

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



# SKETCHES OF SPAIN

DIRECTED BY RICHARD TOGNETTI

## Program in Short

The music you're about  
to hear

p.14

## Spanish Variations

How the colours of Spain  
inspired this program

p.20

A profoundly moving program featuring  
Richard Tognetti and Principal Viola  
Stefanie Farrands performing Mozart's beloved  
*Sinfonia Concertante* alongside Britten's  
*Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*.

# MOZART & BRITTEN

7-23 MAY

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Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane

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Inside you'll find features and interviews that shine a spotlight on our players and the music you are about to hear. Enjoy the read.

# INSIDE



## Welcome

From the ACO's Managing Director Richard Evans

p.2



## News

What's coming up with the ACO

p.3



## Musicians on Stage

Players on stage for this performance

p.8



## Program in short

The music you're about to hear

p.14



## Spanish Variations

Richard Tognetti explains how the colours of Spain inspired this program

p.21



## Acknowledgements

The ACO thanks our generous supporters

p.40

# WELCOME

Spain has captured the imaginations of artists and musicians the world over for centuries. From Bizet's *Carmen* and Debussy's *Images pour orchestre* to Miles Davis' infamous *Sketches of Spain*, we celebrate the extraordinary music inspired by the streets of Madrid and Barcelona in this collaboration with some of Australia's great jazz musicians, pianist Matt McMahon, trumpeter Phil Slater, bassist Brett Hirst and drummer Jess Ciampa.

The celebrations continue over the coming weeks as we gear up for our Opening Festival at Pier 2/3, Walsh Bay Arts Precinct. Over three days, from 29 April to 1 May, we'll throw open the doors of our extraordinary new home and invite you to join in the festivities, from thrilling live concerts led by Richard Tognetti, collaborations with artists including William Barton, Jimmy Barnes and artists from the Sydney Theatre Company, stimulating talks featuring creatives Jane Campion, Frances Rings and Ben Quilty and a fun-filled morning of family activities.

I'm delighted to share that we'll be live streaming three of our concerts, including our Opening Celebration concert, for free on YouTube and Facebook, so that audiences all over Australia can share in the weekend.

Thank you for embarking on the journey with us, as we enter this exciting new chapter in the ACO's history. We can't wait to welcome you all into our long-awaited new home.



**Richard Evans**  
Managing Director

**Join the conversation**

#ACO2022 |    

@AustralianChamberOrchestra



Coming up

## APRIL



### Opening Festival at Pier 2/3

29 APRIL – 1 MAY

Pier 2/3, Sydney

You're invited to join the celebrations as we open the doors of our spectacular new home.

We'll be putting on a full weekend of festivities including concerts led by Richard Tognetti, thrilling collaborations, engaging talks from some of the country's leading cultural figures, family friendly activities and more.

For tickets and further information visit [aco.com.au/openingfestival](http://aco.com.au/openingfestival)

## MAY



### Mozart & Britten

7–23 MAY

Sydney, Wollongong, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane

Our Principal Viola, Stefanie Farrands, makes her ACO concerto debut, joining Richard Tognetti for Mozart's exquisite *Sinfonia Concertante* before a performance of Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*.



### ACO Up Close: Timo-Veikko Valve

29 MAY & 31 MAY

Sydney & Melbourne

Get to know our Principal Cello Timo-Veikko 'Tipi' Valve in these intimate recitals at Pier 2/3 and the University of Melbourne.

## JUNE



### ACO Relaxed Performance: Mozart & Britten

10 JUNE

Pier 2/3, Sydney

A welcoming performance open to anyone who wishes to enjoy an informal, daytime concert experience.



### Bach

18–27 JUNE

Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Sydney, Canberra

A Bach family reunion that celebrates this greatest of all musical dynasties.

## JULY



### There's a Sea in My Bedroom

13–17 JULY

Pier 2/3, Sydney

20 JULY – 27 AUGUST

On tour in QLD, NSW & VIC

An immersive and theatrical introduction to live classical music, based on the beloved children's book by award-winning author Margaret Wild.



### ACO Talks: An Unauthorised History of Classical Music

25 JULY – 15 AUGUST

Pier 2/3, Sydney

Join favourite ABC Classic presenters Vanessa Hughes and Russell Torrance for a four-night tour through the remarkable, inspiring and often shocking history of classical music.



**El Jaleo by John Singer Sargent, 1882**

American artist John Singer Sargent was an ardent admirer of Spanish music and culture, as expressed in this 1882 painting *El Jaleo*, which depicts a Spanish flamenco dancer accompanied by a group of musicians.









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Richard Tognetti Artistic Director





# PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin

Matt McMahon Piano

Phil Slater Trumpet

Brett Hirst Bass

Jess Ciampa Drums

Australian Chamber Orchestra

DEBUSSY (arr. Rofe)	Images pour orchestre: 2. Ibéria: I. Par les rues et par les chemins (abridged)	3
RAVEL (arr. Tognetti)	Violin Sonata: II. Blues. Moderato	6
ANON. (arr. Tognetti)	Yo era niña de casa alta	2
BOCCHERINI	Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid, G.324	10
BIZET/SHCHEDRIN	Carmen Suite: Selections <i>Introduction</i> <i>Dance</i> <i>Carmen</i> <i>Second Intermezzo</i> <i>Bolero</i> <i>Torero and Carmen</i> <i>Torero</i>	17
<b>INTERVAL</b>		<b>20</b>
DAVIS/EVANS (arr. McMahon/Rofe)	Sketches of Spain: Solea	10
VICTORIA	Ave Maria a 8	4
COREA (arr. McMahon/Rofe)	Spain	23

The concert will last approximately one hour and 50 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

The Australian Chamber Orchestra reserves the right to alter scheduled artists and programs as necessary.



ACO concerts are regularly broadcast on ABC Classic.

*Sketches of Spain* will be broadcast on Saturday 23 April at 1pm.

# MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage for this performance.

## Discover more

Learn more about our musicians, watch us Live in the Studio, go behind the scenes and listen to playlists at: [aco.com.au](http://aco.com.au)



**Richard Tognetti**  
Director and Violin

Richard plays the 1743 'Carrodus' Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin kindly on loan from an anonymous Australian private benefactor. His Chair is sponsored by Wendy Edwards, Peter McMullin AM & Ruth McMullin, Louise Myer & Martyn Myer AO, Andrew & Andrea Roberts.



**Helena Rathbone**  
Principal Violin

Helena plays a 1759 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin kindly on loan from the Commonwealth Bank Group. Her Chair is sponsored by Margaret Gibbs & Rodney Cameron.



**Satu Vänskä**  
Principal Violin

Satu plays the 1726 'Belgiorno' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from Guido Belgiorno-Nettis AM & Michelle Belgiorno-Nettis. Her Chair is sponsored by David Thomas AM.



**Aiko Goto**  
Violin

Aiko plays her own French violin by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. Her Chair is sponsored by Anthony & Sharon Lee Foundation.



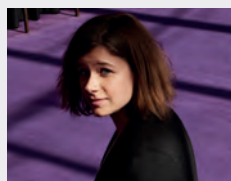
**Mark Ingwersen**  
Violin

Mark plays a 1728/29 Stradivarius violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Prof Judyth Sachs & Julie Steiner AM.



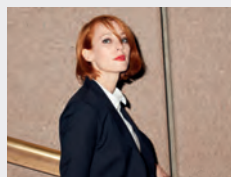
**Ilya Isakovich**  
Violin

Ilya plays his own 1600 Marcin Groblicz violin made in Poland. His Chair is sponsored by Meg Meldrum.



**Liisa Pallandi**  
Violin

Liisa plays her own Elina Kaljunen violin made in 2019. Her Chair is sponsored by The Melbourne Medical Syndicate.



**Maja Savnik**  
Violin

Maja plays the 1714 'ex-Isolde Menges' Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. Her Chair is sponsored by Alenka Tindale.



**Ike See**  
Violin

Ike plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Ian Lansdown & Tricia Bell.



## Stefanie Farrands

**Principal Viola**

Stefanie plays her own 2016 viola made by Ragnar Hayn in Berlin. Her Chair is sponsored by peckvonhartel architects.



## Elizabeth Woolnough

**Viola**

Elizabeth plays her own 1968 Parisian viola by Pierre M. Audinot. Her Chair is sponsored by Terry Campbell AO & Christine Campbell.



## Meagan Turner

**Viola**

Meagan plays a 2019 viola by Samuel Zygmuntowicz on private loan.



## Timo-Veikko Valve

**Principal Cello**

Tipi plays a 1616 Brothers Amati cello on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Prof Doug Jones AO & Prof Janet Walker.



## Melissa Barnard

**Cello**

Melissa plays a cello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume made in 1846. Her Chair is sponsored by Dr & Mrs J Wenderoth.



## Julian Thompson

**Cello**

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, kindly donated to the ACO by the late Peter Weiss AO. His Chair is sponsored by The Grist & Stewart Families.



## Maxime Bibeau

**Principal Bass**

Max plays a late-16th-century Gasparo da Salò bass kindly on loan from a private Australian benefactor. His Chair is sponsored by Darin Cooper Foundation.



## Brian Nixon

**Percussion**

Brian's Chair is sponsored by Robert Albert AO & Libby Albert.

## JAZZ QUARTET



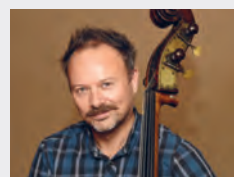
## Matt McMahon

**Piano**



## Phil Slater

**Trumpet**



## Brett Hirst

**Bass**



## Jess Ciampa

**Drums**

Stroh violin kindly supplied by the Sydney String Centre

# OPENING FESTIVAL AT PIER 2/3, WALSH BAY ARTS PRECINCT

## 29 APRIL – 1 MAY



Join us around Australia as we celebrate the opening of our spectacular new home at Pier 2/3 with a full weekend of festivities including thrilling live concerts, digital live streams, boundary-pushing collaborations, stimulating talks, engaging family shows and more.

Over three days, we'll throw open the doors of our harbourside home in Sydney's revitalised Walsh Bay Arts Precinct and be joined by iconic artists and close friends of the Orchestra including didgeridoo virtuoso, singer and composer William Barton, singer/songwriter Jimmy Barnes, filmmaker Jane Campion, poet, musician and artist Omar Musa, guitarist Slava Grigoryan, pianist Tamara-Anna Cislowska and actors from Sydney Theatre Company.

Our new home at Pier 2/3 is for everyone, in Sydney and beyond. We've planned a full program of digital activities over the weekend so that the ACO's national audiences can participate in the celebrations as well. Three of the concerts will be streamed live across Australia, and festival artists will engage with audiences directly through social media takeovers, behind the scenes videos and more.

Help celebrate this milestone in the ACO's history that will be remembered for generations to come.

**DISCOVER THE FESTIVAL**  
[aco.com.au/OpeningFestival](https://aco.com.au/OpeningFestival)



## HELP MAKE HISTORY

There are many ways you can become a part of our new, permanent home, whether through a general gift or by dedicating a chair in someone's name or with a special message.

This is an opportunity for you to make history with a gift that will resonate for generations to come. There are different donation levels available and all donations are fully tax-deductible and may be made in full or in instalments. All contributions are deeply valued and appreciated.

**DONATE:** [aco.com.au/Revealed](https://aco.com.au/Revealed)

**DEDICATE A CHAIR:** [musicalchairs.aco.com.au](https://musicalchairs.aco.com.au)



Take a tour with our  
flythrough video







Study for Seated Figures for El Jaleo (cropped) by John Singer Sargent, 1882





## PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read  
before lights down.

Pre-concert talks take place 45 minutes before the start of every concert. See the ACO information desk for location details.

Newcastle City Hall  
**Francis Merson**  
Thu 31 Mar, 6.45pm

Llewellyn Hall, Canberra  
**Kim Cunio**  
Sat 2 Apr, 7.15pm

Arts Centre Melbourne  
**Megan Burslem**  
Sun 3 Apr, 1.45pm  
Mon 4 Apr, 6.45pm

City Recital Hall, Sydney  
**Francis Merson**  
Tue 5 Apr, 7.15pm  
Wed 6 Apr, 6.15pm  
Fri 8 Apr, 12.45pm  
Sat 9 Apr, 6.15pm  
Sun 10 Apr, 1.15pm

QPAC Concert  
Hall, Brisbane  
**James Tudball**  
Mon 11 Apr, 6.15pm

Wollongong Town Hall  
**Francis Merson**  
Wed 15 Apr, 6.45pm

Pre-concert speakers are subject to change.





## Claude Debussy

(1862–1918)

### **Images pour orchestre: 2. Ibéria: I. Par les rues et par les chemins (abridged)**

*Arranged by Bernard Rofe*

*Ibéria* forms the central, Spanish chapter of Debussy's final orchestral work, *Images pour orchestre*, which conjures images of England (*Gigues*), Spain (*Ibéria*) and France (*Le Matin d'un jour de fête*). *Ibéria* itself is further divided into three movements, with the first, *Par les rues et par les chemins* (Along the streets and paths), serving as overture to these concerts.

Against the fiery rhythms of castanets, the clarinet introduces a melody that builds through the orchestra, joining a marching band along the way, then evaporating into the distance as the journey through Spain continues. The second movement, *Les parfums de la nuit* (The perfumes of the night) evokes the perfumed gardens of Andalusia, and *Le matin d'un jour de fête* (The morning of a festival day) creates a frenzy of guitars, percussion and vibrant summer festival sounds.



## Maurice Ravel

(1875–1937)

### **Violin Sonata: II. Blues. Moderato** *Arranged by Richard Tognetti*

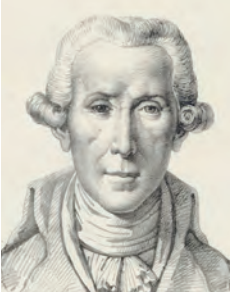
Ravel was fascinated by the dynamism of American life, from its skyscrapers and advanced technology, to its musical traits – particularly jazz music and the “frightening virtuosity” of the musicians who played it. He shared this fascination with violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, to whom this sonata is dedicated, and wrote her a piece (eventually premiered by Georges Enescu) whose central movement, “Blues”, is celebrated for its evocation of jazz singers and instrumentalists. One critic has even found borrowings from Jelly Roll Morton's *Black Bottom Stomp*.

Jazz was considered “popular” music in America, but Ravel was one of the first to assert that it should be taken seriously as art. In 1928, he wrote an article for *Musical Digest* titled “Take Jazz Seriously”, where he explained: “Abroad we take jazz seriously. It is influencing our work. The Blues in my sonata, *par exemple*, is stylized jazz, more French than American in character perhaps, but nevertheless influenced strongly by your so-called ‘popular music.’”

# Anonymous

**Yo era niña de casa alta** Arranged by Richard Tognetti

In 1492, Ferdinand II and Isabella I expelled the Jewish people from Spain. Many found new homes in Portugal, northern Africa, Italy, France and, in particular, the Ottoman empire. These Sephardic Jewish communities retained their Spanish musical roots, and their songs were passed down through oral tradition. The song *Yo era niña* is a “kantiga” (i.e. an occasion song, in this case associated with marriage) that was found in Turkey. It is sung from the woman’s perspective: “I was the daughter of a rich home. Did not know suffering. But when I fell into your hands, you forced me to serve you.” Performances often have Arabic or Oriental characteristics, as well as Spanish, reflecting the song’s wide dissemination.



# Luigi Boccherini

(1743–1805)

**Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid, G.324**

Boccherini’s *Night music of the streets of Madrid* evokes the sights and sounds of a hot Madrid evening, from the tolling of local church bells, blind beggars in the streets, guitars (the cellists are directed to turn their instruments on their sides like guitars), street singers, and drum rolls from Madrid’s military night watch, bringing in the curfew and closing down riots in the streets. Boccherini wrote, “One must imagine sitting next to the window on a summer’s night in a Madrid flat and that the band can only be heard in the far-off distance . . . slowly the music grows louder and louder until it is very loud, indicating the Night Watch is passing directly under the listener’s window. Then gradually the volume decreases and again becomes faint as the band moves off down the street into the distance.”



## Georges Bizet / Rodion Shchedrin

(1838–1875 / 1932–)

### Carmen Suite: Selections

In 1967 the Cuban choreographer Alberto Alonso hoped to create a ballet based on the story of *Carmen*, whose story comes from the 1845 novella by Prosper Mérimée. By then, the story of *Carmen* had become inseparable from Bizet's opera, and contemporary composers had trouble accepting the heavy musical baggage. Dmitri Shostakovich declined Alonso's initial offer to compose the music, and Rodion Shchedrin was reluctant. Eventually, Shchedrin came around to the idea, knowing the ballet would be designed for his wife, the famed dancer Maya Pilsetskaya.

Shchedrin took significant liberties with Bizet's music, expanding the percussion section significantly and borrowing musical excerpts from other works by Bizet. He wrote that his ballet was "not simply a slavish obeisance to the genius of Bizet, but rather an attempt at a creative meeting of two minds." The ballet was banned after its first performance and called an insult to Bizet's masterpiece, and for the sexualization of Carmen's character. Today, it is a popular concert piece for string orchestra and percussion.



## Miles Davis / Gil Evans

(1926–1991 / 1912–1988)

### Sketches of Spain: Solea

*Arranged by Matt McMahon & Bernard Rofe*

*Sketches of Spain* represents a unique collaboration between the famed trumpeter Miles Davis and the arranger Gil Evans. The album has its origins in Davis's 1959 visit to the West Coast, where a friend played him Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Davis later said, "I couldn't get it out of my mind. Then Gil and I decided to do this album". The brooding, dramatic Spanish sounds of Rodrigo pervade the entire album.

The final track, *Solea*, is a form of Spanish flamenco music. In this instance it is an Andalusian "song of longing or lament, like the Afro-American blues." Miles Davis's trumpet solo channels the phrasing and timbre of Andalusian gypsies. The back of the original LP bears a quote by the Spanish poet Augusto Ferrán which characterises Miles Davis's "unsparing voice" and the music on the album, especially in *Solea*: "Alas for me! The more I seek solitude, the less of it I find. Whenever I look for it, my shadow looks with me."





## Tomás Luis de Victoria

(1548–1611)

### **Ave Maria a 8**

When one thinks of Renaissance choral music, the pure counterpoint of Palestrina (Italy) and Tallis (England) immediately come to mind. There was, however, a substantial school of Spanish composers whose music achieved a mystical intensity of expression that set them apart from their Italian and English counterparts. Tomás Luis de Victoria's music exemplifies this intensity of expression, a trait which has remained in Spanish music through to the present day. His eight-voice setting of the *Ave Maria*, for two SATB choirs, is written in an antiphonal style which lends itself to the arrangement presented in these concerts: for a choir of strings and jazz quartet.



## Chick Corea

(1941–2021)

### **Spain** Arranged by Matt McMahon & Bernard Rofe

*Spain* is perhaps the best known composition by the late jazz pianist and composer Chick Corea. Originally composed in 1971 for the album *Light as a Feather*, it has since been performed and recorded in countless versions and arrangements. At the time, Corea was in love with Miles Davis's *Sketches of Spain* with Gil Evans, and its treatment of Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Corea "fooled around with that theme, extended it and composed some melodies, which turned out to be the main themes of *Spain*." In 2001 Corea won a Grammy award for a version of *Spain* featuring a jazz sextet performing with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, occasionally referred to as the "definitive" version of the work. It is this rendition which serves as the inspiration for the arrangement presented in these concerts.





20



# SPANISH VARIATIONS

Bernard Zuel talks to Richard Tognetti about how the colours of Spain – as well as its languages, geographies and music – inspired him to create the *Sketches of Spain* program.

**Written by Bernard Zuel**

Bernard Zuel has been listening to music since the glory days of vinyl and writing about music since the noisy days of typewriters. He worked for the Sydney Morning Herald for 25 years and is a lecturer in journalism at Sydney University and Macleay College.





Richard Tognetti knows that for non-Spaniards, including him, Spain comes with built-in expectations – “probably all the clichés that we know” – from food and temperament to movies and landscape. And music.

“It’s all about the rhythm, it’s all about the sultry sensitivities that are able to be slipped into music somehow to create a sense of geography,” says the Australian Chamber Orchestra’s Artistic Director. He goes further, asking, what is that geography? Does it imprint itself on outsiders? Do you even need to go to Spain to feel it or can you get it just by – work with me here, he says – listening to the sounds of people talking?

“Often that’s where the colours of music come from, especially the French. I teach myself French and the more I am able to speak it and read it – badly, of course – the more I realise the nuances of the language are so important. I think that’s an integral part of it, the way people speak and what the language means with different nuances of the sounds.”

Given that the ACO’s program *Sketches of Spain* is rich with interpretations of Spain by composers and arrangers from France, Italy, America and Russia – some of whom knew the country intimately, some filtered through the works of others – how does this language theory translate musically?

“We can say in very specific ways Janáček took from the spoken or verbal utterances of human beings and turned it into music, but I suppose my hypothesis must be if you speak...” Tognetti pauses, searching for the right example. “This flight attendant once came to me and started talking about music, seeing that I

Left: Chick Corea performing at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival, Cheltenham, UK, 2017

“This flight attendant once came to me and started talking about music, seeing that I was a musician, and said ‘I’m totally un-musical’, and something happened, a vocal exclamation, and I said there, you just sang, you just made an utterance.”



was a musician, and said 'I'm totally un-musical', and something happened, a vocal exclamation, and I said there, you just sang, you just made an utterance.

"If you can speak, you're musical, so therefore it's just a matter of expanding that into a musical language. That's one thing. Then there's geography, and the way people travelled and what they brought back."

There are many cultural and geographical layers to this selection of music. For example, Italian-American composer and pianist Chick Corea, who drew inspiration for his masterpiece, *Spain*, from Joaquín Rodrigo's Aranjuez Concerto, first explored it through Gil Evans and Miles Davis' interpretation of the 2nd movement in the 1960 album *Sketches of Spain*.

"At the time I was in love with Miles' *Sketches of Spain* ... I still am," Corea said towards the end of his life. "On that record, Gil has this fantastic arrangement. I fooled around with that theme, extended it and composed some melodies, which turned out to be the main themes of *Spain*."

The cellist and composer Luigi Boccherini was born and educated in Italy and moved to Spain as an adult. Georges Bizet trained and worked in France and Italy, while Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel lived and worked in Paris. Rodion Shchedrin, whose lively, condensed reinterpretation of Bizet's opera, *Carmen*, carries its own excitement – "he's made a wicked little suite there," Tognetti says approvingly – was Moscow-born and educated.

So, Spain, yes, but via a group of non-Spaniards interpreting the work of non-Spaniards influenced by Spain.



Célestine Galli-Marié, dressed for her title role in Bizet's *Carmen*. Photo taken between 1875 and 1883.

**“You can’t refute the background: how you speak and what you’ve grown up with influences your life, no matter how much you might try to deny it or sophisticate yourself.”**



Above: Miles Davis and Gil Evans, conducting, at Columbia Records NYC, 1958.

“That’s particularly true of Miles Davis and Gil Evans. Though Ravel came from [the Basque region in southern France, bordering Spain, his mother being Basque] so he must, again, have imbibed that spirit. He was regarded as French, but the Basque separatists would say he was Basque,” says Tognetti. “Once again, he picked up on the way people spoke and found the rhythms in the speech and the rhythms in the landscape before he moved to Paris and became a universalist, so to speak.

“You can’t refute the background: how you speak and what you’ve grown up with influences your life, no matter how much you might try to deny it or sophisticate yourself.” In key ways, Ravel – “a more universal composer, if you like” – is a lynchpin, providing multiple connections for the program: his work links Spain, traditional composition and jazz in the cross-currents of influence that sum up Tognetti’s concept.

“He was a bower bird, like Stravinsky,” he says. “And the piece we are performing [The Blues movement from his Violin Sonata No.2] shows he was aware of jazz – appropriating! – and thank God he was.”

As with Spain itself – for centuries at the juncture of Western Europe and Africa, of Christian and Islamic thinking and architecture, of the Old World and the New – the intersection of composed music, classical traditions and jazz is the fulcrum of the program. It ranges from the so-called “Third Stream” fusion of jazz and classical music to one of the giants of jazz, Davis, whose own explorations across nearly 50 years took in almost every 20th-century musical form.

Central to the journey from Ravel to Corea is *Sketches of Spain*. Credited to Miles Davis, it is built on the arrangements of Gil Evans, who composed several of the tracks, and is almost defined by its use of space and an elegant melancholy. However, Evans’ piece, ‘Solea’, finds its rhythmic pulse as a relatively optimistic counterpoint.

“I call classical music, ‘shut up and listen music’, because it just doesn’t work when you’re not actually listening,” says Tognetti. “And it’s the same with ‘Solea’. There is that sense of space, and also that sense of strangeness that both Miles Davis and Gil Evans were able to bring. And we have a personal connection with Gil Evans because Maria Schneider [an American composer whose work the ACO has premiered in Australia a number of times] actually worked with Gil Evans, and she talked about him in such high terms, that he really understood what purpose that instruments play and how to get a different space out of them.”

As we speak Tognetti cues up the track, letting it play in the background briefly.

“Gil Evans... I remember when I first heard his music, I thought, wow, is he writing in micro tones or is it just out of tune?” says Tognetti. “Is it deliberate, is it interpretive? For us, in the modern world, with bloody autotune, this is dangerous and raw and ready and searing hot. And that’s the other thing I suppose you think of with Spain, if you are European: the heat. You can’t help but think of the heat.”

He pauses as we listen again. “Yeah. Those fantastic stabbing chords. Gil Evans was the master of it. There was something about Gil Evans: he was able to pick up the sordidness and the sultriness that other people couldn’t. And certainly haven’t been able to since.”

To play the jazz-based compositions, the ACO is augmented by a quartet led by pianist Matt McMahon, with trumpeter Phil Slater, bassist Brett Hirst and percussionist Jess Ciampa. “We collated the program thinking, who the hell are we going to get to play it? And remember when this program was collated [during Covid lockdowns], we were thinking global and acting local,” Tognetti says of the guest musicians. “We asked them early on, would you feel challenged and comfortable by taking this, and their answer was yes.”

“Gil Evans... I remember when I first heard his music, I thought, wow, is he writing in micro tones or is it just out of tune?” says Tognetti. “Is it deliberate, is it interpretive? For us, in the modern world, with bloody autotune, this is dangerous and raw and ready and searing hot.”

According to McMahon, his response was more like hell yeah! He says he has listened to the ACO in the past and thought how much he would love to participate in the “colours” he could hear in an orchestra as adept at challenging themselves as any jazz ensemble.

“It’s really exciting,” McMahon says. “Oddly enough, I’ve watched them a lot over the years and that’s one of the great things that they have: this really solid, wonderful playing of traditional repertoire and then this vision of trying to include other things and take risks and go for something different. That’s a really exciting thing to be part of.”

The willingness to examine a piece from every angle, including the problematic – to be free with unexpected juxtapositions, where “it’s all in the mix” – is an attitude McMahon is familiar with, calling it “just a certain way of thinking” or maybe, a way of being.

“With jazz there may be a composition that has a certain chord structure and we improvise over that chord structure. There will definitely be some of that. And then in a wider sense, improvising can happen on a song, any kind of material, or improvise on nothing at all, which is something [we] have done a lot of,” says McMahon. “So there’s a kind of a spectrum of ways of approaching it. There probably won’t be much totally free playing, but maybe one or two moments where that might happen.”

# The opportunity to test whether their work can be replicated within a larger orchestra, “a whole other world”, is thrilling.

McMahon knows he is on familiar ground. He has a long musical relationship with Slater and Hirst and is excited by connecting again with Ciampa – “this band needed somebody who can play classical percussion and play the drums, and he covers so many bases”. The opportunity to test whether their work can be replicated within a larger orchestra, “a whole other world”, is thrilling.

“I think it’s just going to be what doesn’t get thought of, or spoken about, what assumptions are made about what might happen in this section,” he says. “For instance, Phil Slater would often write a piece of music for me and he would write lots of chords, and the expectation is that I don’t play any of those chords. It’s sort of, this is the song, kind of, but don’t play it. It’s a kind of thing where improvisers are used to taking chances with each other, and I guess when there is an orchestra playing, it’s a different kind of opportunity, while in the background that kind of connection will run through the performance.”

The difference here is that almost all of this music is notated: the “architecture” is known. But there is still freedom and expression, as Tognetti is keen to point out to the “ning nongs out there who say that orchestras are cover bands”.

“Is a theatre troupe a cover band?” Tognetti asks. “You are a musical playwright and you leave a score. In something like [Miles Davis] ‘Bitches Brew’ or particularly ‘Solea’, I would argue that music is there and you interpret it, so you need interpreters like classical music does.”

In his student days, Tognetti went to the Paradise Jazz Club, where he heard a young Dale Barlow and noted the obsession of that generation with the playing and composition of John Coltrane. He remembers thinking, “how do I bring this sense of freedom and danger into the classical music field?” It became a recurring question.

“I worked with Phil Treloar, the percussionist, and he was a colourist and I was very much inspired by that. And Gil Evans, whenever I’m arranging stuff I think of Gil – the colours.”



Interpretation and stimulation goes both ways, says McMahon. “Just hearing the things that have been written can stimulate me into something because I know in four bars-time I’ve got this section coming so I’ve got to try and set that up,” he says.

“I’m guessing, for me, the experience of hearing the orchestra playing will push me and, in the moment, make me do things. And hopefully, if I come up with something that’s interesting, it will reverberate. I mean, people will still be reading the notes, but I can really recontextualise what the musicians are playing by what I’m playing against it.

“More and more I think improvising in various forms is more common. A lot of classical musicians have played in various improvising contexts of one form or another, and obviously in classical music there’s been improvising too since the 1950s and of course in the Classical and Romantic periods. The great composers are improvisers.”

For McMahon, this rollcall of great composers includes Evans and Corea. He still delights in finding the multiple musical tributaries flowing through *Spain* or *Sketches of Spain*.

“Chick Corea is someone who is associated with music from South and Central America, so we are getting a kind of Cuban influence, which is of course related to Spain,” he says. “In this arrangement there are little moments of various other rhythms, like samba rhythms or tango rhythms and things like that, that are part of Spanish music in a very broad sense.

“I’m guessing, for me, the experience of hearing the orchestra playing will push me and, in the moment, make me do things. And hopefully, if I come up with something that’s interesting, it will reverberate.

“I think [the] *Sketches of Spain* album is a mix of different kinds of composition and Gil Evans based that very much on traditional Spanish music, with ‘Solea’ having much deeper roots in the music of Spain. Miles is interesting because he clearly loved Spanish music, loved flamenco, but he is still playing himself, keeping his identity. That’s the beauty of it: you’re getting some of the flamenco and this other sound, from moment to moment.”

Both Tognetti and McMahon speak of the “colours” they hear in the other’s forms. What do these look like to the jazz man?

“I think sometimes I just hear the sound of the strings and the transparency in the fullness of that,” McMahon says. “I can hear space in there for something extra, and sometimes listening to a piece I go, ‘that’s a great chord, what would I playing in there?’ So it’s a very intuitive feeling. I think with the ACO in particular, because of the way they play – it might be the violins playing really high and something beautiful going on in the cello – I can see a little space in there and think, that would be cool fitting in there.”

Below: Gil Evans and Miles Davis, mid-1950s. Photo by Don Hunstein.



Rather than a potential breaking point between theoretically free-from-rules jazz and supposedly tied-by-those-rules classical, it is the common ground he argues, the starting point.

"I really, really enjoy that side of playing: making kind of broad decisions about here I might play something, and I might not play something there – that kind of orchestral decision – and seeing what impact that that has."

Tognetti says that the colours, the cross-currents, the composers – indeed the essence of Spain as realised through these pieces – is at its heart a balance of freedom and control. He sees that balance in Corea and others in "the greatest age of jazz, arguably, when jazz became art music and there was a liberation". But not everyone understood the message.

"The Third Stream was great because it really opened up many doors and at the same time created a certain discipline and restrictions, which you'd need, otherwise you're just a hippie on the streets of Byron," he says. "Nothing wrong with that, but you're not going to be in the great jazz class of the world. You need restrictions, as in rules, like how harmony proceeds. And if you are going to break those harmonic rules you need good reason."

Rather than a potential breaking point between theoretically free-from-rules jazz and supposedly tied-by-those-rules classical, it is the common ground he argues, the starting point.

"Coltrane and Davis, and Evans, being an arranger, knew those rules and restrictions and were able to break them. Chick Corea, like Keith Jarrett, came out of, and in awe of, the harmonic rules that had been passed down and codified and developed by Bach," says Tognetti.

"I can't think of any jazz musician who's worth anything who didn't like Bach. And if they didn't I would immediately dismiss them. That's where Chick Corea comes from ... and therefore it was possible for him to build a monumental orchestral landscape out of his talents and abilities."





Seated Musicians for El Jaleo (cropped) by John Singer Sargent, 1882







# RICHARD TOGNETTI

## Artistic Director

---

Richard Tognetti is Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. He has established an international reputation for his compelling performances and artistic individualism.

Richard began his studies in his home town of Wollongong with William Primrose, then with Alice Waten at the Sydney Conservatorium, and Igor Ozim at the Bern Conservatory, where he was awarded the Tschumi Prize as the top graduate soloist in 1989. Later that year he led several performances of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and that November was appointed as the Orchestra's lead violin and, subsequently, Artistic Director.

Richard performs on period, modern and electric instruments and his numerous arrangements, compositions and transcriptions have expanded the chamber orchestra repertoire and been performed throughout the world. As director or soloist, he has appeared with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Academy of Ancient Music, Slovene Philharmonic Orchestra, Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Hong Kong Philharmonic, Camerata Salzburg, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Irish Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Nordic Chamber Orchestra and all the major Australian symphony orchestras, most recently as soloist and director with the Melbourne and Tasmanian symphony orchestras.



Richard also performed the Australian premieres of Ligeti's Violin Concerto and Lutosławski's Partita. He was appointed the Barbican Centre's first Artist-in-Residence at Milton Court Concert Hall in London in 2016. Richard created the Huntington Festival in Mudgee, New South Wales and was Artistic Director of the Festival Maribor in Slovenia from 2008 to 2015.

Richard was the co-composer of the score for Peter Weir's *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, starring Russell Crowe; he co-composed the soundtrack to Tom Carroll's surf film *Storm Surfers*; and created *The Red Tree*, inspired by Shaun Tan's book. He also created the documentary film *Musica Surfica*, as well as *The Glide*, *The Reef* and *The Crowd*. Richard collaborated with Director Jennifer Peedom and Stranger Than Fiction to create the films *Mountain* and *River* for the ACO, the former of which went on to become the highest-grossing homegrown documentary in Australian cinemas ever following its release.

Richard was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2010. He holds honorary doctorates from three Australian universities and was made a National Living Treasure in 1999. He performs on the 1743 'Carrodus' Guarneri del Gesù violin, lent to him by an anonymous Australian private benefactor.

# THE ACO



“The Australian Chamber Orchestra is uniformly high-octane, arresting and never ordinary.”

– **The Australian**

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its explosive performances and brave interpretations. Steeped in history but always looking to the future, ACO programs embrace celebrated classics alongside new commissions, and adventurous cross-artform collaborations.

Led by Artistic Director Richard Tognetti since 1990, the ACO performs more than 100 concerts each year. Whether performing in Manhattan, New York, or Wollongong, NSW, the ACO is unwavering in its commitment to creating transformative musical experiences. The Orchestra regularly collaborates with artists and musicians who share its ideology, from instrumentalists, to vocalists, to cabaret performers, to visual artists and film makers.

In addition to its national and international touring schedule, the Orchestra has an active recording program across CD, vinyl and digital formats. Recent releases include *Water / Night Music*, the first Australian-produced classical vinyl for two decades, *Brahms Symphonies 3 & 4*, and the soundtrack to the cinematic collaboration, *River*.

In 2020 the ACO launched its inaugural digital subscription 'ACO StudioCasts', an acclaimed award-winning season of cinematic and immersive concert films.

[aco.com.au](http://aco.com.au)



## Matt McMahon

### Piano

Matt McMahon is a Sydney-based pianist and composer. He has won awards including the National Jazz Award and the Freedman Jazz Fellowship and appears on Aria and Bell award-winning albums. He leads his own groups and works in collaboration with many of Australia's most respected musicians, performing within Australia and internationally.

He has released ten albums as a leader or co-leader, and appears on many other albums which feature his compositions and improvisations.

He has performed with some of Australia's most distinguished musicians and groups including Band of Five Names, Vince Jones, Joseph Tawadros, Dr G. Yunupingu, Bernie McGann, Katie Noonan, Jonathan Zwartz, Steve Hunter, Jamie Oehlers, Emma Pask, Simon Barker, Andrea Keller, Sandy Evans, Carl Dewhurst, and Phil Slater.

Matt has performed with many visiting artists on their Australian tours including Wynton Marsalis, Veronica Swift, Bobby Previte, Greg Osby, Sharon Shannon, Bob Hurst, Aaron Goldberg and Mary Coughlan.



## Phil Slater

### Trumpet

Phil Slater is a trumpet player and composer living and working in Wollongong, NSW. He has released ten critically acclaimed recordings as a leader or co-leader, including the recent award-winning album *The Dark Pattern*.

Phil has performed and recorded with a wide range of artists including Archie Roach, Paul Grabowsky, Vince Jones, Missy Higgins, Lou Reed, Bernie McGann, Katie Noonan, Jonathan Zwartz, Andrea Keller, Genevieve Lacey, PNAU, the Australian Art Orchestra and many others. He has composed and performed original music for theatre, cinema and television including productions with Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir, Bangarra, and Legs on The Wall.

Phil has been awarded the Bell Award for Australian Jazz Artist of the Year and Best Australian Contemporary Jazz Ensemble, the Freedman Fellowship, the National Jazz Award, and the Limelight Award for Outstanding Contribution to Australian Jazz. He holds a PhD from the University of Sydney, which studied skill acquisition and motor learning, and is a part-time Senior Lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.





## Brett Hirst

### Bass

Brett Hirst is a New Zealand-born bassist and composer who has been based this side of the Tasman for over 20 years, and currently resides in the Blue Mountains. He has established himself as one of the most in-demand sidemen in the country and maintains a busy recording and performance schedule working with many of Australia's top musicians, as well as international jazz and contemporary artists.

Brett plays both acoustic and electric bass across a wide range of styles. He has been a long-time collaborator with local jazz luminaries such as Mike Nock, Sandy Evans, Vince Jones, Mark Isaacs, James Muller, Simon Barker, Phil Slater and Matt McMahon; as well as singer/songwriter Lior, and Katie Noonan.

As a sideman, Brett has appeared with many international artists of note including Ricky Ford, Sheila Jordan, Peter Omara, Adam Nussbaum, Taylor Eigsti, Mark Guiliana, Jochen Rueckert, Ingrid Jensen, Nate Wood, Baikida Carroll and Charenee Wade.

Brett leads his own groups from time to time and his compositions appear on albums by James Muller, Sandy Evans, Red Fish Blue and Lior, among others.



## Jess Ciampa

### Drums

Jess began his musical life as a trumpet player, changing to percussion halfway through his undergraduate degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

He is a multi-instrumentalist, at home in a variety of styles ranging from orchestral through to jazz, Latin and commercial. He has performed with ensembles including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Synergy Percussion and Taikoz and was principal percussionist for both Sydney seasons of *The Lion King* stage show. He has toured Australia with the Musica Viva in Schools program for three decades.

In the commercial world Jess has recorded and toured with artists such as Tina Arena and Ian Moss. For over a decade he was a member of triple ARIA award-winning group Monsieur Camembert and salsa big band Mucho Mambo. For several years Jess toured Europe extensively with The Spaghetti Western Orchestra, who performed return seasons at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London as well as at the 2011 BBC Proms in The Royal Albert Hall.



Brian Nixon

**Percussion**

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After studying classical guitar for six years, Brian Nixon became more interested in hitting things than plucking them. In 1977, while still at school, studying with Richard Miller and playing with Willoughby Brass Band and the Sydney Youth Orchestra, Brian was chosen to represent Australia as a percussionist in the first Asian Regional Youth Music Camp held in Manila, Philippines.

Brian has been the Australian Chamber Orchestra's Guest Principal Timpani for over 35 years, is Principal Timpani with the Australian World Orchestra and also performs regularly with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australian Brandenburg, and Australian Opera & Ballet Orchestra.

He has performed as a drummer, timpanist and percussionist with artists and ensembles including Australia Ensemble, Synergy Percussion, Pinchgut Opera, John Farnham, Harry Connick Jr, Silverchair and INXS. He has also performed on over 130 albums and on countless movie soundtracks.

Brian founded and directed the percussion program at Barker College, Hornsby until 2009. He has adjudicated many NSW and national competitions, and examined for the AMEB, NSW Brass Band Association, NSW Conservatorium and Canberra School of Music.

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Australian Chamber Orchestra

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The Chairman's Council is a limited membership association which supports the ACO's international touring program and enjoys private events in the company of Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra. For more information please call Tom Tansey, Head of Philanthropy and Partnerships, on (02) 8274 3828.

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This philanthropic program for young supporters engages with Australia's next generation of great musicians while offering unique musical and networking experiences. For more information please call Celeste Moore, Philanthropy Manager, on (02) 8274 3803.

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Thank you to all the generous donors who contribute to our Learning & Engagement, Renewal, Instruments, International and Regional Touring and Commissioning programs. We are extremely grateful for the support we receive to maintain these annual programs.

To discuss making a donation to the ACO, or if you would like to direct your support in other ways, please contact Jill Colvin, Director of Philanthropy & Partnerships, on (02) 8274 3835.

*Program names as at 15 March 2022*

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