

Australian Chamber Orchestra

50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

ACO

COCTEAU'S CIRCLE

Directed by Richard Tognetti

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Wesfarmers Arts

THANK YOU

For over 50 years, our ACO family has been at the heart of everything we do.

Your belief in our vision and your generous support have shaped our journey and helped us become the Orchestra you know and love today.

From all of us at the ACO — thank you.



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.

Share your experience

#ACO25Season



@AustralianChamberOrchestra

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WELCOME

As we sprint towards the end of our 50th-anniversary year, over the next 90 minutes I invite you to join us as we go back in time to 1920s Paris. Guiding us on this adventure is superstar cabaret and opera artist Le Gateau Chocolat, this evening's Maître d'.

Joining Richard Tognetti, soprano Chloe Lankshear and the ACO on stage, Gateau leads us through cobblestoned streets to Le Boeuf sur le Toit, the legendary cabaret bar frequented by the likes of Ernest Hemingway, Josephine Baker, Erik Satie, Lili Boulenger, and, of course, Jean Cocteau.

Cocteau's Circle is an exploration of this golden period in Europe, a time when borders blurred, creativity flourished, and spirits were high. Richard Tognetti and the ACO first explored this period in *Weimar Cabaret*, Barry Humphries' masterful evocation of 1920s Berlin, where jazz and decadence thrived amid the shadows of what was to come.

The spirit of Weimar and Barry's influence never left Richard, and so *Cocteau's Circle* was born – created in collaboration with Circa's extraordinary Yaron Lifschitz, and steeped in the same spirit of innovation, irreverence, and artistry.

Thank you for joining us on this final subscription concert tour escapade in this most special of years. I hope you enjoy the show.



Richard Evans AM
Managing Director



Wesfarmers Arts



Australian Chamber Orchestra & Wesfarmers Arts
Bringing People & Music Together

NEWS

Upcoming concerts and the latest announcements.

Latest News ACO 2026

We are delighted that single tickets and Full and Flexi Subscriptions to our 2026 Season are now on sale.

Our 2026 National Concert Season features majestic symphonies of the 18th and 19th centuries through to Romantic masterworks and trailblazing new music from the most captivating composers of today. It's a season where you'll discover, and rediscover, some of the greatest music ever written.

ACO Subscribers can enjoy a wide range of benefits throughout the season including saving up to 35% off the cost of single ticket prices, free and easy ticket exchanges and access to exclusive subscriber offers and events.

We invite you to join us on the adventure.

Special Events Celebrating the Australian Chamber Orchestra

21 NOV
Sydney Opera House

On 21 November 1975, a group of pioneering musicians walked out onto the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall stage, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra was born.

Fifty years to the day, Richard Tognetti and the ACO will walk out onto that same stage to pay homage to the past and to celebrate a bright and ambitious future.

From beloved classics that capture the ACO's thrilling dynamism and imaginative spirit, to our groundbreaking film collaborations and guest appearances across music, film and dance, this concert showcases why the ACO is one of the most distinct, inventive and renowned ensembles on the world stage today.

1.
2026 Season



1

On Tour

Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody

5-18 FEB

National Tour

In this joyful season opener directed by Richard Tognetti and featuring the singular talents of ever-adventurous pianist Dejan Lazić as soloist, the ACO explores the power of music to take us to the edge of what is known... and beyond. Come with us to explore music including Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* alongside the world premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer John Luther Adams' new work, *Horizon*, which explores the extremes of the Australian landscape.

2.
Dejan Lazić

3.
Ilya Gringolts

4.
Carols On The Pier



2

On Tour

The Devil's Violin

12-28 MAR

National Tour

Virtuoso Ilya Gringolts directs the ACO in a program that pushes the violin to its fiery limits. He returns with his dazzling virtuosity and commanding stage presence for his third tour with the ACO, to perform Tartini's fiendish *Devil's Trill* sonata alongside music by Geminiani, Vivaldi and Sofia Gubaidulina.



3

ACO On The Pier

ACO Up Close: Le Gateau

Chocolat in Raw Cacao

25 NOV

Stepping aside from their mainstage show with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Le Gateau Chocolat comes at us at his most delicious in *Raw Cacao*, an exploration of intimacy and an invitation into the most hallowed of spaces; the chamber where one transitions from performer to person. Who are we when no one is watching?

Carols On The Pier

18-22 DEC

Deck the halls and celebrate the magic of Christmas with our brand-new family concert at ACO On The Pier. Featuring ACO Families musicians alongside the enchanting voices of Luminescence Chamber Singers, *Carols On The Pier* combines the timeless joy of Christmas carols with the beauty of world-class classical music.



4

ACO

RICHARD TOGNETTI

Australian Chamber Orchestra

BEETHOVEN BRAHMS

CONCERTOS FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

Live in Concert

Australian
Chamber
Orchestra **50** Years

Celebrate 50 years of the Australian Chamber Orchestra with this landmark new album that pays tribute to the ACO's remarkable legacy and honours 35 years of Richard Tognetti's extraordinary leadership.

Available to stream, download or purchase as a limited-edition vinyl or CD from 21 November. Scan the QR code to pre-order.



Pre-Concert
Talks

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

SYDNEY – CITY RECITAL HALL

Francis Merson

Sat 8 Nov 6.15pm
Tue 11 Nov 7.15pm
Wed 12 Nov 6.15pm

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Francis Merson

Sun 9 Nov 1.15pm

BRISBANE – QPAC
CONCERT HALL

Matthew Hodge

Mon 10 Nov 6.15pm

MELBOURNE RECITAL CENTRE

Kym Dillon

Sat 15 Nov 6.45pm
Mon 17 Nov 6.45pm

MELBOURNE – ARTS
CENTRE MELBOURNE

Kym Dillon

Sun 16 Nov 1.45pm

ADELAIDE TOWN HALL

Russell Torrance

Tue 18 Nov 6.45pm

CANBERRA – LLEWELLYN HALL

Francis Merson

Sat 22 Nov 6.45pm

PROGRAM

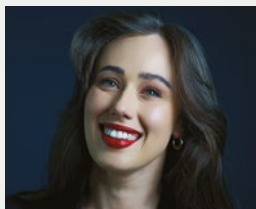
Richard Tognetti Music Director and Violin
Yaron Lifschitz Staging Director
Le Gateau Chocolat Maître d' and Voice
Chloe Lankshear Soprano
Libby McDonnell Costume Designer
Elena Kats-Chernin Interstitial Music Composer
Australian Chamber Orchestra

COMPOSER	TITLE	MIN
Elena Kats-Chernin	<i>Pre-show</i> : Intermission Music [#]	
Georges Auric*	Ouverture [abridged]	4
Elena Kats-Chernin	Interlude 1: Les années folles (The crazy years) [#]	2
Igor Stravinsky	L'Histoire du soldat: Ragtime	2
Arthur Honegger*	Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel: Marche funèbre	3
Elena Kats-Chernin	Interlude 2: L'opéra (The opera) [#]	1
Henri Christiné*	Phi-Phi: Bien Chapeauté	3
Germaine Tailleferre*	String Quartet: I. Modéré	3
George Gershwin*	Oh, Lady Be Good!	4
Maurice Ravel**	String Quartet: IV. Vif et agité	5
Elena Kats-Chernin	Interlude 3: Le sacré (The sacred) [#]	1
Francis Poulenc*	Les Chemins de l'amour	3
Lili Boulanger*	Pie Jesu	4
Igor Stravinsky	Trois pièces pour quatuor à cordes: I. Danse, III. Cantique	4
George Gershwin*	Porgy and Bess: I Loves You, Porgy	4
Jean Françaix*	Concertino for Piano & Orchestra: I. Presto leggiero	2
Elena Kats-Chernin	Interlude 4: Les fantômes (The ghosts) [#]	1
Claude Debussy**	String Quartet, Op.10: II. Assez vif et bien rythmé	4
Janis Ian*	Stars	7
Elena Kats-Chernin	Interlude 5: Étonnez-moi (Astonish me) [#]	1
Darius Milhaud***	Le Boeuf sur le toit, Op.58	16
Édith Piaf*	L'Hymne à l'amour	3

[#] Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra
^{*} Arranged by Andrew Howes
^{**} Arranged by Richard Tognetti
^{***} Arranged by Bernard Rofe

MUSICIANS ON STAGE

Learn more about our musicians,
go behind the scenes and watch
ACO StudioCast films at:
acoondemand.com.au



Chloe Lankshear
Soprano



Satu Vänkä
Principal Violin

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



Richard Tognetti
Director and Violin

Richard plays a 1741–44 Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin on loan from the ACO. His Chair is sponsored by Gaby Kennard, Peter McMullin AM & Ruth McMullin, Andrew & Andrea Roberts, and Rosy Seaton & Seumas Dawes.



Le Gateau Chocolat
Maître d' and Voice



Aiko Goto
Violin

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



Ilya Isakovitch
Violin

Ilya plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin 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 on loan from the ACO. Her Chair is sponsored by the Melbourne Medical Syndicate.



Ike See
Violin

Ike plays his own 2021 Samuel Zygmuntowicz violin.



Stefanie Farrands
Principal Viola

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



Jenny Khafagi[#]
Viola

Jenny plays her own viola made in 1885 by William Tarr. Jenny appears courtesy of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.



Kaori Yamagami[#]
Principal Cello

Kaori plays a cello made in the school of Maggini in Brescia, Italy in 1685.



Julian Thompson
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.



Maxime Bibeau
Principal Bass

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



David Griffiths[#]
Clarinet

David appears courtesy of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne.



Brent Grapes[#]
Trumpet

Brent appears courtesy of Sydney Symphony Orchestra.



Nigel Crocker[#]
Trombone



Brian Nixon[#]
Percussion

Brian's Chair is sponsored by Jennifer & Denys Gillespie, and Jo & John Millyard.



Stefan Cassomenos[#]
Piano

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Joe Cox

Head of Lighting

Melanie Liertz

Costume Supervisor

Lauren Kenyon

Costume Assistant

Tracy Datson

Costume Assistant

Meg No

Costume Assistant

Bob Scott

Audio Engineer

Walter Hart

Production Manager

Jes Halm

Production Coordinator

[#] Guest Musician

ACO

Australian
Chamber
Orchestra

Richard Tognetti Artistic Director



RACHMANINOFF'S RHAPSODY

A dazzling musical revelation featuring Rachmaninoff's Romantic masterpiece, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* and the world premiere of John Luther Adams' *Horizon*.

THE DEVIL'S VIOLIN

Ilya Gringolts reunites with the ACO in a daredevil program of brilliance and virtuosity featuring music by Tartini, Geminiani, Vivaldi and more.



SCHUBERT'S FANTASY & OCTET

Experience the full range of human emotion when Richard Tognetti leads an intimate ensemble of ACO musicians in a celebration of the greatest of musical poets: Franz Schubert.



ISLES OF LIGHT

A genre-defying voyage from the pastoral majesty of Vaughan Williams to the experimental universe of Kate Bush, directed by British virtuoso Lawrence Power.

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GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies

2026 NATIONAL CONCERT SEASON

Uncompromising. Adventurous. Always in motion

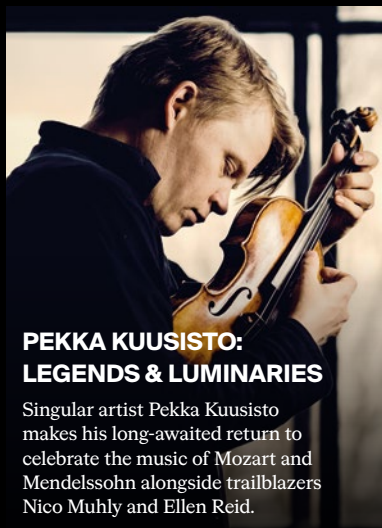
FROM WINTER'S STILLNESS

Richard Tognetti directs an extraordinary collaboration with vocal phenomenon Trio Mediæval and jazz trumpeter Arve Henriksen featuring ancient hymns of Northern Europe through to Sigur Rós and Hildur Guðnadóttir.



PEKKA KUUSISTO: LEGENDS & LUMINARIES

Singular artist Pekka Kuusisto makes his long-awaited return to celebrate the music of Mozart and Mendelssohn alongside trailblazers Nico Muhly and Ellen Reid.



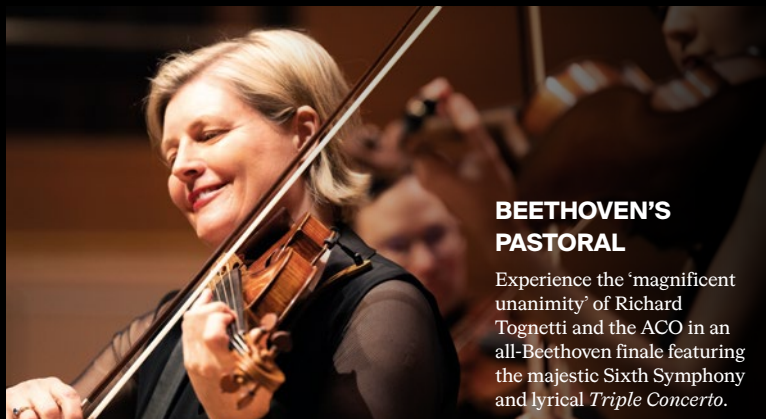
MOZART'S LAST SYMPHONIES & BACH'S CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

In addition to our seven national tours, we are presenting a limited number of performances of these two very special programs. Tickets are selling quickly.



BEETHOVEN'S PASTORAL

Experience the 'magnificent unanimity' of Richard Tognetti and the ACO in an all-Beethoven finale featuring the majestic Sixth Symphony and lyrical *Triple Concerto*.



ACO.COM.AU

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HEAT AND

PORTRAITS OF PARIS IN THE 1920s



LIGHT

After the carnage of World War I, Paris became a ferment of artists and visionaries whose groundbreaking work resonates to the present day.

Written by Neha Kale





You can find them in Montparnasse – in that tangle of streets on the Left Bank of the Seine, where at the crossroads of Rue de Rennes and the Boulevard du Montparnasse, two decades into the new century, the artists, writers and great dreamers of the Jazz Age encountered each other. An electric and heady collective. Collisions that reverberate still.

Walking the cobblestoned pavements, you can hear strange echoes. The strains of Debussy and Ravel, whose ghosts haunt this place. Sonatas for violin and piano, lilting and sonorous, a fantasy of a more romantic time between the wars as the trace of artillery fire still suffuses the air, sweet and smoky. But listen for other sounds too: the murmur of strange accents, new languages, conversations between the migrants fleeing Russia, Armenia and Poland. Bursts of laughter from the American expats, former soldiers drawn here by the cheap rents and dwindling franc.

The notes of a trumpet are carried on the evening breeze, the player one of the Black musicians and performers who found refuge here from American prejudice. Among them was Josephine Baker, who would later frequent the grand brasserie La Coupole, all lamplight and mirrored surfaces, with her pet cheetah. Adorned in feathers and sequins, she danced the Charleston at the Bobino on the Rue de la Gaîté, sparkling and comet fast.

“Adorned in feathers and sequins, she danced the Charleston at the Bobino on the Rue de la Gaîté, sparkling and comet fast.”

Page 12-13
Cocteau's Circle.
Illustration by Asher McShane

Page 14
Paris in the 1920s.
Photo by Arnaud

Page 15.
Erik Satie.
Photo by Sonia y Natalia

Josephine Baker.
Photo by Lucien Waléry

She refused to play the segregated clubs of her home state, Missouri. For Baker, Paris represented a great freedom. This revolutionary streak would recur in the Black avant-garde that arrived in the decades that followed: Miles Davis and Louis Armstrong, the painter Beauford Delaney, the writer James Baldwin, his friend, the legendary singer Nina Simone.

More than a century after Baker, Le Gateau Chocolat performs alongside the Australian Chamber Orchestra as the polymath Jean Cocteau in the ACO's 50th-anniversary concert *Cocteau's Circle*, structured in five musical chapters. In *Les fantômes* (*The ghosts*), he sings "Stars" by Janis Ian, famously performed in the '70s in Montreux by Simone. "The first time I heard it, I wept," he says. Gateau, a shapeshifting cabaret star and baritone, is part of this lineage of Black artistry: a call and response, a conversation that reverberates between artists. Connections that transcend decades, that exist across time.

Cocteau, a prolific poet and playwright, actor and painter, was introduced to the streets of Montparnasse by his friend Pablo Picasso, who had a studio on the Boulevard Raspail. In the next few years, Ernest Hemingway, an expat novelist from Illinois, would write *The Sun Also Rises* at the Closerie des Lilas, a nearby brasserie, which counted Coco Chanel among its regulars.

Across town on Rue Cambon, Chanel was rejecting the opulence that shaped fashion before the Great War in favour of higher hems and trousers for women and men. Clothing for bodies that were freer, no longer so bound by class and gender. A city in thrall to *Les années folles*, or the crazy years. A time and place in which borders were blurring. Mores that had been fixed for centuries loosened slowly – and then all at once.

How do you conjure the past? Evoke a time and place in which artistic hierarchies melted away, that escapes a straightforward telling, a linear narrative? After World War I, the old ways of making meaning didn't resonate. In France, more than a million dead. The National League for the Defence of French Music was pushing to ban German composers. In place of Wagner, that symbol of high romanticism, of Old Europe, new musical forms were awakening, strange and complex, unlike anything anyone had ever heard before.

At the same time, art and literature were transforming. Man Ray – born Emmanuel Radnitzky, part of a Russian-Jewish migrant family from Philadelphia – rented a ground-floor studio at 31 bis rue Campagne-Première in Montparnasse.

“Mores that had been fixed for centuries loosened slowly – and then all at once.”



“This is Stravinsky’s story of the devil and the soldier, an ode to postwar disillusionment, its shifting, roving rhythms inflected with tango and jazz.”

Page 16
Les Six.
Painting by Jacques-
Émile Blanche

Page 17.
Jean Cocteau.
Photo by Patrick Forget



Here, with the help of his lover, a cabaret star nicknamed Kiki, he started making otherworldly images called “rayographs” that felt like they were out of a dream. He fast became central to the surrealist artists around him.

In 1922, Ray was sent to photograph James Joyce, the Irish writer who had just published *Ulysses*, moving to Paris with his family to a half-furnished flat at the invitation of the modernist poet Ezra Pound. The novel, rejected countless times before Sylvia Beach published it, was a stream-of-consciousness retelling of Homer’s *Odyssey* set over a day in Dublin, and grappled with a new social reality.

Ray, of course, photographed Cocteau in the drawing room of the house he lived in with his mother, Eugénie. The poet, who was an ambulance driver on the Western Front and whose father died by suicide when he was young, used to admire his mother as she dressed up en route to the opera or the theatre. Throughout his life as an artist, they shared a devoted relationship.

Cocteau went on to adapt *Antigone* in 1922, Sophocles’ classic story of a family curse, a minimalist reworking of the Greek myth for the modern era. He was among the first dramatists to liberate classic European texts from high culture, making them relevant to a modern audience and imbuing them with emotional immediacy. He piqued the interest of Igor Stravinsky and wrote the libretto, which was translated into Latin, for Stravinsky’s opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex*, which premiered in 1928 at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt. The Russian composer, who was exiled after the Russian Revolution, sparked a riot in 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées with *The Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky lived with his family for a time in the home of his lover, Coco Chanel.

Near the beginning of *Cocteau’s Circle*, we hear *L’Histoire du soldat: Ragtime*, with Richard Tognetti on the violin. This is Stravinsky’s story of the devil and the soldier, an ode to postwar disillusionment, its shifting, roving rhythms inflected with tango and jazz, the syncopated rag music that sometimes played in the American cafes of Paris. Ragtime, conceived by African-American pianists in Mississippi and Missouri, travelled across the Atlantic during the war and was wildly popular with soldiers and French civilians. It inspired Debussy and Cocteau’s collaborator Erik Satie. In Cocteau’s ballet *Parade*, Satie incorporated the soundtrack of everyday life – the sound of sirens and typewriters and pistols, his sonic visions influencing a generation of avant-garde composers in the century to come.





Page 18
Edith Piaf.
Photo by Harcourt

Amedeo Modigliani, Pablo
Picasso and André Salmon.
Photo by Jean Cocteau

Page 19.
Richard Tognetti.
Photo by Daniel Boud

Paris in the 1920s: a sense of wildness in the air. A group of artists and writers, rejecting bourgeois ideals, embraced anti-art, putting chance at the centre of their process. They took up a movement – dada – that started in 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich but exploded in Paris in 1920 with artists and writers such as Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp.

They lived and worked for a time alongside Satie and Ray, at the Hôtel Irtia, an art deco hotel in Montparnasse. The movement's freewheeling energy, its disregard for the conventions of form, rippled outward. It was also shaped by the Ballets Russes, founded in Paris by the art critic Serge Diaghilev, which brought together visionaries from the worlds of art, music and dance, erasing the lines between disciplines. "You just got the feeling that they were thinking more interesting thoughts," says Yaron Lifschitz, director of *Cocteau's Circle*. "A lot of the best music of the time wasn't composed for the concert hall. The greatest pieces were composed for the ballet, created as a kind of accompaniment."

Imagine, for a moment, taking a velvet seat at the Théâtre du Châtelet for the 1917 premiere of *Parade*, Cocteau's one-act scenario for the Ballets Russes. Satie's fragments of melody, dancers moving across the stage cloaked in cubist forms, costumes by Picasso that hint at the advent of surrealism.

Or the performers gliding midair as part of the 1924 opening of *Le Train Bleu*, Cocteau's satire of the French Riviera leisure class, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Bodies adorned in Chanel's elegant striped costumes, bold pinks and indigos, choreographed by Bronislava Nijinska, its polytonal score in fast-moving tempos by Darius Milhaud, who had visited dancehalls in Harlem and spent two years in Rio de Janeiro. Milhaud was part of Les Six, a group of six French composers who drew inspiration from daily life, that included Francis Poulenc, Germaine Tailleferre and Arthur Honegger. They were mentored by Cocteau – the nexus of this heady world, the figure around which so many of the artists and visionaries who shaped this moment pivoted.

Paris in the 1920s was alive with this sense of serendipity. Artists, no longer confined to their disciplines, coming together and then apart. Friendships and liaisons flaming brightly, once-in-a-generation talents soaring and then dissolving, addiction and tragedy snuffing out their potential. Cocteau wrote his acclaimed novel, *Les Enfants Terribles*, in 1928, at the Saint-Cloud clinic while withdrawing from opium. He died in 1963, hours after the passing of his friend, the singer Edith Piaf, whose plaintive "L'Hymne à l'amour" – "Hymn to Love" – closes *Cocteau's Circle*, sung by Le Gateau Chocolat and the renowned Australian soprano Chloe Lankshear.



Milhaud was taught by Nadia Boulanger, whose sister Lili, the first female winner of the Grand Prix de Rome – the highest honour for composition – died at 24 from intestinal tuberculosis. Her lush arrangements, performed on piano and organ, harp and cello, carry a profound emotional depth that changed the course of classical music. The third interlude of *Cocteau's Circle*, *Le sacré*, transports us to the world of the Boulanger sisters, Lili dictating *Pie Jesu* – composed when she was just 16, performed here by Lankshear – to Nadia on her deathbed. It's an expression of spiritual surrender, haunting and powerful. A fateful connection between great artists that's also a testament of love between sisters, greater even than death.

There are certain times, certain places in history that double as portals, where ordinary rules are suspended and new lives, new selves become possible. Take *Le Bœuf sur le Toit* (The Ox on the Roof), the cabaret founded in 1921 on rue Boissy d'Anglas by Louis Moysés. Its previous incarnation, *Le Gaya*, was the unofficial living room of Les Six. The new premises was named for *Le Bœuf sur*

le toit, Milhaud's 1920 ballet that was originally intended to score a film by Charlie Chaplin. In *Cocteau's Circle's* fifth interlude, *Étonnez-moi* (*Astonish me*), we hear Milhaud's composition, its jaunty procession of flutes and horns, its rondo structure interspersed with samba and tango. Alive with sonic influences, blurring and circling, its electricity prefigures Milhaud's embrace of jazz and the hedonistic world of its namesake club.

Enter *Le Bœuf sur le toit* any night of the week in the early 1920s. Inside, painters and novelists, French aristocrats and American businessmen gather around cloth-covered tables. Above the bar hangs *L'Oeil Cacodylate* (*The Cacodylic Eye*), a dadaist painting by Picabia. On stage, back-to-back pianos, fingers flying over keys, first Gershwin, played by the resident pianist Jean Wiener and then the saxophone, the harmonium, courtesy of jazz musicians – Vance Lowry, Eugene McCrown – travelling through the city.

The crowd is intoxicated, the music, the company, thrilling. Here, Stravinsky and Diaghilev. There, Camus and Matisse. Cocteau sits at a table surrounded by members of Les Six – Tailleferre, Poulenc, Milhaud – who are mesmerised by what they are hearing. In the air, too, a sense of queerness as a



“Their ideas enriched each other, a microcosm of the collisions between great artists that defined this decade.”

Page 20.
Gertrude Stein in her Paris studio.
Source: Library of Congress

Page 21.
Le Gateau Chocolat.
Photo by Eli Schmidt

mood, an orientation, championed by openly lesbian musicians such as Dora Stroeve and the gay composer Cole Porter, along with Cocteau himself. Gateau has long crossed artistic disciplines, moving fluidly from jazz to opera to cabaret. “There is something inherently anarchic about drag,” Gateau says. In *Cocteau’s Circle*, he evokes the shapeshifting spirit of Cocteau in his role as maître d’. He escorts us through the world of Le Bœuf – of Paris in the ’20s – and his body in this space is political, an amalgam of queer and Black identity that collapses the lines between them. He gives the subversive spirit of the artists that haunted Le Bœuf a new kind of expression, interpreting their wild freedom for the present day.

Paris in the 1920s rose and fell, its rhythms difficult to distinguish. It is a score written collectively with Cocteau at its centre, around him a circle of artists. A few years after it opened, Le Bœuf moved locations and its atmosphere was never the same.

Towards the end of the decade, the period petered out, its tide receding as quickly as it began. The Great Depression and new political currents finished *Les années folles*. But in Montparnasse, after World War I, everything felt possible. At 27 Rue de Fleurus, on the Left Bank close to the border of Montparnasse, the modernist American writer Gertrude Stein turned the apartment she shared with her brother Leo into a salon. On Saturday evenings she hosted artists and writers – Hemingway and Fitzgerald, Picasso and Matisse, along with members of Les Six. Their ideas enriched each other, a microcosm of the collisions between great artists that defined this decade.

It was a new way of seeing the world, wilder and freer than anything that had come before it – a collective flourishing, evoked in *Cocteau’s Circle*, that reverberates still in the here and now.

Neha Kale is a widely published writer of criticism, journalism, essays and other nonfiction. Her work focuses on art, culture and society, particularly overlooked narratives and how history and power shape individual experience. Kale’s writing has featured in many Australian and international publications including *The Guardian*, *ArtReview*, *Vogue*, *ABC*, *Elephant*, *VICE*, *i-D*, *Griffith Review*, *BBC*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *The World of Interiors*, *Running Dog* and more. From 2022 to 2024, she wrote The Influence column for *The Saturday Paper* and is a long-time contributor to the culture pages of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Spectrum*. Her work has been recognised twice in the Ann Moyal Non-Fiction Fellowship, has won a Faber Writing Scholarship and was nominated in this year’s Walkley Awards. She is the former editor of *VAULT* magazine and currently editor-at-large at *Art Guide Australia*. Her first book is forthcoming in 2026 with NewSouth.



Richard Tognetti

Artistic Director
& Violin



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

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

Richard performs on period, modern and electric instruments and his numerous arrangements, compositions and transcriptions have expanded the chamber orchestra repertoire and been performed throughout the world. As director or soloist, Richard has appeared with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Academy of Ancient Music, Slovene Philharmonic Orchestra, Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Hong Kong Philharmonic, Camerata Salzburg, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Irish Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Nordic Chamber Orchestra and all the major Australian symphony orchestras. Richard performed the Australian premieres of Ligeti's Violin Concerto and Lutoslawski's Partita. In November 2016, he became the Barbican Centre's first Artist-in-Residence at Milton Court Concert Hall in London.

Richard created the Huntington Festival in Mudgee, New South Wales and was Artistic Director of the Festival Maribor in Slovenia from 2008 to 2015.

Richard's arrangements, compositions and transcriptions have expanded the chamber orchestra repertoire and been performed throughout the world. He curated and co-composed the scores for the ACO's documentary films *Musica Surfica*, *The Glide*, *The Reef* and *The Crowd & I*, and co-composed the scores for Peter Weir's *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* and Tom Carroll's film *Storm Surfers*. Richard collaborated with director Jennifer Peedom and *Stranger Than Fiction* to create the award-winning films *Mountain*, which went on to become the highest-grossing homegrown documentary in Australian cinemas, and *River*, which won Best Soundtrack at the ARIA, AACTA and APRA awards.

His recordings have received accolades around the world, and he is the recipient of seven ARIA awards, including three consecutive wins for his recordings of Bach's violin works.

Richard was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2010. He holds honorary doctorates from three Australian universities and was made a National Living Treasure in 1999. In 2017 he was awarded the JC Williamson Award for longstanding service to the live performance industry. He performs on a 1741–44 Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin, lent to him by the ACO.

Yaron Lifschitz

Staging Director

Yaron Lifschitz makes shows. Big ones, small ones, and ones that defy easy categorisation. More than 80 productions have toured across six continents and played to over two million people picking up a shelf's worth of awards including six Helpmanns, the ISPA Distinguished Artist Award and the Australia Council Theatre Award.

As CEO and Artistic Director of *Circa* he has brought circus to the Barbican, string quartets and acrobats to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, four years of performances to Berlin and major shows to major festivals and venues around the world. He's created strange, beautiful things in tents, concert halls, spiegel tents, and opera houses as well as cemeteries and cathedrals. His film work has appeared at the Berlin and Melbourne Film Festivals.

Yaron was the founding Director of the Australian Museum's Theatre Unit, he has taught directing at NIDA and ATYP and has directed opera, concerts and events. In 1999 he was the first Artistic Director of *Rock 'n' Roll Circus* which, in 2004, he transformed into *Circa*.



In 2018 he was Creative Lead of Festival 2018, the cultural program of the 21st Commonwealth Games – one of the most ambitious arts events in Queensland's history.

At the heart of Yaron's work is restless curiosity and a fierce belief in the power of performance to connect and transform. He describes his creations as "love letters to a species that not always easy to like".

Le Gateau Chocolat

Maître d' & Voice



Le Gateau Chocolat's work traverses genre and format. He's trodden *Bark of Millions* with Taylor Mac at Sydney Opera House, and BAM New York, performances at Royal Festival Hall and Royal Albert Hall, Barbican with Basement Jaxx and Metropole Orkest, Glyndebourne, The Globe Theatre, Edinburgh Festivals and Bayreuth. He performs the likes of Wagner to Whitney Houston, Purcell to Radiohead and continues to subvert what it means to be a true icon in the post-genre era.

The six-and-half foot tall, six-inch heeled, wig-clad wonder swings wildly from one end of the musical spectrum to another, from disco, opera, musicals and pop. His recent production *ICONS* has toured to Sydney Festival, Wales Millennium Centre, Soho Theatre, Underbelly Southbank and elsewhere. *ICONS* has also been presented with accompaniment from the Little Coco Orchestra, a Le Gateau Chocolat initiative to support diverse musicians through the creation of an ensemble formed entirely of women of colour.

In theatre performances include at the National in Rufus Norris' production of *The Threepenny Opera*, Feste in Emma Rice's final visionary production of *Twelfth Night* at The Globe (2017), *Effigies of Wickedness – Songs banned by the Nazis* (2018), a co-production between the Gate Theatre and English National Opera and Daddy Brubeck in the Donmar Warehouse's production of *Sweet Charity* (2019)

alongside Beverly Knight and Clive Rowe. He further appeared as part of Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: The First Act* at London's Barbican Theatre (2019), and as a featured cast member of two-time Olivier Award winning cabaret and circus, *La Clique* and *La Soirée*.

Le Gateau Chocolat has presented many solo shows including *In Drag* (Royal Festival Hall commission), accompanied by small orchestra, is an exploration of the effects of living in drag through music by artists ranging from Wagner to Nick Cave presented with trademark wit and candour; and *Raw Cacao*, an intimate song cycle with repertoire from Spirituals to Nina Simone, and Whitney Houston, presented by Carnegie Hall Citywide (2024), and Lyric Hammersmith – For The Culture (2022).

In opera, he has worked with many contemporary composers, specifically Julian Philips (Varjak Paw at Royal Opera House), Jonathan Dove (Tobias and The Angel at the Young Vic), Jocelyn Pook (Ingerland at Royal Opera House and Anxiety Fanfare at Hull City of Culture 2017 and Royal Festival Hall) and Orlando Gough (Imago at Glyndebourne Festival Opera), and his headline-attracting performance as part of Tobias Kratzer's acclaimed production of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* at the 2019 Bayreuth Festival.

Chloe Lankshear

Soprano



Soprano Chloe Lankshear has established a versatile career that has seen her feature with some of Australia and Germany's most acclaimed arts organisations. She delights across many epochs with performances of baroque music, art song, and modern opera. Reviews of her many performances of Handel's *Messiah* include comments such as "*dazzling; her vocal agility, accuracy, range, breath control, and ornamentation [are] extraordinarily impressive*".

Chloe was Pinchgut Opera's inaugural 'Taryn Fiebig' young artist (2021–2023), appearing in their touring recital programs, video productions and recordings, and operatic productions. Chloe sang her Sydney Opera House Concert Hall debut in 2023 with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, performing Bach's *Magnificat* with Stephen Layton. She has also featured with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, the Australian Haydn Ensemble and Sydney Chamber Choir. Orchestral soloist engagement highlights include Mozart's *Requiem*, Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, Mahler's Symphony No.4, and Faure's *Requiem*.

In 2021, Chloe premiered and recorded Paul Stanhope's new major work *Requiem*, and in 2024 joined Sydney Chamber Opera for their concert performance of Mary Finsterer's opera *Antarctica*.

Chloe has appeared four times at the Adelaide Festival, the first being Neil Armfield's production of Brett Dean's opera *Hamlet*, the latest in 2024 for Ukaria's *Chamber Landscapes* festival with guest artistic director Richard Tognetti.

After moving to Germany at the end of 2023, Chloe quickly established herself as an oratorio soloist of note. In 2025, she sang her debut in Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie Concert Hall as a featured soloist performing arias and duets by Vivaldi, Caldara, and Lotti with conductor Klaas Stock and the *Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin*.

Chloe won the soprano position with the NDR-Vokalensemble and will appear with them as a featured soloist at the Elbphilharmonie Concert Hall throughout the 2025/2026 season.

Australian Chamber Orchestra

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

— THE AUSTRALIAN

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its explosive performances that redefine orchestral music. With its fearless leader of 35 years, Artistic Director Richard Tognetti, in 2025 the Orchestra celebrates 50 years 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 ground-breaking 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.

The ACO has its own streaming platform, ACO On Demand, which hosts the Orchestra’s award-winning cinematic concert films, *ACO StudioCasts*, alongside live concert streams. The Orchestra also has an active recording program, with Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra winning eight ARIA Awards. Recent releases include *Water/Night Music*, the first Australian-produced classical vinyl for two decades, *Tchaikovsky/Shostakovich* 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.



ACO Subscriber Stories

Mathisha Panagoda

Sydney Subscriber Mathisha Panagoda always attends an ACO concert with an open mind.

“I’ve known about the ACO since I first started getting involved in music as a child,” Sydney-based subscriber Mathisha Panagoda says. “Then in 2012 I recall bringing the ACO brochure along to a catch up with some friends at a cafe after work.”

Mathisha – Tish to friends – was enticed by the selection of concerts that year, and by the discounted tickets for younger concert-goers. “We also thought it would be a great way to have some regular catch-ups in the year ahead centred around our love for music,” he smiles.

Tish, who now works in law, was surrounded by music from a young age, and studied it seriously. “I loved to sing, and I actually played a few instruments, but the cello was the one that stuck for me. I sang with Gondwana Choirs and played the cello with many of our inspiring youth orchestras.”

He completed a performance degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and continued his music studies overseas, before launching into an entirely different career in law.

An experienced ear, then, Tish tells us it’s the ACO’s dynamism that keeps him coming back to concerts. “What sets the ACO apart and keeps me coming back is the outstanding virtuosity and on-stage energy of the performers, and the innovative programming,” he says. “Over the years I’ve come to trust in the ACO. There have been concerts I would not ordinarily have planned to go to, but sometimes those unexpected concerts have been the most memorable. That’s probably the best benefit of having a



subscription that gives you plenty of what you already know you enjoy, but also challenges you a bit and encourages you to listen to something new with an open mind.”

The other benefit of subscribing to the Orchestra is that it allows him to carve out guaranteed friend catch-ups: “It’s become a stable fixture in the calendars of me and my friends,” he says fondly.

Tish describes his taste in music as “eclectic” – “it unapologetically ranges from Bach to Beyonce!” – and his favourite ACO concerts from across the years reflect that universal love of good music, of good art, no matter the genre.

“My favourite ACO concert from over the years? Well, that’s an impossible question to answer,” Tish says. “But two highlights have been *Abel Selaocoe* (2025) and *Mountain* (2017).”

“Abel is an extraordinary musician and him in combination with the ACO created one of the most unique and energetic concerts I think I’ve ever experienced.

“*Mountain* was breathtaking, both visually and audibly. The music was so cleverly programmed with the cinematography and took us through such a memorable journey.”

Age: 38

Subscriber since: 2013

Date of first ACO concert: 2004

Favourite ACO concert: *Abel Selaocoe* and *Mountain*

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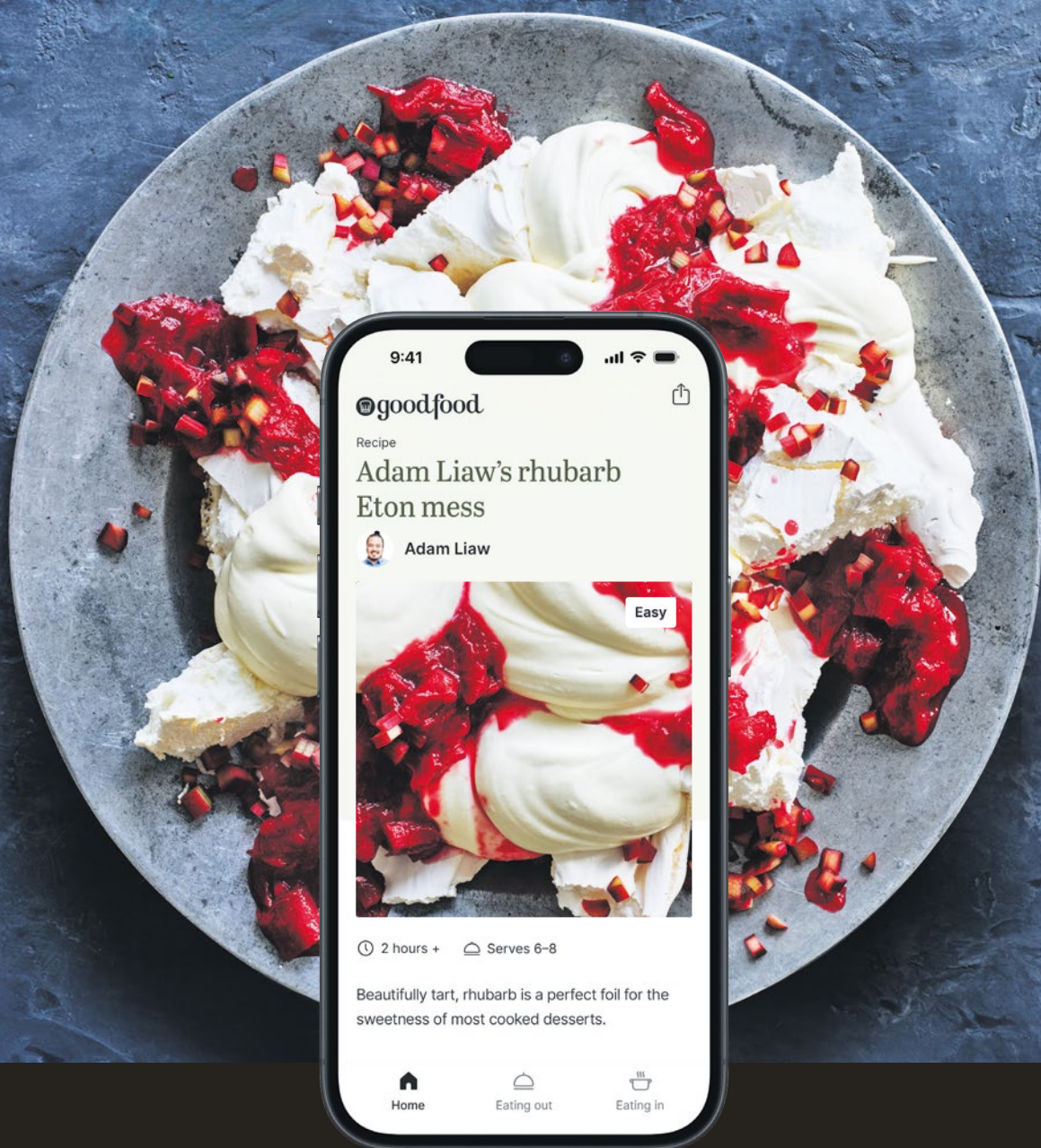
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