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MEDIA RELEASE

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The Red Piano sheds light on human rights in China

The Red Piano, a very special book about a young Chinese pianist's fight for self-expression, is published on 1st September by Wilkins Farago, in association with Amnesty International Australia.

Inspired by the childhood of renowned Chinese-born concert pianist, Zhu Xiao-Mei, the book tells a story from 35 years ago that still has relevance to the human rights situation in China today.

Sent to a labour camp during China's Cultural Revolution—a period when 'decadent' Western classical music was forbidden—the young Zhu Xiao-Mei went to extraordinary lengths to play the piano. Persuading her mother to smuggle a piano across China, she left the camp each night and walked cross-country to a safe house where she could practice the instrument, reading music from tiny handwritten manuscripts smuggled illicitly into the camp. She was caught and punished for her 'crime'.

Eventually leaving China for New York and thereafter France after the end of the Cultural Revolution, Zhu Xiao-Mei is today a renowned international concert pianist and recording artist. The story of her struggles as a child has now been turned into *The Red Piano*, a picture book for younger readers by André Leblanc and illustrator Barroux.

'*The Red Piano* will really resonate with young Australians, who will be amazed that an activity as innocent as playing the piano could be so hazardous,' says Wilkins Farago director Andrew Wilkins. 'Lest we think it's old hat, it's important to note that books that mention Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution still can't be printed in China today—hence our decision to print the book in Singapore.'

'We're delighted to be associated with this important book, which offers a valuable opportunity for young Australians to explore human rights in China,' says Amnesty International Australia's, Human Rights Education Coordinator, Don McArthur. 'We have worked with Wilkins Farago to produce notes for schools on the human rights themes raised by the book, and will help to promote the book to the wider Australian community.'

The Red Piano by Andre Leblanc, illustrated by Barroux (ISBN 9780980607017, \$27.99hb) is available 1st September, 2009.

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