SYDNEY SYMPHONY ANNOUNCES 80TH ANNIVERSARY COMPOSITION PRIZE WINNER

Winning composition by Elliott Gyger to be performed on 22, 23, 24 March at the Sydney Opera House under the baton of Principal Conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy

28 Feb 2012 – In late 2011, 76 composers from around Australia ranging in age from 16 to 70 years old submitted works as part of the Sydney Symphony’s 80th anniversary composition prize, which offered the winner the chance to have their composition performed by the Sydney Symphony at the Sydney Opera House. Today the winner has been announced.

“I am thrilled,” says winning composer Elliott Gyger. “My father is a music critic and I went to every Sydney Symphony subscription concert throughout my high school years. When I think of orchestral sound I think of the Sydney Symphony in the Sydney Opera House concert hall – that’s my reference point. What a joy it will be for one of my compositions to be performed by these wonderful musicians and to hear what kinds of insights Mr Ashkenazy brings to the piece.”

In writing the nine-minute work, titled ‘on air: dialogue for orchestra’, Gyger took inspiration from the history of the ABC (which also turns 80 in 2012) and the history of the Sydney Symphony and its origins as a broadcast orchestra.

“I took inspiration from a photo on the Sydney Symphony website (pictured right) showing 17 musicians who formed part of the ABC studio orchestra in the 1930s.

“My piece starts with those 17 players and then the rest of the orchestra joins them. I thought it was a really interesting idea and I just ran with it,” says Gyger.

Born in Sydney, 43-year-old Gyger currently lives in Melbourne, where he has spent the past four years as lecturer in composition at the University of Melbourne. Prior to this, he undertook graduate study in composition at Harvard University in the US and was then Assistant Professor of Music at Harvard from 2002 to 2007.

The Sydney Symphony composition prize was open to all Australians who had never had a work performed by the Sydney Symphony in the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

According to Sydney Symphony Director of Artistic Planning, Peter Czornyj, the judging panel (composers Matthew Hindson and Mary Finsterer, Sydney Symphony Education Program Artistic Director Richard Gill and CEO of the Australian Music Centre John Davis) were encouraged by the high level of accomplishment revealed in many of the submissions.
“In choosing a winner, the panel was focused on identifying a finely textured and well-structured composition, showing mature sensitivity to the practicality of performance,” said Czornyj.

“The winning composition also needed to fulfill the objective of celebrating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Sydney Symphony in 1932, whilst also taking inspiration from other anniversaries in 2012 – the ABC and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Elliott Gyger’s work embodies all these facets,” added Czornyj.

On top of having his work performed at the Sydney Opera House in March, Gyger has also received $5,000 in prize money and one of the performances will be aired nationally on ABC Classic FM.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Concert details:

FIREWORKS AND FANTASY
Thu 22 March, 1.30pm
Fri 23 March, 8pm
Sat 24 March, 2pm
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

GYGER on air: dialogue for orchestra
PROKOFIEV Piano Concerto No.3 (Behzod Abduraimov, piano)
BERLIOZ Harold in Italy (Roger Benedict, viola)

Free pre-concert talk by Genevieve Lang in the Northern Foyer, 45 minutes before each performance.

For tickets:
Sydney Symphony Box Office (Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm): 02 8215 4600 or select your own seat at www.sydneysymphony.com