

The NZSO National Youth Orchestra announces inaugural Composer-in-Residence

The NZSO National Youth Orchestra is pleased to announce that Auckland based composer, Robin Toan has been named as the winner of the inaugural NYO Composer-in-Residence Award 2005. The award was granted to Robin based on her work Tū-mata-uenga "God of War, Spirit of Man".

Robin, currently in Greece doing her O.E phoned to say, "I'm so delighted to have won this competition! It was quite unexpected. I decided to enter it before I knew I'd be away for so long. Wow, this is such an opportunity! I really want to come home for this!". She planned to come back from the overseas in October but has now decided to come back early for the NZSO, NYO Composer-in-Residence Award 2005.

Robin was selected from 25 promising applicants, ranging in age between 17 and 24, from all over the country, who submitted a maximum 5 minutes works. The project was intended to find new compositional talent, while challenging the composers to complement the wider music strategy of the NZSO.

The NZSO NYO met in Wellington, commencing rehearsals on 17 of August for a week of music making under fully professional conditions. The public concerts followed on in Wellington on Tuesday the 23rd of August, in Christchurch Thursday the 25th of August and Auckland on Saturday 27th of August. The selection panel consisted of James Judd (NZSO Music Director), Hamish McKeich (NZSO Associate Conductor), John Psathas (composer at New Zealand School of Music in Wellington) and Kenneth Young (former NZSO Tuba Player, Conductor and composer).

In addition to having the winning work performed at each of the three NYO concerts, Robin will receive guidance from music professionals such as the NYO conductor Edwin Outwater, NZSO librarian Mable Wong and composer John Psathas, Mentor of the Composer-in-Residence- hereby covering both practical and artistic considerations. The composer prize also includes the most recent version of Sibelius music writing software, with three days of free training from MusiTech Ltd (NZ) consultant John Orams – principal sponsor of the NZSO, NYO Composer-in-Residence Award 2005.

Pascale Parenteau, manager of the NZSO National Youth Orchestra comments: "The NZSO NYO Composer-in-Residence is such a vital part of the project not only to expose the young performers to play the music of today and be part of a world premiere but also to train and especially to give the opportunity to our young NZ composers to work for and with a high calibre symphonic orchestra for an intensive period. There is no substitute for that. I can't imagine something more exciting than: " Music by Youth, played by Youth!"

Robin Toan is both a composer and performer. At the age of 21, she has recently completed a Bachelor of Music with Honours in Composition at the University of Auckland. In 2003, she completed her bachelor's degree in composition and clarinet performance.

She had had various performances of her compositions, including performances by the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Waikato Symphony Orchestra and 175 East. A highlight of 2004 was winning the Philip Neill Memorial Prize and the University of Auckland Douglas Lilburn Composition Prize Concert in both the electronic and acoustic categories.

She won the Auckland Philharmonia Young Composers Competition, in the year 2000, was runner-up in the New Zealand Secondary Schools Choir Choral Composition Competition, in 2003 and 2004 and the KBB/175 East Composition Competition, in 2000. From the University of Auckland she has received the Bishop Scholarship, in 2001, for stage one composition, the Llewellyn Jones Prize for music for piano, in 2002 and, in 2003 and 2004 the Douglas Mews Prize a for an Unaccompanied Choral Composition.

In performance, she has twice been a member of the New Zealand National Youth Orchestra for which she has received two Arts and Cultural Blue Awards from the University of Auckland. In her spare time she likes to play tennis, run and watch movies. This year Robin is embarking on an adventure backpacking across Mediterranean Europe.