

AustralianChamberOrchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



# SCOTLAND UNBOUND

DIRECTED BY RICHARD TOGNETTI

Program in Short

The music you're  
about to hear

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The Sounds  
of Scotland

An interview with  
Sean Shibe

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Source Material

Composer Cassandra  
Miller on *Chanter*

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# ACO GOLD

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Help us blaze a trail into our next 50 years by joining ACO GOLD – our special golden anniversary circle – to celebrate this key moment in our story.



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on 02 8274 3803.

Australian  
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Orchestra

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

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# WELCOME

Welcome to our final national tour of the year.

To close our 2024 Season, we are joined by the visionary guitarist Sean Shibe, an extraordinary virtuoso on both acoustic and electric instruments, in his long-awaited Australian debut.

A deeply curious, intelligent and experimental musician, Sean is a natural collaborator with the ACO. Together with Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra, he will perform the glorious music of his Scottish homeland, from traditional folk tunes to heady 90s electronica to three Australian premieres. This includes a new guitar concerto, *Chanter*, by Canadian composer Cassandra Miller, written specifically for Sean and commissioned by the ACO alongside the Dunedin Consort, Barbican Centre, Saffron Hall and Cheltenham Festival.

On behalf of the ACO, I thank the late Dame Margaret Scott for her generosity and vision in supporting all of our international guest soloists in the 2024 Season, including Sean's performance in this national tour.

It's been a busy end of the year. We have only recently returned from a seven-concert tour across the US, where the ACO performed our acclaimed *Four Seasons* collaboration with oud virtuoso Joseph Tawadros and percussionist James Tawadros in cities including Boston and New York. And following this tour, we will travel to Hong Kong to perform as ensemble-in-residence at the Prison Yard Festival, held at Hong Kong's historic Tai Kwun, with support from the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations.

It's been an extraordinary season of music. On behalf of Richard Tognetti, the ACO musicians and my ACO colleagues, thank you for joining us this year. I look forward to seeing you all in the concert hall next year, as we celebrate the ACO's 50th Anniversary Season.



**Richard Evans AM**  
Managing Director

**Join the conversation**

#ACO24Season |     

@AustralianChamberOrchestra

## NEWS



## 2025 Season

SINGLE TICKETS ON SALE

Our 2025 Season is a celebration of fifty years of invention, curiosity and unforgettable music-making. From Beethoven's epic Symphony No.7 to Gershwin's joyous *Rhapsody in Blue* and the return of our award-winning cinematic collaboration *Mountain*, enjoy the very best of the ACO in 2025.

Explore the full 2025 Season at [aco.com.au/2025](https://aco.com.au/2025)



## University of Melbourne

PARTNERSHIP

We are delighted to share that the ACO has extended our partnership with the University of Melbourne for another seven years.

The partnership pairs the world-class musical expertise of the ACO with the University's educational excellence and wide-reaching influence, enhancing professional training opportunities for students at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

The partnership will also fund the establishment of the acclaimed ACO Foundations program in Melbourne.



## Hong Kong

INTERNATIONAL TOURING

The ACO will return to Hong Kong this December to perform as ensemble-in-residence for the Prison Yard Festival, taking place in Hong Kong's historic Tai Kwun. This tour is supported by the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations.

## ACO ON THE PIER

ACO Up Close:  
Sean Shibe Solo

15 NOVEMBER

ACO On The Pier, Sydney

Innovative Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe brings a solo recital to The Neilson at ACO On The Pier.

ACO Families:  
The Nutcracker

13-22 DEC

ACO On The Pier, Sydney

Join Clara and her Nutcracker on a magical journey in this stunning adaptation for young children and their families featuring live classical music and ballet.

## NATIONAL TOURS



## Brahms &amp; Beethoven

6-17 FEB

National Tour

Brahms's Violin Concerto and Beethoven's Symphony No.7 form an epic opener to our 50th Anniversary Season.



## Abel Selaocoe

3-15 APR

National Tour

International cello sensation Abel Selaocoe brings a kaleidoscope of rhythm and sound to his highly anticipated Australian debut.

Bach to the Beach  
Boys and Beyond

8-20 MAY

National Tour

Explore new musical frontiers as you take a deep dive into the thrilling soundworld of the theremin, the world's first electronic instrument.



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR MEDIA PARTNER

Nine Entertainment is delighted to welcome you to the ACO's final national tour of the 2024 Season, *Scotland Unbound*. This concert is set to break new ground with an extraordinary collaboration between the ACO and the exceptional guitar virtuoso Sean Shibe, in what marks his Australian debut.

We are honoured to partner with the ACO for this exceptional program, directed by the ACO's visionary Artistic Director, Richard Tognetti. The concert will take you on a captivating journey through the Highlands and beyond, featuring a rich tapestry of Scottish folk music, as well as three Australian premieres by acclaimed composers Cassandra Miller, Julia Wolfe, and David Fennessy.

We are thrilled to join the ACO as Media Partner and look forward to supporting the Orchestra as it approaches its landmark 50th Anniversary Season in 2025. Enjoy the performance!



**Tory Maguire**  
Managing Director, Publishing

# ACO

Australian Chamber Orchestra

**Richard Tognetti**  
Artistic Director

“Tognetti has transformed the ACO into a genuine Australian cultural icon, routinely voted one of the best orchestras of its kind on the planet.”

**AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW**



**2025 SEASON**

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\*Transaction fee of \$3.50 applies

AustralianChamberOrchestra

# BRAHMS & BEETHOVEN

Richard Tognetti opens the 2025 Season  
with Brahms's epic Violin Concerto  
and Beethoven's Symphony No.7.

**6-17 FEBRUARY**  
Newcastle, Melbourne,  
Sydney and Brisbane.

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

The Australian Chamber Orchestra acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country, on whose unceded land we perform today. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Richard Tognetti Director and Violin  
Sean Shibe Classical and Electric Guitars  
Australian Chamber Orchestra

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\*Co-commissioned by Dunedin Consort (supported by John Ellerman Foundation), Barbican Centre, Saffron Hall, Australian Chamber Orchestra, and Cheltenham Festival.

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. *Scotland Unbound* will be broadcast on Saturday 30 November at 1pm and available on demand for 30 days after.

# MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage  
for this performance.

## Discover more

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Learn more about our musicians, go behind the scenes and watch ACO StudioCast films at: [acoondemand.com.au](http://acoondemand.com.au)



**Richard Tognetti**  
Director and Violin

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Richard plays a 1741–44 Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin kindly 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.



**Sean Shibe**  
Classical and  
Electric Guitars

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Sean plays a classical guitar made in 2022 by Simon Ambridge, based on an instrument by Hermann Hauser. His electric guitar is a Fender Stratocaster.



**Helena Rathbone**  
Principal Violin

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



**Aiko Goto**  
Violin

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



**Ilya Isakovich**  
Violin

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



**Liisa Pallandi**  
Violin

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



**Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba**  
Violin

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Thibaud plays a 1756 Giovanni Battista Gabrielli violin kindly on loan from Helena Rathbone.



**Ike See**  
**Violin**

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



**Tim Yu**  
**Violin**

Tim plays an 1800 violin by Raffaele & Antonio Gagliano. His Chair is sponsored by Barbara & Ralph Ward-Ambler.



**Mark Ingwersen #**  
**Violin**

Mark plays a 1989 violin by David Gussett.



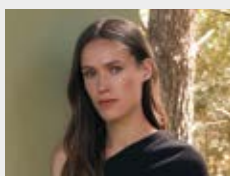
**Véronique Serret #**  
**Violin**

Veronique plays a 1900 violin by Leandro Bisiach.



**Riitta-Liisa Ristiluoma #**  
**Principal Viola**

Riitta-Liisa plays a 1640s Italian viola made by Valentino Siani. The instrument is owned by the city of Espoo (Tapiola Sinfonietta).



**Elizabeth Woolnough**  
**Viola**

Elizabeth plays her own 1968 Parisian viola by Pierre M. Audinot. Her Chair is sponsored by Terry Campbell AO & Christine Campbell.



**Ben Caddy #**  
**Viola**

Ben plays a 2014 Hiroshi Iizuka viola and a bow by Stephane Thomachot. He appears courtesy of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.



**Timo-Veikko Valve**  
**Principal Cello**

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



**Melissa Barnard**  
**Cello**

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



**Julian Thompson**  
**Cello and Bouzouki**

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreae cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, kindly donated to the ACO by the late Peter Weiss AO. His Chair is sponsored by the Grist & Stewart Families.



**Maxime Bibeau**  
**Principal Bass**

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

## AUDIO

**Bob Scott**  
Audio Engineer

# Guest Musicians

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## PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read  
before lights down.

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

**Wollongong Town Hall**  
**Genevieve Lang**  
Thu 7 November, 6.45pm

**City Recital Hall**  
**Genevieve Lang**  
Sat 9 November, 6.15pm  
Tue 12 November, 7.15pm  
Wed 13 November, 6.15pm

**Sydney Opera House**  
**Genevieve Lang**  
Sun 10 November, 1.15pm

**QPAC Concert Hall**  
**Matthew Hodge**  
Mon 11 November, 6.15pm

**Llewellyn Hall**  
**Bernard Rofe**  
Sat 16 November, 7.15pm

**Arts Centre Melbourne**  
**Kym Dillon**  
Sun 17 November, 1.45pm  
Mon 18 November, 6.45pm

**Adelaide Town Hall**  
**Russell Torrance**  
Tue 19 November, 6.45pm

**Perth**  
**William Yeoman**  
Wed 20 November, 6.45pm

Pre-concert speakers are subject to change.

# Traditional

## A Scots Tune

*Arranged for classical guitar by Sean Shibe*

Most surviving Scottish lute manuscripts date from the 17th century, though the instrument had come to Scotland sometime in the 1400s. These manuscripts were collected by members of various noble households, and show us the roots of what we now call Scottish music. They draw attention to the historic closeness between “high” and “low” art – players would happily jump between slow Scottish airs and flamboyant Italian ditties. *A Scots Tune* appears in the Rowallan manuscript, collected 1612–1628 and one of the oldest surviving sources of Scottish lute music. This gorgeous tune demonstrates the change from the court-influenced continental style into the native Scottish song tradition.



## James MacMillan

(1959–)

### From Galloway

*Arranged for classical guitar and strings by George Duthie*

Sir James MacMillan lives and works in Scotland, and his music is strongly influenced by the sounds of Scottish folksong and inspired by the beautiful landscapes of his homeland. He learned country dancing as a boy and played and sang in folk clubs in his 20s, and his music is full of old tunes and idioms. *From Galloway* (2000), named for the idyllic ancient region in southwest Scotland, was originally composed for solo clarinet, and shares the same bitter-sweet harmonic inflections as ancient Scotland’s oldest folk music.

## Friedemann Stickle

(1794–1867)

### Da Trowie Burn

*Arranged for classical guitar and strings by James Crabb*

Trowie Burn is a small stream in the parish of Tingwall on the Shetland islands. *Da Trowie Burn* is attributed to Friedemann Stickle, a legendary fiddler who came from Germany and settled on the Shetland island of Unst. As the story goes, Stickle and his fiddle were tossed overboard by crew because he was not well liked and they had become tired of his playing. Nevertheless, this slow jig is now recognised as a Scottish classic.



# James Scott Skinner

(1843–1927)

## Ossian

*Arranged for string orchestra by James Crabb*

James Scott Skinner is considered to be one of the most influential Scottish fiddlers and composers, and became known as “the Strathspey King”. He was considered a master of Scottish dance, and was even invited by Queen Victoria to teach calisthenics and dancing to the royal household at Balmoral. Ossian is the narrator and purported author of the Scottish epic poems *Fingal* and *Temora*, likely drawn from traditional Gaelic poetry by Scottish poet James Macpherson. Ossian is based on Oisín, a legendary bard in Irish mythology.



# Niel Gow

(1727–1807)

## Niel Gow's Lament for the Death of his Second Wife

*Arranged for string orchestra by James Crabb*

This air is one of the most celebrated compositions of the famous Scottish fiddler Niel Gow. He was happily married to his second wife, Margaret Urquhart of Perth, for three decades and became grief stricken when she died in 1805. For a while, he gave up fiddle playing completely, but was convinced to take up the instrument again by his family. When he did, he produced this lament, which has been called “one of the loveliest tunes ever written ... it is full of tenderness, and grace, and beauty”.

# Traditional

## Struan Robertson's Rant (Cuckold Come Out of the Amrey)

*Arranged for string orchestra by James Crabb*

ACO audiences may know this tune by its Northumberland / Border title, *Cuckold Come Out of the Amrey*, as heard in Peter Weir's film *Master and Commander*, the soundtrack to which was crafted by Richard Tognetti. The Scottish version of the same tune appears under the title *Struan Robertson* or *Struan Robertson's Rant*. Struan (“Streamy”) is a placename in Perthshire, a region known for its harpers in the 17th century whose chiefs were referred to as the Struan Robertsons. The Scottish tune is a Strathspey, which is followed here by the Northumbrian version as a fast reel, with variations by the Northumbrian piper John Peacock from 1805, and extended variations by James Crabb.



## Cassandra Miller

(1976–)

**Chanter** *Australian Premiere*

*Chanter* was composed after celebrated Canadian composer Cassandra Miller was visited by Sean Shibe, who sang along to the music of Scottish smallpipes player Brighde Chaimbeul. Miller recorded Shibe's singing, layering his voice many times on itself. He then sang along to his own recorded voice again and again, reclining on the sofa, until he was somewhere between sleep and song: sleep-chanting.

The “chanter” is the part of the bagpipes on which one plays the melody. In *Chanter*, her concerto for guitar and strings, Miller has transcribed Shibe's sleep-recording to form the skeletal architecture for the solo guitar part. She has also taken inspiration from the ornaments in Brighde Chaimbeul's smallpipes, “exploring how these could inspire the guitar to warble-ripple in its own resonance.”

The result is a warbling, folk-like, sighing mantra, repeated by the guitar until a dreamlike landscape is reached, all the while carried by the string ensemble's rippling, lulling, rocking – in four verses and coda, played continuously.



## Julia Wolfe

(1958–)

**Lad** *Australian Premiere*

*Arranged for electric guitar and strings by James Crabb*

The slow, intense keening of *Lad*, originally composed for nine bagpipes by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Julia Wolfe, is an outpouring of grief and anger following the death of a friend. *Lad* is composed in three sections. The first contains repeated statements of bagpipes droning, increasing in volume and pitch as more bagpipes join. The second contains a slow melody over powerful drones. In the third section, the melodies begin to dance, creating a kaleidoscopic landscape of bagpipe textures. *Lad* has been adapted for various ensembles, and these performances see the premiere of a new version for electric guitar and strings.



## David Fennessy

(1976–)

### **Hirta Rounds** *Australian Premiere*

The title of *Hirta Rounds* refers to the remote island of Hirta, in the St Kilda archipelago off the Atlantic coast of Scotland. For centuries a small community thrived there, however in 1930 they were forced to evacuate. Today, only the shells of their stone houses remain on this otherwise barren rock in the middle of the ocean, and one can almost sense the traces of a once vibrant society. Splitting the orchestra into smaller groups that freely stagger their entries like winds over the sea, *Hirta Rounds* depicts the airy soundscapes of this remote and beautiful setting.



## Martyn Bennett

(1971–2005)

### **Bothy Culture: Ud the Doudouk, Aye?, Shputnik in Glenshiel** *Arranged for electric guitar and strings by James Crabb*

*Bothy Culture* was the second studio album by the Scottish Celtic fusion artist Martyn Bennett. The album celebrates the music of Bennett's native Gàidhealtachd (Gaeldom), while at the same time taking influence from international folk music styles and contemporary electronic music. The album's title refers to the traditional party culture of Highland bothies, and was critically acclaimed after its 1997 release. Primarily intended as a dance album, the selections presented here include 'Ud the Doudouk', an exotic sound world that finds a hard-beat groove, 'Aye?', with its slow chilled out groove, and 'Shputnik in Glenshiel', completing the set with hard groove and multi-layered energy.



## James Crabb Arrangements

James Crabb will be familiar to many audience members through his performances with the ACO as a classical accordionist – most recently in a national tour of music by Piazzolla in 2022, and as part of our collaboration with Leigh Sales and Annabel Crabb earlier in 2024.

Born in Dundee, Scotland, James has a deep knowledge of and affection for Scottish traditional music. In 2003, he and Richard Tognetti performed an arrangement of *Cuckold Come out of the Amrey*, which features in these performances, at the 2003 Rugby World Cup Opening Ceremony in Sydney. We are grateful to James for introducing us to new traditional Scottish tunes for this program and creating a number of bespoke arrangements.

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ORCHESTRA &  
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BRINGING PEOPLE &  
MUSIC TOGETHER



16

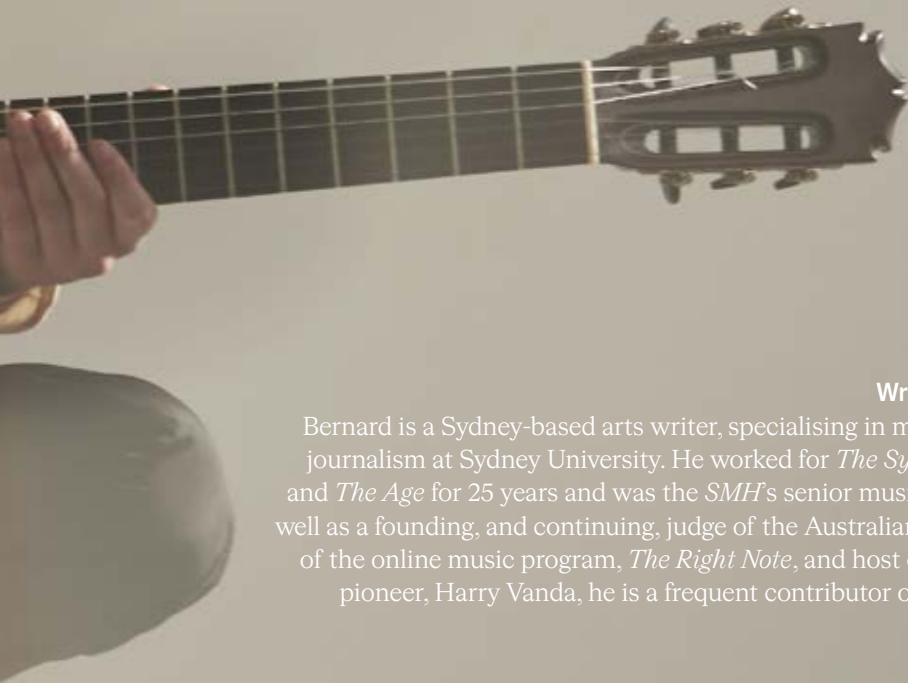


Sean Shibe. Photo by Iga Gozdowska.



# THE SOUNDS OF SCOTLAND

Acclaimed Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe has  
an expansive notion of what music can be.



**Written by Bernard Zuel**

Bernard is a Sydney-based arts writer, specialising in music, and a lecturer in journalism at Sydney University. He worked for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* for 25 years and was the *SMH*'s senior music writer and critic. As well as a founding, and continuing, judge of the Australian Music Prize, co-host of the online music program, *The Right Note*, and host of a podcast on music pioneer, Harry Vanda, he is a frequent contributor on television and radio.

“Performers should not be scared of playing complex and good music,” the acclaimed Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe once said. “And listeners should try not to be scared of listening to it.”

“Oh no, no no,” Shibe says now with horror, mixed with a small sliver of humour, when I read it out. “You are quoting 19-year-old me. That’s terrible.” To be fair, he has a point. Not everyone wants to be held to what they said when they were barely out of school, not least because a good many of us would struggle to remember anything we said then.

Shibe (pronounced she-beh) has always been happy to play outside the norm. As Australian Chamber Orchestra audiences will see on his first Australian tour, he’s a guitarist who is comfortable incorporating electric guitar into classical repertoire, whether he’s playing baroque or transcriptions from centuries-old Scottish manuscripts.

In his classical career, he’s been a pioneer. He was the first guitarist selected for BBC3’s prestigious New Generation Artists scheme, the first to be awarded a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and to receive the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Young Artists. His awards include two Gramophone Awards and the Leonard Bernstein award.

If the instrumental variety and adventure he possesses is at one end of the program he will perform with the ACO, at the other is the equally complex and sometimes fraught issue of cultural roots. The immigrant experience of being *from* a place but yet not entirely *of* that place is very familiar to Shibe.

His mother is from a small fishing village in Japan and his father was from London. They met in Edinburgh, where Shibe grew up. One of the peculiarities of his childhood was being regularly asked “where are you really from?”, with the answer – “from right here” – never being quite enough.

Growing up, he felt a degree of alienation, and as a young adult he wasn’t sure whether he felt particularly Scottish. But this has now changed.

“I feel pretty Scottish,” he says firmly. “It’s also a political thing: when I look at the movements in the UK that are shifting things [such as Brexit] and Scotland has been more resistant, it does increase a sense of specific identity. I think also gradually growing a sort of presence in this country has been healthy. I think when I was growing up in the ’90s in Edinburgh it was

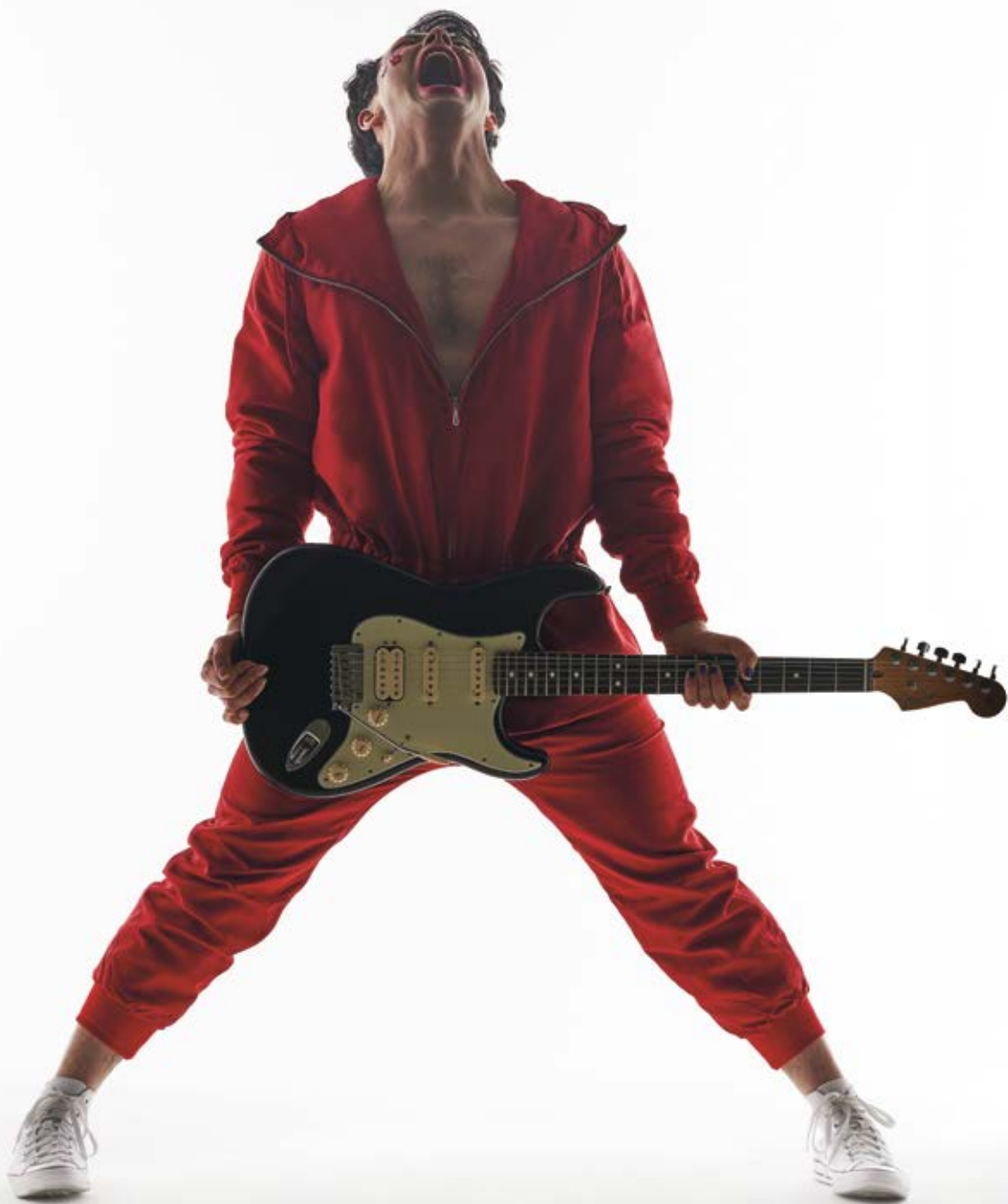
“I feel pretty Scottish,” he says firmly. “It’s also a political thing: when I look at the movements in the UK that are shifting things [such as Brexit] and Scotland has been more resistant, it does increase a sense of specific identity.”

a very ethnically homogenous place and that had an effect. It definitely was not the most racist place and we’ve moved on in some ways as well, but I think those early experiences were quite formative.

“I do feel Scottish. I feel probably more Scottish than European. I definitely feel more Scottish than British, but I think a lot of Scots would say that.”

His mother encouraged Shibe to learn guitar, which he took up initially with a “yeah, sure, why not?” attitude. Early on in his studies, he rejected the growing trend of developing multifaceted artists who are comfortable in cross-genre collaborations. Was that the purity of the convert or the certainty of youth?

“When I was going through the conservatory, the gift that they give you is the time to explore really how deeply you can go with the repertoire,” he says. “At that point it was really important for me to be able to understand how focused you could be on something extremely specific. I don’t think I felt able to think about branching out until I sort of dealt with that. I think it was neither uncompromising youthful attitude nor the zealotry of the convert – it was more a structural or timing decision.”



Sean Shibe. Photo by Iga Gozdowska.

The electric guitar is a very different instrument to the classical acoustic instrument, with more to learn, he says. “There are some composers who would be interested in writing for classical [guitar] but they feel like the electric guitar really does speak to them. ... It’s more than an instrument, right? It’s like a conceptual broadening which has been totally liberating.

“When I was picking up the electric guitar for the first time, there was a lot of flak that I got from colleagues and friends as well who felt like it was a bit showboating or posturing,” he says. “In some ways I think that didn’t surprise me at all, and to me, summed up the lack of open-mindedness that the guitar, the classical guitar, can suffer from these slightly siloed positions.”

Technical knowledge is only one part of what he describes as a different way of thinking when approaching his instrument. “You are using ideas of colour to communicate a larger-than-reality sense of volume and projection and sustain. You’re actually able to add on these things that do create it in a very objective way,” he says. “But it’s not a vehicle of conservatism. It’s something that is constantly being updated, whereas the acoustic instrument that I’m playing is a copy of a 1930s instrument which is a copy of an 1890s instrument. It’s quite conservative guitar-playing and classical guitar is quite the conservative enclave, but the electric guitar is constantly developing, constantly reiterating, and the technology is really incredible.”

“It’s quite conservative guitar-playing and classical guitar is quite the conservative enclave, but the electric guitar is constantly developing, constantly reiterating, and the technology is really incredible.”



What then does the traditional music of Scotland mean to him now? Another exotic music to find a path through, or something closer?

“It’s the soundtrack to my upbringing and I think of different ideas of home when I hear it,” Shibe says. “I spent a lot of time at Gaelic festivals when I was younger, with folk musicians, and there was a lunchtime ceilidh band rehearsal at school. It’s part of the climate here, as normal as the autumnal cold.”

When music of place becomes so ubiquitous, it can lose a sense of specialness. Was there a time when he started to see it as more than just the music of the place, and instead as music that belonged to him?

“Yes, but also the fact that it is of a place is what makes it so powerful as well,” he says. “For me that is a strength: it is evocative and distinct [and] my relationship with Scottish music is always expanding into different areas that I hadn’t anticipated. So I spend a lot more time with Scottish musicians than I used to. I’ve got a collaboration I’m putting together with [composer/folk music fiddle player] Aidan O’Rourke in December after I get back from Australia and it’s been really rejuvenating.

“In Scotland, in these manuscripts that hold Scottish sources, Scottish versions of Dowland’s ‘Lachrimae’ for instance, there were also folk tunes. It was really that recently, in the 1800s

“Yes, but also the fact that it is of a place is what makes it so powerful as well,” he says. “For me that is a strength: it is evocative and distinct [and] my relationship with Scottish music is always expanding into different areas that I hadn’t anticipated.”



Sean Shibe. Photo  
by Kaupo Kikkas.

even, that we did not make these distinctions [between] folk music and ‘higher’ music. It was really seen as pretty one and the same. And when you come into contact with the lute manuscripts that is crystal clear.”

The idea that traditional airs are played in the parlour rather than the concert hall lasted for a while in certain quarters, he says. “A lot of the sources in the lute books, a lot of the time this music was played privately and there wasn’t an audience in the way that we think about it: it was still essentially salon music.”

Does this traditional music bring vitality, discovery and freshness for Shibe, rather than the fustiness some see in tradition? “I don’t see the traditional necessarily as fusty,” he says. “It depends how it’s treated. We can’t help but treat these pieces as contemporary things – that’s what we are always doing as performers, contextualising them.”

One of the contemporary pieces in the program, Julia Wolfe’s *Lad* – written originally for nine bagpipes – is an American take on Scotland, while James MacMillan’s *From Galloway*

brings an English perspective; both are reflections from outsiders. *Lad* is anything but gentle guitar music: it feels imposing, it cuts through and is a demanding piece because of its forcefulness. This has clear appeal for some, maybe generationally, though that same thing can trouble.

“I think all of these pieces are just good pieces,” says Shibe. “I think that [*Lad*] says something about the strength of the diaspora. It says something about the spirit of the pipes. It is also piece that as a guitarist is so seductive because it has a forcefulness that the guitar is rarely able to muster.

“I feel like some of my favourite performances have been when you’re on the stage but you can feel it vibrating. It’s a thrilling experience if the audience are in the state for it.”

Much the same could be said of the work of Martyn Bennett, a Canadian-Scottish composer who, until his early death at 33, melded Celtic traditions and contemporary formal music with an electronic base. But Shibe is drawn to Bennett by more than a shared expansive view of what music can be.

Sean Shibe. Photo by  
Camilla Greenwell.



“That fusion of tapes from the ‘50s of Wee Free preachers and beats and bagpipes is just as heady as it was then. And actually, just as unique. Nobody has really done it with the same vigour since.”

“I went to the same school as Martyn did, albeit he wasn’t there when I was there, and his presence was really deeply felt. We would play his compositions in the orchestra, as cellists,” Shibe recalls. “For example, for the opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, one of his pieces, *Mackay’s Memoirs*, was played. I remember when we recorded that in a studio in Glasgow [in 2005], it was just after he passed away, it was a very powerful experience.

“As I got older I got more interested in what he was doing musically with those albums like *Grit* and *Bothy Culture* and I recognised that what he was moving towards was more what we think of as traditional classical composition. So that was interesting that he was moving through all these different phases relatively seamlessly.”

Describing Bennett as “an EDM [electronic dance music] artist who was way ahead of his time”, Shibe concedes some of the musical innovations may sound a bit dated now but “that fusion of tapes from the ‘50s of Wee Free preachers and beats and bagpipes is just as heady as it was then. And actually, just as unique. Nobody has really done it with the same vigour since.”

If there is an element of the time-stamped about some of Bennett’s work, it’s probably because we can forget how startling and must have been at the beginning. But there is still a thrill in the way Bennett brings these elements together, viscerally and intellectually, being of Scotland and beyond, both challenging and inviting.

As Shibe said when he was only 19, no one should be afraid of complex music. ●





Buachaille Etive Mor mountain, Highlands, Scotland.







28



Cassandra Miller. Photo by Benjamin Ealovega.



# SOURCE MATERIAL

Canadian composer Cassandra Miller  
enjoys finding space in her music for  
the instinctive and impromptu.

**Written by Joseph Earp**

Joseph is an author, painter, and critic based out of Sydney.  
His novel *Painting Portraits of Everyone I've Ever Dated*  
is forthcoming from Pantera Press in 2025.

If there has been one desire driving Canadian composer Cassandra Miller's career, it's to get out of her own way. Her acclaimed compositions, which are frequently based on pre-existing source materials, are born from an extensive, transformative process of meditation – an attempt to lose herself in the music. She doesn't want to lead the creative process. She wants the composition to. "I just follow what the music wants," she says, simply.

For instance, when she's starting from a source – in the past she has drawn from pieces as varied as a recording of grunge icon Kurt Cobain to music by blues artist Maria Muldaur – she'll listen to it over and over. As she listens, she'll start to sing along, writing in her journal as a way of "focusing in the moment". When she returns to what she's written, it often doesn't even make sense: she's only doing it to stay present. It's a process she describes in highly physical terms – a way of "discovering how my body is reacting to this music, and how I can go deeper into that".

Her interest in working with sources was born from her time under the composer and pianist Michael Finnissy. Finnissy, as she explains it, saw his prolific output as a reaction against postmodernism. "The idea of postmodernism at the beginning was, 'We can use excerpts of this material from anywhere in the world, because nothing matters.' They were trying to get away from modernist ideals that you need to build everything from nothing, which obviously isn't real anyway.

For instance, when she's starting from a source – in the past she has drawn from pieces as varied as a recording of grunge icon Kurt Cobain to music by blues artist Maria Muldaur – she'll listen to it over and over.

“For me the only good stuff has come from the moments where I have thrown away my own stuff in service of what the music wants, or, marvellously, mistakes,” Miller explains.

“But then Mike Finnissy comes along and says, ‘No, I’m using music from different sources because *everything* is meaningful. Because this is extraordinary stuff.’ He talks about himself as though he is the result of everything he’s ever listened to. Which really resonates with me.”

That idea – that we are mostly made up of things other than ourselves – also leaves room in Miller’s practice for the instinctive and the impromptu. “For me the only good stuff has come from the moments where I have thrown away my own stuff in service of what the music wants, or, marvellously, mistakes,” Miller explains. “They are always mistakes that have revealed something. So my intention has absolutely nothing to do with it.”

To prove her point, Miller relays the experience of writing her piece *Duet for Cello and Orchestra*, a 2015 composition based on an Italian folk song. The process of composing it was, she says, “horrendous”; bad enough that it led her to abandon notating music for a while. She was running against a deadline and though she had worked out what she wanted the orchestra to do, she had yet to crack the other half of the duet. “I had even worked with a cellist for a week, trying out different things, and nothing was happening.” The deadline came and went.

Desperate, she pasted a transcription of the folk song into the composition, hated it, and promptly deleted it. But she deleted the transcription messily and left behind a “skeleton of the guitar accompaniment”. When she hit play to listen to it back,

she didn't even realise that the slither of transcription was still in there until it made itself known. But she was struck by what had been left behind. That's the cello part, she remembers thinking.

The accident made the work – and only a few weeks behind deadline. “It became the piece, and it became what the whole piece is about, in a way that everyone assumes I knew what I was doing from the beginning.”

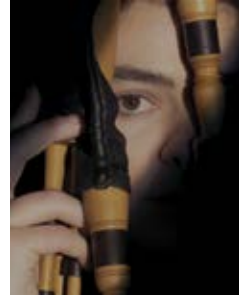
*Chanter* is born from a similarly distinctive process – in composing it, she worked extensively off music by the Scottish smallpipes player Brighde Chaimbeul – the first time, she notes, that she has worked from a starting point composed by somebody she knows personally. Chaimbeul was always on the other end of a text message thread, always there for Miller to ask her whether she approved of this unique form of transcription and translation.

“Once I've decided that a certain piece will be the source material, then I'm so bound to that in a beautiful way,” Miller says. “So even though I'm transforming it, I stay close to it – with *Chanter*, I stole ornaments from Brighde's slightly strange tuning. The goal is that I'm trying to honour the fact that she is a physical person with a physical instrument, and I'm trying to use that physicality as the basis for the new piece. It takes a lot of respect for that physicality. Sometimes that means I'm trying to fetishistically get really close to a performance she's done.”

The path that Miller took to Chaimbeul was a slightly winding one. She had always been interested in Scottish music – Miller notes that Canada, her original home, has a strong community of bagpipers – so when the opportunity to collaborate with Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe came up, she took it. Shibe became a core part of her process: the two met, listened to music together and meditated.

“I wanted the piece to have a sense of collaboration with Sean,” she says. “Once we had a bunch of music that we knew resonated with both of us, we did experiments singing along with different things. And then we discovered Brighde.”

Through Chaimbeul and Shibe, Miller completed her perennial goal of escaping her own thoughts about what the music should be. “It's really great when I'm working with someone else – it's like adding another restriction. It disrupts stuff that I would normally think or do. Every question I had for the piece, the answer either had to be in Brighde or in Sean,” she says.



Brighde Chaimbeul

When the opportunity to collaborate with Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe came up, she took it. Shibe became a core part of her process: the two met, listened to music together and meditated.

In the process, Miller discovered something about herself. Which is par for the course – how often we find ourselves by having no idea where we are. Miller came out of the project with a new and surprising love for guitar music. “When I started, I didn’t really like the guitar. I knew I loved Sean – when I listened to him, I would think, Oh maybe I like the guitar. But generally, I’m not drawn to it. So there was this fantastic challenge at the heart of the piece.”

Now the piece is done, Miller is a convert: she loves everything about the guitar. “I listen to guitar music constantly now,” she says. “I just had to find my way in. There’s just endless listening – I have to find pieces I like more than others, and people I like more than others, and techniques I like more than others.”

As to how Miller knows when a piece is done – when it’s completed, ready for performance – perhaps unsurprisingly, that’s a matter of instinct too. She explains it via anecdote: years ago, her friend got interested in a form of bodywork therapy known as craniosacral therapy. Miller elected to have her friend perform it on her.

“There was a moment in the treatment, about 45 minutes in, where it was like her hands were being repelled,” Miller says. “And she was like, ‘Oh, this is how I know I’m done.’ The body doesn’t want to accept it anymore. It’s done. And that’s an image that makes so much sense to me. When I know, I just know.”

From there, it’s onto the next piece, the next process of listening, the next loss – and the discovery that comes with it. Miller laughs. “I’m just always listening,” she says. ●





Quiraing, Isle of Skye, Scotland.





# 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 was the co-composer of the score for Peter Weir's *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, starring Russell Crowe; he co-composed the soundtrack to Tom Carroll's surf film *Storm Surfers*; and created *The Red Tree*, inspired by Shaun Tan's book. He created the documentary film *Musica Surfica*, as well as *The Glide*, *The Reef*, and *The Crowd & I*. Most recently, Richard collaborated with director Jennifer Peedom and Stranger Than Fiction Films to create the films *Mountain* and *River*, the former of which went on to become the highest-grossing homegrown documentary in Australian cinemas.

His recordings have received accolades around the world, and he is the recipient of six 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.



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# SEAN SHIBE

## CLASSICAL & ELECTRIC GUITARS

Sean Shibe continues to prove himself a truly original mind at the frontier of contemporary classical music. He is a former BBC New Generation Artist, a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship 2012 winner, a Royal Philharmonic Society 2018 Young Artist Award winner, a GRAMMY nominee, and the recipient of the 2022 Leonard Bernstein Award.

This season includes a residency at Wigmore, tours with folk fiddler Aidan O'Rourke, mezzo-soprano Ema Nikolovska, and tenor Karim Sulayman, debuts in Shanghai and Hong Kong, and a debut tour with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

He has given solo performances at Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Philharmonie de Paris, Konzerthaus Wien, Southbank Centre, Konzerthaus Dortmund and Alte Oper Frankfurt and has collaborated with the Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, BBC Singers, Manchester Collective, Dunedin Consort, Quatuor Van Kujik, Danish String Quartet, LUDWIG, and conductors Thomas Adès, Krzysztof Urbanski, Christoph Eschenbach, Taavi Oramo, Catherine Larsen-Maguire, flautist Adam Walker, singers Allan Clayton, Ben Johnson, Robert Murray and Robin Tritschler, and performance artist Marina Abramović.

Shibe is an ardent supporter of contemporary



music, taking a hands-on approach to new commissions and working with composers to experiment with and expand the guitar repertoire. Premieres include works by Thomas Adès, Oliver Leith, Cassandra Miller, Sasha Scott, Daniel Kidane, David Fennessy, Shiva Feshareki, David Lang, Julia Wolfe and Freya Waley-Cohen.

Shibe's discography continues to garner recognition from critics and audiences alike. Recording exclusively for Pentatone, his latest solo album *Profesión* was awarded the 2024 BBC Music Magazine Award while his album with tenor Karim Sulayman – *Broken Branches* – was nominated for the 2024 GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. His solo album *Lost & Found* was awarded the OPUS Klassik 2023 Award for Solo Instrument, adding to an OPUS Klassik 2021 Award for Chamber Music Recording, a 2019 Gramophone Concept Album of the Year Award and a 2021 Gramophone Instrumental Award for *softLOUD* and *Bach* respectively.

Born in Edinburgh in 1992, Shibe studied at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland under Allan Neave, at Kunst-Universität Graz in Austria and in Italy under Paolo Pegoraro. He is a Guitar Professor at Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

# THE ACO



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

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The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its explosive performances and brave interpretations. Steeped in history but always looking to the future, ACO programs embrace celebrated classics alongside new commissions, and adventurous cross-artform collaborations.

Led by Artistic Director Richard Tognetti since 1990, the ACO performs more than 100 concerts each year. Whether performing in Manhattan, New York, or Wollongong, NSW, the ACO is unwavering in its commitment to creating transformative musical experiences. The Orchestra regularly collaborates with artists and musicians who share its ideology, from instrumentalists, to vocalists, to cabaret performers, to visual artists and film makers.

In addition to its national and international touring schedule, the ACO has an active recording program across CD, vinyl and digital formats. Recent releases include *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 2023 the ACO launched its digital streaming platform, ACO On Demand, which hosts the Orchestra’s award-winning season of cinematic concert films, *ACO StudioCasts*, alongside live concert streams and premium on-demand content.

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# SPOTLIGHT ON BNP PARIBAS

We recently caught up with Karine Delvallée, CEO of BNP Paribas Australia and New Zealand, to discuss music and growing the next generation of Australian musicians.

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The BNP Paribas Group is committed to a sustainable and inclusive economy and society. Around the world, we offer support in three priority areas - solidarity, environment and culture.

In 2023, we supported culture globally to the tune of 7.59 million Euro (approx. AUD 12.4 million). Part of this support is our partnership with the ACO, which expresses our commitment to arts and culture in Australia. Our partnership started back in 2006 and it has been a long and fruitful one.

Apart from the fact we're helping to bring beautiful music to more people, our relationship also allows us to fulfil our commitment to youth, enabling them to realise their potential and fulfil their dreams.

We are proud to be the presenting partner of **ACO Academy**, which gives talented young musicians the opportunity to spend a week learning from and playing alongside the ACO's core players.

We're also proud of our support for the **ACO BNP Paribas Pathway Scholarship**, which offers tailored support to diverse, school-aged musicians, including First Nations youth – from private lessons to mentoring from ACO musicians.

Our partnership also gives our clients and staff access to the talents of the ACO, which is an amazing opportunity for them and something that they thoroughly enjoy.



## Why are the arts and culture so important?

Culture enriches and connects us as a society and our philanthropic support for the arts all around the world allows us to open opportunities for cultural enrichment to more people. Artistic creation is vital to our society – it nurtures our understanding of the world, provides shared experiences, and develops our creativity.

I strongly believe that music can provide motivation and inspiration. However, sustaining that motivation and finding a teacher or mentor to inspire you is equally crucial. The role of the talented ACO mentors in this regard is crucial in the lives of many talented young musicians and BNP Paribas is proud of the role we play in bringing these opportunities to life.

Music has the power to transform moods and to transform people and the ACO is testament to this transformative power. It is not difficult to be in awe of the talented ACO musicians – they are disciplined, passionate and inspiring, and through their talents they can transport us to another time, another place, another culture.

It is a privilege to know that our partnership supports their talents and their ability to share them, not only with Australians, but with people all over the world.

L'INSTANT TAITTINGER

PHOTO BY DAVID BLACK



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Patrick Loftus-Hills – Co-Chair  
Sally Phillips Paridis – Co-Chair  
Camilla Bates  
Judy Crawford  
The Hon Mitch Fifield  
James Larsen  
Camilla Marr  
David McCann  
Steve Paridis  
Heather Ridout AO  
Lucy Turnbull AO  
Alastair Walton

## ACO UK Directors

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Richard Evans AM  
Alison Harbert  
Rebecca Hossack  
Sonya Leydecker  
The Rt Hon. the Baroness  
Liddell of Coatdyke

## ACO Committees

ACO FINANCIAL AUDIT & RISK  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
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Peter Chun (Independent)  
JoAnna Fisher  
Annabelle Mooney  
Martyn Myer AO

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