

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

BEETHOVEN 250

12 – 20 November 2020



aco

MANAGING DIRECTOR WELCOME

Welcome to *Beethoven 250*.

In March we optimistically asserted to ourselves that we would be able to bring you our final concerts of 2020. Accordingly, we are delighted to all be in the room, together, tonight.

In the 250th anniversary year of his birth, the towering figure of Beethoven was to have shaped our 2020 season. You will recall we opened with Beethoven's first, second and third symphonies, which sadly ended up being our only national tour before our world was thrown into lockdown – but we pick Beethoven up again as we close the year with a final celebration of the compositional giant.

250 years ago, Ludwig van Beethoven, the Grand Mogul from Bonn (as Haydn cheekily referred to him) was born. The German composer, whose own extraordinary story famously includes suffering from profound deafness from his late 20s, would become regarded as the great musical liberator, forging the course of the Romantic movement and beyond. We bring to a close our thorny and truncated 2020 season with a program that showcases the magnitude of Beethoven's enduring legacy.

In this COVID-friendly one-hour concert format, we open with Schubert's magnificent *Quartettsatz* before moving through Vaughan Williams's soaring *The Lark Ascending* in a signature performance by Richard Tognetti, who celebrates his 30th year with the ACO this year. In a world-premiere performance, we're delighted to present our new commission, *Stride*, by fabulous British-American composer Anna Clyne, before concluding with Beethoven's masterpiece *Cavatina* and *Grosse Fuge*.

On behalf of Richard Tognetti and everyone at the ACO, I warmly thank those who have donated so generously during this extremely challenging time for so many. Our thoughts are with our audiences and wider community during these difficult times and we appreciate your support now more than ever. We'll soon be announcing our plans for next year and we're excited to share what we have in store.

I hope that you enjoy the magic of this evening's performance.



Richard Evans
Managing Director

Join the conversation     #ACO2020

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Maserati is honoured to be the National Tour Partner for this powerful celebration of Beethoven, and to play our part in the return of the Australian Chamber Orchestra to the stage. I have no doubt this magnificent and invigorating program will energise and enthral its audiences.

Maserati is glad to join in this exploration of Beethoven's enduring influence on the development of music over the last 250 years. Just as our craftsmen believe in the use of traditional materials, techniques and methods – informed by the past to produce the best response – in this program we see Beethoven's influence on composers over the last quarter millennium. The program features the music of composers from 1820 (Schubert), 1920 (Vaughan Williams's beloved *The Lark Ascending*) and 2020 (with a new work by Anna Clyne, commissioned by the ACO, in its world premiere), culminating in two of Beethoven's most revered major works, the *Cavatina* and *Grosse Fuge*.

We will witness how Beethoven's music, as with Maserati's craft, tradition resounds with perpetual modernity.



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PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Director & Violin
Australian Chamber Orchestra

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The concert will last approximately one hour and 10 minutes, with no interval
The Australian Chamber Orchestra reserves the right to alter scheduled artists and programs as necessary.



ACO concerts are regularly broadcast on ABC Classic.
Beethoven 250 will be recorded on 20 November from City Recital Hall
and broadcast on ABC Classic on 14 December at 1pm.



Watch Artist Martina Stifinger's creative response to Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*, created in collaboration with ACO Principal Violin Helena Rathbone.



PROGRAM IN SHORT



Franz Schubert

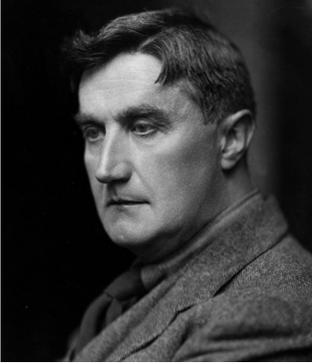
Franz Schubert

Quartettsatz in C minor, D.703
arranged by Richard Tognetti

1820 was a dreadful year for the 23-year-old Schubert. In March, during the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, he was arrested by Vienna's secret police on suspicion of revolutionary activities. To make matters worse, the love of his life had recently married another man. Musically, his attempts to escape from the immense shadow left by Beethoven were yielding only mixed results, with his first attempt to compose a mature string quartet a failure, completely abandoned by December of that year.

All that remains of the unfinished quartet is the ill-tempered C minor first movement. While Schubert had not reached the gargantuan heights of the late Beethoven quartets, the standalone *Quartettsatz* ("Quartet Movement") achieved new heights of expression for the young composer. A turbulent semiquaver opening, reminiscent of the start of his *Unfinished Symphony*, gives way to the movement's restless opening theme. The serene second theme, though achingly lovely, is violently interrupted by repeated outbursts from the rest of the ensemble. It is clear that Schubert was channeling his personal frustrations of 1820 into the music – something all too common in the works of Beethoven before him.

Schubert never completed the quartet and his love remained unrequited, but the *Quartettsatz* marks a turning point in Schubert's all-too-short quest to emulate his hero, Beethoven. Richard Tognetti's arrangement for string orchestra recognises Schubert's musical and personal struggle, transporting this heartfelt emotional utterance from the salon to the concert hall.



Ralph Vaughan Williams

Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Lark Ascending

arranged by Adam Johnson

Vaughan Williams took up the violin at seven years of age, declaring it “my musical salvation” in comparison to his struggles with piano. As for his compositional influences, he worked out very early that his heart lay in England’s folkloric and musical history. Vaughan Williams and his friend Gustav Holst made numerous trips around the country to collect folk songs from old villagers, and the results of these trips are often heard in their music.

The Lark Ascending originally existed as a piece for violin and piano which Vaughan Williams had composed a first draft in 1914. However, he had to put it away for several years so he could enlist in the British Army after the outbreak of the First World War. Borrowing the term from Beethoven, Vaughan Williams called the piece a *Romance for violin*, invoking Beethoven’s love for nature and allowing the piece to follow a form as free as its pastoral title suggests.

When Vaughan Williams returned to composing in 1919, *The Lark Ascending* was one of the first pieces he revised and orchestrated. He prefaced the score with George Meredith’s 1881 poem of the same name, which had inspired him to compose the work:

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup
And he the wine which overflows
to lift us with him as he goes.

Till lost on his aerial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

(George Meredith, 1828–1909)

First performed in 1920, the piece is bookended by two extended violin cadenzas in which the violin mimics birdsong to represent the swooping, gliding and soaring of the lark. In the middle section, Vaughan Williams evokes folk song, gently at first, then with jaunty exuberance from the entire orchestra underneath solo violin figurations.

One hundred years on from that first performance, necessitated by current events, the ACO returns *The Lark Ascending* to its more intimate roots, performing an arrangement for string orchestra by British composer Adam Johnson.



Anna Clyne. Photo credit
Christina Kernohan.

Anna Clyne

Stride (world premiere)

London-born Anna Clyne is a Grammy-nominated composer of acoustic and electro-acoustic music. Her work often includes collaborations with cutting-edge choreographers, visual artists, filmmakers and musicians worldwide.

Clyne has been composer-in-residence for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, L'Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, and Berkeley Symphony. Clyne currently serves as the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's Associate Composer through the 2021-2022 season, with a series of works commissioned over three years, and as the mentor composer for Orchestra of St Luke's DeGaetano Composer Institute.

Her newest piece for string orchestra, *Stride*, was commissioned with Beethoven's 250th anniversary in mind, and is inspired by his *Sonata Pathétique*. Clyne writes that "I chose a few melodic, rhythmic and harmonic fragments from each movement and developed these in the three corresponding sections of *Stride*. The title is derived from the octave leaps that stride in the left hand in first movement of *Sonata Pathétique*. I was immediately drawn to the driving energy of this bass movement and have used it as a tool to propel *Stride*."

Stride was commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Lausanne Orchestra and River Oaks Chamber Orchestra.



Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven

String Quartet in B-flat major, Op.130: V. Cavatina Grosse Fuge, Op.133

arranged by Richard Tognetti

Beethoven composed his Opus 130 string quartet between 1825 and 1826 as the third in a group of quartets dedicated to Prince Nikolaus Galitzin, who had organised the first performance of his *Missa Solemnis* in St Petersburg a year earlier. The respect Beethoven commanded across Europe is illustrated by Prince Nikolaus's letters, which address Beethoven, a commoner, as "Dear and Respected Monsieur van Beethoven." This was no ordinary thing.

The third quartet Beethoven dedicated to the Prince was no ordinary thing either. Its six movements were a huge deviation from the four-movement form he had inherited from Haydn and taken to such formal and expressive heights over the course of 12 earlier quartets. Even further from ordinary was the finale of the new quartet, known as the *Grosse Fuge* ("Great Fugue"). It was so forceful, futuristic, and of such ridiculous proportions that his publisher and friends convinced him write a new, shorter finale the following year.

From the get-go, Beethoven begins unpicking a hundred years of the string quartet tradition, commencing with a spacious first movement that constantly alternates between *Adagio* and *Allegro*, and reaches remote keys that B-flat major has no business ending up in. The *Presto* second movement, a *Scherzo* with a stylish *Trio* at its centre, is nearly over in a breath. The next two movements are so playful and carefree, one could be forgiven for thinking Beethoven was composing not for the concert hall but for the stage. The *Andante con moto, ma non troppo* seems straight out of a light-hearted opera; the *Alla danza Tedesca* (a German dance) straight out of the ballroom.

The heart of the quartet, without question, is the *Cavatina*. Its title implies an expressive operatic aria, continuing with the narrative of the previous two movements. But through subtle, skilful treatment of its deceptively simple melody, Beethoven elevates the movement, and the listener, to another place altogether. A friend of Beethoven's recalled that the *Cavatina* "cost the composer tears in the writing and brought out the confession that nothing that he had written had so moved him". But although the movement is filled with an intense longing which Beethoven describes in the score as *beklemmt* ("anguished"), the *Cavatina* seems to transcend all time and feeling, transporting the listener to a place of such rapture and tranquility that it's little wonder the piece is a personal favourite of Richard Tognetti.

In true Beethoven fashion, the serenity of the *Cavatina* is violently interrupted by the opening chord of the *Grosse Fuge*. What follows is 15 minutes of the most remarkable fugue writing since Bach himself. In the words of Richard Tognetti, this is no longer Beethoven the "unifier of humanity and clarifier of musical intention as exemplified in his symphonies" but Beethoven "the debater, the philosopher, the questioner, the discombobulator. Opus 130 inhabits a space near the edge of the universe." After its first performance, some declared the *Grosse Fuge* to be the confused ramblings of a deranged man, while others hailed it a masterpiece. So reluctant were people to accept it that Beethoven had to write a more palatable finale as a replacement. But 200 years on, the *Grosse Fuge* has been returned to its rightful place, and is a fitting finale to a concert that celebrates 250 years since the birth of classical music's great pioneer.

Australian Chamber Orchestra
Richard Tognetti



BEETHOVEN

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for this performance.



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Director and Violin

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Principal Violin

Satu plays the 1726 'Belgiorno' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from Guido Belgiorno-Nettis AM & Belgiorno-Nettis. Her Chair is sponsored by David Thomas AM.



Aiko Goto
Violin

Aiko plays her own French violin by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. Her Chair is sponsored by Anthony & Sharon Lee Foundation.



Mark Ingwersen
Violin

Mark plays a 1728/29 Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Judyth Sachs & Julie Steiner.



Ilya Isakovich
Violin

Ilya plays his own 1600 Marcin Groblicz violin made in Poland. His Chair is sponsored by Meg Meldrum.



Liisa Pallandi
Violin

Liisa plays her own violin made in 2019 by Elina Kaljunen. Her Chair is sponsored by The Melbourne Medical Syndicate.



Maja Savnik
Violin

Maja plays the 1714 'ex-Isolde Menges' Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. Her Chair is sponsored by Alenka Tindale.

Please note that the instrument and Chair listings are as at November 2020.

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Viola

Nikki plays a 2012 Bronck Cison viola. Her Chair is sponsored by Ian Lansdown.



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 the late Peter Weiss AO.



Ike See

Violin

Ike plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.



Elizabeth Woolnough

Viola

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



Melissa Barnard

Cello

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



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Principal Bass

Max plays a late-16th-century Gasparo da Salò bass kindly on loan from a private Australian benefactor. His Chair is sponsored by Darin Cooper Foundation.



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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 Orchestra 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*, a collection of the ACO’s legendary Beethoven recordings, and the soundtrack to the acclaimed cinematic collaboration, *Mountain*.

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