

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an artist; As an individual

A New National Cultural Policy

A ‘new’ National Cultural Policy *must* be a cultural policy with a ‘new’ vision and therefore *must* consider the big questions that encapsulate the obvious obstacles that year after year continue to downgrade the value of a national art in Australia as a culturally unique entity, and that effectively sabotage the artistic life of a practicing artist in Australia. With regards to the contemporary classical Australian musical landscape, Australian major performing arts organisations (the chamber and symphony orchestras, the opera, the ballet, etc.) that are in receivership of state and federal arts funding support *must* support Australian music. The sad truth is that they do not, and upon a brief review of the statistics, there is little to celebrate. I often joke about the fact that if the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra performs 2 to 3 Australian works per year, with over 500 composers represented by the Australian Music Centre, one has a good chance of being performed by the MSO once in the next 100 years. On last counts, the estimates are that Australian orchestras perform around 7 per cent of Australian content, while the opera and ballet fare worse than that. Australian music *needs* to be celebrated in its own country. Australia *needs* to build on its artistic legacy into the future and for that dream to materialize all artistic entities are obliged to support this ideal, including the country’s symphony orchestras. In Chile for example, every professional orchestra is required by law to perform at least 25% local content. In fact, the National Chilean Symphony Orchestra has performed almost every work composed in the past fifty years by a Chilean composer. The result of that policy being a greater sense of oneness, and hence a more positive artistic community; the negative elements of competitiveness amongst composers automatically removed because of all-embracing and inexhaustible opportunities. I strongly believe that culture is the legacy of a country, and supporting its cultural life will not only enrich its own citizens, but also encourage peace and understanding between the peoples of the world. The more we engage in soft diplomacy the better. Artists are an excellent vehicle for the promotion of the ideal that we are all equal citizens of the world; that we share the world as part of humanity, and that we as human beings embrace the idea of a universal truth, or a truth that promotes tolerance and respect for other people. This view will of course not change the world, but along with other non-idealistic measures will come a long way in addressing the international divides that affect our everyday lives. The unification of the world is the answer: humans must come together and care for each other. And wouldn’t be nice if Australia had relevance in the world and that its artists were acknowledged in their own country together with their sports heroes. In the words of 2022 Archibald Prize Winner Blak Douglas (winner for his “portrait of artist Karla Dickens – the first time a portrait of an Aboriginal woman has been awarded the prize”): “For those people that say that Australia is the greatest country in the world, well, we have a lot of work to do (Q&A, Thursday, 18 August, 2022).”

Dr. Andrián Pertout

Andrián Pertout is a freelance composer with a PhD in Composition from the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (University of Melbourne). His music has been performed in over 50 countries around the world. He is currently Vice-President of the Melbourne Composers' League (2021-); Australian delegate of the Asian Composers' League (2007-); International coordinator, PUENTE Festival Interoceánico, Valparaíso, Chile (2019-); Member of the Editorial Board, Eurasian Music Science Journal, The State Conservatory of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan (2022-); and was Visiting Professor of Composition at Aichi Prefectural University of the Arts, Nagakute, Aichi Prefecture, Japan (2019), President of the Melbourne Composers' League (2009-2013, 2017-2021); and Honorary Fellow at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (University of Melbourne) (2008-2015).