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Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited

1 December 2008 for immediate release



Photo: © Mark Coulsen

Brett Dean

The Lost Art of Letter Writing wins 2009 Grawemeyer Award

first Australian composer to win \$200,000 award

Brett Dean has won the 2009 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for his violin concerto *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*, premiered in 2007. The Grawemeyer Award, granted annually by the University of Louisville, is the world's most prestigious composition prize, worth \$200,000 (£130,000; 305,000 AUD), and Brett Dean is the first composer from Australia to win the award. Dean's *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* was selected from a field of 145 entries worldwide, and the Grawemeyer's prize announcement describes the concerto as "a wonderful solo vehicle that also contains terrific writing for orchestra".

Dean on winning the Grawemeyer Award

Brett Dean writes of his reaction on winning the award: "The writing of music is a solitary process, and one spends a lot of time immersed in one's own internal sound world. A prize is an acknowledgement that one's work is not only being heard, but appreciated in the big, wide world outside of one's own studio. But I can think of no prize which represents a more significant acknowledgement of this kind than the Grawemeyer Award. To read the names of the award's previous winners, and to know that my own work will stand alongside the work of these legendary musicians that I admire so greatly, is a humbling and moving experience."

about *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*

The Lost Art of Letter Writing was commissioned by the Cologne Philharmonie and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra for violinist Frank Peter Zimmermann. Brett Dean conducted the premiere in 2007 at the Philharmonie in Cologne with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Zimmermann has played the concerto twelve times to date, including performances in Amsterdam, Munich, Berlin, Stockholm and Boston.

...a concerto of letters...

Each movement in the half-hour concerto begins with an excerpt from a 19th-century letter, with a violin evoking the mood of each letter as it plays the alternate roles of writer and recipient. Authors of the letters include composers Johannes Brahms and Hugo Wolf, artist Vincent Van Gogh and Australian outlaw Ned Kelly.

To hear a soundclip of *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* visit www.boosey.com/av.

For further information on the Grawemeyer Award and biographical information on Brett Dean please see over.

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about the Grawemeyer

Often described as 'the Nobel Prize for Classical Music', the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition was established in 1984 and previous winners have included Witold Lutoslawski, György Ligeti, Harrison Birtwistle, John Adams, Unsuk Chin and György Kurtág. Each year the Grawemeyer Foundation at the University of Louisville awards one million dollars, \$200,000 each for music composition, education, ideas improving world order, religion and psychology. The selection process includes a jury of professionals from each discipline and a knowledgeable lay panel. The late Charles Grawemeyer was an industrialist, entrepreneur and University of Louisville graduate who had a lifelong passion for music, education and religious studies.

For further information about the Grawemeyer Awards visit www.grawemeyer.org.

Brett Dean biography

Brett Dean (b.1961) studied in Brisbane until 1984, when he moved to Germany to join the Berliner Philharmoniker's viola section, a position he held for 15 years. He began composing in 1988, becoming established in his own right through works such as the clarinet concerto *Ariel's Music*, which won a UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers award, the piano quintet *Voices of Angels* and *Twelve Angry Men*, written for the 12 cellists of the Berliner Philharmoniker. Leaving the orchestra to devote himself to full-time composition, he returned to Australia in 2000. He continues to perform as a violist and conductor and is artistic director of the Australian National Academy of Music.

Dean's most widely-known work, *Carlo* for strings, sampler and tape, was inspired by the music of Renaissance composer Carlo Gesualdo. Other major scores include *Beggars and Angels* (1999), commissioned by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, *Pastoral Symphony* (2001), written for Ensemble Modern, and *Testament* (2003), composed for the Berliner Philharmoniker's 12 violas. Dean has performed his *Viola Concerto* (2004) 17 times on four continents since its premiere and the work was recently released on an all-Dean disc on the BIS label. He is currently composing his first opera, *Bliss*, with a libretto by Amanda Holden based on the novel by Peter Carey. Two recent works related to the opera are *Moments of Bliss*, selected as Best Composition Award at the 2005 Australian Classical Music Awards, and *Songs of Joy*, premiered by Sir Simon Rattle in Liverpool in October.

Brett Dean's music, including *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*, is exclusively published by Boosey & Hawkes. For further information on the composer and his music visit www.boosey.com/dean.