

**Erin Helyard's Acceptance Speech**  
**8 September 2018**

"I am extremely honoured to have been named the 2018 recipient of the MOST Achievement Award and humbled indeed to be following in the footsteps of colleagues whose work I so deeply admire. Ever since I can remember, I have been fascinated by the extraordinary power of the human voice. Because it has a text, the illocutionary force of the vocalist surpasses that of the instrumentalist. Singers tell stories and sing poetry. In the 1960s theorist Roland Barthes famously spoke of the "grain of the voice" and the strange combination of factors that move us to heightened emotional states. Somehow combinations of phenomena affect us all in differing ways: it might be the persona of the singer, the register of the voice, or the setting of the text—we are affected by whether the voice is tugging at the extremes of its register or it is comfortable and relaxed, and we are mesmerised by the unique transformation that undergoes the singer in the act of singing.

All my musical life has been dedicated to the power of the human voice. I emulate the voice at the keyboard, as all treatises of the past exhort us to do, and they move me as I conduct or accompany them in operatic performances or lieder. I am honoured to be at the helm of an opera company dedicated to the performance of great operas of the past and I am constantly inspired by the wealth of talent that surrounds us in Australia and for which I have made it my mission to support and celebrate. I congratulate all the finalists at tonight's concert and pay tribute to those who have supported them in their journey. My warmest thanks for this great honour! Thank you!"