

# THE EULOGY

## Press Kit



Directed by JANINE HOSKING

Produced by JANINE HOSKING- KATEY GRUSOVIN- TRISH LAKE

An iKANDY FILMS-GRUSOFLIX-FRESHWATER PICTURES production

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Website: [theeulogy.com.au](http://theeulogy.com.au)

## SYNOPSIS

### LOG LINE

The untold story of Australia's greatest classical pianist.

### SHORT SYNOPSIS

**The Eulogy** is a feature documentary, which for the first time unravels the truths and myths behind the life and career of one of Australia's most brilliant, prolific and least understood concert pianists, Geoffrey Tozer.



## LONG SYNOPSIS

*'Geoffrey Tozer's death is a national tragedy.'* - *The Hon. Paul Keating*

*'Geoffrey was a great ambassador for his nation's culture. Much of the time it must have felt to him as if his nation didn't care.'* - *Norman Lebrecht, French Music Critic*

**The Eulogy** is a feature documentary, which for the first time unravels the truths and myths behind the life and career of one of Australia's most brilliant, prolific and least understood concert pianists, Geoffrey Tozer.

As an 8-year-old child prodigy the world was Geoffrey Tozer's oyster. From the time that he was the youngest ever semi-finalist at the famous Leeds Piano Competition, he dazzled audiences around the world.

As an adult Geoffrey Tozer continued to perform in Australia and internationally but for a career that promised and delivered so much, Tozer's end was shocking.

At his memorial service in 2009, Tozer's friend and former Prime Minister, Paul Keating delivered a searing eulogy, painting a haunting picture of a lonely genius shunned by the Australian musical establishment during the final years of his life.

Intrigued by Keating's controversial eulogy and spurred to find out what went wrong with Tozer's career, esteemed conductor and music educator Richard Gill goes on a journey to discover the man behind Keating's eulogy.

Richard's first steps begin at the Estate of Geoffrey Tozer, where in a humble backyard shed is an archive that contains thousands of drawings, photographs, letters and diaries documenting every aspect of Tozer's tumultuous life.

Gill also meets with members of Tozer's family, inner circle and musical colleagues who have never before spoken publicly about the pianist.

The epic tale and musical legacy of one of the greatest pianists Australia never really knew is finally revealed.

## KEY CAST BIOS

### GEOFFREY TOZER



*‘When one has been touched by the stellar power and ethereal playing of a sublime musician, one is lifted, if only briefly, to a place beyond the realm of the temporal. Geoffrey Tozer did this for many people.’* - The Hon. Paul Keating

Geoffrey Tozer was born in 1954 in Missouri, India. His musical genius was recognised at an early age when, as a three year old, his music teacher mother, Veronica Tozer, recognised him playing parts of Beethoven’s Appassionata Sonata on the piano. When Geoffrey was 4 years of age, he moved to Melbourne with his mother and brother Peter. There, on 27 August 1963, Geoffrey Tozer gave his first broadcast recital on ABC radio. Seven months later, on 13 April 1964 he performed the Bach F Minor Concerto with the Astra Chamber Orchestra conducted by George Logie-Smith at the Nicholas Hall in Melbourne.

During the 1960s he became the youngest recipient ever of the Winston Churchill Fellowship when he was thirteen, moving to England to further his studies. In 1969 he became the youngest ever semi-finalist in the Leeds Piano Competition, later winning First Prize in both the Alex de Vries Piano Competition in Belgium and the Royal Overseas League Competition in London. He made his international debut on 17 August 1970 in London at the Royal Albert Hall playing Mozart’s Piano Concerto No 15 K 450 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Colin Davis. Important engagements followed with Tozer giving performances in Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, France and Britain, including invitations from Daniel Barenboim’s English Chamber Orchestra and from Benjamin Britten to perform at the 1971 Aldeburgh Festival. Tozer distinguished himself at Aldeburgh both as a recitalist and as an accompanist for the great cellist Rostropovich.

During the 1970s and 1980s Geoffrey was the recipient of a number of awards. In 1973 he was a Semi-finalist at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth, Texas. In 1977 he won the Bronze Rubenstein medal in Israel followed by winning the gold medal in 1980. He was also awarded the Liszt Centenary Medal in 1986 for his contribution to the music of Franz Liszt. Throughout this period Geoffrey also travelled and performed extensively around the world.

In 1988 Geoffrey Tozer was one of seven inaugural recipients of the Creative Fellowship awards. These fellowships were funding grants introduced by then Australian Treasurer, Paul Keating for the purpose of supporting artists in mid-career. Geoffrey went on to receive a second Creative Fellowship in 1993. During the Creative Fellowship period, Geoffrey recorded 36 CDs for Chandos records, one of which won him a Grammy

nomination in 1992 along with the Diapason d'Or prize and Gramophone Critics Record of the Year in 1997.

In the 1990s, Geoffrey's highlights included the Australian premiere of the Medtner Piano Concerto No 1 in C Minor Opus 33 with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra (1992), the Medtner Piano Concerto No 2 in Finland, a performance conducted by Leif Segerstrom and broadcast in Europe (1993), Tozer's first tour of China at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture, with recitals in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and other cities (1993) and his performances of the complete sonatas of Beethoven at the Melbourne International Festival (1994). In 2001, Geoffrey also became the first Westerner to perform the Yellow River Concerto, which was broadcast live to an estimated audience of 80 million viewers.

Geoffrey Tozer gave his final public performance in June 2009 in Bendigo and later more privately for the nuns and brothers at Presentation Convent Chapel in Windsor. He passed away on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2009 alone in his Melbourne home. Tozer's private funeral was held in the Windsor Convent Chapel attended by close family and friends. Four weeks later, in accordance with Tozer's wishes, his Memorial Service was held at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. His eulogy was delivered by his friend and Former Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating.

**For more information about Geoffrey Tozer go to:**  
**<http://www.geoffreytozerlegacy.com>**

**RICHARD GILL, AO**  
**Conductor/Music Educator**



*'Perhaps it's just as well that Leonard Bernstein is dead. Otherwise he'd probably have to relinquish his great reputation as a musical educator- or at least share it with Sydney's Richard Gill.'* - John Carmody, *The Sun Herald*

Richard Gill, AO, Founding Music Director and Conductor Emeritus of Victorian Opera, is one of Australia's pre-eminent and most admired conductors specialising in opera, musical theatre and vocal and choral training and is internationally respected as a music educator. Richard's work in developing young musicians and creating opportunities for them is recognised world-wide. Richard has been Artistic Director of the Education Program for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Director of OzOpera, Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, and Artistic Advisor for the Musica Viva Education program. He is currently Music Director of Sydney Chamber Choir, Artistic Director of the Australian Romantic and Classical Orchestra (ARCO) and is the Founder and Director of the National Music Teacher Mentoring Program.

Most recently, Richard Gill has had the honour of being appointed to a personal chair. The international law firm, King & Wood Mallesons, has endowed a chair in music education at the Conservatorium High School, secondary arm of the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney. Richard is the inaugural *King & Wood Mallesons Conservatorium Chair in Music Education*.

This year Richard continues his associations with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for *Ears Wide Open*, Sydney Chamber Choir, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra for *Unwrap the Music*, Taipei American School as the Joanna Nichols Performing Artist in Residence, and the Australian National Academy of Music, Melbourne as well as continuing in his role as a mentor and music educator to young musicians, teachers and many community groups in Australia.

Recent engagements have included the International Schools Choral Music Society (ISCMS) Festival in Beijing, Anzac Commemorative and Discovery concerts (Sydney Symphony); New Zealand Symphony Orchestra National Youth Orchestra; Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra for Festival of Voices, including *St. Matthew Passion*; *Ears Wide Open* and the Metropolis Festival (Melbourne Symphony); *Unwrap the Music* with Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra; Sydney Chamber Choir; director of the National Music Camp for the Australian Youth Orchestra in Canberra; *Sleeping Beauty* (Pantomime), *Cinderella* (Pantomime), *The Rake's Progress*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Play of Daniel*, the Viva Verdi Gala concerts, *The Magic Flute*, *Sing Your Own Opera*, *How to Kill Your Husband* and *The Threepenny Opera* (at Sydney Theatre Company) all for Victorian Opera; Family concerts, Meet the

Music and Tea with Symphony for Sydney Symphony; Classic Kids concerts with Melbourne Symphony; New Zealand Symphony Orchestra; Sydney Youth Orchestra; Melbourne Youth Music and Young Symphonists (Australian Youth Orchestra). In 2012 Richard's memoirs "*Give Me Excess of It*", described by Pan Macmillan as "warm, extremely funny, highly opinionated, occasionally rude (where warranted) and always sublimely full of the love of music", were published.

Further works Richard has conducted for Victorian Opera include *The Coronation of Poppea*, *Damnation of Faust*, *Julius Caesar*, *Don Giovanni*, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, *Carmina Burana*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Noyes Fludde*, *The Snow Queen*, *Così fan Tutte*, *Metamorphosis*, *Les Noces/Oedipus Rex*, *St John Passion*, *The Parrott Factory*, *The Cockatoos* and the world premiere of *Rembrandt's Wife*.

His work in the concert hall is extensive and includes concerts with all the major Australian orchestras, Sydney Philharmonia, Canberra Symphony Orchestra as well as the Australian, Sydney, and Western Australian Youth Orchestras. For the Sydney Symphony he regularly conducted their Meet the Music concerts, Discovery concerts with the Sydney Symphony Sinfonia, and Sinfonietta concerts.

Richard's repertoire for Opera Australia includes *Julius Caesar*, *The Love for Three Oranges*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, the world premiere of Moya Henderson's *Lindy*, *Faust*, *The Gondoliers*, *The Eighth Wonder*, *Macbeth*, *La forza del destino*, *Rigoletto*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il trovatore*, *Romeo et Juliette*, *Pericole*, *The Merry Widow*, *Fidelio*, *Turandot*, *Pearl Fishers*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Monteverdi's *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* in a double bill entitled 'Baroque Masterworks'; for Oz Opera, *The Barber of Seville*, *La bohème*, *Carmen*, and *The Magic Flute*; for Opera Queensland he has conducted *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Music theatre repertoire includes *Brundibar* (Windmill Performing Arts), the world premiere of Jonathan Mills' *The Ghost Wife* at the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts, Adelaide Festival, Sydney Festival and London Barbican, *Eternity Man* for Sydney Festival, *The World's Biggest Singing Lesson* at the UWA Perth International Arts Festival and *Sing Your Own Opera* at the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts. He also acted as Chairman of the Jury for the ABC/OA Operatunity OZ project 2005/06.

He has held several other important posts including Dean of the West Australian Conservatorium of Music (1985-1990) and Director of Chorus at The Australian Opera (1990-1996) and has received numerous accolades during the course of his career, including an Order of Australia Medal, the Bernard Heinze Award for Services to Music in Australia, an Honorary Doctorate from the Edith Cowan University of Western Australia for his service to Australian music and musicians, an Hon. Doc. (ACU), and the Australian Music Centre's award for 'Most Distinguished Contribution to the Presentation of Australian Composition by an Individual'. Richard is also the recipient of the prestigious Don Banks Award 2006 by the Australia Council and the 2014 APRA Art Music Award for Distinguished Services to Australian Music.

## **FILMMAKERS**

### **JANINE HOSKING**

#### **Director/ Producer**

Janine Hosking's career highlights include producing and directing the award-winning and high profile feature length documentaries 'My Khmer Heart' and "Ganja Queen" for HBO and having 'Mademoiselle and the Doctor' screen to critical acclaim at Australian and international film festivals. My Khmer Heart was shortlisted for an Academy Award nomination. The two-part feature length Australian version "Schapelle Corby: The Hidden Truth" was nominated for Most Outstanding Documentary at the Logie Awards 2008. Her most recent feature documentary, 35 Letters won Best Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival in 2014.

She also co-executive produced and directed The Memorial a five part series on the Australian War Memorial for Foxtel's History Channel.

### **KATEY GRUSOVIN**

#### **Writer/Producer**

Katey Grusovin spent 10 years working with UNICEF as a communication and media officer before returning to filmmaking. During her time with UNICEF she worked in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Yemen, India, Nepal, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In 2005, she established and ran the UNICEF South Asia Media Hub for three years in New Delhi. In 2013 Katey worked as a Senior Adviser at UNICEF in New York where she helped design and implement its landmark global End Violence Against Children Initiative.

Prior to joining the UN, Katey worked in film and television, writing and directing documentaries with her brother David including the award winning THE CHRISTMAS CAKE (1996) which received the Dendy Award for Best Australian Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival that year, and a film on Australia's best-known political cartoonist, Michael Leunig, titled LEUNIG ANIMATED (2002). In recent times she worked as a Producer on THE MEMORIAL: BEYOND THE ANZAC LEGEND a five part series presented by Neil Oliver for The History Channel & Foxtel (2014) and is a Writer/Producer on THE EULOGY (2018).



## **TRISH LAKE**

### **Producer**

Brisbane based Independent Producer and former ABC Television journalist Trish Lake, is managing director of Freshwater Pictures and specialises in the creative development and production of feature films and feature documentaries. Her credits include the upcoming feature documentaries, WIK VERSUS QUEENSLAND, LOVE OPERA and THE EULOGY.

Her feature film EARLY WINTER a Canadian/Australian Co-production, won the prestigious Venice Days Award at the Venice Film Festival. EARLY WINTER was written and directed by Michael Rowe and produced with partner Serge Noël (Possibles Media). Trish Lake's credits also include FRACKMAN, a feature documentary, produced with partners Smith&Nasht and Aquarius Productions, which was selected for Good Pitch Australia and has been released theatrically in Australia through the cinema-on-demand web platform, Demand.film and Madman ; SHOW ME THE MAGIC, seen in cinemas and on ABCTV; MY AMERICA, selected for competition at Sydney Film Festival and released by Film Buff in the US; THE BURNING SEASON, selected for competition at Tribeca Film Festival, and a winner of Best Documentary at the Australian IF Awards; RARE CHICKEN RESCUE a previous winner of Best Documentary at Sydney Film Festival, and the feature film SUBDIVISION, directed by Sue Brooks and distributed by Walt Disney Studios and Denmark's Level K.

While her films have had numerous nominations and awards, Trish herself won the prestigious SPA Feature Film Producer of the Year Award, for her award-winning first feature, GETTIN' SQUARE, which was directed by Jonathan Teplitsky, written by Chris Nyst and co-produced by Freshwater Pictures, with Mushroom Pictures and Working Title. Trish is an Adjunct Fellow at Griffith University in Brisbane where she leads a mentor program for emerging producers at Griffith Film School, and where she is also doing post-graduate research.

## **DANIEL SCHULTZ**

### **Co-Producer**

In 2018 Daniel Schultz was the recipient of Screen Australia Enterprise People funding to be the fulltime Business Affairs Manager for Ludo Studio in Brisbane. Daniel also consults as a producer and production accountant for Freshwater Pictures and The Planet Spins.

His feature film credits include Secrets of Vanuatu Water Music (2017) as Producer, The Eulogy (2018) as Co-Producer, The Second (2018), Wik Versus Queensland (2018), Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible (2017), Early Winter (2015), and Rise of the Eco-Warriors (2014) as Production Accountant. He also produced the short horror film, Post Mortem Mary, with funding from Screen Queensland that premiered at ScreamFest LA in October 2017.

Previously Daniel worked as a Sessional Academic at Griffith Film School teaching Screen Distribution and Film Finance. He has also provided services to Brisbane based production company's Like A Photon Creative, Virgo Productions, Wild Fury, VisionQuest, Faraway Films and Gulliver Media.

# CREDITS

Music Performed by Geoffrey Tozer

Presented by Richard Gill, AO

Directed and Edited by Janine Hosking

Produced by Janine Hosking  
Katey Grusovin  
Trish Lake

Writers Janine Hosking  
Katey Grusovin

Co-Writer Richard Gill, AO

Executive Producer Shaun Miller

Co-Producer Daniel Schultz

Associate Producer Katrina McGowan

Director of Photography Rod Pollard

Field Director Katrina McGowan

Voice of Veronica Tozer Rachael Blake  
Voice of Geoffrey Tozer Mark Kilmurry

Young Veronica Tozer Rebecca Chambers  
Young Geoffrey Tozer Fox McMaster

Featuring The Honourable Paul Keating  
Geoffrey Tozer  
Richard Gill

Tozer Estate Researcher and Story Consultant Peter Wyllie Johnston

Research Katey Grusovin  
Jane Grusovin  
Janine Hosking  
Katrina McGowan

Animation Fifty Fifty Films

Animation Producer Paul Butler

Animation Creative Director Andres Gomez Isaza

Offline Editing iKandy Films

Offline Post Production Supervisor Stephen Hopes

Post production Facility Cutting Edge

## **GEOFFREY TOZER'S EULOGY – DELIVERED BY PAUL KEATING St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne - 1 October 2009**

Geoffrey Tozer's death is a national tragedy.

For the Australian arts and Australian music, losing Tozer is like Canada having lost Glenn Gould or France, Ginette Neveu. It is a massive cultural loss. The kind of loss people felt when Germany lost Dresden.

The national run rate for artists of Tozer's accomplishment is about one in every hundred years. In fact, if you think of our greatest artists, those who are so regarded in world terms, three come to mind: Nellie Melba, Percy Grainger and Joan Sutherland. In terms of sheer artistry and musical power, Geoffrey Tozer could well be the credible addition to that triumvirate.

Tozer belonged to a small and rarefied stratum of world pianists. He was certainly of a calibre of greats like Emil Gilels, Arthur Schnabel, Sviatoslav Richter, Ferruccio Busoni and Artur Schnabel, the latter two whose music he championed.

In terms of musical comprehension, intellectualism and facility, Geoffrey's talent was simply off the scale. He could read an orchestral score, hear the entire work in his head and then play a piano transcription of it at sight. He could transpose anything put in front of him into any key and give a perfect performance of it. He could arrange, orchestrate, compose and improvise; indeed, improvisation was one of his specialties, weaving other melodies through the larger works of composers like Liszt.

The remarkable thing about Geoffrey Tozer was that in these last 25 years we were witnessing an artist with a level of musical understanding and repertoire you would have expected to witness in the last 25 years of the nineteenth century or the first 25 years of the twentieth, when classicism and scholarship in music was at its zenith.

Geoffrey would not have been out of place in 1920s Weimar Berlin in the company of people like Erich Kleiber or Otto Klemperer or Igor Stravinsky. Or with pianists like Rudolf Serkin or Claudio Arrau, who were playing there then.

Geoffrey made his international musical debut at the age of fifteen, playing Mozart's Concerto No. 15 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis at the Royal Albert Hall. The Daily Telegraph critic wrote that 'Geoffrey Tozer played Mozart's Concerto in B Flat with agreeably crystalline touch, faultless technique and good sense'. The Times critic considered that Geoffrey 'played in a way that many an artist twice his age might envy'.

Following his debut, in Belgium in November 1970 in which Geoffrey played an enormous program of Bach, Beethoven, Haydn and Chopin, the Antwerp-Stadt reported that Geoffrey Tozer 'has become one of the great revelations to astound the musical world . . . he showed that his technical skill is merely a means to clarify the complete and often celestial way he plays, feeling the deeper meaning of everything he performs. Geoffrey Tozer will become one of the great pianists of the world'.

The following year, in 1971, the great composer Benjamin Britten invited Geoffrey to stay with him for several weeks, inviting him to also perform at the Aldeburgh Festival, where he accompanied the master Russian cellist, Mstislav Rostropovich.

Geoffrey could play anything written for piano from any period in history right up until now. He had virtually played and mostly knew anything of any substance written for the piano. His repertoire included over 200 concertos; for instance, it included 24 of the 27 Mozart concertos. Geoffrey had the ability not just to put himself into the head of a composer, he also had the ability to understand the milieu within which a composer worked, the musical influences at the time, the tastes, the comprehension of the whole.

When the pianist Tatiana Nikolayeva, a mistress of Shostakovich, came to Australia in the 1990s, she said to her tour promoter, 'I want to hear the one who plays like a Russian'. And, of course, she meant Geoffrey. But if Geoffrey was playing Purcell he would bring an English feeling to the work or Liszt a more obviously Hungarian or middle European one.

He was unbelievable.

Born in the foothills of the Himalayas, Geoffrey's infant years were filled with music. His earliest memory of the piano was when, as a three-year-old, he began to play Beethoven's Appassionata Sonata, music he had just heard his mother teaching to a pupil.

Musical genius flowed through Veronica Tozer's family and she realised at once that her son was possessed of vast musical ability. Just how rare it was became clear when she began to teach him music of Bach, Bartok and Beethoven.

By 1958, when Mrs Tozer brought her two sons to Australia to settle in Melbourne, Geoffrey was already immersed in music, playing, singing, reading and listening to music on a wind-up gramophone.

It was here, in Melbourne, that the world first discovered the young boy who was quickly dubbed a 'musical genius' by Australia's foremost musicians. Within five years of his arrival in Australia, Geoffrey's life as a professional musician began in earnest. This was an extraordinary period of his life, one during which he began to receive the patronage and recognition that would enable him to develop the full range of his virtuosic abilities, and become a concert pianist of the highest standard.

In 1963 when Geoffrey was eight, Dr Clive Douglas auditioned him for a concerto performance for ABC television. The performance, with Geoffrey playing Bach's Concerto in F Minor was filmed in February 1964 with Dr Douglas conducting the Victorian Symphony Orchestra. On April 11 of that year, Geoffrey made his public debut in the Nicholas Hall playing the same concerto, this time under George Logie-Smith.

Later the same year he gave at least eight more performances, playing concertos of Bach and Mozart with the orchestra in Melbourne and Ballarat. The phrase 'musical genius' was applied to him right from the beginning.

Geoffrey's introduction to Eileen Ralf was the most important event in his musical

development. She lived in Hobart. So, in order to foster Geoffrey's prodigious talents, TAA announced that it would fly the young musician every week to Hobart and back free of charge, so that Geoffrey could have lessons with Eileen. Let's hear what Geoffrey himself had to say about her influence and his lessons in Hobart during those early years. I am quoting from the text of Geoffrey's lecture on the great pianist Artur Schnabel which Geoffrey delivered at the Berlin Festival in September 2001 in the presence of the entire Schnabel family:

"By the greatest of good fortune I found a teacher who was the living, breathing embodiment of all the vitality I was getting from the recordings of Schnabel. This was the Australian pianist Eileen Ralf. She opened up for me a world of serious, probing musical thought I knew must exist but I had never experienced. Her teaching was the greatest musical gift given me."

For the next five years Geoffrey performed a vast amount of music in public performances, both in recitals and concerts. By the age of thirteen his concerto repertoire included all five of the Beethoven and nine of the Mozart as well as concertos by Bach and Haydn, and he later added more than 200 pieces to his solo repertoire. Geoffrey also recorded the first movement of the Brahms Second Concerto with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in a studio performance arranged by Reuben Fineberg, the man who would manage Geoffrey's career until his own death in 1997.

How was Australia to develop such a rare and prodigious talent, one that was already nationally recognised? The solution came when the committee of the Churchill Fellowship decided to lower the minimum age by five years and award Geoffrey a Churchill, extending it to two years instead of the usual one. Four years later the committee awarded Geoffrey a second Churchill as he began to make the difficult and, for many gifted teenagers, usually impossible transition from child prodigy to fully mature artist.

In 1969, the first of Geoffrey's Churchill Fellowships enabled him to travel to England with his mother. That year he entered the Leeds Piano Competition and became the youngest semi-finalist. The same year he won the prestigious Alex de Vries Prize, making his debut with the English Chamber Orchestra soon afterwards. In May 1970 he won First Prize out of 157 contestants in the Royal Overseas League competition and was presented to the Queen.

And as I said earlier, on 17 August 1970 Geoffrey made his debut at the Royal Albert Hall playing Mozart's Concerto No. 15 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis.

In 1971 Geoffrey returned to Australia to begin the next phase of his career; the difficult years of transition when the musical world had to decide whether he was just another prodigy, albeit one of seemingly superhuman ability, or whether, like Mozart, he was in fact a great musician whose artistry would continue to develop and improve as he gained maturity.

At least once a year throughout the 1970s he toured Australia playing concertos with all the major orchestras around the country, while frequently travelling to America, Britain and Europe for concert appearances.

During this period he hugely expanded his repertoire and toured Japan and New Zealand, also giving recitals in Israel, America and England where he resumed lessons with Maria Curcio, a pupil of Schnabel. In Israel, in 1977, Geoffrey won the first of his two Rubenstein medals, being awarded the prize personally by Arthur Rubenstein who described him as ‘an extraordinary pianist’. Many of his performances during this period were recorded and broadcast by the ABC as had been done in the 1960s. They included numerous concertos and recital performances and, sometimes, vocal performances. In 1978, for the ABC, Geoffrey gave the Australian premiere of the Medtner Vocalise with the soprano Loris Synan. This reflected his deep love of the vocal–piano repertoire as well as his ongoing relationship with the music of Medtner.

Geoffrey was already breaking convention by not fading from view like many prodigies before him and by his preparedness to explore new musical territory. He also knew that the vocal repertoire was a vitally important part of his future. The last recording he made for Chandos, released in 2004, the fortieth anniversary year of his career, was of the Medtner Vocalise sung by soprano Susan Gritton. It was a recording which earned Geoffrey one of the best reviews of his career in Gramophone magazine.

In 1980 he travelled to Israel to compete once more in the Rubenstein competition. This time he won the Gold Medal, returning to Australia for a celebratory tour. There, among several superlative reviews, he received what he considered to be one of the greatest compliments of all from the critic Ron Hanoch: ‘Geoffrey Tozer . . . is not only a great pianist, but also a great musician’.

The 1980s were halcyon days for Geoffrey. In 1983 he decided to base himself in Canberra. He was briefly on the staff of the Canberra School of Music until it became clear that his national and international touring engagements were as incompatible with such a position as some other aspects of institutional life. By now Geoffrey had become immersed in the music of Liszt. He toured Australia and New Zealand at least twice a year playing concertos and recitals, while constantly expanding his international career. He made debuts in many parts of the world, including Hungary, Germany, Finland, Ireland, Switzerland, Canada, Holland, Denmark and Austria, returning also to Russia for his debut with the Moscow Symphony Orchestra and also touring in Japan.

During the 1980s he began his commercial recording career. Although Geoffrey had made numerous recordings since as early as 1964, none had been commercially released. In 1986 he made his first commercial recording, the John Ireland Piano Concerto in E Flat with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, a recording that is still ranked by most critics as the best recording available of that music. The same year, in recognition of his ability, Geoffrey was one of a handful of musicians around the world to receive the Liszt Centenary Medallion awarded by the Hungarian government. The following year he made his second commercial recording, an LP entitled Geoffrey Tozer in Concert, on which he played the music of Liszt, Brahms, Haydn, Weber and Chopin. In 1989 he joined Peter Sculthorpe to record *Landscapes*, a disc of Sculthorpe’s compositions for piano and strings.

Geoffrey had spent the 1980s performing around the world while based in Australia. He loved Australia and believed that the time had come when an Australian of international

standing could build and sustain an international career from here. This involved substantial costs and, while he could generate a living from his touring engagements, once he had covered the costs, there was very little left. So it was then that he accepted a job at St Edmund's College, Canberra to help him pay the rent. To its credit, the school allowed him great flexibility so that Geoffrey could continue to perform in many parts of the world while remaining on the staff.

It was owing to his decision to work at St Edmund's that I first heard Geoffrey play. He was playing two works, one by Scriabin and the other by Liszt, for the school's end-of-year pre-Christmas break-up. The playing was breathtaking. When the formalities ended I made my way over to him to inquire of his playing and career. It was then that I understood the under-realisation of Geoffrey's international standing and of his straitened circumstances; earning \$9000 a year at St Edmund's, relying on a bicycle for his transport.

It was Geoffrey's power and poverty that caused me to realise how little Australia valued artists of accomplishment, especially those in mid-career: in his case, the explosive power of his playing, yet his meagre capacity to afford the basics of life.

This sharp reality caused me to study the circumstances of other Australian artists who, while accomplished, found themselves marooned in mid-career. The novelty of their earlier work having faded, being left to fend for themselves, doing things that had naught to do with their art.

This was the inspiration for the Australian Artists Creative Fellowships, a Commonwealth-funded program paid to artists at about one-and-a-half to two times the average weekly earnings and paid for periods of one to five years. The inspiration for them came from Geoffrey's greatness and his circumstances. It is not that many other artists were not also great but Geoffrey was one so obviously so and the one I actually ran into.

A country's indifference to such accomplishment says something about it. When there is no obvious premium on this level of accomplishment, one has to ask, where and when does such a premium apply?

As it transpired, 63 other artists were awarded fellowships under the program and most did something substantial and valuable with their term awards.

In Geoffrey's case it gave him a chance to develop works in parts of the piano repertoire beyond his great staples like Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Liszt and Brahms. The musician in Geoffrey Tozer fell in love with beguiling compositions that had either rarely or never seen the light of day. One such composer was the Russian Nikolai Medtner, who composed three dramatic and complex piano concertos, only one of which had ever been recorded, and then, during the 1940s in London. Geoffrey began working up these concertos as he did the formerly unrecorded piano concerto of Ottorino Respighi and other compositional works by composers like Rimsky-Korsakov and Busoni. But he had nowhere to perform them; certainly no program to perform them.

So, in 1988, as Treasurer, I made my way down from London to Colchester in Britain in the High Commissioner's car to engage the founder and managing director of Britain's

foremost recording company, Chandos Records. That person, Mr Brian Couzens, said, 'why on earth would someone like you be making an appointment with someone like me?'

I said, 'I have come to introduce to you one of the greatest pianists of world' and he said, 'Who is that?' and I said, 'The Australian, Geoffrey Tozer'. He said, 'Yes, I have heard of him but not recently. Has he done anything I can listen to?' I immediately brought forth a number of audio tapes for his listening. But Couzens said, 'Audio tapes are often compositions themselves, many artists break down and can't complete a full work across the dynamic range of the composition'. I said to Couzens, 'Well, I will get him over here. He will astound you'.

Well, Geoffrey did get over there. Couzens rang me to say he was unbelievable. He said not only can he play anything; he actually prepares the orchestra and individual players for you. The first thing he recorded for Chandos were the three Medtner piano concertos with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Neeme Jarvi. They hit the world of recorded classical music like a thunderclap and that year won for Chandos the world's highest prize for classical music, the French Diapason D'Or. In the same year, the recordings were nominated for a US Grammy Award for Best Classical Performance—Instrumental Soloist with Orchestra. Geoffrey and Chandos missed winning the Grammy by one place, to the American cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

France's top classical music critic, Alain Cochard, wrote of the Medtner recordings, 'All that Medtner demands, Tozer possesses. This is the playing of a grand master; there is no doubt about it. This is a landmark in recording history'.

Geoffrey went on to make 36 recordings with Chandos, which for any pianist is a major recorded legacy. Indeed, he left behind more recordings of modern listening quality than were capable of execution by the pianists he most admired: Busoni, Schnabel and Rachmaninoff.

But Geoffrey's great international success with orchestras like the London Philharmonic, the Swiss Romande, the Scottish National Orchestra and the Bergen Philharmonic was not replicated in Australia. Geoffrey gave his last performance with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra fifteen years ago, on 5 June 1994, with the Emperor Concerto in a sold-out performance at the Town Hall. About fourteen months later, he played his last concert with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

From those performances, and for the rest of his life, he received nothing further from any major symphony orchestra in Australia. Indeed, in 1996, in one of the most stupendous performances of his career, he played Brahms' Second Concerto with the Newcastle Symphony Orchestra under Roland Peelman. In the impossibly difficult passages towards the end of the first movement, we hear Geoffrey Tozer outdo Vladimir Horowitz.

But for all that, he could not make the cut with the latter-day Melbourne and Sydney Symphony Orchestras. Their indifference and contempt towards him left him to moulder away, largely playing to himself in a rented suburban Melbourne house. The people who chose repertoire for those two orchestras and who had charge in the selection of artists during this period should hang their heads in shame at their neglect of him. If anyone needs



a case example of the bitchiness and preference within the Australian arts, here you have it.

Geoffrey was not just a musical genius; he was also an explosive performer. Some of these people felt this put an onus on them to engage him, which then, out of some kind of inverted snobbery, they resisted, choosing lesser artists they felt more comfortable with. Or agents they could do deals with.

This malevolence more or less broke Geoffrey's heart. After all, all he wished to do was to give out. In a famous interview for a Melbourne newspaper, he said, 'it's a waste to have someone like me here, not being used'. Artists like Tozer secured the psychic income through sparkling performances and by mesmerising audiences. It was never about money. He only ever wanted enough to keep going.

The last time I saw him play was at the Australian Institute of Music in Sydney in 2005 in the company of Miriam Hyde and her daughter to an audience of about fifteen people. He played Miriam Hyde's massive piano concerto, a concerto she told me needed someone of Geoffrey's power to play. She had always made a good fist of it herself but Geoffrey ate the piece. On his program, he also had pieces by Sibelius and Scriabin, played with such fantasy and facility you knew you were in the presence of someone extraordinary. In reality, he was simply mucking around with our heads, and he knew he was. But in his humility he threw off these works, self-effacingly, like a stroll in the park.

But he did get to do other things outside of Australia. In 2001, with the support of close personal friends in Melbourne, Mr and Mrs Wu, he undertook a concert tour of China at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture, playing the Yellow River Concerto to a massive television audience. That was the year he performed the Schnabel Sonata for the Schnabel family at the Bergin Festival and then at the Festival En Blanco y Negro in Mexico City. Also, in 2001, on the anniversary of Medtner's death, he gave the most transcendental recital of his career in the assembly hall here in Collins Street. Though the program was a sell-out and the playing was for the gods, there was not one review of the performance in the media, print or broadcast. This cut Geoffrey to the core.

His last grand tour of Australia in 2004 was a privately promoted one, where he gave over twenty performances around the country, including to a sold-out recital at the Sydney Opera House. The tour was promoted by Jim McPherson, who did Geoffrey the honour and the country the favour that the established orchestras had long denied him and it.

Peter McCallum, the Sydney Morning Herald's music critic, had this to say about the performance:

'Tozer plays as though he is trying things out, playing for himself with everything being imaginative and free. Then suddenly . . . something quite extraordinary emerges—a moment of special inspiration, special because it was unplanned, perhaps not fully even noticed or comprehended.' McCallum went on to remind his readers that Liszt first devised the piano recital. He went on to say 'Tozer here revived something of its original spirit: a great Australian musician and a true original'.

His early death at age 54 reminds us of the death of Maria Callas at the age of 53.

Performing all their lives, both artists finally reached the stage of wondering what it is all about. After operating constantly at a level of high achievement they needed the spiritual sustenance of audiences and friends. They needed the acclamation to stir the genius in them. When the acclaim stopped, both of these people turned towards an inner, more human life, with a lower premium on the art and on longevity. Geoffrey had had a bout of hepatitis. He lived by himself, didn't look after himself and his health suffered accordingly. In the end, his liver failed.

But I have to say we all let him down. Franco Zeffirelli, Callas's great collaborator, said much the same thing following her death. He said 'we thought she was all right in Paris, that she had the intellectual resources to hang on, if even in semi-seclusion'. But as it turned out, she didn't. We should have cared more and done more. He could have been speaking for us about Geoffrey Tozer.

That said, it's also worth saying that Geoffrey had many who cared deeply for him. Most of all, his mother and teacher, who put pressure on him but also loved everything about him, Reuben Fineberg, his mentor and manager, whom he lost in 1997 and Peter-Wyllie Johnston, the executor of Geoffrey's estate, who took up where Reuben Fineberg left off and gave Geoffrey succour and support at important periods over the last decade.

Geoffrey is survived by his brother Peter and members of his extended family.

Geoffrey Tozer's last public performance was here in Victoria with David Pereira in Bendigo, an artist whom he held in the highest esteem and finally, more privately, for the nuns and brothers at the Presentation Convent Chapel in Windsor.

When one has been touched by the stellar power and ethereal playing of a sublime musician, one is lifted, if only briefly, to a place beyond the realm of the temporal. Geoffrey Tozer did this for many people. His remembrance is the small recompense we give him in return.