

ARTS AND CULTURE

UNIVERSITY NEWS: THE CLASSICS COME TO COLLEGE

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Fazioli grand pianos turn the heads of serious musicians: only 100 are hand-crafted in Italy each year by Paolo Fazioli, so they're pricey, coveted and can be found in places like the Juilliard School in New York.



UWA's School of Music acquired its first Fazioli in 2007 and now a second stands before a classic bay window in the wood-paneled dining hall of St George's College and – says Warden Ian Hardy with obvious pride – its acquisition was driven by School of Music students.

Music has played an important part in college life but Hardy aspires to making the College an acknowledged centre of excellence for performances that will showcase both College and School of Music students.

“We've entered into a partnership with the School of Music to develop the College as a venue for high quality musical programs,” explains Hardy. “In this way we will become an extension of the School's activities. We aim to develop our musical resources, hold vacation programs and offer music scholarships.”

Certainly there is no shortage of performance spaces including the Hackett Dining Hall, Chapel and Quadrangle. School of Music and Engineering student Michael Grebla came up with the idea of developing a classical concert series and purchasing a piano. Encouraged by the Warden and knowing the excellence of the hall's acoustics, he pursued the possibility of a Fazioli.

The fact that the piano now sits in the Hackett Dining Hall says much for the generosity of a Georgian, leading WA engineer Peter Knight, and the fact that the School of Music had already established a relationship with the Italian piano maker. Support also came from Vice-Chancellor Paul Johnson, who agreed that money set aside for the College's music program could go towards the piano. And, to the delight of students and staff, in addition to supporting the piano purchase, Peter Knight endowed the Knight Family Music Scholarship.

There is a nice add-on to this story that underscores the importance of College life. Georgians of an earlier era shared a room, and School of Music graduate Tony Field's room-mate was engineering student Peter Knight. Tony introduced Peter to classical music, playing Beethoven's Pathetique. It was the starting point of a love of music, and both were present at a Georgians' dinner recently when, coincidentally, the second movement of the piece was performed by Michael Grebla.

“It was an emotional moment,” recalls Hardy, “and it underscored that this is what College living is about: you're introduced to things that ordinarily you might miss out on but which end up greatly enriching your life.”

The UWA St George's College Concert Series, which started with the Fazioli Piano Inauguration Concert in March, is now in full swing and will undoubtedly win many new music converts in the college.

If you would like to know more about the Concert Series and open events, visit the new college website: stgeorgescollege.com.au