



## 2010 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards



### Media kit

Media interviews and images

Trudy Johnston | 02 8904 0822 | 02 6685 6762

0402 485 902 | [trudy@vimandzest.com.au](mailto:trudy@vimandzest.com.au)

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## MEDIA RELEASE

**The potent vocal prowess of a beguiling performer, the collaborative jazz grooves of an orchestra, the tireless acumen of a gifted arts number-cruncher mark the outstanding achievement recognised by the *2010 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards*.**

**WINNERS 2010 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards:**

**INDIVIDUAL AWARD:** Paul Capsis, awarded \$50,000

**GROUP AWARD:** Australian Art Orchestra, awarded \$80,000

**FACILITATOR'S PRIZE:** John Paxinos, awarded \$20,000

The talents and accomplishments of some of Australia's most accomplished and talented performers have been recognised tonight at MONA, Hobart's new ancient and contemporary art museum.

Gender-ambiguous cabaret, theatre and film performer Paul Capsis has taken out the Individual Award while the Australian Art Orchestra's culturally-collaborative development of contemporary music was recognised with the Group Award and John Paxinos's commitment to supporting sound business practice in the small-medium arts sector has secured him the Facilitator's Prize.

The Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards were created in 1984 by the Trustees of the Sidney Myer Fund to mark the 50th anniversary of Sidney Myer's death, to commemorate his life and his love for the arts.

"Sidney Myer was a great philanthropist, patron of the arts and supporter of community life. These Awards support his belief that the arts are inseparable from everyday life and a rich society is one that expresses great creative spirit," said Carrillo Gantner, Chairman of the Trustees for the Sidney Myer Fund.

"These Awards pay tribute to outstanding excellence in drama, comedy, dance, music, opera, circus and puppetry throughout Australia."

### **The 2010 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards winners:**

#### **INDIVIDUAL AWARD: Paul Capsis**

Paul Capsis's extraordinary abilities, seemingly limitless vocal range and success in forging a distinctive genre mark his uniqueness as a performer. He is an embodiment of the artist as both a cipher (channelling the divas) and sharply defined individual whose work is inextricably bound up in who he is. Gender-ambiguous, Paul has had remarkable success in a huge variety of characterisations across theatre, cabaret and film in the past two decades.

#### **GROUP AWARD: Australian Art Orchestra**

Formed in 1994 by Artistic Director, pianist, conductor and composer Paul Grabowsky, the Australian Art Orchestra is committed to the development and exploration of improvised and notated jazz music. The Australian Art Orchestra's many groundbreaking projects including artistic collaborations - composition and performance projects - with Aboriginal communities and artists from nations in the Asia Pacific region across a range of genres.

#### **FACILITATOR'S PRIZE: John Paxinos**

A quiet achiever, John Paxinos' support of the small to medium arts sector over the past 30 years has built artistically vibrant and financially robust companies. His are the hands behind the success of hundreds of artists and small companies, helping them organise their company governance structures, sort out their finances, meet regulatory requirements and share the essential business skills required to sustain a long-term career as an artist.

“The 2010 winners have made a longstanding contribution to Australian cultural life and their work will continue to resonate long after the curtain has closed. Their artistic passion, dedication and craft is inspiring to all of us and the next generation of Australian,” Gantner added.

More information on the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards see [www.sidneymyerperformingartsawards.org.au](http://www.sidneymyerperformingartsawards.org.au)

**MEDIA:** For interviews & images please contact Trudy Johnston, 0402 485 902, 02 6685 6562, 02 8904 0822, [trudy@vimandzest.com.au](mailto:trudy@vimandzest.com.au)

## 2010 SIDNEY MYER PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS WINNERS

### 2010 Individual Award Winner: Paul Capsis



Paul Capsis is an iconic figure in the Australian theatre. He is the embodiment of the artist as both a cipher (channelling the divas) and a sharply defined individual whose work is inextricably bound up in who he is. Determinedly gender-ambiguous, he has had remarkable success in a variety of cross-gender characterisations, including no less than three transsexual prostitutes; in Ana Kokinos’s film *Head On*, the Malthouse Theatre’s *Threepenny Opera* and most recently MTC’s stage version of Pedro Almadova’s *All About My Mother*.

As a performer he works from a base of guileless naiveté, with an openness to possibilities that goes hand in hand with his own unfettered instincts and the seemingly limitless powers of his vocal chords. Perhaps the greatest manifestation of this has been in his cabaret shows, particularly in collaboration with Barry Kosky, who has encouraged him to go to the edge of his capacities, stretching conventional female impersonation to meta-theatrical riffs on performance prowess. Here Paul can be seen as a free-wheeling tour de force, combining discipline and risk-taking in equally awe-inspiring measures. His work with Kosky on *Boulevard Delirium* was rapturously received from Melbourne to Vienna and won him both the Helpmann and the Greenroom award in 2006.

He has forged a career with great commitment in a specific genre, and it is for his determination to be himself, as well as his extraordinary and unique abilities that he is awarded the Individual Award of the 2010 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards.

### 2010 Group Award Winner: Australian Art Orchestra



The Australian Art Orchestra unites a diverse group of artists committed to the development and exploration specifically of improvised/jazz music. Since the orchestra’s formation in 1994 by Artistic Director, pianist, conductor and composer Paul Grabowsky, AAO has provided a focus in Australia for the development of contemporary music, both notated and improvised, and a forum for cultural dialogue, exchange and performance.

AAO’s stated goal – to stimulate artistic collaboration, through composition and performance projects, with the Aboriginal community and artists from nations in the Asia Pacific region - has led to some groundbreaking projects across a range of genres. These include theatre works for Festivals such as *The Theft of Sita*, which brought together Indonesian artists and puppetry with AAO musicians and collaborations with Ruby Hunter and Archie Roach on *Ruby’s Story* and *Kura Tungar*.

Possibly their most ambitious project, *Crossing Roper Bar* - contemporary jazz brought face-to-face with traditional indigenous music from Ngukurr in south east Arnhem Land – earned the AAO the prestigious 2010 H C Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship from the Australian National University Research School of Humanities and the Arts. In addition, AAO has received multiple awards including the Helpmann, Deadly, and Green Room Awards.

AAO supports the work of Australian composers and musicians. As a national ensemble of improvising musicians, AAO draws on diverse approaches to music making, emphasising individual expression within a group context. Each member of the ensemble has charted a unique, expressive course in their solo careers, citing global influences while remaining true to new Australian music.

### **2010 Facilitators Prize Winner: John Paxinos**



John Paxinos, known as Paxo to a whole community of artists, is the quiet force behind the success of hundreds of artists and small companies; helping them organise their company governance structures, sorting out their finances, meeting regulatory requirements and sharing the essential business skills required to have a long-term career as an artist.

He is utterly committed to the arts, and in particular, to the issue of sustainability for individual artists and the small to medium arts sector.

As one former colleague said, “he just keeps going (like the Energiser Bunny) when others have given up.”

John Paxinos served as the General Manager of the Murray River Performing Group from 1979 to 1985, a professional theatre company established in Albury-Wodonga. During the 1990’s the MRPG evolved into two separate companies, “Hothouse Theatre” and “The Flying Fruit Fly Circus”.

He left at the end of 1985 in order to accept an offer of funding from Arts Victoria and the Australia Council to undertake full time study towards an MBA at Monash University. The intent of the funding was two-fold: first to research and develop case studies into a broad array of arts organisations, and second, to return to the field and work on building artistically vibrant and financially robust companies.

John achieved both of these goals and, in 1987, established John Paxinos and Associates Pty Ltd. In 1992, John established Auspicious Arts Project Inc, aimed at supporting a new era of artists undertaking creative developments and presentations of new work. The name Auspicious Arts is now part of the everyday lexicon of many independent artists, and is the go-to organisation when you need business support for your artistic project.

John’s vision has now extended to the Auspicious Arts Incubator, which is a creative hub for artists and a venue for new work.

John Paxinos is a tireless advocate for the small to medium arts company and the individual artist. An inside source said that his motto is always to “give clients twice what they pay for” and numerous Australian artists have benefitted enormously from that generous philosophy.