

Mr William Barton

The honorary degree of Doctor of Music was conferred upon William Barton by the Deputy Chancellor Alan Cameron AM at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music graduation ceremony held at 4.00pm on 21 May 2010.



The Deputy Chancellor and Mr Barton, *photo, copyright Memento Photography.*

Citation

Deputy Chancellor, I present William Barton for admission to the degree of Doctor of Music (*honoris causa*)

“a musical instrument of Australian Aborigines made from a long wooden tube that is blown into to create a low drone”. The didgeridoo is more than a musical instrument to William Barton. As one of Australia’s leading didgeridoo players and composers, he is a powerful advocate for the wider perception of his cultural traditions. Mr Barton aims to present the virtuosic potential of his instrument and richness of his Australian culture to audiences throughout the world. He hopes they will see this music, not just as an illustration of some exotic antiquity, but as a living, dynamic process, requiring considerable technique, stamina and study, equal to that of any conventional classically trained professional musician.

Born in Mount Isa, William Barton was taught the instrument by his uncle, an elder of the Waanyi, Lardil and Kalkadunga tribes of western Queensland. At 17 years, he played his first classical concert with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. A recording of some of William’s works, by William and The Queensland Orchestra, was nominated for Best Classical Album in the 2004 ARIA Awards.

His collaboration with Sean O’Boyle - *The Concerto for Didgeridoo*, has ranked highly in recent surveys of the most popular Australian music. It speaks directly from the land and was named in the top 100 classical concertos in Australia for 2007. Liza Lim’s work for orchestra, didgeridoo and flute, *The Compass*, was premiered at the Sydney Opera House in 2006 and then Munich in 2007. William’s compositions include *Songs of the Mother Country* and *Journey of the Rivers*, performed at the Pompidou Centre, Paris in 2006.

In 2004 he performed at Gallipoli for the 90th anniversary of the ANZAC landing and recently in Belgium for the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele. In 2006 he toured to Germany with the Queensland Ballet, in 2007 concerts included the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, Reno Chamber Orchestra, Jena Philharmonic, and Sydney, Tasmanian and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. He also performed at Australia Day celebrations in Seoul. He appeared at the 2007 Venice Music Biennale and Australia Pittsburgh Festival in the USA for the premiere screening of *Kalkadoon Man*.

William Barton’s connection with The University of Sydney dates back to 2001 when he began collaborating with Australian composer and University of Sydney Professor, Peter Sculthorpe. Sculthorpe’s *Requiem*, first performed by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and at the UK’s Lichfield Festival, was composed with William in mind. This work was released as a CD on ABC Classics in 2006.

In July, 2008 Mr Barton travelled as part the 13-member ensemble of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music

to Beijing. The Sydney Conservatorium was one of only ten music institutions worldwide to secure a prestigious invitation to perform in the pre-Olympic music festival, Musicathlon. He performed with Conservatorium staff and student musicians in a number of ensemble pieces including his own composition, *Birdsong at Dusk* for string quartet and didgeridoo. He also played solo pieces, wowing the audiences with his interpretation of Australian wildlife. To the audience in Beijing at the Central Conservatory of Music, this was just the entrée - just a month later, William Barton returned to Beijing to perform in the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in a televised broadcast to millions worldwide.

Deputy Chancellor, I present William Barton for admission to the degree of Doctor of Music (*honoris causa*) and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.