

Mr Peter William Weiss AM

The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon Peter Weiss AM by the Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO at a special ceremony held in the Vice-Chancellor's office at 3.30pm on Monday 24 September 2012.



Photos are by Ted Sealey, copyright University of Sydney. Click on images for enlargement.

- Top left: The Vice-Chancellor reading the citation.
- Top right: The Chancellor conferring the honorary degree upon Mr Weiss.
- Middle left: The Chancellor and Mr Weiss.
- Middle right: Robert Leece AM, Dr Karl Kramer (Dean of Conservatorium), Danny May, John Kaldor AM, Jonn Leece OAM, Ken Weiss, the Chancellor, Ariane Weiss, Mrs Doris Weiss, Antony Weiss, the Vice-Chancellor, Leslie Green, Ginny Green and, in front, Mr Weiss.
- Above left: Mr Weiss in conversation with the Vice-Chancellor.
- Above right: Mr Weiss

Citation

Presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Michael Spence

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to commend Mr Peter Weiss AM to you for the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) in recognition of his service to the arts and to philanthropy.

Peter Weiss is one of Australia's most successful businessmen and arts philanthropists. Born in 1935 in Vienna, Peter came to Australia with his family in 1939. A man of humble beginnings, he was brought up in a musical family and from childhood he had a passion for playing the cello; he remembers boarding a ship to London aged 21, cello under his arm, ready to "ravish the world".

Peter was educated in Sydney and developed his business here. His company, "Weiss", was formed over 30 years ago and became a renowned and highly successful leader in the fashion industry. In the mid 1980's, his business was firmly established and he began to turn his attention to the arts.

In the last few years, Peter has simplified his business activities, allowing him to devote more time to his love of music and art, despite his increasing ill-health. While principally focusing his energies on the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony, the Art Gallery of NSW, and the University's Sydney Conservatorium of Music, where as a young boy he studied the cello; Peter has assisted a multitude of organisations and has backed dozens of projects and initiatives with his generosity, his business acumen and his commitment. For example, Peter supported the Australian Youth Orchestra by providing two annual scholarships and is a Founding Patron of the Australian World Orchestra.

Peter's extraordinary contributions have seen him recognised as a member in the general division of the Order of Australia in 1995 for service to the arts, as a Life Patron of the ACO and as Life Governor and Life Benefactor of the Art Gallery of NSW. Last year he received the Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Leadership Award. From his positions on advisory committees and boards of arts organisations, through to his concert sponsorships, his most generous bequests and his patronage of individual musicians, he has been and continues to be, a passionately dedicated philanthropist.

The organisations Peter has supported paint a picture of a man who not only contributes a disproportionate amount of his personal wealth, but who acts as an ambassador and a driver of philanthropic efforts. His financial contributions are underpinned by an energy and enthusiasm, which encourages other people to give generously. His sense of adventure is an integral part of his philanthropy, inspiring people to do more and to do better.

Peter is known for his ability to turn concepts into successful and workable initiatives, always leading by example. His impact on Australian cultural life has been profound.

His multi-faceted financial support of music and the visual arts for over 25 years, his philanthropic innovations and his leadership and passion will have an impact on Australia's cultural landscape, long into the future.

Chancellor, I commend Peter Weiss to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), and invite you to confer the degree upon him.