



## Interview with Margot Fenley

*Margot Fenley trained as an actor at the Victorian College of the Arts, at the University of Melbourne. She currently teaches acting, and acting through song, in the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Music Theatre). She has been Head of Music Theatre since 2012.*

### *Can you tell us a bit about your approach to crying, which you use with you students?*

You know we've all been socialised to believe that crying is something terrible, and dangerous and weak, which is why they [the students] are scared of crying in front of each other. Students will generally need to cry – generally will at some point in their studies, or in their acting classes because its part of their studies, but they'll separate that out from crying about something that they feel themselves. And so I'll emphasise to them that it's not a big deal.

Crying is no different from laughing. It's a physical response to a particular emotional state, and it's no more going to kill you than laughing is. So, it's very healthy to cry, it's a release. You'll feel better after a good cry, generally, so there's absolutely nothing ever to be worried about it.

There will never ever be any kind of disadvantage to someone for letting us know that they are suffering, or that they are struggling. We don't treat people differently because of their mental health issues, and often that's the thing that students are most worried about if they come to see me. They are worried that I am now going to treat them with kid-gloves, that I'm not going to give them good feedback any more, that I'm not going to be straight forward with them.

I think it's really important that the feedback they get in class doesn't change or they will feel like I am scared of their fragility. And I'm not scared of their fragility, they are just crying! It's just part of life – to be upset, to be frustrated, to be angry at yourself, to be disappointed in yourself – it's also part of the continuum that says I'm elated that I did something fabulously well, I'm so proud of myself, I can see my progress. It's just actually all part of the same fabric, and I think that's really important for students to understand.

**Margot Fenley**

Head of Music Theatre

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