

Blown away and back again

After becoming a world name in classical music, Barry Tuckwell has returned to Australia but isn't impressed by aspects of the local scene, writes **Jane Scott**

It's five years since world-renowned musician Barry Tuckwell returned to live in Australia, 13 since he officially retired but, at the age of 78, the man widely described as the greatest French horn player of his generation is still playing, still conducting and still rocking the boat.

He went to Europe in 1950, became chairman of the London Symphony Orchestra in 1955, toured the world as a soloist, taught, conducted and recorded. In 2004, he returned home and while he's loving life in country Victoria, he's not afraid to say, in charming but no nonsense tones, that Australia's classical music scene is something of a disappointment.

"It's not peculiar to Australia, but I find that people who run music, to a great extent, don't know anything about music," says Barry. "It's assumed that anybody who has managed something can manage a musical organisation and, in fact, that's not the case."

He does, however, have high praise for the Federal Government-supported Melba Foundation and its recording arm, Melba Recordings, which promotes Australian artists on the world stage. Melba is behind *Rhapsodie: Fantasie: Poeme*, a recording of Barry conducting French horn player Ben Jacks with Orchestra Victoria and The Queensland Orchestra. It includes *Rhapsodie*, a work commissioned for the distinguished horn player by another Aussie Barry.

"Being an Australian in London, one knew Barry Humphries," Barry explains. "He said he wanted to commission a piece for me and selected the composer Jean-Michel Damase. When I gave the first performance of it, Barry wasn't able to be there but he did send me some gladioli, so he was there in spirit."

Following retirement in 1996, Barry didn't touch a French horn for five years. "I had no intention of picking it up again. I didn't miss it because I didn't like to have to practise. The only problem was I missed using the practice as an excuse to put off doing my income tax," he says with a laugh.

Following an invitation to fill in as seventh horn with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Barry found himself "back in harness" and enjoying it. Now, he plays occasionally and supports musicians as a director of the Melba Foundation. His income tax returns may be late, but his many fans are happy.

RHAPSODIE: FANTASIE: POEME (Melba Recordings, about \$26) is available from music retailers and www.melbarecordings.com.au

Photograph // Justine Walpole



TATTS CELEBRATION SEASON RACE DAY

SATURDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2009



EAGLE FARM
BRISBANE RACING CLUB

GATES OPEN: 10:30AM

WIN a trip for two to the Cook Islands valued at \$10,000

Live Tap Show and Band
GROUP PACKAGES
AVAILABLE!

For further information contact Claire Dean
ph 3331 8866 or email claire.dean@tattersallsclub.com

www.tattersallsclub.com

General Admission \$15 Under 18's and pensioners FREE. Under 18's must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

2 FOR 1
ENTRY
upon presentation of this ad

