

MEDIA RELEASE
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**SYDNEY
CONSERVATORIUM
OF MUSIC**

HISTORY REPEATS FOR PETER SCULTHORPE

Peter Sculthorpe, recognised as a pioneer in composition of Australian contemporary music, has fittingly been awarded an international prize linked to the historical voyages to the Southern Seas ordered by the Spanish crown in the 17th century.

Emeritus Professor Sculthorpe, who turned 80 this year, has received the Casa Asia Prize for his stellar career in music generally and his highly acclaimed work, *The Quiros Suite*, written to commemorate the explorations of Pedro Fernandez de Quiros and Luis Vaez de Torres, in particular.

The Spanish Embassy proposed Sculthorpe for the prestigious award “for the bridge created between the Australian and Spanish societies through his music.”

The five movement *Quiros Suite* was first performed by the Sydney Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra in 2006, with Imre Pallo conducting and Gerard Willems on piano.

2006 was the year Spain celebrated the fourth centenary of the voyage across the Pacific in 1605-06 by Quiros and Torres, with Quiros taking possession of Vanuatu on behalf of King Phillip III, and naming the island “Austrialia del Espiritu Santo.”

The name was in tribute to the House of Austria, the then reigning dynasty.

According to Sculthorpe, Quiros can be considered “the first (Australian) hero or antihero, or almost the first Australian.”

Torres was the first European to navigate through the Strait that bears his name. A journal of his travels written in 1765 was used by Joseph Banks on the epic voyage on the Endeavour with Captain Cook in 1768.

Sculthorpe has been invited to Madrid in November to receive the honour. It is understood Queen Sophia of Spain has given her approval for a special orchestra to perform the Suite at the ceremony.

Earlier this year Sculthorpe announced he was endowing The Con to establish Australia’s first Chair of Australian Music. The multi-million dollar endowment will nurture generations of future young composers from Australia and overseas as part of the legacy of the nation’s most prolific and esteemed composer.

Sculthorpe was awarded an MBE in 1970, and OBE in 1977 and an Order of Australia in 1990. He is one of Australia’s Living National Treasures.

More than 300 of his self-penned manuscript scores are held in a special collection at the National Library.

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