



MEDIA RELEASE
23 March 2009

HARPING ON: MUSIC TO THE EARS VIA THE FOUR WINDS

A giant red cylinder that emanates musical sounds generated by prevailing winds has taken root in Sydney's CBD – appropriately outside the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Some 10 metres high and five metres round, the steel, plastic and timber installation aims to deliver a range of sounds courtesy of three large Aeolian Harps acoustically placed in the cylinder.

Called "*Songlines*," the installation - the brainchild of Sydney architect **Joe Snell** – has been created as part of The Con's public **Open Day** on Sunday 29 March.

"The inspiration for *Songlines* is drawn from Bruce Chatwin's interpretation of Indigenous Australian's ancient invisible pathways told in song," commented Snell, who is co-founder of DARCH, the Emerging Architects of NSW and Creative Director of the Smart Light Sydney 2009 Festival.

"They told stories and sang songs to communicate pathways across the terrain, understanding their place in this vast continent and nature's power.

"Here, with the harps as a metaphor, *Songlines* equally draws on the powers of nature to produce a musical communication in a most harmonious and sustainable way."

There will be different tones for each of Sydney's prevailing winds – north-easterly's, southerly's and westerly's.

The cylinder is pixelated through thousands of coloured plastic strips and designed to flutter and flourish with each distinct breeze – like a gust of wind on a field of wheat or across a body of water.

A golden low energy power source in the centre of the cylinder will provide varying shades of light between dusk and dawn, ranging from translucent glows to radiant bursts.

Each harp has stainless steel strings, varying in diameter – the thinner strings will deliver a lighter tone, while a deeper darker tone will emerge from the thicker strings.

One of the world's leading wind harp experts, **Alan Lamb**, provided advice on a special pulley system to help control the tension of each set of strings to blend with the changing wind direction.

The installation was jointly launched today by the Minister for Fair Trading, Citizenship and the Arts, **Virginia Judge** and the Lord Mayor of Sydney, **Clover Moore MP**.

"*Songlines* is a handsome addition to the Sydney streetscape, and is another example of the great creativity of our artists," commented Minister Judge.

Clover Moore said: "*Songlines* is a welcome and refreshing addition to Sydney's urban art. It looks stunning, is perfectly placed outside one of the world's best music institutions and by using the winds to create music it is environmentally sustainable as well as technically beguiling."

Snell said the pure cylinder shape was inspired by the grand turrets of the historical architecture of The Con.

"There is a connectivity here involving the iconic building, the winds that sweep through our CBD, the beautiful and powerful music generated within the Conservatorium and the public's urge for engagement with new ideas," added Snell.

The Dean and Principal of Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Professor **Kim Walker**, said *Songlines* was "a signal to the community at large that the Conservatorium is a place that welcomes everyone and anyone."



“We want to send out a message that The Con is open for people from all walks of life,” Professor Walker said. “You don’t have to be a musician to come here and get a feel for the long and interesting history and soak up the atmosphere of an environment that cherishes music.

“The positioning of the installation will enable it to be seen from Macquarie and Bridge Streets, and by motorists on the Cahill Expressway.”

Conservatorium benefactor, **Mary Turner**, whose funding assisted the development of *Songlines*, said she was excited by the design that linked the ancient origins of Aeolian Harps and nature to produce results that would change with the fickleness of the wind.

“It is very clever and intriguing, and says something brilliant about young minds at work,” she said.

The Con’s Open Day on **Sunday 29 March**, from 10am to 5pm, will feature:

- Free performances in jazz, brass, string ensembles; vocal and piano concerts featuring an array of leading musicians as well as young virtuosos and students from the Conservatorium High School and NSW Regional Conservatoria;
- Masterclasses;
- Learn to play an instrument workshops;
- Tours and forums;
- A classical music quiz;
- Sound installations
- A finale from the Sensational Sundays concert series

Media inquiries

Scott Saunders on 02 9351 1298