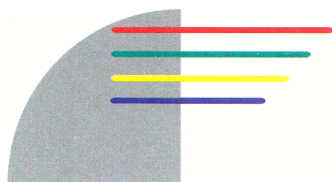


EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:30PM, FRIDAY 27 MARCH 2009



**AUSTRALIA'S MOST LUCRATIVE
PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS
CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

**ARCHIE ROACH, RUBY HUNTER, BIG hART and PAUL PETRAN
RECIPIENTS OF THE
2008 SIDNEY MYER PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS**

Hosted by Lady Southey, the 2008 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards held tonight at The Malthouse in Melbourne has paid tribute to and awarded music icons **Archie Roach** and **Ruby Hunter**, renowned arts and social change company **Big hART** and music producer **Paul Petran** for their exceptional contribution to Australia's cultural life through the performing arts.

What started in 1984 as a celebration and commemoration of Sidney Myer's life and love of performance, the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards (SMPAA) remains 25 years on Australia's most lucrative performing arts awards.

For the first time in the history of the Awards the **Individual Award (\$40,000)** has been awarded to a couple whose creative partnership is also a partnership in life. **Archie Roach** and **Ruby Hunter** have made extraordinary contributions to Australian music.

"Through their music and their personal stories, Archie and Ruby have made an extraordinary contribution to Australian music individually and as a team," said Carrillo Gantner, Chairman of the Sidney Myer Fund. "Through music they have helped us understand the Indigenous experience and ourselves. The judges spoke of them as one and did not want to choose between them, so it seemed fitting that they take the Individual Award together."

For the last 17 years the highly acclaimed **Big hART** has pioneered transformational and purposeful work around Australia particularly in small communities with people experiencing the effects of marginalisation. At any one time **Big hART** has multiple culture-lead programs happening nationwide including current projects *This is Living*, *Junk Theory*, the highly acclaimed *Ngapartiji Ngapartiji* and the *GOLD* project exploring the effects of climate change in rural communities. For this **Big hART** are a most worthy **Group Award winner (\$70,000)** of the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award.

Paul Petran, winner of the **2008 Facilitator's Prize (\$15,000)**, has spent his life creating opportunities for Australian musicians. As a music producer, Paul has made over 1500 recordings, in studios as well as at concerts and music festivals around the country. Paul has managed tours of musicians internationally and across Australia including concerts held in isolated towns that rarely see live music. And he has been involved as producer and presenter with ABC Radio's *Music Deli* program since its inception in 1986, a program that allows him to showcase music from a diverse range of cultures to a wide audience.

Rotated annually, the judging committee for the 2008 SMPAA were David Bates, The Famous Spiegeltent; Carrillo Gantner, the Sidney Myer Fund; Kerry Gardner, the Sidney Myer Fund Arts & Humanities Committee; Lindy Hume, Artistic Director, Sydney Festival; Michael Kantor, Artistic Director, The CUB Malthouse; Genevieve Lacey, Artistic Director, the Four Winds Festival; and David McAllister, Artistic Director, The Australian Ballet.

This year is a year of commemoration for The Myer Foundation as it celebrates the 50th Anniversary, the Sidney Myer Music Bowl is also celebrating its 50th anniversary and the Sidney Myer Fund celebrates the 75th Anniversary of its establishment.

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