

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

BEETHOVEN & PROKOFIEV

MARCH 2019



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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

I am thrilled to welcome back as guest director charismatic Italian violinist Lorenza Borrani. Lorenza first toured with us in 2016 and her versatile and passionate approach to music-making makes her the ideal ACO collaborator.

I am also delighted to announce that onstage is our newest member of the ACO's instrument collection: a 1590 Brothers Amati violin, acquired by the ACO Instrument Fund with investment from Media Super. This extraordinary violin, played by violinist Ike See, joins our growing collection of instruments that is now amongst the finest of any ensemble (large or small) in the world.

I would like to acknowledge Maserati, our National Tour Partner for these concerts. Maserati's philosophy embodies Lorenza's passion and virtuosity, and we thank them for their ongoing support: for this tour and over the last nine years of partnership with the ACO.

Following these concerts, our musicians will embark on a two-week tour to the United States, travelling from west to east as we collaborate with pianists Paul Lewis and Inon Barnatan at major musical centres including Stanford, New York, and Boston.

I do hope that you enjoy this concert, and look forward to seeing you all when we return in May for our performances with the magnificent Branford Marsalis.



Richard Evans
Managing Director

Join the conversation     #ACO19



Cover image.
Oliver Beer
Recomposition (Jenny), 2018
Violin, sectioned and set in resin; gesso
67 x 47 x 2 cm
Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

News



2019 Emerging Artists

In 2019 we have eight exceptional young musicians participating in our Emerging Artist program, the largest ever cohort in the program's 12-year history. To read more, visit: aco.com.au/education



Introducing the 1590 Brothers Amati Violin

We are delighted to welcome the newest member of the ACO instrument family: a 1590 Brothers Amati violin, acquired by the ACO Instrument Fund with investment from Media Super. This extraordinary instrument will be played by ACO violinist Ike See.

Coming up



APR

ACO US Tour

31 MARCH – 14 APRIL

North America

We embark on a two-week tour of North America in April, giving eight concerts over 15 days in major concert halls including New York's Lincoln Centre, Stanford's Bing Concert Hall and Princeton University's Richardson Auditorium with soloists including pianist Paul Lewis.



MAY

Branford Marsalis

9–22 MAY

Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Wollongong

The American saxophone virtuoso makes his ACO debut in a Latin American jazz inspired program featuring Piazzolla and Villa-Lobos directed by our Principal Violin Satu Vänskä.



JUN

Respighi, Britten & Vasks

4 JUNE

Melbourne

A Melbourne Recital Centre exclusive that explores the beauty of strings through lively dances and ethereal reveries.



Indies & Idols

14–29 JUNE

Brisbane, Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth and Sydney

Compositions from Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, The National's Bryce Dessner, and Sufjan Stevens presented alongside some of their shared musical influences: Polish composers Szymanowski and Lutosławski.

BUILD YOUR 2019 SEASON

Branford Marsalis

Piazzolla, Villa-Lobos and Ginastera

9–22 MAY

Indies & Idols

Music by Szymanowski, Sufjan Stevens
and Jonny Greenwood

14–29 JUNE

Luminous

Our ground-breaking collaboration with artist Bill Henson

10–23 AUGUST

Celebrating Mozart

With pianist Dejan Lazić

5–17 SEPTEMBER

Intimate Bach

With Richard Tognetti, Erin Helyard and Brett Dean

19–30 OCTOBER

Brahms & Dvořák

The Double Concerto and Eighth Symphony

9–22 NOVEMBER

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Liisa Pallandi – Violin

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PROGRAM

Lorenza Borrani Director and Violin
Australian Chamber Orchestra

PRE-CONCERT TALK	45 mins prior to the performance See page 10 for details	mins
SERGEI PROKOVIEV (arr. Lorenza Borrani)	Violin Sonata No.1 in F minor, Op.80 <i>I. Andante assai</i> <i>II. Allegro brusco</i> <i>III. Andante</i> <i>IV. Allegrissimo</i>	28
DOBRINKA TABAKOVA	Such Different Paths <i>Australian premiere</i>	17
INTERVAL		20
BEETHOVEN (arr. strings)	String Quartet in F major, Op.135 <i>I. Allegretto</i> <i>II. Vivace</i> <i>III. Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo</i> <i>IV. Der schwer gefaßte Entschluß</i> (Grave – Allegro – Grave ma non troppo tratto – Allegro)	25

The concert will last approximately one hour and 40 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.

Beethoven & Prokofiev will be broadcast on ABC Classic on Sunday 17 March at 12 noon.



Overseas model shown.

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Maserati is honoured to be a National Tour Partner of the ACO and to play a small part in the return to Australia of Lorenza Borrani. She is one of the world's most talented violinists and I have no doubt that this tour will energise and enthrall Australian audiences through the emotive music of *Beethoven and Prokofiev*.

Lorenza's talent is matched only by her energy and enthusiasm for her chosen instrument. As a master of the violin and of Italian descent, Lorenza Borrani is the perfect synthesis of our partnership with the ACO. The technical virtuosity and unique passion presented by these musicians can only but provide a link to the Maserati philosophy. Maserati's craftsmen have a similar belief in their use of traditional materials, techniques and methods that are informed by the past and provided with time to produce their best.

Maserati Australia is therefore honoured not just to have played a part in bringing you one of the world's most talented violinists, but one who is the epitome of what makes Italy such a creative, passionate force of nature for every facet of the lives that it touches.



Glen Sealey

Chief Operating Officer

Maserati Australia, New Zealand & South Africa

Oliver Beer

Recomposition (Clive), 2018

Violin, sectioned and set in resin; gesso

67 x 47 x 2 cm

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery



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PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read
before lights down.

Pre-concert talks

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

Newcastle City Hall

Francis Merson

Thu 7 March, 6.45pm

Llewellyn Hall, Canberra

Francis Merson

Sat 9 March, 7.15pm

Brisbane – QPAC

Gordon Hamilton

Mon 11 March, 6.15pm

Sydney – City Recital Hall

Francis Merson

Tue 12 March, 7.15pm

Wed 13 March, 6.15pm

Fri 15 March, 12.45pm

Sat 16 March, 6.15pm

Hamer Hall –

Arts Centre Melbourne

Lucy Rash

Sun 17 March, 1.45pm

Mon 18 March, 6.45pm

Adelaide Town Hall

Sidonie Henbest

Tue 19 March, 6.45pm

Pre-concert speakers are
subject to change.



Sergei Prokofiev

(1891–1953)

Violin Sonata No.1 in F minor, Op.80
Arranged for violin and string orchestra
by Lorenza Borrani

The background to Prokofiev's First Violin Sonata, begun in 1938, is as dark and tragic as the music itself. By 1936, Soviet propaganda was fiercely attacking the music of Prokofiev's compatriot, Dmitri Shostakovich, labelling it aesthetically at odds with "the wishes and expectations of the Soviet public". Arrests by Stalin's secret police soon followed, including that of Shostakovich's patron Marshal Tukhachevsky, Bolshoi Theatre general director Vladimir Mutnykh (who had commissioned Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*), dramaturge Adrian Piotrovsky (who created the synopsis for Prokofiev's ballet), stage director Natalia Sats (who had commissioned *Peter and the Wolf*), and composer Nikolai Zhilyayev (a staunch supporter of Prokofiev's work). Apart from Sats, none were ever seen again, and we now know they were shot soon after their arrests.

Dark strains of fear and the grotesque dominate Prokofiev's Sonata, and it seems the work was intended as a memorial to his colleagues who suddenly disappeared during Stalin's Great Terror. The Sonata was premiered by the renowned violinist David Oistrakh, who remarked that passages in the score marked "freddo" (cold) were "like the wind in a graveyard". Italian violinist Lorenza Borrani has arranged the sonata for violin and string orchestra, turning it into a chilling concerto.

“The beauty for me in any great chamber work is the discovery of the dialogue between the voices”



Dobrinka Tabakova

(Born 1980)

Such Different Paths

Such Different Paths was composed for the Dutch violinist Janine Jansen. Its underlying idea is of music as building blocks, one avenue of musical material after another: the violins enter first, next the paired violas, then two cellos and, lastly, the double bass, with melody lines passed from one instrument to another until the ensemble blends; the solo violin eventually rises sky high. Tabakova's intention is that there is a sense of a journey, hence directions in the score such as “searching” or “transition”.

“When Janine approached me to write the piece,” Tabakova explains, “I discovered that chamber music is at the heart of her approach to music making. It's something that she grew up with, an ideal that she applies to her performances whether concerto or chamber. I was inspired not only by her readiness to communicate with the other musicians, but also by her special sound. That blend of the conversations between the musicians together with the blossoming of the solo line is something I had in mind while composing. The beauty for me in any great chamber work is the discovery of the dialogue between the voices: the layers and the shifts in perspective, like a camera zooming in and out of focus on the background or foreground.”

“Here, my dear friend, is my last quartet. It will be the last; and indeed it has given me much trouble.”



Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

String Quartet in F major, Op.135 Arranged for string orchestra

1826 was a traumatic year for Beethoven. He was in very poor health, was fighting with his publishers, and his nephew Karl – for whom he had fought a bitter custody battle years before – had attempted suicide by shooting himself in the head. The String Quartet in F major, Op.135, Beethoven's last completed work, was completed shortly after Karl was released from hospital.

Beethoven knew it would be his last quartet. The last movement is preceded by the now-famous enigmatic lines “Muß es sein? – Es muß sein!” (Must it be? – It must be!). Above it reads “Der schwer gefaßte Entschluß” (The Difficult Decision). There have been many attempts to explain what Beethoven meant by these words. One biographer tells us the music deals with Beethoven's “overcoming of melancholy” as he struggled with his own impending mortality. There is another, more light-hearted explanation: When a local musician asked “Must it be?” that he should have to pay for performance parts of the Op.130 quartet, Beethoven gleefully wrote a canon for four voices whose words answer “It must be, yes, yes, yes, open your wallet!” The music of this canon appears in the finale of Op.135.

MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage
for this performance.

Discover more

Learn more about our musicians, watch us Live in the Studio, go behind-the-scenes and listen to playlists at:

aco.com.au



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 Kate & Daryl Dixon.



Lorenza Borrani

Guest Director & Violin

Lorenza plays a 1745 Santo Serafino violin made in Venice, provided by Fondazione Pro Canale di Milano.



Satu Vänskä

Principal Violin

Satu plays the 1726 'Belgiorno' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from Guido Belgiorio-Nettis AM & Michelle Belgiorio-Nettis. Her Chair is sponsored by Kay Bryan.



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 contemporary violin made by the American violin maker David Gusset in 1989. His Chair is sponsored by Prof Judyth Sachs & Julie Steiner.



Ilya Isakovich

Violin

Ilya plays his own 1600 Marcin Groblicz violin made in Poland.



Liisa Pallandi

Violin

Liisa currently plays Helena Rathbone's violin which is a c.1760 Giovanni Battista Gabrielli. Her Chair is sponsored by The Melbourne Medical Syndicate.



Ike See

Violin

Ike plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Di Jameson.



Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba

Violin

Thibaud currently plays Liisa Pallandi's violin which is a 1946 Charles Clarke.



Jakob Dingstad

Guest Principal Viola

Jakob appears courtesy of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. The Principal Viola Chair is sponsored by peckvonhartel architects.



Nicole Divall

Viola

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



Elizabeth Woolnough

Viola

Elizabeth appears courtesy of Melbourne 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 Peter Weiss ao.



Melissa Barnard

Cello

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



Julian Thompson

Cello

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, kindly donated to the ACO by 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 a private Australian benefactor. His Chair is sponsored by Darin Cooper Foundation.



THE SO INSTRU

Fiona Wright interviews Lorenza Borrani,
about Prokofiev, Beethoven, Tabakova
and the limits of truth

Words. Fiona Wright

Fiona Wright is an author and poet.
Her latest book is *The World Was Whole*.

Photography. Piera Mungiguerra

CIAL UMENT



“I can’t help but imagine the hands that such an instrument must have passed through before ending up here”

It’s almost accidental that Lorenza Borrani is a violinist, although watching her play, eyes half-closed, leaning in to the instrument and swaying with it, trembling with it, this is hard to fathom. She looks not so much like she is dancing with it as swooning into it, her dark hair cascading down her back.

Borrani first wanted to play the trumpet and auditioned, as a five-year-old, for the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole in Florence with this “exclusive wish”. They told her, simply and bluntly, that she was too young. To choose a different instrument, right there and then. “I had no idea,” Borrani says. She had “never thought of an alternative”. But hanging on the wall in front of her, beside the door, was a picture of a violin, with the declarative caption IL VIOLINO. It seemed like a good answer, an “emergency exit from the question”. And so the violin it was.

The violin, Borrani says, is “a super social instrument”. Almost always, it is given several parts in any piece of ensemble music, and also tasked with leading the orchestra. It’s flexible, too: “Solo, chamber music, symphonic, opera, everything.” Despite the accident of her first encounter with the instrument, she soon learnt to love it – the instrument itself, the specific art of playing violin, and “the amount of different repertoire and music you can do”. Borrani plays a Venetian violin, a Santo Serafino from 1745, and I can’t help but imagine the hands that such an instrument must have passed through before ending up here – and everything they may have pressed upon it.



Above. Spira Mirabilis are an ensemble of committed and passionate elite professional musicians from around the world.

Borrani keeps, as the screensaver on her phone, a photo of the card that the musicians of the Australian Chamber Orchestra gave her at the end of her previous Australian tour. It has been there since 2016, she says, because being here, playing with this orchestra, is one of the happiest memories she has. “Both the musical journey and the human connections,” she explains, “went very fast very deep.” She calls the memory “very precious”, and has been looking forward to returning ever since.

Borrani has a real interest in working with orchestras that are democratic, orchestras that share responsibilities as well as opportunities for the interpretation and organisation of the music. “Democracy is a lot about sharing responsibilities,” she says.

Borrani is the principal leader of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, which is sometimes referred to as an “anti-orchestra” for its participatory and experimental ethos, and a member of Spira Mirabilis, an orchestra that works with no conductors, little rehearsal, and no fixed set-up – playing with however many musicians the piece demands and in unorthodox public spaces, giving “guerrilla concerts” for broad and often unsuspecting audiences, who may well be entirely unfamiliar with classical music.

It’s tempting to draw parallels between these orchestras and the ACO, an organisation working in a country so far away from the established cultural centres of classical music – and also a little freer, perhaps, from the hefty histories and traditions that may weigh them down. It’s easy to imagine that this is the reason that those connections, for Borrani, went so fast and deep.

Borrani says she feels “at home” and “the most welcome and useful” in orchestras that have this democratic kind of ethos, and these innovative, exciting organisations are also places where there’s more room for collaborative and even conflicting interpretations of the music. “You can read all the books about performing practice and how the music we play today was meant to be played at the time it was written,” she says, “but in the end it all has to pass through the filter of our personal taste and interpretation, and so that’s why people who read the same books can get to so many different conclusions ... It is very fascinating,” she adds, “how everyone can get to a personal truth that probably has very little to do with the truth. If an actual truth exists.”

It is Borrani’s role in this tour, as orchestra director, to determine the music’s interpretation, to find a common truth, and yet she sees the most important aspect of this as remaining flexible, because “being able to integrate all of the inputs that can come from the musicians is a huge enrichment”. She refers to her role as one of “sharing”, of respecting that “every group is different” and of trying to minimise the leading that is actually required by making sure everyone is on the same page by the time the playing begins. Her vision for the orchestra is social, much like the violin.

It is Borrani’s arrangement of the canonical pieces in this program that the ACO will be performing. Both pieces – Prokofiev’s Violin Sonata No.1 and Beethoven’s Op.135 – are pieces that she loves, that she considers “literature”. The violin sonata, she says, she has been playing since she was 14 – it is “a piece I have grown up with”. The art that we grow up with: I sometimes think these stories and images and scores become a part of who we are, inextricably tied up with how we think and who we imagine ourselves to be. I think of them as foundational, and relational, somehow.

Borrani says she has been dreaming of arranging the sonata for violin and strings for the new perspectives it may allow her to explore, and it seems a fitting way to think about this piece, which is cyclical, full of flashbacks, in which “you can almost hear the voice of a storyteller” in



Top. Ludwig van Beethoven, portrait by Joseph Karl Stieler, 1820.
Above. Sergei Prokofiev, circa 1918, photographer unknown, published by Bain News Service.

the phrases of the violin, narrating something folkloric, or mythic, as well as deeply personal.

Many people consider Prokofiev's piece to be a kind of memory-work: a lament, or a memorial; Prokofiev himself is said to have described the tremulous violin scales at the end of the first and fourth movements as "wind passing through a graveyard". The piece was written during the Second World War, begun just two years after Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union from his exile in the West and the first arrests of Stalin's Great Purge, an extended campaign of terror that saw many of Prokofiev's colleagues and collaborators arrested and secretly executed, although the fact of their deaths wasn't made public for many years. Instead, they just disappeared; a lingering and terrible unknown.

Death stalks the piece: Borrani speaks of "all the elements that emerge in difficult times" – the battle cry, the funeral march, the dream. The different movements are ominous, sardonic and furious, impressionistic and wild. They "combine reality with dream, history with legends", and never really come to rest: the sonata, too, is haunted with irresolve.

Death is ever-present in Beethoven's Op.135: it is, famously, the composer's last work, written only a few months before he died, and first performed posthumously. Borrani's arrangement of this piece has grown directly from her previous tour with the ACO, where she worked with the orchestra on Op.131, a piece she was initially "quite sceptical about playing in a string arrangement". Her arrangement and performance were widely praised for their intelligence and sensitivity, however, and Op.135 is a powerful and enduring work – Borrani refers to it as "one of the columns of string quartet history". She means "pillars", of course, but I love this mistranslation, how instead of stonework, it makes me think of a spine – something more human, and more flexible.

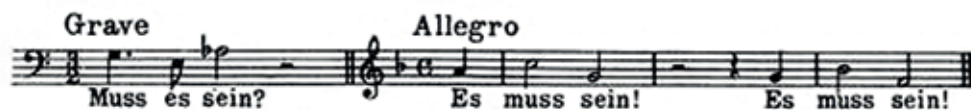
Op.135 is a work, Borrani says, of "perfection that at first looks like simplicity". It is interrupted by "moments of obsession and chaos" and underpinned by a great subtlety of harmony and emotion. It is an immensely



Lorenza Borrani
leading the
Chamber Orchestra
of Europe.



Der schwer gefasste Entschluss.



moving and emotional work: fantastical, at times, and structured by repeated figures interrupted by dynamic, dislocated syncopations, which eventually give way to the melancholy and contemplative final movement.

It is this final movement that comes with the almost legendary epigraph – *Muß es sein? Es muß sein!* ("Must it be? It must be!") – that has also been interpreted in myriad ways. I think again of Borrani speaking of truths that have very little to do with the actual truth, wondering whether such a thing exists. Some of these interpretations are prosaic, practical – or "really less philosophical," as Borrani puts it: that the question was asked by Beethoven in response to his housekeeper's demand for more money, or as a request to his patrons for money; that it's an expression of his own frustration at the difficulty of writing the piece in the first place. But Borrani's interpretation is that the epigraph speaks of something bigger, something almost ineffable, "something related to the meaning of destiny, nature, life and death".

Beethoven was in poor health when he wrote the opus, and probably aware that he was dying. It's hard not to read this epigraph as a questioning of mortality, of fate.

Also included in Borrani's program is an Australian premiere, Dobrinka Tabakova's *Such Different Paths*. Borrani describes this as "music of today, just born" that she and the ACO's musicians are entrusted with "discovering from zero". Tabakova's work is rich and sensuous, and highly regarded for its radiance, and this piece is designed to evoke a sense of journey – amid the directions in the score are that the music be played in "searching" or "transition".

The Bulgarian-born Tabakova has said that her music is always written with a desire for direct communication in mind, for an accessibility that is still challenging but not



Top. The resolution reached with difficulty: Must it be? It must be! It must be! Above. Lorenza Borrani in rehearsal with ACO in 2016.

“This requires flexibility in the listening approach... as they reflect and refract”

abstruse. It's democratic music that she is interested in – and it's easy to see why this appeals to Borrani. This, and the excitement of interpreting and performing something entirely new, just born.

“Today's audience,” Borrani writes in an email to me, “(and in a way also we musicians!) tends to feel more at home with the music of the past, and even slightly challenged by 20th-century and contemporary music.” But this, she explains, is a new phenomenon – “it was the opposite at Beethoven's time, and even more so in earlier times, when it was only contemporary music that was performed for an audience.” In a way, then, it is the performing of Tabakova's piece that is closest in spirit to the orchestral concerts of the past, but it's a different aspect of the program that Borrani finds most fascinating.

“What we hear in our concert is ... real travel,” she says. By this, she means time travel, “into different historical times,” and cultural travel, “into different languages” and traditions. “This requires flexibility in the listening approach,” but also brings a new dynamism to the pieces, as they reflect and refract each other in “a different light”. It's another opportunity for those new interpretations, and for new discoveries as well.

Borrani describes this program, as a whole, as one “that takes a lot of handcraft”. Handcraft is there in her new arrangements of canonical pieces, in the orchestra's debut performance of Tabakova's work; I imagine it there, too, when each musician touches their instrument, when their hands move furiously, but their bodies only ever so slightly sway. Handcraft, but also the thrill of the new – here, it isn't just the music that you can hear as “sound in the air,” Borrani explains, “but also the paper and ink... still drying out!” ●

Oliver Beer

Recomposition (Sonya), 2018

Violin, sectioned and set in resin, gesso

67 x 47 x 2 cm

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery



Romy Ash meets composer Dobrinka Tabakova
to discuss *Such Different Paths*

Words. Romy Ash

Romy Ash is a novelist. Her first book, *Floundering*,
was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin award.

CONT- ENTME AT THE

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair pulled back, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a light grey sweater. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

ENT END

From her home studio, Dobrinka Tabakova laughs warmly. The Bulgarian-born composer, who moved with her parents to London when she was 11, is describing her first piano teacher. “I was very lucky,” she says. “My first piano teacher in Bulgaria, she was very laid-back. It was the '80s; she wore leopard-print leggings and stilettos, and even had a manicure. Her nails would tap against the keys. I really had the best start with this teacher, who was quite liberal. I'd come to lessons with a half made-up piece and she wouldn't scold me for it. She'd just say, 'Well, next time, I'm sure you'll learn it.' She was quite encouraging about the liberal improvisations of a seven-year-old.”

As a child in Bulgaria, Tabakova would listen to her grandfather's LP collection and go to the opera and the orchestra with her family. In London, she began study at the Royal Academy of Music Junior Department, and by 15 years of age, after a summer course in France at Centre Acanthes, where she met the composer Iannis Xenakis, she began to think of herself as a composer. Tabakova had plucked up the courage to show him some of her scores. “He just very kindly said, ‘Don't be afraid to be different.’ He could see that my pieces were different both in terms of development – all the other students were undergraduates – but he could also see that I was interested in more of a tonal, melodic world, which he very graciously supported.”

For Tabakova, composition always starts with the piano. She says, “I need that physical connection. It feels a little bit too theoretical if you're just writing it on the page. I need to actually feel it, play the chord, play through the melody.” When she's composing, she takes her time; she doesn't like to go back and rewrite. She begins, like the view from her studio, which looks out over South London and Kent, broadly, with an overview.

“I think there's two types of approaches to composition,” she says, “and one is that you start with a detail and you work your way out of that detail to reach a structure, but you always start with this smaller cell of an idea – a colour,



“I was very lucky. My first piano teacher in Bulgaria, she was very laid-back. It was the '80s; she wore leopard-print leggings and stilettos, and even had a manicure.”

or a harmonic, an isolated thing. And there's the other way of approaching it, which is from the outside going in, which is to have this broad idea of what you want to be happening, and usually with a commission you get a duration, which you have to fill with your own voice. I would put myself with the composers who start the structure with a bigger idea.”

Tabakova began *Such Different Paths*, a string septet, with a vision of the structure, and the violinist Janine Jansen in mind. The idea, Tabakova says, “was to have a prominent solo violin line. Janine Jansen is very much a chamber player, always, whether she's playing a concerto, or any work, she's always very aware of everything around her, it's not just soloist and accompaniment.” The piece, which took five months to complete, was written in 2008 for a chamber concert series in Berlin, Spectrum Concerts. “The shape of the piece,” she says, “I envisioned this spark of energy at the beginning that finds its glow towards the end, that settles.” She describes the journey that the listener goes on: “At the beginning it's very energetic material, quite folksy material. Everybody has their own lines. First it's the violins that enter, and then it's the violas that enter and it's the celli that enter. So they all enter in pairs, increasing the density of the material. It's very intimate, also complex, and then slowly throughout the piece things get clearer and this solo emerges. You get increasing clarity. In the middle there's something of an early baroque kind of sound that's just exploring the different associations you have with strings. Then there's this lush, romantic end. The composer note for the final few bars is to 'end with contentment'. So it's quite a gentle, quite a calm ending. I wanted the players to feel, 'We've arrived, it's a good thing.'”

Such Different Paths is the final piece on her debut album, *String Paths*, on ECM Records, which was nominated for a Grammy in 2014. Tabakova says that *Such Different Paths* brings this contentment to the end of *String Paths*, an album she likes to think of as one big work, rather than a collection of pieces, or as well as.

Tabakova's work is modern, revelatory. It has been described as avant-garde and within it there is a sensitivity and reverence for tradition. It has been featured in films – Jean-Luc Godard's *Adieu au Langage* and Scottish filmmaker Ruth Paxton's short *Pulse* – and was used by the Sydney Dance Company's Rafael Bonachela for his work *Anima*.

She says, "I guess because I began my love of music listening to the classics I will always feel this connection to the great composers: Schubert and Mozart, Beethoven, Bach. The reason I'm a composer is because of their music, because of what they unlocked in me when I was listening to their music. I feel a very strong connection to tradition and to that way of appreciating your cultural heritage. The responsibility of the living composer is to be sensitive to the time that you're living in and try and give an outlet to the crazy complex world that we're living in, but in my view without losing the thread that invisibly links all of humanity in terms of its cultural development over the centuries. So I feel like I'm part of that journey through time. My responsibility is to do the best that I can but with an awareness and a respect for the tradition that I've inherited, and the reason why I create, which is because of those great masterpieces." ●



Above. Violinist, Janine Jansen.

A COLLECTED IDEAL

Steve Dow interviews ACO violinist Ike See

Words. Steve Dow

Steve Dow is a Sydney-based arts writer.

Photography. Ben Sullivan

CTIVE

“It’s all about the human interaction and the way that plays into the way we perform and work and rehearse.”

When I meet Singaporean-born violinist Ike See, he has recently swapped his violin made by Johannes Cuypers in The Hague in 1790 for an even greater treasure: a violin made in Cremona, Italy, by the Amati brothers, Antonio and Hieronymus, in 1590.

“The Amati has nobility,” See says of the violin, once owned by an English noblewoman, Lady Margaret Cecil, and a Dutch–American historian, Hendrik Willem van Loon. “It’s very warm and generous sounding.”

The humidity of Sydney, though, where See has lived since joining the Australian Chamber Orchestra in 2014, requires special care. It will not be played outside, for instance.

As we speak outside a cafe in Balmain, near See’s home, his partner, freelance violinist Caroline Hopson, happens to walk past, her own violin strapped to her back. She says hello briefly.

“I’ve asked Caroline to play the Amati, just for my ears,” says See. “She doesn’t want to play it too much because she feels she gets spoiled by it, which I totally understand.”

At six, See’s parents first brought him to Australia, to Melbourne, for two years. His father was working as a Methodist minister. The youngest of four children, See’s three siblings stayed on in Australia, but his parents took him back to Singapore.

At 10, he won his first national competition for violin, having begun lessons at the age of four, under Sylvia Khoo. In his late teens, he went to study at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, under Joseph Silverstein and Pamela Frank. He remembers Silverstein’s approach in particular, and says it really spoke to him. “He brought a sense of order and ease to the way I approach music. He was often

questioning my choices. He had the right measure of being critical and being encouraging."

Compulsory national service interrupted See's studies, and at 19 he joined the army and the Singapore Armed Forces String Ensemble.

"There was a certain amount of trepidation. But when the time came to enlist, I thought, 'Look, I'm just going to make the best of this.' I knew the first three months during basic training I pretty much wouldn't see the violin, except on weekends.

"I did take away a lot from my time in the army. It really taught me a lot about self-discipline, which enabled me to return to Curtis and make much better use of my last two years there."

See returned to Australia in 2012, a move prompted by a relationship with a former partner, as well as fond childhood memories and the prospect of again being near his siblings, all of whom played instruments in childhood, although only See makes a living from music.

He took up an associate concertmaster's position at the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. His next career move was more pragmatic, however. "To be perfectly honest, I didn't know much about the Australian Chamber Orchestra before I joined it," he says. "Part of the motivation was being able to move to Sydney, but also I liked the idea of making music in a more intimate setting."

What does playing the violin give him? "As a child, there were a lot of positive elements to playing violin. I made a lot of friends through playing. There was a social element to it," he says. "I've always enjoyed playing recitals and concertos and doing solo things, but my passion really lies



Above. Ike with the 430-year-old 1590 Brothers Amati violin purchased by the ACO Instrument Fund with investment from Australian industry super fund Media Super.



in playing music with quartets or in this case playing with the ACO. It's all about the human interaction and the way that plays into the way we perform and work and rehearse."

Chamber music is "all about pursuing a collective ideal," he says, "but each voice brings something different. That is the pinnacle of music-making."

"Chamber music is "all about pursuing a collective ideal," he says, "but each voice brings something different. That is the pinnacle of music-making."

Did this collective ethos stem from something his parents taught him? "Yeah, perhaps. It might have to do with family and growing up in church, where I played sometimes. Maybe it's something intrinsically within me that likes to find a sense of purpose or direction in a whole, in a group."

See will be playing the Amati violin in all three pieces presented in the Beethoven & Prokofiev concerts, directed by the Italian violinist Lorenza Borrani, with whom See played when Borrani toured Australia in 2016.

"I absolutely loved playing with Lorenza," he says. "There is this vitality to her and this longing and searching quality. We're always looking to delve deeper into the music for things that we haven't seen before."

See remembers playing Prokofiev's Violin Sonata No.1 in F minor, featured in these concerts, in his Curtis Institute graduation recital.

"I haven't heard it since, so it's been six years. It's originally for violin and piano, but now it's been arranged for violin and the ACO. It will bring back memories. Very exciting." ●

Oliver Beer

Recomposition (Soprano and Alto), 2018

Violin, sectioned and set in resin; gesso

100 x 133 x 3 cm

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery





LORENZA BORRANI

Lorenza Borrani is an artist for our times: an inspiring and charismatic violinist, a much sought-after leader of orchestras and a gifted chamber musician. Dedicating herself to timeless music in all its different forms and periods, she likes to challenge herself in every kind of repertoire. Lorenza's musical journey has taken her from the traditional values of 19th and 20th century music to the creation of new work and the re-examination of old masters through the intensive study of historically informed performing.

Lorenza is much in demand as a director and soloist. She has collaborated closely with many great conductors and orchestras including Lorin Maazel with the Orchestra Toscanini and Claudio Abbado. As the principal leader of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Lorenza has toured all over the world with Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Bernard Haitink, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Vladimir Jurowski. In the 2018/19 season, Lorenza focuses on play/direct roles appearing with Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Freiburger Barockorchester and Norwegian Chamber Orchestra where she will be Artist in Residence in 2020. As a keen chamber musician, Lorenza continues collaborating with Kristian Bezuidenhout and Alexander Lonquich as well as with 'Mozart Quintets', a collaboration with her close chamber music partners.

In 2007 Lorenza, with a group of close musical friends, launched Spira Mirabilis as a laboratory for the intense preparation and performance of orchestra and chamber music repertoire of all periods, all performed without a conductor or leader. Spira Mirabilis' illuminating and groundbreaking programs have been enthusiastically received in London, Frankfurt, Paris and Hamburg, as well as across Italy.



THE ACO

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

– The Australian, 2017

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for their 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 their commitment to creating transformative musical experiences.

The Orchestra regularly collaborates with artists and musicians who share their ideology, from instrumentalists, to vocalists, to cabaret performers, to visual artists and film makers.

In addition to their 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, *Heroines*, recorded with Australian soprano Nicole Car, and the soundtrack to the acclaimed cinematic collaboration, *Mountain*.

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A black and white photograph of Aiko Goto, a violinist, is the background of the entire page. She is shown from the chest up, smiling and looking towards the left. She is holding a violin and bow, with her fingers positioned on the strings. The background is blurred, showing other musicians and the setting of a concert hall.

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– AIKO GOTO

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Aiko Goto – Violin

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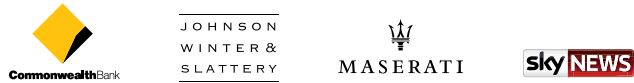
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