

Youth leadership winners spread wings on US stage

A YOUNG director who is off to Broadway and a policy officer with the Defence Department, who will meet one of the top women in US aerospace research, are the recipients of the inaugural Sir Keith Murdoch Youth Leadership Award.

The judges felt their applications were outstanding and that both men showed great enthusiasm for their work. They also showed initiative in their choice of whom they would like to meet in the US to further their careers.

Kris Stewart, 25, of Melbourne, is a musical theatre director who has worked for companies around the country. In 1996, he won the Emerging Directors Prize and has twice been runner-up in the Young Australian of the Year Arts Prize.

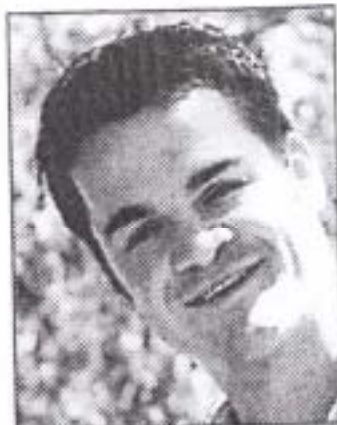
"Always the bridesmaid, never the bride," he said.

Mr Stewart argued that despite Australian performers being highly regarded worldwide, there had never been a successful Australian musical, a problem he aimed to solve by discussing with three people in the US different phases of development of the musical.

They include Stephen Schwartz, who has had a string of commercial hits on Broadway, and Eric Schaeffer, one of the hottest new directors in the US.

He says he wants to "make Australian stories sing".

Warwick Fry, 29, will be meeting Natalie Crawford, the Director of Project Air Force at the RAND Corporation,



Aims: Mr Stewart, left, and Mr Fry

who impressed him as the only female speaker at the Air Power Conference in Canberra in 1998, among presenters who included the upper echelons of the RAAF.

Mr Fry, who is a researcher and analyst in the strategic policy branch of the Department of Defence, said there were many links between his work and that of similar policy organisations in the US, including the RAND Corporation.

However, he said there were precious opportunities to gain exposure to high-level officials and professionals from other countries.

Mr Stewart and Mr Fry were chosen from more than 60 applicants and 10 finalists.

The Sir Keith Murdoch Youth Leadership Award is sponsored by Australian-American Association, Ansett Australia and *The Australian*.