



William Barton returns to the Australian Festival of Chamber Music with music, messages and memories

The powerful sound of William Barton's didgeridoo will again ring out through North Queensland when the renowned composer and musician performs from his significant canon of works at the 30th Australian Festival of Chamber Music (AFCM) in Townsville from 23 July to 1 August.

A proud Kalkadunga man, ARIA-award winning William Barton is a distinguished artist of extraordinary musicality, a virtuoso performer of the didgeridoo and a renowned composer of the highest acclaim who just last month was given the prestigious Australia Council Don Banks Music Award for outstanding and sustained contribution to music in Australia.

Barton shares a long history with the AFCM, having been a regular performer for many years, and now is set to return to perform at three major events during the Festival. He last performed at the AFCM in 2012.

"The AFCM holds a special place in my heart, I premiered a number of my works there, and I have always dreamt of returning to perform a combination of pieces from my current portfolio which I have performed around the world on some of the greatest stages, as well as those formative pieces from earlier years. I am looking forward to creating some premiere addendums to key pieces, music that hasn't been heard before using didgeridoo, voice and guitar," he said.

"Coming back to Townsville, and the AFCM is exciting, particularly to mark the 30th anniversary of this extraordinary chamber music festival. Performing on Magnetic Island will be a special experience."

William Barton performs in the Queens Gardens Concert on Sunday 25 July at 3pm, the Sunset Series Concert *B4* on Monday 26 July at 5pm at the Townsville Civic Theatre and the Sounds Like Paradise Dinner on Tuesday 27 July on Magnetic island.

The 30th AFCM will be held from 23 July to 1 August as a joyous 10-day celebration of music curated by Artistic Director, **Kathryn Stott**. Over 30 music-filled years, the AFCM has forged a stunning international reputation as one of the best chamber music celebrations in the world. Featuring 133 works, 112 composers, four world premieres and five Australian premieres the program stars more than 40 Australian musicians, 15 in their AFCM debut, as well as three ensembles including the Goldner String Quartet in their 25th anniversary year, and three local groups including the acclaimed Dancenorth.

ABOUT WILLIAM BARTON

Over his long and remarkable career, William has performed all over the world, from large concert halls to regional music festivals and at international landmarks reflecting the central importance of his music to Australian and world identity. His generosity of sound and spirit have seen his work commissioned by some of the most outstanding ensembles from around the world.

For two decades, he has forged a peerless profile as a performer and composer in the classical musical world, from the Philharmonic Orchestras of London and Berlin to historic events at Westminster Abbey for Commonwealth Day 2019, Anzac Cove and the Beijing Olympics.

His awards include Winner of Best Original Score for a Mainstage Production at the 2018 Sydney Theatre Awards and Winner of Best Classical Album with ARIA for Birdsong At Dusk in 2012. With his prodigious musicality and the quiet conviction of his Kalkadunga heritage, he has vastly expanded the horizons of the didgeridoo — and the culture and landscape that it represents.

“I grew up on a cattle station just outside Mt Isa in northwest Queensland. I started learning the didgeridoo from about the age of seven from my uncle, Arthur Peterson. He was an elder of the Wanyyi, Lardil and Kalkadunga people.”

His mother — singer, songwriter and poet Delmae Barton — remembers him dancing to Elvis Presley when he could barely stand. He recalls Beethoven and Vivaldi streaming from ABC classic FM radio, and AC/DC in his cassette player. Through it all, the hypnotic whoop and drone of the didgeridoo wove a common thread in his imagination.

“What I remember so clearly from my uncle is him telling me that the didgeridoo is a language. It’s a speaking language and like any language, it’s something that you’ve got to learn over many months, and many years. It’s got to be a part of you, and what you do.”

At 17, William realised a lifelong dream when he was invited to perform with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. But the full, rapturous embrace of the classical music world came in 2004, when Tasmanian composer Peter Sculthorpe unveiled his Requiem with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and guest soloist, William Barton. That night, William was invited to join the orchestra in Japan, to perform Sculthorpe compositions Earth Cry and Mangrove. Tours to the USA and New Zealand followed, and the composer and didgeridoo artist cemented a firm creative partnership. "William offered me a new direction," the late composer has said, praising his instinctive musicality and skill as an improviser. He’s almost like a magician... bringing my music home.”

The importance of William’s outstanding and enduring contribution has been recognised by many awards including the Artist Residency Peggy Glanville-Hicks Composers House (2020), Artist in Residence Melbourne Recital Centre (2019), Best Original Score for a Main Stage Production - The Long Forgotten Dream – Sydney Theatre Awards (2018), ARIA Best Classical Album - Kalkadungu: Music for Didjeridu and Orchestra (2012).

Australian Festival of Chamber Music

23 July to 1 August 2021 in Townsville, North Queensland

Festival tickets, concert passes and holiday packages on sale now

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