

News at Waikato

Conservatorium of Music welcomes tāonga puoro collection

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The purerehua bone is one of the instruments in the tāonga puoro collection.

A ceremony will take place next month to welcome a new collection of tāonga puoro (traditional Māori musical instruments) to the Conservatorium of Music and the University of Waikato.

Thanks to the generous financial support of Ian Graham and Agi Lehár-Graham, the collection was commissioned by Associate Professor Martin Lodge from master carver of tāonga puoro Brian Flintoff. It is understood that the University of Waikato is the first New Zealand university to commission a complete set of these instruments.

Dr Lodge sees the arrival of the collection as bringing together a number of important threads, including his long friendships and working relationships with key figures in the revival of the instruments such as Flintoff, the late Dr Hirini Melbourne and Dr Richard Nunns.

Dr Lodge acknowledges the importance of the knowledge and experience of these masters being passed on.

“The collection provides a focus and hugely rich resource for future artists, student and scholars. With this wonderful collection of instruments, old traditions can grow and new ones can emerge,” says Dr Lodge.

Flintoff, who has witnessed the success of tāonga puoro in Aotearoa and around the world over the past 30 years, also emphasises the significance of this collection.

“The origins of the tāonga puoro revival were nourished by the support given to Hirini Melbourne by the University of Waikato. I have aimed to honour this relationship by bringing the tāonga puoro into being,” says Flintoff.

The ceremony will be held on Tuesday 8 March at 6pm in Te Whare Tapere Iti in the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts. The event is free and open to public. Guests are asked to assemble in the foyer of the Academy from 5.45pm.

The event will include short speeches and musical performances using the instruments played by leading tāonga puoro exponent Horomona Horo and the New Zealand Chamber Soloists (the Conservatorium’s Katherine Austin, Lara Hall and James Tennant), and feature new works by Horo, Dr Lodge, and recent Conservatorium PhD graduate Jeremy Mayall.

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