AustralianChamberOrchestra

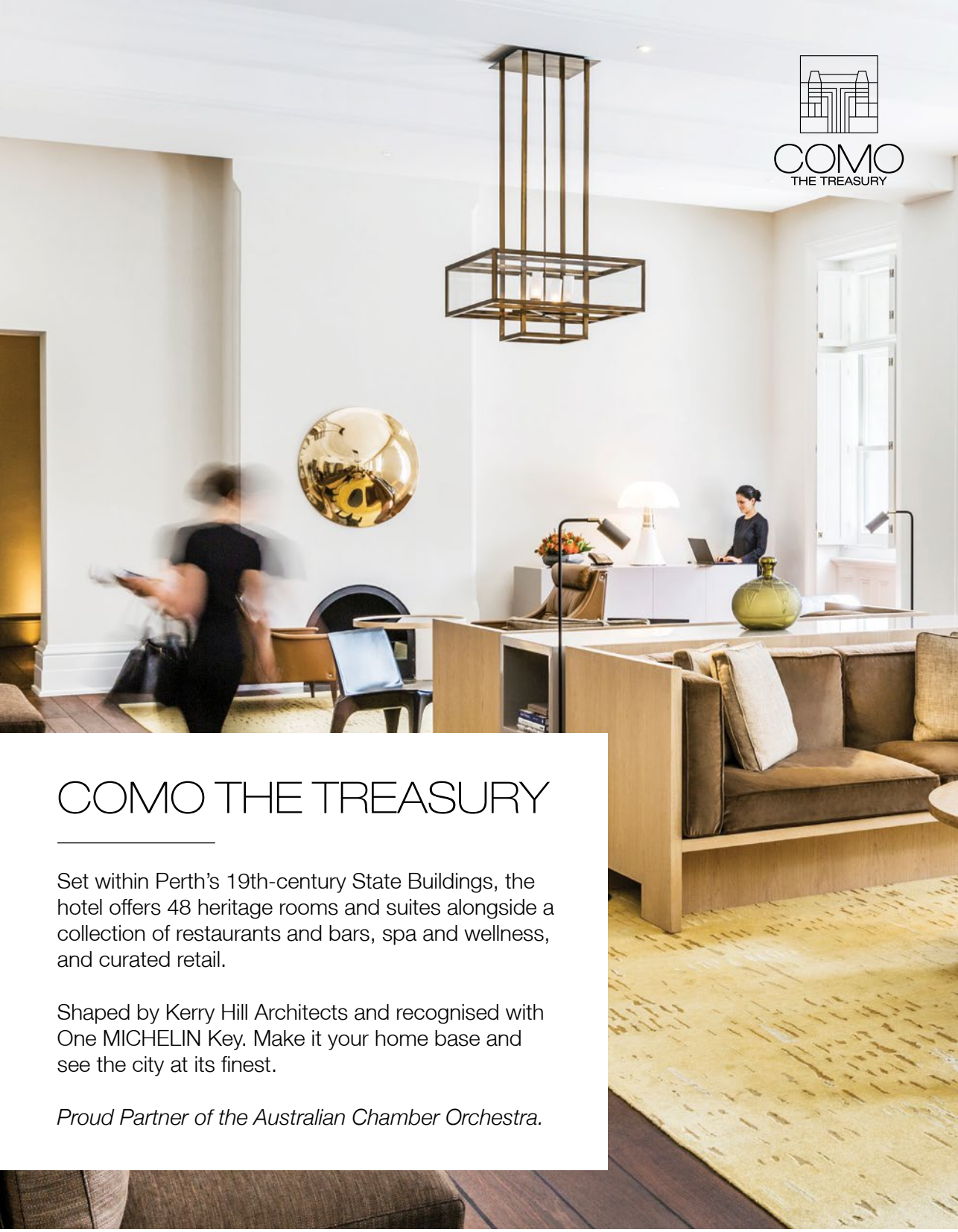


BEETHOVEN'S PASTORAL

Directed by Richard Tognetti

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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.

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Share your experience

#ACO26Season

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WELCOME FROM THE ACO

Welcome to the final national tour of the ACO's 2026 Season.

We close the Season with a big, celebratory all-Beethoven program directed from the violin by Richard Tognetti. For this concert, the ACO is joined by period wind and brass musicians from around the world – many of them dear friends of the Orchestra – to perform a program including the composer's *Pastoral Symphony*, a work that has remained a favourite of musicians and audiences alike since it premiered over 200 years ago.

This our also marks a special anniversary: 20 years since Timo-Veikko 'Tipi' Valve joined the ACO as Principal Cello. In celebration of this milestone, Tipi joins Richard and pianist Konstantin Shamray centerstage as soloists in Beethoven's *Triple Concerto*, a work that basks in the joy of collaboration.

On behalf of the ACO, I thank Wesfarmers Arts for their support as both Principal Partner and National Tour Partner for this tour. Wesfarmers have been a deeply valued partner of the ACO for nearly three decades, providing essential support in allowing more audiences across Australia and around the world to experience the Orchestra. We are deeply grateful for their ongoing support.

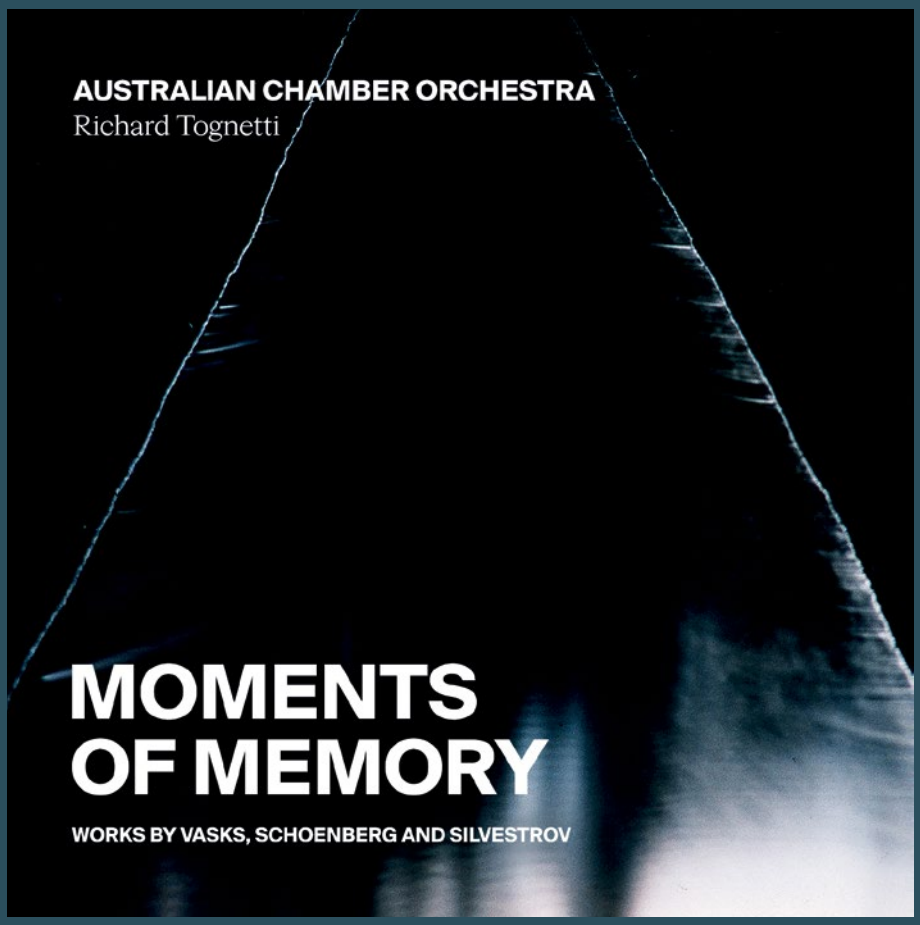
As our 2026 Season draws to a close, I would also like to thank you for joining us in the concert hall throughout the year. And if you have not yet secured your tickets for our 2027 Season, I invite you to explore the Season for yourself, and perhaps secure a Full-season Subscription, at aco.com.au. Richard Tognetti has planned an extraordinary season for you, filled with ambition, imagination and, of course, some of the most remarkable music ever written. You won't want to miss it.



Richard Evans AM
Managing Director

ACO

NEW ALBUM



A masterful new release featuring Arnold Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, Pēteris Vasks's *Vox Amoris* and the world premiere recording of Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov's *Moments of Memory (VI)*, written especially for the ACO.

Scan the QR code to stream, download or purchase as a CD.

ABC

WELCOME FROM WESFARMERS

Nearly thirty years after Wesfarmers first brought the Australian Chamber Orchestra to Perth, we are immensely proud to support this exceptional and much-loved orchestra as Principal Partner.

Beethoven provides a fitting conclusion to the 2026 National Concert Season. From the dramatic energy of the *Coriolan Overture* to the calm of the *Pastoral Symphony*, this program highlights the variety and enduring appeal of Beethoven's extraordinary music.

We are pleased to help bring this program to audiences across Australia and to continue supporting the ACO's work in delivering exceptional musical experiences around the country.

It is a privilege and a joy to support the tremendous work of the ACO as part of our commitment to making a broader contribution to the communities in which we live and work. Thank you for joining us, and we hope you enjoy the performance.



Rob Scott
Managing Director
Wesfarmers Limited

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Australian Chamber Orchestra & Wesfarmers Arts
Bringing People & Music Together

NEWS

Upcoming concerts and the latest announcements.

Latest News

New Album: Moments of Memory

The ACO is thrilled to have released its latest recording, *Moments of Memory*, with ABC Classic.

Richard Tognetti says of the recording, "Moments of Memory *brings together three pieces which have become defining works for the ACO. The Orchestra has performed Schoenberg's* Verklärte Nacht *since its earliest years, while Pēteris Vasks's* Vox Amoris *has been a part of my life since the ACO commissioned the work nearly two decades ago. The album closes with the first ever recording of* Moments of Memory (VI)*, a new work by the remarkable composer Valentin Silvestrov, written in exile from his Ukrainian homeland."*

ACO X Club Weld

The ACO and Club Weld – an initiative of the Arts and Cultural Exchange that empowers neurodivergent artists to create, perform and release music – continued their ongoing creative collaboration with a concert at ACO On The Pier that celebrated creativity, inclusion and the transformative power of music.

Four Club Weld musicians, Tua Hunt, Patrick Li, Jerrah Patson and Jonathan Yung, took to the stage alongside ACO musicians to perform their original music for an enthusiastic sold-out concert hall. The ACO is immensely proud to partner with Club Weld and we look forward to presenting future collaborations.

Taittinger Partnership

In 2027, Champagne Taittinger and the Australian Chamber Orchestra will toast ten years of partnership, a pairing that continues to strike all the right notes.

Established in 1734, Champagne Taittinger is a family-run, independent Champagne House and one of the world's most respected Champagne brands. Taittinger has one of the largest vineyard holdings in Champagne, helping ensure exceptional quality from vine to glass.

The Taittinger style is shaped by an intuitive yet exacting approach to blending, resulting in Champagnes of unmistakable character and purity.



1



2

On Tour

Bach's Christmas Oratorio

8–11 DEC

Celebrate the festive season with Bach's revelatory choral masterpiece, directed by Richard Tognetti.

Nicolas Altstaedt

4–17 FEB

Experience infinite possibility and extraordinary kinetic energy when the world-renowned cellist returns to direct the ACO.

Bach's St John Passion

13–24 MAR

Richard Tognetti and the ACO will be joined by multi-award-winning Belgian vocal ensemble Vox Luminis for Bach's choral masterpiece, the *St John Passion*.

ACO On The Pier

ACO Up Close: Suzanne Ciani

29 NOV

Suzanne Ciani makes music at the edge of a new world. The doyenne of electronic music, she pioneered sound design with early synthesizers in the 1970s, and her music remains inventive and irrepressible to this day.

ACO Up Close: Anthony Marwood with ACO Collective

7 DEC

British violin virtuoso Anthony Marwood reunites with ACO Collective for an evening of rare discoveries, connection and breathtaking playing, with Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in D minor, featuring Marwood as soloist, at its heart.

ACO Families

The Nutcracker

12–21 DEC

Join Clara in an enchanted dreamland as she befriends the Nutcracker and goes on a magical Christmas Eve journey in this mesmerising ACO Families production.

Created in collaboration with former Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet David McAllister, this clever adaptation of the much-loved ballet brings together Tchaikovsky's beloved music, performed live by an ACO Families quintet, with dance and narration in an immersive theatrical experience.

For children aged 3–8 and their families.

1.
ACO X Club Weld

2.
Taittinger Partnership

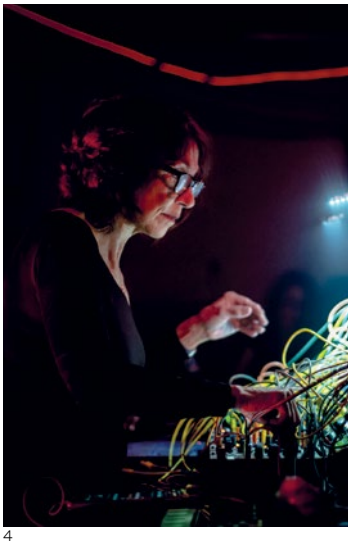
3.
Nicolas Altstaedt

4.
Suzanne Ciani

5.
The Nutcracker



3



4



5

A NOTE ON THE CONCERT FROM RICHARD TOGNETTI

It's rare for us to put on an ostensibly meat and two veg program at the ACO.

But with the opportunity to work with this wonderful consort of wind and brass experts on period instruments – many of them Australian expats – we decided to revisit Beethoven's radical *Pastoral Symphony* No.6.

Radical? Absolutely.

Beethoven wrote the *Pastoral* in parallel with his Fifth Symphony. And whilst one is overt drama, the other is an essay in texture. Calm textures, subtle textures, nuanced textures, through which Beethoven expresses meaning that is always unfolding. Beethoven was a walker, and in this Symphony, he presents us with new ways to look at nature, as he saw it.

The ACO performs this concert as a hybrid orchestra. Wind and brass instruments modelled on those from Beethoven's time, gut strings but on modern set-ups, a modern piano but recontextualised by pianist Konstantin Shamray to our sonic paradigm. I've always embraced the hybrid model, and now – from hybrid cars to hybrid power – it feels like my notions have finally been accepted.

A hybrid orchestra brings the musical hardware of Beethoven's time to modern ears. But am I suggesting that it's Beethoven's music as his audiences would have heard it? You've got to be kidding.



Richard Tognetti AO
Artistic Director



ACO

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Following a hugely successful 2024 national tour, world-renowned cellist Nicolas Altstaedt returns as Guest Director for a virtuosic showstopper featuring CPE Bach's Cello Concerto.

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Pre-Concert Talks

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

NEWCASTLE CITY HALL
Jack Stephens
Thu 12 Nov 6.45pm

SYDNEY – CITY RECITAL HALL
Jack Stephens
Sat 14 Nov 6.15pm
Tue 17 Nov 7.15pm
Wed 18 Nov 6.15pm

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
Jack Stephens
Sun 15 Nov 1.15pm

BRISBANE – QPAC CONCERT HALL
Matthew Hodge
Mon 16 Nov 6.15pm

MELBOURNE RECITAL CENTRE
Andrew Aronowicz
Sat 21 Nov 6.45pm
Mon 23 Nov 6.45pm

MELBOURNE – ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE
Andrew Aronowicz
Sun 22 Nov 1.45pm

ADELAIDE TOWN HALL
Russell Torrance
Tue 24 Nov 6.45pm

PERTH – WINTHROP HALL
William Yeoman
Wed 25 Nov 6.45pm

PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Timo-Veikko Valve Cello
Konstantin Shamray Piano
Australian Chamber Orchestra

COMPOSER	TITLE	MIN
Ludwig van Beethoven	Coriolan Overture, Op.62	8
Beethoven	Concerto for Violin, Cello and Piano in C major, Op.56 "Triple Concerto" *I. Allegro* *II. Largo* *III. Rondo alla Polacca*	36
Interval		**20**
Beethoven	Symphony No.6 in F major, Op.68 "Pastoral" *I. Pleasant, cheerful feelings, that awaken within a person upon arrival in the countryside: Allegro ma non troppo* *II. Scene by the brook: Andante molto moto* *III. A merry gathering of country folk: Allegro –* *IV. Thunder. Storm: Allegro –* *V. Shepherds' song. Charitable, with feelings of gratitude to the deity after the storm: Allegretto*	42

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. *Beethoven's Pastoral* will be broadcast on Wednesday 16 December, 1pm AEDT and available on demand for 30 days after.

MUSICIANS ON STAGE



Richard Tognetti
Director & 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.



Konstantin Shamray
Piano



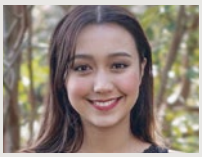
Helena Rathbone
Principal Violin

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



Satu Vänskä
Principal Violin

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



Anna da Silva Chen
Violin

Anna plays an 1850 violin by John Lott, in the style of Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, on loan from an anonymous Australian private benefactor. Her Chair is sponsored by Alenka Tindale.



Aiko Goto
Violin

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



Ilya Isakovich
Violin

Ilya plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by anonymous donors and Colin Golvan AM KC & Dr Debbie Golvan.



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.



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.



Tim Yu
Violin

Tim plays a violin by Nicolo Amati in 1665–1670 on loan from an anonymous Australian private benefactor. His Chair is sponsored by Ralph Ward-Ambler AM & Barbara Ward-Ambler.



Brigid Coleridge#
Violin

Brigid plays her own 1804 C. Pirot violin.



Harry Egerton#
Violin

Harry plays a 1994 Vladimir Pilar violin. He appears courtesy of the Bavarian State Opera.



Tamara Elias#
Violin

Tamara plays her own 1750 Bernardus Calcanius violin.



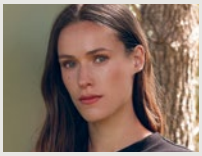
Maja Savnik#
Violin

Maja plays her own 1797 Giuseppe Gagilano violin.



Amanda Verner*
Viola

Amanda plays her own 2023 copy of a Gasparo da Salò viola by Florian Leonhard Fine Violins.



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.



Benjamin Caddy#
Viola

Benjamin plays his own 2014 Hiroshi Iizuka viola. He appears courtesy of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.



Jacqueline Cronin#
Viola

Jacqueline plays her own 1912 Pedrazzini viola.



Nathan Greentree#
Viola

Nathan plays his own viola made in 2008 by New York-based maker Stefan Valcuha.



Timo-Veikko Valve
Principal Cello

Tipi plays a 1616 Brothers Amati cello on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Prof Doug Jones AO & Prof Janet Walker 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 Andreæ cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, kindly donated to the ACO by the late Peter Weiss AO. His Chair is sponsored by the Stewart Family and Ms Julie Steiner AM & Prof Judyth Sachs.



Eliza Sdraulig#
Cello

Eliza plays a 2011 cello by Roberto Cavagnoli.



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.



Ali Yazdanfar#
Bass

Ali plays a Thomas Kennedy bass made in London circa 1830 on loan from Maxime Bibeau. He appears courtesy of Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal.



Melissa Farrow#
Principal Flute

Melissa appears courtesy of Australian Brandenburg Orchestra.



Mikaela Oberg#
Flute

Guest Musician
* Acting Principal



Jessica Lee#
Principal Piccolo



Tatjana Zimre#
Principal Oboe



Valerie Colen#
Oboe

Valerie appears courtesy of the Noord Nederlands Orkest.



Ernst Schlader#
Principal Clarinet

Ernst appears courtesy of Concentus Musicus Wien.



Regine Müller#
Clarinet

Regine appears courtesy of Chemnitz Opera.



Jane Gower#
Principal Bassoon



Sim Walters#
Bassoon



Anneke Scott#
Principal Horn



Emmanuel Frankenberg#
Horn

Emmanuel appears courtesy of the Orchestra of the 18th Century, Concerto Copenhagen and Les Musiciens du Prince, Bremen University of Arts.



Leanne Sullivan#
Principal Trumpet



Richard Fomison#
Trumpet



Nigel Crocker#
Principal Trombone



Cooper Rands#
Trombone



Brian Nixon#
Principal Timpani

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

Guest Musician


ACO
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We invite you to be a part of the ACO's home at ACO On The Pier in the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct by making a tax- deductible donation and dedicating a Musical Chair with a name or a special message.
Choose from a fixed seat in our state-of-the-art performance space, The Neilson (only 10 seats left), or one of our loose chairs used in both The Neilson and our beautiful Studio. Your dedication will be engraved on a special plaque on the back of your chosen musical chair.
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PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read before lights down.

Written by Russell Torrance



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Coriolan Overture, Op.62

There are many examples in history of stage works that would have been completely forgotten, if they had not had famous pieces of music written to accompany them. In the case of the five-act tragedy *Coriolan* by Heinrich Joseph von Collins, it had even become obscure three years after it was written, which was when Beethoven wrote this overture.

It is not known whether Beethoven was independently inspired to write the work – either by von Collins' play or the better-known Shakespeare version of the story – or at the request of his patron Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz. In any case, the premiere took place in a private concert at Lobkowitz's house in Vienna in March 1807, along with a revival of the play. Also in the concert were the first performances of Beethoven's Symphony No.4 and Piano Concerto No.4.

Coriolanus (the Coriolan of the title) is a Roman general who, in the play, struggles to fight the corruption of Rome, making enemies of just about everyone along the way. This turmoil and anxiety is reflected in the storminess and drama of Beethoven's music – this is not the simple heroism in the composer's other great overture of the time, *Egmont*.

Beethoven

Concerto for Violin, Cello and Piano in C major, Op.56 "Triple Concerto"

When Beethoven's *Triple Concerto* emerged in the first few years of the 19th-century, it was a work that did not have an immediate precedent. Concertos with multiple soloists were common in the era of Bach (his *Brandenburg Concertos*, for example) and the generation of composers before Beethoven had championed the Sinfonia Concertante, a genre that would feature more than one instrument. But the combination of violin, cello and piano as the solo group – effectively a piano trio – had seemingly never been tried before.

So why did Beethoven choose these instruments? One possible explanation was that he was experienced in writing for the piano trio in the chamber context, and might have been intrigued by how the combination would work with an orchestra.

A more solid reason behind the *Triple Concerto*'s inspiration comes from a contemporary account that it was commissioned by the Emperor's son Archduke Rudolf, a close friend and financial supporter of Beethoven's. Rudolf was a fine pianist – Beethoven was his teacher after all – and the piano part was written for him.

Moreover, in Rudolf's court orchestra were two exceptional musicians: cellist Anton Kraft, who had been close friends with Mozart and Haydn, and violinist Karl August Seidler. The work was probably first performed in private at Archduke Rudolf's residence.

Many commentators point to the fact that the piano part, despite sounding virtuosic, is notably easier to perform than the other two solos – Beethoven was catering to the vanity of his patron Rudolf, who was much younger and less experienced than Seidler or Kraft, the other soloists. That is not to detract from the challenge to all three soloists of performing this novel work. Three world-class soloists share the "voice" of the concerto, a difficult musical challenge.

The *Triple Concerto* has a very long, grand opening movement – perhaps a result of three soloists, not one, introducing in turn the thematic material. This leads on to a short theme and variations section, which serves as the middle movement, before an exuberant Polish-style "Polacca" for the finale.

Beethoven's writing for the piano and violin is typically brilliant. But especially of note is the expressive and bold way he composes for the cello, not a solo instrument otherwise hugely featuring in Beethoven's catalogue. Here, it is prominent throughout, and has the first solo entry of each of the movements.

Beethoven
Symphony No.6 in F major, Op.68 "Pastoral"

Beethoven is the composer who, above that of all others, seems to embody struggle, revolution and torment. The music itself, especially in the symphonies, reflects this – it is complicated, and the themes are often manipulated and twisted into torrid musical arguments.

In this concert you will hear the exception to the rule. A work designated a "Pastoral Symphony" by its composer, which brings a mood of peace, not of conflict, and comprises music which, for Beethoven, is uncharacteristically uncomplicated.

Many writers comment on this anomaly, in particular the contrast between the Fifth Symphony and the *Pastoral* – the Beethovenian anger and struggle of the former and the surprisingly gentle bliss of the latter. The astonishing fact is that these two very different symphonic sides of Beethoven came very close together in his output. In fact, many accounts will tell you that they were written simultaneously, between 1804 and 1808.

The setting for the *Pastoral* is Beethoven's favourite summertime haunts in villages around Vienna. Its carefree mood is directly inspired by wonderful sights he saw, the people he met and the natural wonders he experienced during these summers in the countryside around Heiligenstadt and Mödling.

However, in taking this inspiration, Beethoven was careful not to write anything too picturesque or "twee". He detested the descriptive music being written by many of his contemporaries, and so emphatically called this symphony as being more an "expression of feelings than painting".

It is to this that you are directed by Beethoven's title for the first movement – "Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside". A building of joy in the hot, flustered traveler as they realise they are away from the noise of the city. The composer went deeper in another description of the opening movement – the "effect that nature has on one's soul".

The opening movement is where, in any other Beethoven symphony, you would hear a titanic construct of themes and ideas battling with one another. But in the *Pastoral*, the first movement unfolds with the simple untroubled grace you would expect from Beethoven's descriptive title.

There is a contemporary biography of Beethoven by his associate Anton von Schindler, that scholars love to discredit for its often spurious claims and tall tales. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating source of first-hand accounts about the composer and his music.

Schindler tells a story of how, in the 1820s, Beethoven took him to some of the spots on the high ground above Heiligenstadt that inspired the slow movement of the *Pastoral Symphony*, the "Scene by the Brook".

Passing through the pleasant meadow valley between Heiligenstadt and Grinzing, which is traversed by a gently murmuring brook that hurries down from a nearby mountain and is bordered with high elms, Beethoven repeatedly stopped and let his glances roam, full of happiness, over the glorious landscape. "Here I composed the Scene by the Brook," Beethoven said.

Schindler's account goes on to Beethoven describing the birds he loved hearing at these beautiful spots and, sure enough, the composer points out their song at specific points in his score for the symphony.

It is worth noting that when Beethoven eagerly wrote down these bird songs by the stream in the composition of the *Pastoral*, it was in the knowledge

that he would soon no longer be able to hear them at all. Indeed, according to Schindler's story, by the time they took their walk to the same location in the 1820s, Beethoven could no longer notice the birds singing; the composer had to ask the younger man if he could hear them.

The symphony's third movement, the "Merry Gathering of Country Folk", takes you to another of Beethoven's favourite places, the village of Mödling, in Vienna's south. It was there that Beethoven spent many a happy hour in the pub – at an inn called By the Three Ravens.

One of the attractions for the composer was the famous folk band that played there, year in year out. In fact it is meant to have been from the Mödling Band that the young Beethoven, freshly arrived from Bonn, first heard proper Austrian folk music. The composer became life-long friends with the band members, and wrote music for them throughout his career.

It is the Mödling Band that is the probable inspiration for the third movement of the *Pastoral*. Beethoven's music is in a lilting waltz or "Ländler" but changes direction frequently into foot-stomping 2/4 sections. This is a characteristic of Austrian folk music and would be heard frequently in performances by the Mödling musicians.

Another spurious but wonderful story from Schindler is that the band in the inn had to play for so long that they would frequently take it in turn to have a nap. Schindler asserts that Beethoven mimics this in his score by the changing instrumentation.

The ensuing Viennese thunderstorm – brief but intense – is the only real drama in the whole symphony, before unfolding into the final movement. Once again, easeful grace is the mood for the shepherd's song and hymn of thanksgiving that ends the work.

The *Pastoral Symphony* was famously premiered in a grand concert in Vienna on 22 December 1808. The Fifth Symphony was also given its first performance that evening, as was the Fourth Piano Concerto and the Choral Fantasy, in a programme lasting well over four hours.

You might wonder why it was necessary for the concert to be quite this long, and for Beethoven to subject his audience to quite so many new works, however brilliant, in one go. It would seem that his reasons were entirely practical and financial.

In the summer months, Vienna's aristocracy would leave the city and retire to their country estates, leaving no concert going-public behind. The spring and autumn seasons were dominated by opera, leaving only Lent and Advent, when opera was forbidden, for other concerts. The famous four-hour concert, with four new, under-rehearsed works, was one of Beethoven's few options.

Hopefully Beethoven's musical account of being in the summery Viennese countryside helped people feel warm inside – the concert hall was unheated, and the weather outside extremely cold!

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.


In music and the law, great performances are never solo. That shared belief is why we proudly support the Australian Chamber Orchestra.
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JOHNSON | WINTER | SLATTERY

The drama of Beethoven's later works invoked a universal language of emotion and human freedom that could travel anywhere – including to Australia.

A WILD AND PLAINTIVE BEAUTY

Written by Geordie Williamson





"I'm still stupidly ambitious as only a Southern Hemispherian can be. And I'm still really curious to see how canonical works can appear in fresh contexts. I'm always driven to play for people who have never heard the music before. That's been a constant with me."

– RICHARD TOGNETTI, INTERVIEW: "YEARS OF PASSION", JANUARY 2025

When the Australian Chamber Orchestra attacks the opening chords of a Beethoven overture, the sound has nothing of the dark wood and velvet associated with the late-19th-century concert hall. Standing to play, instruments strung with gut, timpanists wielding sticks bound with hard leather instead of felt, Richard Tognetti's ensemble strips the composer back to an originary plainness and force. The audience is returned to Beethoven as he once was – a radical, volatile avant-gardist who wrote the soundtrack for our modern world.

To hear Beethoven played with such lean, breathless velocity is to be reminded that Romanticism was the most significant rupture in thought and feeling, culture and art, between the Renaissance and 20th-century modernism. It reminds us that in his defiance and isolation, his passionate identification with human equality and freedom, his celebration of the natural world, Beethoven was the very embodiment of the Byronic hero.

By 1802, reeling from the knowledge that his hearing was now irreversibly failing, the composer fled from Vienna for the village of Heiligenstadt. In his famous testament written there, he confessed that only art kept him from ending his life. What emerged from that private torment was a valiant



reimagining of music's purpose. "In the autumn of 1802, Beethoven looked into the abyss of his silence and turned despair into defiance," wrote composer and Beethoven biographer Jan Swafford. "His 'new path' was music about the process of becoming – the hero striving toward something, overcoming catastrophe to claim his own destiny."

No longer would Beethoven compose within the accepted musical boundaries of his era. Instead, he would compose beyond them.

Beethoven's struggle is the lodestar of the ACO's three-part program. In the *Coriolan Overture*, Op.62, for example, we meet a tragic hero – best known to Anglosphere audiences through Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, though Beethoven was drawing on Heinrich Joseph von Collin's 1804 German play *Coriolan*. The drama of Beethoven's dashing C-minor opening gesture comes from how it embodies the profound adamancy of its subject: a man whose stubbornness is both his glory and his curse.

The tender and lyrical second theme of the overture, with its warmly maternal, supplicatory cadences, is met with a surprising musical response. Instead of being folded back into the musical structure of the piece's conclusion – any dissonance overcome as the old classical rules require – we hear the aural equivalent of a man who can neither bow nor back away. As in Shakespeare's play, it's evident that the martial virtues inculcated in General Gnaeus Marcius Coriolanus make the Roman Capitol's defender unable to lead the very civic sphere his actions have preserved.

Because reconciliation between the general and the citizens of Rome is impossible, the overture is unable to offer triumphant synthesis. The coda instead sees the initial theme break up into halting fragments, final shuddering breaths and a lapse into silence. This is the work of a man composing in the shadow of political, as well as personal, disillusionment – one who famously scratched Napoleon's name from the dedication page of the *Eroica* after the great liberator had himself crowned Emperor.

Where *Coriolan* ends in catastrophic isolation, the *Triple Concerto*, Op.56, models something more hopeful: a chamber music democracy. Rather than pitting a solitary virtuoso against a monolithic orchestra, Beethoven introduces a triumvirate of equals – violin, cello and piano. In the hands of ACO Artistic Director Richard Tognetti, Principal Cello Timo-Veikko Valve and Russian-Australian pianist Konstantin Shamray, the work becomes an intimate conversation negotiated within the larger orchestra's sonic envelope. It is a composition in which democracy is held in delicate, uncoerced balance, not one more iteration of the strongman's

"No longer would Beethoven compose within the accepted musical boundaries of his era. Instead, he would compose beyond them."

Page 20–21.
Richard Tognetti directs the ACO in *Brahms & Beethoven* at the Sydney Opera House, 2025.
Photo by Stephen Blake

Page 22.
Richard Tognetti directs the ACO in *Beethoven 123* at Hamer Hall, Arts Centre Melbourne, 2020.
Photo by Julian Kingma

"For a composer who was losing his hearing, the surrounding countryside was an acoustic sanctuary."

will to power. If the work "were not by Beethoven, but by some mysterious composer who had written nothing else and who had the romantic good fortune to die before it came to performance, the *Triple Concerto* would be acclaimed as a work of genius," said the British musicologist Donald Tovey. "Its spaciousness and its leisurely, amicable distribution of parts among the three soloists create a completely original kind of conciliation."

Then comes the Sixth Symphony, the *Pastoral*. Composed alongside the relentless, fatidic drive of the Fifth, the *Pastoral* is, comparably, an astonishing act of Romantic decompression. In the woods of Heiligenstadt, Beethoven walked with sketchbook in hand, scribbling down bird calls and rustic dance rhythms, insisting that his new symphony was "more an expression of feeling than painting". For a composer who was losing his hearing, the surrounding countryside was an acoustic sanctuary.

The *Pastoral* abandons heroic aggression in favour of the vast and meditative non-human realm. As pianist and music critic Charles Rosen observed, it "has an exceptionally low degree of internal tensions: it substitutes a relaxed, static harmony for the dynamic drive characteristic of Beethoven's style ... In the first movement, the development does not intensify dramatic conflict; it diffuses it, giving the impression not of a journey toward a goal, but of a lingering within a landscape."

No goal: rather, a breathing meditation that expands outwards, in shimmering repetition. In the second movement, *Szene am Bach*, woodwinds suggest nightingale, quail and cuckoo without resorting to outright mimicry, just as the motion of water in the brook is not the sound of water in melody, but (Rosen again) "the movement of consciousness contemplating it".

Likewise, in the fourth, *Gewitter, Sturm*, the force that interrupts this idyll is not a moral conflict but an elemental force. "Listen to those rain-charged gusts of wind; to the dull murmur of the basses; to the shrill whistling of the piccolos, which announces that a fearful tempest is about to break," wrote the composer Hector Berlioz, describing the scene. "The storm increases in fury; an immense chromatic scale, started in the highest registers, plunges to the depths of the orchestra, catches the basses, drags them with it, and ascends again like a surging waterspout. Then the trombones burst forth the lightning flashes, the thunder roars..."

The symphony is no longer an orchestral simulation of a tempest, he concludes: "It is the terrifying, blinding reality of nature itself." It's a storm that's not resolved through some heroic human agency but which simply runs out of its

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The ACO onstage following a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No.7 at the Sydney Opera House, 2025. Photo by Stephen Blake



own substance, leading to the final hymn of thanks in which humanity offers gratitude to nature, instead of a will to dominate.

Theodor Adorno, Beethoven's great 20th-century champion, had a paradoxical response to the Sixth: for a work devoted to nature, he wrote, it "achieves an effect of true humanity". It's an idea worth holding onto as the ACO brings Beethoven into an Australian present. For what are Richard Tognetti and the ACO doing with their longstanding engagement with Beethoven's work, both in terms of performance and recording, if not picking up this thread?

The governing philosophy of Beethoven's time belonged to G.W.F. Hegel. Famously, that great German thinker, who wrote voluminously on the music of his era, passed over Beethoven, the greatest orchestral composer of the time, in silence: a silence so total that it became eloquent. According to Hegel's aesthetic program, Beethoven was a tough fit. The philosopher revered music to the degree that it expressed, with a purity unavailable to the plastic arts, the realisation of spirit, or *Geist*.

Yet Hegel was suspicious of purely instrumental music, in which he saw the potential either for a retreat into merely mathematical experiment or a subjective, sonic free-for-all. It was better, he considered, that instruments be placed in the service of language, with poetry providing the scaffold of meaning around which music might cohere. Beethoven's musical evolution was increasingly in tension with Hegel's ideas. As we have learnt, the composer's later works refuse easy synthesis. There was no more resolution of opposites into a triumphant whole. Beethoven began to leave the seams exposed. His later style was marked by jagged disruptions, sharp contrasts and irresolution.

As Beethoven retreated into rural solitude and the groundbreaking drama of his late works, Hegel settled at the pinnacle of intellectual life on the Continent as Chair of Philosophy at the University of Berlin. Here his philosophy shifted from the open-ended odyssey of his early career to a more established, systematic doctrine. It was a system that had no place for the world beyond Western Europe – the theatre in which, he believed, History with a capital H took place.

The new colony in New South Wales had, it followed, no place in his thought. Though Australia was of the "New World" it was not, like North America, "the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself". Australia was too torrid, barren, strange and removed – with an Indigenous people who lived in unity with nature instead of in dialectical relation to it – to be an arena in which History could unfold.

Beethoven's music proved Hegel wrong. Works such as the *Pastoral* freed music from language, while



overtures such as *Coriolan* broke away from rigid classical convention. With them, the composer created a universal language of emotion and human freedom that could travel anywhere. His music pointed to a world outside Europe, to a history beyond "History".

Such was its universality, that Australian composer Isaac Nathan – an impeccable Romantic who had collaborated with Lord Byron on *Hebrew Melodies* – cited Beethoven when arguing that Indigenous song in Australia possessed a pathos that European masters would have understood and respected. In his *The Southern Euphrosyne*, Nathan wrote of a "wild and plaintive beauty which would not dishonour the muse of Beethoven ... [having] that deep melancholy which touches the heart without aid of artifice".

For Tognetti and the ACO, the challenge has been to respond to these antipodean potentialities for Beethoven's work, while removing the 19th-century barnacles that remain attached to it. Tognetti's entire career has consisted of a brilliant, sustained act of iconoclasm against those who would lock Beethoven in a European cage. Working from the premise that the ACO is first and foremost a hyper-responsive chamber ensemble, theirs is a Beethoven who emerges from the original dash and kineticism of the early Romantic era.

The ACO restores to Beethoven his original vocabulary of unexpected dynamics – goosepimpling *sforzandi*, sudden, breathless *subito pianos*, elongated crescendos that collapse into the barely audible. As a conductor, Tognetti treats his scores like triathlon guide-markers; as a performer alongside his colleagues, their resulting musical dialogue is thrillingly swift and clean. And when his orchestra lets rip with the *Pastoral*, it is a performance stripped to the waist.

Tognetti's Beethoven does not belong exclusively to Vienna, nor does he belong to Hegel's circumscribed World. His Beethoven returns to Romantic origins beneath the skies of the Southern Cross. It's a heroic act of translation and musical craft, of meaning freed from language and so explicable to all.

Geordie Williamson has been chief literary critic of *The Australian* since 2008. He is publisher of the Picador imprint at Pan Macmillan and most recently author of *On Alexis Wright*, part of Black Inc.'s *Writers on Writers* series.

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Richard Tognetti performs Beethoven's *"Bridgetower" ("Kreutzer") Sonata* at the Barbican Centre, London, 2022.
Photo by Nic Walker

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Richard Tognetti directs the ACO in *Brahms & Beethoven* at the Sydney Opera House, 2025.
Photo by Stephen Blake

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Timo-Veikko 'Tipi' Valve, now celebrating his 20th anniversary with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, says joining the Orchestra was "like jumping into a moving car".

A COLLECTIVE MILESTONE

Written by Anna Snoekstra



Two decades ago, Timo-Veikko 'Tipi' Valve made a decision that would change the course of his life. The Helsinki-born cellist had just graduated from the Edsberg Music Institute in Stockholm and had also come out of a long-term relationship, when an invitation arrived to audition for the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

"It was quite a positive thing in a challenging moment for me personally," he reminisces. "Two massive things were coming to an end and there I was, 24 years young, thinking, what am I going to do now?"

Valve enjoyed his student years. He loved immersing himself in learning and absorbing everything that the community around him had to offer, instilling a deep sense of curiosity and a collaborative spirit that remains to this day. After wrapping up his studies, he imagined he would freelance for a while. He had never considered joining a group, nothing bigger than a string quartet anyway. "I was mainly focused on doing my own thing, being the modern-day musician, nurturing a diverse palette of roles, and seeing where that might lead me," he says.

He thought the audition would provide good experience. "I literally thought that okay, if I'm going to do this audition and fail, no one in Finland is going to know because it's in Australia," he laughs. "So, I have nothing to lose. Perhaps I'll go for a visit, experience Australia and learn a few things, and then I'll move on with whatever my professional life will be. But here we are, 20 years later."

Valve is Principal Cello at the ACO, having had a remarkable tenure curating, commissioning and premiering new works and reviving beloved classics with the Orchestra. He has toured extensively with the ACO, balancing his career with the Orchestra alongside his work as a soloist and chamber musician, both here in Australia and abroad, but calls Sydney home.

It was difficult to move to a country where he knew no one, but he found belonging with his new colleagues. "The band became my family," he says, describing the experience of joining the group at that time as being "like jumping into a moving car". "My personality as a musician was a match with what the ACO was then and still is today. It was a very short honeymoon period, if you like, before it all became a big part of my life".

For almost 10 years Valve has played a Brothers Amati cello from 1616, which he calls "a good friend". He believes that his instrument has become part of his personality, and it's a connection he devotes himself to.

"It can take years to really master and be comfortable with this wooden object," he says. "It's still very much a living thing. It reacts to a cold rainy Sydney day like today, the same way we people might."

His relationship with his instrument is not the only deep connection he's formed within the ACO: Valve is violinist Liisa Pallandi's partner.

They enjoy all the travel together that working as an ACO musician entails, and making the most out of the time spent away from their home. Valve says, "Both the ups and downs of a touring lifestyle, or just life in general – I'm lucky I get to share all that with Liisa."

Valve is exactly where he wants to be; surrounded by a community where collaboration is a key principle. He cherishes the quieter moments, when he and fellow ACO musicians can work together without the pressure of a deadline, entering the same headspace effortlessly. "The way that we work together as a section, or between the principal players, is almost telepathic, after so much shared time and knowledge together," he explains.

For Valve, what the musicians do collectively is more important than what he does alone. "We're talking about my 20 years, but it's our 20 years," he says. "I'm the newest member of the cello and bass section, which means that we have now played together for two decades. Melissa, Julian, Max, and I have really stuck together. Thinking about that now fills me with deep gratitude. So, when we talk about my anniversary, that's my association: it's our anniversary."

Anna Snoekstra is the author of six novels that have been translated across the globe. *The Ones We Love* is out now and her next novel, *The End of the Ski Season*, will be released in January 2027 by Penguin Books Australia. She also writes for *The Saturday Paper*.

"Both the ups and downs of a touring lifestyle, or just life in general – I'm lucky I get to share all that with Liisa."

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Timo-Veikko 'Tipi' Valve.
Photo by Simon Lekias

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Tipi directing the ACO from the cello in *A Musical Awakening*, 2025.
Photo by Charlie Kinross

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Tipi with ACO Cello Melissa Barnard and ACO Principal Double Bass Maxime Bibeau.
Photo by Nic Walker



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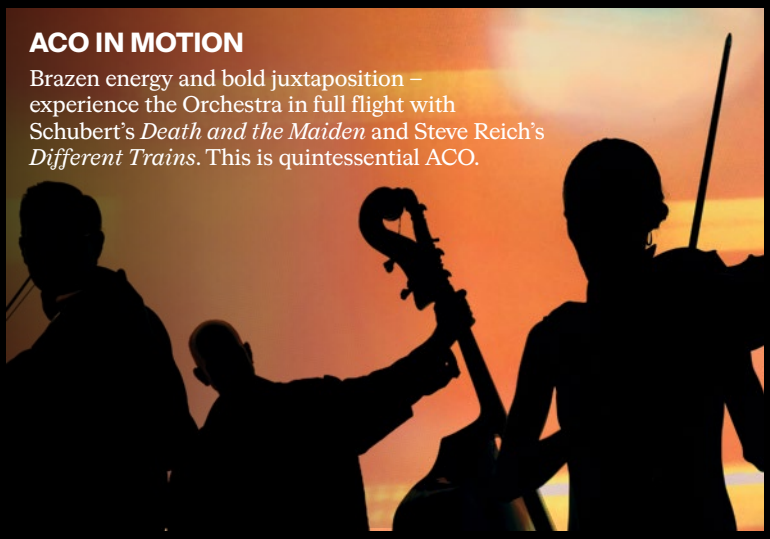
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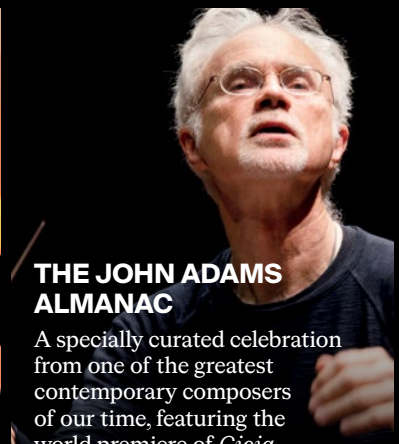
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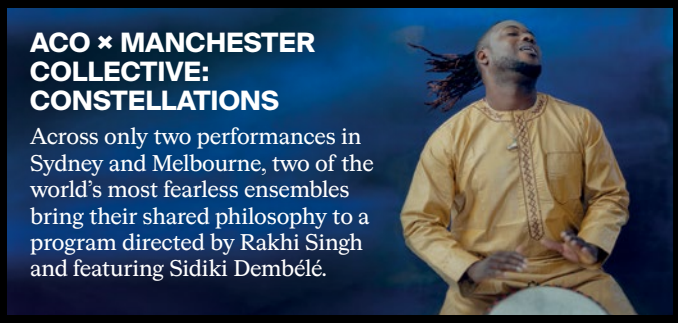
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Richard Tognetti

Artistic Director
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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. 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 Lutosławski'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, and surfs in wetsuits generously provided by Patagonia.

Timo-Veikko Valve

Cello



Timo-Veikko Valve, affectionately known by audiences far and wide as 'Tipi', grew up in Finland, surrounded by a family of "musically oriented normal people". Music lessons were a natural part of his upbringing, and at six years old, Tipi was encouraged to pick up the cello after a teacher at the local music school declared with considerable conviction that "*he looks just like a cellist!*". To this day, Tipi remains somewhat puzzled about what that statement actually meant. Whatever the subtext, the teacher seems to have been correct.

Tipi was appointed Principal Cello of the Australian Chamber Orchestra in 2006, and his leadership soon became an integral part of the ACO. Recognised for his natural, creative, and generous musicianship, Tipi seeks to define the modern-day musician. Prior to his Australian adventure, Tipi studied at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki before continuing to the Edsberg Music Institute in Stockholm.

Tipi effortlessly transitions between modern and period instruments and describes the cello as a flexible and adaptive partner, both in an ensemble and as a soloist, across all forms of music. He reflects this versatility and enjoys a diverse career as a musician, curator and director, directing from the cello and appearing as a soloist with many of the major orchestras across his two home countries, Finland, and Australia. Tipi is also a sought-after collaborator and frequently appears as a chamber musician. His active commitment to the music of our times through curating and commissioning has seen him deliver world-premiere performances of multiple concertos and other significant works written especially for him.

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

Konstantin Shamray

Piano



Australian-based pianist Konstantin Shamray is celebrated for the rare combination of fearless virtuosity and deeply poetic musicianship that has made him one of the country's most sought-after performers. As critic Graham Strahle observed, "Shamray has a technique that enables him to take any interpretative decision, but it was the depth of his insight that impressed right through this performance."

Konstantin first came to international prominence in 2008 when he won First Prize at the Sydney International Piano Competition, becoming the first and only pianist in the competition's history to receive both the First Prize and the People's Choice Prize, in addition to six other awards. He further cemented his international reputation by winning First Prize at the 2011 Klavier Olympiade in Bad Kissingen, Germany, where he was also presented with the prestigious Luitpold Prize for outstanding musical achievement.

Widely acclaimed as both a concerto soloist and recitalist, Konstantin regularly performs with Australia's leading orchestras, including the Sydney, West Australian, Adelaide, Queensland and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, and, the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

A popular recital artist, he appears frequently at leading venues and festivals including Ukaria Cultural Centre, Musica Viva, Adelaide Festival, the Harris International Piano Series, Melbourne Recital Centre and Live At Yours. Chamber music remains central to his artistic life, and he has collaborated with distinguished musicians including Jeroen Berwaerts, Sergey Krylov, Daniel Müller-Schott, Richard Tognetti, Satu Vänskä, Kristian Winther and Li-Wei Qin.

Alongside his performing career, Konstantin is a Senior Lecturer in Piano at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne, where he mentors the next generation of pianists.

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 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.

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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L'INSTANT TAITTINGER

PHOTO BY DAVID BLACK



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