



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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# Uniview

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From 'refugee kid'  
to Young Australian  
of the Year

## The classics come to college

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-panelled 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



Benefactor and graduate Peter Knight unlocks the Fazioli watched by Michael Grebla.

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 Pathétique. 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](http://stgeorgescollege.com.au)

## Research highlights

In this issue we profile UWA's Nobel Laureate Professor Barry Marshall, who divides his time between ongoing research and his role as WA Ambassador for Life Sciences.

Professor Marshall's story highlights the impressive output of this University's leading-edge scientists in tackling some of the world's most pressing problems. And, as UWA marks its centenary year, the breakthroughs just keep coming.

One such advance relates to the incurable muscle-wasting disease Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) and the discovery by Professors Steve Wilton and Sue Fletcher of a new genetic treatment approach. It recently won the pair the WA Innovator of the Year Award and has resulted in a licensing agreement with a US drug company.

Another discovery with worldwide impacts came from a collaboration involving 12 of the world's leading plant biologists, including Winthrop Professor Rana Munns of the School of Plant Biology. This high-level research team found that specialised plant membrane transporters can be used to enhance crop yields, nutrient content and resistance to stresses such as salinity and toxicity from heavy metals. Published in the journal *Nature*, this research addresses feeding a hungry world sustainably – and extending the world's stocks of arable land.

Scroll through media reports for the first half of UWA's centenary and you get an insight into the extraordinary breadth of research being advanced on campus and through international collaborations. Thanks to UWA researchers:

- we know more about the role of new blood vessels in treating bone diseases and fractures following research by Winthrop Professor Jiake Xu, co-author of a paper with Harvard University's Professor Vicki Rosen (who visited UWA as part of the Australia-Harvard Fellowship Program);
- our neighbour Timor-Leste has a new variety of high-yield (and highly nutritious) sweet potato much appreciated by subsistence farmers (published in *Field Crops Research*);
- the world has a new super strong metallic composite created by harnessing the properties of nanowires (co-author of this

world first research, published in *Science*, is UWA's Head of the School of Mechanical and Chemical Engineering, Winthrop Professor Yinong Liu);

- three new molecules have been discovered that could play a role in breast and prostate cancer treatments (oncologist Associate Professor Andrew Redfern and colleagues) and the precise delivery of drugs to diseased cancer cells is being commercialised from nanoparticle technology research by Dr Swaminathlyer's team in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry;
- we're a step closer to unravelling the puzzle of bird migrations (Dr Jeremy Shaw and Professor Martin Saunders from UWA's Centre for Microscopy, Characterisation, published in *Current Biology*);
- and a quicker, cheaper test for Type I diabetes could be on the horizon following research by Professor Grant Morahan and Assistant Professor Cao Nguyen (published in *Diabetes*). And the list goes on...

All these findings are the result of patient and painstaking work – in laboratories and research hubs on campus, in teaching hospitals and through the many research bodies and international collaborations to which UWA contributes.

And with every advance and breakthrough, the skills and curiosity of a new generation of researchers is being nurtured to take on the challenges of the 21st century. All of which is worth celebrating during our centenary!

You can keep abreast of these findings – and other UWA news – by visiting the UWA website: [news.uwa.edu.au](http://news.uwa.edu.au)



Professor Steve Wilton and Professor Sue Fletcher.