

PAUL GRABOWSKY

Paul Grabowsky is a distinguished Australian pianist, composer, and festival director, renowned for his significant contributions to jazz and the broader music scene over nearly five decades. Born in Lae, Papua New Guinea, and raised in Melbourne, Australia, he began his journey in music with piano lessons in 1964. From 1966 to 1977, he studied classical repertoire under Mack Jost and attended the Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music.

Grabowsky's interest in jazz developed during his secondary school years, prompting him to focus exclusively on jazz and improvised music from 1978. His early career involved collaborations with various music-theatre, cabaret, and comedy performers, building lasting professional relationships with the likes of Steve Vizard and Robyn Archer.

Between 1980 and 1986, Grabowsky lived in Europe and the US, primarily based in Munich, Germany, with a significant stint in New York City. During this period, he gained recognition as a versatile jazz pianist, performing across Europe with esteemed artists including Art Farmer, Benny Bailey, Johnny Griffin, Sal Nistico, and Harry Sokal. He played in bands led by saxophonists Günther Klatt and Roman Schwaller, drummer Lala Kovacev, and trombonist Marty Cook, recorded multiple albums, and led his own trio, delivering his debut album as a band leader in 1985.

Upon returning to Australia in 1986, Grabowsky quickly became a cornerstone of the Australian jazz scene, collaborating with significant figures such as Vince Jones, Dale Barlow, Bernie McGann, Allan Browne, and James Morrison. Alongside performing, he ventured into film and television scoring, working internationally with directors like Fred Schepisi, Paul Cox, and Gillian Armstrong. From 1990 to 1992, he gained widespread fame as the musical director of

the television talk show "Tonight Live With Steve Vizard." He was a composer for the Sydney 2000 Olympics opening and closing ceremonies.

In 1994, Grabowsky founded the Australian Art Orchestra (AAO), which he directed until 2012. Under his leadership, the AAO initiated groundbreaking cross-cultural projects with musicians from India, Indonesia, and Australia's First Nations communities, collaborating with iconic figures like Uncle Archie Roach and Aunty Ruby Hunter.

In recent years, Grabowsky has focused on collaborative works with singers in duet formats, teaming up with artists such as Paul Kelly, Kate Ceberano, Lisa Gerrard and Emma Donovan. He has also engaged in projects blending song and poetry, including three operas, and other innovative forms.

Grabowsky was composer-in-residence for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra from 2020 to 2022 and has served as artist-in-residence at the Melbourne Recital Centre and the Melbourne International Jazz Festival. He directed the Queensland Music Festival in 2007 and the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 2010 and 2012. Since 2012, he has been a Professor at Monash University and the Executive Director of the Monash University Performing Arts Centres. He is currently artist-in-residence at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre.

Throughout his illustrious career, Grabowsky has received numerous awards, including eight ARIA awards, several APRA Art Music awards, Bell awards, an AFI award, a Helpmann award, and a Deadly award. He has been the recipient of the Melbourne Prize for Music and was the Sidney Myer Performing Artist of the Year. His contributions to music were recognized with the title of Officer of the Order of Australia in 2014.

