

First Australian announced as Concert Scholar in prestigious US Music Institution

Erin Helyard, co-artistic director of Pinchgut Opera, has been chosen as the Westfield Concert Scholar for 2009-10. The Westfield Centre (no connection to Australia's Westfield Holdings) is a North American institution devoted to the study of historical keyboard instruments.

After a highly competitive process, Erin was chosen as their representative Concert Scholar and will be touring several universities in North America giving lecture-recitals of the music of Muzio Clementi, the composer who is the focus of Erin's PhD dissertation. Clementi was considered by his contemporaries as the "Father of the Pianoforte" and whose successful career embraced that of the virtuoso performer, composer, pedagogue, industrialist and publisher.

The organisers said they "had a number of excellent nominations this year (with organ, harpsichord and fortepiano represented)... and the level was very high. Erin's project particularly impressed the selection committee with the cogency of its concept.... His proposal reflects the ideal of the "scholar-performer" and his concerts promise to be both exciting and illuminating."

He graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2000 with first class honours and the University Medal and was awarded the inaugural Lenore Buckle Scholarship for Music.

Erin is currently completing his PhD in Musicology at McGill University, Montréal under the supervision of Tom Beghin. Sydney audiences will have a chance to see and hear him when he conducts Pinchgut Opera's production of Cavalli's "L'Ormindo" in December 2009.

"I'm extremely honoured to have been chosen. The programme offers a unique opportunity in allowing me to perform on different kinds of historical keyboard instruments associated with my research and also facilitate debate with my colleagues on historical issues arising from my dissertation. Late eighteenth-century London was a fascinating place and I believe that the cultural activities that took place there were more influential on continental trends than has previously been thought."

With its base in New York, the Westfield Centre has members in 47 US states and 18 countries, and its activities include international study tours as well as publications and symposia on topics of national and international interest. The Centre present a variety of programs throughout the United States including Massachusetts, Tennessee, Virginia, California, Arizona, Minnesota, Texas, Wisconsin, New York, and Washington.

For media enquiries, or to arrange an interview with Erin Helyard, please contact: Anna Cerneaz, Pinchgut on Ph: 0412 093 063 E: anna@pinchgutopera.com.au

For more information:

Westfield Centre: www.westfield.org

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