



Cultural Assembly Morning Comment 2026

Friday 21 August 2026

Cultural Captains Alice Howard and Scarlett Ryan (both Year 13)



Alice Howard:

Please Don't Stop the Music isn't just a fun opening number. It's the message I want to leave you with today: don't stop your "music" – the thing that brings you joy, purpose, and connection.

Maybe that's dance, singing, sport, or anything else that makes you feel alive. Your "music" is the thing that connects you to other people without even trying. And our message is simple: don't stop it. Because if

you do, you risk losing a piece of what makes you, you.

That's what art does. It's not just decoration, it's how we stay human, how we stay connected. Today we're celebrating culture at St Andrew's College, and all the cultural activities that connect us.

Every art form on this stage came from somewhere, built by people who challenged what was expected, and influenced by those who came before us. For many of us, that connection runs even deeper, because it begins with our own stories. I remember when I was younger making up dances and forcing my younger brother to do them with me. I remember when my Year 8 class wrote a song to farewell our teacher. Art doesn't just appear out of nowhere, it's shaped by the people who came before us, and the people who helped us grow.

Art is meant to be shared. A performer with an audience. A dancer with a crowd. A painting that makes you stop and look. For those who watched our Senior Production of *Anything Goes*, every night was different, because we're all human. There was a connection between audience and performers because we knew that exact performance could never happen again.

Art doesn't have to be formal, either. It can be a pre-game playlist, a doodle in a friend's workbook, learning a dance with your mates. Everyday moments that connect us through art.

And here's the part most people forget: to share your "music," it has to live in you first. Every person who's performed on this stage, or shown a drawing to a friend, has shown courage. Art is one of the only places you get to be unapologetically yourself, and that connects you to yourself, as well as to everyone watching.

Because the connection you have with yourself, though it's the quietest, is the most important. Knowing your own rhythm is how you find your voice in everything else.



Today, as you watch these performances, remember what they're really made of: the past still evolving, people sharing one room and one experience, and everyone up here showing a little bit of who they are.

So, whatever your "music" is, don't stop it. Because when you stop your music, you stop sharing the part of yourself that only you can bring to the world.

Scarlett Ryan:

Please Don't Stop the Music. They're important words, and an important message.

As Alice has just said, your "music" can be absolutely anything that brings you joy. Obviously, that means different things for different people.

I think culture is the same.

Culture is defined as the beliefs, customs, arts of a particular social group, place, or time. Culture is everywhere. It is found on this stage, but also on the sports pitch, the court, the classroom, the studio, and even in the lunchtime hangout spots.

Just like music, people have different tastes in culture and where they want to find it. Where we find our culture doesn't separate us. In fact, culture is one of the best ways to bring us together because what makes us the same is our search for the right culture, and a place to belong.

I moved to St Andrew's in Year 10 as a nervous and quiet student with short hair and an uncertainty about who I wanted to be. I leave this year with confidence, longer hair, and the hope of pursuing the arts.

For me, this transformation came from discovering the arts.

Singing, acting, dancing, theatresports, and productions have happily occupied a large part of my free time over the past few years. More importantly, the culture and the people I found through those activities became like a second family to me. It gave me a place where I belonged, where I was encouraged to be myself, and where I could grow into someone I am proud of today.

However, just as the right culture can build people up, the wrong culture can break people down.

I'm sure you've all heard teachers and school leaders say that culture takes a long time to build and can be broken very easily. I actually think that's only half true.

Culture can absolutely be broken quickly, but it can also be built quickly.

The challenge is that the people bringing a culture down are often louder than the people trying to build it up. It can be hard to stay positive in a negative space.

But positivity is contagious too. In theatre, we're constantly encouraged to share our energy with the people around us. If someone walks into rehearsal feeling flat, someone else lifts them up. That energy spreads. Culture works exactly the same way. It is the shared beliefs and values of everyone involved.



You might think you can't change a culture, but you can.

You don't have to change an entire community. Sometimes all it takes is creating one small, safe space where someone feels they belong, to make a huge difference.

The culture I chose to surround myself with happened to be the arts, but that's only one kind of culture and just because I love being on this stage doesn't make me better than someone who would rather be out on the pitch. I prefer being here. They prefer being there. And I think that's something we should celebrate. Each finding our own place to belong.

We should embrace these different spaces, and cultures, because they allow us to want different things, and that's exactly what makes a community work. Different passions, different strengths, different kinds of "music".

We've all had moments when we didn't want the music to stop. So don't let it.

Keep searching and preserving that culture that builds you up and helps you become someone you are proud of. And don't let someone else's different taste in music stop you from connecting with them.

Because, after all, we are all lovers of art in some form, just different types of it. Every kind of music comes from somewhere. Every culture has something to teach us. And every one of us deserves a place where we can belong.