

Tognetti crescendo for Garrett's act

WILIAM YEOMAN

One of Australia's most famous international musicians is leading the growing pressure on Federal Arts Minister Peter Garrett to reverse his decision to stop funding a prestigious national classical music academy.

Violinist Richard Tognetti, artistic director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra and one of Australia's most respected musicians, has spoken out in Perth over Mr Garrett's decision last month to stop funding the Australian National Academy of Music.

Tognetti described the feelings of shock and anger that many in the arts community are still experiencing over the decision.

"There are a lot of really distressed people out there. But what we've garnered from all this is that we have a tidal wave of support. And the groundswell has been really quite profound," Tognetti said.

"I'm not a whingeing artist and I speak on behalf of many on the ground. Pop, rock and jazz musicians, listeners: nobody can see any sense in all of this."

Tognetti said he believed that the arts community had been betrayed after many artists had put their faith in Labor at the last election.

"Now they've just announced plans to build a \$58 million National Ice Sports Centre in Melbourne while doing away with our national music academy. That's just hypocrisy. That's stupid."

ANAM was established in 1994 under the Keating government as a finishing school for elite classical musicians along the lines of the Australian Institute of Sport, helping the transition from university to professional life through intensive training with top-level national and international instrumentalists.

Mr Garrett told the academy it would not receive its funding of \$2.64 million for 2009 because it no

longer represented the most efficient way of delivering support for elite classical music training.

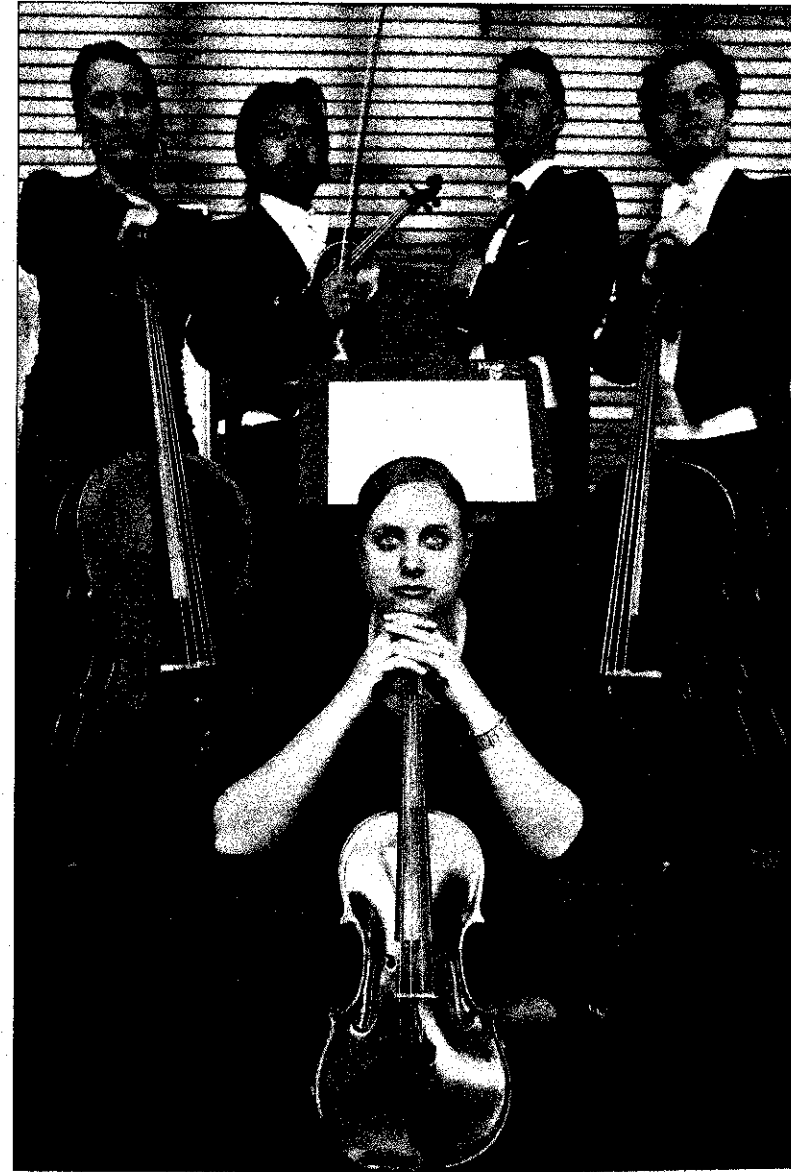
Former Perth clarinettist Ashley Smith, who moved to Melbourne this year to study at the academy, said the Government would be hard pressed to find a better model than the existing one. "For \$2.64 million a year, ANAM trains 55 academy musicians and 30 junior academy musicians," he said. "The Government's getting an absolute bargain. This decision to cut the academy's funding is cultural vandalism at its worst."

Five out of six recent key appointments to the WA Symphony Orchestra have come from ANAM, including cellist Eve Silver who said there was no other institution like it in Australia.

"I know that if I hadn't gotten in, I was considering moving overseas to further my studies. So if there isn't a place like this, it's dire for the classical music industry," she said.

Alex Millier, a WASO member of 12 years, said the "young, fully charged" ANAM graduates had added a level of vibrancy to the orchestral culture.

In a recent letter to ANAM artistic director Brett Dean, Mr Garrett said that he expected to be able to announce an alternative shortly to provide a long-term solution for the delivery of world-class elite classical music training.



Sour note: WASO's Rebecca White, front, Eve Silver, back, Shaun Lee-Chen, Alex Brogan and Nick Metcalfe are all Australian National Academy of Music graduates. Picture: Sandra Jackson

"The Government's decision to discontinue funding to ANAM after 2008 follows lengthy discussions between Government and the organisation during which it was given an opportunity to address a range of issues in order to secure future funding support," a spokesman for Mr Garrett said. "It

was unable to do so. The Minister has emphasised his determination to now direct the Government's strong support for classical music training in Victoria to a more efficient and effective organisation."

Mr Dean said the most important thing was to ensure continuity for the students.

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