

## Sir Jonathan Mills

For his exceptional achievement in the creative arts.

*Doctor of Music (honoris causa) [Hon DMus]*  
*Conferring ceremony: 17 April 2015.*

### Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Sir Jonathan Edward Harland Mills AO to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Music (*honoris causa*) for his exceptional contributions to the creative arts.

Born in Sydney on 21 March 1963, Sir Jonathan was fortunate to have a maternal grandfather born in Scotland, providing him with the opportunity to have both Australian and British citizenship.

He completed the HSC in 1979, and went on to enrol at the University of Sydney, studying music composition with the late Peter Sculthorpe. In 1984 he graduated with a Bachelor of Music.

In the late 1980s Sir Jonathan was the artistic director for the Blue Mountains Festival, and later went on to become the Composer-in-Residence and Research Fellow in Acoustic Design at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT). In 1999, he received a Master of Architect (Acoustic Design) from RMIT, where he also served as an adjunct professor until 2003.

Sir Jonathan's years at RMIT were quite productive, during which time he composed a number of works for various genres. Among these were the 1996 ballet *Ethereal Eye*, which examined the architects who designed and built Canberra; the opera *Ghost Wife* based on the short story by Barbara Baynton set in the Australian bush at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and premiered at the 1999 Melbourne Festival and then performed again in 2002 in London under conductor Richard Gill; the 2001 *Sandakan Threnody*, an oratorio for tenor, choir and orchestra, based on the real-life stories of Australian and British POWs; and finally, *Eternity Man*, a chamber opera based on the life of Arthur Malcolm Stace, an Australian soldier and eccentric who wrote the word "Eternity" with chalk on footpaths in and around Sydney. *Eternity Man* had its London premiere in July 2003. Indicative of his talent, Sir Jonathan was awarded in 2005 the prestigious Prix Italia for *Sandakan Threnody*.

Additionally, while at RMIT, he also found time to undertake the role of artistic director for various music festivals in Sydney and Melbourne, including director of Melbourne's Millennium Eve celebrations and Federation Festival, as well as the inaugural co-artistic adviser for the Brisbane Biennial International Music Festival from 1995 to 1997.

Sir Jonathan's artistic energy was employed as he undertook one of his greatest roles as the director and chief executive of the Edinburgh International Festival. Appointed in 2006, his contract was extended twice, first to include the 2012 Olympics and then to 2014 for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Under his leadership the festival has explored cultures, technology and built links with other countries. He has been responsible for turning a Euro-centric festival into a global phenomenon, having both a creative and an international tourist reach.

It is, therefore, no surprise that Sir Jonathan has received many awards, including the Centenary Medal in 2001; the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the performing arts as a composer and director of international festivals in 2011; and a knighthood recognised in the Queen's birthday honours in 2013 for his services to culture.

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