

Australian Chamber Orchestra

AACO

ISLES OF LIGHT

Directed by Lawrence Power

PRINCIPAL PARTNER


Wesfarmers Arts

ACO

FROM WINTER'S STILLNESS

25 Jul – 9 Aug

Directed by Richard Tognetti
Nordic jazz visionary Arve Henriksen
Vocal phenomenon Trio Mediæval

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Perth, Sydney and Brisbane.**

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sound world featuring ancient hymns to
Sigur Rós and Hildur Guðnadóttir.



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*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies

INSIDE

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.

Cover.
Lawrence Power

Share your experience

#ACO26Season



@AustralianChamberOrchestra

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WELCOME

Welcome to *Isles of Light*, a concert that will transport audiences to the lush, poetic soundworld of the British Isles.

Directing the Orchestra from both the violin and the viola is British string virtuoso Lawrence Power, in what marks his ACO debut. Lawrence has crafted a voyage through his British homeland, from an eclectic 'English Mixtape' featuring works from Henry Purcell to the inventiveness of Kate Bush, through to Ralph Vaughan Williams's evocative *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

Reflecting both Lawrence's and the ACO's commitment to commissioning and performing new music, the program will feature the Australian premiere of a new work from Irish composer Garth Knox. Inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's epic poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the work is presented in what the composer terms 'instrumental theatre' that sees Lawrence personify the role of the cursed Mariner.

This program also celebrates one of the ACO's own: cellist Julian Thompson, who marks 20 years with the ACO this month. Julian spoke with writer Declan Fry for a piece in this program, where he discusses what led him to audition for the ACO, how he approaches teaching the next generation of string musicians and his two passions: cello and surfing.

As we approach 30 June, I warmly encourage you to support the ACO's annual fundraising campaign. The ACO receives only 7% of its annual revenue from government investment. With your philanthropic donations accounting for over five times this amount, they are absolutely vital in ensuring that the ACO can continue to bring our concerts, education and family programs to audiences and communities around Australia.

I have it on the highest authority that the surest way to ensure passage to the heaven of your choosing for you and your loved ones is by supporting the ACO, and I encourage you to do so today at aco.com.au/donate.

Thank you for joining us for this performance.



Richard Evans AM
Managing Director

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Wesfarmers Arts



Australian Chamber Orchestra & Wesfarmers Arts
Bringing People & Music Together

NEWS

Upcoming concerts and the latest announcements.

Latest News

Help us take our music further

Music has the unique power to move us – to spark emotion, ignite curiosity, and fuel our imagination.

Across concert halls, classrooms and communities, it's your generosity that keeps the ACO moving. With your support, we can reach further, inspire more deeply, and create experiences none of us could achieve alone.

Help us open doors to discovery, innovation and possibility by making a tax-deductible donation before 30 June at aco.com.au/donate.



1

On Tour

From Winter's Stillness

25 JUL – 9 AUG

International vocal phenomenon Trio Mediæval and jazz trumpeter Arve Henriksen join Richard Tognetti and the ACO for a soul-stirring evocation of ancient landscapes and Northern light, featuring music by Grammy-winner Hildur Guðnadóttir and Sigur Rós paired with the ancient hymns of Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Estonia.

Mozart's Last Symphonies

19–25 SEP

Richard Tognetti directs an expanded ACO, joined by the country's leading wind and brass players, in a joyous celebration of Mozart's last three symphonies. This promises to be a highlight of the year.



2

ACO On The Pier

ACO Up Close: Trio Mediæval with Arve Henriksen

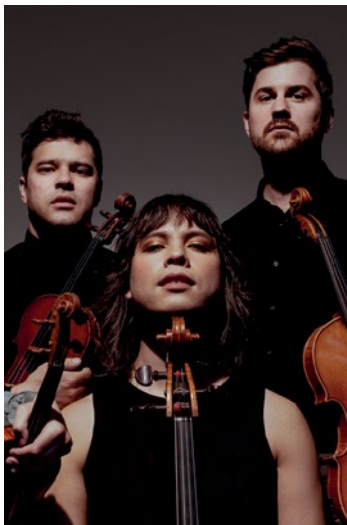
31 JUL

Step into a sacred space, where the sublime voices of Trio Mediæval and Arve Henriksen bathe the Pier in a luminescent sound.

ACO Up Close: Attacca Quartet

8 AUG

The Grammy Award-winning Attacca Quartet plays at the cutting edge of classical music. The effect is intimate, electric, and unforgettable. Experience them perform the music of Radiohead, Caroline Shaw and Beethoven.



3

ACO Up Close: Satu in the Beyond

20 AUG

Join ACO Principal Violin Satu Vänskä and her electro-infused spin-off group Satu in the Beyond, featuring Richard Tognetti on electric violin, for the eagerly anticipated album release of *Satu In The Beyond: Far Field Theory*.

ACO Up Close: Hand to Earth with the ACO Quartet

11 SEP

An ACO string quartet led by Richard Tognetti joins forces with Hand to Earth, an astonishing ensemble that brings Yolju song cycles into conversation with bold contemporary approaches to music making, for an intimate, improvisation-fuelled collaboration that feels both ancient and electrifyingly new.



4

ACO Families

Pinocchio

9-19 JUL

Experience the timeless tale of *Pinocchio* in our brand-new ACO Families production, brought to life with live music, theatrics and a touch of magic.

ACO Family Day

10-11 OCT

Bring the whole family to ACO On The Pier on Sydney's Harbour to experience a vibrant 30-minute classical concert celebrating Vivaldi's beloved *Four Seasons*, followed by creative play activities and the opportunity to meet the musicians.

1. Australian Chamber Orchestra and ACO Foundations students

2. Arve Henriksen

3. Attacca Quartet

4. Hand to Earth

5. ACO Family Day



5

HELP US TAKE OUR MUSIC FURTHER

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

Give today to help us reach further.



[ACO.COM.AU/DONATE](https://aco.com.au/donate)



Pre-Concert Talks

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

CANBERRA - LLEWELLYN HALL

Bernard Rofe

Sat 13 Jun 6.45pm

MELBOURNE - ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE

Kym Dillon

Sun 14 Jun 1.45pm

Mon 15 Jun 6.45pm

SYDNEY - CITY RECITAL HALL

Genevieve Lang

Tue 16 Jun 7.15pm

Wed 17 Jun 6.15pm

Fri 19 Jun 6.15pm

Sat 20 Jun 6.15pm

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Genevieve Lang

Sun 21 Jun 1.15pm

BRISBANE - QPAC CONCERT HALL

Matthew Hodge

Mon 22 Jun 6.15pm

ADELAIDE TOWN HALL

Kane Moroney

Tue 23 Jun 6.45pm

PROGRAM

Lawrence Power Director, Violin & Viola
Australian Chamber Orchestra

COMPOSER	TITLE	MIN
English Mixtape: Henry Purcell	Timon of Athens, Z.632: Curtain tune on a ground	11
Jonny Greenwood Thomas Tallis Kate Bush (arr. Brett Dean)	Popcorn Superhet Receiver: Pt.2b Why Fum'th in Sight The Man with the Child in His Eyes	
Ivor Gurney (arr. Richard Birchall)	Sleep	
Edward Elgar (arr. Bernard Rofe)	Enigma Variations: XI. Allegro	
Garth Knox	The Ancient Mariner: Concerto for Viola and String Orchestra (<i>Australian Premiere</i>)* <i>I. Prologue –</i> <i>II. Setting sail –</i> <i>III. Albatross –</i> <i>IV. Poseidon</i> <i>V. Waltz of the sea-snakes –</i> <i>VI. Homeward –</i> <i>VII. Epilogue</i>	25
Interval		20
Elizabeth Maconchy	Symphony for Double String Orchestra <i>I. Allegro molto</i> <i>II. Lento</i> <i>III. Scherzo. Allegro scherzando</i> <i>IV. Passacaglia. Lento sostenuto</i> <i>– Allegro – Lento</i>	20
Herbert Howells	Elegy for Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra, Op.15	10
Ralph Vaughan Williams	Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis	15

The ACO thanks the late Dame Margaret Scott AC for generously supporting Lawrence Power's appearance at these performances.

* Co-commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Camerata Bern (supported by Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation) and La Société Française de l'Alto.

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. *Isles of Light* will be broadcast on Wednesday 2 September, 1pm AEST and available on demand for 30 days after.

MUSICIANS ON STAGE



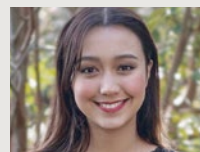
Lawrence Power
Director, Violin & Viola

Lawrence plays a 1580 Brothers Amati viola and the 1742 'ex Baillot' Francesco Stradivari violin. Both instruments are on loan from the Karolina Blaberg Stiftung.



Helena Rathbone
Principal Violin

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



Anna da Silva Chen
Violin

Anna plays an 18th-century violin made in the style of Pietro Guarneri of Venice, on loan from Jannie Brown. Her Chair is sponsored by Alenka Tindale.



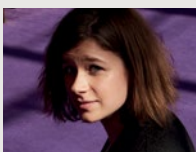
Aiko Goto
Violin

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



Ilya Isakovich
Violin

Ilya plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Meg Meldrum.



Liisa Pallandi
Violin

Liisa plays a 1759 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin kindly on loan from the ACO. Her Chair is sponsored by the Melbourne Medical Syndicate.



Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba
Violin

Thibaud plays his own 1842 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin. His Chair is sponsored by The Minta Group.



Ike See
Violin

Ike plays his own 2021 Zygmuntowicz violin. His Chair is sponsored by Gus & Nanna Lehrer.



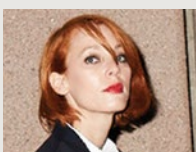
Tamara Elias[#]
Violin

Tamara plays her own 1750 Bernardus Calcanius violin.



Caroline Hopson[#]
Violin

Caroline plays her own 1955 A.E. Smith violin.



Maja Savnik^{*}
Violin

Maja plays her own 1797 Giuseppe Gagilano violin.



Véronique Serret[#]
Violin

Véronique plays a 1900 Leandro Bisiach violin.



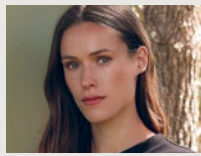
Stefanie Farrands
Principal Viola

Stefanie plays a 1610 Maggini viola on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. Her Chair is sponsored by peckvonhartel architects.



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.



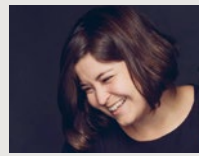
Elizabeth Woolnough
Viola

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



Jacqueline Cronin
Viola

Jacqueline plays her own 1912 Pedrazzini viola.



Jenny Khafagi
Viola

Jenny plays her own 1885 William Tarr viola. She appears courtesy of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.



Timo-Veikko Valve
Principal Cello

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



Melissa Barnard
Cello

Melissa plays an 1846 cello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. Her Chair is sponsored by Jason Wenderoth.



Julian Thompson
Cello

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreae 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 Stewart Family and Ms Julie Steiner AM & Prof Judyth Sachs.



Sharon Grigoryan
Cello

Sharon plays an 1846 Thomas Kennedy cello. She appears courtesy of Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.



Eliza Sdraulig
Cello

Eliza plays a 2011 Roberto Cavagnoli cello.



Maxime Bibeau
Principal Bass

Max plays a late-16th-century Gasparo da Salò bass on loan from UKARIA. In Brisbane, Max plays a 19th-century Italian bass. His Chair is sponsored by Janet Matton AM & Robin Rowe, and Ros Morauta.



Robin Kesselman
Bass

Robin plays a Thomas Kennedy bass made in London circa 1830 on loan from Maxime Bibeau. In Brisbane, Robin plays an 1840 Lorenzo Ventapane bass made in Naples on loan from Ken Poggioli.

Guest Musician

PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read
before lights down.

Written by Russell Torrance

English Mixtape

Works by Henry Purcell, Jonny Greenwood,
Thomas Tallis, Kate Bush, Ivor Gurney
and Edward Elgar*

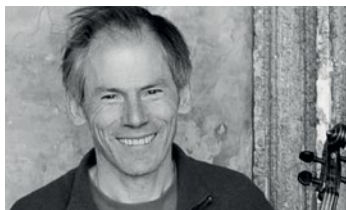
This *English Mixtape* presents a history of English song in its many guises, from the Baroque through to the present day. We begin with a *Curtain Tune* by Henry Purcell, who is often considered to be the greatest English composer of the Baroque era. This *Tune* would have been performed as the curtain lifted to one of his musical dramas. From the Baroque, we come to the present day with *Popcorn Superhet Receiver* by Jonny Greenwood, of Radiohead fame. Greenwood describes listening to cassettes of rock songs and musicals in the family car as a child, still hearing their songlines cutting through the engine noise long after the tapes had stopped playing.

After glimpsing the 20th century, we hark back to Thomas Tallis, perhaps the greatest composer of High Renaissance choral music. In 1567 he compiled nine tunes for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker. Of these *Tunes for Parker's Psalter*, the third tune "Why fum'th in sight" has become one of Tallis's most famous compositions, used by Ralph Vaughan Williams as the basis for his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

English singer Kate Bush rose to stardom with hit singles like *Wuthering Heights*. *The Man with the Child in His Eyes*, from her debut album, is about the idea that "a lot of men have got a child inside them... that they're more or less just grown up kids".

Ivor Gurney studied music alongside Ralph Vaughan Williams, but suffered from bipolar disorder for much of his life. His song *Sleep* is a plea to escape worldly pain, yearning for comfort and peace.

Our mixtape concludes with Variation XI from Edward Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. This particular variation was named for the organist George Robertson Sinclair, but is really a musical depiction of Sinclair's English bulldog, running and barking. The theme, though etched into English folklore, remains unsolved to this day – an ode to the mystery and beauty that personifies English music.



Garth Knox (1956-)

**The Ancient Mariner: Concerto for
Viola and String Orchestra**
(*Australian Premiere*)

The composer writes:

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1799) by Samuel Coleridge is an epic poem whose dramatic imagery still resonates today. It evokes a mysterious Mariner with a “glittering eye” who suddenly appears and obliges people to listen to the story of his sea voyage. It is a wild tale of storms and ice off South America and an albatross who guides the ship safely round the Cape to the Pacific Ocean. The Mariner, for no apparent reason, shoots the albatross with his crossbow. For this he is cursed by a sea spirit who condemns the crew to die of thirst while the Mariner will live forever on the motionless boat to suffer endlessly. When the Mariner belatedly discovers the beauty of all living things by inadvertently watching sea-snakes, he is pardoned, the ghostly crew rises from the dead and the ship sails homewards.

Personified by the solo viola (Lawrence Power, to whom the piece is dedicated), the Ancient Mariner tells his story in music in what could be called a semi-staged piece of instrumental theatre. Everything on stage becomes part of the action – the music stands, the chairs and of course the players of the ensemble, who represent the crew members and the main characters of the story. All will set sail together on an imaginary ship to relive his adventures.

But is he really the survivor of the incredible events he recounts, or is he just some crazy eccentric, inventing the whole story?

Co-commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Camerata Bern (supported by Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation) and La Société Française de l'Alto.



Elizabeth Maconchy (1907-1994) **Symphony for Double String Orchestra**

Elizabeth Maconchy is one of the great unsung heroes of 20th-century British music. She had a consistent, brilliant style that was neither abrasively modern or soupy and nostalgic.

One of the main ingredients in Maconchy's style is the wide range of influences on her music. She was born in England but always considered herself Irish – her parents were from Ireland, and the family moved to the Dublin area when Maconchy

was 10. She later lived again in Dublin in her 20s, and the sound of Irish music is often in her works.

Maconchy studied in London at the Royal College of Music where her teachers included Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob. She was of course influenced by them, and the work on this programme shows similarities to Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*.

It was while studying that Maconchy also experienced music that set her on a different course from many of her contemporaries: that of Béla Bartók and Leoš Janáček. Through a scholarship, she even managed to study abroad in Prague, where her Piano Concerto received its first performance.

The influence of Bartók and Janáček's music, especially their rhythmic energy and quirky harmonies, is one of the key characteristics of Maconchy's vast output, including her monumental set of 13 string quartets.

The work on this programme is no exception. Maconchy composed her Symphony for Double String Orchestra between 1952 and 1953. As with *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, Maconchy uses the two string bands to play against one another and provide moments of contrast.

The work is full of jaunty rhythm and forward momentum, melodic interplay and colour. But Maconchy saves the best for last – the passacaglia gives the listener something of a surprise ending. After the intense, joyful tautness of the first three movements, the work ends in quiet reflection.



Herbert Howells (1892-1983) **Elegy for Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra, Op.15**

Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, also in this programme, was given its premiere in September 1910, in Gloucester Cathedral. In the audience, an 18-year-old aspiring composer: Herbert Howells.

Howells had grown up in modest circumstances in the nearby town of Lydney and by the age of 16 was studying music at Gloucester Cathedral alongside Ivor Gurney and Ivor Novello. The premiere of the Vaughan Williams in the cathedral had such an effect on Howells that he was unable to sleep,

instead spending the night pacing the streets of Gloucester, reliving the music in his mind.

And it stayed there in his mind. In 1917 Howells was safely in London, studying at the Royal College of Music. He had been spared conscription to fight in the Great War because of an autoimmune disorder, but many of his friends had not been so lucky.

Francis Purcell “Bunny” Warren studied at the Royal College of Music alongside Howells, and the two became close friends. Warren joined the army at the outbreak of war in 1914, and was killed in the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.

Howell’s *Elegy for Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra* is dedicated to the memory of his friend, and it was premiered in December 1917 at the Mons Memorial Concert in London’s Royal Albert Hall.

The memories of that earlier night in 1910, and the premiere of the Vaughan Williams’ *Fantasia*, show clearly in Howell’s music here. The forces are very similar to the Vaughan Williams – a string quartet and a larger string ensemble, contrasting off one another to create dramatic changes of colour and volume. And the choice of a solo viola is inspired: Francis Purcell Warren had been a fine viola player.



Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) ***Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis***

Ralph Vaughan Williams was a vital part of a quiet revolution in British music at the beginning of the 20th century. As the 1900s began, the United Kingdom had a healthy, home-grown music scene thanks to the likes of Edward Elgar, Charles Stanford, Herbert Howells and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. But the music itself, brilliant as it was, owed a lot to the sound of German composers such as Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms and Anton Bruckner.

Vaughan Williams brought a freshness to his music by turning to other sources of inspiration. He studied with French composer Maurice Ravel (Vaughan Williams said he had learnt from Ravel that “the heavy contrapuntal Teutonic manner was not necessary!”). He was also passionate about British folksong, and incorporating the style of the songs he collected into his own music gave it a new sound.

But one of the surprising inspirations for this new sound was the past – the distant past. In 1906, *The English Hymnal* was published, with Vaughan Williams as its music editor. As well as contributing several new hymn tunes himself – many of which became cornerstones of Anglican worship – the composer encountered during the process a rich array of old, English church music.

For this work, we are concerned with a short work by 16th-century composer Thomas Tallis, a psalm setting written for Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury. So, how does a new, fresh sound in 20th-century English music come from a 350-year-old fragment?

The answer is in the melodic scale used in the Tallis, a “mode” which is an alternative, archaic version of the modern idea of major and minor scales. This lends a different flavour to the music, making it sound strange and exotic to ears more accustomed to Bach-style harmony. One reviewer for *The Times* at the 1910 premiere cottoned on to this:

Throughout its course one is never quite sure whether one is listening to something very old or very new. ... But that is just what makes this Fantasia so delightful to listen to; it cannot be assigned to a time or a school, but it is full of the visions which have haunted the seers of all times.

There is also a fresh approach in the orchestration – two string ensembles, which Vaughan Williams pits against one another, in the way that had been done with choirs in 16th century Venice. In the middle, a string quartet. The results are breathtaking transitions from loud to soft and back again, adding to the magic and mystique of this landmark work.

Russell Torrance is an award-winning radio presenter and producer, and is currently the Mornings Presenter on ABC Classic. Russell’s career began as an editor on the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and, as well as broadcast, has encompassed music teaching, composition and performance.

*Note by Bernard Rofe

John Luther Adams Horizon Australian Chamber Orchestra

Experience the world premiere recording of a landmark new work from Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning composer John Luther Adams, written especially for the ACO.

Available to stream, download or purchase in vinyl or CD from <https://snd.click/ACOHorizon>



British violist Lawrence Power reflects on the variation, constancy and changeability of his career as a soloist and a commissioner of new works.

HEARING THE OLD, ANEW

Written by Kate Middleton



“This is the first time I’ve worked with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.” British violist Lawrence Power tells me, as we discuss the several hats he’s wearing for this program. It’s an exciting prospect as a first collaboration: in developing a program for this ensemble, Power has the opportunity to curate music that reflects the way his career has grown as soloist, commissioner of new works, musical historian and practitioner.

As director, violist and violinist, Power offers a “love letter” to British music in *Isles of Light*, a program that crosses centuries.

What comes out often in our conversation is a sense of Power’s prevailing interest in history. We discuss how British music integrates its own history, for instance, when composers look back to earlier British works. There’s the historic provenance of his own instrument, and Power’s embrace of the viola’s repertoire in its full historic range, as well as his desire to extend it through his work with new music.

The viola, he says, is his “mother tongue”. Power is well-versed in the existing language but also wants to make sure that he coins

new vocabulary for the instrument, and for the orchestra that accompanies it.

He didn’t initially choose the viola as his instrument. At seven, he was tall for his age. “They ran out of violins, and they gave me a viola instead,” he says. “So there was no romantic story”. I enjoy reflecting on the happenstance of that scene. Power doesn’t come from a family of classical musicians: “We didn’t even know what a viola was then, to be honest with you.” As he came to embrace the instrument fully, he fell in love with it, developing an “obsession” with the viola and its repertoire.

There is no such thing as a “standard” viola. The viola is not simply a bigger violin, but rather an instrument that has changed at different moments in its history – in contrast to the violin, which has held the same dimensions for centuries. This variability, I learn, comes from the fact that acoustically “perfect” dimensions would result in an instrument too large to hold under the chin. Because of the non-standardised design, each



viola is truly different, containing within its body a balance between playability and depth of tone.

Power's instrument for this concert is a 1580 Brothers Amati viola. From one of the most famous instrument workshops in history, the Amati has a pedigree of which he is conscious: Power refers to himself as its "temporary curator". The word "curator" is canny. Just as a gallery develops a cultural aura through the art it displays over time, this instrument has its own aura. It was previously played by German-American violist Walter Trampler, who like Power was a champion of new music, commissioning many new works over his career.

This viola is an old instrument in whose body new music accumulates. Noting the ACO's collection of historic instruments, Power marvels at the beauty of their craftsmanship and the privilege of being entrusted with one of them for a time.

A viola such as this, Power notes, is a living instrument. Its wood *breathes*. A big part of travelling around as a string player, he says, is understanding the way the instrument responds: for example, "when you go to a humid place, things feel very different." The instrument reflects its environment and both the instrument and the player must adapt. While the viola has this changeable quality, it also has a continuity that appeals to Power: "I play in all these beautiful places, and it's the same invention, without amplification." As the instrument travels with him, he writes new performances into its history.

In the past decade, Power has also regularly played the violin. He doesn't see a dissonance in championing both. If the viola's form is notable for being changeable, the violin's constancy is equally remarkable. It's "two pieces of wood glued together with some strings at tension, and a little bit of wood inside to keep the tension". Moreover, the violin is "acoustically correct, according to all sorts of Pythagorean measurements of sounding string lengths". He suggests this sounds geeky, but it is just this sort of detail that captures for me what is so interesting about playing both instruments at such a high level.

In picking up the violin, Power feels a continuity with the musicians of the past. The specialisation of playing only one instrument is, he says, a very recent fashion. In the past, a musician such as himself would "have to play the violin and the viola at least, and then maybe even play the viola d'amore". The desire to move between instruments is born both of a connection to the historical role of musicians and of the wish to be "a useful musician". It is also, I suppose, a way to never grow restless.

With these two instruments, Power is able to find great variation, constancy and changeability. The violin, he says, "sings so beautifully – it has that in

"The desire to move between instruments is born both of a connection to the historical role of musicians and of the wish to be 'a useful musician'. It is also, I suppose, a way to never grow restless."

Page 14–15.
Lawrence Power.
Photo by Matthew Johnson

Page 16.
Lawrence Power.
Photo by Giorgia Bertazzi

“When you dig into the whole nature of pastoral music, it’s an interesting conversation because it’s actually quite dark. It’s not pretty birds tweeting.”

its DNA somehow”. The viola, on the other hand, is often said to be close to the human speaking voice.

“Every viola has a slightly different timbre, a different voice,” he says. “One viola might be always quite bass-like. Another viola might be more contralto. And even though, within its voice I can play everything at the top that the violin could play, more or less, or what a cello could play, there’s this beautiful pathos to the viola. There’s something in the viola, maybe this little bit of *compromise*, that makes it more of a speaking-type instrument.”

The word “compromise” is one that Power returns to. Embedded in the design of the instrument, the idea of compromise also makes me think of the mediating voice that the viola represents. With its middle register, it is featured more rarely than the violin as soloist – but when viola takes centre stage, it has a commanding presence.

Power is interested in the composer-violin players of today, such as his friend and collaborator, violinist and composer Garth Knox, who consciously extends the music of the viola, making new histories. As an in-demand soloist and caretaker of an extraordinary instrument, Power takes as an exemplar the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. “Without Rostropovich, you wouldn’t have all the Benjamin Britten works, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, Lutoslawski...” says Power. “So much cello repertoire exists thanks to that one performer. If you look at history, there are these key people who commissioned works or were a driving force behind just getting great pieces written.”

With Rostropovich in mind, Power formed the Viola Commissioning Circle, with which he is in the process of commissioning 10 viola concertos over 10 years. The Commissioning Circle has already commissioned concertos and other works from composers including ESA Pekka Salonen, Thomas Larcher, Thomas Ades, Magnus Lindberg, Cassandra Miller, Anna Clyne, Liza Lim, Erkki-Sven Tuur, and Olli Mustonen amongst others. This dedication to new work feels natural to Power: “It’s a part of the DNA of my instrument, I guess – that we’re dealing with new music all the time.”

That figure of speech, “the DNA”, again speaks to the sense of a living instrument and living repertoire. It’s also a great reminder of the impact ensembles such as the ACO can have: making relationships with composers and committing to the performance of new works means that the Orchestra’s life is never static. I think of new works as enabling listeners to hear the old with fresh ears.

New music can move in any direction. It can offer an “extraterrestrial new language” or it can look back at history and recontextualise it. Power is open

to many different approaches: as a performer he has to be flexible, sometimes “inventing interesting ways to play”, at others finding ways to make new music work on his instrument. What he emphasises is being open to many different forms of collaboration: having “a beautiful spectrum of music being written for me”.

He describes this program as a snapshot of British music across the ages. As we talk about what is British about this program, he acknowledges that there is no one quality that characterises the music. While the word “pastoral” is often invoked in discussions of British music – especially that of composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams – it is a word that Power resists and complicates. “When you dig into the whole nature of pastoral music, it’s an interesting conversation because it’s actually quite dark. It’s not pretty birds tweeting.”

Instead it’s the resonance and connection to history that draws Power to this music. Ralph Vaughan Williams looks back to Thomas Tallis and to English folk song to create a sense of continuity in British music: his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas*

Tallis is one of the composer’s best-known works. Vaughan Williams was often drawn to the English Renaissance and to folk songs as he sought to incorporate tradition into his emerging oeuvre. In this conscious decision to look at that tradition, Vaughan Williams shapes the listener’s perception of it. Power’s gathering of works around the famous “Fantasia” places these works in conversation with each other, inviting new resonances.

The program’s “English Mixtape” traverses ground from Henry Purcell to Kate Bush, both important proponents of British song, looking to forms of continuity with tradition. Edward Elgar, whose “Nimrod” variation from the *Enigma Variations* is always played on Remembrance Sunday, has “a very specific connotation for English people”, and appears in the Mixtape on the program, as does music by poet and composer Ivor Gurney, another proponent of British song. Herbert Howells, an organist and composer, is represented in this program by his early, lyrical *Elegy* for Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra.





A composer such as Elizabeth Maconchy, Power says, has been often “overlooked”. Maconchy’s music, he notes, is very inspired by Igor Stravinsky and often looks to Eastern European composers such as Béla Bartók and Bohuslav Martinů, but she writes from her time and place. Her 1952 Symphony for Double String Orchestra gives “maybe not specifically a *British* feeling, but it does give a 1950s London feeling”. In that specificity, expressing the attitude of a time and place, each of these pieces contributes “its own unique little story” to the whole. Perhaps the program forms not so much an overview as an itinerary.

At the centre of the concert is the Australian premiere of Garth Knox’s Viola Concerto – co-commissioned by the ACO – another entry in the viola repertoire. Power praises Knox’s work as violist and composer, as well as his engagement with musical history. A former member of Pierre Boulez’s Ensemble InterContemporain and Irvine Arditti’s Arditti Quartet, Knox performs on not just the viola but also the viola d’amore, an instrument whose repertoire crosses the baroque and modern periods.

“He has been at the forefront of new music for a long time,” says Power. “He’s a Renaissance person: he’s very connected to his role in history. He composes, he improvises – he is aware of the role of a musician historically.” Power says that it is a joy to play Knox’s music, noting that it “lies beautifully” on the instrument.

This work is inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s visionary poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The poem is present in the music not just as inspiration – as a tone poem or programmatic music may be – but extends to the staging of the work. Power tells me that the orchestra will be reconfigured, sitting in the shape of a boat. As for the famous “albatross about my neck”, that is one of the concerto’s “surprises”.

I am excited to see how Knox allows Coleridge’s poem to guide the music through narrative flourish, musical symbolism and the use of the stage. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has inspired many artists across different art forms. The poem’s seascape, by turns tumultuous or glassy and still, has enormous scope for musical interpretation. The senseless crime at the centre of this narrative – the killing of the albatross that led the mariner’s crew out of Antarctic waters and that has become a cultural image of great power – bears cosmic punishment. Power describes having “a detuned viola wrapped around my neck” and I imagine music suddenly unable to take flight in any direction.

In the poem, the crew’s fate is death, while the mariner’s punishment is “the nightmare life-in-death”, and the ongoing task of recounting his story. In his Viola Concerto, Knox translates the work into a new form, using recitation and musical devices to tell the tale. In performance, Power is interested in how to reimagine the presentation of classical music: for this Viola Concerto they are adding a “fluid dimension to the staging”, with players actively moving. “I think that could be quite exciting for the audience,” he says.

It is this reimaging of how music can be configured for contemporary audiences – each piece full of new possibilities – that makes the ACO the perfect crew with whom to embark on the next voyage.

Kate Middleton is an Australian poet and critic. She is the author of the poetry collections *Fire Season*, awarded the Western Australian Premier’s Book Award for Poetry in 2009, and *Ephemeral Waters, Passage and Television* (Giramondo). She has written widely for Australian literary publications and worked in collaboration with artists and musicians. In 2020 she was runner-up for the ABR’s Calibre Essay Prize. From 2021 to 2026 she was the poetry editor for *Island*.

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Lawrence Power.
Photo by Jack Liebeck



Cellist Julian Thompson – now celebrating his 20th year with the ACO – has two deep, abiding passions: music and surfing.

R I D I N G

Written by Declan Fry



THE WAVES

Julian Thompson has just emerged from the surf when we speak in Sydney – he’s been out on the waves with his son. We speak via Zoom – a novelty for Thompson. Apart from the “blip” of Covid, Thompson’s world is one of physical engagement: with the cello, with audiences, with the presence of performance.

Thompson – who is celebrating his 20th year with the Australian Chamber Orchestra – describes his relationship with surfing as “one of those deep, abiding passions, possibly bordering on a vice”. The illicit aspect, it turns out, is that Thompson can’t stop collecting boards. “I’ve got them scattered all around my house. I got to the point where I was thinking, ‘Well, where can I hide that board I want around the house so my wife doesn’t find it straight away?’ That kind of thinking probably means that maybe I’ve got a board collection issue.”

Like performance, he says, surfing “taps you into the environment”. Thompson emphasises the importance of maintaining a connection to passions via habits and practices – what he calls, in the context of performance, “cello fitness”. The relationship between cello and performer is intensely physical and when he travels, Barry – a 1729 Guarneri instrument – sits beside him on the plane. (“He’s selfish and always takes the window seat.”)

I can’t help wanting to ask: why Barry? “Barry sort of epitomises a certain kind of cello sound that’s woody, textured, baritone. These low, sexy tones. We thought he kind of had some of the sexiness of Barry White.”

Thompson rarely says “I” when speaking about music. He comes from a musical family and the first-person plural pronoun informs his practice: his sister is a violinist and his two brothers are “both musically inclined”. Ballet and singing were musical mainstays in the household.

“My mum thought the cello would be a good option for me. I was a pretty big kid, had some big hands, and we already had a violinist in the family. If it wasn’t for them, I definitely wouldn’t have kept practising. I guess when you’re younger, if your friends are out playing footy or skateboarding, that’s a bit more instant gratification than working on your C-sharp major scales.”

His relationship with the ACO was one of love at first sight. He attended their recitals as a young teenager, captivated by seeing the British cellist Steven Isserlis.

“They were just a mind-blowing ensemble. Such sharp attack and unified sound and all moving as one. As a young Padawan cellist, to see



this organism onstage, just doing amazing things that I hadn't even imagined yet, was absolutely inspiring."

Along with the rest of the ensemble's cello section – Melissa Barnard (31 years) and Principal Cello Timo-Veikko Valve (20 years) – and Principal Double Bass Maxime Bibeau (28 years), there is almost a century of ACO performance between them. What has changed since he began, Thompson says, is his sense of himself as a musician.

"You know, playing the cello is not something that I do but something that I am. That's how my mind and body have been shaped for so long. I perceive a lot of other things in the context of my understanding of the cello, the same way Bruce Lee talks about, as you master your kung fu, everything becomes kung fu."

Thompson has recently returned from a regional tour with ACO Collective, the ACO's education and regional touring ensemble that pairs the core musicians of the ACO with the country's most talented emerging string musicians. As a mentor, he recalls his younger self, hyper-focused upon improving particular areas or technical aspects – a chord formation, playing at a particular speed. With its five-octave range, the cello can move from deep, double bass-like tones through a viola-esque mid-range and up into a soprano's high singing registers. A cellist, Thompson says, is a "musical chameleon" for whom receiving knowledge through teachers is "critically important".

"Looking back with a few more years, I can see that getting better comes incrementally. Vocally, if you go between two notes that are a long way apart, you don't just go from one to the next. You have to move between them. I feel like the cello has that real physicality when you sing on it well. It takes years before you start to be able to make sounds that you enjoy making, or even to really create musical shapes that you find satisfying. You're gauging the desires and progress of the student and trying to work out, well, what can I put in the pathway that will generate change, or a strong reaction?"

Growing up in Canberra, Thompson found John Painter, founder of the ACO in 1975 and director of the Canberra School of Music, especially influential. His chamber orchestra program, Thompson recalls, "was inspiring and intimidating all at once." Painter's wife, Lois Simpson, a cellist who played with the ACO from its earliest days, taught Thompson at the Canberra School of Music. He describes her as a "very patient woman" who shaped his approach to sound and "the way you could make the cello sing."

Now a Fulbright Scholar, Thompson has studied with Australian cellist David Pereira and completed a Master of Music in the United States with János Starker and Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi. He has played everywhere from Carnegie Hall to shearing sheds

"You know, playing the cello is not something that I do but something that I am. That's how my mind and body have been shaped for so long."

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Julian Thompson performing with ACO Underground at the Factory Theatre in Sydney, in February 2020.
Photo by Daniel Boud

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Julian Thompson surfing the Western Australian coast during the making of *The Reef* in 2012.
Photo by Ed Sloane





“Growing up in Canberra, Thompson found John Painter, founder of the ACO in 1975 and director of the Canberra School of Music, especially influential. His chamber orchestra program, Thompson recalls, ‘was inspiring and intimidating all at once.’”

in the red dirt of Western Australia. In the interval between habits and practice, between audience and performer, starting out and two decades in, it’s not easy, as a cellist, getting from one note to the next. You must be flexible. Each time is a bit of a recital. You wait out a series of waves before the calm.

“Sound waves, light waves, ocean waves...,” Thompson muses. “At the end of the day, it’s all waves, isn’t it.”

Declan Fry has been shortlisted for the Judith Wright Poetry Prize and the Walkley-Pascall Prize in criticism. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *Another Australia* (Affirm), *The Uncollected Animals* (Turtle Point Press), and *Woven* (Magabala). A recipient of the Hilary McPhee Award, the Peter Blazey Fellowship, and the *Griffith Review* short story prize, Fry has written for *The Guardian*, *The Saturday Paper*, *The Age/Sydney Morning Herald*, *Griffith Review*, *Memo* and *The Monthly* and is a regular contributor to ABC Arts.

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Julian Thompson performing the baroque guitar in *Sketches of Spain*.
Photo by Nic Walker

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Julian Thompson on tour with the ACO in Berlin in 2022.
Photo by Nic Walker

Lawrence Power

Director, Violin & Viola



Internationally acclaimed viola player Lawrence Power is widely praised for his richness of sound, technical mastery and advocacy for new music. Heralded by *The New York Times* as “a musician on a mission to make us pay attention to the viola”, Lawrence has advanced the cause of the instrument through outstanding performances as well as through the creation of the Viola Commissioning Circle (VCC) which has led to a substantial body of fresh repertoire. Lawrence has premiered concertos by leading composers such as James MacMillan, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Julian Anderson and Alexander Goer, and through the VCC has commissioned works by Anders Hillborg, Thomas Adès, Gerald Barry, Cassandra Miller and Magnus Lindberg.

Lawrence opened the current season with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra (Nicholas Collon) performing Berlioz’s *Harold in Italy* and appeared again under the baton of Collon alongside violinist Vilde Frang for the Britten Double Concerto with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He will close the season with the world premiere of Ryan Wigglesworth’s *Viola Concerto* at the Aldeburgh Festival under the composer’s baton, commissioned through the VCC.

Concerto highlights include performances of the critically acclaimed Magnus Lindberg *Viola Concerto* with Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona (Matthias Pintscher), Royal Stockholm Philharmonic (Ryan Bancroft), and Trondheim Symphony (Adam Hickox), and play directing the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Further engagements include performances of Cassandra Miller’s *I cannot love without trembling* with the BBC Philharmonic (Ludovic Morlot) and the Montréal Symphony Orchestra (Elim Chan), Bacewicz’s *Viola Concerto* with NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester (James Gaffigan) and a three-week play direct tour with the Australian Chamber Orchestra to include the Australian premiere of Garth Knox’s *Viola Concerto*.

Lawrence is a strong collaborator, and this season will perform alongside Ryan Wigglesworth, Simon Crawford-Phillips, Nicholas Alstaedt and Ilya Gringolts, at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Palau de la Música Catalana and LSO St Luke’s.

Lawrence and videographer Jessie Roger will join forces again for a newly commissioned project from creative studio Àme at the Barbican Centre, marking the start of Lawrence’s Artist Residency, and make their debut in Paris with a performance of *Reflections* at Théâtre de l’Athénée.

Lawrence plays a viola made in Bologna in 1590 by Antonio Brenzi and also a Brothers Amati viola from 1580 on loan from the Karolina Blaberg Stiftung.

Australian Chamber Orchestra

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The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its explosive performances that redefine orchestral music. With its fearless leader of over three decades, Artistic Director Richard Tognetti, the ACO is acclaimed internationally as an ensemble of invention, disruption and unforgettable music-making.

The ACO performs more than 100 concerts each year, with programs that embrace celebrated classics alongside new commissions and groundbreaking collaborations, working with artists and musicians who share the Orchestra’s ideology: from

Emmanuel Pahud, Steven Isserlis, Polina Leschenko, Pekka Kuusisto, Nicolas Altstaedt and William Barton, to Jonny Greenwood, Neil Finn and Meow Meow; to visual artists and film makers such as Bill Henson, Shaun Tan, Jane Campion, and Jennifer Peedom, who co-create unique, hybrid productions for which the ACO has become renowned.

In addition to its national touring schedule, the ACO undertakes multiple international tours a year, regularly performing in cities including London, New York and Tokyo. Following the success of Richard Tognetti’s season as the Barbican’s first ever Artist-in-Residence at Milton Court Concert Hall, the Orchestra performed a three-year residency as International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court in partnership with London’s Barbican Centre from the 2018/19 season.

The ACO has a series of award-winning cinematic concert films, *ACO StudioCasts*, as well as an active recording program across vinyl, CD and digital. Its recordings of Bach’s violin works won two consecutive ARIA Awards. Recent releases include *Horizon, Beethoven & Brahms: Concertos for Violin and Orchestra*, featuring Richard Tognetti as soloist, *Water/Night Music*, the first Australian-produced classical vinyl for two decades, *Beethoven 1, 2, & 3 Eroica* and ARIA award-winning albums *River* and *Indies & Idols*.

In 2022 the ACO opened a new, world-class venue, ACO On The Pier, continuing the Orchestra’s dedication to creating and presenting transformative experiences for all music lovers.

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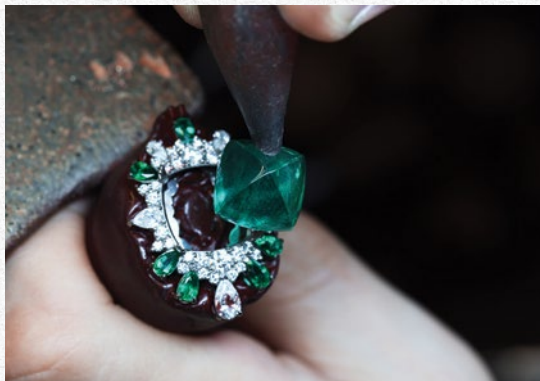
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A black and white close-up photograph of a violin's bridge and strings. The strings are taut and run diagonally across the frame. The bridge is visible in the center, with its arching top and the points where the strings are anchored. The background is softly blurred, showing the body of the violin.

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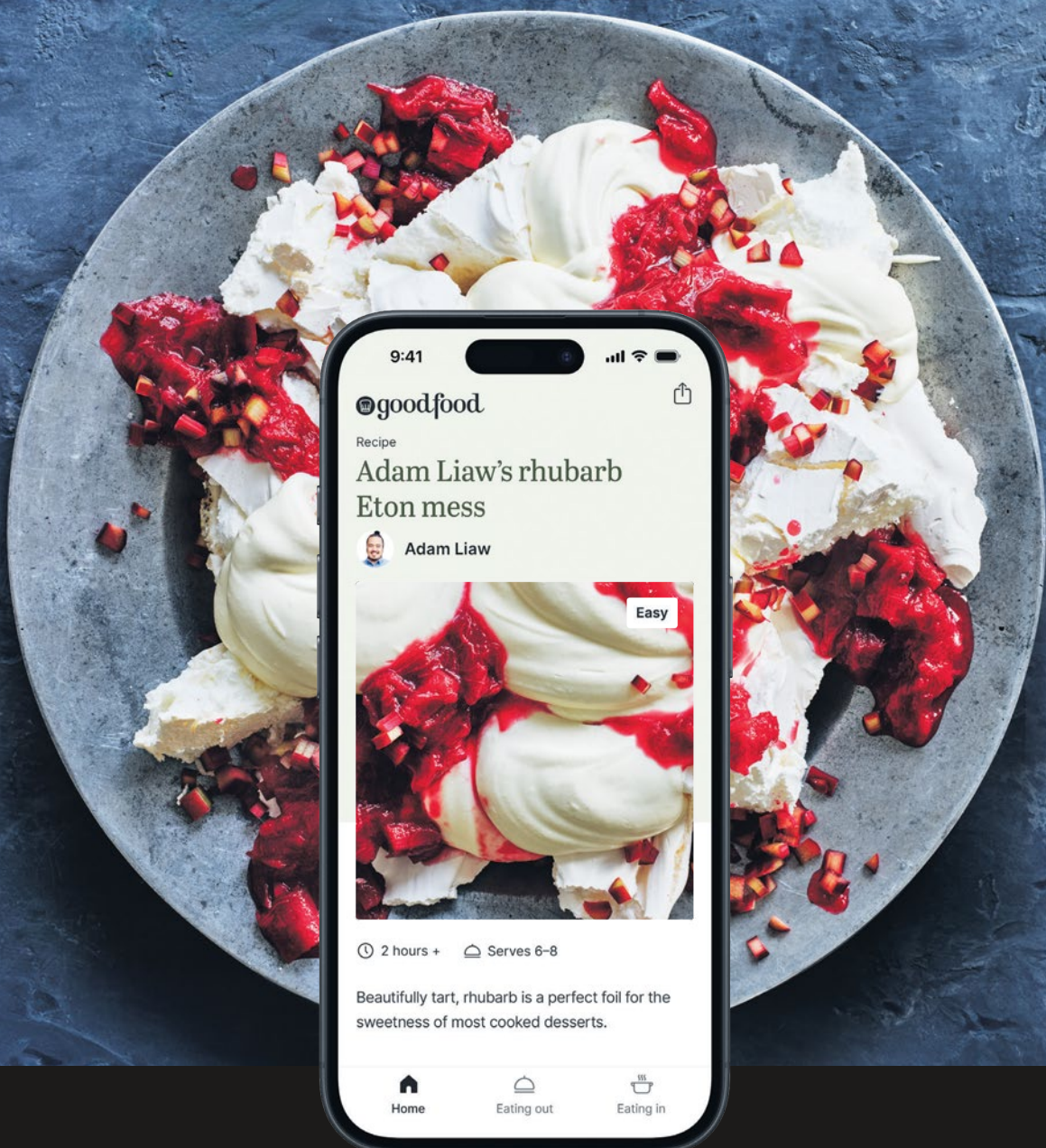
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