



MEDIA RELEASE

30 January 2007

ANONYMOUS BENEFACTOR PURCHASES RARE VIOLIN FOR TOGNETTI

The Australian Chamber Orchestra is thrilled to announce that an anonymous Australian private benefactor has acquired one of the world's rarest violins, valued at AUD\$10,000,000, for the use of the ACO's Artistic Director, Richard Tognetti.

The violin, created by Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù in 1743 and known as the 'Carrodus', is one of the very finest in existence. The best violins in the world were made in the 18th century in Northern Italy and Antonio Stradivari and Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù were the undisputed kings of this golden epoch of violin making. There are 600 Stradivari violins but only 100 del Gesù violins in the world today. Guarneri del Gesù has been the maker of choice for the greatest violinists of the 19th and 20th centuries – Paganini, Wieniawski, Ernst, Heifetz, Menuhin, Stern and Kreisler.

Richard Tognetti said: "I am overwhelmed by the generosity and the vision of the owners of this extraordinary instrument. This is believed to be the first time an instrument of such quality will be owned in Australia. It is a supreme honour to have the custodianship of this instrument. A violin is to a violinist as a voicebox is to a singer. This is the ultimate voicebox and it will enable the ACO to reveal new dimensions in music, only attainable with an instrument of this calibre."

Since 1996, Tognetti has performed on a 1759 J.B. Guadagnini violin, generously lent to him by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

Richard Tognetti said: "Since the voice of the Guadagnini became an integral part of the ACO, it has been evident that the Orchestra's enhanced reputation has been inextricably connected to the Commonwealth Bank's enlightened acquisition, and I am immensely grateful to the Bank."

The Commonwealth Bank has generously agreed to allow the Guadagnini violin to remain with the ACO, to be played by Helena Rathbone, the Orchestra's renowned Principal 2nd Violin.

Audiences around Australia will have the opportunity to hear both the del Gesù and the Guadagnini as the ACO embarks on its first national concert tour of 2007, **Revolution**. Starting in Newcastle on Thursday 8 February, the **Revolution** tour also travels to Canberra (10 Feb), Melbourne (11 & 12 Feb), Adelaide (13 Feb), Sydney (17, 18, 20 & 21 Feb) and Brisbane (19 Feb).

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FACT SHEET

Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù 'Carrodus' violin

Maker: Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù in Cremona, Italy in 1743

What is the instrument's value?

The 'Carrodus' violin is valued at AUD\$10,000,000

Who owns the violin?

An anonymous Australian private benefactor, who is making it available to the ACO. The purchase was made from Dr David Fulton, an American violinist and collector (see his website at www.sheilascorner.com) through the reputable London dealer, J & A Beare [pronounced Beers] www.beares.com

Why is the violin so valuable?

The two greatest violin makers were Antonio Stradivari and Giuseppe Guarneri. This member of the Guarneri family is known by his nickname 'del Gesù' ('of Jesus), due to his practice of including the Christian symbols IHS and a cross on his labels. The 'Carrodus' is a beautiful instrument, made in 'del Gesù's last years. It has well-established history. The combination of tone, condition and provenance is unusually good, hence its value. Charles Beare describes it as *'among the four or five finest of the fine that are still being played today.'*

How many owners has the violin had?

The 'Carrodus' has an excellent provenance, not least because part of its wood has been proven to come from the same tree as that of another authenticated del Gesù, the 'Cannon', which was played by Paganini.

Why is it named the 'Carrodus'?

It is named after one of the leading English violin virtuosos of the Victorian era, John Carrodus, who owned the instrument in the years around 1895. It shouldn't be confused with another del Gesù, known as the 'ex-Carrodus'.

Before this purchase, how recently was the violin played?

The last known player was Ossy Renardy. The 'Carrodus' may have been the violin which was with Renardy when he was killed in a car accident in 1953 – the violin survived unscathed. Richard Tognetti will return it to the public stage, for the first time in 50 years.

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Richard Tognetti and the 'Carrodus'
Photo credit: Paul Henderson Kelly