



General Sir  
**John Monash**  
Foundation

# Annual Report 2017-18



# Impact

## Music of Life

### Michael Grebla



Michael Grebla (far left) with the string quartet who premiered *Sfidare*

Michael Grebla, 2016 Zelman Cowen John Monash Scholar, had an indirect journey to music composition. During a particularly challenging semester as an undergraduate, he lost the ability to sing for a couple of months which led him to serious contemplation about his love of music and engineering. At the time, Michael was studying science and engineering, partly to please his mum.

"I realised while I had an interest in science, I didn't have a passion for it. I did have a passion for engineering but not as much as for music," he says.

While a career in singing wasn't the answer, Michael had an enormous curiosity for composing. The artists who impacted him the most were all composers, including Beethoven, Bach and Phillip Glass. He subsequently switched to a combined Music and Engineering degree.

Having completed his Bachelor of Music and Mechanical Engineering at the University of Western Australia, Michael went on to complete a Master of Music Composition at the New England Conservatory, supported by his John Monash Scholarship.

Michael graduated in May 2018 with Academic Honours, having had the chance to compose for orchestra, learn from some remarkable teachers and make some lasting friendships along the way. In January 2018 he participated in the Australian Youth Orchestra's National Music Camp in Adelaide where he was one of four composers chosen to write and premiere a work.

Michael also attended the Zodiac Music Academy & Festival in the French Alps, winning the Composition Award for Most Outstanding New Work. The two-week festival and training program offers daily classes with a mentor plus rehearsals of each composer's work. Michael's mentor was renowned composer and Berklee College Professor of Music, Andrew List.

"I had the opportunity to work closely with the quartet performing my work and met a number of people who expressed interest in either playing my piece in their home cities or just working on a new composition together," Michael says.

His winning string quartet, titled *Sfidare*, reflects his Romanian-Italian heritage. It means "defy" in Italian and "defiance" in Romanian. The composer note says the work is a "tribute to those who challenge and defy to declare their place in the world".

Michael says gaining a foothold in America has been extremely important for him at this stage of his life, and this achievement is due to his John Monash Scholarship. "Breaking into the US without a degree from a good school can make it very difficult," he says. Next on the agenda is moving to New York City to be a freelance composer for a year. He is also hoping to record and have his quartet performed in America and Australia.

## TED Talks for Parenting

### Sarah Lux-Lee



Before her 2014 John Monash Scholarship, Sarah Lux-Lee was working for the Australian government as a public policy advisor. She wanted to broaden her knowledge and networks overseas – and ultimately, her overall perspective.

Lux-Lee says her Master of Public Administration at Columbia University in New York was incredible. "I not only learned from thought leaders and world leaders, but also had the opportunity to implement what I was learning through internships at the World Health Organization and UN Women.

"I got to move the literature forward through research with Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, and since graduating, the networks and experiences I gained as a Monash scholar continue to drive me every day." Lux-Lee's social venture Mindr, dubbed the 'TED Talks of Parenting' by Time Out Magazine, runs talks, workshops, classes and events led by global experts, where crying babies are welcome. Speakers include Nobel laureates, United Nations leaders, representatives from Fortune 500s, leading universities as well as innovative non-profits and startups.

"So many new parents find that once they have a baby, their avenues for intellectual and professional development narrow considerably," Sarah says. "You can't take a baby to a conference, and childcare continues to be astronomically expensive in both Australia and the US."

**"At Mindr, we're transforming the experience of new parenthood into a time of learning, growth and deep interconnection, and we're helping organisations to recognise and harness the intellectual capital of new parents throughout all stages of the work-life cycle."**

In April 2017, Mindr was awarded third place in the Columbia Venture Competition's Startup Challenge, winning \$10,000 which Sarah is putting towards building an enterprise platform to help organisations better serve their parent workforce.

Mindr was also featured in the *New Yorker* for its work with anti-nuclear activist Beatrice Fihn, a mother of two, who accepted the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons).

In March this year, Mindr partnered with the United Nations to co-host the World's Biggest Mama Meetup, a global campaign that brought together mothers in more than 60 cities around the world on International Women's Day. "The flagship event that day took place at the United Nations Headquarters – the first time, to our knowledge, that babies were allowed, en masse, at the UN – and included an address by Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu," Sarah says.

In terms of next steps, Mindr is working to get employers on board with its mission.

"We want to help employers support employees who are going through the transitions into and beyond new parenthood."