

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

BRANFORD MARSALIS

Directed by Satu Vänskä

MAY 2019

Program in Short

Your five-minute read
before lights down

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Encounters with Jazz

Kate Holden meets
composer Sally Beamish

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Between Old and New Worlds

Bernard Zuel talks to Branford
Marsalis and Satu Vänskä

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PEKKA KUUSISTO ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Richard Tognetti AO, ACO Artistic Director & Lead Violin and Pekka Kuusisto, ACO Collective Artistic Director

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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Between Old and New Worlds

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WELCOME

It is with great enthusiasm that we welcome Branford Marsalis to Australia for his debut with the ACO.

Branford is an artist whose virtuosity and musicality make him a perfect collaborator with our director for this tour, our own Principal Violin Satu Väänskä, and of course the ACO itself.

We have just returned from a two-week tour across the US, that saw the Orchestra give critically-acclaimed performances in magnificent halls across the country, including New York's Lincoln Center, Stanford University's Bing Concert Hall and Princeton's glorious Richardson Auditorium. The US, UK and Europe are the key international markets we regularly tour to, and after a visit in 2018 and one planned for 2020, we have recently added Japan to this list.

The ACO is extremely fortunate to have the support of Virgin Australia as both our Principal Partner and National Tour Partner for these concerts. Throughout our seven-year partnership, Virgin Australia's commitment has enabled the ACO to tour to regional areas and city centres across Australia, and around the world. I thank Virgin for their support of this tour and the ACO's activities more broadly.

It's great to be back and I hope you enjoy the performance.



Richard Evans
Managing Director

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News



US Tour

We've just returned from our two-week tour of the US, where we gave eight concerts in cities including New York, Boston and Paulo Alto.



Play a role in our future

DONATE BEFORE 30 JUNE

ACO Patrons are our lifeblood. With less than 10% of our funding provided from government sources, you play a vital role in helping us to shape the musical landscape through bringing the Orchestra's artistic vision to life. A tax-deductible donation will help us maintain our position as one of the world's great chamber orchestras.

Coming up



MAY

There's A Sea in My Bedroom

9–20 MAY

Sydney

Our first family concert series, presented in partnership with the Sydney Opera House. An immersive introduction to live music and storytelling based on the much-loved children's book by Margaret Wild, performed by the brilliant musicians of ACO Collective.



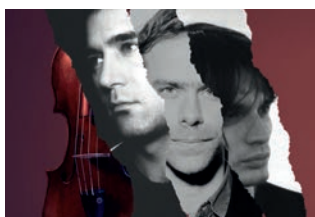
JUN

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

Music by Sufjan Stevens and the creative forces behind Radiohead and The National, presented alongside their shared classical musical influences. Directed by Richard Tognetti.



JUL

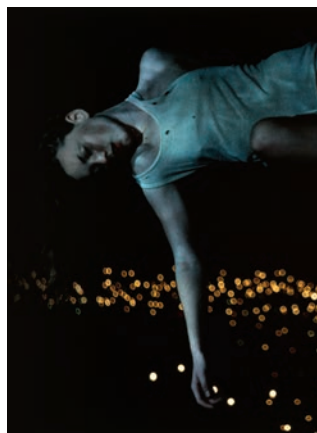
ACO Academy

7–12 JULY

Sydney

Our program for talented secondary school string players, led by ACO violinist Aiko Goto.

Participants spend an inspirational week in rehearsal with ACO musicians, culminating in a public performance at the City Recital Hall.



AUG

Luminous

10–23 AUGUST

Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney

Ten years since its last performance, we bring back our ground-breaking musical and visual collaboration with photographer Bill Henson, revived and refreshed, and featuring singer-songwriter Lior.

Bill Henson
Untitled, 2000/2003
LMO SH177 N2A
Courtesy of the artist, Tolarno Galleries
and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.



SEP

Celebrating Mozart

5–17 SEPTEMBER

Wollongong, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney

Pianist Dejan Lazić reunites with Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra for a celebration of Mozart's symphonies and concertos.

BUILD YOUR 2019 SEASON

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 Lazic

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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Glenn Christensen – Violin

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PROGRAM

Branford Marsalis Saxophone
 Satu Vänskä Director and Violin
 Australian Chamber Orchestra

Tour supported by David & Sandy Libling and Deborah & David Friedlander

PRE-CONCERT TALK	45 mins prior to the performance See page 10 for details	mins
STRAVINSKY	Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet: No.3	1
VILLA-LOBOS (arr. strings)	Fantasia for Saxophone and Orchestra, A.490 <i>I. Animé</i> <i>II. Lent</i> <i>III. Très animé</i>	10
PIAZZOLLA (arr. Desyatnikov)	The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires (Estaciones Porteñas) <i>Buenos Aires Summer (Verano Porteño)</i> <i>Buenos Aires Autumn (Otoño Porteño)</i> <i>Buenos Aires Winter (Invierno Porteño)</i> <i>Buenos Aires Spring (Primavera Porteña)</i>	25
INTERVAL		20
VILLA-LOBOS (arr. strings)	Bachianas Brasileiras No.5, A.389 <i>I. Aria (Cantilena)</i> <i>II. Dansa (Martelo)</i>	10
GOLIJOV	Last Round: I. Movido, urgente	5
SALLY BEAMISH	Under the Wing of the Rock: Saxophone Concerto No.2 <i>Australian Premiere</i>	13
GINASTERA	Concerto for Strings, Op.33 <i>I. Variazioni per i solisti</i> <i>IV. Finale furioso</i>	13
PIAZZOLLA (arr. Rofe)	Libertango	4

The concert will last approximately one hour and 45 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

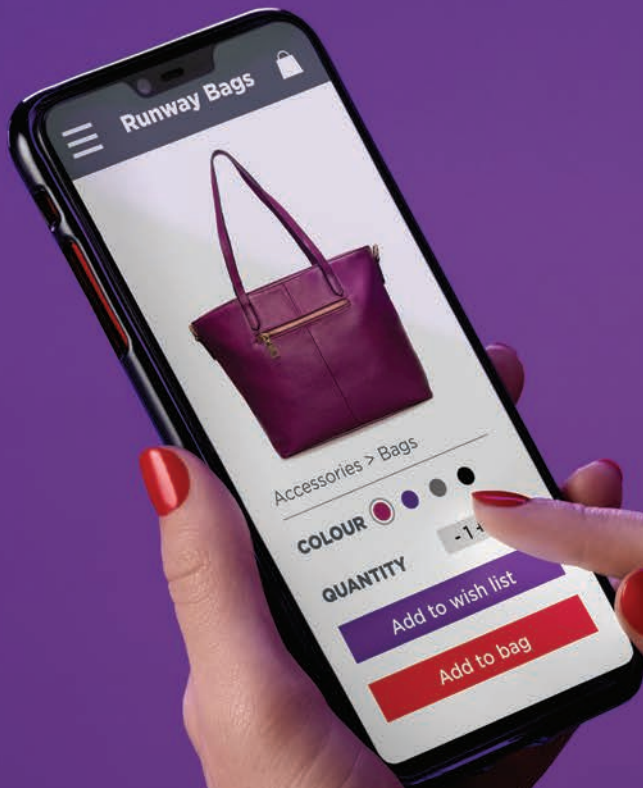
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Australian Chamber Orchestra



australia

NATIONAL TOUR PARTNER WELCOME

Virgin Australia is proud to be the Principal Partner of the ACO and the National Tour Partner for *Branford Marsalis*.

This is Marsalis's debut with the ACO, and Virgin Australia is proud to play a role in bringing him to Australia. Over the past seven years, Virgin Australia has enabled the ACO to share its diverse music with Australia and the world through a comprehensive domestic and international network that reaches more than 450 destinations worldwide.

If listening to Marsalis inspires you to travel, we are pleased to offer ACO Subscribers an exclusive discount on domestic and international flights. Visit aco.com.au/vadiscount for more information.

Please enjoy the concert and we hope to welcome you onboard soon.



Rene Burri

ABOVE. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1958.

RIGHT. Sunday fiesta in a small village near Buenos Aires. "Gauchos" (Argentinian Cow-Boy) and "Peones" (farmers) come with their families to have fun and listen to the "payadores", a kind of modern troubadour who invents his songs right away. Argentina, 1958.

© Rene Burri / Magnum Photos / Snapper Images.



10

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.

Wollongong Town Hall

Vincent Plush

Thu 9 May, 6.45pm

Llewellyn Hall, Canberra

Vincent Plush

Sat 11 May, 7.15pm

Hamer Hall –

Arts Centre Melbourne

Vincent Plush

Sun 12 May, 1.45pm

Mon 20 May, 6.45pm

Brisbane – QPAC

Lucas Burns

Mon 13 May, 6.15pm

Perth Concert Hall

Rosalind Appleby

Wed 15 May, 6.45pm

Sydney – City Recital Hall

Vincent Plush

Sat 18 May, 6.15pm

Tue 21 May, 7.15pm

Wed 22 May, 6.15pm

Sydney Opera House

Concert Hall

Vincent Plush

Sun 19 May, 1.15pm

Pre-concert speakers are
subject to change.

Igor Stravinsky

(1882–1971)

Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet: No.3

One of music's great chameleons, Igor Stravinsky reinvented himself alongside 20th-century tastes and trends. Following *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky became fascinated with sparse textures and contemporary influences, culminating in *The Soldier's Tale*, which took influences from jazz, tango and ragtime. Stravinsky wrote *Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet* in 1919 for Werner Reinhart, a Swiss merchant who had financed *The Soldier's Tale* and was an enthusiastic clarinetist himself. The third piece is a jazzy perpetual mobile that revisits the Ragtime from *The Soldier's Tale*.

Heitor Villa-Lobos

(1887–1959)

Fantasia for Soprano Saxophone and Orchestra, A.490

Arranged for soprano saxophone and string orchestra

Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos dedicated his 1948 *Fantasia* to the great French classical saxophonist Marcel Mule. Mule was unable to find a conductor for the work, and as a result his own interest in playing the piece faded. Instead, the *Fantasia* was premiered by Waldemar Szilman, who had it transposed so he could play it on tenor saxophone. Branford Marsalis will perform the *Fantasia* in its original key on soprano saxophone, reclaiming the charm and delicacy of Villa-Lobos's original. The soloist blazes through vivacious Latin rhythms in the outer movements, framing a mysterious central lullaby. Today the *Fantasia* is a staple of the saxophone concerto repertoire and the most popular work for the soprano saxophone.

Astor Piazzolla

(1921–1992)

The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires (Estaciones Porteñas)

Arranged for violin and strings by Leonid Desyatnikov

Astor Piazzolla spent his formative years in New York, where he learned the bandoneón, experienced Harlem's jazz clubs, and met the great tango singer Carlos Gardel. Upon returning to his native Argentina, Piazzolla took lessons from Alberto Ginastera and won a prestigious competition that enabled him to study with French composer and conductor Nadia Boulanger. Seeing little of "Piazzolla" in his compositions, she asked him to play her a tango on his bandoneón, to which she proclaimed: "*This is Piazzolla, don't ever leave it!*" Immediately, he began to revolutionise tango into a new style that became known as nuevo tango.

Piazzolla's *Seasons*, conceived as individual pieces for his quintet of violin, piano, guitar, bass and bandoneón between 1964 and 1970, are mature examples of nuevo tango. He includes subtle allusions to Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, a concept that Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov takes a step further in his 1999 arrangement.

Heitor Villa-Lobos

(1887–1959)

Bachianas Brasileiras No.5, A.389

Arranged for saxophone and
strings

Desyatnikov incorporates many explicit Vivaldi quotations, and makes several clever musical associations: for example, incorporating passages from Vivaldi's Italian Winter into Piazzolla's Argentinian Summer because they occur at the same time of year. The result is a unique musical bridge across the centuries and between totally different styles.

Villa-Lobos's output is often characterised by a willingness to harmonise elements from the European tradition with Brazilian folk music. The most significant of these endeavours is *Bachianas Brasileiras*, a series of nine suites written between 1930 and 1945, in which he freely applies Bach's techniques to the music of northern Brazil. The most famous of these, No.5, is scored for soprano and eight cellos. The frequently performed Aria is a plaintive song to the moon; the spirited *Dansa* represents the persistent *embolada* rhythms of the Brazilian hinterland, its melody suggesting the birds of the region.

Oswaldo Golijov

(b. 1960)

Last Round: I. Movido, urgente

Oswaldo Golijov composed *Last Round* in 1996 as an imaginary chance for the spirit of Astor Piazzolla "to fight one more time". The work is conceived as an idealised bandoneón: the first movement represents a violent compression of the instrument, but is also a sublimated tango dance between two dueling groups. "The bows fly in the air as inverted legs in crisscrossed choreography, always attracting and repelling each other, always in danger of clashing, always avoiding it with the immutability that can only be acquired by transforming hot passion into pure pattern."

Sally Beamish

(b. 1956)

Under the Wing of the Rock: Saxophone Concerto No.2 (Australian premiere)

Under the Wing of the Rock is inspired by the poem 'Lullaby of the Snow', which is said to have been sung by a young mother to her child, fleeing the 1692 massacre at Glencoe, Scotland. As the story goes, an officer heard a child crying and dispatched a young soldier to kill it. Upon finding the pair, the soldier stopped, recognising the lullaby as the last music he heard before leaving his home years before. He wrapped the mother and child in his plaid, gave them what food and drink he had, and left them.

Inspired by Celtic song and psalm, the work begins and ends with extended improvisatory meditations that surround a restless middle section drawing on rhythms and chants from Celtic working songs. While composing the work as a viola concerto in 2006, Beamish heard Branford Marsalis play, influencing the sound world of the piece. In 2008 she made this version especially for him.

Alberto Ginastera

(1916–1983)

Concerto for Strings Op.33: I. Variazioni per i solisti, IV. Finale furioso

Along with Béla Bartók, Ginastera is perhaps the 20th-century's best assimilator of traditional folk elements into western classical music. The 1965 Concerto for Strings comes from what Ginastera called his "neo-expressionist" period, combining serial and quarter-tone techniques with surrealism and traditional Argentinian elements. The first movement is a series of four variations on a hymn-like theme. The thrilling finale employs *malambo* rhythms (a rapid, triple-time Argentinian dance) that grow to an unbearable peak of intensity through Ginastera's use of irregular beats and extreme dynamics.

Astor Piazzolla

Libertango

Arranged for alto saxophone and strings by Bernard Rofe

Libertango is the opening work from Piazzolla's iconic 1974 album of the same name. Written in Italy shortly after Piazzolla left Argentina, the title reflects his liberation from the socially defined style of classical tango, as well as his freedom from the political constraints imposed on Argentinians. Boasting an instantly recognisable melody and ostinato, *Libertango* is Piazzolla's best known and most frequently performed composition, appearing in countless arrangements for tango band, orchestra and even a cappella choir.

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



**Branford
Marsalis**
Saxophone



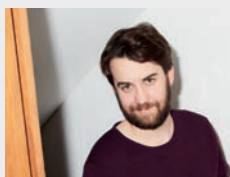
Satu Vänkä
Director & Violin

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



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.



Glenn Christensen
Violin

Glenn plays a 1728/29 Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Terry Campbell AO & Christine Campbell.



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 Gabrieli. 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.



Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba
Violin

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



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.



Carol Cook
Guest Principal Viola

Carol appears courtesy of Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestra. Carol plays a viola made by Samuel Gilkes, London, 1810. The Principal Viola Chair is sponsored by peckvonhartel architects – Robert Peck AM, Yvonne von Hartel AM, Rachel Peck & Marten Peck.



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



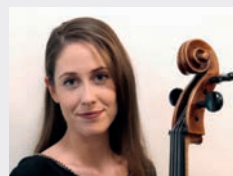
Tuomas Lehto
Guest Principal Cello

Tuomas appears courtesy of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Tuomas plays a Matteo Goffriller cello owned by his Orchestra.



Melissa Barnard
Cello

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



Alexandra Partridge
Guest Cello

Alexandra plays a 2009 Jay Haide cello.



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.

ENCOUNTER WITH JAZZ

Composer Sally Beamish meets Kate Holden
to discuss *Under the Wing of the Rock*.

Words. Kate Holden
Photography. Ashley Coombes



INTERVIEWS JAZZ



“I realise that doing an improvisation in jazz is composing in real time, so why not improvise onto the page?”

Sally Beamish, now in her 60s, is in a wonderful period of transformation. Thirty years ago, almost to the month, someone crept into her house in Tulse Hill, London, and stole her Gabrielli viola. The loss was a devastating grievance to Beamish, but it helped make up her mind: without her instrument, she agreed to move with her family to Scotland and dedicate herself to composition rather than performance. She became one of the most beloved composers of contemporary music in Britain.

Recently, she moved back to England. With her was a beautiful new viola, made by her luthier daughter to replace the lost Gabrielli. This gift has seen Beamish playing her instrument again after many years – a hiatus during which even listening to music could make her sad – and this has renovated her attitude to composition. With new appreciation of the challenges of performance, she's repented of ever making her intricate, elastic melodies too challenging to play. “Something has to feel really good when you're playing, like a really comfortable but glamorous outfit,” she says. “I'm writing rather differently now that I'm playing again. Partly,” she adds, “because there's a danger I might end up playing the thing myself.”

Beamish's years of experience in ensembles gives her a precious understanding of player rapport and how it can form a performance. The ACO's esprit de corps is familiar to her from their appearances in Britain, though she's never been to Australia. “Top of my list would be to work with the Australian Chamber Orchestra in person. I'm a

“Ever since I met him I’ve been much, much freer in the way I write. Sometimes it’s literally as if I’m imagining a jazz solo in my head and then just writing it down.”

huge admirer,” she says immediately. “I love the ethos of the orchestra: they seem really adventurous, with superb playing. You do get that feeling that everyone’s equal, and the huge energy that comes from that.”

Speaking of energy, this prolific, consistently questing and generative artist had what she describes as “an explosion in my life” with the encounter, more than 10 years ago, with renowned jazz master Branford Marsalis. He had chosen a work by Beamish, commissioned by saxophonist John Harle, *The Imagined Sound of Sun on Stone*, to play at a Rotterdam festival. Beamish crossed the Channel and surprised him at rehearsal; the ensuing conversation continues to this day. Some frustration completing a commission for viola and strings was resolved for Beamish by the energy and possibilities of Marsalis’s jazz world: it seemed natural then to write an arrangement for him and his saxophone.

That work, *Under the Wing of the Rock*, is a lament for the 17th-century massacre at Glencoe, in which about 30 members of a clan were killed on the wild slopes of their homeland. Beamish had found a lullaby in a book of Gaelic poetry and prayer. The revision for saxophone was premiered by Marsalis at the major Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow in 2009: “There’s quite a lot of jazz in it, fleeting really; it combines Celtic, classical and jazz, I suppose.”

For her, the saxophone has a strong analogue with the viola: they share, she says, “this slightly plangent, very, very human sound, expressive in a sort of imperfect way, so there’s always an edge to the sound”. The musical worlds of Marsalis and Beamish also share a respect for music as storytelling, with an emphasis on relationship with audience and a mission to convey not just aesthetics but narrative through melody and performance; even her titles are poetic, evocative. But at that first conversation, Beamish couldn’t understand Marsalis’s jazz vocabulary. “I didn’t know what a solo meant, I didn’t know anything. So I just learned the language. It’s had a massive effect on my composing,” she enthuses, “because I realise that doing an improvisation in jazz is composing in real time, so why not improvise onto the page? So ever since I met him I’ve been much, much freer in the way I write. Sometimes it’s literally as if I’m imagining a jazz solo in my head and then just writing it down. There’s a whole process that’s been eliminated,” she explains with satisfaction, “because it’s just coming straight from inside and going onto the page, and it’s sometimes the first thing I’ve thought of. It’s getting rid of all those voices that say, ‘No, you have to work all this out, and you have to justify every note, you have to have your systems, and all the rest.’ That’s all gone, really, since I’ve been working with him, and also understanding more about the world of jazz.”

Back in 2007, the two were inspired to collaborate on a project combining Marsalis’s jazz quartet and string orchestra, revising jazz “songs” and Beamish’s actual songs together. They’ve done about half but are yet to finish the piece; Marsalis assures her that the longer it takes, the better it will be.

She saw her muse perform recently with his quartet and is still exhilarated by the revelation of jazz. “There’s this fantastic sense of adventure as they start each song: what’s going to happen? They don’t know what’s going to happen! The humour of it, the energy: it’s just an extraordinary experience. The audience, everyone is *in there*; that’s an element that’s much more difficult to achieve with classical music, but I think the Australian Chamber Orchestra is a band that does achieve that rapport with each other and the audience. I think it starts with the rapport with each other. That’s what’s so special.” ●



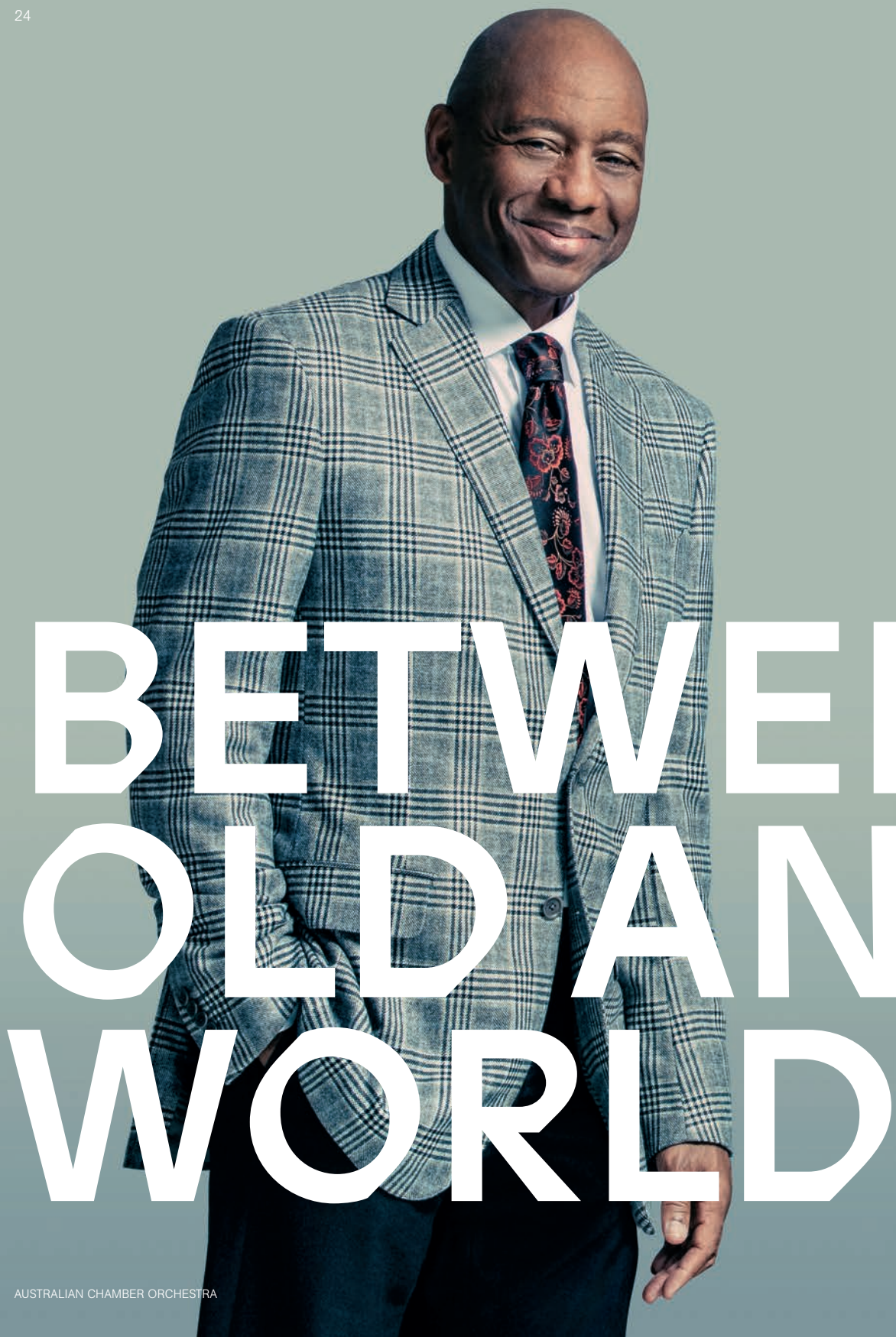
Rene Burri

ABOVE. Entry of the subway, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1958.

RIGHT. In a restaurant along the Avenida de Mayo in center of Buenos Aires, gauchos perform the "zapatos", Argentina, 1958.

© Rene Burri / Magnum Photos / Snapper Images.





BETWEEN OLD AND WORLD

Bernard Zuel talks to
Branford Marsalis and
Satu Vänskä.

Words. Bernard Zuel
Photography. Eric Ryan Anderson

EN ID NEW S

Speak to Branford Marsalis and he'll say crossing genres is less about the tools and more about the listening. More about what you absorb and what you can bring with you.

That's how it was in Louisiana, where he grew up, one of four musician sons of a jazz singer mother and a pianist father. That's how he does things now, nearly 40 years into a professional career that began, while he was still studying at Boston's Berklee College of Music, as a sideman for bandleader and drummer Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers.

"In some ways, growing up in New Orleans we understood it," the saxophonist says. "We had a lot of guys playing in brass bands and funk bands who were playing with faulty equipment and they never complained about the equipment: they put tape on it, they put a rubber band on it, and that would just keep going."

Take Heitor Villa-Lobos, one of the leading figures of Brazilian 20th-century music, whose *Fantasia for Saxophone and Orchestra* was Marsalis's choice for his program with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

"Villa-Lobos is an interesting guy because he decided to write symphonic music and he had no traditional European training at all. A lot of his pieces are like discoveries: you have to figure out how to play them," Marsalis says. "I've heard many versions of the *Fantasia* and I haven't really been comfortable with any of the interpretations, particularly the phrasing. Because he was not only from Brazil, he was *of* Brazil, proud of it ... There's a kind of rhythmic pulse built into the music and it crosses over into the phrasing. If you haven't spent a lot of time listening to Brazilian music, it would be harder for you to glean that.

"I have listened to a lot of Brazilian music, so when I play it it's mostly in the phrasing. I think a lot of people will

Right. Satu Vänskä with the 1726 'Belgiorno' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from Guido Belgiorno-Nettis AM & Michelle Belgiorno-Nettis.



find it very quirky: they won't have anything they can settle on. The second movement is very beautiful. The third movement sounds like a chase scene in a cowboy movie. When it starts, it starts with the basses and every time in my mind I'm going, 'Yee-ha!' I don't know how to explain that piece."

If explaining it is hard, playing it as it was conceived – for soprano saxophone – may be harder still, its original performance already semi-mythical for its near disaster. It's a story Marsalis relishes retelling.

"It was originally written for [French saxophonist] Marcel Mule and he didn't know what to make of it, so he says, 'I'm not going to play this piece', a month before the premiere. They scramble to find a replacement and could not find a soprano player in the country, but there was a tenor player."

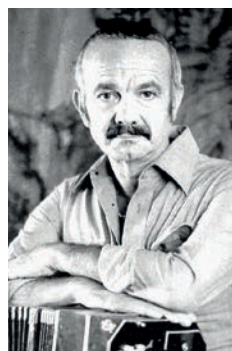
That tenor saxophone player, Waldemar Szpilman, was the cousin of the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman, whose story was the basis of the Oscar-winning film *The Pianist*. But even here, the story has a further twist.

"He asked Villa-Lobos if he could lower the piece one full step [tone] because it's very hard to play some of that on the tenor. So the premiere was played on tenor by Szpilman and the published version was one step lower than it was written, for soprano."

After a friend of Marsalis's found the original score, Marsalis had it transposed to its original key, which is the version he now performs. Though he remains shocked that the original remained unheard for some 50 years, he wryly notes that "it's not lost on me that Mr Mule didn't know what to make of the piece, how to approach it or how to play it".

Still, "now the string players don't hate the piece as much as they used to [because] the fingering, when it was lowered, was really difficult to play and orchestras routinely said, 'Man, I hate this.'"

The reconstituted *Fantasia* was the spark for the ACO's Principal Violin, Satu Vänскä, who is directing the Marsalis program, to expand into a South American adventure.



Top. Astor Piazzolla with his bandoneon in 1971. Copyright by Pupeto Mastropasqua.

Above. Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos.

“The second movement is very beautiful. The third movement sounds like a chase scene in a cowboy movie.”

Alongside the third of Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet*, and Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras No.5*, will be works by Argentinian composers Alberto Ginastera and Astor Piazzolla, the giant of modern tango.

The first four Piazzolla pieces are semi-seriously known as *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, though their connection to Vivaldi in their original form (before Desyatnikov's arrangement, which adds direct quotations) is tenuous at best and certainly not part of Piazzolla's original intentions. The clearly urban textures of the Argentinian piece may surprise modern audiences who, from a 21st-century distance, think of the Vivaldi as representing a rural idyll, a natural rhythm.

“Actually, if you think about it, the Vivaldi is urban,” says Vänskä, who points out that tango is, as she puts it, urban flirting music connected to convivial evenings of wine and dance. She says *The Four Seasons* “is tied to the times, with autumn being harvest time for example, and also they would have big parties during the harvesting, so it's all about the people getting drunk after the harvest. [On] the music is written, ‘This is a drunkard who is stumbling out of a party.’ So it's very social at the same time.”

Of course, Vivaldi was not writing from life spent in a little hamlet; he was for the time an urban dweller who was celebrating something vivid in his imagination, both old and current.

“That's what I'm thinking with the Piazzolla, too: what do I want to achieve with it?” Vänskä asks. “It's the Tango Nuevo, so Piazzolla's tango was not the strict old tango of Argentina, either. He made it his own version of that identity and [furthermore] this is an arrangement by a Russian for a string orchestra.



"I have been listening a lot to Piazzolla's own quintets and how he treats time and how he treats the textures, which were bandoneón, piano, the bass, violin and electric guitar. And I find it very, very fascinating working out how to achieve that sort of hybrid sound out of the strings so that the string orchestra can sound like a bandoneón at times. We do try to chase that essence of the quintet and the essence of the urban, of Buenos Aires, of tango."

The links between the Brazilian and the Argentinians are more than geographical, with all three composers blending their folk traditions with European compositional forms, finding themselves in-between old and new worlds in a way rather familiar for this Australian orchestra, and for Vänskä, a Finn, born in Japan and long resident here.

"I think we can relate to that. Australia is a 'between' place, too. Let's be honest," she says. "It's an immigrant country with a complicated past, and the immigrant part is very, very new, so you are geographically in a very different place to where your cultural heritage comes from. And I find it fascinating in this program, thinking that Ginastera studied in America with Aaron Copland, and Aaron Copland studied with Nadia Boulanger, who is an unsung heroine of the 20th-century really."

"When she heard Piazzolla do the tango, she said, 'This is your music, why aren't you doing this? This is the music you should be doing' rather than the 20th-century contemporary concert music he was studying. It's curious that she saw that in him, and that's where the Tango Nuevo started."

Crossover, before crossover became a thing.

"Composers had always done that but it really opened up in the early 20th-century, when composers like Ravel and Stravinsky started hearing jazz as all these African-American bands started coming in to Europe," Vänskä says.

"And they were absolutely fascinated by it, so these European composers started using jazz in their own music. Then these composers in South America started using their own music as well as [a European] approach."

Left. Satu Vänskä
performing at Arts Centre
Melbourne in March 2017.

“We can give you something refreshing to think about and give you a different angle of ideas.”

Just thinking about the way the already rich catalogue of music expanded over the past century excites Vänskä, who regularly flies the ACO coop for the more relaxed lines of the experimental ACO Underground.

“That’s one of the real gifts of being a classical musician. We know this: we have such a huge amount of repertoire and knowledge of different eras,” she says. “We can play so many different things, some which people are not expecting, so I think in a way it’s a nice thing to have that sort of calling card of people being surprised.

“I have said that it’s important to entertain people but what I mean is that going to a concert should not be a place where you just switch off your brain. We can give you something refreshing to think about and give you a different angle of ideas.”

Refreshing the brain as much as the repertoire is part of the process for Marsalis, who played his first classical piece as a teen. He remembers being “this 16-year-old kid from New Orleans who grew up playing rhythm and blues and marching bands, playing Glazunov, and I’m sure it was pretty horrid”. He also remembers that when he returned to the form seriously three decades later, “I was working with the [New York chamber ensemble] Orpheus Orchestra and I was as green as green can be, rough around all edges, period.

“They pointed me in the direction and took care of me. I love the opportunity to play with world-class musicians in an environment where they control it. It’s exhilarating.”

Marsalis’s second selection for the ACO program, *Under the Wing of the Rock* (Saxophone Concerto No.2), is by

the English composer Sally Beamish, who wrote it for viola originally but, with Marsalis in mind, rearranged it for alto saxophone.

"I welcomed the idea, and the first time I played it I thought, 'Yeah, it's going to get better,'" the saxophonist remembers. "She is funny. Her instinct is, 'Oh, I could have done better.' And I was like, 'That was not you; that was me.'

"I recorded it a few years ago and I was still like, 'I'm sorry I'm not playing the way it needs to be; I'm not ready.' Now, I think I play it pretty good. I understand the phrasing and how it has to be and I've changed some fingerings to make it more technically efficient and I'm working through it. I understand it better musically – I'm ready to make music out of it now."

If the Villas-Lobos reflects a South American urban life, the Beamish could not be further away.

"With Sally, a lot of her pieces start out very serene. She moved to Scotland and spent a lot of time listening to the air and the smell of the sea, and that's what I'm going to evoke for the beginning of the piece, that kind of calm. Then the fugue starts and it's quite exciting before we return to the sea. It's more about feeling things than saying things."

As anyone who has spent time on the coast of Scotland knows, particularly to the north, that mix of serenity and intense excitement very much sums up the volatility of the natural world.

"With that perpetual rain [in Scotland], the green is a kind of green you get in a jungle environment, more so than in normal situations. It always rains just enough and that's the kind of imagery I use when I'm playing it, especially in the adagio at the beginning," Marsalis says. "In the fugue, I'm focused more on playing my notes right because I'm playing off of the orchestral players.

"There's a lot to think about and I can't be so serene in that part as I'm trying to blend in with the orchestra and bounce off of what they're doing. They are doing things behind me that are quite unorthodox at times."



Above. Composer Sally Beamish.

“There is a presumption that jazz audiences and classical audiences have a certain level of sophistication that pop audiences don’t. I’ve seen no real evidence of that”

As a final thought on genre and border crossing, Marsalis pulls back from theorising and comparisons to something more straightforward: his view that making sound to create emotion is universal, and maybe paramount.

“There is a presumption that jazz audiences and classical audiences have a certain level of sophistication that pop audiences don’t. I’ve seen no real evidence of that,” he says. “I am a big opera fan, and routinely people tend to applaud, if it’s done well, the set design when the curtain opens. People hear with their eyes, and I’m not saying that pejoratively. As a musician we spend so much time working on the things you and I are talking about that we sometimes delude ourselves into thinking that that’s what it’s actually about, and that the audience is going to respond to that.

“The audience is going to respond to how it feels when you’re done, and that’s it.”

Which maybe brings us back to the debate we began with, about tools versus expression, equipment versus ears and hearts.

“If you don’t listen to music, you have no way of actually understanding how that music is supposed to sound,” Marsalis says. “You can’t get into the middle of it; all you can do is play it correctly. Which, as my teacher used to say: Well, it’s correct, but it ain’t right.” ●

Right. Branford Marsalis



PHOTO. ROGER THOMAS

NATIONAL CONCERT SEASON 2019





Rene Burri

LEFT. Reception at the Teatro Collon during the visit of the vice president Nixon. Buenos Aires,1958.

ABOVE. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1960.

© Rene Burri / Magnum Photos / Snapper Images.

BRANFORD MARSALIS

Branford Marsalis has stayed the course. From his early acclaim as a saxophonist bringing new energy and new audiences to jazz, he has refined and expanded his talents and his horizons as a musician, composer, bandleader and educator – a 21st-century mainstay of artistic excellence.

Growing up in the rich environment of New Orleans as the oldest son of pianist and educator Ellis Marsalis, Branford was drawn to music along with siblings Wynton, Delfeayo and Jason. His first instrument, the clarinet, gave way to the alto and then the tenor and soprano saxophones when he began working in local bands as a teenager. A growing fascination with jazz as he entered college gave him the basic tools to obtain his first major jobs, with trumpet legend Clark Terry and alongside Wynton in Art Blakey's legendary Jazz Messengers. When the brothers left to form the Wynton Marsalis Quintet, the world of uncompromising acoustic jazz was invigorated. Branford formed his own quartet in 1986 and, with a few minor interruptions in the early years, has sustained the unit as his primary means of expression.

Branford has not confined his music to the quartet context however. Classical music inhabits a growing portion of Branford's musical universe. A frequent soloist with classical ensembles, Branford has become increasingly sought after as a featured soloist with such acclaimed orchestras as the Chicago, Detroit, Düsseldorf and North Carolina Symphonies, and the Boston Pops, with a growing repertoire that includes compositions by Debussy, Glazunov, Ibert, Mahler, Milhaud, Rorem and Vaughan Williams. Praised by the New York Times for bringing "a graceful poise and supple tone...and an insouciant swagger" to his classical performances, Branford Marsalis has proven that his musical command knows no bounds.

Some might gauge Branford Marsalis's success by his numerous awards, including three Grammys and (together with his father and brothers) his citation as a Jazz Master by the National Endowment for the Arts. To Branford, however, these are only way stations along what continues to be one of the most fascinating and rewarding journeys in the world of music.



SATU VÄNSKÄ

Satu Vänskä is Principal Violin of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. She regularly performs as lead violin and soloist with the Orchestra.

Satu performed as orchestra leader and soloist in the 2018 London production of Barry Humphries' *Weimar Cabaret* with the Aurora Orchestra. She has appeared as soloist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, most recently giving a performance of the Sibelius Violin Concerto at the 2019 Mona Foma Festival, and in recital at the Sydney Opera House and Melbourne Recital Centre.

She is the director, frontwoman, violinist and vocalist of electro-acoustic ensemble ACO Underground, and as a violinist and singer has collaborated with artists that include Barry Humphries, Meow Meow, Jonny Greenwood, The Presets, Jim Moginie and Brian Ritchie in settings ranging from New York's Le Poisson Rouge and Sydney's Oxford Art Factory, to Slovenia's Maribor Festival and the US's Tanglewood Festival.

Satu was born to a Finnish family in Japan where she began violin lessons at the age of three. Upon her family's relocation to Finland, she studied with Pertti Sutinen at the Lahti Conservatorium and the Sibelius Academy, and later at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich where she finished her diploma as a pupil of Ana Chumachenko.

Satu was named 'Young Soloist of the Year' by Sinfonia Lahti in 1998, and a few years later was prize winner of the 'Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben'. From 2001 she played under the auspices of Lord Yehudi Menuhin's Live Music Now Foundation which gave her the opportunity to perform with musicians including Radu Lupu and Heinrich Schiff.

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



PHOTO. BEN SULLIVAN

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Spotlight on

POHO FLOWERS

The ACO and Poho Flowers celebrate 8 years of partnership this year. We managed to find time in Ed's busy schedule to ask him a few questions.



Ed pictured with dyed orchid.

Poho Flowers, 117 Macleay St
Potts Point NSW

Why did you become a florist?

I've always been drawn to nature, plants and flowers. Floristry is an incredible creative outlet, and it makes me smile every day. I can honestly say I love going to work.

Poho Flowers supports all ACO fundraising events.

Can you talk about the concept for the most recent Sydney fundraiser at Carriageworks?

We used a large quantity of Baby's Breath to create just the right impact in what is an incredibly raw and beautiful space. The concept was the brainchild of MG Events and the ACO, and we were given creative licence to interpret the brief in our distinct Poho style.

How did you become involved with the ACO?

Poho's relationship with the ACO represents the perfect synergy between two art forms. We love the creative freedom we're given to do something out of the box; to use the best seasonal flowers, while pushing our own creative boundaries.

Creativity is at the core of your business.

Where do you take your inspiration from?

Sourcing materials is still one of the most inspiring parts of what I do – I have so much respect and admiration for the farmers we work with. Greater Sydney's microclimates mean we get the best of all seasons and growing conditions.

POHO
FLOWERS

@pohoflowers
www.poho.com.au



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ACO Foundations participants performing with
Artistic Director Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber
Orchestra. Photo by Flora Sacco.

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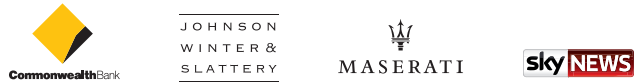
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