

ACO Collective

NICO MUHLY AND THE NEW

DECEMBER 2019

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Collective

PEKKA KUUSISTO
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GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Inside you'll find features and interviews that shine a spotlight on our players and the program you are about to hear. Enjoy the read.

INSIDE:



Welcome

From the ACO's Managing
Director Richard Evans

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A photograph of a woman with short dark hair, smiling as she plays a violin. She is wearing a grey sweater. In the background, other musicians are visible, including a woman with glasses also playing a violin. The setting appears to be a concert hall or rehearsal space.

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Be inspired

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WELCOME

Welcome to *Nico Muhly and the New*, a concert that features the marvellous young musicians of ACO Collective, led by the ensemble's inimitable Artistic Director Pekka Kuusisto.

In tonight's performance you will enjoy five pieces of music by today's most exciting and ground-breaking composers, with the pinnacle of the program being the world premiere performance of acclaimed New York composer Nico Muhly's new violin concerto, *Shrink*, a work written specially for Pekka.

Included in the wonderful Collective ensemble onstage tonight are our eight Emerging Artists for 2019 – our largest ever cohort in the program's 12-year history. We are immensely proud of the ongoing success of this program which has seen Emerging Artist alumni go on to work with professional orchestras around the world. In fact, six former Emerging Artists have graduated to become members of the ACO, including violinist Liisa Pallandi, who is performing with ACO Collective in this concert.

I thank our patrons who have supported this tour, and in particular, I thank Horsey Jamison Bird for supporting Pekka Kuusisto as his Medici Patron. Similarly, I thank Wesfarmers who are Principal Partners of ACO Collective and whose support is most integral to the success of this tour, and the enduring success of ACO Collective more broadly.

I hope you have a rejuvenating festive season and looking forward to seeing you in the concert hall in 2020.



Richard Evans
Managing Director

Join the conversation    #ACO19



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PEKKA KUUSISTO ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Pekka Kuusisto,
ACO Collective Artistic Director

Art by Lydia Balbal from the Wesfarmers Collection

Wesfarmers and the Australian Chamber Orchestra have a long and valued partnership, with the shared objective of making a positive contribution to the communities in which we operate.

Twenty years after we first collaborated to bring this wonderful Orchestra to Perth on a regular basis, we are honoured to support the ACO in reaching regional communities in Western Australia and beyond as the Principal Partner of ACO Collective.

Nico Muhly and the New is a unique program that showcases the vitality and energy of the internationally acclaimed and multi-talented Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto as Artistic Director, ACO Collective.

It is a privilege and a joy to support the tremendous work of the ACO as part of our commitment to making a broader contribution to the communities in which we live and work. We hope you enjoy this performance as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you.



Rob Scott
Managing Director
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ACO COLLECTIVE ON STAGE

Melbourne Recital Centre



PROGRAM

Pekka Kuusisto Artistic Director and Violin
ACO Collective

PRE-CONCERT TALK	Nico Muhly in conversation with Marshall McGuire and Anna Melville at 6.45pm	mins
ACO COLLECTIVE	Drone Meditation	5
STEVE REICH	Duet Pekka Kuusisto & Harry Ward Violins	6
MISSY MAZZOLI (arr. strings)	You Know Me From Here <i>I. Lift your fists</i> <i>II. Everything that rises must converge</i> <i>III. You know me from here</i>	20
INTERVAL		20
ANDREA TARRODI	Birds of Paradise	9
ALEX MILLS	One is Fun (world premiere) Pekka Kuusisto & Liisa Pallandi Violins	5
NICO MUHLY	Shrink: Concerto for Violin and Strings* (world premiere) <i>I. Ninths</i> <i>II. Sixths</i> <i>III. Turns</i> Pekka Kuusisto Violin	20

*Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Melbourne Recital Centre

The concert will last approximately one hour and 30 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

The Australian Chamber Orchestra reserves the right to alter scheduled artists and programs as necessary.

EXTRA PERFORMANCE: NICO MUHLY AND PEKKA KUUSISTO BREAKING GROUND

After tonight's concert, please get a drink and join us back in Elisabeth Murdoch Hall for *Breaking Ground*, a special duo set that will include improvisation and Finnish folk songs, featuring Nico Muhly on piano with Pekka Kuusisto.

Admission to this special performance is included with all tickets to *Nico Muhly and the New*.

Breaking Ground will last approximately one hour with no interval.



ACO concerts are regularly broadcast on ABC Classic.

Nico Muhly and the New will be recorded for broadcast by ABC Classic FM on 15 December at 12 noon.

ACO Collective

ACO Collective features members of the ACO alongside musicians from our Emerging Artist Program – young, professional musicians at the outset of their careers.

With Artistic Director Pekka Kuusisto at the helm, the result is an ensemble full of youthful energy, with the dynamism and artistry of which the ACO is renowned.

ACO Collective is supported by Wesfarmers Arts and tours regional Australia, taking world-class performances to audiences far and wide. 2019 has seen the ensemble embark on two tours – one led by Pekka Kuusisto through regional South Australia and Victoria, and the other led by ACO Principal Violin Helena Rathbone through regional New South Wales and Queensland.

aco.com.au/collective

The musicians on stage for this performance.

Pekka Kuusisto

Artistic Director & Violin

Chair sponsored by Horsey Jameson Bird

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Violin

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James Morley²

Double Bass

Jaan Pallandi^{2#}

¹ ACO / ² 2019 Emerging Artist / * Courtesy of ANAM / # Courtesy of Sydney Symphony Orchestra



Pekka Kuusisto

ACO Collective Artistic Director & Violin

Violinist, conductor and composer Pekka Kuusisto is Artistic Partner of the Saint Paul and Mahler Chamber orchestras, Artistic Director of the ACO Collective and Artistic Best Friend of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen.

Highlights of the season include concerto appearances with the NDR Elbphilharmonie, Chicago, NHK, Gothenburg, MDR, Swedish Radio and Finnish Radio symphony orchestras, and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich where he is an artist "in focus". Kuusisto returns as violinist-director-conductor to the Tapiola Sinfonietta, the Norwegian, Swedish and Scottish Chamber orchestras. He also is the featured artist for Amsterdam's annual Prinsengrachtconcert – the largest classical open-air concert in the Netherlands.

An advocate of new music, Kuusisto will premiere this season concerti by Nico Muhly and Enrique Chapela, as well as performing other works written for him including Daniel Bjarnason's Violin Concerto and Anders Hillborg's *Bach Materia*.

Kuusisto is a gifted improviser who engages with people across the artistic spectrum, recently with Hauschka, neurologist Erik Scherder, electronic music pioneer Brian Crabtree, and folk artist Sam Amidon. Together with Samuli Kosminen, Kuusisto co-composed the score to the new animated *Moomins* television series. He also collaborated with Cannes award winning director Juho Kuosmanen, performing in the Greenpeace campaign film *The Elegy of the Forest*.

His recordings include Erkki-Sven Tüür's *Noesis*, Sebastian Fagerlund's *Darkness in Light*, Hillborg's *Bach Materia* and Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* Nos. 3 and 4.



Nico Muhly

Composer

Nico Muhly (b.1981) is an American composer and sought-after collaborator whose influences range from American minimalism to the Anglican choral tradition. The recipient of commissions from The Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tallis Scholars and St John's College, Cambridge and others, he has written more than 100 works for the concert stage, including the opera *Marnie* (2017), which premiered at the English National Opera and was staged by the Metropolitan Opera in the fall of 2018.

Muhly is a frequent collaborator with choreographer Benjamin Millepied and, as an arranger, has paired with Sufjan Stevens, Antony and the Johnsons and others. His work for stage and screen include music for the Broadway revival of *The Glass Menagerie* and scores for films including the Academy Award-winning *The Reader*. Born in Vermont, Muhly studied composition at the Juilliard School before working as an editor and conductor for Philip Glass. He is part of the artist-run record label Bedroom Community, which released his first two albums, *Speaks Volumes* (2006) and *Mothertongue* (2008). He lives in New York City.

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

WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO HEAR

Your five-minute read before lights down

Steve Reich

Duet

Steve Reich is one of the most significant figures in 20th-century music, being one of the pioneers of “minimal” music along with La Monte Young, Terry Riley and Philip Glass. Reich's particular brand of minimalism involves the use of canons (in which one voice follows another), pulsing patterns, and repetitions of small cycles of music to create a trance-like effect. One of his most significant musical innovations, “phasing”, was born out of the use of tape loops – playing two identical tapes at once and letting them drift out of sync with each other, creating incredible patterns and harmonies.

His *Duet* for two violins and strings was composed in 1994 and is dedicated to Sir Yehudi Menuhin and “to the ideals of international understanding which he has practiced throughout his life.” The piece is built around simple unison canons between the two violins who, from time to time, slightly vary the rhythmic distance between their two voices. As an accompaniment to the two solo violins, the strings create a wash of sound that seems to pulse and shimmer endlessly while undergoing subtle changes in harmony.

Missy Mazzoli

You Know Me From Here (arr. strings)

The string quartet is arguably the most personal genre a composer can tackle. Mozart's quartets show us how he admired and followed in the footsteps of his friend, Joseph Haydn; Beethoven's quartets are a summation of his career; Smetana and Janáček wrote quartets

about intensely personal aspects of their lives. Another composer in this concert, Nico Muhly, has said he has “a huge anxiety about string quartets; they are normally meant to be giant expressions of a composer's life”. Missy Mazzoli seems to have no such reservations, and in her string quartet *You Know Me From Here* she attempts to capture the emotional scale not of her own life, but of a couple's long-term relationship.

The piece was commissioned by Carol Magnus Cole in honour of her husband Tim Cole's 75th birthday. Mazzoli sums up the three movements as “a trek through chaos, then loneliness, to a place of security and companionship.” Accordingly, the first movement ‘Lift your fists’, features an aggressive pace and bursts of anger. The second, ‘Everything that rises must converge’ rapidly slows down, and starts to feature individual instruments against a chordal background. Finally, the third movement ‘You know me from here’, blends the two moods. Mazzoli describes the end of the piece as “a raucous love song”, encouraging us to remember that real energetic emotion is earned with effort and time.

Andrea Tarrodi

Birds of Paradise

Andrea Tarrodi is one of Sweden's leading composers. Her music, which is often inspired by the natural world and seeks to “connect music with images and colours”, has been performed at London's Barbican Centre and Royal Albert Hall, the Berlin Philharmonie and Vienna's Musikverein. In 2018, her album of string quartets, performed by the Dahlkvist Quartet, won a Swedish Grammy Award for best classical album of the year.

Tarrodi has alleged that her compositional style usually commences with a non-musical idea that builds into “a sort of map with colours and symbols that define the form of the piece”. In *Birds of Paradise*, which was written for Musica Vitae in 2008, the non-musical inspiration was a BBC *Planet Earth* film “about the strange and beautiful birds of paradise. Their many different colours, the way they fly and the way the sound and sing...”. Bird calls permeate the work and form the entire middle section, while the musical swells that encompass them provide an overwhelming sense of the birds’ place in the world.

Alex Mills

One is Fun (world premiere)

Welsh composer Alex Mills studied at Cambridge University and with Raymond Yiu, winning “Young Composer of the Year” at the 2011 Edinburgh International Harp Festival. His music has been performed at London’s Barbican Centre and LSO St Luke’s, and broadcast on BBC Radio. He has worked with the likes of Nico Muhly (assisting him on his 2017 opera *Marnie* and score for the BBC series *Howards End*) and the Grammy Award winning ensemble Eighth Blackbird. His first opera, *Dear Marie Stopes*, premiered in London in 2018, and his second opera, *Leonardo*, based on the life of Leonardo da Vinci, premiered at London’s V&A this November.

One is Fun was composed in 2016, but receives its world premiere in Melbourne today. The piece can be played by two violins or by solo violin with tape, prompting comparisons with the “phasing” technique of Steve Reich, whose *Duet* for two violins and strings features in this concert. However, where Reich uses speed to gradually separate or “phase” his soloists apart, Mills uses rhythm, register, dynamics and slight variations in pitch. In doing so, he creates a constant state of intrigued stress, or a “push-pull effect ... where the tension continuously builds and releases, often spilling over into hockets where the two parts are both dependent on and independent of one another”.

Nico Muhly

Shrink: Concerto for Violin and Strings (world premiere)

Nico Muhly is one of the most celebrated and sought-after classical composers of the last decade, with works spanning instrumental, orchestral and choral music, to film music and opera, being the youngest composer ever commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera. He has also collaborated extensively with both classical and popular musicians, including Philip Glass, Björk and Sufjan Stevens.

His concerto for violin and string orchestra, *Shrink*, was commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Melbourne Recital Centre. The concerto is dedicated to Pekka Kuusisto, and receives its world premiere in this concert. In *Shrink*, Muhly takes the concept of the traditional violin concerto and completely inverts it, focusing not on the monumentality of the orchestra, nor the virtuosity of his soloist, but the intricacy of how they work together.

Muhly writes:

“*Shrink* is in three movements. Each movement obsesses over certain intervals: the first, ninths; the second, sixths; and the final, a tiny set of anxious intervals between unisons and fourths. The overall structure suggests an intensifying focus on these small building-blocks, a process which is reflected in the speed of each movement. The first proceeds quickly, becomes aggressive, and dissolves into small fragments. The second movement is slow and taut, with a looped sequence of chords whose character becomes increasingly thick and heavy. The last movement is fast, nervous, and scattered, with occasional giant unisons coming in and out of focus.”

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