

Mr Richard Bonyng AC CBA

For his exceptional achievement in the creative arts.

Honorary Doctor of Music (honoris causa) [Hon DMus]
Conferring ceremony: 10 October 2015

Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Maestro Richard Bonyng AC CBE to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Music (*honoris causa*) for his exceptional contributions to the creative arts.

Maestro Bonyng was born in Sydney in September 1930, educated at Sydney Boys High School and subsequently studied piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music under Lindley Evans. It was during his time at the Conservatorium that Richard's interests in opera and the voice were awakened, during the years when Eugene Goosens was a formative influence in the musical life of Sydney, at the helm of the both the Conservatorium and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Richard was subsequently offered a scholarship to the Royal College of Music then studied with Herbert Fryer, a pupil of Busoni. During this time his activities as a pianist and accompanist developed into the realm of vocal coaching and research, and one of the great musical collaborations of the century was forged, between Richard and Dame Joan Sutherland.

Richard became an important collector of musical manuscripts, rare editions and operatic ephemera, creating an extraordinary archive that has informed his operatic sympathies as a performer, embracing eighteenth century opera, bel canto Italian opera of the earlier nineteenth century and French nineteenth century opera, works that he restored to the repertory, along with numerous operettas and ballet scores. The performance presented this evening of Haydn's *Orfeo* exemplifies Richard's lifelong championship of neglected repertoire – a work never performed during the composer's lifetime, receiving its premiere in 1951, and having been often championed by Richard during his career.

In 1965 the Sutherland/ Bonyng operatic presence was established in Australia when the Sutherland/Williamson Grand Opera Company toured Australia, with Richard as music director. He then served as Artistic Director of Vancouver Opera, followed by Music Director of The Australian Opera. He has subsequently conducted in many of the world's major opera houses, in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Argentina, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Portugal, Poland, Russia, Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Notable are the twenty five years during which he was a regular guest conductor at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, making his debut in 1966, and conducting his last performance (to date) in 1991.

In addition to his artistic collaboration with Sutherland, Richard has been instrumental in developing and nurturing the careers of many notable international singers, notably Luciano Pavarotti, Renata Tebaldi, Marilyn Horne, Sumi Jo, Jerry Hadley and Huguette Tourangeau, along with collaborating, recording, and championing the talents of numerous significant Australian singers, in particular Margreta Elkins, Deborah Riedel, Rosamund Illing, Cheryl Barker, Elizabeth Whitehouse, and most recently Greta Bradman who has performed the role of Euridice this evening.

In 1954, Richard married soprano, Joan Sutherland and their son, Adam, was born in 1956.

Richard has received many awards internationally. During the Silver Jubilee Celebration in 1977 Queen Elizabeth II made him a Commander of the British Empire, and in 1983 he became an Officer in the Order of Australia, which was, in 2012 promoted to companion, for eminent service to the performing arts as an acclaimed conductor and musical scholar, to classical singing and the promotion of opera, and through the collection and preservation of operatic manuscripts. The French Government made him Commandeur de l'Ordre National des Arts et des Lettres in 1989 and in 2007 he was made Socio d'onore of the R. Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna, Italy.

Richard has also written four books – The Joan Sutherland Album (with Dame Joan Sutherland), Joan Sutherland, Designs for a Prima Donna, A Collector's Guide to Theatrical Postcards, and Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyng with The Australian Opera.

Richard lives in Switzerland and is still performing, judging major competitions and giving masterclasses. He and the late Dame Joan Sutherland continue to support burgeoning operatic talents of the future through the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyng Foundation, whose aim is 'to financially assist, nurture and support our next generation of young opera singers and to perpetuate the Sutherland/ Bonyng legacy of excellence in the field of opera.'

Chancellor, I present Maestro Richard Bonyngé AC CBE for admission to the degree of Doctor of Music (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.