

Melbourne Recital Centre announces \$1million bequest from Betty Amsden Foundation

The Betty Amsden Foundation has given \$1 million to Melbourne Recital Centre for a dedicated families and children's program, acknowledging the late Betty Amsden's commitment to music education.

This is the largest bequest Melbourne Recital Centre has received to date and one of the most significant.

Kathryn Fagg, Melbourne Recital Centre's Chair, said programs aimed at families and children were an important focus for the venue, which hosted over 14,000 young people across a variety of events in 2016-2017.

'Betty was a great friend and mentor to the Centre and she holds a special place in our hearts. It is an honour to be entrusted with the resources Betty intended Melbourne Recital Centre to have to develop music programs that continue her commitment to participation in the arts and strengthen the Centre's connection with our community and particularly with young people,' said Ms Fagg.

The bequest will be used to extend the Centre's current programming to generate both new content and act as an advocate for the creation of new works for young people that have music at their core.

The *Betty Amsden Kids & Family Program* will include an entertaining program of events for the young and young at heart, aiming to inspire and educate the next generation of music lovers. The family-friendly program will include Music Play, a four-day annual festival in January; Salon concerts for children during school holidays; regular family performances with Opera Australia; regular touring family programs such as Mister Maker and The Wiggles; and Songbirds – weekly music sessions for the local community and their children aged 0-4. The Centre will also be introducing relaxed performances for children and families.

Betty Amsden AO (1926-2017) was a passionate advocate for exposure to and participation in music and performing arts from a young age. Betty was a seed funder of many Melbourne Recital Centre initiatives including the Music Play Children's Festival, Music Circle Patrons Program, the Musical Explorations illustrated lecture series, SummerSalt Festival and many more programs focusing on learning and outreach. Betty is remembered for the very special qualities she embodied as a philanthropist and a person; and the pivotal role she has played and will continue to play through her bequest in the development of the Centre and its engagement with Victoria's young people.

'I believe it's critical to teach children the value of music and telling stories in this way.' Betty Amsden, 2016

Minister for Creative Industries Martin Foley said: 'Betty Amsden was a legend of our creative state with an unrivalled energy for the arts and for giving back to the community. This bequest is part of the enduring legacy she has left on our creative sector and ensures that Betty's passion lives on through a program that will engage the next generation.'

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