

Glorious Voices on display as RMP Aria turns 10 in 2016

Sunday 14 August is a red letter night for all emerging professional oratorio singers in Australia when seven talented singers will battle it out at the final of the 10th RMP Aria Competition, now firmly established as one of this city's most important singing competitions.

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of this competition this year, RMP Aria founder and RMP Artistic Director Andrew Wailes confirmed that this is still the only major Oratorio specific Aria competition in Australasia, and is thrilled that after 10 years, the competition now receives entries from right around Australia, New Zealand and even from Asia.

This year seven young Australian singers have been selected as Finalists. According to Wailes they have already enjoyed significant success on the concert and opera stage, as well as having shown great ability in major competitions around the country. The 2016 finalists are: Sydney based lyric **soprano Sarah Ampil** 25; Melbourne born **tenor Tomas Dalton** 27; Brisbane based **baritone Samuel Piper** 22; Perth born **mezzo soprano Fleuranne Brockway** 24; Tasmanian born now Queensland based **contralto Anastasia Bickel** 25; Melbourne born **counter tenor Maximilian Riebl** 25; and Queensland born now Melbourne based **bass Timothy Newton** 25.

Past winners and runners up of the RMP Aria are now high profile classical singers who, according to Wailes are forging successful careers as concert artists all over the world – names like Sony recording artist Greta Bradman who recently toured India with the Australian World Orchestra; baritone Laurence Mickle (who having been based in London and Italy is now working at Theater Erfurt, Theater Nordhausen and Deutsches Nationaltheater and Staatskapelle Weimar in Germany); Tasmanian bass-baritone Christopher Richardson who is now in demand both in Australia and in New Zealand; soprano Suzanne Shakespeare currently carving out a successful concert career in England; tenors Robert Macfarlane and Daniel Todd who are both enjoying great success in Germany, and baritones Nathan Lay and Jeremy Kleeman, who are both well known to Australian audiences. What they all have in common is that their success in the RMP Aria was a huge springboard for their professional careers.

Each Finalist will perform a short program of arias and recitatives from the world of oratorio, accompanied on piano by outstanding pianist and RMP Principal Accompanist Stefan Cassomenos. A distinguished panel of judges will decide over \$5000.00 worth of cash prizes, as well as other awards including language coaching and professional photographic packages and future performance opportunities with the RMP. There are various other awards and prizes, including a special People's Choice Award, voted by all performers and members of the audience, and various other professional development and language coaching prizes.

Also on Sunday 14 August is the popular annual Sing Your Own Oratorio event, where participants from many of Victoria's choirs and the wider musical community will workshop and rehearse Antonio Vivaldi's sparkling Magnificat in G minor during the day, before performing it that evening with members of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir and RMP Orchestra under the direction of conductor Andrew Wailes at the conclusion of the Final, before the winners are announced and audience and contestants join together for a convivial champagne supper at the conclusion of the evening.

"There is something really exciting about this event" says Wailes. "Hearing so many excellent young singers all on the verge of glittering careers performing such fantastic repertoire makes for a musically rewarding evening which is always memorable. The competition amongst the finalists just gets better and better every year."

All finalists will be accompanied in the final by RMP Official Accompanist and one of Australia's most outstanding pianists, Stefan Cassomenos, who also contributes to the Adjudication panel. The RMP Aria is open to singers resident in Australia who have not turned 35 at the time of the Final.

And for lovers of oratorio and choral music who like to do more than merely sit back and enjoy the wonderful arias performed by the seven finalists, there is the opportunity to join the RMP Oratorio Festival Choir. To do so, prospective performers should register for the Sing Your Own Oratorio event via www.rmp.org.au.

Sunday 14 August at 7pm, at Deakin Edge, Federation Square.

Online bookings, images and further information: www.rmp.org.au.

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