

Looking Back at a Decade of the Richard Pollett Memorial Award

Reflections from past recipients on Richard Pollett's enduring musical legacy

AUSTRALIAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA | 20 OCTOBER 2021

The past recipients of the Richard Pollett Memorial Award all reflect on the enduring legacy of Richard Pollett, and what the award has meant to them.

Richard Pollett is remembered as a violinist with incredible warmth, humanity, and intelligence. When his life was tragically cut short at the age of 25, Richard had already made an enormous impact on the Australian musical landscape. His personality and playing touched both audiences and musicians alike, and he was an inspiration to all who knew and heard him.

His inspiration and impact continues to this day. In 2011, the Richard Pollett Memorial Award was established by the Pollett Family in association with AYO. Each year it is awarded to a violinist who displays outstanding personal and musical attributes. In the last decade it has been awarded to a number of amazing players, and helped each of them gain access to a new level of their playing.

This year's award went to AYO's Robert Smith during a special commemorative concert at the University of Queensland last month. Read on to see what all the past recipients have achieved since the award.

Glenn Christensen (2012)



Glenn Christensen - recipient, 2012

"I was the inaugural recipient of the Richard Pollett Memorial Award, which was as a great honour. This award enabled me to take further study abroad, specifically in Germany, which was immeasurably beneficial to my musical and career development. I now reside in Germany, where I hold the position of Principal 2nd violin with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. Prior to this position, I was a member of the Australian Chamber Orchestra for 6 years, and held the position of Principal 1st Violin with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra."

Liisa Pallandi (2013)



Liisa Pallandi - recipient, 2013

"Since receiving the Richard Pollett Memorial Award I have been a member of the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO). I love the versatility of my job – from being a mentor to Emerging Artists and ACO Academy students to performances ranging from a Mendelssohn String Quartet under the stars in Mount Isa to Mozart Symphonies at the Barbican Centre in London. I can draw a direct line from my studies with Henk Guittart in the Netherlands (made possible by the Richard Pollett Memorial Award) to my subsequently successful ACO audition, as well as my continuing desire to 'problem solve' on the violin and increasing interest in teaching/mentoring. I will always be grateful for receiving that Award at a time in my life when I really needed it."

Zoe Freisberg (2014)



Zoe Freisberg - recipient, 2014

"In 2020 I completed a Performance Diploma at Indiana University's Jacobs' School of Music with Professor Mauricio Fuks. I enjoyed it so much that I have returned to study a Master of Music with Professor Mark Kaplan. I feel fortunate to have been given the opportunity to study overseas with such wonderful teachers. The Richard Pollett Memorial Award was the first award I received; it allowed me the opportunity to travel to Europe and the UK for violin tuition. The scholarship definitely sparked my joy and curiosity for overseas study."

Rollin Zhao (2015)



Rollin Zhao - recipient, 2015

"Since receiving the Richard Pollett Memorial Award in 2016, I've spent my time in Melbourne, Brisbane, and Sydney as an Australian Chamber Orchestra Emerging Artist, a Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellow, as a contract player with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, and returning to the Australian National Academy of Music recently in 2020; collaborating with musical colleagues, programming some meaningful performances, and commissioning a work in memory of a family friend. Difficult COVID times may take our minds into less positive places, but I always look back to the kind encouragement and support I received from the Pollett family as a recipient of this award. What a privilege it is to reaffirm and hold dear to what we love, and really mean it when we say something. That is music for me today and I'm grateful."

Kyla Matsuura-Miller (2016)



Kyla Matsuura-Miller - recipient, 2016

"Since finishing at the Australian National Academy of Music in 2018, I have enjoyed building a career as a soloist and chamber musician. I am currently a finalist for the prestigious Freedman Fellowship and am looking forward to making music with friends and colleagues again in 2022!"

Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba (2017)



Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba - recipient, 2017

"Since the generous award, I've focused on chamber music; in particular my role with the Flinders Quartet. We have recently uncovered 3 string quartets by Australian composer Margaret Sutherland and are midway through performing and recording the set for the very first time. Performing quartet music has opened the door to featuring at high profile festivals around Australia and I am looking forward to our Musica Viva tour next year."

Mana Ohashi (2019)



Mana Ohashi - recipient, 2019

"Having come to the halfway point in my undergraduate studies in Munich, it's interesting to reflect on the past two years. Despite the chaos brought on by COVID-19, I have been able to create a new home in this city and to live in this environment with a sense of self confidence. It has been important for me to see every small musical opportunity as a chance to explore this and communicate through playing in a way that I have always wanted to. I cannot quite express my gratitude to have been given this immense encouragement, which not only greatly supports my life overseas as a studying musician, but serves as a very special symbol for the Australian music community, in honour of Richard's life and memory. I feel blessed to be connected to him. I am determined to do my very best overseas and wholeheartedly embrace every musical and life challenge that will inevitably come my way."

Robert Smith (2021)



Robert Smith - recipient, 2021

"I am currently a third year Bachelor of Music student at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Griffith University studying with Michele Walsh. I plan to use this award to assist me in postgraduate studies in Europe. My long term goal is to pursue a career as an orchestral or chamber musician"

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Patricia Pollett and the University of Queensland for producing these profiles.

Photographs supplied for this illustrated edition.