MEDIA RELEASE
9 July 2008

STRINGS ATTACHED: LET THE GAMES BEGIN

One of Australia’s pre-eminent musicians, Neal Peres Da Costa, is packing a repair kit for a prestigious assignment in China to ensure audiences hear a unique blend of musical flavours.

The kit is needed to re-quill and re-string a fairly rare solo, chamber and orchestral instrument – the harpsichord - for two concerts faculty and student members of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music will give as part of a pre-Beijing Olympics festival.

The Con is one of only nine international institutions and two host conservatoriums taking part in the pre-Games cultural event titled Musicathlon.

It took six months of persistent hunting by the Con’s International Development Manager, Elaine Chia, to locate the harpsichord in Beijing.

The four-tiered Australian program will bring together European Baroque, Opera, contemporary string quartet and classic Indigenous sounds – all against the backdrop of one of the world’s oldest civilisations.

“The program we have put together is a deliberate combination of old and new, with a hoped-for wow factor in the linking of the harpsichord and the didgeridoo,” said Kim Walker, Dean and Principal of the Con.

“It was touch and go there for a while but Elaine wouldn’t take no for an answer and through a wonderful collaboration with our Chinese hosts we have secured a full complement of instruments.”

Dr Peres Da Costa will leave Sydney a day ahead of his colleagues to ensure the instrument is at its best.

The Australian “squad” will perform concerts on the 19th and 20th of July.

The first program features Baroque instrumental music by Bach, Handel and Cassanea de Mondonville; Opera Arias by Verdi and Puccini, and music by Australian composers Peter Sculthorpe and William Barton.

The second concert includes music by Mozart and Poulenc, Peter Sculthorpe and William Barton and fellow Australians Carl Vine, Elena Kats-Chernin and Stephen Yates.

The Stephen Yates work, especially composed for Musicathlon, will bring together all 11 performers – Neal Peres Da Costa (harpsichord), Elizabeth Gormley (violin), Heather Lindsay (cello), David Papp (oboe), Sonja Schebeck (violin), Luke Spicer (viola), Ben van Tienen (piano), Caroline Wenborne (soprano), Daniel Yeadon (viola da gamba), William Barton (didgeridoo) and Kim Walker (bassoon).

The festival was conceived by the Dean of the Yale School of Music Robert Blocker and the President of the Beijing Central Conservatory Cizhao Wang.

Other participating institutions are: Shanghai Conservatory, Royal Academy of Music (London), Liszt Academy (Budapest), Korean National University of the Arts, The Juilliard School (New York), the Beethoven Institute (Vienna), Sibelius Academy (Helsinki) and the Universitat Mozartheum Salzburg.

Media inquiries Scott Saunders 02 9351 1298