

Australian Chamber Orchestra

50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

ACO

THEREMIN & BEYOND

Directed by Richard Tognetti

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Australian
Chamber
Orchestra

50
Years



INSIDE

Inside you'll find features and interviews that shine a spotlight on our players and the music you are about to hear. Enjoy the read.

Cover.
Carolina Eyck.
Photo by Shai Levy

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#ACO25Season



@AustralianChamberOrchestra

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WELCOME

Welcome to *Theremin & Beyond*.

Curiosity and innovation have always been at the heart of the ACO. This program exemplifies our inventive spirit as – for the very first time – Richard Tognetti and the musicians of the ACO are joined onstage by renowned theremin virtuoso Carolina Eyck.

The theremin is capable of conjuring a thousand different colours and moods. One of the most intriguing instruments ever created, in the hands of Carolina it becomes an instrument of remarkable nuance and expression, with melodies emerging as if by magic.

Carolina, Richard and the ACO will take us through an enthralling exploration of the sounds of the theremin – from Saint-Saëns' beloved *Carnival of the Animals* to a world premiere from Australian composer Holly Harrison and Carolina's own evocative music, before finishing on a high with the swinging sounds of The Beach Boys and the riotous thrumming of the *Flight of the Bumblebee*.

It's going to be a lot of fun, and certainly a unique concert experience, with curiosity and innovation to the fore!

As you know, the ACO has long pioneered innovative cinematic projects. This October in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, you'll have the special opportunity to see a reprise of our film *Mountain* (our collaboration with director Jennifer Peedom) brought to life in concert halls. And if you fancy a June trip to Sydney, you can be amongst the first to experience the live version of director Adam Elliot's new animated feature, *Memoir of a Snail*, with original music by Elena Kats-Chernin, performed by the ACO at our new premises, ACO On The Pier.

Thank you for joining us – enjoy the performance!



Richard Evans AM
Managing Director



Wesfarmers Arts



Australian Chamber Orchestra & Wesfarmers Arts
Bringing People & Music Together

Upcoming concerts and the latest announcements.

- 1. The ACO onstage at Poland's National Forum of Music
- 2. ABC's Creative Types



1

Latest News
European Tour

The ACO has recently returned from a triumphant tour across Europe and the UK that saw the Orchestra perform electrifying sell-out concerts in Amsterdam, Wrocław, Stuttgart and London that were met with rapturous standing ovations and glowing 5-star reviews. *The Guardian* praised the performance as a “masterclass in chamber music-making” in a 5-star review while *The Telegraph* declared “It’s not just the superbly drilled precision and lyric grace of the orchestra that has placed it among the top handful of chamber orchestras. It’s the way that the players cast a bright new light on everything they perform.”

ABC’s Creative Types

Richard Tognetti features in the new season of ABC TV’s *Creative Types*. Host Virginia Trioli joined Richard at his home in Manly and in rehearsal at the ACO’s premises in the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct, where he shared what drives him in his pursuit of artistic collaborations and how his love of surfing fuels his life as a musician.

Stream the episode on ABC iView now or watch on ABC TV on **Tuesday 6 May, 8.30pm**.

Tyrrell’s Wine

We’re thrilled to share that ACO Major Partner **Tyrrell’s** has been named one of the Top 50 Most Admired Wine Brands in the World for 2025 by London-based publication, *Drinks International*.

To celebrate this global recognition, Tyrrell’s would like to offer ACO audiences 15% off all regular priced wines + free shipping until 31 December.

To redeem this offer, visit the Tyrrell’s Online Store at tyrrells.com.au and use code ACOWINE15! at checkout.



2

On Tour

Death and the Maiden Revealed

21 JUN – 2 JUL
National Tour

Patricia Kopatchinskaja is experimental, unpredictable and brilliant. The acclaimed violinist returns to the ACO to direct a tour that showcases her dynamic virtuosity and enormous range, from Ravel's showpiece *Tzigane* to Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*.

Gershwin & Shostakovich

1-18 AUG
National Tour

Directed by Richard Tognetti, this program is a celebration of the power of music featuring Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No.1 with superstar pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk.

3.
Patricia
Kopatchinskaja

4.
Memoir of a Snail

5.
The Princess,
The Pea (and The
Brave Escapee)



3

ACO On The Pier

Memoir of a Snail Live in Concert

6-8 JUN
ACO On The Pier

Experience director Adam Elliot's Oscar-nominated poignant, heartfelt and darkly funny animated feature in concert with a live score performed by the ACO.

ACO Up Close: Shostakovich, Silvestrov & Bach

23-25 AUG
ACO On The Pier &
Melbourne Recital Centre

ACO Principal Violin Satu Vänkä leads a deep exploration of the majesty and heartache of Shostakovich and Silvestrov chamber works, set alongside the depth, candour and ecstasy of the music of JS Bach.



4

ACO Families

The Princess, The Pea (and The Brave Escapee)

13-20 JUL
ACO On The Pier

There is the fairytale you know and love... but what isn't known is why our brave princess was out in the middle of a storm, in the middle of a night, at the end of an adventure. This is *that* story.

This stunning theatrical production comes alive with classical music performed live by ACO musicians. It's perfect for audiences of all ages who need a reminder that they can be brave, even if they feel scared of the unknown.



5

AustralianChamberOrchestra

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN REVEALED

International virtuoso
Patricia Kopatchinskaja leads
the ACO in an extraordinary
Schubert odyssey.

“She is ever thrilling and
alive to the moment.”

LOS ANGELES TIMES

21 JUNE - 2 JULY

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

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

*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies



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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.

WOLLONGONG TOWN HALL

Jack Stephens

Thu 8 May 6.45pm

SYDNEY – CITY RECITAL HALL

Jack Stephens

Sat 10 May 6.15pm

Tue 13 May 7.15pm

Wed 14 May 6.15pm

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Jack Stephens

Sun 11 May 1.15pm

BRISBANE –
QPAC CONCERT HALL

Matthew Hodge

Mon 12 May 6.15pm

MELBOURNE RECITAL CENTRE

Dan Golding

Sat 17 May 6.45pm

Mon 19 May 6.45pm

ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE

Dan Golding

Sun 18 May 1.45pm

CANBERRA – LLEWELLYN HALL

Andy Baird

Tue 20 May 6.45pm

The concert will last approximately two hours, 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. *Theremin & Beyond* will be recorded live from QPAC Concert Hall, Brisbane and broadcast on Friday 30 May, 1pm and available on demand for 30 days after.

PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Carolina Eyck Theremin
Australian Chamber Orchestra

COMPOSER	TITLE	MIN
Brett Dean	Short Stories: IV. Komarov’s Last Words	3
Mikhail Glinka	A Farewell to St Petersburg: X. The Lark	5
Johann Sebastian Bach	Orchestral Suite No.3 in D major, BWV1068: II. Air	4
Jacques Offenbach	Orpheus in the Underworld: Can-can	2
Camille Saint-Saëns	The Carnival of the Animals: Selections <i>Tortoises</i> <i>The Elephant</i> <i>Aquarium</i> <i>The Swan</i>	10
Erwin Schulhoff (arr. strings)	Five Pieces for String Quartet <i>I. Alla Valse viennese</i> <i>II. Alla Serenata</i> <i>III. Alla Czeka</i> <i>IV. Alla Tango milonga</i> <i>V. Alla Tarantella</i>	14
Miklós Rózsa	Spellbound Concerto	6
Interval		20
Jörg Widmann	180 Beats Per Minute	5
Holly Harrison	Hovercraft (World Premiere)*	8
Yasushi Akutagawa	Triptyque <i>I. Allegro</i> <i>II. Berceuse</i> <i>III. Presto</i>	12
Alexander Courage	Star Trek: Main Theme	2
Carolina Eyck	Fantasias: I. Oakunar Lynntuja (Strange Birds)	4
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov	Flight of the Bumblebee	4
The Beach Boys	Good Vibrations	4
Ennio Morricone	The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: The Ecstasy of Gold	3

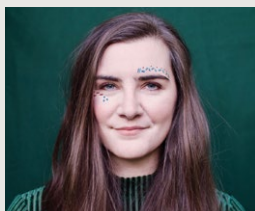
MUSICIANS ON STAGE

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



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.



Carolina Eyck
Theremin

Carolina plays an Etherwave Pro theremin by Moog and a D-Lev theremin by Eric Wallin.



Satu Vänkä
Principal Violin

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



Ilya Isakovich
Violin

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



Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba
Violin

Thibaud plays a 1756 Giovanni Battista Gabrielli violin on loan from Helena Rathbone. His Chair is sponsored by The Minta Group.



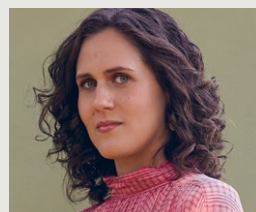
Ike See
Violin

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



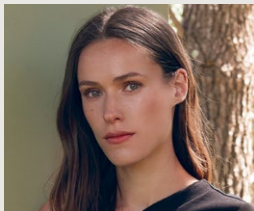
Tim Yu
Violin

Tim plays a violin ascribed to Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù in 1740, assembled by John Lott circa 1850, on loan from an anonymous Australian private benefactor. His Chair is sponsored by Barbara & Ralph Ward-Ambler.



Stefanie Farrands
Principal Viola

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



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.



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.



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 Julie Steiner AM & Judyth Sachs.



Maxime Bibeau
Principal Bass

Max plays a late-16th century Gasparo da Salò bass on loan from UKARIA.



Brian Nixon #
Percussion



Tamara-Anna Cislowska #
Piano

Guest Musicians

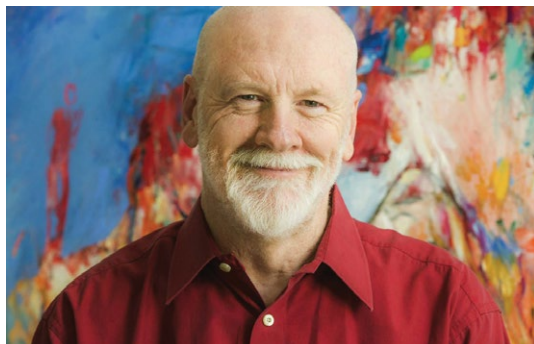
PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read
before lights down.

As the world's first electronic instrument, the theremin has a long and storied history. The instrument was originally conceived as a proximity sensing security device by the Soviet government, but was soon transported to concert halls around the world. In a series of chapters, this concert takes us on that journey: from the instrument's Russian/Soviet roots and performances of works from the classical canon, through to its use in cutting-edge film music and contemporary works composed especially for it.

This concert's opening chapter begins with **Komarov's Last Words** from *Short Stories*, by Australian composer Brett Dean. One of five miniatures composed for the ACO, this movement describes the death of Soviet cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov, who died upon re-entry to the Earth's atmosphere in his Soyuz I spacecraft in 1967, thereby becoming the first person to die in space, and an early casualty of the political pressures of the international space race of the 1960s. With musical material derived from electronic signals in space, Komarov's Last Words sets the scene for this electronic concert. This is followed by a piece by Mikhail Glinka, often considered the father of Russian music. **The Lark**, originally from his song cycle *A Farewell to St Petersburg*, celebrates the beauty of the Russian countryside. The arrangement here is inspired by Mily Balakirev's virtuosic transcription for solo piano, while reclaiming the lyrical vocal line for the theremin. It is this piece that the instrument's inventor, Leon Theremin, played to Vladimir Lenin to demonstrate his new invention.

Leon Theremin patented and granted commercial rights to the instrument in 1928. Soon, the theremin was appearing in concert halls around the world, fascinating audiences. The greatest performer of this new instrument was Clara Rockmore, who toured America and abroad to great acclaim. Rockmore is particularly associated with performances of classical favourites, including the Air from Johann Sebastian Bach's Orchestral Suite in D major, popularly known





as Air on the G String, and The Swan from Camille Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals*. The instrument's lyrical, otherworldly appeal is on full display in these pieces, complemented by the Carnival's Aquarium and Elephant. As a prelude, we hear the Infernal Galop from Jacques Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, popularly known as the **Can-can**, whose melody is the basis for Saint-Saëns's Tortoises – slowed down to the pace of a tortoise.

From evocative works of the classical canon, we move to a 1923 suite of pieces by Czech composer Erwin Schulhoff. Each of his **Five Pieces for String Quartet**, here arranged for string orchestra, evokes a different international style of dance music. We hear a Viennese waltz, a mysterious serenade, a frenzied representation of Czech folk music, a warmly seductive tango, and a thrilling Italian tarantella whose traditional purpose was to cure spider venom. Each vivid movement reflects Schulhoff's views on music: "Music should first and foremost produce physical pleasures, yes, even ecstasies. Music is never philosophy, it arises from an ecstatic condition, finding its expression through rhythmical movement".

To conclude the concert's first half, we enter the world of film music, which made full use of the theremin's mysterious, otherworldly sound, such that it has almost become a cliché to convey the supernatural. Alfred Hitchcock's 1945 film *Spellbound* tells a tale of love and psychoanalysis between two doctors, played by Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck. The Oscar-

winning orchestral score by Hungarian-American composer Miklós Rózsa is notable for its pioneering use of the theremin, such that Rózsa prepared a standalone concert work for piano, theremin and orchestra which he titled *Spellbound Concerto*.

Numerous composers have composed new pieces for the theremin, exploiting its unique sonic qualities. *Hovercraft* was composed especially for Carolina Eyck and the ACO by Australian composer Holly Harrison. Of her new work, she writes:

"The theremin is an extraordinary instrument that almost defies belief. Hovercrafts are amphibious, almost science-fiction-like vehicles, capable of traversing water, land, snow, and mud: they literally hover on a cushion of air. I see many similarities between this instrument and invention. This piece reimagines the hovercraft as more airborne than intended! A hovercraft through the looking-glass, capable of soaring heights. A hovercraft that isn't afraid to get down and dirty. In this way, the title itself pays homage to the way the theremin is played – both literally and metaphorically – an acknowledgement of the pure magic of producing a sound from thin air.

"I sought to write a work that enjoys the idiosyncratic blips and beeps of the theremin, showcasing its quirky side, but also highlighting its versatility. At times, I've treated the theremin like a voice, glissing in and out of operatic mode, and then contrasting this with rumbling, gurgling synthesiser sounds. Stylistically, the piece embraces my disco



string obsession of accented stabs and four-to-the-floor grooves, and combines this with twisted rhythms, big riffs, and rapid mood changes. The theremin ducks and weaves with lyrical lines and dirty grunge, all while conversing with grooving and strobing strings.”

Hovercraft is bookended by two works for string orchestra. The first is German composer Jörg Widmann’s **180 Beats Per Minute**, composed in 1993 and derived from the then highly popular techno beats. The composer describes the music as a “sheer enjoyment of rhythm”, having a “rhythmic drive and permanent change of pulse whizzes past at maximum speed (180 beats per minute)”. The bracket concludes with Yasushi Akutagawa’s **Triptyque** for string orchestra. Akutagawa was a friend and student of Dmitri Shostakovich, and his *Triptyque* forms an aesthetic bridge between this contemporary chapter and the Soviet roots of this concert. Each movement of Akutagawa’s piece is intrinsically linked through the repeated use of the work’s opening rhythmic figure.

To conclude, we present a medley of contemporary music that has employed the theremin’s unique sound. We begin with Alexander Courage’s iconic Main Theme for the television series **Star Trek**. While the original theme did not actually use a theremin (it was instead the voice of soprano Loulie Jean Norman), many have mistaken its otherworldly vocals for the instrument, making it the perfect concert work for theremin and orchestra. Carolina Eyck’s *Fantasias* was composed especially

for vinyl LP. Each movement involves theremin improvisations over carefully scored-out string parts. **Strange Birds** evokes the sounds of mysterious flying objects coming in and out of view over Reich-ian string textures. Ennio Morricone’s **The Ecstasy of Gold** appears at the Mexican stand-off climax of the 1966 film *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, and is a concert staple for Carolina Eyck. BAFTA-winning composer Jim Parker’s Main Theme to the series **Midsomer Murders** is one of the best-known uses of the theremin in music for the screen, while The Beach Boys song **Good Vibrations**, an outtake from their landmark album *Pet Shop Sounds*, is one of the best-known uses of the theremin sound in popular music, originally produced by an “electro-theremin” and performed on a real theremin in these concerts. Our finale is **Flight of the Bumblebee**, in which the whole orchestra revels in the twists and turns of flight.

Page 10.
Brett Dean.
Photo by Bettina Stoess

Page 11.
Holly Harrison.
Photo by Sally Tsoutas

Page 12.
Jörg Widmann.
Photo by Marco Borggreve

Australian Chamber Orchestra

GERSHWIN & SHOSTAKOVICH

DIRECTED BY RICHARD TOGNETTI



1-18 AUGUST

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

Tickets from \$59* | \$35* for U35s

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Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*
and Shostakovich's Piano
Concerto No.1 with superstar
pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk.

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CREATING



The theremin is often thought of as a novelty, but between the masterly hands of Carolina Eyck it becomes an instrument of classical majesty and contemporary brilliance.

A UNIVERSE

Written by Shaad D'Souza

The theremin, the first electronic musical instrument ever invented, is a funny thing. Most people probably don't know exactly what it looks like but would know, vaguely, the movements one needs to make in order to play it. They probably have an idea of how it sounds – descriptors like “spooky” or “weird” might come up – but likely wouldn't realise how common theremin use has actually been throughout pop history.

It's a curio, yes – known as the instrument used on the *Midsomer Murders* theme tune and in the score for *The Day The Earth Stood Still* – but it can also be used to convey ecstatic enlightenment in a folk song such as Sufjan Stevens' 2004 track “In the Devil's Territory”, or punky disaffection. Elsewhere, it's been used by everyone from The Flaming Lips to iconic Canadian power-pop band The New Pornographers to the Brazilian electroclash heroes CSS, who used a theremin intro to kick off their enduring banger “Let's Make Love and Listen to Death From Above”. In other words, the theremin has become an essential part of popular culture in the 100-plus years since its invention. Mass culture may view it as a novelty but in the hands of some,

the theremin is filled with potential – even more, perhaps, than something as am-dram as, say, the guitar or the piano.

Take, for example, the work of German theremin player Carolina Eyck. The 37-year-old, who began as a child prodigy and has radically altered the way many view theremin playing, has worked doggedly to pull the instrument out of the realm of

“In other words, the theremin has become an essential part of popular culture in the 100-plus years since its invention.”



novelty and into the zone of contemporary classical music. Her 2022 album, *Thetis 2086*, is a richly textured, lucent marvel of experimental composition that has a surprising amount in common with the wide-ranging textures of electronic musicians such as Aphex Twin, Suzanne Ciani and ML Buch, while her performances can glide between classical majesty, contemporary brilliance and off-kilter quirkiness.

She joins the Australian Chamber Orchestra for an eclectic program directed by Richard Tognetti. It includes classics such as the Air from JS Bach's Orchestra Suite No.3 and Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals*, alongside the world premiere of a new composition from Australian composer Holly Harrison and popular television and film themes such as *Midsomer Murders*, *Star Trek* and *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*.

For Eyck, the pieces she is playing form her potted history of the theremin and oscillate between personal favourites and well-known classics. "It's sort of drawing a line through the history of famous theremin repertoire," she says.

Eyck's range speaks to the looseness with which she views the instrument she's dedicated her life to. "I think 10 years ago I was on that mission, to make people accept the theremin as something with as much artistic value as the piano," she says over Zoom from her home in Germany. "I thought 'Let's make this a proper classical instrument'. But I've come away from that – I don't try to be on a mission anymore, I just try to do music that I enjoy.

"On the one hand, it's great that it's a novelty, that it's a niche – for me and my business, but also for the world; it means that the theremin can still be 'magic'. On the other hand, with that comes the questions, and it's always the same questions [about how it works]. So what I try to do is just play what I love with all my heart, and then when I do have to explain, especially onstage, I make it fun and do a little show to explain how it works. I use that as a way to connect to the audience, and that's always very nice, in the classical context, to go onstage and invite the audience into what's about to happen."

The theremin was invented in 1920 by Leon Theremin, a Soviet physicist who was creating and experimenting with motion detectors. After accidentally stumbling into the invention – simply by realising that the output of the circuitry he was working on was affected by his body's proximity to it – he quickly realised its musical potential, and began performing with the instrument throughout Europe and, later, the United States.

A *New York Times* article from October 1927, about Theremin's demonstration of what he then called "ether music" – an appropriately unnerving name for such a sound – described the instrument's "extraordinary beauty and fullness of tone", reporter Waldemar Kaempffert's neutrality dampened some by his clear astonishment at what he was seeing. Speaking to the audience at that New York theremin demonstration, Theremin gave an amazingly hopeful speech about his instrument's potential: "My apparatus frees the composer from the despotism of the 12-note tempered piano scale, to which even violinists must adapt themselves. The composer can now construct a scale of the intervals desired. He can have intervals of 13ths, if he wants them. In fact any gradation detectable by the human ear can be produced."

He said it also introduced an entirely new range of tonal colours. "Hitherto the composer has had only about 20 tone colors, represented by as many different types of orchestral instruments. I give him literally thousands of tone colors ... with nothing but gestures, [theremin players] will give us concerts that will reveal new beauties in tones and their combinations. Apart from these possibilities, ether wave music is created with a simplicity and a directness matched only by singing. There is no keyboard to obtrude itself, no catgut, no bow, no pedal, nothing but simple expressive gestures of the hands."

"Her 2022 album, *Thetis 2086*, is a richly textured, lucent marvel of experimental composition that has a surprising amount in common with the wide-ranging textures of electronic musicians such as Aphex Twin, Suzanne Ciani and ML Buch."

It was a statement of remarkable ambition – one which Theremin and his instrument could not, exactly, meet. While many were taken with the theremin, it only became commercially available in 1929, as many were suffering financially from that year's stock market crash. Even so, the instrument was adopted by some performers and became a point of interest for audiences. But by 1938, Theremin had left the United States, abandoning his wife, ballet dancer Lavinia Williams. He moved back to the Soviet Union due to financial issues, although he did not reveal his reason at the time. In the meantime, Theremin's onetime lover, Clara Rockmore, continued to boost the instrument's popularity in the United States, performing with orchestras and eventually becoming known as the greatest theremin player of all time.

Although the theremin eventually fell out of favour – easier to understand, more traditionally oriented electronic musical instruments were invented throughout the '40s, '50s and '60s – it remained beloved among its devotees. In 2015, novelist Sean Michaels wrote in *The Guardian* about his years-long love affair with the instrument, an “impossible voice” that he described as having an “overlooked capacity for beauty”.

“Most musical instruments require their players to strum, push or blow into something. They require that sticks strike skins or horsehair strokes strings,” he wrote. “Only the theremin seems to rely on nothing more than its player's presence or absence. Only the theremin appears to run on hope.”

This sense of magic seems to be something many of the theremin's players appreciate: Dorit Chrysler, head of the New York Theremin Society, described one of the joys of playing as the “mystery of not touching anything, which naturally feeds into the imagination. So it really just sparks your mind”.

“The great thing about the theremin is that, since it's niche, and it's not so far developed... you can sort of create your own universe.”

For Eyck, the “magic” of the theremin has never been as apparent as it is to other people. Born near Berlin, her parents were both engaged in musical practice, and she grew up around a lot of electronic music. “My dad and his colleague had a band, and they had all these synthesisers, and played meditative electronic music in churches, so electronic music was always around in our family, and my mum would do the light shows for them,” she recalls. “One day, I think they were getting a new synthesiser, and this person selling them said, ‘Did you see the theremin? Maybe that could be something for your band.’ And so they bought it.”

Eyck was seven at the time, and she had already begun taking lessons on the piano and violin. When her parents realised that the theremin wasn't as easy an instrument to pick up as they had initially thought, they passed the instrument along to Eyck. “They realised you didn't just ‘get it’ – you need to practise,” she says. “And so, since I was there, and I was young, and standing around, it then became my instrument.”

Shortly after she began to play the theremin – “there's video recordings of me trying the first notes, and they were terrible” – Eyck and her parents went to a theremin concert featuring the Russian player Lydia Kavina, who was a distant relative of Leon Theremin and learned her craft from him. Eyck's parents asked Kavina to teach her how to play the instrument and so, every so often, Kavina would fly to Germany from Russia to give Eyck some lessons.

“I would see her about twice a year, whenever she was around – there was no Zoom back then,” says Eyck. “In between the times that she would see me, my dad would practise with me on the piano. So I had violin lessons, piano lessons, so I sort of picked up things from the other instruments, and then for the technique, when Lydia was around she taught me. In between, I would just try to practise loads.”

Playing something that nobody else did gave Eyck a unique kind of confidence. “As a child, you just take things as they are – I didn't really compare it to anything. For me, the theremin was just its own thing, and I knew that when I was onstage, nobody knew what the theremin was, they hadn't heard about the instrument yet,” she says.

“When I was younger, that gave me confidence in being a musician onstage. My father would put me onstage at a very young age – I had my first performance at eight years old – but since nobody knew what I was doing, the question was rarely ‘Why does it sound strange?’ It was always more fascinating [for people], there was never much judgement up there. On the other hand, when somebody tells me today ‘Oh this is so fascinating, what you're doing’, I think ‘I hope I moved beyond the fascination – into something that might stay with them.’”



Once Eyck started playing the theremin, other instruments lost a little bit of their shine – perhaps naturally, given how unique the theremin is. “I don’t play anymore, but I studied viola later and I do like to have something in my hands as well and be like ‘Oh, there’s bow pressure’. With the piano as well – I can play several notes at the same time, and I can create a beautiful chord. I can’t do that with the theremin,” she says. “But on the other hand, I always knew that the theremin would be my path because the feeling I had onstage was a different one. I knew I wouldn’t be judged as much, and so it gave me a freedom, in a way, that the other instruments wouldn’t be able to give me.”

The theremin unlocked Eyck’s creativity in a new way (“you can add effects to it, or you can draw things in space”) and, most notably, it allowed her to radically reinterpret the instrument as she saw fit. When she was 16, Eyck developed her own method of playing the theremin. She later detailed it in a book, *The Art of Playing the Theremin*, and is still exploring and developing her practice to this day.

“I guess that’s also creative,” she says, somewhat bashfully. “The great thing about the theremin is that, since it’s niche, and it’s not so far developed,

“Only the theremin seems to rely on nothing more than its player’s presence or absence. Only the theremin appears to run on hope.”

everything that’s around it, you can sort of create your own universe. I teach, I do recordings, you can even build an instrument on your own. So there’s a whole universe you can create.”

I ask whether Eyck felt pressure being a child theremin prodigy, to which she replies, simply, “I don’t know”. “Back then, it just felt like hard work, and also it kind of shaped my ego, in a way, because it was always very connected to the instrument and to the ability I have with the instrument,” she says. “At some

I had my first performance at eight years old – but since nobody knew what I was doing, the question was rarely ‘Why does it sound strange?’

point, I questioned myself – like, what am I without my ability to play the instrument, if my self-worth is so connected to it, and this is something I’m truly confident about... What about other things in life? Who am I without that? But with the theremin, there was not so much pressure, because I put a lot of work into mastering the instrument.”

The relative youth of the theremin is exciting to Eyck, given that the community of players is always expanding the instrument’s capabilities. “A couple of years ago, Eric Wallin built his own instrument, and it’s a mostly digital instrument, and all of a sudden you can shape the timbre of the sound as well as the volume, and it’s like a whole new dimension added to the sound,” she says. “I need to figure out how to play that, because it’s not just soft and loud, but also like shaping the sound.”

“Soft and loud” is, it seems, an oversimplification of how the instrument works, especially because, Eyck says, so much of your playing is reliant on feeling good in the moment. “The only thing you feel yourself is your body – if that’s the first thing you feel, you also feel if you’re nervous, or if you had bad sleep, so it’s a priority before you start to play to just make sure you’re feeling sort of grounded, and that you get to a state where you feel comfortable,” she says.

In recent years, the theremin has found a new audience on social media and the internet, with artists such as Mezerg, an electronic dance musician, achieving millions of views on YouTube thanks to a series of vigorous, expressive videos in which he uses the theremin to make club tracks. TikTok star Caroline Scruggs, an American theremin player, has become famous on the platform thanks to her videos in which she explains how the instrument works and then covers well-known songs, and modern indie musicians such as Kevin Morby are using the instrument on classic-sounding rock songs, adding new texture and variation to the potential usage of the instrument.

Eyck herself is part of this phenomenon. She has over 180,000 subscribers on YouTube, more than 2.9 million likes on TikTok and some of her videos have clocked more than 11 million views.

“I think social media is what makes the instrument popular these days,” says Eyck. “Back in the days when YouTube just started, I created my channel, and for me, the challenge was to produce videos so that we could get a good balance between videos of cats playing the theremin and real people playing the theremin,” she says. “Today, with TikTok and so on, it’s just good – it’s great that people can get educated.”

Shaad D’Souza is a freelance writer, editor and creative consultant currently based in London. He is *The Saturday Paper*’s music critic and writes regularly for *Pitchfork*, *New York/Vulture*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and more, and was previously on staff at *The Guardian*, *VICE* and *The FADER*. He has also worked at Spotify and triple j, and served on the board of directors for youth music non-profit The Push Inc and the industry advisory board for Arts Centre Melbourne’s Australian Music Vault. Shaad was the Australian and New Zealand editor of *VICE*’s music vertical *Noisey*, a contributing editor at *The FADER*, and has appeared on The New York Times’ *Popcast*, The Guardian’s *Full Story* podcast, Schwartz Media’s *The Culture*, triple j’s *Hack*, and ABC Radio National.

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Carolina Eyck.

Page 16.
Carolina Eyck playing her
Moog Big Briar 91A, 1995.

Page 19.
Lev Theremin and
Lydia Kavina, 1976.
Photo by A. Snegirev

Page 21.
Carolina Eyck.
Photo by Shai Levy



Richard Tognetti

Artistic Director
& Lead 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.

Carolina Eyck

Theremin



Carolina Eyck is a German-Sorbian musician and composer, largely recognised as the world's leading theremin virtuoso. She was awarded the Echo Klassik Prize for "Concert Recording of the Year" in 2015. As a soloist and ensemble musician she has given concerts in over 30 countries and has played with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Brussels Philharmonic, Argentine National Symphony Orchestra, and more. She was also featured in the premiere of Fazil Say's Universe and Mesopotamia Symphonies. In 2016, she released an album featuring her own composition *Fantasias for Theremin and String Quartet* with the American Contemporary Music Ensemble. In 2022, she performed at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in London. In 2016, Carolina began touring her innovative solo *Theremin & Voice* program. She breaks new ground using a surround sound system, allowing her theremin to break free and fill the space. Magical loops and artfully arranged layers of Carolina's voice are generated live on stage and fly through the room in sync with her dance-like performance. Her transcription of Ennio Morricone's The Ecstasy of Gold has been viewed more than 15 million times online. Carolina has released several solo albums, including *Elegies for Theremin & Voice* (2019) and *Thetis 2086* (2022). Based on her *Theremin & Voice*

project, Carolina composes and produces film music. In 2023, she wrote the original score for the documentary *Confessions of a Good Samaritan* by Penny Lane.

Carolina regularly conducts theremin workshops, lectures, and master classes worldwide. She developed her own precise eight-finger-position playing technique by age 16 and published the first extensive theremin method book *The Art of Playing the Theremin*. Her method is now being used by thereminists around the world and has revolutionised how the instrument is played.

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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 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, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, 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

Margaret Eva

Brisbane Subscriber Margaret Eva has had an enduring love of chamber music ever since she was a little girl.

Longtime ACO subscriber Margaret Eva saw one of the first concerts the Australian Chamber Orchestra ever performed in Brisbane. She had a subscription to Musica Viva, which was responsible for touring the ACO at that time, so that she could fuel her love of music – especially chamber music – which she'd developed when she lived in London.

"My husband and I were mainly interested in chamber music so that was the sort of scene we got involved in," she tells us. "We had already been saturated in such music in London. We lived there for two years from 1965 to '67, and then again from '72 to '74. We spent any money left over from rent and fuelling the car, and feeding us, on concert tickets," she remembers fondly.

When the pair returned home after travelling the UK and Europe extensively, they settled in Brisbane and looked for performances to satisfy their chamber music cravings.

"We first came across the ACO in 1976 when they performed a wonderful concert with Nancy Weir and John Kennedy at the Brisbane Theatre," Margaret says.

A memorable night led to a life-long dedication to the Orchestra.

Margaret's love of music comes from her childhood.

"I grew up in the house where there was a piano, which my sister learnt to play. She was musical and still is. I am not. I learnt to play a recorder at school, and I can read one line of music but that's about it."

We know you don't need to learn an instrument or read music to love it. It was hearing music that got Margaret hooked:



"My father came home from work one day bearing a pile of classical LPs, and my sister and I sat at the record player whenever we were free, and played them over and over again," she smiles. "There was a Beethoven Seventh Symphony and Third Piano Concerto, also some Gilbert & Sullivan, and some Schubert."

Margaret shares her all-time favourite composer with Artistic Director Richard Tognetti – JS Bach.

"I am always especially pleased to hear the ACO play Bach," she says enthusiastically. "I've always had a passion for Bach because of the mathematics of it, and its tunefulness. It's just magic."

As well as a shared proclivity for the music of Bach, Margaret appreciates the ACO for its beautiful collection of Golden Age instruments, its programming choices, and for the dynamism of the performances.

"I'm not able to get out as much as I used to due to age, but the ACO is the only orchestra I make the effort to still get to," she says. "You'll never be let down by an ACO concert. They choose brilliant programs, and will always have a good performance so I never feel that I'll be let down by going to one of their concerts," she says.

"It's always a true highlight."

Age: 87

Subscriber for: 49 Years

Date of first ACO concert: 1976

Favourite ACO concert: Anything featuring Bach

Australian Chamber Orchestra

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