

Date: 31 August 2026

Sydney Youth Orchestras is pleased to provide this letter of support for The House That Dan Built's application for *Bowerbird Blues*, a new work for choir, soloist-narrators and orchestra, developed in collaboration with author and illustrator Aura Parker.

SYO is excited to partner with The House That Dan Built on its first two phases: the commissioning and development of the score, leading to an industry showing in 2027. We see *Bowerbird Blues* as a distinctive and valuable new Australian work — one that brings together orchestral music, storytelling, literature, young voices and professional creative development in a way that is highly aligned with SYO's mission to provide exceptional musical opportunities for young people.

If the application is successful, SYO will receive support to our role as a partner producer. This will contribute to SYO's coordination and producing responsibilities, including coordinating the orchestrator, orchestra and participating musicians; participating in the composer selection process and creative development; scheduling rehearsals and assisting with venue coordination; supporting partner producing, administration and showcase planning; and contributing to the successful delivery of the development process and staged industry showing.

In addition, SYO confirms its intended in-kind support for the project, comprising rehearsal and development venue access; orchestra program infrastructure, including ensemble administration, scheduling, parent communications, music stands, equipment, storage and existing program systems; conductor and musical oversight; pianist/repertoire support for development and youth management and production support.

These contributions reflect the existing resources, expertise and program infrastructure that SYO can bring to the development of the work. They are offered subject to final scheduling, venue availability, artistic requirements and the agreed project plan.

SYO musicians will be involved across the development, rehearsal and showing phases. For SYO's young musicians, this project offers an exceptional opportunity to be part of the creation of a new Australian orchestral work from its earliest stages. This is rare and valuable professional learning: it builds musical confidence, ensemble skills, adaptability, creative agency and an understanding of how new Australian works are made. It also places young musicians in meaningful collaboration with composers, conductors, creative producers, vocal artists and storytellers.

We are also supportive of the project's longer-term ambition: to develop *Bowerbird Blues* towards broader national presentations in 2028, subject to future support, confirmed presenters and appropriate production pathways. We would welcome further conversations about how the work might connect with the wider sector, including potential interest from the Australian Network of Youth Orchestras and the possibility of future state-based youth orchestra participation, where appropriate and feasible.

SYO believes *Bowerbird Blues* has strong potential as a new Australian work for young performers and young audiences. It brings together high-quality music-making, literary adaptation, youth participation and national development potential. We are pleased to support The House That Dan Built's application and look forward to working with the team to help bring this project to life.

Sydney Youth Orchestras is one of Australia's leading youth orchestral training organisations, providing exceptional ensemble experiences, artistic development and performance opportunities for young musicians across NSW. Through its orchestras, education programs, regional initiatives and creative partnerships, SYO supports young people to develop musical excellence, confidence, collaboration and a lifelong connection to orchestral music.

Yours sincerely,



**Daniel Placido, Company Secretary**  
Sydney Youth Orchestras



31st August 2026

Dear Peer Assessors at Creative Australia Music Board

I am the author and illustrator of *Bowerbird Blues*, first published by Scholastic Australia in 2023, which has since grown into a series, and strongly support the request for \$58,000 from Creative Australia for *The House That Dan Built* to adapt the book into a new 45-minute orchestral work with choir and soloists.

The book is about a Satin Bowerbird on the search for blue items, who falls in love with the blue of the sky but can't fly high enough, then falls in love with the blue of the sea but can't hold it. The story is about longing, searching and love and I believe the book is suited to music and live performance because of the lyrical and emotional potential, qualities which would translate beautifully into music. There's an opportunity to make something new, original and stunning from the bowerbird's journey and obsession with blue. Satin Bowerbirds, native to Australia are known for singing, dancing and performing as they build their bowers, making this an exciting storytelling opportunity inspired by their fascinating sounds and behaviour. I would be delighted to see the work take on a new life and be able to reach more children in a new musical format bringing together Australian literature, Australian composers, young singers and orchestral musicians to collaborate, share skills, grow and learn through shared experience.

Developing *Bowerbird Blues* into a new work helps my career as an author illustrator by bringing my much-loved book to new audiences, and has the power to broaden a national reading culture, as well as inviting students to take an interest in our local wildlife, recycling, the environment as well as science and STEM through bower building craft projects as the book continues to inspire creativity in classrooms and bookstores across the country.

The concept of *Bowerbird Blues* is simple enough for an early childhood audience to understand and has enough depth in themes to span up in age, and in fact has many adult fans too, perfect for entertaining both children and their families. This project can introduce children and families to orchestral and choral music, fostering a love of music and an invitation to learn an instrument through a familiar Australian story, about a uniquely Australian bird. There is huge potential for the work to reach libraries, preschools, schools and audiences nationally, which is why presenting a free or affordable public and industry showing is essential.

I have the performance rights to *Bowerbird Blues* with my literary agent, Pippa Masson at Curtis Brown. I have confidence in Danielle O'Keefe and *The House That Dan Built* because of the high quality of their productions and am keen to see what they can create with *Bowerbird Blues*. I will be involved in the process as creative consultant, giving feedback on the developing work and participating in the showing, and my early contribution to this project is in-kind. My artwork and illustrations from the book can be used in any staging, subject to my input and approval.

Kindest wishes,  
Aura Parker

[www.illustrated.com.au](http://www.illustrated.com.au)

AURA PARKER - AUTHOR - ILLUSTRATOR - SPEAKER  
9 Seaman Street, Greenwich NSW Australia 2065



25 August 2026

To Artistic assessment panels,

I am writing in support of *Bowerbird Blues* as a children's music adaptation of Aura Parker's bestselling picture book.

As Aura's publisher at Scholastic Australia, I have seen first-hand the powerful impact *Bowerbird Blues* has had on young readers. In 2024, it reached over 2.3 million children during ALIA National Simultaneous Storytime, inspiring excitement around reading and literacy. To date, sales of *Bowerbird Blues* have exceeded a whopping 100,000 copies. The love and demand for this bestselling book has led to a sequels *Bowerbird Brood* and *Bowerbird Bloom*. The fourth book *Bowerbird Brave* is scheduled for release at the end of this month. In addition to the impressive sales and reach, Aura's highly-regarded book was shortlisted for the Children's Book Council of Australia's Picture Book of the Year Award.

The subject matter and environmental themes have inspired impressive craft and creativity across Australia, with teachers, librarians and children proudly sharing their bowerbird-inspired creations. From epic library displays to incredible Book Week costumes – the response and love for this book has been enormous. The themes have also inspired a strong interest in nature and recycling, with re-used and found objects such as bottle tops, buttons and pen lids, contributing to this art. A stage production could also use many recycled materials, for costumes and props, as inspired by the messaging in *Bowerbird Blues*. The story, imagery and themes would translate beautifully on the stage.

A choral and orchestral production would further extend the book's life and reach by engaging children through live performance, puppetry, dance, and interactive participation, for example. A multi-modal experience would be highly engaging and memorable for children, expanding the life of words and images from the page.

I strongly support a project such as this and know that it will help champion Aura's future publications and further her picture book career.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Best wishes

Rebecca Young

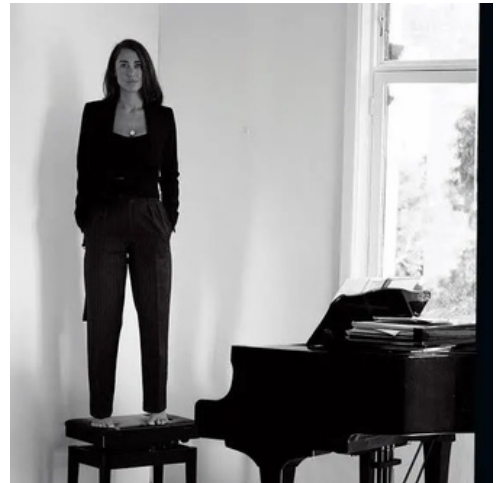
**Rebecca Young**

Senior Publisher | Scholastic Press

1/1 Merriwa Street, Gordon NSW 2072

The House is fuelled internally by a skilled, intergenerational team who are resilient, adaptable and collaborative. The organisational culture fosters a supportive and rigorous environment where female artists and arts workers can grow, challenge themselves and step outside what has been previously possible.

**"Being supported by The House completely changed the way I work as an artist and composer, I now think on a much bigger scale, I use my own voice and have since ventured into more choral compositions. Danielle is an extraordinary force and it is a privilege to work with her and her ensemble."**



## **ROSE RIEBL.**

The authenticity and integrity of the relationships fostered between The House and communities are crucial to the success of the work of the house and our methodology reinforces this investment over time. Trust and respect are the threads that connect us to our external environment.



**The House That Dan Built has an innate understanding of how to deliver a program to a regional community. Their team has members from regional areas and with significant experience working with regional communities. They understand the importance of developing strong local connections to ensure successful programs and learning experiences. While many city-based organisations purport to understand regional communities The House That Dan Built is the real deal.**

**Rebecca Ryan - Director Gunnedah Conservatorium.**

**Before working with the company, we were not singers, our voices akin to scratched records. Afterwards, we firmly believed that we could perform at the Sydney Opera House if they'd let us, and therein lies the power of this work. This collective act of creating harmony boosts confidence and self-esteem, giving women a strong voice both literally and figuratively, and the 30 women in that room relished every moment.**

**Claire Harris - Manager, Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre**



## ACCESSIBILITY

As a young, disabled woman from Western Sydney I have had my share of barriers within my artistic career. The House is nowhere near this. Dan has fostered a space where I, as a disabled woman can not only feel safe, but also encouraged to express and communicate in my own unique voice as a disabled person.

Bedelia Lowrenčev - Sydney Fringe Access co-ordinator.

## REGIONAL

What I find remarkable about the ethos of the House is the time and effort taken to authentically engage with young people and communities and to listen to them. They do this not just to tick a box but to genuinely integrate what's important to young people in what they do and how they do it. It's the essence of outcomes-based thinking, where the goal comes first - to raise the voices of young women - and how it is achieved is infinitely flexible and based on the ideas and creativity of the young people who are involved. In some ways it's audacious as increased stress on time and resources makes it much easier to design first rather than take the time to co-design. It's one of the many things that sets them apart. That and the joyfulness that underpins their projects and the connections they make between generations of women. As I enter the 'crone' phase of my life, it fills my heart to be able to learn from young women and pass on what I have experienced.

KATE BUTLER - Deniliquin.

## PATHWAYS:

*"The House has nurtured me throughout my formative years, firstly collaborating as a budding emerging artist, to working within the organisation as Artistic Associate and challenging me to become who I am today. I am so thankful for this experience because it has given me the agency to be able to start my own singing business in Goondiwindi Queensland and continue to empower people through creation.*

*Jayden Selvakumaraswamy,*

*Founder of Vocals With Jayden & former Artistic Associate at The House that Dan Built.*

## AUDIENCE

"The house does a really amazing thing in creating community. Especially between young women and older women, that connection often gets lost. Understanding that everyone in the room has something artistically valuable to say is amazing because so much of the art that I see is either a massive big opera, The House somehow brings me into the world of the music.

Audience, Reverence 2022