

Crystal DREAMING

THE MUSICAL



We chat with **ARIANA SCHNEIDER** about her creative journey writing and **PRODUCING "CRYSTAL DREAMING"**.

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city of Telos, and was drawn to the idea of portraying a utopian world. I wanted to write a piece of music theatre that was uplifting and gave hope, especially to children, who I see as being constantly bombarded with negative news etc. I based the musical on the *Telos* book series by Aurelia Louise Jones and received permission from the publisher to use the story.

From the first words written up to now has taken nine years. Naively, I thought I had finished it all after two years and sent the script to a reviewer, who gave some fantastic feedback and also some very constructive advice. This meant a rewrite of the script.

You have written an amazing 24 songs for the musical. What was your creative process?

It began with writing the script, and the songs seemed to emerge from that. I wrote the lyrics first, and the melody line followed the lines of the poetry. They say creativity is part inspiration, part perspiration, and I can vouch for that. Many words and notes were discarded. But also, some songs just seemed to write themselves.

After three years, the musical has now been made into a film. Can you tell us about this journey?

A fully staged production of the musical took place in October 2016 and was filmed in order to make a DVD. However, the sound quality was really bad, with many problems. So Peter Stevenson (who wrote the orchestration for nearly all the songs) and I decided that if the cast was willing, we would re-record all the singing in his professional studio, Turn Around Music. Nearly everyone said “YES”, for which I will be eternally grateful. So began a time of organising schedules to fit in with Peter, me and the cast members. Then all 24 songs had to be edited, which is a hugely complicated process. Fortunately, I had no idea of the complexity of it all, otherwise I may have balked.

What have been some of the highs and lows of turning it into a movie?

The great highs have been to sit back and listen to each song

as we completed it, hearing the music as it was meant to sound. I also loved working with Liam Worth, who filmed the show. The lows really, have been my struggle with the time it has taken.

What do you love about working with children?

I love their spontaneity, curiosity and creativity. The 14 children in the show were so enthusiastic and really got the message. They also managed the harmonies of the songs extremely well, which gave them and me great satisfaction.

All proceeds from the musical went to the Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF). How much was raised, and why is this foundation close to your heart?

We raised one thousand dollars. Music education is a great passion of mine. I have taught music in nearly every school in the district. It made me aware of the schools that HAVE and the schools that HAVE NOT. It has been scientifically shown that performing music enhances brain activity in so many ways, too numerous to list. The ACMF is close to my heart because it brings music to disadvantaged schools, which helps to redress the imbalance.

Can you tell us a little about Don Spencer and the ACMF?

Don Spencer OAM is the founder and CEO of the ACMF. In 2002 he founded this wonderful organisation to address the needs of children who were not receiving the benefits of music education. He says, “The power of music can never be underestimated”. This organisation is now Australia wide and has been operating on the Mid North Coast for the last six years.

This journey has involved a cast of thousands. Are there any special mentions?

Firstly, my husband Ian Herd, who has been my rock. He had to completely change his idea of “retirement”, and even went back to work willingly to help fund the project; the brilliant Peter Stevenson - music arranger/producer; Liam Worth - editor; David Saville - special effects and converting the DVD into a film; the cast and their families; and friends who helped sustain me over the years.

Where can we find out more info or donate to the ACMF?

Just log on to “The Australian Children's Music Foundation” and click on “ABOUT US”. There is a special window marked “DONATIONS”.

Thanks Ariana. Interview: Bronwyn Davis.

Can you explain the storyline of *Crystal Dreaming the Musical*?

The musical is about the adventures of a feisty, idealistic, gifted young girl called Mirabelle.

I call her a child of the cosmos, because she plays with nature spirits, hears angels singing and goes on interstellar journeys. She is able to perform magic, and her best friend is a gnome called Cabanossi. Her family and friends do not understand her; however, she is intensely loyal - especially to Thomas, her mentally challenged friend, whom she protects from the school bully, Sly. She also has a strong sense of a destiny she is meant to fulfil.

The story moves to the night of her 16th birthday, when, under the influence of dark energy, directed towards her from Sly, she has a serious accident and is rendered unconscious. During her two year recovery, she struggles to remember her magical powers, and it is only when her mother lovingly reminds her that Mirabelle recalls all her gifts, and there is a joyful reunion with her elemental friends.

During her sleep that night, she is visited by a fifth dimensional being called Adama, who is the High Priest of Telos - a crystal city set deep within a mountain named Shasta. The people of Telos live in complete harmony, and it is a utopian realm. Mirabelle is invited to go there and act as a messenger, an ambassador between this fifth dimensional plane and earth, and thus fulfil her destiny.

What inspired you to write the musical?

I heard about the legend of Lemuria, a highly evolved civilisation that lost its way only to recreate itself as the crystal