

Young dynamo activates the opera

Aicole Alexander is a most unusual mover and shaker. She is wide-eyed, youthful, modest and seemingly diffident and dreamy. Note the qualifier. Despite appearances Alexander is about as diffident and dreamy as a tank (battle, not water).

"My parents think I'm crazy," she admits, grinning. "But then it started coming together and they decided if it's what I want, it must be okay."

Coming together is an entrepreneurial approach to music unique in Australia and probably pretty rare anywhere. Alexander is half way to raising the \$2 million budget for a fully staged production of the opera *Dead Man Walking*, in Sydney in 2006 at the Capitol Theatre.

The green light for this ambitious venture came on big time when Teddy Tahu Rhodes committed to reprising the role of the convicted killer which has made him Mr Bankable across the

world. "It's wonderful that he has," says Alexander. "He's brilliant in the role as anyone who saw it in Adelaide knows, and he says it's the last time he'll sing it."

Alexander is a singer herself. She graduated from the Conservatorium with a BMus and a soprano voice which is, says its owner, "Heavier than most. But I had started thinking towards the end of my degree that it wouldn't be enough. I realised ages before how impossible it is to get work and I made some decisions. I did an accounting course and I went to work for Robin Gardner (prominent Sydney artists' agent) and I set out to learn arts administration."

With all this expertise she had gained, Alexander figured she was in a position unlike most of her peers in more ways than one. "I love organising and managing. I love creating and being a singer isn't necessarily creative. I was a featured artist on the Russell Watson tour, but it's not what

I want to do full time." Alexander is passionate about opera and possibly even more passionate about cajoling young people into it.

So much so that she instituted a staggeringly successful event titled *Midsummer* in Melbourne. It featured young singers from all over the country who had auditioned fiercely to get a look in.

This year Alexander is doing a *Midwinter* version in Sydney and the response from student singers has once again been overwhelming.

"This year we have students from the United Kingdom who want to try out and there's sponsorship to get them here. "There is such interest, if only it's used and channelled."

If you fancy being a *Dead Man Walking* angel or sponsor contact the producer at 9380 5375.

