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ARIA (the Australian Recording Industry Association) and The Song Room, a national arts education organisation, are excited to announce that nominations for the 2019 Telstra ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Award are now open.

This year's Telstra ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Award will be dedicated in loving memory of Richard Gill AO, the much admired music educator who sadly passed away last year. Richard was an accomplished conductor, but it was his passion for inspiring others to learn and love music that will live on.

Gill believed music should be integral to a child's education and said,

"We teach music because it acts in a unique way on the heart, mind, soul and spirit of the child, stimulating thought and imagination in very special ways." This Award is open to any teacher working on a music program in a school, kindergarten, early childhood centre, youth centre or private tuition music school in Australia. Anyone from around the country - from students, school administrators, to friends, neighbours and family - can nominate their music teacher for consideration to win an ARIA.

At last year's ARIA Awards, ARIA Award winning band, Sheppard announced Scott Maxwell from Grant High School in Mount Gambier, South Australia the winner of the 2018 Music Teacher of the Year Award sponsored by Telstra. Scott was one of four finalist music teachers from four different states of Australia who were visited by ARIA Artist Ambassadors Guy Sebastian, Justine Clarke, Sheppard and Thelma Plum.

2018 ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Scott Maxwell said:

"Music is so important, it's life changing, it connects us with the world, it connects us with each other, it connects us to ourselves and it brings our consciousness into the present. This Award is validating music education in our country and it is supporting music education in our country, which is so important. There are so many amazing educators out there doing wonderful things in music and it is such an honour to be recognised as a leader in transforming lives and inspiring others through music." 2018 ARIA Music Teacher of the Year, Scott Maxwell shares what winning the Telstra ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Award means to him & why teaching music matters. Scott became the second South Australian music teacher to win the prestigious Award, with the inaugural ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Award going to Renee McCarthy from Woodcroft College in South Australia.

The Telstra ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Award was introduced to recognise music teachers for their passion and hard work in providing Australian children with a better education and the chance to play and enjoy music. There is growing recognition worldwide of the value of creativity and the arts to improve education standards and build a better connection for students to their school life in general. The Song Room is helping to close the education equity gap in many communities in regional, remote and metro areas through its arts education programs that are run in partnership with schools.

"ARIA is thrilled to announce the return of the Telstra ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Award as part of the 2019 ARIA Awards and we are proud to welcome back Telstra as our major sponsor for the award" said Dan Rosen, Chief Executive ARIA.

"For every performer who makes it to the ARIA stage, there was a mentor who played a critical role in getting them there. Research continues to prove that children involved in music at school achieve better grades, -attend school more often, have increased self-esteem and confidence, and experience less depression and loneliness. This year we look forward to working with The Song Room and Telstra again to celebrate our awe-inspiring music teachers with the Award this year being dedicated in loving memory to one of the staunchest advocates for music education, Richard Gill."

"When we think about those teachers who made a positive difference in our lives as learners, so many of us remember our music teachers who inspired us and connected us to a world beyond school! Congratulations to ARIA and Telstra for helping us to celebrate the enormous contribution made by music teachers in shaping so many young lives." said Simon Gipson, CEO of The Song Room.

Genelle Sharples, General Manager Media and Sponsorships at Telstra, said: "We are delighted to be partnering with ARIA again in 2019 with the Telstra ARIA Music Teacher Of The Year Award. It was so joyous to watch Scott Maxwell honoured as the ARIA Music Teacher Of The Year in 2018. We are so proud to join ARIA as we recognise the music teachers who enrich our kids' lives and create an enduring legacy through their work at school and in their communities."

"Our continued partnership with the ARIAs and the Telstra ARIA Music Teacher Of The Year award is important to Telstra and we look forward to celebrating more teachers from across the country who use their talents to inspire the next generation of Aussie musicians."

Entries are now open and a shortlist of nominees will be announced at the ARIA Nominations Event in October. Each shortlisted ARIA nominated teacher will be partnered with one of the Artist Ambassadors who will visit the school, help celebrate their success and tell their story. Previous ambassadors for the Telstra ARIA Music Teacher Of The Year Award include Guy Sebastian, Jessica Mauboy, Josh Pyke, Justine Clarke, Lior, Missy Higgins, Sheppard and Thelma Plum.

A public voting process will then be conducted culminating in the presentation of the winner at the 2019 ARIA Awards in November.

To view guidelines and/or to nominate your favourite music educator, visit www.ariamusicteacheraward.com.au ARIA and The Song Room gave fans the chance to vote for their favourite nominee to help decide who takes home the inaugural ARIA Music Teacher Of The Year Award. Scott Maxwell, from Grant High in Mt Gambier South Australia, won the 2018 ARIA Music Teacher Of The Year for 2018! Watch his incredible night here. This award was presented in conjunction with The Song Room and sponsored by Telstra. Media enquiries

Kylie Martin | Martini Media | kylie@martini-media.com.au | 0418 314 088

Contacts

Kylie Martin
+61418314088
[mailto: kylie@martini-media.com.au](mailto:kylie@martini-media.com.au)