

## **MR WILLIAM THOMAS (TOMMY) EMMANUEL, AM**

### **Citation for the conferral of a Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*)**

Chancellor, it is a privilege to present to you and to this gathering, for the award of Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*), Mr William Thomas ("Tommy") Emmanuel, AM.

The University Council has resolved to confer this award on William Thomas ("Tommy") Emmanuel in recognition of his outstanding musical achievements and contribution to the education of music, and his commitment to rural Australia.

Born and raised in the University's footprint, Tommy Emmanuel is one of Australia's most respected musicians. With a professional career spanning five decades, Tommy has always maintained a strong connection to rural and regional communities including significant interaction with Indigenous Australians.

Tommy received his first guitar at age 4 and by age 6, he was working as a professional musician in the family band (variously named The Emmanuel Quartet, The Midget Surfaries and The Trailblazers). By the age of 10, young Tommy had already played his way across Australia.

In the 1970s, Tommy was in high demand as a session player and sideman: he played on recordings for Air Supply, Men at Work and dozens of other popular bands and artists, as well as thousands of commercial jingles and tunes. Some of his most notable appearances were on the Air Supply hit singles "Lost in Love," "All Out of Love," "Every Woman in the World," and "Now and Forever". Tommy soon became known as one of the best modern guitarists in Australia. In 1985 he joined one of the decade's biggest Australian rock bands, Dragon, and recorded the platinum-selling album "Dreams of Ordinary Men". It is for his successful solo career, however, that Tommy is best known.

In the 1980s, Tommy finally met and got to play with his hero, Mr Chet Atkins, in Nashville, Tennessee. From that magical moment forward, Atkins took him under his wing, and the influences are evident throughout Tommy's music: in his personal philosophy, technical precision, virtuosic improvisations and unusually broad repertoire encompassing not only country and bluegrass, but pop, jazz, blues, gospel, even classical, flamenco, and aboriginal styles. Tommy speaks of his mentor with the love and gratitude of a son, and his dream of recording with Chet Atkins came true in 1996 when the pair made an album titled "The Day The Finger Pickers Took Over The World" for which Tommy received his first Grammy award nomination.

Chet honored Tommy with the title of "Certified Guitar Player" for his contribution to guitar music, a very rare distinction shared by only four other people in the world. After an amazing performance with his brother Phil at the Sydney Olympic Games Closing Ceremony, the world wanted to know who this mysterious Australian guitar virtuoso was. In 2001, Tommy released his first solo-acoustic album titled "Only" and his popularity has grown enormously, aided by a non-stop touring schedule and increasing exposure in the media.

Tommy's album "The Mystery" earned him another Grammy nomination, and in 2008 Guitar Player Magazine and Acoustic Guitar Magazine named him Best Acoustic Guitarist and Gold Medalist in the Readers' Choice and Players' Choice Awards. Guitar Player's 2010 Readers Choice awards named him Best Acoustic Guitarist for the second time!

In all, Tommy's catalogue includes over 20 musical recordings of solos, duets, ensembles, cover tunes, originals, utilising both electric and acoustic guitar. He has made 6 live performance DVDs, 6 additional instructional DVDs and CDRoms, and he regularly teaches master classes on the road.

Performing live for his fans is extremely important to Tommy: he has demonstrated this by playing over 300 concerts every year for the last seven years! Guitar players of all levels come to his shows to watch him work his magic, but his appeal goes far beyond musicians. His live shows are known for their humour, performance, passion, and infectious joy.

In June 2010 Tommy was honored as a Queen's Member of the Order of Australia which is bestowed on Australian citizens for meritorious service in a particular area or field of activity. Emmanuel was cited for his "service to the music and entertainment industries as a guitarist, and to the community as a supporter of Kids Under Cover". Kids Under Cover is an Australian charitable organisation working to build homes and provide scholarships for homeless and at risk young people.

Tommy is also one of the most prodigious music educators in the world, meeting with both amateur and professional musicians at every show and location when he travels, often giving hours of his time to teaching and collaboration.

At his last show in Bathurst several years ago, he visited a local high school, which had recently been destroyed by fire, the day after the show to spend time with the students and play for and teach them. In addition Tommy regularly conducts workshops, sometimes spanning several days, and has music festivals named in his honour, where he both performs and teaches. He was also one of the pioneers amongst professional musicians in the use of online media such as YouTube in the teaching and sharing of his music.

Tommy's message is one of pure love for the music and his delight in sharing it with the world, one audience at a time.

Chancellor, I now present Mr William Thomas ("Tommy") Emmanuel AM, musician, teacher and a living representation of Charles Sturt University's vision of regionality being not only no hindrance but a positive advantage to both national and international excellence.

**Dated this Twenty Seventh Day of November Two Thousand and Thirteen**