

# ACO COLLECTIVE



## BACH, BRAHMS & PÄRT

Directed by Satu Vänskä

PRINCIPAL PARTNER: ACO COLLECTIVE

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Satu Vänskä, Director  
Photo by Charlie Kinross

Cover.  
ACO Collective  
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# WELCOME FROM THE ACO

Welcome to this performance by ACO Collective, the Australian Chamber Orchestra's critically acclaimed string ensemble that pairs our Emerging Artists – the best and brightest young musicians in the country – with the core musicians of the ACO.

Directing this ensemble for the very first time is the ACO's own Principal Violin Satu Vänskä. Satu will not only feature as soloist in this concert, performing music including Arvo Pärt's *Fratres*, a piece that has become a calling card for the ACO, but will also put down her precious Stradivarius violin to take to the microphone as vocalist in music by Nick Drake and Radiohead.

I extend my deep thanks to JBWere for their support of this performance. Following a long history with the ACO, in particular as the Financial Services Licence Holder for the ACO Instrument Fund, I am delighted to share that JBWere has become the Principal Partner of ACO Collective. This partnership will see JBWere provide essential support in nurturing and providing opportunities for the next generation of world-class Australian string players, and we are thrilled to launch this brand-new partnership with this spectacular tour across Victoria and New South Wales.

Thank you for joining us tonight and I hope you enjoy the performance.



**Richard Evans AM**  
Managing Director

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# WELCOME FROM JBWERE

As Principal Partner of ACO Collective, JBWere is delighted to welcome you to this performance from one of Australia's most exciting chamber ensembles, that brings together the extraordinary core musicians of the Australian Chamber Orchestra with some of the nation's most talented emerging string players. Since its inception in 2007, ACO Collective has played an essential role in mentoring the next generation of Australian string musicians while bringing exceptional music to audiences in regional centres and capital cities across the country.

At JBWere, we believe in the long-term value of investing in excellence, nurturing potential and creating meaningful connections between communities and culture. Together with the ACO, we are pleased to support a program that develops emerging musicians and brings extraordinary live performance to audiences across Australia

Tonight's *Bach, Brahms & Pärt* concert moves beautifully between the timeless and the contemporary, from the meditative music of contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt and the baroque brilliance of JS Bach to music by Nick Drake, Radiohead, and Australian composers Nigel Westlake and Olivia Bettina Davies, before concluding with the warmth and generosity of Romantic composer Johannes Brahms. We hope this concert brings you both inspiration and enjoyment.



**Michael Saadie**

Executive NAB Private Wealth | CEO JBWere

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Your support helps bring the ACO to the stage, and to audiences and communities beyond it.

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# PROGRAM

Satu Vänskä Director, Violin & Voice  
ACO Collective

COMPOSER	TITLE	MIN
<b>Arvo Pärt</b>	Fratres, for violin, strings and percussion	10
<b>Johann Sebastian Bach</b> (arr. Richard Tognetti)	Sonata for Solo Violin No.1 in G minor BWV1001: II. Fugue	5
<b>Olivia Bettina Davies</b>	Trace* (World Premiere)	5
<b>Nick Drake</b> (arr. Tognetti)	River Man	4
<b>Nigel Westlake</b>	Ascension*	13
<b>Radiohead</b>	Harry Patch (In Memory Of)	6
<b>Interval</b>		<b>20</b>
<b>Johannes Brahms</b> (arr. strings)	String Sextet No.2 in G major Op.36 <i>I. Allegro non troppo</i> <i>II. Scherzo: Allegro non troppo</i> <i>III. Adagio</i> <i>IV. Poco Allegro</i>	38

\* Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra

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.

# MUSICIANS ON STAGE



**Satu Vänskä**  
**Director, Violin & Voice**

Satu plays a 1728/29 Stradivarius violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. Her Chair is sponsored by David Thomas AM.



**Aiko Goto**  
**ACO Violin**

Aiko plays the 1714 'ex-Isolde Menges' Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andrea violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. Her Chair is sponsored by Anthony & Sharon Lee Foundation.



**Olivia Kowalik**  
**Violin**

2026 ACO Emerging Artist.



**Benjamin Lam**  
**Violin**

2026 ACO Emerging Artist.



**Lydia Sawires**  
**Violin**

2026 ACO Emerging Artist.



**Theonie Wang**  
**Violin**

2026 ACO Emerging Artist.



**Harry Egerton**  
**Violin**

ACO Emerging Artist Program Alumni.



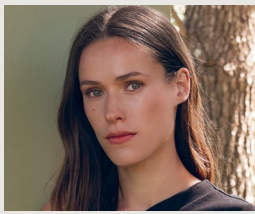
**Liam Freisberg**  
**Violin**

ACO Emerging Artist Program Alumni.



**Fiona Qiu**  
**Violin**

ACO Emerging Artist Program Alumni.



**Elizabeth Woolnough**  
**ACO Viola**

Elizabeth plays a 1952 A.E. Smith viola on loan from the ACO. Her Chair is sponsored by Terry Campbell AO & Christine Campbell.

ACO Emerging Artist  
Program Alumni.



**Sebastian Coyne**  
**Viola**

2026 ACO Emerging Artist.



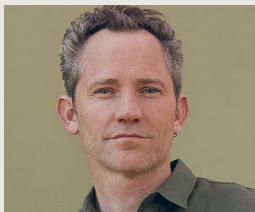
**Angelina Kim**  
**Viola**

Guest ACO Emerging Artist.



**Amanda Verner#**  
**Viola**

Amanda plays her own 2023 copy of a Gasparo da Salò viola by Florian Leonhard Fine Violins. She appears courtesy of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.



**Julian Thompson**  
**ACO Cello**

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andrea cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, donated to the ACO by the late Peter Weiss AO. His Chair is sponsored by the Stewart Family, and Ms Julie Steiner AM & Prof Judyth Sachs.



**Max Wung**  
**Cello**

2026 ACO Emerging Artist.



**Jack Overall**  
**Cello**

ACO Emerging Artist  
Program Alumni.



**Oakley Paul**  
**Double Bass**

ACO Emerging Artist  
Program Alumni.

# Guest Musician

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead ACO Collective for the very first time. These young musicians – all current and former members of the ACO Emerging Artist program – are the future of Australian music, as evidenced by the number of Emerging Artists who have joined the ranks of the ACO and distinguished orchestras across the world. It is a privilege to mentor and play alongside them today.

*ACO Collective: Bach, Brahms & Pärt* will see the Orchestra tour from the Great South Coast of Victoria to the Central Tablelands of New South Wales. We are thrilled to be performing in these beautiful regional towns, reconnecting with long-time ACO fans and meeting new listeners along the way.

The music in this concert spans three centuries, from the timeless instrumental music of Johann Sebastian Bach to contemporary composers like Nigel Westlake and Arvo Pärt. We are particularly honoured to be performing a brand-new work, *Trace*, composed especially for these concerts by Australian composer Olivia Bettina Davies.

The program explores the transcendent and the spiritual, such as Bach's profound music for solo violin and Arvo Pärt's mesmerising *Fratres*, as well as the very personal, including Nigel Westlake's *Ascension*, written in memory of his late mother, Heather Westlake, who was herself a violinist with the ACO in the 1980s.

It is particularly special for me to sing *River Man* by Nick Drake, a folk musician who was ahead of his time and passed away all too young, as well as *Harry Patch (In Memory Of)* by Radiohead, featuring orchestrations by the band's lead guitarist Jonny Greenwood, a leading composer of film and concert music and close friend of the ACO. Both of these songs defy genre and blur the boundaries between classical concert music and contemporary stage music.

This concert culminates with Johannes Brahms's String Sextet in G major, a monumental work that might be considered Brahms's Fifth Symphony, overflowing with melody and emotional power as it reminisces about a love that wasn't meant to be.

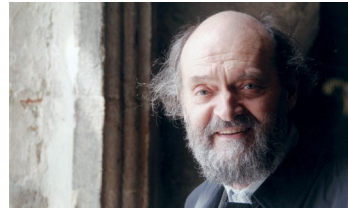
Thank you for joining us on this exquisite musical journey. We hope you enjoy this performance as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you.

**Satu Vänskä**

Director, Violin & Voice

# PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read  
before lights down.



**Arvo Pärt (1935-)**

## *Fratres, for violin, strings and percussion*

It has been remarked that *Fratres* is something of a “musical franchise”, with no fewer than 19 versions in existence. The composition’s musical substance, however, is remarkably simple – a hymn played over a drone, which grows richer in texture and develops into a state of profound peace and beauty. In this version, the violin performs a series of variations over the hymn, but always with a sense of meditative silence. As Pärt says, “musical silence is sacred.”



**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

## *Sonata for Solo Violin No.1 in G minor BWV1001: II. Fugue*

*Arranged for violin and string orchestra  
by Richard Tognetti*

Bach’s six sonatas and partitas for solo violin stand as one of western music’s most glorious and monumental achievements, and represent the ultimate challenge for any violinist. Technically, they are extremely demanding, but they also make great demands on performers in terms of interpretation and expression. Although written for a single unaccompanied violin, Bach makes full use of the instrument’s four strings with an abundance of chordal and contrapuntal writing.

The *Fugue* from the first Sonata in G minor is an impressive and moving musical journey which Bach would later rework into versions for both organ and lute. Richard Tognetti has gone one step further, arranging it for string orchestra. Tognetti’s arrangement is not strictly an “explosion” of the original violin lines for string orchestra, but rather, is a re-imagining that celebrates both the intimacy of Bach’s original solo violin writing and the grandeur of the orchestra in equal parts.



**Olivia Bettina Davies (1988-)**

**Trace**  
*World Premiere*

The composer writes:

*Trace* is inspired by the intricate grid paintings of Agnes Martin. Through muted, alternating colours and hand-drawn lines, Martin explored states of joy, love, and innocence. While simple in form, these grid paintings are both deeply intuitive and meticulously executed, expressing a single state with nuance, precision, and restraint.

*Trace* is a textural piece conceived as a single form and features the bow technique *flautando* – fast, light bowing that renders a hollow, flute-like tone. Sustained throughout, this technique parallels the pale, airy quality of Martin’s palette. The music unfolds through lines of fast-repeating notes that emerge, extend and overlap, forming a soft, continuous texture. Like Martin’s paintings, *Trace* emerges from iterative gestures, building into a diffused whole.



**Nick Drake (1948-1974)**

**River Man**  
*Arranged for voice and string orchestra*  
*by Richard Tognetti*

The English singer/songwriter Nick Drake released only three albums and was largely unappreciated in his short lifetime, overdosing on antidepressants at the age of only 26. However, since the mid-to-late 1980s his music has found an increasingly large audience, and Drake is now considered an influential

musician, with artists as diverse as REM, The Cure and Badly Drawn Boy all hailing him as an influence.

His music has a haunting sincerity to it that is genuinely affecting. His songs also have a musical depth that stands up well to interpretations by other artists – often a sign of good craftsmanship. *River Man* is perhaps Drake’s most covered song. It is unusual in being composed in 5/4 time. This gives the music an unsteady flow. Drake’s original was orchestrated by Harry Robinson. It’s hard to imagine these days that a pop label would (or could) ask for an orchestration “rather like Delius, or Ravel”, but Robinson seems to have grasped the rather elusive, shimmering quality they were looking for. *River Man* lingers in the memory after listening.



**Nigel Westlake (1958-)**

**Ascension**

*The Lark Ascending* by Ralph Vaughan Williams holds iconic status for all violinists as one of the sublime pinnacles of the repertoire. My mother performed it several times early in her career, and many decades later it became the soundtrack of choice during her final days. *Ascension* is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Heather Westlake (née Sumner), who recently passed away aged 95, and is an intimate dialogue between strings, distilled from a deeply personal expression of treasured recollections.

Reflecting on Heather’s life and career during the composition process, (she played with the ACO in the 1980s), I found myself revisiting the gentle warmth and skyward rising melodies of *The Lark*, perhaps secretly hoping that some of its glorious magic might leave a faint fingerprint on the score “Now, when I’m gone” she would exclaim with a characteristic wry smile, “...I don’t want any fuss or musical dedications please!” She probably guessed I wasn’t listening.

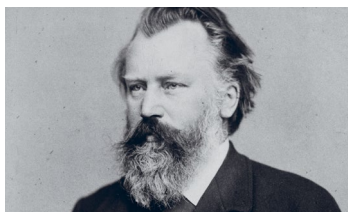
*Ascension* was commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra for the Orchestra’s 50th-anniversary celebrations.

## Radiohead

### Harry Patch (In Memory Of)

Jonny Greenwood's immaculate string orchestra arrangements appear on numerous Radiohead albums and singles. *Harry Patch (In Memory Of)* was released in 2016 as a tribute to Harry Patch, the last surviving World War I soldier to have fought in the trenches from any country, and briefly the oldest man in Europe (having lived to 111 years of age). Removed from Radiohead's usual sound world, its serene vocals and undulating strings make for Radiohead's most explicit anti-war song:

*I am the only one that got through  
The others died wherever they fell  
It was an ambush  
They came up from all sides  
Give your leaders each a gun and then let them  
Fight it out themselves  
I've seen demons coming up from the ground  
I've seen hell upon this Earth  
The next will be chemical  
But they will never learn*



## Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

### String Sextet No.2 in G major Op.36

*Arranged for string orchestra*

Looking back, Johannes Brahms might be likened to a hopeless commitment-phobe, continually running back to the safety of his friendship with Clara Schumann, his bachelorhood "almost a social scandal". But Brahms was, for a short time, engaged to be married to one Agathe von Siebold. His usual reservations got the better of him, and he wrote to her: "I love you, I must see you again, but I cannot be bound". The marriage was off.

Agathe married someone else, but Brahms didn't move on so quickly. Six years after they parted he confided to a friend that he had 'finally said goodbye' in his second string sextet. One finds the

letters AGATHE spelt out in the music: A-G-A-[no T, although there is a similar-sounding letter D in another part]-H [B in English musical notation]-E. This motto appears repeatedly throughout the work, passionately, and often underpinned by an unusually harmonised sighing motif.

Late in life, Agathe recalled her relationship with Brahms: "from that time until the present, a golden light has been cast on my life, and that even now, in my late old age, something of the radiance of that unforgettable time has remained. I loved Johannes Brahms very much, and for a short time, he loved me." We will never know if Agathe was aware she had been immortalised in this sextet.

# Satu Vänskä

Director, Violin & Voice



Born to a Finnish family in Japan, violinist Satu Vänskä has developed an international profile through her role as Principal Violin with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, a position that she has held for the past 20 years. In that time Satu has both directed and performed as soloist with the ACO, an ensemble regarded as one of the greatest chamber orchestras in the world, hailed for its striking virtuosity and innovative programming.

Satu's development of solo violin projects is reflective of her desire to continually evolve as a musician and to courageously embrace new musical challenges. She has a passion for dynamic programming that explores the link between old and new music, alongside presenting boundary-blurring cross-genre collaborations, that resonate with today's classical music audiences.

As a soloist in Australia, Satu enjoys performing with the country's leading orchestras including the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (Beethoven Violin Concerto with Umberto Clerici), the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and West Australian Symphony Orchestra (in a play/direct role). As a recitalist Satu performs at venues and festivals including the Melbourne Recital Centre, UKARIA Cultural Centre, Canberra International Festival and Adelaide Festival. Further afield, Satu performs with the Artik Philharmonic in Norway, with London's Aurora

Orchestra (in the London season of *Weimar Cabaret* with the late Barry Humphries), Sinfonia Lahti and at the Festival Maribor in Slovenia

Satu is the founder, curator, front-woman, violinist and vocalist of the critically acclaimed ACO Underground, the ACO's electro-infused, experimental spin-off project. With ACO Underground, Satu has performed collaborations with artists including Midnight Oil's Jim Moginie and the Violent Femmes' Brian Ritchie in venues ranging from New York's Le Poisson Rouge to Sydney's Phoenix Central Park, and has appeared as part of the Vivid Festival. In 2022 she formed Satu In The Beyond with Richard Tognetti and producer Paul Beard. This is a band that has evolved from ACO Underground over the years with the aim to present audiences with original music.

Satu took her first violin lessons at the age of three in Japan, before her family relocated to Finland when she was ten, where she continued her studies with Pertti Sutinen at the Lahti Conservatorium and the Sibelius Academy. She later studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich as a pupil of Ana Chumachenco.

Satu performs on the 1728/29 Stradivarius violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

# ACO Collective

“The Australian Chamber Orchestra’s emerging talent arm, ACO Collective, is blazing a promising trail into the artform’s next era.”

– THE AGE

ACO Collective is the ACO’s critically acclaimed string ensemble that brings together musicians of the ACO with Australia’s most talented young professional string players to create a high-energy string orchestra.

ACO Collective commenced touring as ACO<sub>2</sub> in 2007 and since then has performed in more than 85 regional centres in every state and territory, all of Australia’s state capitals, and has toured to Japan. The ensemble works with guest artists of the

highest calibre, both international and Australian, including violinists Pekka Kuusisto (who served as ACO Collective’s Artistic Director from 2016–2019), Matthew Truscott, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Benjamin Schmid, Henning Kraggerud, Malin Broman, Alexander Sitkovetsky and Thomas Gould; cellist Daniel Müller-Schott; the Meta 4 quartet; harpist Alice Giles; recorder virtuoso Genevieve Lacey; singer / songwriter Tim Freedman; clarinetist Matthew Hunt, oud player Joseph Tawadros and the Gondwana Indigenous Children’s Choir.

In 2013, the ACO presented ACO Collective in a national subscription tour led by Richard Tognetti and it was named by *The Australian* as “one of the year’s must-see concerts”. Biennially, ACO Collective is the orchestra-in-residence at the Vasse Felix Festival in Western Australia and in 2014 it was the orchestra-in-residence at the Canberra International Music Festival. In 2015, ACO Collective performed with the Sydney Dance Company and Katie Noonan in the SDC’s season of *Triptych* and gave the World Premiere of Nico Muhly’s *Shrink* (Concerto for Violin & Strings) at the Melbourne Recital Centre.

Under the direction of ACO Principal Violin Helena Rathbone, ACO Collective recorded the ABC Classic album *Collective Wisdom* for the Hush Foundation in 2018. Bringing together the artistry of six of Australia’s most established composers and six emerging composers in an ambitious project that engaged with adolescent patients at children’s hospitals around Australia, this beautiful album features twelve original Australian works written for hospitals, homes and shared spaces across the globe.



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