

Simon Tedeschi wins the Calibre Essay Prize

Congratulations to distinguished classical musician **Simon Tedeschi** on winning the sixteenth Calibre Essay Prize. In 'This Woman My Grandmother', Tedeschi explores his grandmother's story: 'My grandmother, a Polish Jew, the only survivor of a family obliterated by the Nazis, wrote a memoir of her wartime years shortly before she died sixteen years ago. Only recently was I able to bring myself to read it. When I did, it caused not only a torrent of memory to erupt but spurred me to find out more about this tormented woman who, despite her vociferousness and overbearing presence, was the bearer of secrets too painful to divulge.'

The judges – **Declan Fry**, **Beejay Silcox** and **Peter Rose**, Editor of *ABR* – chose 'This Woman My Grandmother' from a field of 569 entries from 17 different countries. Here are their comments on Simon Tedeschi's essay:

This year's winning essay has a powerful, memorable duality: it's at once forceful and gentle, timeless and timely. While Tedeschi plays with eternal themes – the fragility of memory and intergenerational anguish – there is also a quiet urgency to his account of his grandmother, Lucy's, complicated legacy. We stand on the cusp of a great forgetting: the Holocaust is fading from living memory, and Covid is ravaging our elderly. As we lose our story-keepers and war rages in Europe, it feels vital not just to honour the past, but to acknowledge its knots and nuances. That is what Tedeschi has done in this remarkable essay, with grace, care, and glorious prose craft.



Simon Tedeschi (photo by Cole Bennetts)

Simon Tedeschi on winning the Calibre Essay Prize:

'When Peter Rose rang to tell me that I'd won this year's Calibre Prize, I felt a tornado of emotions: joy that my hard work had been recognised, gratitude to my wife for being my locus of love and inspiration, sadness that my grandmother was no longer here, disbelief that the memories this tormented woman gave me and of which I am constituted could now be shared with others, and finally, encouragement for the act of writing – an artform that, as with music, one never truly masters but which is the closest thing possible to healing the past.'

About Simon Tedeschi:

Simon Tedeschi is one of Australia's most renowned classical pianists. His first book, *Fugitive*, will be published by Upswell in May 2022. He lives in Sydney.

Calibre Essay Prize:

The Prize, now in its sixteenth year, is one of the world's leading awards for an original essay. We thank *ABR* Patrons Peter McLennan and Mary-Ruth Sindrey for supporting the Calibre Prize.

Interviews

Simon Tedeschi is available for interview. Please direct requests to Peter Rose at editor@australianbookreview.com.au | (03) 9699 8822