

Cultural Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson

Friday 15 August 2025



It gives me pleasure to welcome Mr Peter Nelson to this special assembly as an Old Collegian, member of our Board of Governors, and the Presbytery Nominee on our Board. Thank you attending this special Cultural Assembly, and it's very appropriate that you are.

St Andrew's College was founded by Rev. A T Thompson back in 1917, with a strong Presbyterian Christian character that remains an important part of our College's culture today.

When culture is used in the context of the visual and performing arts, public speaking, literature, and other creative expressions, it refers to the shared creative heritage, values, and practices that shape how people express themselves and interpret the world.

It's a real privilege to stand before you today at this special Cultural Assembly – not just as your principal, but as someone who deeply believes in the power of culture and creativity to shape lives. Today's assembly is a celebration of the arts in all its forms: dance, music, drama, visual arts, and public speaking. These are not just subjects on a timetable—they are the soul of our school.

I want to lead a school that produces creative and vibrant students. So, I'm delighted that creativity is one of our five College values. Sir Ken Robinson, a passionate advocate for creativity in education, once said:

"Creativity is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status."

Creativity is not a luxury – it's a necessity. It's how we solve problems, how we connect, and how we imagine a better future. The famous artist, Picasso, once said:

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

I'd like to share a story that illustrates how younger children are more likely to take a chance and are less afraid to get it wrong. In this story a teacher was observing a young student in an Art class. The young student, who was usually not very attentive, was completely absorbed in their drawing. Curious, the teacher asked, "What are you drawing?" The student replied, "I'm drawing a picture of God." The teacher gently said, "But nobody knows what God looks like." And the student, without missing a beat, said, "They will in a minute."

Here at St Andrew's, I want to ensure that we foster young people to be innovators, take good risks, are entrepreneurs, problem-solvers, challenge themselves, and strive for excellence – and become people who make a positive difference in our world. When you are here at St Andrew's – in every rehearsal, every sketch, every speech, and every performance – you are doing something extraordinary.

You are expressing yourselves. You are telling stories. You are building bridges between people. And you are showing us what it means to be human.

The arts teach us things that no textbook ever could. They teach us to listen – to really listen – to each other and to ourselves. They teach us to take risks, to be vulnerable, and to be brave. They



teach us that mistakes are not failures but stepping stones to growth. Through the arts we can learn how to better understand and express ourselves.

Whether you're painting in silence, dancing in rhythm, or speaking with passion – your voice matters. Your creativity matters. And it deserves to be seen, heard, and celebrated.

Let me speak directly to our performers and artists for a moment:

- To our dancers: you move with stories in your limbs. You show us emotion and feeling beyond what words could say;
- To our musicians: you speak in melodies that reach places words cannot. You create harmony in a world that often feels chaotic;
- To our actors and speakers: you give voice to truth, humour, and imagination. You help us see the world through different eyes;
- To our visual artists: you capture beauty, challenge ideas, and make us stop and think;
- To our Media Technical Crew: you record, edit and creatively share the many images and experiences that happen in our College and world, to then be able to revisited and enjoyed again;
- And to everyone who supports, cheers, and contributes – you are part of this living tapestry.

As none of this happens in isolation.

Behind every performance, every exhibition, every moment of courage on stage or in the studio, there are dedicated staff who guide, encourage, and inspire. So today, I want to offer a special thank you to our teachers and support staff in the arts. You give your time, your energy, and your belief to help our students grow not just as artists, but as people. On behalf of the entire school, thank you. You are helping shape confident, expressive, and thoughtful young people – and that is a gift to all of us.

So today, we celebrate not just talent, but courage – the courage to try, to fail, to grow, and to shine. We celebrate the bravery to be seen and heard. And we commit, as a College, to continue nurturing the arts – not as an add-on, but as a cornerstone of who we are.

To all our students: keep creating. Keep expressing. Keep inspiring. You are the artists, the storytellers, the changemakers. And the world needs your voice.