

ASRA Award 2018

Virginia Read



Figure 1

Virginia Read, one of Australia's leading classical music producers and engineers, was presented with the joint ASRA Award for excellence in sound recording and production in 2018. Read is currently based in Sydney, at the ABC studios in Ultimo, where she has worked with a range of musicians such as harpsichordist Erin Helyard on his 'Handel Great Suites' album and various albums with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and the Grigoryan brothers.

Read completed her music degree in the 1980s and it was through her studies in composition that she formed her interest in electronic music, sound recording and technical production.

Read started her career at the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) as an engineer in the Sound Restoration department. She soon decided to follow her passion in sound engineering and production and left Australia to study for her post-graduate at the Schulich School of Music at the McGill University in Montreal. The Schulich School specialises in the European *Tonmeister* tradition of training classical musicians to combine their artistic skills with sound engineering and production. She is only one of a few women who has ever been accredited as a

Tonmeister, a prestigious title only given to those who achieve a high standard of engineering excellence and creative endeavour.

After graduating, Read went on to work at Classic Sounds in New York alongside multi-Grammy award winning recording engineer Tom Lazarus. Whilst at Classic Sounds she had the opportunity to hone her skills in post-production, editing and audio recording.

After her stint in New York, Read returned to Australia and was employed at ABC Classics in Sydney as an engineer. Her overseas experience and *Tonmeister* qualifications soon proved to be an invaluable resource at the studio and she quickly assumed the dual role of producer and engineer in her work with some of Australia's top classical musicians. During her time with ABC Classics it has evolved from a small operation into a 'powerhouse' in the classical recording industry. This growth can be attributed to its agile transition from analogue into a digital service and the support of its talented technical staff. The availability and sophistication of modern digital technologies have given Read greater freedom and flexibility to fully focus on the quality and aesthetics of the sound in recording sessions. This has meant mixing and audio editing tasks traditionally carried out during recording can now be attended to in post-production.

Read is a leader in her chosen field where she has been nominated for several ARIA awards since the early 2000s. In 2013 she was the first woman to receive an ARIA award for best engineer for her work on Sally Whitwell's album of solo contemporary classical piano pieces *All Imperfect Things: Solo Piano Music of Michael Nyman*. Her ASRA award for excellence in both sound engineering and production is in recognition of her career as a *Tonmeister*, inspiration to others in the field, and for her extensive body of work.

Melinda Barrie

Figures:

1. Virginia Read photograph courtesy Melinda Barrie