

FESTIVE FIREBIRD

A tribute to Ballet

24th November

7 for 7.30pm



Original artwork by Ann Seddon

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AU/UK

SEASON
2021-22



Australian Government

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Festive Firebird is a wonderful celebration of the Tait's artists, supporters and their friends. We welcome back Ross Alley as our host and Presenter. We thank him for generously donating his time and expertise to present these bespoke concerts for us, as ever we welcome his ongoing support. Tait Awardee, Chad Vindin returns as the Musical Director and is this evenings accompanist. Now a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, we are so pleased that our association with Chad can continue in this way.

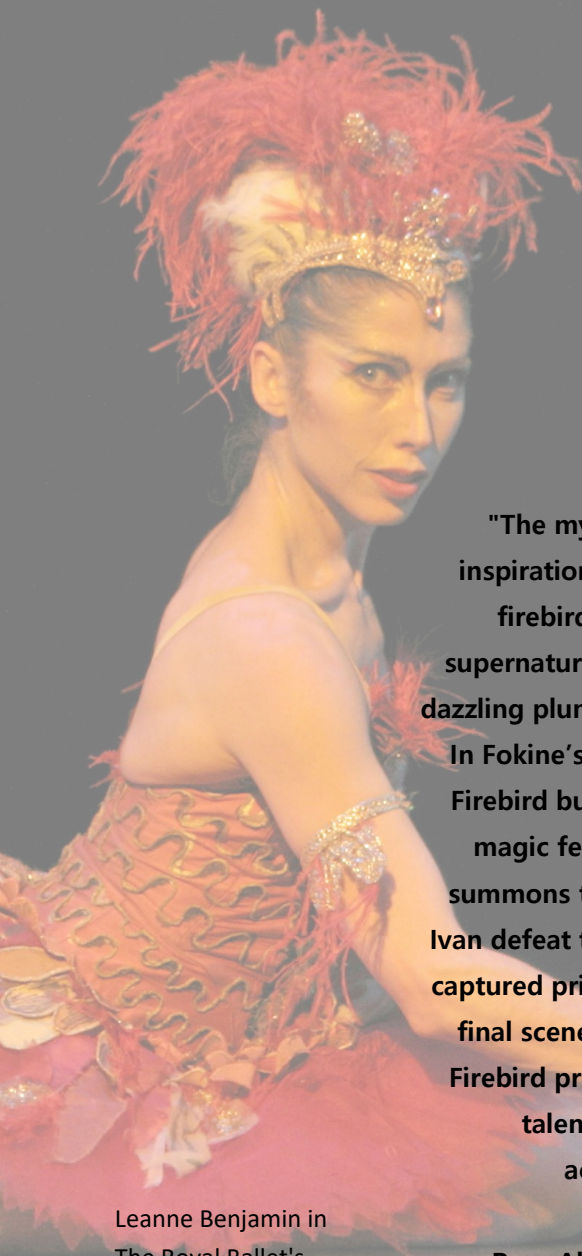
We are all looking forward to hearing from Tait Patron, June Mendoza AO OBE about her fascinating life and career, stories about her mother's work with JCW, learning more about Ann Seddon's artwork, and then some performances from a few of our new awardees.

We are also very grateful to Leslie Macleod-Miller who so generously has invited us into his home and allowed us to mount tonight's concert. We are delighted to welcome HE the Hon. George Brandis QC, High Commissioner of Australia; and Linda Apelt, Queensland Agent General (soon to leave us I am afraid) as our honoured guests this evening. Their support of our work has been a constant that we can always rely upon.

To our Friends, many individual sponsors and loyal supporters: we are so pleased to see your sponsorship growing year-on-year - we can't do this without you! This year we hope to increase our awards funding again...thank you for making this happen.

Isla Baring OAM
Chairman,
The Tait Memorial Trust

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE
MELBOURNE



"The mythical firebird is a symbol of inspiration and art. In Slavic folklore, the firebird embodied the magical and supernatural spirit of a celestial bird whose dazzling plumage allured many an avid hunter. In Fokine's ballet, Prince Ivan captures the Firebird but releases her in exchange for a magic feather which, later in the work, summons the miraculous creature to help Ivan defeat the evil Kostcheï and liberate the captured princesses. In honour of the ballet's final scene of rejoicing, tonight's Festive Firebird programme celebrates Australian talent in both dance and music across the generations."

Leanne Benjamin in
The Royal Ballet's
The Firebird
©Dee Conway

Ross Alley, London November 2021

FESTIVE FIREBIRD - PROGRAMME

Isla Baring OAM welcome

Introduction to ballet in Australia by Ross Alley

June Mendoza AO OBE in conversation with Ross Alley

Pavlova & *The Dying Swan* (performed by Lavinnia Rae, cello)

Ross Alley – A brief look at ballet in Australia

Ann Seddon ballet artwork – a spotlight by Ross Alley

Coppélia pas de deux viola solo (recording)

Lisa Bucknell, viola & Chad Vindin, piano

We look at Leanne Benjamin AM OBE's book - Built for Ballet

Katherine Allen, soprano & Chad Vindin, piano

1. *Pie Jesu* - Faure

2. *Waltz of my heart* - Novello

Sarah Prestwidge, soprano & Chad Vindin, piano

1. *Les filles de Cadiz* - Delibes

2. *I could have danced all night* – Lerner & Loewe

ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2021 AWARDEES

Piers Lane AO, piano

Trois Mouvements de Pétrouchka

1. *Danse Russe*

2. *Chez Pétrouchka*

3. *La Semaine Grasse*



Leanne Benjamin AM OBE and June Mendoza AO OBE

Photo by Alick Cotterill

June Mendoza AO OBE, artist

June Mendoza AO.OBE.RP.ROI.HonSWA is a member of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters and is considered to be one of the world's foremost portrait painters and undertakes commissions for portrait painting on a wide range of subjects,. June was born in Melbourne, Australia to an artistic family, pianist, composer Dot (née) Mendoza and musician John Morton. June focused on an art career from twelve years of age, taking life drawing at fourteen. By seventeen June was illustrating book jackets, magazine illustrations, town-planning exhibition artwork, record sleeves, some portraits and the adventure comic strip *Devil Doone*. Mendoza immigrated to England in the early 1950s and worked for Hulton Press producing illustrations and comics for Eagle's companion title *Girl*. After five years June transitioned into full time portraiture with subjects including Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Sammy Davis Jr, Sean Connery, Princess Diana, Queen Elizabeth II (five times), HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, Sir William McMahon, Prince Edward, Baroness Margaret Thatcher, Sir John Major, Sir John Gorton 1972 (official Parliamentary portrait acquired 1972 – the first and only official portrait of an Australian Prime Minister by a woman artist).

Ann Seddon, artist

Born into a theatrical family in Melbourne in 1944. Ann moved to the UK in the late 60s and worked as a wig assistant at The Old Vic and a fashion illustrator before the birth of her daughter Olivia. On moving back to Melbourne in 1974 Ann took up doll making classes with the artist Mirka Mora who inspired Ann to make three-dimensional figures. She then moved to Hong Kong with her husband Christopher who was there to oversee the building of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank as a director for Norman Foster Architects. During her time there she ran a drawing group 'The South Bay Artists' "The whole place then had such an exotic character. We owned a Chinese fishing Junk and every weekend would have a day's outing to the Islands to get some peace and fresh air. It was a very idyllic time. I did lots of sketches of the street markets, but my Chinese friends didn't understand my attraction to the amazing side of Hong Kong!"



By the end of the 1980's Ann's husband's work took the family to Japan where Ann continued her artwork and published two illustrated children's books 'Hansel and Gretel' and 'The Lullaby Song Book'. When Christopher moved from working on the new airport in Hong Kong to The Hermitage in St Petersburg Ann felt lucky to get the chance to live in Russia, soaking up the ballet and Tchaikovsky, which inspired her work on The Nutcracker book & toy theatre with her Vienna based writing partner Jean Mahoney.



Piers Lane AO, piano

London-based Australian pianist Piers Lane has a worldwide reputation as an engaging, searching and highly versatile performer, at home equally in solo, chamber and concerto repertoire. Five times soloist at the BBC Proms, Piers Lane's wide-ranging concerto repertoire exceeds one hundred works and has led to engagements with many of the world's great orchestras, working recently with conductors like Sir Andrew Davis, Andrew Litton, Vassily Sinaisky, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Brett Dean. Festival appearances have included Aldeburgh, Seattle, Bard, Bath Mostly Mozart, Bergen, Cheltenham, Como Autumn Music, La Roque d'Anthéron, Rockport, Prague Spring, Ruhr Klavierfestival, Schloss vor Husum and the Chopin festivals in Warsaw, Duszyniki-Zdrój, Mallorca and Paris.

He has also recorded eleven volumes of piano quintets with the Goldner String Quartet for Hyperion, many cds with Tasmin Little and Michael Collins for Chandos and further solo and chamber cds for EMI, Phillips, Dutton, Unicorn Kanchana and ABC Classics.

Piers Lane is Artistic Director of the Sydney International Piano Competition. He was Artistic Director of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music from 2006 to 2017, and from 2006 to 2013 he also directed the annual Myra Hess Day at the National Gallery in London.

In the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Birthday Honours he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished services to the arts. In 1994 he was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music, where he was a professor from 1989 to 2007. Piers holds Honorary Doctorates from two Australian Universities: Griffith and James Cook.



Ross Alley, a New Zealander, graduated from Victoria University of Wellington following which he became sole pianist for the Royal NZ School of Dance and was Musical Director for many shows in the capital city. Moving to Melbourne in 1979 he worked for the Australian Ballet School and Company before arriving in London where, for his first ten years, he was a pianist at the Royal Ballet School and Music Tutor to its Teacher Training Course. In 1990 he was appointed as a music lecturer for Birkbeck College, University of London which also led to a wide range of other lecturing experience, becoming a frequent speaker at the Royal Opera House giving over 70 talks on opera and ballet music. Over the years he has given numerous pre-performance talks and informative lectures at the English National Opera, Wigmore Hall, Wagner Society, Symphony Hall Birmingham, the Gustav Mahler Society, NADFAS, Kenwood, Artstur & the London Jewish Cultural Centre. Ross also organizes his own private lecture series on opera which take place each day of the week in various venues around London, the longest of which has been running for almost 30 years.



Chad Vindin Winner of the prestigious accompanist prize at the Royal Overseas League Competition, the Ludmilla Andrew Russian Song Accompanist Prize at the Royal Academy of Music, and the Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards Accompanist's Prize at the Wigmore Hall, Chad is one of the rising young stars of the accompaniment world. Born in Australia, Chad first studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music before moving to London. He now maintains a full workload as a staff pianist and vocal coach at both the Royal College and Royal Academy of Music and performs regularly across the UK and internationally. He is a founding member of the Sydney Chamber Opera Company and performed with OperaUpClose in their Olivier Award-winning production of *La Bohème*. Chad's studies were generously supported by the Thornton Foundation, and is grateful to have received further support by the Leverhulme Trust, the Reizenstein scholarship, and the Ian Potter Cultural Trust.



Lisa Bucknell, viola

Lisa enjoys a varied career as a guest artist with chamber ensembles and orchestras throughout the UK and abroad. As a chamber musician, she has played with the Sacconi Quartet & Manchester Collective, is the principal solo violist for The Opera Story, and in the Alan Bennett play *Untold Stories* at the National Theatre and on the West End. Lisa holds both an Artist Dip and a MPerf with Distinction from RCM studying with Simon Rowland-Jones. Lisa is grateful for the support of the Richard Carne Trust, the Ian Potter Cultural Trust, the Tait, and the Clemence Charitable Trust.



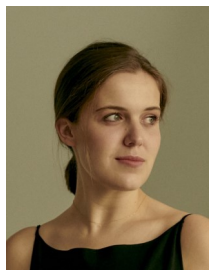
Lavinnia Rae, cello

Lavinnia Rae is a Leverhulme Arts Scholar at GSMD, completing a MPerf in orchestral artistry in association with the London Symphony Orchestra, studying with principal cello Rebecca Gilliver. Lavinnia recently played with the LSO as an orchestral cellist. She also holds a MPerf with distinction from the Royal College of Music. . In 2020 and 2021, Lavinnia was awarded a full scholarship for the Music Academy of the West Festival in California, and this year attended the Hellensmusic Festival in Hertfordshire for intensive chamber music performing with Lawrence Power, Tom Poster, & Maya Iwabuchi.



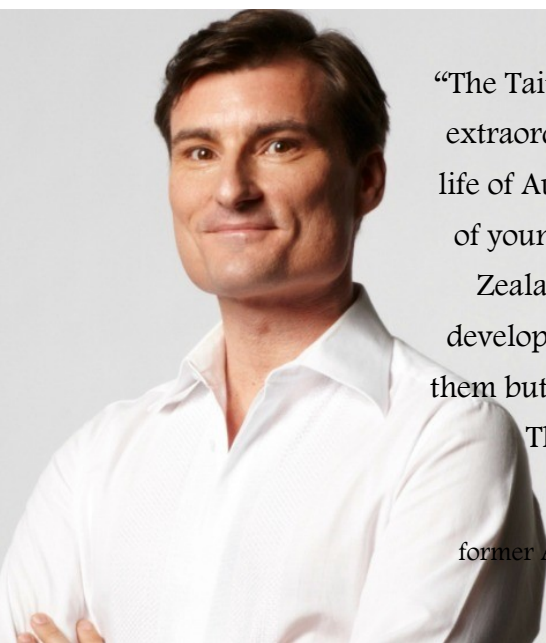
Sarah Prestwidge, soprano

Sarah Prestwidge is a young aboriginal Australian Soprano, studying a Master of Music at the Royal Northern College of Music, with a full ABRSM scholarship. She holds a Bachelor of Music (Education) from Sydney Conservatorium of Music and is also the recipient of the Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship from the Australian Council for the Arts. As a young artist, Sarah has been supported by programs such as Pacific Opera, Australia and with Buxton International Festival, England. Sarah's operatic experience includes roles in *A Little Night Music*, *H.M.S Pinafore* *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Magic Flute*. Sarah is to sing Zerbinetta in the prologue of *Ariadne Auf Naxos* and Susanna in *Le Nozze Di Figaro* at RNCM.



Katherine Allen, soprano

English-Australian Soprano Katherine Allen made her debut at the Sydney Opera House in as Paquette in Bernstein's *Candide* (2018). She has since performed in the Chorus of *Don Giovanni* (Opera Australia), as Josephine in *HMS Pinafore* (Hayes Theatre Company) and as Adele in *Die Fledermaus* (Lyric Opera Studio Weimar). Recent orchestral solo engagements include Mahler's 4th Symphony with Ensemble Apex, Mozart's Great Mass in C Min with the Sydney Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, and Mozart Operatic excerpts with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra. Katherine is a Dangoor Scholar at the Royal College of Music, where she is completing a Master of Performance, studying with Janis Kelly. Katherine is the 2021 recipient of the Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship, Annie McFarling Opera Scholarship, and Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award with Melba Opera Trust. In 2019 Katherine received the Megan Evans OAM Encouragement award from the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngel Bel Canto Award. That year she also won the Sydney Eisteddfod Senior Vocal Scholarship and Operatic Aria.



“The Tait Memorial Trust is one of the most extraordinary organisations in the artistic life of Australia. Supporting the study costs of young Artists from Australia and New Zealand who travel to the UK to fully develop their talents is a great gift to both them but also the global artistic community.

Thank you for your support.”

David McAllister AC

former Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet

The Tait Brothers

- Ballet in Australia -



The five Tait brothers can be credited with many things in Australian cultural and artistic history. They produced the world's first feature length film *The Story of the Kelly Gang* in 1906, and from the early 1910s became associated with J. C. Williamson's eventually going on to form one of the largest theatrical empires in the world. Through this they brought the world's best theatre, opera, operetta, musical comedy, plays and pantomimes to the antipodes.

The Firm, as they became known, was also responsible for bringing the first ballet to Australia. In 1913 Ted Tait, as newly appointed manager of J. C. Williamson's, brought out the Imperial Russian Ballet Company starring 'Danish toe-Danish dancer' and darling of the London Empire, Adeline Genée, and her partner Alexandré Volinin. This was the first time that Australian audiences had seen such dancing, and it arguably signified the birth of ballet in Australia.

In 1926 and again in 1929 the Firm brought to Australia the famed dancer Anna Pavlova and her company. Her extensive tour

generated a wake of dancing schools all over Australia. This was followed in 1934 by a tour of the 'The Russian Ballet', starring Olga Spessivtseva. It was, however, not until the three tours by Colonel de Basil's Companies in the late 1930s that ballet became firmly planted in Australian soil. These three tours (1936-40) had the same effect on the artistic world of Australia as Diaghilev's Ballets Russes had on Paris in 1909.

In 1939, as Europe teetered on the edge of war, many of the Russian and Polish dancers on the tour chose to stay in Australia. Within this group was Edouard Borovansky and his Russian-born wife Xenia Smirnova, who had both come to Australia previously with the Pavlova Company. They settled in Melbourne and set up a training school and subsequently a small seasonal company. Czech-born Borovansky had been a dancer with the Prague National Theatre before joining the Pavlova Company in 1928.

By 1943 the Borovansky Ballet Company received the sponsorship of the Firm and the following year became a professional ballet company. The school trained the first wave of Australian-born ballet dancers and the company toured Australia, staging many classical ballets as well producing the first original Australian ballets, including *Terra Australis*, *Black Swan* and *The Outlaw*. After Borovansky's death in 1959 the company continued until finally disbanding in 1961, re-emerging the next year as the Australian Ballet with much support from Frank Tait.

The Australian dance heritage owes much of its history to the foresight and tenacity of the Tait Brothers, and now produces some of the best classical dancers in the world. The Tait Memorial Trust continues to support Australian dance students to this day, keeping this legacy alive.

© Caroline Hamilton 2014*

*This article was originally published in our 2014 Winter Prom Programme

TAIT AWARDS 2021/22

| AWARDEE NAME | AU/NZ | AWARD DONOR | AWARD |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Lotte Betts-Dean mezzo-soprano | VIC | White/Loewenthal | Priv Studies |
| Samantha Clarke soprano | WA | White/Loewenthal | Priv Studies |
| Shakira Tsindos mezzo-soprano | VIC | White/Loewenthal | NOS |
| Sarah Prestwidge soprano | NSW | White/Loewenthal | RNCM-MM |
| James Fisher bassoon | NSW | Tait/Est. Lady Mackerras | SbS* |
| RBS group fund | AU/NZ | John Frost AM | LBA at RBS |
| Oliver Lee saxophone | NSW | Julian Baring Family | Tait Sch RCM |
| Sophie Sparrow soprano | NZ | Tait Award | ROSL Award |
| tba tba | tba | Tait AIOA | AIOA -RCM |
| Alastair White composer | NZ | Tait Award | Gold-PhD |
| Elli Welsh piano | QLD | Tait Award | NOS |
| Joanna Harries, mezzo-soprano | NZ | Tait Award | NOS |
| Jessica Blunt soprano | NSW | Tait Award | RAM-MM |

TAIT AWARDS 2021/22

| AWARDEE NAME | | AU/NZ | AWARD DONOR | AWARD |
|----------------------------------|--|-------|--|-------------|
| Katherine Allen soprano | | NSW | Tait Award | RCM-MM |
| Magdalenna Ksrtevska clarinet | | VIC | Tait Award | RCM ADip |
| Lavinnia Rae cello | | NZ | Tait Award | GSMD MM |
| Cassandra Wright soprano | | QLD | Tait Award | RAM Adv Dip |
| James Chen violin | | NSW | Tait Award | RAM Bmus |
| Cleo Lee-McGowan, soprano | | VIC | Tait Award | GSMD AdCer |
| Liberty Fergus ballet | | QLD | Richard Bonyng Award Sponsored by: David Norman Elspeth Turner Laing Linbury Trust | RBS |
| RCM | Royal College of Music | | | |
| RAM | Royal Academy of Music | | | |
| RNCM | Royal Northern College of Music | | | |
| GSMD | Guildhall School of Music & Drama | | | |
| NOS | National Opera Studio | | | |
| RBS | Royal Ballet School | | | |
| Sbs | Southbank Sinfonia, Tait Mackerras Chair | | | |
| AIOA | Australian International Opera Awards | | | |
| LBA | Leanne Benjamin Awards | | | |
| Gold | Goldsmiths - University of London | | | |
| UOL | University of London | | | |
| Pf | Performance | | | |
| Adip | Artist Diploma | | | |
| AdCer | Advanced Certificate | | | |

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