

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

# RESPIGHI, BRITTEN & VASKS

Directed by Richard Tognetti

JUNE 2019

## Program in Short

Your five-minute read  
before lights down

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## Guiding Lights

Bernard Rofo  
discusses the art of  
homage in music

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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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generous supporters

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# WELCOME

*Respighi, Britten & Vasks* marks our first concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre for 2019. We are delighted to return to this most magnificent of recital venues to present this striking program of string music, directed by Richard Tognetti.

Following this performance, the Orchestra will embark on our fourth national tour for the year, *Indies & Idols*. This bold, energising program sees string orchestral music by contemporary indie icons paired alongside breathtaking works from the great Polish classical composers who inspired them.

Without you, we wouldn't be able to tour our orchestra and education programs around Australia each year. The ACO earns 90% of its own revenue, and ticket sales only make up 40% of what it takes to bring our work to stages and classrooms around the country.

Donations from the public are vital to our existence. I encourage you to consider making a tax-deductible donation to the ACO before 30 June.

Thank you for your support and for joining us in the concert hall this evening. I hope you enjoy the performance.



**Richard Evans**  
Managing Director

Join the conversation     #ACO19

## News

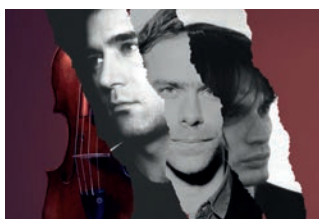


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ACO Patrons are our lifeblood. With only 12% of our funding provided from government sources, you play a vital role in helping us to shape the musical landscape through bringing the Orchestra's artistic vision to life. A tax-deductible donation will help us maintain our position as one of the world's great chamber orchestras.

## Coming up



### 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.



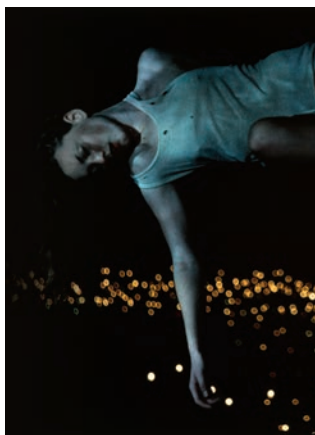
## JUL

### ACO Academy

7–12 JULY

Sydney

Our program for talented school aged string players, led by ACO violinist Aiko Goto. Participants spend an inspirational week in rehearsal with ACO musicians, culminating in a public performance at 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 Lazic reunites with Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra for a celebration of Mozart's symphonies and concertos.



## OCT

### Barbican Residency

3–5 OCTOBER

London

We return to London for the second of our three seasons in residence as International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court at the Barbican Centre.





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

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# PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Director and Violin  
Australian Chamber Orchestra

PRE-CONCERT TALK	From 6.45pm by Pat Miller	mins
HANDEL	Alcina, HWV34: Overture and Dances <i>Ouverture</i> <i>Musette</i> <i>Menuet</i> <i>Gavotte</i> <i>Sarabande</i> <i>Menuet</i> <i>Gavotte</i> <i>Tamburino</i>	11
MEALE	Cantilena Pacifica	8
RESPIGHI	Ancient Airs and Dances: Suite III <i>I. Italiana</i> <i>II. Arie di corte</i> <i>III. Siciliana</i> <i>IV. Passacaglia</i>	17
INTERVAL		20
PĒTERIS VASKS	Viatore for 11 solo strings <i>Australian premiere</i>	15
BRITTEN	Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, Op.10 <i>I. Introduction and Theme</i> <i>II. Adagio</i> <i>III. March</i> <i>IV. Romance</i> <i>V. Aria Italiana</i> <i>VI. Bourrée Classique</i> <i>VII. Wiener Waltzer</i> <i>VIII. Moto Perpetuo</i> <i>IX. Funeral March</i> <i>X. Chant</i> <i>XI. Fugue and Finale</i>	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.

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# PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read  
before lights down.



## George Frideric Handel

(1685–1759)

### Alcina, HWV34: Overture and Dances

Handel's *Alcina*, which premiered at Covent Garden in 1735, was described as “an opera with which Handel seems to have vanquished his opponents”. A deeply ironic tale of chivalry and heroism based on Ludovico Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando Furioso*, a group of heroes sets out to vanquish a mighty sorceress who lures knights onto her island and turns them into plants, animals and rocks when she tires of them.

One admirer of Handel's new opera wrote: “I think it is the best he has ever made ... 'tis so fine I have not words to describe it.” The opera opens with an instrumental overture and a suite of dances composed especially for the French dancer Marie Sallé, and closes with an ebullient *tamburino*, which the full company joins in jubilant chorus.

## Richard Meale

(1932–2009)

### Cantilena Pacifica

*Cantilena Pacifica*, which is frequently performed today as a standalone work for violin and strings, originated as the final movement of Richard Meale's second string quartet. The quartet emerged out of a dilemma for the composer – that his devotion to hard-edged modernism had begun to overshadow honest artistic expression. “The problem that I was encountering was brought to a head in 1979 ... Sadly, my best friend, Stephen Wilson, died after a sudden onset of cancer. It now became a matter of necessity to write a piece that would be a memorial to him. So it became clear that the work could not be based on any artifice; its existence had to lie in its emotional truth.”

*Cantilena Pacifica* became that memorial. It is an extended outpouring of elegiac melody that seems, at times, to meander aimlessly in its grief as the solo violin sings in heartbreak above the gentle undulations of the strings.



## Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)

### Ancient Airs and Dances: Suite III

It may seem surprising, but for much of the 19th and 20th centuries, the music of pre-Classical composers was largely unknown to the general concert-going public. As a student, Ottorino Respighi became exposed to a significant amount of this music – works that had long been forgotten or dismissed as old fashioned. His three suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances* are based on pieces he re-discovered in Italian libraries and wanted to bring to life once again.

The 'Italiana' that opens Suite III combines an anonymous late-16th-century galliard (a lively dance) with another, *La Cesarina*, by Santino Garsi da Parma. The 'Arie di corte' is based on *Airs de Cour* – six court airs published in 1603. The 'Siciliana' is based on a tune better known in the 17th century as *Spagnoletta*. And the 'Passacaglia' (variations on a ground bass) is based on a 1692 guitar publication called *Capricci armonici*.

These suites have since become extremely popular with modern audiences, and while the original composers would never have imagined hearing their music in Respighi's modern settings, they surely would have been delighted to know their music was being enjoyed once again.

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**Above.** The pier with the library and the column of San Theodoro, Venice. Oil on canvas, c1735.

“*Viatore* tells the story of a wanderer who arrives in this world, grows up in it, develops, falls in love, fills himself up and then departs. The journey is illuminated by the endless and starry universe.”

## Pēteris Vasks

(1946–)

### *Viatore*

Arranged for 11 solo strings by  
Stefan Vanselow

Latvian composer Pēteris Vasks' music pursues themes such as the complex interaction between humans and nature, and the beauty of life pitted against the ecological and moral destruction of the world. Vasks writes that *Viatore* “tells the story of a wanderer who arrives in this world, grows up in it, develops, falls in love, fills himself up and then departs. The journey is illuminated by the endless and starry universe.”

*Viatore* unfolds as a single movement and comprises two musical images: the theme of the traveller grows and develops throughout the composition; the theme of eternity, however, remains ageless and unchanging. *Viatore* is dedicated to Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, who Vasks describes as his “guiding light for many decades.”

## Benjamin Britten

(1913–1976)

### Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, Op.10

Benjamin Britten, the major British composer of the 20th century, was Frank Bridge's only composition student, having been taught by Bridge from his teenage years. Today, Bridge is known almost solely through this set of variations on the theme from the second of his *Three Idylls*. Britten decided that each of the ten variations should reflect an aspect of his teacher's personality, namely his integrity, energy, charm, humour, tradition, enthusiasm, vitality, sympathy, reverence and skill, each rendered using a different musical style. History often forgets great teachers, but Britten's tribute ensures that his own composition teacher will always be remembered.

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## Richard Tognetti

**Director and Violin**

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Richard plays the 1743  
'Carrodus' Giuseppe  
Guarneri del Gesù violin  
kindly on loan from an  
anonymous Australian  
private benefactor. His Chair  
is sponsored by Wendy  
Edwards, Peter & Ruth  
McMullin, Louise Myer &  
Martyn Myer AO, Andrew  
& Andrea Roberts.



## Satu Vänkä

**Principal Violin**

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



## Glenn Christensen

**Violin**

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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.

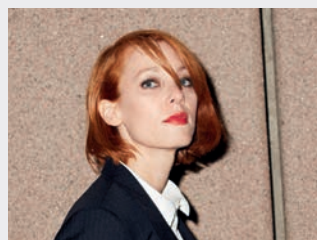


## Mark Ingwersen

**Violin**

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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.



## Maja Savnik

**Violin**

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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.



## Ike See

**Violin**

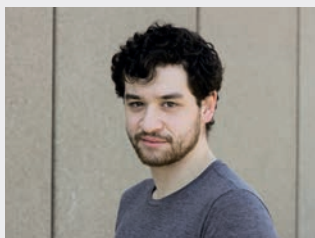
Ike plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Di Jameson.



## 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.



## Nathan Greentree

**Viola**

Nathan plays a viola by Štefan Valčuha made in 2008 in New York.



## 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.



## 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.





# GUIDING LIGHTS



Bernard Rofe discusses the  
art of homage in music.

**Words. Bernard Rofe**

Bernard Rofe is the ACO's librarian as well as a composer and arranger. Most recently his arrangement of Piazzolla's *Libertango* was performed by Branford Marsalis and the ACO.

IG

“For all their old Renaissance charm, Respighi’s arrangements have a romantic lyricism that makes them sound anything but ancient.”

On the evening of 29 May 1913, audiences packed into Paris’s newly opened Théâtre des Champs-Élysées to witness an event that would have lasting effects on the future of classical music. That event, of course, was the first performance of Igor Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, a work that seems as modern and futuristic today as it must have been to its first audience, which included such creative minds as Pablo Picasso, Claude Debussy and Marcel Proust.

Much is said of how “prophetic” and “influential” Stravinsky’s *Rite* is, but perhaps more than anything, *The Rite* is an homage to Stravinsky’s native roots and influences. Traditional Russian folk melodies dominate Stravinsky’s earliest major works, and are rendered using richly colourful yet innovative orchestrations. None of this was anything new: Stravinsky inherited these traits from his teacher Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, but he would take them to new, groundbreaking places.

Paying homage to one’s teachers and roots is a theme that permeates music history. We would not have the perfection of Mozart’s late quartets and symphonies if he wasn’t intently following in the footsteps of his friend Joseph Haydn, to whom he dedicated six of his late quartets. We would not have the turbulence of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony if it wasn’t modelled on Mozart’s tragic

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Left. Italian composer Ottorino Respighi. Drawing, c1935, by Hilda Wiener.





Top. Claudio Monteverdi painting by Bernardo Strozzi. Above. Ottorino Respighi by photographer Ghitta Lorell.

40th Symphony, and although Beethoven never fulfilled his wish to study with Mozart, he paid homage to the composer by writing several sets of variations on themes from Mozart's operas. Without Gabriel Fauré's influence, we would not have the distinctively French colour and sensuality of Ravel's String Quartet, which is dedicated to his teacher.

More recently, an entire school of the 20th century's most significant composers (including Aaron Copland, Elliot Carter, Philip Glass, Astor Piazzolla, Wojciech Kilar and Peggy Glanville-Hicks) owe not only their rigorously wrought composition skills but, most importantly, clarity and confidence in their individual styles, to the great composer and pedagogue Nadia Boulanger, such that she is one of the few great teachers in any art form that history has not forgotten.

History has a bad habit of forgetting some of its most important cornerstones. For much of the 19th century, and well into the early 20th century, the music of such seminal Renaissance and Baroque composers as Claudio Monteverdi, Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Sebastian Bach and their contemporaries was largely unknown to concert-goers: Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* were far from the inescapable elevator music they seem today; Bach's *Goldberg Variations* had not yet been recorded to international fame by Wanda Landowska or Glenn Gould. Indeed, much music from before Haydn's time was largely restricted to academic study by specialist scholars.

One of these scholars was the Italian composer Ottorino Respighi, who counted among his teachers the composer and musicologist Luigi Torchi, an early music scholar who sowed the seeds for his lifelong interest in early music. This music, though fascinating to the young Respighi, was notoriously difficult to find at the best of times, and even when it could be found, it might be written in old-



fashioned notation that was difficult for the modern musician to interpret. Fortunately, a treasure trove of this music had recently become available in modern editions prepared by the Italian scholar Oscar Chilesotti, a pioneer in deciphering lute tablature. Chilesotti published several volumes of lute songs over a period of 30 years, and Respighi, fascinated by their contents, would turn to them several times between 1917 and 1932, arranging selected pieces for orchestra into his ever-popular *Ancient Airs and Dances*.

Listening to these works in 2019 can be a slightly disconcerting experience. Our ears are used to historically informed performances that use gut strings, harpsichord continuo and historical reproductions of lutes and theorbos. By comparison, Nadia Boulanger's 1937 recordings of Monteverdi employed a grand piano which, at the time, would not have seemed out of place at all. And yet, for all their old Renaissance charm, Respighi's arrangements have a romantic lyricism that makes them sound anything but ancient. Respighi paid homage to early music in numerous other works, notably *Gli Ucelli* (The Birds), such that his music and reputation are now inexplicably linked with his Italian roots.

Where Respighi paid homage to the musical influences of his native country, English composer Benjamin Britten paid homage to the man who gave him his musical influences. Frank Bridge was a notable figure in the British music scene of the early 20th century. A well-known composer, though something of an outsider in English music circles, Bridge was a part of the pastoral school of composers that included Arnold Bax and Frederick Delius – quite removed from the structured modernism that was taking over Europe at the time. In 1924, at the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, Britten first heard Frank Bridge's orchestral poem *The Sea*. The effect was immediate: Britten "was knocked sideways".



Top. Igor Stravinsky & Nadia Boulanger 1937.  
Above. Frank Bridge

Britten returned to the Festival as a 13-year-old in 1927, finally meeting Bridge through his viola teacher, Audrey Alston. As they say, the rest is history: Britten became Bridge's only composition student, taking day trips to visit Bridge's London house. There, he took in all he could from Bridge's principles of composition study: "One was that you should find yourself and be true to what you found. The other – obviously connected with the first – was his scrupulous attention to good technique, the business of saying clearly what was in one's mind." Bridge introduced Britten to a plethora of music, from the cornerstones of the classical canon to the beautifully modern music of Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg (with whom Britten briefly considered studying).

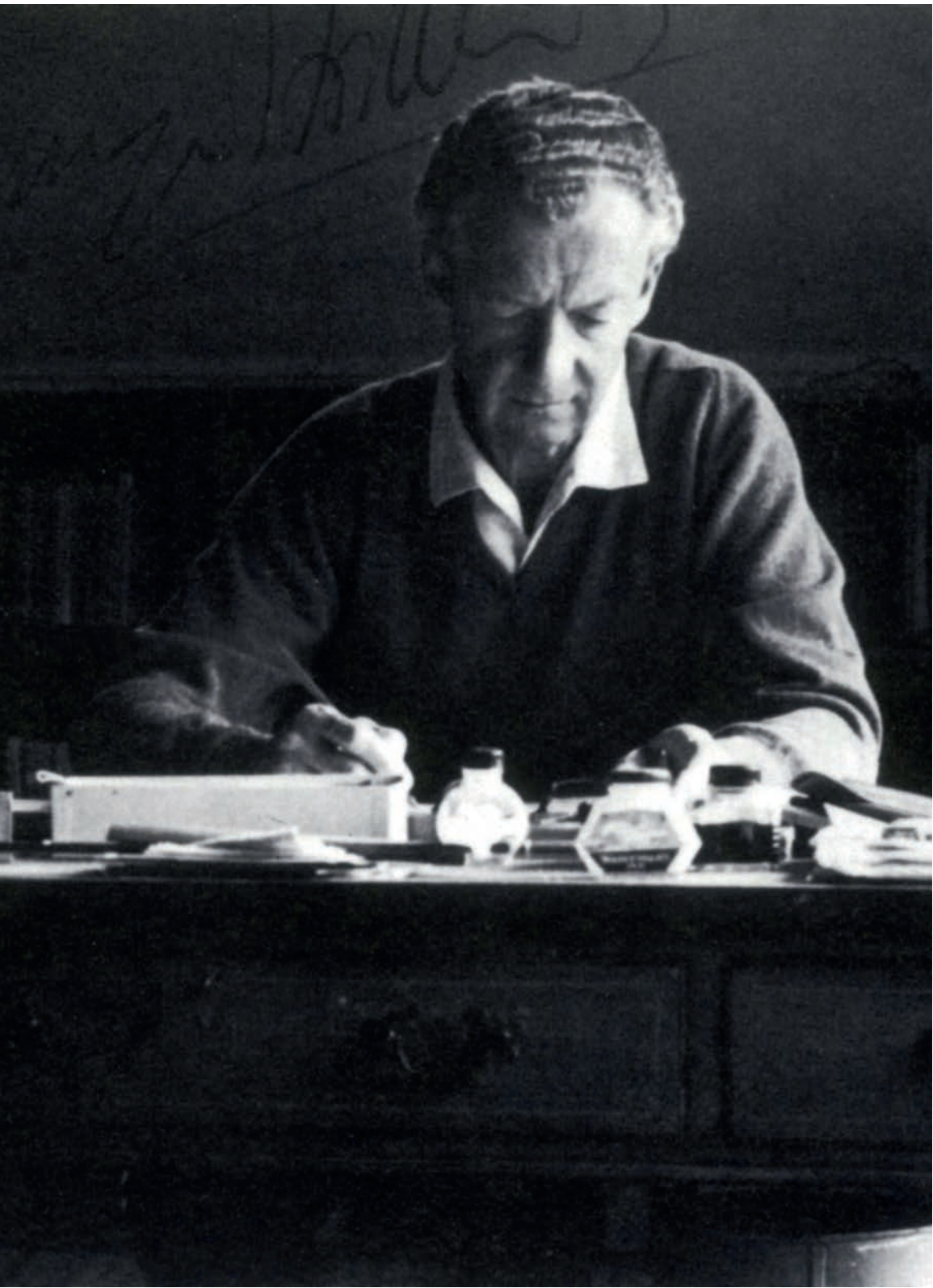
In 1937, the British conductor Boyd Neel sought to commission a new work for that year's Salzburg Festival. His orchestra, which performed repertoire from Corelli to Stravinsky, would comprise "the best 18 string players in the country". Britten completed the commission in a little over a month. He worked furiously but efficiently, selecting a simple theme from his teacher's 1906 *Three Idylls* for string quartet, on which he produced a series of ten short variations – turning a daunting assignment into a manageable task. Endearingly, Britten decided that each variation should represent an aspect of his teacher's personality, using musical styles and techniques that his teacher had so lovingly introduced him to. As well as the principal theme, Britten alluded to five other works by Bridge, including *The Sea* (the first piece by Bridge that Britten ever heard), *Enter Spring*, *Summer*, *There is a Willow Grows Aslant a Brook*, and the Piano Trio.

The work launched Britten's career, and he would go on to become the pre-eminent British composer of his day. But the real triumph of his *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, was that it ensured his teacher's legacy would never be forgotten. Writing to Britten, Bridge said "It is one of the few lovely things that has ever happened to me, and I feel the richer in spirit for it all, including the charming dedication." There is a touch of Elgarian self-pity in Bridge's letter of thanks, acknowledging that, while Britten's piece would keep his name alive, it was ultimately Britten who would gain immortality through his music.



Edward Benjamin  
Britten



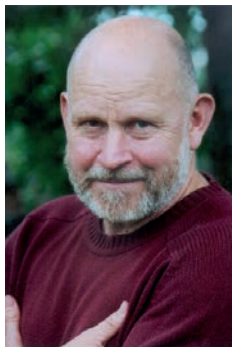


“There is a touch of Elgarian self-pity in Bridge’s letter of thanks, acknowledging that, while Britten’s piece would keep his name alive, it was ultimately Britten who would gain immortality through his music.”

While Britten's *Variations* seem to strive for immortality, more than four decades later, Australia's Richard Meale was grappling with mortality, dedicating *Cantilena Pacifica* to a friend who had recently passed away. Meale remains one of Australia's most exceptional composers: a prominent advocate of new music by Boulez, Messiaen and Schoenberg, his own style evolved throughout the 20th century, embracing and mastering neo-Romanticism, serialism, atonalism and modernism, before rediscovering lyrical melody late in his career.

In the late 1970s, with much of his musical output firmly under the influence of European modernism and experimentalism, the most important stylistic change of Meale's career would take place. A personal crisis had emerged: his adherence to the meticulously ordered neurotic convulsions of modernism was in direct conflict with his own honest artistic expression. This dilemma came to a head in 1979 as he was composing his second string quartet: "Sadly, my best friend, Stephen Wilson, died after a sudden onset of cancer. It now became a matter of necessity to write a piece that would be a memorial to him. So it became clear that the work could not be based on any artifice; its existence had to lie in its emotional truth."

The quartet's final movement, entitled *Cantilena Pacifica*, could not be more different from Meale's previous output. Its lyrical violin line sings a mournful melody over a tonal undercurrent in the strings. In that same year Meale returned to a lushness of orchestration not seen since Debussy's *La Mer*, re-embracing the emotional possibilities of harmony and tonality in his orchestral work *Viridian*. Meale's newfound style would culminate in his 1986 opera



Top. Pēteris Vasks.

Above. Arvo Pärt.

Voss, an adaption of Patrick White's novel of the same name, which would remain for many years the leading candidate for "the great Australian opera".

On the other side of the world, Latvian composer Pēteris Vasks was having a similar crisis of faith. His earliest works owed much to the experimental music of Witold Lutosławski and Krzysztof Penderecki, as well as the music of Iron Curtain composer Dmitri Shostakovich. In his native Latvia, however, Vasks suffered under the repressions of Russian cultural doctrine due to his religious beliefs and artistic convictions. It is out of this political turbulence that his present style – which combines nationalistic, moral and environmental concerns – was born.

Today, Vasks' music is often grouped with Europe's holy minimalists: John Tavener, Henryk Górecki and of course, Arvo Pärt, another avant-gardist who experienced religious and artistic repression from the Soviets, and consequently turned to a deep spirituality in his music. Because of his emigration to Berlin in the early 1980s, Pärt's music became widely known much sooner, such that his music and career became something of an inspiration to Vasks. In his 2001 composition *Viatore*, he pays homage to Pärt, whom he describes in the dedication as "my guiding light for many decades."

In *Viatore*, Vasks pays tribute not only to Pärt's intensely spiritual sound world, but to the very building blocks of his compositional technique, "tintinnabuli" (derived from the Latin word for "bell"), which sets one voice moving stepwise against a second voice moving in triads. In Vasks's tribute, Pärt's two voices become two musical images. One is a traveller who "arrives in this world, grows up in it, develops, falls in love, fills himself up and then departs", the other is the "endless and starry universe" that illuminates his journey, in much the same way Pärt has illuminated Vasks' journey for many years.

The works in this program are more than an eclectic assortment of fine, virtuosic music for string orchestra. As Lucretius observed, "the sum of things is ever being renewed ... the generations, like runners, pass on the torch of life." These works pay homage to each composer's deepest influences and guiding lights, so as to create new music that illuminates the future. ●





# 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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## Australian Chamber Orchestra

ABN 45 001 335 182  
Australian Chamber Orchestra  
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The ACO thanks the following people for supporting the Orchestra.

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The Reconciliation Circle directly supports our music education initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with the aim to build positive and effective partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community. To find out more please contact Jill Colvin, Director of Philanthropy, on (02) 8274 3835.

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The Chairman's Council is a limited membership association which supports the ACO's international touring program and enjoys private events in the company of Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra. For more information please call Tom Tansey, Events & Special Projects Manager, on (02) 8274 3828.

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## Share your experience

Photography is permitted at the end of each performance during applause. Please share your story and join the ACO conversation.



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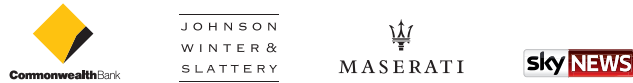
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