



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

GOVERNOR'S PERFORMANCE SERIES

Wednesday 16 April 2025

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Eastern Kulin Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It's a pleasure to welcome you all here for the latest instalment of the Governor's Performance Series.

Tonight's talent, the Sutherland Trio – featuring Dimity Shepherd – will pay homage to the matriarch of Australian classical music, Margaret Sutherland.

Behind her extensive body of work and her contribution to Australia's musical scene, Margaret Sutherland's story is one of perseverance.

An original and fearless artist, she was born into an era where composers were almost all men.

Renowned classical music publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, once declined to publish one of her pieces when it realised that the composer 'M. Sutherland' stood for 'Margaret', rather than a 'Mark' or a 'Matthew' as it had first assumed.

Her battle – one that would never really end – was to be taken seriously.

Growing up in an artistic and expressive family, it was ingrained in her from an early age that a woman's place is wherever she chooses – if only society, at that time, reflected that.

Having worked her way through various scholarships in Melbourne, she travelled to London, where she would compose one of her greatest works: *Sonata for Violin and Piano*.

Upon returning to Melbourne to premiere this original, and uniquely Australian work – Sutherland, tragically, reflected solemnly on the performance:

“The recital was well attended, but no one seemed to know what I was driving at...”

I knew then that it was going to be a desperately heart-breaking up-hill journey, and I felt cold and dismayed. And I was right...”

Cold and dismayed she may have been, but importantly, she was not deterred.

Throughout her life, she would compose some 200 works.

Luckily for us, Sutherland was driven to compose music.

Then, the nation that she loved so dearly, and that inspired so much of her work, did not pay her the respect we do today.

Tonight’s performance is an opportunity to appreciate her significant contribution to our cultural identity – a recognition that was sadly absent throughout most of her life as a composer.

This series of concerts is part of a long-running tradition that celebrates Victoria’s rich cultural scene here at Government House.

The music that you are about to hear is something unique to our country and our State.

Written for us and about us – and performed by local talent – tonight we have the important opportunity to pay our own homage to one of Australia’s greatest, yet underappreciated, artists – and to some other contemporary composers.

Victoria is renowned for its vibrancy in arts and culture, but that doesn’t happen by chance – it is a direct result of the passion evident in both performers and attentive listeners.

Thank you to all those in attendance, and to the Sutherland Trio and Dimity Shepherd for what I'm sure will be a captivating performance.

Please enjoy the show.