

SOPRANO, COMPOSER AND ARTS LEADER DEBORAH CHEETHAM AO WINS MELBOURNE PRIZE FOR MUSIC 2019

Melbourne, Thursday 14 November 2019 - Yorta Yorta soprano, composer, Artistic Director of Short Black Opera, and Melbourne Recital Centre Board Director, **Deborah Cheetham AO** was honoured with the Melbourne Prize for Music 2019 at a ceremony on 13 November. The prestigious music award is granted every three years to an outstanding Victorian musician of exceptional musicianship, skill and creativity and is worth \$60,000.

The Melbourne Prize caps an incredible year for Deborah Cheetham who has had major works premiered by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, PLEXUS, Rubiks Collective, and Syzygy Ensemble. Ms Cheetham received the Merlyn Myer Music Commission 2019 to compose a new work for chamber ensemble. The Merlyn Myer Commission, presented in collaboration with Melbourne Recital Centre celebrates the work of Australian female composers. Deborah Cheetham's work draws inspiration from the tapestry, *Dulka Warngiid (Land of All)*, which hangs in Melbourne Recital Centre. In June Ms Cheetham received the Sir Bernard Heinze Award for her outstanding contribution to Australian music. Ms Cheetham gave the 2019 Peggy Glanville Hicks Address in October at Melbourne Recital Centre, reflecting on her life in classical music as an Indigenous woman.

Deborah Cheetham has been an important art leader for more than 25 years, recently emerging as one of Australia's most exciting compositional voices. In 2009, Ms Cheetham established Short Black Opera as a national not-for-profit opera company devoted to the development of Indigenous singers. The following year she produced the premiere of her first opera *Pecan Summer*. This landmark work was Australia's first Indigenous opera and has been a vehicle for the development of a new generation of Indigenous opera singers. Short Black Opera will present *Pecan Summer* at Melbourne Recital Centre in October 2020 in celebration of the 10th anniversary of its premiere.

Deborah Cheetham was appointed to the Melbourne Recital Centre Board of Directors in October 2019. She is the first Indigenous person to sit on the Centre's Board.

Melbourne Recital Centre Chair Andrea Hull AO said, 'I am overjoyed that Deborah Cheetham has been awarded the prestigious Melbourne Prize for Music. Deborah is one of Australia's most vital creators, a performer and musician with important things to say with her art, expressed with moving beauty. This prize, and Deborah's superb achievements in recent years, are testament to her leadership, advocacy and tireless work behind the scenes and on stage. On behalf of Melbourne Recital Centre's community of artists, patrons, audiences and staff, I offer our congratulations and thanks to Deborah.'

For more information and to schedule interview, contact Robert Murray, Director of Marketing and Customer Relations, Melbourne Recital Centre:

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