



THE RHYTHM OF THE REEDS

ANAM and Australian Tapestry Workshop's commission for the return to South Melbourne Town Hall.

The Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) and the Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW) are delighted to announce the joint commissioning of a groundbreaking new tapestry by First Nations artist **Maree Clark**. Entitled *The Rhythm of The Reeds*, the stunning artwork will serve as a welcome in ANAM's new \$110M redeveloped home at South Melbourne Town Hall and celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Australian Tapestry Workshop.

Measuring seven metres by three metres, the tapestry will feature 250 specially dyed colours of Victorian wool. It will be hand woven at ATW by a highly skilled team including eight weavers, dyeing specialists and support staff over an eight-month period, requiring more than 6,500 hours of work.

This tapestry explores themes of welcome, safe passage, and cultural continuity, expressed through movement, rhythm, and sound. It draws together imagery of waterways, river reeds viewed under a microscope, and the music they produce, foregrounding the deep connections between Country, material knowledge, and cultural practice.

River reeds were traditionally gifted to people travelling through Country as a gesture of friendship and an assurance of safe passage. In this work, the river reed becomes both a cultural reference and a metaphor — carrying sound, knowledge, and connection across landscapes and generations.

Installed in the foyer of ANAM, the tapestry functions as a threshold work — welcoming visitors and setting a tone of care, respect, and belonging. It acknowledges the cultural significance of arrival and passage, inviting audiences to enter the space with an awareness of Country and the relationships that hold it.

Maree Clark, Artist Statement

Maree Clarke is a Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba, Mutti Mutti, Boonwurrung woman, and a pivotal figure in the reclamation of Southeast Australian Aboriginal art practices. Her work centres on reviving elements of Aboriginal culture that were lost or lay dormant through colonisation. She is recognised for her open and intergenerational collaborative approach, her use of technology to bring new audiences to contemporary Southeast Aboriginal art, and her leadership in nurturing the next generation of artists.

Maree has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally. In 2021, she was the subject of the major survey exhibition *Maree Clarke: Ancestral Memories* at the NGV. In 2020, she received the Linden New Art commission for the Metro Tunnel Project and was awarded an Australia Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Fellowship. She holds an Honorary Doctorate of Arts in recognition of her exceptional leadership and impact on Southeast Australian Aboriginal art and cultural practice.

Making the announcement **Nick Bailey, Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM), Project Director, South Melbourne Town Hall** said:

"A central consideration throughout our planning has been the profound significance of this location as a First Nations site. It was essential to us that this history be honoured and embedded within South Melbourne Town Hall from the outset.

When Maree first shared her ideas for the tapestry design with us, we all felt "this is it; this will provide the building's – indeed the precinct's – centre of gravity". And as we have continued to work with Maree and the wonderful artists of the Australian Tapestry Workshop, we have become more convinced that Maree's work brings the Town Hall's past, present and future – including its music - into alignment.

We are grateful for the support of architect Peter Jopling AM KC for sharing our vision and making this beautiful work possible."

CATHERINE JONES, Australian Tapestry Workshop Co-Director/CEO said:

"In ATW's 50th anniversary year, we're delighted to be creating this tapestry for ANAM's home, the South Melbourne Town Hall. After being neighbours in South Melbourne for 50 years it's significant that we can finally create a work for the newly refurbished South Melbourne Town Hall. We are confident that Maree's beautiful design will be a joyful and much-loved presence in the space for students and the community alike."

Port Phillip Council Mayor Alex Makin commented:

"The Australian Tapestry Workshop is a vibrant and valued part of South Melbourne's cultural life, so we're delighted that First Nations artist Maree Clarke's tapestry will be displayed at South Melbourne Town Hall after this historic building's restoration is delivered by our Council and the Australian National Academy of Music.

Commissioned by ATW and ANAM, the tapestry will welcome visitors with a strong sense of respect, belonging and cultural awareness. The artwork is especially meaningful in view of the Emerald Hill Precinct's history as a traditional meeting place for the Yalukit Willam clan of the Boon Wurrung people. It will be a powerful and visually stunning addition that honours connection to Country and shares the themes of welcome, safe passage and cultural continuity."

The Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) is internationally renowned as the only purely classical music performance training academy in Australia, and one of the few in the world. Part music training academy, part performing arts company, there is no other organisation anywhere in the world that dances the line between the two so effectively.

ANAM has industry partnerships with over 20 organisations, including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, the Auckland Philharmonia, Musica Viva Australia, a range of national music and arts festivals, and internationally with the Berliner Philharmoniker, Bayerisches Staatsorchester (Munich), Mahler Chamber Orchestra (Berlin) and London's Royal College of Music.

ANAM alumni are found in many of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles, and ANAM's intensive schedule brings together a global network of artists and performers who provide invaluable mentorship and guidance for emerging young musicians through public performances, in-residence masterclasses and other programs.

<https://anam.com.au>

The Australian Tapestry Workshop is a not-for-profit organisation that creates handwoven tapestries for public and private commissions.

Working across disciplines — with painters, ceramicists, and fashion artists — its weavers represent one of the most specialised workforces in Australian craft.

ATW tapestries are held in collections across Australia and internationally — at the MCG, the Melbourne Recital Centre, the Arts Centre Melbourne, the State Library of Victoria, the Sydney Opera House, and in embassies and high commissions around the world.

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