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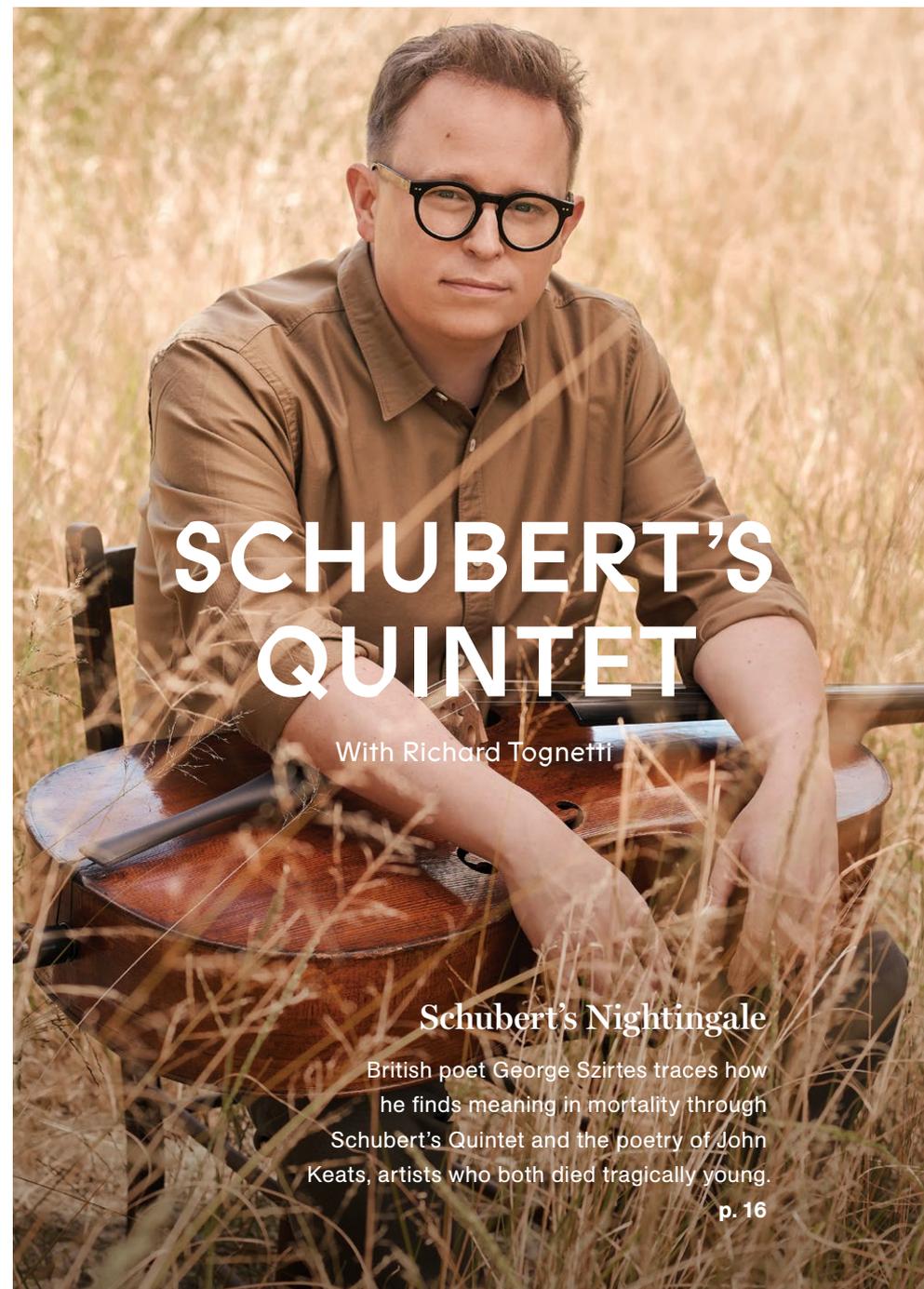
2021

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

SCHUBERT'S QUINTET

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



# SCHUBERT'S QUINTET

With Richard Tognetti

## Schubert's Nightingale

British poet George Szirtes traces how he finds meaning in mortality through Schubert's Quintet and the poetry of John Keats, artists who both died tragically young.

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# BACH AND THE BEYOND

An evocative and impassioned concert film pitching Bach's timeless search for redemption alongside compositions by Richard Tognetti, including a special performance of Bach's *The Musical Offering*, featuring flautist Emmanuel Pahud.

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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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The ACO thank our generous supporters

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Cover image: Timo-Veikko Valve. Photo: Stephen Ward.

# WELCOME

Welcome to *Schubert's Quintet*.

We are absolutely delighted to return to national touring for this concert series, and warmly welcome our Melbourne and Canberra audiences back to the concert hall for the first time in over a year.

In this concert series, the ACO ensemble led by Richard Tognetti taps into the grandeur and intimacy of Schubert and Beethoven. Our program includes two monumental gems of the chamber repertoire: Schubert's beloved String Quintet in C major – a magnificent feast of joy and melody – and Beethoven's grand String Quintet in C minor.

We hope you enjoy these two works performed together as our ensemble takes you on a soulful journey through sadness, fear, contemplation and joy.

Later this year you can also experience the beauty of this concert series from another perspective through our new digital concert film series, ACO StudioCasts.

Last month on StudioCasts we premiered *Bach and the Beyond*, featuring a guest appearance by our great friend and even greater flautist, Emmanuel Pahud. I hope you join us on our new and exciting digital concert film journey. I can personally vouch for their filmic quality and an arresting direction unlike any other as we move into a new era of home concert experiences – you can find them at [acostudiocasts.com.au](https://www.acostudiocasts.com.au).

I thank Johnson Winter & Slattery, our National Tour Partner, for bringing these concerts to platforms in NSW, the ACT and Victoria. Johnson Winter & Slattery share the ACO's passion for bringing people together through music and we are grateful for their longstanding and ongoing support.

After this concert series, we're excited to take our Sydney and Melbourne audiences on a sordid musical romp through Europe with *Baroque Revelry*. I look forward to seeing you in the concert hall and hope you are enjoying our exciting digital season, ACO StudioCasts.



**Richard Evans**  
Managing Director

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## News



### ACO BNP Paribas Pathway Scholarship

#### LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

ACO is proud to introduce the inaugural ACO BNP Paribas Pathways Scholarship for 2021. This annual scholarship provides an accessible pathway that empowers select, school-aged string musicians to reach their full potential through the provision of financial assistance, specialist string training, mentorship and other support. 2021 recipients will be announced soon, so to find out more head to:

[aco.com.au](https://www.aco.com.au)

## Coming up

### MAY



### ACO StudioCast: Love & Transfiguration

19 MAY (PREMIERE)

Then available on demand.

This heart-lifting cinematic concert film takes you on a journey toward the light, with the Orchestra performing exquisitely beautiful works by Schoenberg and Bach alongside a special performance of Pēteris Vasks' *Vox amoris*, written for Richard Tognetti in 2009.

### JUNE



### Tchaikovsky's Serenade

7 JULY (PREMIERE)

Then available on demand.

This magical film celebrates composers who write music from the heart. Featuring Tchaikovsky's beloved Serenade for Strings and George Walker's Lyric for Strings, this is music that gives something truly special back to the world.

### JULY



### Baroque Revelry

19-30 JUNE

Melbourne, Sydney

Richard Tognetti directs an orchestra of ACO soloists in a multi-sensory journey through the vibrant world of the Baroque. The madness of Geminiani's *La follia* meets eccentric works by CPE Bach and Biber, alongside music by trailblazers Barbara Strozzi and Francesca Caccini, and of course Tartini's famous *Devil's Trill*. *Baroque Revelry* closes our inaugural ACO StudioCasts season premiering on 1 December.



### River

29 JUL-10 AUG

Newcastle, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra

Working again with the creative team behind our record-breaking production, *Mountain*, this musical and cinematic journey sees Richard Tognetti performing and directing the Orchestra through a sweeping musical score of his own compositions alongside Bach, Vivaldi, Ravel, Jonny Greenwood, and a new collaboration with William Barton. From director Jennifer Peedom, the film tells an extraordinary tale of nature and humans as partners and adversaries.

### AUGUST



### Music for Healing

26 AUG-8 SEP

Wollongong, Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth

This concert film is a meditation on wellbeing, exploring the depth of human experience through Pēteris Vasks' *Vox amoris* and examining emotions and the fragility of mental health. The program also includes music by Grandage, Albéniz and Pink Floyd.

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## PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Violin  
 Helena Rathbone Violin  
 Stefanie Farrands Viola  
 Elizabeth Woolnough Viola  
 Timo-Veikko Valve Cello  
 Melissa Barnard Cello

<b>BEETHOVEN</b>	String Quintet in C minor, Op.104	30
	<i>I. Allegro con brio</i>	
	<i>II. Andante cantabile con Variazioni</i>	
	<i>III. Menuetto: Quasi Allegro</i>	
	<i>IV. Finale: Prestissimo</i>	
<b>INTERVAL</b>		20
<b>SCHUBERT</b>	String Quintet in C major, D.956	54
	<i>I. Allegro ma non troppo</i>	
	<i>II. Adagio</i>	
	<i>III. Scherzo: Presto</i>	
	<i>IV. Allegretto</i>	

The concert will last approximately one hour and 45 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.  
*Schubert's Quintet* will be recorded at Melbourne Recital Centre on 17 May and broadcast on ABC Classic on 30 May at 1pm.

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Photo © Julian Kingman

## NATIONAL TOUR PARTNER WELCOME

Over the last year we have endured more change and uncertainty than anyone ever expected. While we have been comparatively lucky in Australia, we have all shared a need to hear stories of hope and inspiration; providing moments of calm and quiet reflection.

We are all here today because the ACO has inspired us for decades. Through the lockdowns of 2020, the ACO performers continued to give us these precious moments; not in concert halls, but online – sharing their music, their talent and a glimpse into their homes.

Now that we are fortunate to be back together and enjoying live music, Johnson Winter & Slattery is pleased to be partnering with the ACO to present *Schubert's Quintet*. A story not only of hope and inspiration, but also of resilience and reaching long-desired goals.

Chamber ensembles interact with an intimacy and teamwork that is not always so obvious with larger orchestras. Bringing together the right team to achieve excellence and a seamless performance is something we also pride ourselves on in delivering high quality legal advice.

We are delighted to be the National Tour Partner for *Schubert's Quintet*. As with every ACO performance, we look forward to an extraordinary experience from which we will, no doubt, come away feeling inspired and full of hope.

NATIONAL TOUR PARTNER



**Jeremy Davis**  
Managing Partner Elect  
Johnson Winter & Slattery

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# PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read  
before lights down.

## Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)



### String Quintet in C minor, Op.104

*arranged by the composer from the  
Piano Trio in C minor, Op.1, No.3*

In 1817, Beethoven was shown an arrangement of his very popular Piano Trio in C minor, Op.1, No.3 of 1795 by a certain “Herr Kaufmann”. To say Beethoven was unimpressed is an understatement, and Beethoven, believing he could do better, proceeded to create his own string quintet arrangement of the work.

Beethoven’s expert treatment of the trio is thoroughly idiomatic, with his original pianistic passages recast throughout as rich string textures. The audacious spirit of the original trio is only amplified by the larger ensemble. The first movement abounds with abrupt changes and violent sforzandos, so typical of the young Beethoven. Following the drama of the first movement is a set of variations on a simple, hymn-like theme. The third movement lies somewhere between a minuet and a scherzo, with the trio featuring a lilting ländler melody in the cello. In the prestissimo finale, Beethoven juxtaposes extremes of violence and lyrical tenderness.

On completing his own arrangement, Beethoven remarked that he had “brought it to the light of day in five real voices, thereby elevating it from abject wretchedness to moderate respectability.” As for Kaufmann’s version, Beethoven sacrificed it to his fireplace “as a solemn burnt offering to the gods of the underworld.”

## Franz Schubert

(1797–1828)

### String Quintet in C major, D.956

Schubert, for most of his career, strived to emulate Beethoven's achievements in genres that Beethoven had practically redefined, particularly in his chamber music, piano sonatas and symphonies. Only in the final years of his short life did Schubert finally live up to the expectations he had set for himself, composing such works as the "Great" Symphony in C major, the "Death and the Maiden" String Quartet, the song cycle *Winterreise*, and the three last piano sonatas.

The String Quintet in C major, Schubert's final chamber work before his death in 1828, is the culmination of these efforts – a work that rivals Beethoven's symphonies and late quartets for length, thematic and harmonic richness, and emotional impact. At the time of its writing, Schubert had been a pallbearer at Beethoven's funeral, and it has been suggested that Schubert intended to fulfil a commission for a string quintet in C major that Beethoven never completed before his death. Schubert was also acutely aware that his own years were numbered, having contracted syphilis.

It's easy to think of the Quintet as Schubert's final dying statement but, in reality, it was written with no particular sense of foreboding. Instead, Schubert gives us four movements of his most lyrical, buoyant music, with allusions to opera and dance, and touching on ethereal. To achieve this, Schubert employed two cellos, rather than the usual double violas, and thus the work is sometimes referred to as the "Cello Quintet". This frees up the higher cello to soar lyrically throughout, and allows the viola, Schubert's own favourite instrument when performing chamber music, to anchor and colour the whole ensemble.



Above  
W. A. Rieder: Franz Schubert.  
Oil painting, 1875,  
after Rieder's watercolour  
painting of 1825.

The substantial first movement is spun out of relatively simple material – a lyrical theme that develops alongside triplets and pizzicati. The mood is often reminiscent of opera, and the influence of Rossini (whose music Schubert had listened to and admired for years) seems very likely. In the famous second movement, Schubert creates a feeling of suspended time with a simple dotted-rhythm theme in the violin, accompanied by a floating accompaniment and gentle pizzicati in the other instruments.

In the Scherzo that follows, Schubert evokes a stomping country dance, interrupted by a restrained Trio that can't help but return to the boisterousness of the Scherzo. If that wasn't enough dancing already, Schubert's Finale is an uninhibited Hungarian dance, drawing his experience of similar finales by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. The Gypsy-like opening theme is countered by a graceful second theme that is very Viennese, before racing at breakneck speed to a frenzied conclusion.

Schubert's Quintet is his longest and probably his greatest chamber work. It had a lasting influence on later composers, particularly Brahms, who modelled his first attempt at a quintet on Schubert's.

# MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage for this performance.

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[aco.com.au](http://aco.com.au)



RICHARD TOGNETTI. PHOTO NIC WALKER



## Richard Tognetti

### Violin

Richard plays the 1743 'Carrodus' Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin kindly on loan from an anonymous Australian private benefactor. His Chair is sponsored by Wendy Edwards, Peter & Ruth McMullin, Louise Myer & Martyn Myer AO, Andrew & Andrea Roberts.

Richard Tognetti is Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Lead Violin. 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 of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and that November was appointed as the Orchestra's Lead Violin and, subsequently, Artistic Director.



## Helena Rathbone

### Principal Violin

Helena plays a 1759 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin kindly on loan from the Commonwealth Bank Group. Her Chair is sponsored by Margaret Gibbs & Rodney Cameron.

Helena started playing the violin at the age of five with the London Suzuki group. She then went on to study at the Royal Conservatory of Music Junior department with Dona Lee Croft, and subsequently at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with David Takeno. Before joining the ACO in 1994, she was Principal Second Violin with the European Community Chamber Orchestra and played regularly with ensembles such as the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

In her role as Principal Violin of the ACO, Helena performs regularly with the Orchestra as a soloist and guest leader. In addition, Helena is the Orchestra Representative and Mentor for the ACO Emerging Artist program.



## Stefanie Farrands

### Principal Viola

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

Prior to her appointment with the ACO, Stefanie was Principal Viola with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra from 2015. She has performed extensively throughout Europe, America, Asia and Australia with orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Camerata Salzburg and has performed as Guest Principal Viola with the Strasbourg Philharmonic, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Australian World Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Stefanie has won numerous awards and chamber music prizes including the Asia Pacific Chamber Music Competition (as a member of the Hamer Quartet) and has been recipient of the Freedman Classic Fellowship. She grew up in Melbourne and studied at the Australian National Academy of Music before continuing her studies with the renowned violist Tabea Zimmermann at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin.



## Elizabeth Woolnough

### Viola

Elizabeth plays her own 1968 Parisian viola by Pierre M. Audinot. Her Chair is sponsored by Philip Bacon AM.

Elizabeth is one of the ACO's newest members, and its youngest, joining the Orchestra in 2019. She grew up on the Central Coast and started playing the viola almost accidentally because her music school had too many violins and cellos, and her teacher thought her "long arms" would suit the bigger instrument.

Prior to joining the ACO, she was a member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra from 2017–2018, but she prefers playing in the smaller ensemble because it allows for more spontaneity in performance and means that every player has to be on their game at all times – Elizabeth thrives on this kind of pressure.



## 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 Medici.

Timo or 'Tipi' as he's affectionately known, grew up in Helsinki, surrounded by family who were "musical, but not musicians", and wanted music lessons to be a part of their children's lives. Tipi was encouraged to pick up the cello because one of the teachers at the local music school, upon seeing him as a toddler, declared that he "looks like a cellist." Tipi is still not sure what this actually means.

Tipi describes the ACO as his "first and only job to date". His audition for the Orchestra was also his first and only professional audition, done while he was nearing the end of his studies at the Edsberg Music Institute in Stockholm. He has been the Principal Cello of the ACO for 14 years.



## Melissa Barnard

### Cello

Melissa plays a cello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume made in 1846. Her Chair is sponsored by Dr & Mrs J Wenderoth.

Born in Vienna to Australian parents, Melissa holds degrees with Distinction from the Sydney Conservatorium, The New England Conservatory in Boston and Mannes College in New York, where she studied with renowned teachers and performers such as Yo-Yo Ma, Ralph Kirshbaum, Colin Carr, Timothy Eddy and Laurence Lesser.

Melissa also studied chamber music with such luminaries as the Guarneri Quartet, the Juilliard Quartet, Louis Krasner, Eugene Lehner and members of the Beaux Arts Trio.

British poet George Szirtes traces how he finds meaning in mortality through Schubert's Quintet in C major and the poetry of John Keats, both works by artists who died tragically young.

# SCHUBERT'S NIGHTINGALE

Image 'Ode to a Nightingale'  
from a collection of poems by John Keats.

### Schubert's Nightingale

It is Schubert night  
in the universe which squats  
right down to listen

its ear pressed against  
the window. It thinks it might  
have to break the glass

to possess the sound.  
And the glass gives a little  
but it will not break.

Music does not break.

I was recently asked to choose six or seven mainly classical pieces of music for an interview program on radio. Any restricted choice is hard and my first instinct, like most people's I imagine, was to make a preliminary list. Franz Schubert's String Quintet in C major was at the heart of it. But when I sent the list to the producer she asked me – if I could bear it – to leave it out, because too many other people had chosen it in the past.

I wasn't altogether surprised and had secretly prepared an alternative. But why, I wondered. The classical repertoire is vast and various and even if you chose only chamber music – and I generally would choose chamber music – there is no shortage of great works. So I put that question to myself.

Why would I choose it?

My immediate answer would lie in the 2nd movement, the *Adagio*, which took my breath away the first time I heard it. When it is excerpted, inevitably people play the beginning of the *Adagio*.

I think of the *Adagio*, perhaps a little morbidly, as the antechamber of death. It's a preparation for and apprehension of death, the point at which the heart begins to move more slowly, perhaps just a micro-beat more slowly than the universe itself while – and this is vitally important – remaining fully absorbed in the sheer splendour, sinuousness and rapture of life at its most energetic.

That's a crude answer. I tend to be suspicious of abstractions and I see I have listed at least three. "Rapture" is a rather antiquated word we rarely use for fear of being accused of grand romantic gestures or hyperbole. Rapture appears to us now between the faintest of inverted commas: we imagine the gesture in the air. Rapture is elsewhere.

“My immediate answer would lie in the 2nd movement, the *Adagio*, which took my breath away the first time I heard it.”

The parallel between Schubert and Keats has often been discussed. Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* offers a particular experience of rapture in the company of words that lend it some context, words such as: *darkling, love, ease, soft, quiet, rich* then cease, as here:

*Darkling I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain*

*I have been half in love with easeful Death*, says Keats. *Now more than ever seems it rich to die*. Rapture in Keats is rich and voluptuous, almost joyful. It is mortality having the time of its life. Is that morbid? To put death before pleasure does seem a deliberate romantic gesture. *Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird*, cries Keats. That's not true. The nightingale was born for death, and so was Keats.

Keats died at the age of 25 in 1821, Franz Schubert at the age of 31 in 1828. Though both died of diseases of one sort or another – tuberculosis in Keats's case, typhoid or syphilis in Schubert's – and their deaths are early enough to be described as tragic.

Cordelia's death is tragic: Lear's is not. Tragedy is interruption given meaning. Schubert died two months after he finished the composition. He was interrupted. Keats was interrupted. Tragedy is a literary form that renders meaning to fatal interruptions. So is music.

We too know that our lives are finite and that all we do is conducted in that awareness. We are aware that we are under threat and make the best of life while we can, because who knows when life will be taken from us, or when it might take those we most treasure.

I write this at a time of pandemic when Britain has lost well over 100,000 people. We have spent most of the last year within the confines of our rooms. So does chamber music. The term “chamber music” implies a room, a strictly limited room, with a limited number of, mainly, string instruments.

String instruments work through tension and vibration. In confirmation of that tension, the performers form an almost closed circle, facing each other around the focal point of the music. The music too proceeds inward. It will not open on rolling landscapes or great plains. It draws the world in and dives into them at tension.

Chamber music’s limitation is also its strength: it offers us a force field, an inner space we may inhabit in ourselves. Keats’s nightingale inhabits the same tension. As Gerard Manley Hopkins puts it:

*O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall  
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne'er hung there  
We hang in music's force field, in that inner, often  
precipitous, space.*

“It will not open on rolling landscapes or great plains. It draws the world in and dives into them at tension.”

“A poignant melody was rising high above it, and there was an agitation in the middle range, just under the melody, that was disturbing”

The Adagio is not the whole Quintet, it is just a phase of it. The First Movement is labelled as *Allegretto ma non troppo* – fast but not too fast – but it actually starts with a single quiet note that says, “Hush” as it establishes itself. Having done so, it immediately swells in volume before returning to pianissimo and holds it there, swelling and subsiding again before, slowly and tentatively, preparing itself for the storm about to develop.

High and low are the polarities between which we are to move, the bass notes sounding the necessary depths through the quintet’s two cellos while the violins dance and fret at the top. The unusual doubling up of cellos emphasises the need for extra power. Hopkins’s cliffs of fall point to a resonant depth.

Soon we are in a world of rapid change, of nervous ecstasy and foreboding, constantly carried forward, tune by tune. From the first few bars we learn that the musical terrain we are about to cross is unlikely to be stable or composed of long stretches of uninterrupted calm. But even while it remains susceptible to surges of weather and fortune, it’s steadied by the harmony that binds the changes together and prevents the moods from disintegrating into a succession of crises. Wonderfully seductive melodies continue to rise, even as the pizzicato pulse continues with echoes higher up the register. Those melodies will not desert us.

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The first time I really heard the quintet was at home while listening to the radio. I had not set out to listen to it. I turned it on when the performance had already started. The bass pizzicato of the First Movement was already conjuring a beating heart. A poignant melody was rising high above it, and there was an agitation in the middle range, just under the melody, that was disturbing. The Adagio followed and the antechamber opened. I hadn’t experienced anything like it in music.

It wasn't that I had not grown up with music. Classical music was part of the wallpaper at home in our Central European refugee house, but I hadn't paid it much attention. My mind then was a crude version of what it is now, a kind of drunken butterfly no sooner alighting somewhere than taking off again. I had no long-term concentration. I had, I think, the gift of a kind of flight instead, but it wasn't a flight that was going to be of any use. It was only when I began writing poems, at the age of 17, that I learned the intense, short-term, concentration that tends to characterise poets. It was about then I started to become an adult. Poetry was a part of that process. As a child and adolescent, there was nothing I could really land on. Everything was a haze. Now there was something.

Through much of my schooling in London I was labouring through grades on the piano while my younger brother, Andrew, was already far ahead of me on the violin. He had a proper gift. Music was going to be his professional life ever since he was offered a future place at the Liszt Academy in Hungary at the tender age of two. Music was in his nervous system. It was his body. It was also my parents' hope for him. For me it was wallpaper.

But what was it to my parents? We arrived in England after the failed Hungarian Uprising in 1956 without money or possessions, knowing no one except the refugees we had met en route. The change, while of long term significance for us as children, must have been much harder for my parents, survivors of labour camps, concentration camps, as well as war and its aftermath in dictator-led Stalinist Hungary. Neither of them had received a full education, though both had aspirations to a decent social and cultural life. My father's father wrote unpublished and unread plays while labouring on the

“My mind then was a crude version of what it is now, a kind of drunken butterfly no sooner alighting somewhere than taking off again.”



**Above**  
George Szirtes and his family in England with their first car.

workshop floor of a shoe factory. His deportation to Auschwitz interrupted him for ever. His wife, my grandmother, helped by taking in sewing. My mother's family were lower middle-class Transylvanian Hungarians who were murdered in the war along with my mother's brother, both children too young to have had a chance of third-tier education. Tragedy ran in the family.

Neither my father nor mother played a musical instrument, but they did build a small record library that they rarely had time to listen to. They loved Beethoven's symphonies and overtures for their energy and defiance and Tchaikovsky's ballet music for the sheer gorgeousness of his tunes. Chamber music tended to lie beyond their taste. They joined a record club that sent them, among other things, a two-box set of Beethoven's Quartets, but I don't remember them ever playing it. They loved powerful and sweet emotions, rapture and pathos, and they liked them bold. War and suffering might have given them a thirst for such things. They liked gypsy violins, popular operatic arias, operetta and songs of the Hungarian cabaret. Chamber music, with its closely woven intimacy and what they might have perceived as cerebral intensity, belonged to other people, of another class.

My father did possess a mouth-organ, as did my brother and I. We would take them on picnics, settle down on a piece of grass and play together. He had played his at the International Scout Jamboree in Hungary before the war and later at the labour camps in which he served in Russia and the Ukraine. His repertoire included "My bonnie lies over the ocean" "It's a long way to Tipperary", tunes from rhapsodies, operas and popular songs. The last time I heard him play was round the campfire at a reunion of surviving Hungarian scouts when he was in his nineties and so was everyone else.



Schubert at the Piano by Gustav Klimt 1899

“Purity tends to be unforgiving. Too much purity claims too much soul on the one hand and too much self-pity and self-regard on the other.”

In an old Spike Milligan anecdote, the sergeant major asks a private: What are you doing here, you horrible little man? To which the private replies, Everyone's got to be somewhere.

During the UK Brexit campaign, the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, argued that anyone who claimed to be a citizen of the world was, in effect, a citizen of nowhere. It was an effective sleight-of-hand equating *world* with *nowhere*. It appealed to people's sense of continuity. Continuity was rooted in place, in substantial depth of soil. *Somewhere* people were people of deep soil and had substance and obligations, whereas *nowhere* people lacked both substance and obligation. The former were to be trusted more than the latter. The latter, the distinction implied, were unstable, fleeting, untrustworthy and potentially treacherous. This distinction was familiar to refugee migrants. The soil of *somewhere* was undeniably shallower for us.

Being *somewhere* is, after all, a set of associations: symbols, images and practices involving history and memory as received. I, as a nowhere person, was as susceptible to such associations as the somewheres, only in reverse. I associated Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* not with the notion of *heimat*, or belonging, but with the image of cultured Nazis drooling over the music's purity, or with an image of lyrically susceptible young men surrendering themselves to their souls.

Purity tends to be unforgiving. Too much purity claims too much soul on the one hand and too much self-pity and self-regard on the other. Even now, I find it difficult to rid myself completely of some wariness of either. But I can ignore them by telling myself that both the cultured Nazi and the self-dramatising, self-absorbed young man are received images. The music, in itself, is elsewhere, on its own terrain.

Isn't Schubert himself a lyrically susceptible young man? And wasn't I much the same? Did that make me more self-regarding and self-pitying than anyone else? Wasn't that condition simply a token of the inner world where art happened? And isn't that inner world shared as we, as an audience, share Schubert's?

Everyone has to be somewhere, as Milligan's soldier remarked, but *somewhere*, like *anywhere*, is provisional. One of the wonderful things about Schubert is that, much as he clearly loves his musical location – hence the Nazi love of him – he is continually aware of its provisionality. It is the provisionality that prevents him sliding into saccharine sweetness, a sweetness that is, after all, simply another name for sentimentality and cliché.

The truth of Schubert's great C Major Quintet is that it constantly acknowledges its provisionality through disruption. Disruption is the truth of any proper work of art but, in Schubert, the stakes are so much higher: the sweet is sweeter, the mood keener and more dramatic, the range of the imagination wider and more complex, the exploration deeper, and the control of rapidly developing and constantly contrasting emotions more miraculous. The miracle is that while we ourselves are aware of Schubert's powerful and, at bottom, troubling feelings, we never feel we are intruding on a purely private experience. We never feel obliged to pathologise the music. We are never at the bedside. We are somewhere and nowhere, both inside the music and a million miles from it, moving on our personal orbits with all the distractions of the world to accompany us.

“The truth of Schubert's great C major Quintet is that it constantly acknowledges its provisionality through disruption.”

“It is a defiant dance with a determined thrust. We are going to go on. We are not to be stopped. We will dance our way through.”

Art is neither control nor disruption: it is the necessary tension between the two. The melodic sweep of the quintet is continually reaching beyond itself, striking at us at various points while reassuring us that something sacred – a kind of central fire – remains in place. Individual instruments combine to establish a common harmonic landscape through which they lead us, without once moving from the tight room that is our mutual chamber.

The third movement brings us the joyful declarations of the Scherzo. After that comes the inevitable descent in the Trio with its new Andante which offers a correction, a coming down to earth with the awareness of a sadder reality, before returning to a now partly sobered up Scherzo (how could it not be sobered up after that Andante?)

Where are we being taken? The last movement starts jauntily enough with a dance. The dancing persists in the violins, though solemnity keeps re-emerging only for the jauntiness to reassert itself with greater force. It is a defiant dance with a determined thrust. We are going to go on. We are not to be stopped. We will dance our way through. But the defiance is essentially gestural, right up to the triple forte at the end. The all-but-penultimate chord has a razor edge before it drops at the very end to the major.

That is a description: but what do descriptions achieve? Mine is just a sketch, a crude attempt to keep track, to follow the process through to the end and to seek in it something that might add up to meaning. But it's only a meaning of sorts because music, like poetry, like any art, is not for paraphrasing and defining. The old fashioned pedantic school-teacher's question regarding what the poet meant by this or that line can't be answered in any useful way because any answer is a reduction, and a sum of reductions is not a poem. Meaning is a sum of possibilities, but each time we do the sum it works out differently, because we never know all the terms. That doesn't make the uncomprehending student dimmer than the poet, because the poet doesn't know either, nor can he or she know, because meaning is that which is being explored. It flows between the fingers: it has sensible but fluid qualities that continue to be fluid.

Meaning is like music. It inhabits you as a poem might. How does it do that in this case? With Keats I can talk about death, since Keats keeps referring to it; but how does Schubert “refer”? How does the music – this music – come to enter me? Through the ears in the first place, you dolt, cries the inner schoolmaster. But where does it go from there? How does it spread? Perhaps a neuroscientist can offer an answer to that question. But there are ever more questions: such as, where has it been, and where is it now? More importantly, how does it manage to leave me both resolved yet entirely unresolved, and why is that in itself a kind of resolution? Frankly, I don't know.

Fled is that music – do I wake or sleep? asks Keats.  
And I am exhausted and alive.

**George Szirtes**

“Meaning is a sum of possibilities, but each time we do the sum it works out differently, because we never know all the terms.”

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The Instrument Fund offers investors the opportunity to participate in the ownership of a bank of historic stringed instruments. The Fund's assets are the 1728/29 Stradivarius violin, the 1714 'ex Isolde Menges' Joseph Guarnerius filius Andreae violin, the 1616 'ex-Fleming' Brothers Amati Cello and the 1590 Brothers Amati Violin. For more information please call Yeehwan Yeoh, Investor Relations Manager on (02) 8274 3878.

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Tonia Shand was an extraordinary woman.

She has given the ACO an extraordinary gift.

1938 – 2020 VALE

## TONIA SHAND AM

Late last year, we learned of an unexpected gift from the late Tonia Shand AM, one of our Canberra concert-goers, who passed away last July. We have since learned that Tonia led an amazing life as a member of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, having been a trailblazer for women in the Australian public service.

Following her studies at the University of Melbourne and Bonn University, Tonia joined the Department of External Affairs in 1961 – one of only two women in the intake of 13 that year. It was a difficult time for women in the public service. The “marriage bar” (preventing the permanent employment of married women) was in place and equal pay and other benefits available today were many years away in the future. Women were largely relegated to policy backwaters of the Department. Tonia experienced many of the challenges for women directly, having had to resign from the Department twice (when she got married and subsequently after having a child), returning after both occasions as a ‘temp’ and at the base level. Despite the obstacles in place, Tonia actively strove to break down the barriers facing women. Having directly engaged with

politicians at the highest levels to effect change, Tonia went on to achieve a rewarding career as a diplomat with a number of postings in Asia including as the first female High Commissioner to Sri Lanka (1988-1991) which she considered the high point of her career. Tonia earned herself a place in the history of women’s advancement in the Department, a place which was recognised in March this year with the awarding of the inaugural annual Tonia Shand AM Memorial Award in her honour for substantial contributions towards women’s empowerment and gender diversity within DFAT.

A supporter of the arts generally, Tonia particularly loved classical music – a passion she shared with her late husband, Ric (the security code for their house was 1812!). Although we were thrilled to receive it, we are sorry we didn’t know about the gift Tonia left the ACO in her will before she died, so that we may have been able to thank her personally and involve her more closely in the life of the Orchestra she clearly loved, during her lifetime.

Our thoughts are with Tonia’s family and friends for their loss. Tonia once said “I’d like to be remembered as a gutsy, noisy, sensitive and lively person”. Others have described her as a person of “warmth, charm and generous spirit”.

We are enormously honoured to be the beneficiaries of Tonia’s generous spirit through her most special gift. This gift will help to ensure that the ACO plays on for future generations and will leave an enduring legacy.

If you are considering leaving the ACO a gift in your will or if you have already done so, please do let us know as we would love to welcome you as a member of our Continuo Circle. Please feel free to contact Lillian Armitage on 02 8274 3827 or at [Lillian.Armitage@aco.com.au](mailto:Lillian.Armitage@aco.com.au)

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