

AIPAHS students performing at the recent Suncorp awards night.

Local school reaches out with stars

By Paul Dillon

What makes AIPAH the first choice school for serious minded performers and artists is the students themselves.

Since its beginning in 2005 the Australian International Performing Arts High School (AIPAHS) has nested in and around a heritage listed building in multicultural Harris Park. The building has a lengthy history of both music and education and the tradition continues. Dedicated to nurturing and developing talent, the school also expects its students to perform academically as well as encouraging artistic performance of the highest quality

The school facilities include a recording studio, dance studio, rehearsal and in-house performance space, along with multiple practice and recital rooms. Other performance venues are hired as required but there is no shortage of opportunities for the talented students to show the benefit of their training. Students perform at corporate functions, local community festivals, awards ceremonies, eisteddfods and charity events. In fact, almost since its inception, the school has provided talented performers and outstanding performances as part of the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce's Awards for Business Excellence.

This year those Awards were expanded to cover and represent all of Western Sydney at a truly gala event at Rosehill Racecourse and there was never any question that the school would be involved; as it has been since its establishment. An ambitious program was laid out by perennial event manager, Roman Dechnicz that relied to a large degree on the school providing performers to carry the Chicago Roaring Twenties theme; which they did to enthusiastic and appreciative acclamation. They sang, danced and acted their parts through a tight running schedule without missing a beat. Just the type of grounding student Kate Grima-Farrell received on her way to featuring in the critically acclaimed stage musical *Billy Elliot*.

The school has also been very much in the news with School Captain Nathan Brake storming into the finals of Australian Idol with a stirring rendition of Queen's "We are the Champions". In a further honour for Nathan and the school, the somewhat shy and humble young man was confidently handed the role as the City's first Goodwill Ambassador by Parramatta Council's longest serving Councillor and new Lord Mayor, Cllr. Paul Garrard. "I know of the family and I am impressed with the way this young man has worked his way up to this level" Cllr. Garrard said.



Nathan's first year of high school wasn't a positive experience but the change to AIPAHS has done wonders for him. Many of the school's teachers teach both academic and performing subjects and it no doubt helps the students having the same teachers for subjects they love as well as those they may not be so fond of. Of course, being in an environment where one's talent is given full support and opportunity would be the ideal learning environment. Part of the school's vision is "that talent is best nurtured when those who foster the student are themselves worthy of emulation".

That philosophy has clearly worked and created an environment of which the entire school community can be proud. As School Principal Jim McCrudden says, "What makes AIPAH the first choice school for serious minded performers and artists is the students themselves. They have created an atmosphere of support, tolerance and encouragement for themselves and their peers.