

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



# POSTCARDS FROM ITALY

Program in Short

The music you're  
about to hear

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Darkness and Light

Writer Emily Bitto on Italy's  
seductive contrasts

p.16

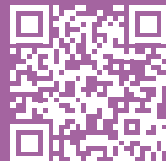


# ACO NEXT

ACO Next is a unique membership program for budding philanthropists and music lovers.

Members experience the Orchestra at exclusive private events in Sydney and Melbourne, forge connections with like-minded individuals who are passionate about the Arts, and help shape Australia's cultural landscape for the next generation.

For details on how you can be involved, contact Celeste Moore at [celeste.moore@aco.com.au](mailto:celeste.moore@aco.com.au) or on 02 8274 3803.



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.

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The ACO thanks our generous supporters

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# WELCOME

Welcome to *Postcards from Italy*.

This performance is a musical love letter to a country that has inspired countless musicians and artists throughout the centuries.

An intimate ensemble of six ACO musicians – Helena, Ike, Stef, Liz, Tipi and Julian – perform a glorious program of music that basks in our enduring captivation with Italy, from Bach's *Italian Concerto*, in a new arrangement by Tipi, and Tchaikovsky's beloved *Souvenir de Florence*, through to Giovanni Sollima's *Viaggio in Italia* and Thomas Adès' *Arcadiana*.

Three of our musicians on stage will perform on precious Italian Golden Age string instruments. A period lasting from the 17th century to the middle 18th century in Cremona, the Golden Age is regarded as the pinnacle of fine string instrument making, with instruments from this period prized around the world for their tonal excellence, design, and beauty. In the hands of Helena, Tipi and Julian, these extraordinary instruments, the 1732 'ex-Dollfus' Stradivarius violin, a 1616 Brothers Amati cello and a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ cello, become living pieces of history as they bring this timeless music to life.

We have recently announced our 2024 Season, and I hope that you have received a brochure and are exploring our offering online. I think that next year is very special indeed, and I encourage you to renew your subscription if you haven't done so already.

If you are not yet a subscriber to the ACO, 2024 is a great year to start!

I do hope that you enjoy the performance.



**Richard Evans AM**  
Managing Director

**Join the conversation**

#ACO23Season |     

@AustralianChamberOrchestra

## News



## ACO 2024

We are delighted to unveil our 2024 Season, with subscriptions now on sale.

Our 2024 Season embodies the very essence of the ACO: vibrant collaborations, old friends, new friends, and the Orchestra showcased in music from the celebrated classics to the sounds of tomorrow.

Explore the full ACO 2024 Season at [aco.com.au/2024](https://aco.com.au/2024)



## Japan Tour

OCTOBER

The ACO are set to return to Japan, a country with which the Orchestra has deep personal ties, to perform at Tokyo's Kioi Hall, in a concert featuring the music of Janáček and Beethoven, directed by Richard Tognetti.

## ACO Pier 2/3

## SEPTEMBER

ACO Families:  
The Princess, The Pea  
(and The Brave  
Escapee)

27 SEPTEMBER – 7 OCTOBER

ACO Pier 2/3, Sydney

Join rebellious Princess Isabella as she embarks on an epic adventure in this 21st-century reimagining of a much-loved fairytale. Featuring theatrics and live music from the musicians of the ACO, this is an exciting new ACO Families production that will ignite your imagination and heart.

For children aged 3+ and their families.

## OCTOBER



## ACO Total Immersion

27–28 OCTOBER

ACO Pier 2/3, Sydney

Step inside Pier 2/3 and experience live music like never before.

*ACO Total Immersion* is an intimate and exclusive performance event that allows audiences to weave their way through the ACO's award-winning home at Pier 2/3 to explore three different and immersive performance experiences, seated amongst the musicians of the ACO.

Sounds of Australia  
Family Day

29 OCTOBER

ACO Pier 2/3, Sydney

Join the ACO for an immersive day of discovery for the whole family, featuring performances with didgeridoo virtuoso William Barton and the ACO.

Suitable for children of all ages and their families.

## National Tours

## NOVEMBER

Chopin & the  
Mendelssohns

9–22 NOVEMBER

National Tour

Pianist Polina Leschenko joins Richard Tognetti and the ACO for a program full of brilliant music-making, deep emotions and profound connections, featuring Chopin's Piano Concerto No.2 and Mendelssohn's Concerto for Violin and Piano.

# ACO 2024 NATIONAL CONCERT SEASON

RICHARD TOGNETTI • ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW ON  
SALE FROM \$150\*



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Australia  
Council  
for the Arts



\*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies. Based on D-Res Flexi-subscriptions.

# PROGRAM

Helena Rathbone Violin  
 Ike See Violin  
 Stefanie Farrands Viola  
 Elizabeth Woolnough Viola  
 Timo-Veikko Valve Cello  
 Julian Thompson Cello

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The concert will last approximately one hour and 40 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.

*Postcards from Italy* will be broadcast on Friday 13 October, 1pm and available on demand for 30 days after.

# MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage  
for this performance.

## Discover more

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



**Helena Rathbone**  
Principal Violin

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Helena plays the 1732 'ex-Dollfus' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from anonymous Australian private benefactors. Her Chair is sponsored by Margaret Gibbs & Rodney Cameron.



**Ike See**  
Violin

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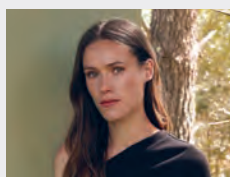
Ike plays his own 2021 Zygmuntowicz violin. His Chair is sponsored by Ian Lansdown & Tricia Bell.



**Stefanie Farrands**  
Principal Viola

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



**Elizabeth Woolnough**  
Viola

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



**Timo-Veikko Valve**  
Principal Cello

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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 CM.



**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.



Pianist Polina Leschenko joins Richard Tognetti and the ACO to perform Chopin's Piano Concerto No.2 and Mendelssohn's Concerto for Violin and Piano.



Australian Chamber Orchestra

# CHOPIN & THE MENDELSSOHN'S

**9-22 NOVEMBER**

Newcastle, Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

Tickets from \$49\* / \$35\* for U35s

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GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



\*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies.



Still from *Boccaccio '70* 1962, co-written and directed by Federico Fellini.

Federico Fellini (1920–1993) was an Italian filmmaker who is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential filmmakers of all time. He is known for his distinctive and deeply personal style of filmmaking, which incorporated charming whimsical and dreamlike elements. Many of his films are synonymous with Italy, drawn from iconic scenes filmed at locations including the Colosseum, Trevi Fountain and Baths of Caracalla.



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## 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.

**Wollongong Town Hall**

**Genevieve Lang**

Thu 14 Sep 6.45pm

**Melbourne Recital Hall**

**Megan Burslem**

Sat 16 Sep 6.45pm

Mon 18 Sep 6.45pm

**Arts Centre Melbourne**

**Megan Burslem**

Sun 17 Sep 1.45pm

**City Recital Hall, Sydney**

**Genevieve Lang**

Tue 19 Sep 7.15pm

Wed 20 Sep 6.15pm

Fri 22 Sep 12.45pm

Sat 23 Sep 6.15pm

**Sydney Opera House**

**Genevieve Lang**

Sun 24 Sep 1.15pm

**QPAC Concert Hall, Brisbane**

**Matthew Hodge**

Mon 25 Sep 6.15pm

**Llewellyn Hall, Canberra**

**Kim Cunio**

Tue 26 Sep 7.15pm

Pre-concert speakers are subject to change.



## Thomas Adès

(1971–)

### **Arcadiana, Op.12: I. Venezia notturna**

*Venezia notturna* (Venice by night) is the opening movement from the string quartet *Arcadiana* by multi-award-winning British composer Thomas Adès. Composed in 1994, *Arcadiana* is one of his earliest masterpieces, evoking a sense of lost time and place. In the composer's own words, each movement is "an image associated with ideas of the idyll, vanishing, vanished or imaginary". The first movement depicts a mysterious night in Venice, with suggestions of eery moonlight and masked figures lurking around every corner. Wandering through all of this is a rocking gondola driven by a crooning singer whose song is subtly alluded to, before disappearing into the moonlight.



## Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750)

### **Italian Concerto, BWV971**

*Arranged for strings by Timo-Veikko Valve*

One of Bach's great achievements was to enrich the German Baroque style by distilling compositional elements from abroad, particularly Italy and France. As a young man he spent countless hours studying, copying out, and transcribing music by Italian masters, notably Antonio Vivaldi. These concertos for strings had such an impact on Bach that at least a dozen of his concertos for harpsichord and organ have been found to be Vivaldi transcriptions. Even Bach's original concertos reveal the strong influence of Vivaldi's model, from their adherence to a three-movement structure that favoured ritornello fast movements and rhapsodic slow movements, to the florid and flamboyant solo writing for which Vivaldi was famous.

The *Italian Concerto* for solo harpsichord appropriately appears alongside the *French Overture* in the second volume of his *Clavier-Übung* – a bold display of Bach's mastery of both styles. Bach gave it the full title "*Concerto nach Italiænischen Gusto*" (Concerto in the Italian taste), and in the Italian taste it truly is. The first movement is a galant ritornello (a form where the main theme always returns) that easily recalls the concerti grossi of Vivaldi, without ever relinquishing Bach's own musical identity.

The second movement features an arioso solo melody over a pulsing quaver accompaniment. The spirited finale returns to ritornello form, implying concertino solos in each of its many episodes.

Given the form's roots in Italian string music, the *Italian Concerto* has been arranged especially for these performances by ACO Principal Cello Timo-Veikko Valve, transforming Bach's keyboard solo into a concerto grosso for strings.



## Giovanni Sollima

(1966–)

### Viaggio in Italia (selections)

*Viaggio in Italia* (A Journey in Italy) is an hour-long chamber suite in several movements by Italian cellist and composer Giovanni Sollima. In it, he seeks to embody the spirit of Italian luminaries including Michelangelo, Dante, Leonardo da Vinci, Scarlatti and Casanova, among others. Several of the movements feature a soprano singing texts by Michelangelo, Francesco Borromini and Giordano Bruno.

The selections we have chosen give a glimpse into Sollima's world of the Italian arts. "Giotto – Dante" recalls Italian plainchant – a hymn of 13th-century composer Fra' Giuliano da Spira (Julian of Speyer). "Campo dei miracoli" (Field of Miracles) depicts an area in Pisa, Tuscany which is celebrated as an important centre of European medieval art and one of the finest architectural complexes in the world, with the Duomo at its heart. "La camera bianca" (The White Room) evokes rustic fiddling and dancing.



## Luigi Boccherini

(1743–1805)

### String Quintet in C minor, G.355

The brother of Spain's King Charles III, Don Luis, was an avid musician who played in his own string quartet. He hired Italian cello virtuoso and composer Luigi Boccherini as a court composer and performer in this quartet, leading Boccherini to compose over a hundred quintets for two violins, viola and two cellos.

The Quintet in C minor is an "opera grande" (grand work) in a structure similar to Haydn's string quartets, but maintains an

underlying darkness, perhaps echoing Boccherini's own ill health in his later years. The first movement is a sombre Adagio recalling better days. The troubled second movement features rapid interplay between the instrumentalists, always leaving the listener on the edge of their seat. The tense and stormy finale returns to the troubled world of the second movement, this time even more terrifying in its musical shocks and surprises.



## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

(1840–1893)

### **Souvenir de Florence, Op.70**

The String Sextet *Souvenir de Florence* was Tchaikovsky's last chamber work. It was given its title because the composer sketched one of the work's principal themes while visiting Florence, where he also composed his penultimate opera *The Queen of Spades*. He completed the work upon his return to St Petersburg, and the first performance took place in 1882, two weeks before the premiere of *The Nutcracker*.

Tchaikovsky recalled writing the sextet with “the greatest enthusiasm and without the least exertion”, perhaps as light relief from his efforts on *The Queen of Spades*. He knew the city of Florence well, having made three visits in 1877, 1879 and 1890, but although he no doubt wanted to celebrate his experiences in the Italian city, there is little explicitly “Italian” about the sextet, with its folk-like melodies in the final two movements instead having a markedly Russian flavour. The spirit of the sextet as a whole, however, has a spirit and charm that is definitely Florentine in nature.

The first movement's bold opening and sweeping second subjects are somewhat reminiscent of an Italian serenade, also recalling the sunny works of his *Serenade for Strings*. But the clearest depiction of Italy occurs in the second movement, implying a ride on a gondola with pizzicati evoking a serenader's mandolin, and the lyrical melodies the serenader's tenor voice. The mysterious third movement opens with lightness of touch that grows to a vigorous scherzo-like middle section, before dying away into the distance. The Finale, perhaps the most explicitly Russian of the four movements, pits vigorous accented figures against each other in a kind of peasant dance. Tchaikovsky works his themes into fugue-like sections, before concluding with an ecstatic coda.



Still from *I Vitelloni* 1953, co-written and directed by Federico Fellini.





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*Street in Venice*, 1882 by John Singer Sargent. National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

A painting of a narrow street in Italy, likely a Venetian alleyway. In the foreground, two figures are seen from behind, walking away from the viewer. They are dressed in dark, heavy clothing, possibly winter coats and hats. The street is flanked by tall, light-colored buildings with dark windows and doorways. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere. The style is impressionistic, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and shadow.

# DARKNESS AND LIGHT

For more than a millennium, the chiaroscuro of Italy's seductive contrasts has inspired artists and thinkers from all over the world.

**Written by Emily Bitto.**

Emily Bitto is an award-winning and widely published writer of fiction, poetry and non-fiction. Her debut novel, *The Strays*, was the winner of the 2015 Stella Prize. Her second novel, *Wild Abandon*, won the 2022 Margaret and Colin Roderick Award and was shortlisted for the ALS Gold Medal. Emily has taught literary studies and creative writing at various institutions over the past decade and is currently a tutor and course advisor at the Faber Writing Academy.

Many readers will be familiar with Dr Samuel Johnson's famous declaration that "a man who has not been to Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of traveling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean." In fact, Italy functions as a symbol for the very longing to travel – for the "life elsewhere" – itself: a seduction to which artists have perhaps been especially prone.

In 2018, before the pandemic made travel impossible for a while, I was awarded a BR Whiting Studio residency by the Australia Council for the Arts, which allowed me to live and write for six months in an apartment in Trastevere, Rome. The apartment was originally owned by Lorri Whiting (née Fraser), a Melbourne-born abstract painter, and her husband Bertie, a poet. The Whitings left Australia in 1955 and never returned, remaining in Italy for the rest of their lives. After Bertie's death in 1988, Lorri donated the apartment to the Australia Council to be used for a writing residency.

Implicitly, this bequest is founded on the belief that travel, and openness and exposure to other places, other cultures and other artistic traditions, is beneficial – if not essential – to an artist's development. Perhaps it is also predicated on the idea of Italy as the cultural centre, a locus of art and culture that will inevitably seep into the soul of the visiting antipodean artist and elevate her work. While this may be a particularly Australian attitude, closely related to our longstanding tradition of "cultural cringe", in projecting our fantasies onto Italy in particular, we are not alone.

Undoubtedly this is in part due to the cultural domination and colonising reach of the Roman Empire. But if what we now refer to as Italian culture has historically exerted such influence over artists and their creative output, it is likewise true that artists – whether painters, writers, musicians, filmmakers or photographers – are essential to the *idea* of a particular place that accumulates over time within the cultural imagination. Italy is no exception.

When I arrived in Rome, I brought with me a panoply of images, assumptions and fantasies about the place and culture that, on reflection, were influenced far more by the literary representations produced by non-Italian writers – from the English Romantic poets Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats, to Henry James, Thomas Mann and especially, in my case, to Australian literary Italophile David Malouf – than by either factual research or by accounts created by actual Italians. From the English Romantics I had absorbed the idea of Italy as a locus of *the sublime*, as well as the idealised image of literary pilgrimage or "grand tour" – though because both Keats and Shelley died young in Italy, there is a



Lorri Whiting



*The Arch of Titus and the Coliseum, Rome, 1846, by Thomas Hartley Crome.*

certain fatal (though not unromantic) tragedy in the associations that cling to their representations.

From Henry James I assimilated the idea of Italy as the apex of taste and beauty, layered with history, and complex almost beyond capturing: a place against which the oldest human dramas of power, desire and morality play out with a fitting sense of grandeur and significance. From Mann's *Death in Venice*, its tale of decadence, desire and death set against the watery ineffability of the sinking city, I envisioned a place that seemed to belong more to dream than reality. And from David Malouf I imbibed a particularly Australian fantasy of Italy, characterised by an excruciating sense of distance and the image of the Italian journey as an essential rite of passage.

This is at its seductive, if self-deprecating, height in the final lines of Malouf's poem, "The Little Aeneid":

...With the epic two days out from land, a thousand  
lines break loose, the apron  
strings of a suburban  
Dido snap, the new life  
beckons—a coast whose every promontory  
glitters with artefacts, plains  
all air, by moonlight ghostly  
with stick-white asphodel.  
In your loins the dragon  
howls for empire. Time  
like a new land awaits  
your entry. Give it  
a name. Three syllables: say, Italy.

Its irony notwithstanding, this poem created a yearning in me, long before I actually reached Italy, to attach myself to the lineage of the artist-traveller: to return, like those before me, altered by my encounter, and perhaps even to contribute my own representation of Italy to the great corpus.

Its irony notwithstanding, this poem created a yearning in me, long before I actually reached Italy, to attach myself to the lineage of the artist-traveller.



David Malouf.  
Photo by photo by  
Conrad Del Villar

In his epic study of the art and history of Rome, Robert Hughes similarly begins by describing his early longing to visit the eternal city, and his fantasy that it was in Italy that “the real thing” – that is, undeniably “great art” – was to be found:

“Where could one see the real thing? Clearly, only in Rome ... Come down to it, how would one know that art of any kind was any good? Mainly – if not only – by going to Rome, and seeing the real thing in the real place. Rome would be my entry-door to Italy and then the rest of Europe. And with that would come sophistication and taste and possibly even spirituality. Not to mention all the other more earthly delights I was also looking forward to.”

As in Malouf’s poem, there is a particularly antipodean self-deprecation in Hughes’s depiction of his youthful longing for “culture” – which he was yet to recognise could, of course, be found at home – and a self-conscious gesturing to the idea of Italy as a symbol of fantasy.

This idea of Italy as a locus of fantasy mediated through earlier artistic renderings goes back centuries. Historian Mario Casari examines 12th-century descriptions of Rome by Arabic and Persian writers, historians and geographers. Most had never travelled there and based their accounts on literary texts circulating at the time, creating visions of the city constituted by rumours and second-hand, often spurious fictions. None of the 17 most prominent Arab geographers had seen the city with their own eyes. One of them, Yāqūt, went as far as declaring that his methodology allowed the inclusion of potentially specious details, because he was following the example of scholars who had come before him.

Casari reveals that the most consistent descriptions of Rome in these texts represent it as a labyrinth designed to seduce and entrap the traveller. This image can be traced back to a text dated between 946–948, a kind of travel guide that says about the structure of the city: “Its walls are most extraordinary: there are ten walls, one after the other; when a foreigner enters and walks along the space between the walls, until he gets near the city, it seems as if they are spinning around him, so he wants to leave but he gets confused and then might get lost.”

The figure of the labyrinth lends itself to multiple interpretations, but suffice it to say that it is a space of myth, of twisting, multiple pathways with a potentially dark centre. As with Hughes’s idea of an Italy that encompasses both the height of taste and spirituality and the baser “earthly delights”, here we see a similarly ambivalent image of sophistication, seduction and entrapment.

According to literary critic Michael L. Ross, this dual aspect – the light and the dark – is at the heart of artistic representations of

# Johann Sebastian Bach is another artist on whom the influence of Italy and Italian culture was mediated by absorbing the work of other artists.

Italy: “Few [places],” he observes, “have been more copiously productive of ambivalence.”

Johann Sebastian Bach is another artist on whom the influence of Italy and Italian culture was mediated by absorbing the work of other artists. Because of his commitments to court and church, Bach was never able to travel to Italy, but he maintained a fascination with the musical developments of the country throughout his life. Maggie Lu describes how, in the 1730s and '40s, he was dissatisfied with his life in Leipzig and was eager to expand at least his artistic, if not his literal, horizons. During his 20s and 30s, he spent countless hours seeking out, copying and arranging manuscripts by Vivaldi, Marcello and others, regarding them as an opportunity to refine, test and expand his compositional toolkit. And he continued to derive creative stimulation from Italian concertos into his later life: his ‘Concerto in the Italian taste’, as the Italian Concerto was officially titled, was published when he was 50.

Lu’s description of the quintessentially Italian elements of the work – that is, those that bear the influence of Bach’s absorption of Italian music and musical trends – is informative. She contrasts the newer, Italianate elements of the *Italian Concerto* with Bach’s earlier style, characterising the former as “light-hearted”, “natural”, “youthful”, “relaxed” and “immediately appealing”, and the latter as more densely woven, “intellectual”, “complicated” and even “laboured”.

This set of duelling adjectives maps onto the opposition between the ideas of north and south, with *the south* evoking associations of warmth, sunshine, bountiful nature and a sensuousness that veers towards decadence. Opposed to this is the idea of Bach’s native *north* as a place of cold, formality and austerity. In the words of Ross, for the northern artist, Italy embodies a fantasy of “personal freedom that transcends, while it includes, artistic licence” and at the furthest extreme, “the unrestrained public enactment of the emotions and appetites”.





Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

In contrast to Bach, another of the northerners on the program, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, spent significant periods of time in Italy and was profoundly influenced by the place and its culture. In a letter describing his first visit to Rome, Tchaikovsky writes: “Strolling around the city I actually saw the sights of the capital, i.e. the coliseum, the thermae of Caracella, the Capitoline, the Vatican, the Pantheon, and, finally, the acme of celebration of human genius, the Cathedral of Peter and Paul [sic].” The adverb “actually” is telling here, as it alludes to the fact that these were places already alive in his imagination, which he was now, at last, able to view with his own eyes. On a later visit he writes, “I sat for a long time in the Sistine Chapel – an absolute miracle. For almost the first time in my life I was enraptured by the art of painting.”

Tchaikovsky’s ideas of “Italianness”, which inflected his *Souvenir de Florence*, are thus clearly characterised by great admiration and reverence for its art and architecture. However, in another letter, he too seems to conceive of Italy as a culture marked by extremes of both light and dark, civilisation and decadence. On the same trip, during which he gazed in rapture at the Sistine Chapel, Tchaikovsky witnessed that most potent symbol of Italian decadence and licentiousness, the carnival. “We have a carnival in full swing here,” he writes. “I only knew this from Berlioz’s [*Roman Carnival Overture*], and I can tell you that it well conveys the cheerful ebullience of the Roman crowd. He who hasn’t seen this cannot imagine what a demonic frenzy this is.”

In his survey of literary representations of Rome, Florence and Venice, Ross concludes that these opposing binaries are the essence of what constitutes “Italianness” for foreign travellers and artists. Delving a little further into the specific tropes that cluster around these three cities reveals a rich and fascinating lexicon of image and symbols.

Florence, Ross observes, is represented via the binary between paganism and Christianity, which expresses itself even within the

On a later visit he writes, “I sat for a long time in the Sistine Chapel – an absolute miracle. For almost the first time in my life I was enraptured by the art of painting.”



Duomo Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence, Italy.

city's architecture, with the black and white patterning of many of the city's church facades itself playing out the symbolic victory of enlightenment over an earlier "dark" pagan past. Venice is symbolised by the palace and the prison described in Canto IV of Byron's *Childe Harold*, between the grandeur of the city's long-famed wealth and history and its fading future as memento mori. Finally, Ross classifies Rome as a place in which limitless extent, in time and space, coexists with the idea of the centre, roughly coinciding with the contrast between antiquity and modernity.

In weighing all of these various and competing symbolic images of Italy, it strikes me that they may all be summed up in the Italian term *chiaroscuro*, with its implication that contrast is necessary to show each competing aspect to its best effect.

To complicate the picture still further: as well as functioning as the very symbol of the fantasy of travel, another important facet of the idea of Italy appears to be that it is a place – perhaps the only place – that is able to live up to – even surpass – the fantasy of which it is the symbol. After poking fun at his juvenile longing to journey to the cultural centre of Rome to find "the real thing", Hughes continues by earnestly declaring that "nothing exceeds the delight of one's first immersion in Rome".

My own experience of Italy confirms this. While in residence at the BR Whiting Studio, I was forever gasping at the storied sites that greeted me at every turn. I visited Naples, Sicily, Pompeii, the Amalfi Coast, Lake Como, Tuscany, Venice and Piedmont. I experienced not one moment in which I thought that the idea I had of the place, gathered from all those writers who had been here before me, was grander or more beautiful than the place itself.

However, like all fantasies, Italy has its shadows. Due to the failure of the Italian government to upgrade their waste disposal system by the date when the EU banned incineration, piles of uncollected rubbish littered the streets of Rome during the months I spent there. Scores of refugees, mostly from North and Sub-Saharan Africa, begged or set up illegal stalls on street corners. Those I spoke to were trying to get to Germany, where they at least had a hope of being granted refugee status and allowed basic work rights. At the same time, the far-right education minister was proposing to exclude history from the high school exit exams, with the result that its prominence in the curriculum would steeply decline.

And so I too continue to reinforce the tradition of representing Italy as a *chiaroscuro* – or perhaps more accurately, as a place upon which visitors and the artists who continue to be inspired by it, persist in projecting their own ambivalent fantasies. Fortunately, then, that the program for this concert also includes work by two actual Italians, to offset all this fervent fantasising. ●



Still from *The Nights of Cabiria* 1957, co-written and directed by Federico Fellini.

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# HELENA RATHBONE

## Principal Violin

---

Helena Rathbone grew up in North London in a family of musicians. She started playing the violin at the age of five with the London Suzuki group, and from the age of nine attended the 'Pro Corda' music camps on the Suffolk coast during the holiday season each year. It was here that Helena developed her lifelong love of chamber music and performing in chamber orchestras.

Helena went on to study at the Royal College of Music Junior Department with Dona Lee Croft, and subsequently at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with David Takeno. While in London she performed regularly with ensembles including the Academy of St Martin in the Fields before moving to



Australia in 1994 to begin her first and only full-time job to date, as Principal Violin with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Helena regularly performs as soloist and guest leader with the ACO. She is also actively involved in the Orchestra's Learning & Engagement program, as an Orchestra Representative and Mentor with the ACO Emerging Artist program as well as being Director and Leader of ACO Collective, the ACO's regional touring and education ensemble.

Helena plays the 1732 'ex-Dollfus' Stradivarius violin, kindly on loan from an anonymous private benefactor.

# IKE SEE

## Violin

---

Violinist Ike See joined the Australian Chamber Orchestra in 2013. A three-time first prize winner at the Singapore National Violin Competition, he has performed as a soloist with ensembles including the ACO and Adelaide and Singapore Symphony Orchestras.

Growing up in Singapore, Ike began violin lessons at the age of four with Sylvia Khoo and later studied with Qian Zhou, Head of Strings at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. He then relocated to Philadelphia to attend the Curtis Institute of Music, where he completed a Bachelor of Music under the tutelage of Joseph Silverstein and Pamela Frank.



A passionate chamber musician, Ike has enjoyed the privilege of leading ensembles and orchestras and performing at festivals internationally. He studied chamber music with members of the Guarneri, Orion and Vermeer Quartets, and has collaborated with musicians such as Roberto Diaz, James Dunham, Pamela Frank, Karen Gomyo, Susan Graham, Clive Greensmith, Gary Hoffman, and Anthony McGill. Prior to joining the ACO, Ike was Associate Concertmaster of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Ike is proud to play on the first instrument he can truly call his own, made for him in 2021 by Brooklyn-based luthier Sam Zygmuntowicz.

# STEFANIE FARRANDS

## Principal Viola

---

Stefanie Farrands was appointed as Principal Viola of the Australian Chamber Orchestra in 2020.

Stefanie grew up in Melbourne and began her studies on violin before making the switch to the viola at the age of 16. She describes her connection with the viola as instant, saying that from the moment she played the instrument for the first time she knew she 'had found her voice.'

Stefanie studied at the Australian National Academy of Music and spent a year as an ACO Emerging Artist in 2008, before moving to Berlin to continue her studies with the renowned violist Tabea Zimmermann at the Hochschule für Musik. She has won numerous awards and chamber music prizes including the Asia Pacific Chamber Music Competition (as a member of the Hamer Quartet).



She has performed extensively throughout Europe, America, Asia and Australia with orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Camerata Salzburg. Prior to her role with the ACO she was Principal Viola with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and has performed as Guest Principal Viola with the Strasbourg Philharmonic, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Australian World Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Stefanie is passionate about commissioning and performing new music for the viola, and as recipient of the Freedman Classic Fellowship, she used her scholarship to commission several new works for the instrument. She performs on a 2016 viola made by Ragner Hayn in Berlin.

# ELIZABETH WOOLNOUGH

## Viola

---

Elizabeth Woolnough grew up on the Central Coast and joined the Australian Chamber Orchestra as a violist in 2019.

She studied viola at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with former Sydney Symphony Principal Violist Roger Benedict, where she was awarded High Distinction. Following her studies, Elizabeth was selected as a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellowship program in 2015 and was an Emerging Artist with the Australian Chamber Orchestra in 2016.

Prior to her appointment with the ACO, she was a member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and



has performed regularly with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Ensemble, Australian World Orchestra and MSO Chamber Quartet.

Elizabeth is a member of the Chroma Quartet, which was formed during the 2020 Covid lockdown and has performed in venues including Angel Place, 5 Eliza, and Glebe Town Hall.

Elizabeth plays her own 1968 Parisian viola by Pierre M. Audinot. In between ACO tours, Elizabeth manages to find the time to be a devoted dog mother to her nutty Staghound, Gandalf.



# TIMO-VEIKKO VALVE

## Principal Cello

Timo-Veikko 'Tipi' Valve grew up in Helsinki, surrounded by a family who were "musical, but not musicians" and who wanted music lessons to be a part of their children's lives. Tipi was encouraged to pick up the cello because one of the teachers at the local music school, upon seeing him as a toddler, declared that he "looks like a cellist!" (Tipi is still not sure what this actually means.)

Tipi has been the Principal Cello of the Australian Chamber Orchestra since 2006. He studied at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and at the Edsberg Music Institute in Stockholm, focusing on solo performance and chamber music, and describes playing with a small, tightly-knit community of people as the natural habitat for someone with his musical personality.



Tipi performs on modern and period instruments and describes the cello as flexible and adaptive, both in its role in an ensemble and as a soloist across all forms of music. He reflects this versatility and enjoys a varied career as a musician, play-directing from the cello and appearing as a soloist with many of the major orchestras across his two home countries, Finland and Australia, as well as a chamber musician across Europe, Asia and the US. He also has an active interest in new music, having commissioned and premiered concertos and other works written specifically for him.

Tipi plays a Brothers Amati cello from 1616, kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

# JULIAN THOMPSON

## Cello

Julian is one of Australia's most versatile cellists. For the last 17 years he has toured Australia and the world with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, regularly performing in the world's most prestigious concert halls and appearing on the ACO's recordings.

Julian is in much demand as a recording artist in a variety of genres with his solo cello performances being heard in films including *Sherpa*, *Tanna*, and *Miracle on Everest*, and Sydney Dance Company productions *ab [intra]* and *2 One Another*. Julian recorded the solo cello Yidaki parts on Gurrumul's album *Djarimirri*, which was the first indigenous language recording to reach No. 1 on the Aria charts and won the Best World Music Album ARIA. In 1999 Julian won the Best World Music ARIA for Fyvie's *Embrace*.



Julian is a Fulbright Scholar and completed a Master of Music in the USA with Janos Starker and Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi. He also studied at the Australian National University with Lois Simpson and David Pereira and at the Australian National Academy of Music.

Julian performs regularly with the Australian World Orchestra and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and has appeared as soloist with the Canberra and Adelaide symphony orchestras.

Julian plays a 1729 Guarneri cello, kindly donated to the ACO by Peter Weiss AO.

# THE ACO



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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, *Indies & Idols*, and the ARIA award-winning soundtrack, *River*.

In 2023 the ACO launched its digital streaming platform, ACO On Demand, which hosts the Orchestra's award-winning season of cinematic concert films, ACO StudioCasts, alongside live concert streams and premium on demand content.

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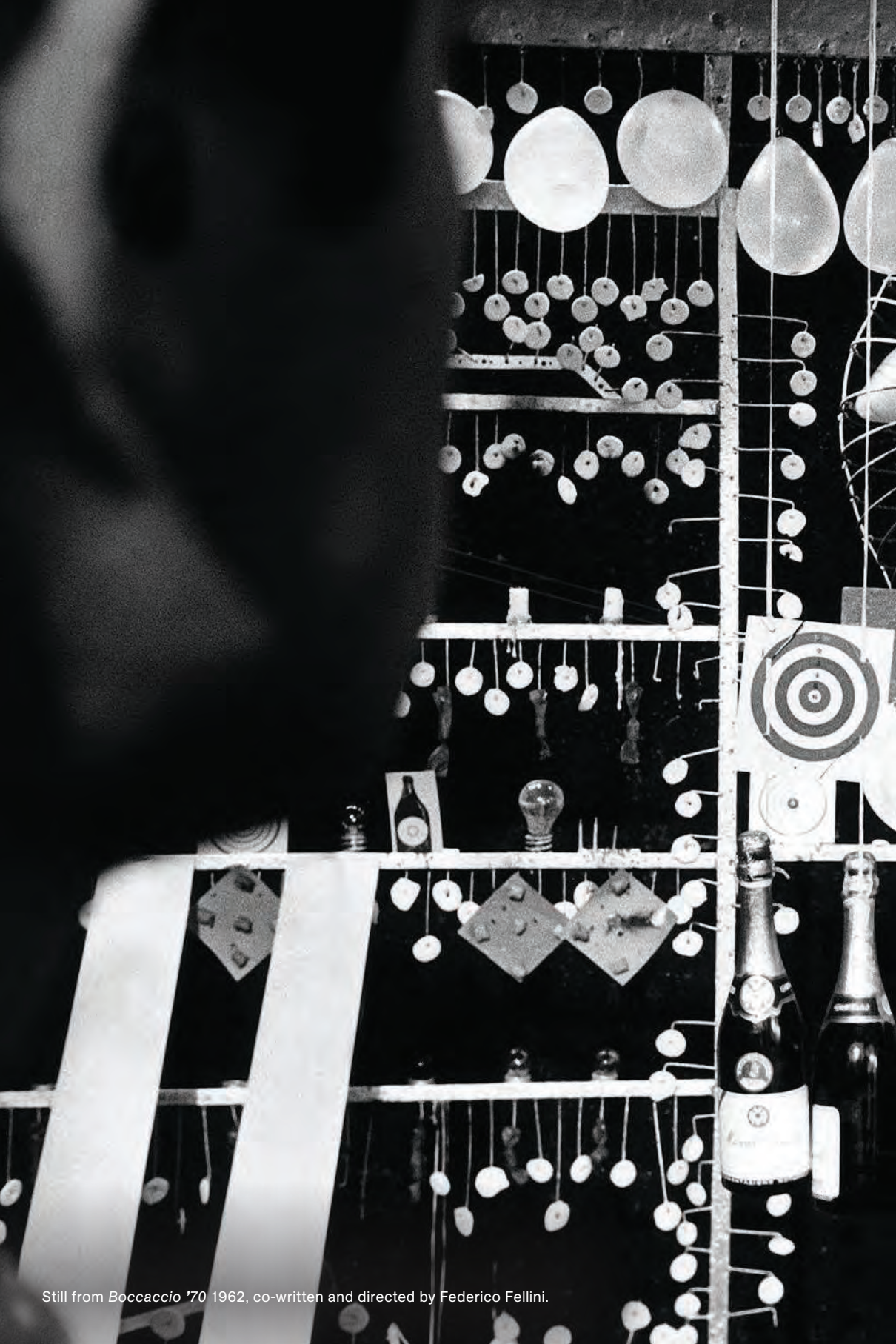
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Still from *Boccaccio '70* 1962, co-written and directed by Federico Fellini.





Still from *La Dolce Vita* 1960, co-written and directed by Federico Fellini.

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