



STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL FRIDAY 16 MAY 2008 - 6AM



**Honorary Doctorates awarded
to renowned opera singers
Cheryl Barker and
Peter Coleman-Wright**

On Thursday 15 May the University of Melbourne's Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) awarded opera singers **Cheryl Barker** and **Peter Coleman-Wright** with Honorary Doctorates of Visual and Performing Arts. Barker and Coleman-Wright, both alumni of the VCA, are the first music professionals to receive this University award, which recognises outstanding service to the arts and arts education.

The husband and wife duo are internationally recognised for their work across opera, concert and recital platforms. They recently appeared together in the successful season of Strauss' *Arabella* with Opera Australia.

Barker has performed to rave reviews on many of the world's most prestigious stages. She regularly sings with Opera Australia and has appeared at the Royal Opera, English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Netherlands Opera and Houston Grand Opera among others.

Coleman-Wright is widely considered one of Australia's most versatile singers. He has performed around the world and is the recipient of many awards including the Glyndebourne Touring Prize (UK), a Green Room Award (for *Billy Budd*) and Helpmann Awards for Best Actor in a Musical (*Sweeney Todd*, 2002) and Best Male Performer in a Supporting Role in an Opera (*Death in Venice*, 2006).

At the VCA's annual graduation ceremony at Hamer Hall, Professor Andrea Hull AO, Director and Dean of the VCA, thanked the couple for their contributions to the College and the wider arts community.

"I am absolutely delighted that we have been able to recognise such renowned alumni as Cheryl Barker and Peter Coleman-Wright who bring such distinction to the country. It is testament to the high quality arts education that the VCA delivers, to be represented by such prestigious alumni on both the national and international stage," said Professor Hull.

Barker and Coleman-Wright said they were thrilled and honoured to receive such recognition from one of the most important arts training institutions in the country. "It's particularly special for us to be receiving these awards together on the same evening as husband and wife," said Coleman-Wright.

Media Information, Interviews, Images: Lisa Montague, VCA Communications Manager:
03 9685 9371 / 0412 002 544 or montague@unimelb.edu.au