

Australian Chamber Orchestra



RACHMANINOFF'S RHAPSODY

Directed by Richard Tognetti

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Wesfarmers Arts

ACO

ACO UP CLOSE

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WILLIAM BARTON AND THE BRODSKY QUARTET

27 Feb

An enthralling program of music with a deep connection to place and people.

OLLI MUSTONEN PLAYS BEETHOVEN SONATAS

7 Mar

A masterful interpreter sits down with the works that transformed piano music forever.

TOGNETTI AND GRINGOLTS

27 Mar

Two of the world's greatest violinists. One intimate, unforgettable concert.

LEONKORO QUARTET

5 May

Experience the fearless energy of the Leonkoro Quartet where audacity, passion, and mastery collide.

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Tickets from \$59* | ACO On The Pier

*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies

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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.

Share your experience

#ACO26Season



@AustralianChamberOrchestra

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WELCOME

Welcome to *Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody*,
the opening concert of our 2026 Season.

It's our great pleasure to welcome you back to the concert hall as we begin a new year of musical exploration together.

We're delighted to reunite with the wonderful Croatian pianist Dejan Lazić, a long-standing friend of the Orchestra, for our season-opening celebration. Dejan joins Richard Tognetti and the ACO on the concert platform for Rachmaninoff's dazzling *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* — a work that is at once lush, virtuosic and irresistibly theatrical. Inspired by Paganini's legendary Caprice No.24, the *Rhapsody* retains the caprice's virtuosic DNA while transforming it into a dazzling showcase for the piano.

This concert also marks an important milestone for the Orchestra. Over the past year, we've had the great privilege of working closely with Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer John Luther Adams on a new work written especially for the ACO. *Horizon*, which receives its world premiere this season, is inspired by John's recent relocation to Australia and his travels across the continent - from the Northern Territory to the Red Centre, and down to Tasmania. John has written a wonderful essay about the ideas and experiences that shaped the piece, which I warmly encourage you to read from page 14.

I thank our Principal Sponsor Wesfarmers Arts for their ongoing support of the Orchestra, and you for being here with us this evening. I hope you enjoy the performance.



Richard Evans AM
Managing Director

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Wesfarmers Arts



Australian Chamber Orchestra & Wesfarmers Arts
Bringing People & Music Together

Upcoming concerts
and the latest
announcements.

Latest News
2026 Emerging Artists

Seven incredible young string musicians have been selected for our Emerging Artist Program in 2026. Hailing from across the country, each of these players will spend the year participating in intensive learning, one-to-one mentorship, and side-by-side professional performance opportunities with the core musicians of the ACO.

The 2026 Emerging Artists are:

Olivia Kowalik, Violin
(mentored by Satu Vänskä)

Benjamin Lam, Violin
(mentored by Aiko Goto)

Lydia Sawires, Violin
(mentored by Liisa Pallandi)

Theonie Wang, Violin
(mentored by Helena Rathbone)

Sebastian Coyne, Viola
(mentored by Stefanie Farrands)

Max Wung, Cello
(mentored by Timo-Veikko Valve)

Harry Young, Double Bass
(mentored by Maxime Bibeau)



1

On Tour
The Devil's Violin

12-28 MAR
National Tour

Virtuoso Ilya Gringolts returns to direct the ACO in a program that pushes the violin to its fiery limits. In his third national tour with the ACO, Ilya will perform Giuseppe Tartini's fiendish *Devil's Trill* sonata, alongside music by Francesco Geminiani, Antonio Vivaldi and Sofia Gubaidulina.

Schubert's Fantasy & Octet

14-30 MAY
National Tour

Richard Tognetti's affinity for Schubert is evident in every note he plays. Here, he directs an ACO ensemble, featuring a handpicked selection of Australia's top wind players, in two exquisite works that showcase Schubert as a master of chamber music: the Octet and the Fantasy in C major.



2

Special Events

TarraWarra Festival

28 FEB –1 MAR
TarraWarra Museum, Victoria

Richard Tognetti directs the ACO in our annual festival at the TarraWarra Museum of Art in Victoria, featuring three concerts and an open workshop.



3

ACO On The Pier

ACO Up Close: William Barton and the Brodsky Quartet

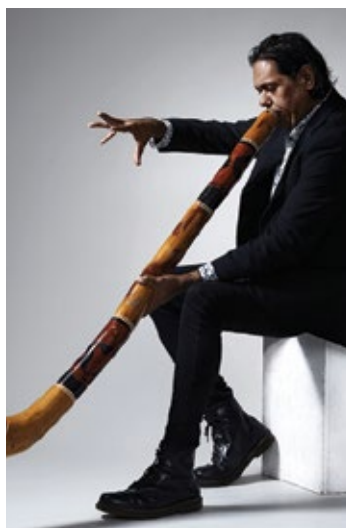
27 FEB

The Brodsky Quartet joins Australian icon William Barton to present an enthralling program of music with a deep connection to place and people.

ACO Up Close: Olli Mustonen plays Beethoven Sonatas

7 MAR

Olli Mustonen is a composer, conductor, and concert pianist famous for his technical prowess and invention. When the Finnish virtuoso plays the classics, he is playing with a style that is all his own. To hear him play Beethoven, in an intimate venue like The Neilson, is an unmissable experience.



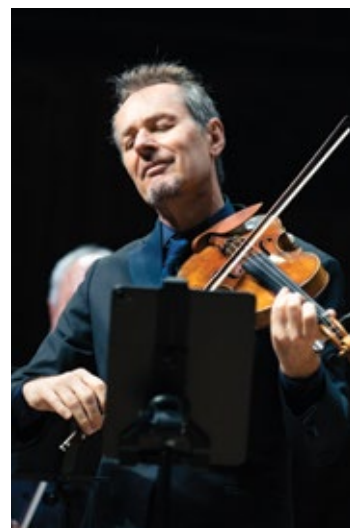
4

ACO On The Pier

ACO Up Close: Tognetti and Gringolts

27 MAR

Two of the world's greatest violinists; one intimate, unforgettable concert. A surprise program where two artists, Ilya Gringolts and Richard Tognetti, will push the violin to its limits, to the awe and delight of the lucky people who will be there to witness it.



5

1.
2026 Emerging Artist
Olivia Kowalik
2.
Ilya Gringolts
3.
ACO at TarraWarra
4.
William Barton
5.
Richard Tognetti

ACO

THE DEVIL'S VIOLIN

12–28 March

Directed by Ilya Gringolts

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

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

ACO.COM.AU

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.

- NEWCASTLE CITY HALL**
Genevieve Lang
Thu 5 Feb 6.45pm
- MELBOURNE RECITAL CENTRE**
Bernard Rofe
Sat 7 Feb 6.45pm
Mon 9 Feb 6.45pm
- MELBOURNE – ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE**
Bernard Rofe
Sun 8 Feb 1.45pm

- SYDNEY – CITY RECITAL HALL**
Genevieve Lang
Tue 10 Feb 7.15pm
Wed 11 Feb 6.15pm
Sat 14 Feb 6.15pm

- WOLLONGONG TOWN HALL**
Genevieve Lang
Thu 12 Feb 6.45pm

- SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE**
Genevieve Lang
Sun 15 Feb 1.15pm

- BRISBANE – QPAC CONCERT HALL**
Matthew Hodge
Mon 16 Feb 6.15pm

- CANBERRA – LLEWELLYN HALL**
Bernard Rofe
Wed 18 Feb 6.45pm

PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Dejan Lazić Piano
Australian Chamber Orchestra

| COMPOSER | TITLE | MIN |
|--|--|-----|
| John Luther Adams | Horizon# (<i>World Premiere</i>) | 20 |
| Igor Stravinsky | Concerto in D “Basle” <i>I. Vivace</i> <i>II. Arioso. Andantino</i> <i>III. Rondo. Allegro</i> | 12 |
| Interval | | 20 |
| Raminta Šerkšnytė | De Profundis (<i>Australian Premiere</i>) | 13 |
| Sergei Rachmaninoff (arr. Bernard Rofe) | Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op.43 <i>Introduction: Allegro vivace</i> <i>Variation 1: (Precedente)</i> <i>Tema: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 2: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 3: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 4: Più vivo</i> <i>Variation 5: Tempo precedente</i> <i>Variation 6: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 7: Meno mosso, a tempo moderato</i> <i>Variation 8: Tempo I</i> <i>Variation 9: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 10</i> <i>Variation 11: Moderato</i> <i>Variation 12: Tempo di Minuetto</i> <i>Variation 13: Allegro</i> <i>Variation 14: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 15: Più vivo. Scherzando</i> <i>Variation 16: Allegretto</i> <i>Variation 17</i> <i>Variation 18: Andante cantabile</i> <i>Variation 19: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 20: Un poco più vivo</i> <i>Variation 21: Un poco più vivo</i> <i>Variation 22: Marziale. Un poco più vivo (alla breve)</i> <i>Variation 23: L'istesso tempo</i> <i>Variation 24: A tempo un poco meno mosso</i> | 22 |

Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra

The concert will last approximately one hour and 50 minutes, including a 20-minute interval. The Australian Chamber Orchestra reserves the right to alter scheduled artists and programs as necessary.

ACO concerts are regularly broadcast on ABC Classic. *Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody* will be broadcast on Sunday 15 March, 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.



Dejan Lazić
Piano



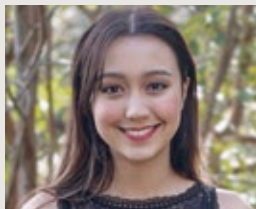
Helena Rathbone
Principal Violin

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



Aiko Goto
Violin

Aiko plays 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 Meg Meldrum.



Liisa Pallandi
Violin

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



**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.



Véronique Serret[#]
Violin

Véronique plays a 1900 violin by Leandro Bisiach.



Stefanie Farrands
Principal Viola

Stefanie plays a 1610 Maggini viola on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. 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.



Alexina Hawkins[#]
Viola

Alexina plays her own 2010 viola made by John Johnston in Sydney.



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



Maxime Bibeau
Principal Bass

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



Brian Nixon[#]
Timpani & Percussion

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

[#] Guest Musician

PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read
before lights down.

Written by Russell Torrance



John Luther Adams (1953–)

Horizon

World Premiere

The composer writes:

The horizon – the line at which earth and sky appear to meet – defines the circle that encompasses all of us and everything around us, no matter where we may be.

In theory there is only one horizon. Yet in our experience of the world there are two horizons. The visible horizon. And the true horizon.

The visible horizon is what we see from where we look. Most often our visible horizon is circumscribed – by our own human structures, by trees, by mountains, or other topological features.

The true horizon is the full extent of all that we might possibly see, an unobstructed view of the enveloping circle where the sky meets the earth or the sea. On land – far out on the tundra or the plains, or in the middle of a great desert – we sometimes catch a glimpse of the true horizon. At sea our visible horizon is almost always the true horizon.

As we scan the horizon we measure not only space, but also time. How long might it take us to traverse that distance, from where we are to as far as we can see? And what lies beyond that edge of the known?

Even as humanity searches for clues of how to adapt, how to survive the frightening new realities we have created for ourselves, our horizon seems to grow ever darker and more limited, obstructed by the consequences of our own wanton actions, which extend far beyond the limits of our knowledge.

Eventually, whether 50 years or 50,000 years from now, we will reach our final horizon as a species. Yet whenever that may be, the earth will endure for billions of more years to come, on toward the true horizon of deep time.

Surrounded by ocean and with sprawling open spaces at its heart, Australia is a continent where the visible horizon is often the true horizon. I began composing “True Horizon” in the middle of the Pacific, enroute to Australia. I worked on “Visible Horizon” in the tropical savannah of northern Australia and in the great red desert of central Australia. I continued my work scanning the horizon from the shore of the Tasman Sea. And I completed the full score in the forested hills and grasslands of the southern mainland.



Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Concerto in D “Basle”

This 1946 work from Igor Stravinsky bears the name of a European city – indeed it was composed for the Basel Chamber Orchestra’s 20th birthday – but its inception is a world away from the borders of Switzerland, Germany and France.

Stravinsky had just moved to Los Angeles – to Hollywood, no less. He’d recently married his long-term lover, painter and dancer Vera de Bosset, and the couple had taken up residence on North Wetherly Drive, a stone’s throw from Hollywood’s Sunset Boulevard.

World War II had meant that the composer was unable to earn royalties for any performances in Europe. The financial pressure was one of the reasons that, in this period, Stravinsky spread his musical wings and ventured into new styles and genres. Another reason must surely be his environment, located at the centre of the world’s entertainment industry in its heyday.

In the 1940s, Stravinsky experimented with film music, wrote a Broadway revue, and in his *Ebony Concerto*, incorporated jazz into his work. He and de Bosset also became leading lights in Hollywood’s social scene, mingling with the likes of Aldous Huxley, WH Auden and Sergei Rachmaninoff.

The Concerto in D ‘Basle’ is Stravinsky’s first composition after having become a United States citizen. It is not a normal concerto in the modern sense, in that there is no soloist at the front of the orchestra. Instead, Stravinsky sets this as a virtuosic feat for the entire ensemble.

Stravinsky had first become famous in the 1910s for his edgy, kinetic ballet scores such as *The Rite of Spring*. By the 1940s, he had long since adopted a new style known as ‘neo classicism’, where his writing was inspired by the cleanness, economy and grace of music from the 18th century.

But there is still plenty of modern edginess in this ‘Basle’ concerto – listen out for some dazzling string techniques, such as the striking use of pizzicato (plucked) and spiccato (short detached notes).



Raminta Šerkšnytė (1975-)

De Profundis*

Australian Premiere

Lithuanian composer Raminta Šerkšnytė’s music is distinguished by its poeticism, powerful emotional impact, and unique beauty imbued with Baltic mysticism and melancholy. Her music is crafted using a system of her own invention known as “fusion of major and minor”, a form of non-traditional tonality that blends “light” and “dark” sonorities. Šerkšnytė believes “that peak experience and spiritual impact is the essence in the art, which can lead to the unforgettable transcendental experience.”

Of her work *De Profundis*, the composer explains that “This dramatic music, packed with contrasts, conveys a certain worldview of a young person (the work was written as a bachelor’s graduation piece) searching for spiritual ideals when life is perceived in a maximalist view with a rapid swapping between euphoria and disappointment. Both in art and in life, one longs for unusual, transcendent experiences and believes in sacredness of art. Hence the title “from the depths”, although the work does not follow the historical tradition of *De Profundis*”

De Profundis has been likened to “thirteen minutes of deepest Lithuania”, beginning with quietly urgent chirping that becomes entwined with descending glissandi and icy string tremolos, eventually giving way to a rapid central section which, with its many repeated notes, recalls Stravinsky’s Concerto in D. The work gradually fades away into the depths of the Lithuanian landscape. Gidon Kremer has called the work “the calling card of Baltic music”, and it has become one of the most frequently performed Lithuanian compositions across the world.



Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op.43

*Arranged for piano, percussion and strings
by Bernard Rofe*

There are relatively few compositions from the last decades of Sergei Rachmaninoff's life. Many of his best known works are from a burst of creativity in the first decade of the 20th century. After that, the increased pressures of performing as a piano soloist and conductor took up too much of his time and energy.

Tumultuous life events played a part too, especially the need for the composer to escape Russia in the face of growing political unrest. And so Rachmaninoff and his family found themselves beginning a new life in the United States in 1918.

Rachmaninoff's concert schedule in the first few years in America was punishing, including a six-month stint during which he performed 70 times. He wrote to a friend, "I have very little love for my current job! I haven't composed a single line during the whole time".

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini is one of these small number of compositions from Rachmaninoff's last years in America, and is based on Niccolò Paganini's Caprice No.24 for solo violin.

The famous Variation 18 'Andante Cantabile' has Rachmaninoff ingeniously turning Paganini's melody upside down in a beautiful orchestral setting. The rest of the work is a genuine contrast to the sheer lushness of this one moment. Rachmaninoff's writing is full of humour and wit, right down to the very cheeky ending.

Alongside the Paganini Caprice, there is another famous tune in the *Rhapsody* – the imposing sound of the *Dies Irae* plainchant, from the Requiem. This is often used by composers as a symbol of fear and dread, and was a favourite of Rachmaninoff's. But there is another reason for its inclusion here: Paganini was such a skilled violinist that many people joked that there must be some dark art at play. He was even called "The Devil's Violinist". By employing the *Dies*

Irae liberally in the Paganini Rhapsody, Rachmaninoff is really bringing the Devil himself out to play!

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

* Note by Bernard Rofe



SUPPORT THE ACO

Philanthropic support breathes life into everything we do, both on and off the stage.

Make a tax-deductible donation today to help us continue changing lives through the transformative power of music.

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As humanity's horizons grow darker,
composer John Luther Adams holds
to his faith in the sublime.

T H E

Written by John Luther Adams

A black and white photograph of a person in a cowboy hat standing in a desert landscape, looking out over a cloudy sky. The person is in silhouette, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a jacket. The landscape is arid with low-lying shrubs and a distant hill. The sky is filled with dramatic, layered clouds.

LIMINAL LINE

“This was the mapmaker’s liminal line, the edge of the known.”

— BARRY LOPEZ

Page 14-15.
John Luther Adams
Photo by Madeline Cass

Page 16.
Barry Lopez
Photo by David Liittschwager

Page 17.
John Luther Adams
Photo by Madeline Cass



Geographers employ the poetically evocative term “pole of inaccessibility” to describe the most geographically remote location, the place that lies farthest from the edge. On land, a pole of inaccessibility is the place that is farthest from the coast. At sea, it’s the place that is farthest from land. Each continent – Eurasia, North America, South America, Africa, Australia and Antarctica – has such a place. And somewhere out in the South Pacific lies Point Nemo, a location postulated as the farthest from land from anywhere else on Earth.

The unfathomably complex fractal geometry and endless shapeshifting of coastlines make it impossible to locate these points with unchanging precision. You could be standing at a pole of inaccessibility without realising it and tomorrow it might’ve moved. Yet this elusive nature only deepens the mystical allure of the idea.

In pursuit of my own private poles of inaccessibility, I’ve lived much of my life far from urban centers. As a refugee from the suburbs, an orphan of a culture that has lost its deepest connections to place, my life has been a continuing search to find home. My map and my compass have been music. For me, places become music and music becomes place. Listening to a place, learning to hear its music, I come to understand more deeply where I am and how I fit in. In my music I aspire to provoke for myself and the listener the experience of standing alone, immersed in a vast, beautiful, sometimes frightening place, and losing oneself within it. This is a hopelessly romantic aspiration.

Poles of inaccessibility stir in us those images of blank spaces on the map and “uninhabited” territory that drove the so-called “explorers” of imperial nation-states and led to the brutal colonisation of so many places. But today, with more than eight billion humans living on Earth, we inhabit a world in which there are no such places. No unclimbed peak in the Himalayas, no abyssal depth in the Pacific, no ice shelf in Antarctica is beyond the reach of our satellites and drones, our probes and surveillance systems. At the same time, many of us now live much of our lives in the ultimate non-places of the internet, a liminal labyrinth of windowless rooms and endless empty hallways leading nowhere. Perhaps these are our new poles of inaccessibility.

For some 40 years, the writer Barry Lopez and I shared a close friendship. We once took a walk together through a storm, up the mountain above my studio. As snow swirled around us, Barry told me about the new book that was taking shape in his imagination. Although we both sensed that this would be his most ambitious work, I don’t believe either of us could’ve imagined the journey that lay ahead of



him. In the years that followed, Barry and I had many more conversations about that book as he gradually discovered the full depth and breadth of his initial vision, as the horizon grew darker for humankind and, ultimately, for him personally. Twenty-eight years after that walk, the book was published.

Horizon is not an easy read. It's a sprawling work that encompasses geographies all over the earth and a broad swath of human history. In addressing the most daunting challenges facing humanity today, Barry doesn't hold back. His assessment of the outlook for our near future is unflinching. Yet I have no doubt that *Horizon* is his most visionary book and that in time it will become essential reading for the best minds of the next generations as they search for clues for how to move beyond the hell that we seem to be creating for them.

In our experience of the world, there are two horizons – the visible horizon and the true horizon. The visible horizon is what we see from where we look. Most often our visible horizon is circumscribed – by our own structures, by trees, mountains or other topological features. The true horizon is the full extent of all that we might possibly see, an unobstructed view of the enveloping circle where the sky meets the earth or the sea. On land – far out on the tundra or the plains or in the middle of a great desert – we sometimes catch a glimpse of the true horizon. At sea our visible horizon is almost always the true horizon.

**“As a refugee from the suburbs,
an orphan of a culture
that has lost its deepest
connections to place, my
life has been a continuing
search to find home.”**



“In our travels in wild places, we’d both had numerous experiences – close encounters with grizzly bears, with raging wildfires, calving glaciers and howling storms – walking that razor’s edge between beauty and terror that Edmund Burke called ‘the sublime’ ”

Page 18.
John Luther Adams
Photo by Madeline Cass

Page 19.
Richard Tognetti and John Luther Adams
Photo by Nic Walker

Ultimately, there is only one horizon: the line at which the earth’s surface and the sky appear to meet, the horizon that surrounds all of us and everything else on earth – no matter where we are, no matter what we see. This singular horizon encompasses the totality, the wholeness of Earth, sky and our presence within it. As we scan the horizon we measure not only space, but also time. How long might it take us to traverse that distance, from where we are to as far as we can see? And what lies beyond that edge of the known?

Even as humanity searches for clues of how to adapt, how to survive the frightening new realities we have created for ourselves, our horizon seems to grow ever darker, obstructed by the consequences of our own wanton actions, extending far beyond the limits of our knowledge. Eventually, whether 50 or 50,000 years from now, we will reach our final horizon as a species. Yet whenever that may be, the earth will endure for billions of more years to come, as it travels on toward the true horizon of deep time.

When we were young, both Barry and I lived by an 18th and 19th century brand of romantic idealism. In our travels in wild places, we’d both had numerous experiences – close encounters with grizzly bears, with raging wildfires, calving glaciers and howling storms – walking the razor’s edge between beauty and terror that Edmund Burke called “the sublime”. From those experiences we could imagine how the whole world once was, how it still is out beyond and deep beneath the terrestrial purgatories that we humans have built for ourselves, and how we might create new societies living in harmony with one another and with the earth.

Throughout the last decades of the 20th century, we held to these visions. But by the turn of the 21st, the increasingly dire state of human affairs began to make this untenable. Everywhere we looked we saw human violence – violence against one another, violence against other species of life, violence against the earth itself. Again and again, in conversation and in our own solitary work, we were confronted with a stark choice: we could surrender our romantic ideals or cling to them more fiercely, to inevitably succumb to what Thomas Merton called “the rotten luxury of despair”. But what could take the place of that heady idealism that had sustained us all those years?

The urgent challenge facing artists and all thinking people today is this: How do we respond to this unprecedented moment in human history? How can we give voice to our grief? How can we move beyond grief, to solace? And beyond solace, how can we find our way forward, toward the possibility of redemption?



Barry always said that he just wanted his work to help. I feel the same way. I want my music to be of use to people I will never know, those in the next generations who may imagine and bring into being a new culture that I will not live to inhabit. Although I can no longer cling to the idealism of my youth, there's one element of romanticism that I'm not willing to let go: the sublime.

I still hold to my faith in those moments of awe tinged with fear that we experience in the presence of an enveloping vastness or a daunting power. The roots of the word suggest something below, and a lifting up from the depths to the surface. From somewhere beneath the liminal line, beneath the threshold of conscious perception, we receive signals that prepare our minds for the conscious perception of something new. We sense both danger and possibility. In such moments we occupy not only a geographic position but also a state of being – a liminal space between the conscious and unconscious, between being and becoming. The places that have provoked such feelings most powerfully for me have been places with unbroken horizons – the tundra, the desert and the sea. In those places from time to time I've felt myself standing on the liminal line at the threshold between here and there, past and present, the known and the unknown.

Near the beginning of *Horizon*, Barry relates an experience at his favourite observation point at Cape Foulweather on the Oregon coast. One morning at dawn he began scanning the horizon through his spotting scope. Starting at the northern extreme of his field of vision, he resolved to work his way south as slowly as necessary to take in all the details that he could see. He imagined this would occupy him for most of the morning. It took him until sunset.

Many years later, on this windblown morning in the southern Pacific, I'm remembering my friend as I scan the horizon, gazing at the seething swells, watching gannets and boobies seemingly suspended in air alongside the ship as we churn southward. Standing here I feel I should be paying closer attention, taking in more of the colors and textures, the light, the air, the waves and the moment, as Barry would. Yet my mind keeps drifting to the new piece I'm composing.

I'm filled with gratitude to have followed music as my life's path for more than 50 years. Although I'm not certain how much longer it may last, I'm determined to continue for as long as I can. This is what I live for. Here I am in the middle of the wild Pacific, preoccupied with all the little details of the music that is unfolding before me. The Pacific is my visible horizon. The music is my true horizon.

Barry has gone on across that last liminal line,

beyond the edge of the known. The storms that he saw gathering on the horizon have reached us now, and they continue to rise with growing ferocity. Yet the world is still beautiful, as it's always been, as it always will be. And once again I feel myself walking that tightrope between beauty and terror.

The unfathomable force rumbling beneath me and the dark fire lighting up the sea stir in me a fearsome primal force. I feel a strong pull to leap into the waves, to disappear into the depths. As frightening as this is, it is also somehow deeply comforting. This strange rapture has a name – *calenture* – and it appears in tales of sailors gripped with fever who have seen the waves as meadows of tall cool grasses and leaped into their watery graves. Perhaps this explains some of the legendary ghost ships that have been found over the centuries, drifting aimlessly, fully intact yet abandoned.

Slowly I pull myself back away from the railing and breathe deeply. To regain my balance, I look out to the line where the sea meets the sky. When the feeling has passed, I bow, sit down and turn to the work in front of me. The title on the score is *Horizon*.

John Luther Adams is the author of *Silences So Deep* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux), *Winter Music*, and *The Place Where You Go to Listen* (Wesleyan). This essay is drawn from a book in progress – *The Shape of Our Refuge* – a memoir of friendship and loss. The composer of *Become River*, *Become Ocean*, *Become Desert*, *An Atlas of Deep Time* and many other works, Adams' latest recording is *Horizon*, with the Australian Chamber Orchestra (Cold Blue Music/ABC Classics).

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Ahead of his performance of Rachmaninoff's
Rhapsody, celebrated pianist Dejan Lazić
reflects on his long history of collaboration with
the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

A SENSE OF ADVENTURE

Written by James Bradley



Dejan Lazić laughs when asked about his first encounter with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. “It was in my birth town, Zagreb, in Croatia, when I was 12. My mother used to take me to concerts at the Lisinski Concert Hall on Saturday evenings. All the great orchestras came. The Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the London Symphony. And then one week the ACO came, and they were dressed in hula shirts and played like no other orchestra I’d ever heard.”

In the 35 years since that afternoon, Lazić has established himself as one of the world’s most celebrated soloists, playing regularly with orchestras such as the London Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He has developed a long and creatively fruitful relationship with the ACO, recording and performing with them many times, most recently as part of 2019’s *Celebrating Mozart* national tour, where he played Mozart’s Piano Concerto No.14 and *Rondo Concertante*, his arrangement of the third movement of the Piano Sonata in B-flat major, K.333.

Lazić speaks with genuine delight about the excitement of working with the ACO and his special bond with Richard Tognetti. “The ACO are unpredictable. I know them so well, and every time they amaze me.” Part of that is about a preparedness to take risks. “To use Richard’s phrase, they’re not afraid of jumping off the cliff.”

This is not simply about novelty for novelty’s sake. Lazić says Tognetti’s capacity to find something fresh in a composition depends upon his readiness to meet the piece anew every time. “That comes really from deep within. You are a different person from the last time you played it. You’ve learned things, you’ve studied, you’ve read. And that’s how it should be. In my opinion, that is what you do as a creative artist.”

He believes that sense of adventure is shared by the ACO audience. “I’ve hardly experienced anything like them. They go from quiet and attentive to loud and jubilant in the one performance.”

He believes that sense of adventure is shared by the ACO audience. “I’ve hardly experienced anything like them. They go from quiet and attentive to loud and jubilant in the one performance. So it’s the ideal mix. And they trust the ACO. They’re not afraid if there’s something they don’t know; instead they say ‘this is interesting, let’s hear it.’ And that’s really fantastic.”

Lazić is particularly excited to be performing Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Op.43. Inspired by the last of Paganini’s 24 Caprices for Solo Violin, Op.1, it is a work that is famous not just for its emotional depth and complexity, but for the technical demands it makes of both the soloist and the orchestra. The challenge posed by the speed and leaps across the keyboard in the 24th variation in particular daunted even Rachmaninoff himself. At the premiere in 1934 he drank a glass of alcohol to calm his nerves, leading to the 24th being dubbed the “crème de menthe variation”.

It is also a work with which Lazić has had a long relationship, having first performed it in 2007 with the Hong Kong Philharmonic. He sees its complexity and emotional range as a reminder of “how profound Rachmaninoff was, and how sensitive”, both as a performer and a composer.

Lazić’s approach to the *Rhapsody* is informed not just by years of study and performance, but by his experience recording the Piano Concerto No.2, Op.18 with Kirill Petrenko and the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2008. “The Second Piano Concerto was another piece I wanted to grow with so I knew the whole story. But that helped me understand that the whole thing was a long process. And it was only after he completed symphonies and concertos and solo music and chamber music that Rachmaninoff wrote the *Paganini Rhapsody*.”

One of the challenges of the *Rhapsody* is its structure, which is made up of 24 variations, most of which are less than a minute in length. Yet while this might suggest the *Rhapsody* lacks “the long line” of a concerto, Lazić argues it cannot be treated as 24 discrete pieces. Instead, the individual variations are more like “cells” that exist independently but “function within a body ... We need to be aware of these small building blocks, because without them we cannot exist, but we also need the whole.”

Lazić argues “the true craftsmanship” of the *Rhapsody* lies in the way this whole is constructed, and the “special glue” that binds the individual pieces together. “You don’t have a clear stop after every variation, so many variations either come from the previous one or lead towards the next one.” Rachmaninoff’s use of tempo also plays an important part, subtly increasing from one variation to the next.

The *Rhapsody* is bound together by tonalities as well. “You start in A minor, which is all white keys, but then the famous slow 18th variation is in D-flat major, which is all black keys. And then we make a full circle back to A minor. So it’s not only black and white he visits, but all the colours. We go from slow to really fast. In other words, everything a composer should achieve has been achieved, but it’s so distilled, it’s so fresh and crisp. That’s true mastery, to boil down the length, but still say everything.”

These complexities mean that even after spending half his lifetime performing it, Lazić does not feel he has come to the end of the *Rhapsody*’s possibilities and complexities. “Every time I perform this piece, I discover new things. It’s like revisiting a painting ... Even a famous painting like Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, which you see reproduced everywhere, you see that in the museum and you realise there are details you haven’t seen before. And the same goes for a great piece of music. Every time brings you new information, new data. Especially in this case, because although I’ve played it for 20 years I’ve never played it in this chamber music setting. But to play it with a soulmate like Richard and the ACO, that’s a real privilege.”

James Bradley is a writer and critic. His books include the novels *Wrack*, *The Deep Field*, *The Resurrectionist*, *Clade* and *Ghost Species*, a book of poetry, *Paper Nautilus*, and a work of non-fiction, *Deep Water*, which won the 2025 NSW Literary Award for Non-Fiction and a gold medal in the 2025 Nautilus Awards and was shortlisted for the Prime Minister’s Award for Non-Fiction and the Queensland Literary Award for Non-Fiction. In 2012 he won the Pascall Award for Australia’s Critic of the Year. His latest novel, *Landfall*, is published by Penguin.



At the premiere in 1934 he drank a glass of alcohol to calm his nerves, leading to the 24th being dubbed the “crème de menthe variation”.

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Dejan Lazić
Photo by Hans Buttermilch

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Dejan Lazić

Richard Tognetti

Artistic Director
& Violin



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dejan Lazić

Piano



Dejan Lazić's fresh interpretations of the piano repertoire have established him as one of the most unique and unusual soloists of his generation. *The Spiegel* magazine noted of his Liszt recording for Onyx Classics: "Grandiose technique, dedicated and witty, whilst full-bodied and thoughtful: this longitudinal section through Liszt's oeuvre is a gift, both for beginners and connoisseurs."

As a soloist, Dejan regularly performs with leading orchestras including the Atlanta Symphony, Bergen Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, London Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Netherlands Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Seoul Philharmonic, Tokyo Symphony, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and the Basel Chamber Orchestra.

Recent releases include a cycle of Mozart Piano Concertos with Jan Willem de Vriend and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra for Challenge Records and a Gstaad Recital Live Recording for Onyx. Dejan has previously released many recordings with Channel Classics, including a critically acclaimed *Liaisons* series; the latest of which couples together CPE Bach and Britten. Chamber concerts and recitals take him to venues such as Teatro Colón (Buenos Aires), Lincoln Center (New York), Melbourne Recital Centre, Forbidden City Recital Hall (Peking) and to festivals such as the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg and the Gstaad Menuhin Festival with chamber music partners such as Joshua Bell, Sol Gabetta, Andreas Ottensamer

and Benjamin Schmid. He is the designated Artistic Director of the 2026 *Toujours Mozart* Festival in Munich.

Dejan is also active as a composer and has been under contract with Sikorski Music Publishers since 2015. His compositions receive increased recognition, most recently *Piano Concerto in Istrian Style*, Op.18 and *Alterations on the Istrian Folk Anthem*, Op.29 recorded 2023 with the Münchner Rundfunkorchester under Ivan Repušić for the BR Klassik label under the title "Istrian Rhapsody" which was on the Opus Klassik 2024 Shortlist in two categories: Composer of the Year and Concert Recording of the Year. In the 2024/25 season he released two new recordings: Mozart Piano Concertos Nos.20 & 12 (Jan Willem de Vriend/ Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra – Challenge Records), Gstaad Recital Live Recording (Onyx).

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 *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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The Chairman's Council is a limited membership association which supports the ACO's international touring program and enjoys private events in the company of Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra. For more information please contact Lillian Armitage, Head of Major Gifts & Bequests, on (02) 8274 3827.

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