

# The Sydney Morning Herald

ENTERTAINMENT MUSIC

## Piers Lane and Tasmin Little partner for Sydney recital

By [Steve Meacham](#)

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"No one is more of a stage animal than Tasmin," says Piers Lane, the Australian pianist who has become one of Britain's best-loved classical musicians and broadcasters. "Audiences love her. She's very chatty on stage and has that 'it' quality."

He's talking about Tasmin Little, aka "the naked violinist", who makes her Australian recital debut at the Sydney Opera House in partnership with Lane on October 16.



With his long-term collaborator, the violinist Tasmin Little, pianist Piers Lane will be performing key classics at the Opera House on October 16. [BIANCA DE MARCHI](#)

They've been collaborators for 32 years. "We've had many adventures together – travelling the world, recording, performing in major concerts, exploring lots of composers most people have never heard of," Lane says.

Adventures include the time when Little arranged a joint recital high up in the Andes mountains of Ecuador. Lane only just survived – first the flight through the steep-sided valleys to get to the concert venue, and then the party afterwards.





Piers Lane: "I'm not a rum drinker and they kept filling up my glass." BIANCA DE MARCHI

"It was only the second time in my life that I've been under the weather with alcohol," Lane confesses. "I'm not a rum drinker and they kept filling up my glass."

Lane, born in London of a British father and Australian mother, both musicians, spent most of his youth in Brisbane. He left for London in his early 20s but still returns to the country he calls home four times a year. He was made an officer of the Order of Australia in 2012.

Little and Lane met on Tasmin's 21st birthday. After her party, she went to watch Lane open a new concert hall in Hampstead.

"She bounced up to me and said, 'are you Piers Lane? I'd like to play with you'. And that was the start of a very long and beautiful musical relationship."

At the Opera House, they'll be performing key works from the classical canon for piano and violin. "Beethoven's Spring Sonata, Brahms' G Minor Sonata, the premiere of a new version of Elena Kats-Chernin's *Russian Rag* for violin and piano, plus the evergreen Franck Sonata," Lane says.

Naturally, neither Little nor Lane will be naked. The violinist, who studied under Yehudi Menuhin – she was a schoolgirl when they performed together at David Niven's funeral – earned that title 10 years ago when she downloaded free tracks from her website to popularise classical music among today's iPhone generation.

"Tasmin has performed in the most extraordinary venues," Lane adds. "Oil rigs, prisons ..."

Together, "we've recorded core works for violin and piano but we're both happy to dip our toes in musical waters most people have never heard of. Howard Ferguson, for example, doesn't sound very promising, but he wrote a gorgeous piece we love performing."

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Piers Lane

Lane is a rarity among Australian musicians, better known overseas than in his homeland. A recent review of his 60th birthday recital in January at a sold-out Wigmore Hall in London described him as "one of Britain's most-loved musicians" with "formidable technique, a remarkable memory and sophisticated interpretative insights".

Part of his celebrity comes from his success as a BBC broadcaster. He auditioned as presenter of Radio 3's *The Piano*, thinking "my Aussie twang" would rule him out. In fact, "the BBC didn't want those posh 1950s voices any more so I ended up doing 54 episodes". He "went to a village above Warsaw where Chopin had held concerts as a teenager, and played Mozart's piano in Salzburg".

Sadly, the Opera House audience won't see one of Lane's party tricks. At his 60th birthday concert, his encore took much of the audience by surprise. Lane recreated the late Dudley Moore's comic masterpiece from *Beyond The Fringe*, when Moore's tormented classical pianist was torn between playing Beethoven and the *Colonel Bogey March* from the 1957 movie, *Bridge Over the River Kwai*, versions of which are on YouTube. .

Musical comedian Rainer Hersch convinced Lane to reproduce it for Classical Relief, the highbrow version of Comic Relief. "I told Rainer I couldn't be that funny, and he said, 'You don't have to be – just copy everything Dudley did'. He was right!"

Piers Lane and Tasmin Little, Sydney Opera House, October 16. 7.30pm.



**Steve Meacham**

Freelance writer