MUSIC \ A young Tasmanian singer is making the jazz world sit up and take notice, writes ELIZABETH ANILE

Ella Fitzgerald and Ray Charles, among many other musical greats.

“She’s got an exceptional sensitivity for music. She really was the perfect, model student. I’ve been at The Con for 18 years and I’ve never seen someone spend more time in the practice rooms … she’d be working on something every day,” he says. “I can talk for a long time about her, I’m still trying to adopt her!”

Since shifting to Melbourne after her studies, Hoyt has fronted Hoffman’s band at the Bennett’s Lane festival on a number of occasions, because, as Hoffman so eloquently puts it, “if you have Elly Hoyt in your band, it’s already a better band”.

Legendary Australian jazz musician James Morrison wholeheartedly agrees.

He selected Hoyt out of thousands of singers around Australia to win the renowned Generation in Jazz vocal scholarship in Mount Gambier in 2008.

“There were other singers who could sing with great voices but what got me about Elly, when she sang, you get the feeling she believes what she’s singing. She hasn’t just learnt the words and notes,” Morrison says.

To add to what was a massive 2012 for the singer, Tasmanian Premier Lara Giddings handpicked her to perform in November for Prince Charles and Camilla on their Diamond Jubilee tour throughout Australia.

“It was a surreal experience. I felt privileged and honoured that I not only got to be a part of it, but more so that I was performing for 700 of the most wonderful, top people in Tasmania,” Hoyt says.

While 2012 was a big year career-wise for Hoyt, it was also a difficult one. Health issues with her immune system, which have taken nearly a year to work through, left her at times unsure “if I wanted to keep going with it all”, plunging her into depression and temporarily zapping her enthusiastic spirit.

But with support from her partner, Adam, and her family and friends, Hoyt is more determined than ever to overcome this rough patch and keep chasing her dreams.

“You just are doing what you are doing and these things happen. It gave me a lot more motivation.”

The silver lining to last year was the news the Australian Council had approved a $10,000 grant for Hoyt to study in New York City for three months this year.

“We sat at the computer, me with butterflies, covering my face. I look up and [the email] said ‘congratulations’. I cried my eyes out and just hugged [Adam] and felt like the luckiest girl in the world.”

While Hoyt couldn’t “quite believe it” at the time, the news came as no surprise to those closest to her, and was indicative of the good things that are bound her way.

“It’s something that I’ve wanted for a very long time but I try to remind myself that hard work pays off.

“If you follow your heart, keep pursuing your dreams then good things happen … don’t ever give up.”

» ellyhoyt.com.au

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