a book to the Tawny Frogmouth Reading Nook following the official proceedings.