

ACO

Australian Chamber Orchestra

2026



PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Wesfarmers Arts

MEDIA KIT

PRAISE FOR THE ACO IN ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON



**“The Australian Chamber Orchestra
isn’t your usual orchestra”**

THE GUARDIAN UK, 2025



**“Unflagging energy and
maverick imagination”**

THE SUNDAY TIMES, 2025

**“The ACO casts a bright new light
on everything they perform”**

THE TELEGRAPH UK, 2025



**“Tognetti and the players radiated
a sense of joyous collaboration,
the true hallmark of any chamber
orchestra. May such joy illuminate
the ACO’s next 50 years.”**

THE AGE, 2025



**“I have been listening to the ACO for all
of its history, and the vitality of its
current incarnation does honour to the
vision and audacity of Robert Pickler,
John Painter and others who contributed
to its founding 50 years ago.”**

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 2025

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES 2026 SEASON

The Australian Chamber Orchestra has announced its 2026 **National Concert Season**. Steeped in a rich musical tradition while simultaneously challenging expectations of what a chamber orchestra can be and do, the ACO’s 2026 Season spans a millennium of music, from the ancient hymns of the frozen North to the majestic symphonies of the 18th and 19th centuries, right through to trailblazing new works from today’s most innovative composers.

Defined by an irrepressible sense of adventure and curiosity combined with the highest possible artistic standards, the ACO is led by its pioneering Artistic Director **Richard Tognetti** and is comprised of 17 exceptional string musicians who hail from across the globe.

In 2026, Tognetti pays homage to some of the most monumental and influential music ever written, that will see the ACO swell in size for epic performances of orchestral blockbusters including **Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony***, **Mozart’s *Last Symphonies*** and **Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio***. The ACO will also perform new music that expands the chamber music form, with world premieres including a new work by Academy and Golden Globe winning Icelandic composer **Hildur Guðnadóttir** and Pulitzer Prize-winning US composer **John Luther Adams**’s expansive new work *Horizon*, alongside Australian premieres including **Ellen Reid’s *West Coast Sky Eternal*** and Lithuanian composer **Raminta Šerkšnytė’s *De Profundis***.

In what promises to be a highlight of the ACO’s 2026 Season, the international phenomenon **Trio Mediæval**, comprised of vocalists **Anna Maria Friman**, **Ditte Marie Bræin** and **Jorunn Lovise Husan**, will make its ACO debut in a soul-stirring concert directed by Tognetti that evokes ancient landscapes and Northern light. Centuries-old hymns are paired with the quiet joy of **Sigur Rós** for a concert that will stay with audiences long after they have left the concert hall.

The 2026 Season also sees the return of cherished friends and collaborators including Finnish violinist **Pekka Kuusisto**, a singular artist unbound by convention who returns to guest direct the ACO for the first time in nearly a decade, while virtuoso **Ilya Gringolts** reunites with the ACO in a daredevil program that pushes the violin to its fiery limits.

In 2026 Tognetti and the ACO return to beloved heartland repertoire in ***Mozart’s Last Symphonies***, a joy-infused celebration of the composer’s final three symphonies that will see the ACO expand in size. First performed by the ACO in 1990, in what marked Tognetti’s first year as Artistic Director of the Orchestra, the late symphonies of Mozart are a touchstone for the ACO, and to experience this performance is to witness “one of the greatest chamber orchestras in the world at its most joyous and inspirational” (*The Guardian UK*).

The 2026 Season will come to a glorious close as Tognetti picks up the baton for ***Bach’s Christmas Oratorio***. With three ARIA wins for his recordings of Bach’s music, Tognetti’s affinity for the composer is famous and the ACO’s last performance of this work, nine years ago, left critics and audiences astounded. Performed in collaboration with **The Song Company**, this celebration of Bach’s choral masterpiece promises to be a transformative feast for the senses.



“There comes a point – somewhere past the age of 23 – when you stop trying to outrun time. Instead, you start listening to it, noticing how it bends and blurs in memory, how it sharpens in stillness.

Music has always been a way to hold onto time, or at least to touch it differently. This season, we travel through music that doesn’t simply mark time, it questions it. Pieces that remind us of what music has always done best: to hold a moment just long enough to feel outside of time.

From the fierce, spiritual urgency of Sofia Gubaidulina, to the elemental vastness of John Luther Adams, to Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio* where time feels both eternal and newly born, these works are invitations to step outside the ticking of the clock, to feel how music can stretch a moment, suspend it, let it linger long enough to alter memory. Because sometimes, a phrase, a silence, a single note, can make time feel like it’s listening back.

So welcome to a season where time bends, breath holds, and music remembers what the clock forgets.

We’ll meet you in the hall.”

ACO ARTISTIC DIRECTOR RICHARD TOGNETTI

THE 2026 SEASON

RACHMANINOFF’S RHAPSODY

In this joyful season opener directed by **Richard Tognetti** and featuring the singular talents of pianist **Dejan Lazić** as soloist, the ACO explores the power of music to take audiences to the edge of what is known... and beyond. A world premiere from Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer **John Luther Adams** is a profound response to the natural world, while **Raminta Šerkšnytė**’s euphoric *De Profundis* plays with high and low extremes, before the concert closes with Rachmaninoff’s extraordinary showstopper, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.

THE DEVIL’S VIOLIN

Virtuoso **Ilya Gringolts** returns to direct the ACO in a program that pushes the violin to its fiery limits. A player of dazzling virtuosity and commanding stage presence, he joins the ACO to perform **Tartini**’s *Devil’s Trill* sonata, a work that is both fiendishly difficult and utterly transfixing. Enigmatic Russian composer **Sofia Gubaidulina**’s String Quartet No.2 looks to the harmonies of heaven from an unsettled, earthbound soul, while works of **Geminiani**, **Tartini** and **Vivaldi** – which will see Gringolts joined by Principal Violin **Satu Vānskā** – showcase the world of the sparkling Italian Baroque.

SCHUBERT’S FANTASY & OCTET

Richard Tognetti leads an ACO ensemble, including a handpicked selection of Australia’s top wind players, in two exquisite works that showcase **Schubert** as a master of chamber music. Schubert’s Octet is six movements of unbridled joy, while his Fantasy in C major, here arranged by Tognetti, is a shimmering and compelling counterpart.

ISLES OF LIGHT

The British Isles boast a magnificent anthology of music grounded in lush, poetic landscapes and thriving cities. This concert will transport audiences there. British violin and viola virtuoso **Lawrence Power** makes his ACO debut directing music from Thomas Tallis’ evocative theme – made famous by **Vaughan Williams** – to the genre-defying exuberance of **Kate Bush**, before the odyssey comes to a thrilling close with **Elizabeth Maconchy**’s Symphony for Double String Orchestra.

FROM WINTER’S STILLNESS

Richard Tognetti directs this extraordinary collaboration between the international vocal phenomenon **Trio Mediæval**, jazz trumpeter **Arve Henriksen** and the ACO. Playing with a larger ensemble boosted by the ACO’s **2026 Emerging Artists**, the Orchestra presents ancient hymns from Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Estonia together with the quiet joy of **Sigur Rós**, interspersed with a brand new work from Academy and Golden Globe winning Icelandic composer **Hildur Guðnadóttir**.

PEKKA KUUSISTO: LEGENDS & LUMINARIES

Pekka Kuusisto returns to the ACO after nearly a decade to direct the ACO in music that transcends age and time. Kuusisto is an artist unbound by convention, who embodies an artistic freedom that is unexpected and thrilling. As a renowned virtuoso and boundary crossing composer, he pushes the limits of performance into exciting new realms, championing contemporary music with an openness and warmth that captivates audiences.

BEETHOVEN’S PASTORAL

To see **Richard Tognetti** and the ACO perform Beethoven is to experience a ‘magnificent unanimity’* of vision, drama and expressive force. In this majestic and uplifting performance, Richard and an expanded ACO perform an all-Beethoven program that takes audiences on a journey through creation and wonder, beginning with the stormy *Coriolan* Overture before culminating in the master craftsman’s *Pastoral* Symphony.

SPECIAL EVENT MOZART’S LAST SYMPHONIES

Richard Tognetti and the ACO return to beloved heartland repertoire in a joy-infused celebration of **Mozart**’s final three symphonies that will see the ACO expand in size. First performed by the ACO in 1990, in what marked Tognetti’s first year as Artistic Director, the late symphonies of Mozart are a touchstone for the ACO, and to experience this performance is to witness “one of the greatest chamber orchestras in the world at its most joyous and inspirational” (*The Guardian UK*).

SPECIAL EVENT BACH’S CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

A performance of **Bach**’s *Christmas Oratorio* is a transformative experience as sublime choral and orchestral magic culminate in a feast for the senses. In partnership with **The Song Company**, the ACO presents a blockbuster performance of Bach’s glorious oratorio, featuring exultant choral passages, a tenor soloist/narrator and magnificent orchestral forces.

* Sydney Morning Herald

ACO 2026 NATIONAL CONCERT SEASON

RACHMANINOFF’S RHAPSODY

5–18 February

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Dejan Lazić Piano
Australian Chamber Orchestra

John Luther Adams Horizon* (World Premiere)
Igor Stravinsky Concerto in D “Basle”
Raminta Šerkšnytė De Profundis (Australian Premiere)
Sergei Rachmaninoff (arr. piano, percussion and strings)
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op.43

*Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

THE DEVIL’S VIOLIN

12–28 March

Ilya Gringolts Director & Violin
Satu Vänскä Violin
Australian Chamber Orchestra

Johann Paul von Westhoff Violin Sonata No.3 in D minor:
III. Imitation of the Bells
Antonio Vivaldi Violin Concerto in D minor, RV237
Sofia Gubaidulina (arr. strings) String Quartet No.2
Giuseppe Tartini (arr. strings) Violin Sonata in G minor
“Devil’s Trill”
Mieczysław Weinberg Aria, Op.9
Antonio Vivaldi Concerto for Two Violins in C major, RV507
Paul Stanhope Giving Ground*
Francesco Geminiani Concerto Grosso No.12 in D minor
“La Follia”

*Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

SCHUBERT’S FANTASY & OCTET

14–30 May

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Helena Rathbone Violin
Stefanie Farrands Viola
Johannes Rostamo Cello
Maxime Bibeau Double Bass
David Griffiths Clarinet
Todd Gibson-Cornish Bassoon
Carla Blackwood Horn

Franz Schubert (arr. Tognetti) Fantasy in C major, D.934
Franz Schubert Octet in F major, D.803

ISLES OF LIGHT

13 – 23 June

Lawrence Power Director, Violin & Viola
Australian Chamber Orchestra

Various An English Mixtape, from Henry Purcell to Kate
Bush
Garth Knox Viola Concerto* (World Premiere)
Vaughan Williams Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis
Herbert Howells Elegy, Op.15
Elizabeth Maconchy Symphony for Double String Orchestra

*Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

FROM WINTER’S STILLNESS

25 July – 9 August

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Satu Vänскä Violin
Trio Mediaeval Vocals
Anna Maria Friman
Ditte Marie Bræin
Jorunn Lovise Husan
Arve Henriksen Trumpet
Australian Chamber Orchestra

Terry Riley Half Wolf Dances Mad in the Moonlight
Sigur Rós (arr. trumpet and strings) Fljótavík
Tõnu Kõrvits Kellemäng (Bells)
Alfred Schnittke Concerto Grosso No.1
*Interleaved with medieval hymns to St Birgitta,
St Sunniva and St Magnus*
Traditional Det lisle bålet (The Little Child)
Arve Henriksen Plume of Ash
Hildur Guðnadóttir New Commission* (World Premiere)

*Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

PEKKA KUUSISTO: LEGENDS & LUMINARIES

3–19 October

Pekka Kuusisto Director & Violin
Australian Chamber Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (arr. Kuusisto) The Magic Flute,
K.620: Selections
Nico Muhly Shrink: Concerto for Violin and Strings*
Ellen Reid West Coast Sky Eternal (Australian Premiere)
Felix Mendelssohn (arr. strings) String Quintet No.2 in
B-flat major, Op.87

*Co-commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Melbourne Recital
Centre, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra,
Mahler Chamber Orchestra with the kind support of the MCO Foundation,
and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

BEETHOVEN’S PASTORAL

12–25 November

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

Ludwig van Beethoven Coriolan Overture, Op.62
Ludwig van Beethoven Triple Concerto for Violin, Cello and
Piano in C major, Op.56
Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No.6 in F major, Op.68
“Pastoral”



ACO 2026 SPECIAL EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENT
MOZART'S LAST SYMPHONIES
19–25 September

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Australian Chamber Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Symphony No.39
in E-flat major, K.543
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Symphony No.40
in G minor, K.550
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Symphony No.41
in C major, K.551 “Jupiter”

SPECIAL EVENT
BACH'S CHRISTMAS ORATORIO
8–11 December

Presented in collaboration with The Song Company

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Amy Moore Soprano & Co-Artistic Director, The Song Company
Jessica O'Donoghue Mezzo Soprano & Co-Artistic Director,
The Song Company
Australian Chamber Orchestra

Johann Sebastian Bach Christmas Oratorio, BWV428

ACO COLLECTIVE
BACH, BRAHMS & PÄRT
19–29 May

ACO Principal Violin **Sätu Vänskä**
directs ACO Collective in a program of
music close to the Orchestra's heart,
including Arvo Pärt's captivating
Fratres and Brahms' epic Sextet in
G major arranged for string orchestra.

ACO COLLECTIVE
SOUND & SENSE FESTIVAL
11–13 December

Charismatic violinist **Anthony Marwood**
directs ACO Collective across three
concerts at the Sound & Sense Festival at
Vasse Felix in Margaret River. Described
as “Britain's most adventurous violinist”,
this promises to be an unforgettable
experience and will feature musicians
from the ACO's acclaimed Emerging
Artist Program.

INTERNATIONAL TOURING
NORTH AMERICA

Across five decades the ACO has
maintained a thriving international
presence. In 2026 the Orchestra will return
to some of its favourite cities and
concert hall stages in North America.



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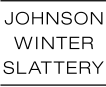
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