Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

BEETHOVEN 1, 2 & 3

Directed by Richard Tognetti

On Beethoven

Five well-known Australians describe their relationship with Beethoven's music

Playing the Holy Scriptures

Peter Craven on Beethoven's first three symphonies

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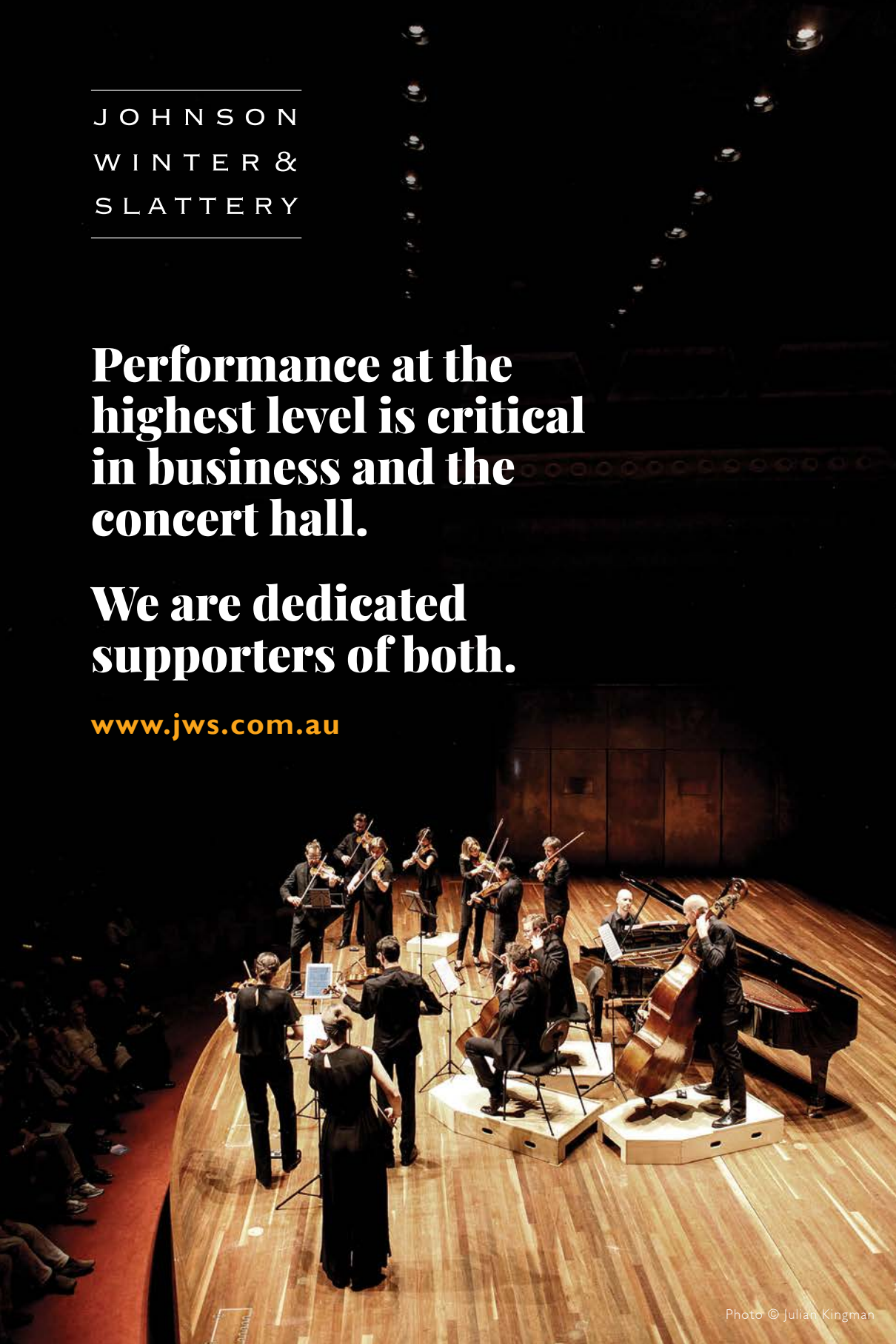

Inside you'll find features and interviews that shine a spotlight on our players and the music you are about to hear. Enjoy the read.

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WELCOME

Welcome to ACO 2020.

It is exhilarating to be back after our long summer break, unfortunately an ongoing period of incredible turbulence and heartbreak as our nation confronts the natural world in all of its fury. We extend our sympathy to all audience members and their families directly and indirectly affected.

We are celebrating two milestone anniversaries throughout this landmark 2020 Season: 250 years since the birth of the great Ludwig van Beethoven and Richard Tognetti's thirtieth year as the ACO's pioneering and inimitable Artistic Director.

Fittingly, we open our Season with Richard directing the first three of Beethoven's monumental symphonies from the violin. The ACO is internationally renowned for its extraordinary interpretations of Beethoven's music, and these performances will be no exception.

Joining the Orchestra onstage for these concerts are students from the Australian National Academy of Music in Melbourne. We have had the opportunity to collaborate with these marvellous young musicians on several occasions in recent years and we're thrilled to share the stage with them once again.

I look forward to seeing you all in the concert hall for these Beethoven symphonies and throughout another year of musical adventuring with the ACO.

Richard Evans
Managing Director
Join the conversation #ACO20

News

Haydn | Mozart
Recording

Our live album release with ABC Classic features three symphonies by classical masters Haydn and Mozart, including the 'London' Symphony.

Beethoven
Recording

ABC Classic have released a collection of the ACO's legendary Beethoven recordings – including never-before released recordings of two of his greatest works: Symphonies 5 and 6. The release will be available to purchase in the venue foyer following select performances of *Beethoven 1, 2 & 3*.

Tasmanian Tour
10-12 March

We're thrilled to be returning to Tasmania in 2020, where we will be presented by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra as part of their 2020 Season in Hobart.

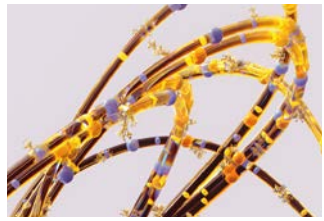
Coming up

MAR

ACO Underground
2 – 12 MARCH

Sydney, Melbourne, Launceston

Led by Satu Vänskä, the celebrated ACO Underground returns, bringing with it an electrifying evening of shape-shifting music.

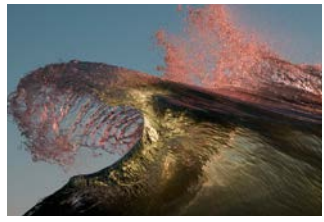


Arvo Pärt & Shostakovich
19 MARCH – 1 APRIL

Wollongong, Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth

In this deeply reflective program led by Richard Tognetti, the ACO brings together some of the world's most profoundly expressive composers: Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Estonia's Arvo Pärt, including a performance of the beloved *Tabula Rasa*.

MAY



Music to Heal
1 – 13 MAY

Sydney, Wollongong, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth

A program of mindfulness, wellbeing and the restorative powers of music, directed by English violinist Hugo Ticciati.

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PROGRAM

Richard Tognetti Director and Violin
Australian Chamber Orchestra
with musicians from the
Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM)

PRE-CONCERT TALK	45 mins prior to the performance See page 8 for details	mins
BEETHOVEN	Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21 *I. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio* *II. Andante cantabile con moto* *III. Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace* *IV. Finale: Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace*	27
BEETHOVEN	Symphony No.2 in D major, Op.36 *I. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio* *II. Larghetto* *III. Scherzo: Allegro* *IV. Allegro molto*	29
INTERVAL		20
BEETHOVEN	Symphony No.3 in E-flat major, Op.55 “Eroica” *I. Allegro con brio* *II. Marcia funébre: Adagio assai* *III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace* *IV. Finale: Allegro molto*	44

The concert will last approximately two hours, 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 1, 2 & 3 will be recorded on 10 Feb from Hamer Hall and will be broadcast on ABC Classic on 23 Feb at 1pm.

ON BEETHOVEN

We asked five well-known Australians about their relationship with Beethoven – what his music means to them and how it has affected their lives. You can find their responses throughout the program.

Beethoven saved my sanity in 1989. It was my HSC and, seventeen, deranged with captivity, I would flee to my piano where immense, torrential, glorious chords let me slam them in splendid passion; the sweetest melancholies let me lie in their shallow pools; thrilling runs of notes threw themselves out the window. The sonatas were hard, but life without them would have been harder.

KATE HOLDEN

Writer

What you are, you are by accident of birth; what I am, I am by myself. There are and will be a thousand princes; there is only one Beethoven.

... And there is only one ACO. Beethoven spoke and composed music from the heart. Who better to bring his awe-inspiring, miraculous and mammoth musical works to life than the virtuosic, vivacious, daring, idiosyncratic, original and breathtakingly brilliant Richard Tognetti and clever co?

Fasten your emotional and psychological seatbelts as we're in for a thrilling ride.

KATHY LETTE

Author

8

PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read before lights down.

Pre-concert talks

Pre-concert talks with the ACO's Head of Programming, Anna Melville, will take place 45 minutes before the start of every concert. See the ACO information desk for location details.

Canberra
Sat 8 February, 7.15pm

Melbourne
Sun 9 February, 1.45pm
Mon 10 February, 6.45pm

Sydney
Tue 11 February, 7.15pm
Wed 12 February, 6.15pm
Fri 14 February, 12.45pm
Sat 15 February, 6.15pm
Sun 16 February, 1.15pm

Brisbane
Mon 17 February, 6.15pm

"The symphony, Beethoven's first, was a rush job, aimed solely at finishing the concert with a bang. And it worked."

Above. Portrait of Beethoven in 1804, having recently completed his first three symphonies, by Joseph Willibrord Mähler.

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21

On April 2, 1800, Beethoven held a concert for his own benefit at the theatre of the Hofburg, a prestigious venue that had played host to the premieres of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and Haydn's *Creation*. These imposing musical figures, role models to the young Beethoven, epitomised the Viennese tradition to which Beethoven considered himself the heir.

The benefit concert, for which Haydn was probably in attendance, served to announce Beethoven's talents to Vienna and acknowledged his Viennese roots in its assortment of styles, genres and forms. It was ambitious, but played to its Mozart- and Haydn-loving audience with seven works that included a new septet, a new piano concerto and solo piano improvisations, concluding with "a new grand symphony" in C major.

The symphony, Beethoven's first, was a rush job, aimed solely at finishing the concert with a bang. And it worked: one reviewer called the event "probably the most interesting concert for a long

time". The symphony earned itself no shortage of favourable reviews, with one remarking that "in the symphony, he finds very much art, novelty, and a wealth of ideas".

There wasn't much to dislike about the symphony, which was very much derived from Haydn's model and musical spirit. It opens (intentionally) in the wrong key with a series of cadences, but is otherwise a Haydnesque Sonata-Allegro movement. In its second movement, Beethoven perfectly captures the lyrical "galant" style of his Classical predecessors.

His third movement is not a stately minuet but a brisk, magical scherzo, and the finale is the most significant of the four movements – something we now consider commonplace in the symphonies of Beethoven (think the Ninth), but the polar opposite of a Classical symphony in which the first movement is given the most weight.

By Beethoven's standards as we've come to know him, the First Symphony (which would quickly become an audience favourite), is a cautious first step. But Beethoven's ambitions for the genre would soon take off.

"In the symphony, he finds very much art, novelty, and a wealth of ideas."

“The Second Symphony seems unlike any other work Beethoven wrote.”

Symphony No.2 in D major, Op.36

If Beethoven’s First Symphony was a cautious, rushed foray into the symphonic landscape left by Mozart and Haydn, then the Second Symphony was a more considered, original and ambitious treatment of the form.

The Second Symphony seems unlike any other work Beethoven wrote – not overtly serious, imposing and awe-inspiring in style (though it may have been the longest symphony ever written up to that point), but akin to comedy, perhaps in the style of “opera buffa”.

The first movement could easily be compared to the overture of a comic opera in its surprising, rhythmic escapades. The second movement has a distinctly operatic quality, akin to a Mozartian aria that explores the deepest emotions. Following the typically Beethovinian scherzo is a Rondo finale in which, as with the works of Haydn or the comic operas of Mozart, the spirit of fun and celebration wins out in the end.

One journal called the symphony “a masterpiece that does equal honour to his inventiveness and his musical knowledge … this symphony can justly be placed next to Mozart’s and Haydn’s.” For Beethoven, however, equal footing with his musical predecessors did not mean a favourable, superficial comparison with them. It meant evolving the artform just as they had done before him.

Beethoven would never write another piece like the Second Symphony, and hoped to find some other way to position himself as a leading artistic figure of his time.

Symphony No.3 in E-flat major, Op.55 “Eroica”

For Beethoven, large works such as symphonies were not mere entertainment. They were statements: dramatic and emotional, but also holding certain ideals for humanity within them. In Beethoven’s time, there was no greater statement being made than Napoleon Bonaparte, a figure who, in Beethoven’s eyes, had risen from nothing to wield great power, conquer the world and liberate humanity.

Above. Napoleon Bonaparte depicted as the most powerful and dynamic figure alive by Jacques-Louis David, 1801.

And so the Third Symphony was to be called “Bonaparte”. It would be modelled not only on Napoleon’s personality and personal story, but on the image of a hero who intended to bring a new order of freedom and peace to Europe. Beethoven chose the key of E-flat major – in his time a noble, heroic, humanistic key (like that of Mozart’s Masonic pieces and *The Magic Flute*) and proceeded to develop the symphony using a small theme and bass line from his ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*.

Beethoven, in his quest to position himself as a leading artistic figure of his time, had hoped to align himself with the most powerful and inspiring figure of the day, in the same way other leading artists and thinkers had done already. He was to move to Paris and present the symphony to Napoleon himself, thus elevating himself and his artform to the greatest heights imaginable.

The depiction of Napoleon’s military life in the symphony is unmistakable from the start. Guns are blazing, horses galloping; there is chaos, terror and decisive victory in battle. But there is also the depiction of a single free hero – the first movement’s “hero” theme is derived from the finale of *Prometheus*, in which one figure defies the gods to bring fire to humanity. Throughout the first movement we hear this hero struggling to break from his boundaries to lead as a free man, with the best-known instance being

the solo horn's statement of the hero theme before the recapitulation, where it resolves triumphantly after 10 minutes of struggle.

The second movement, a *Marcia funébre*, is the inevitable aftermath of war: the burial and commemoration of the dead. In the third movement Beethoven conjures a return to joy and celebration through raucous folk-song that envelops a Trio in which horns call out the first movement's hero theme once again.

The whole symphony culminates in the finale, a series of variations on the "englische" theme from *Prometheus*. The theme symbolises not only the Promethean figure of Napoleon, but Beethoven's ideal for society. In the words of Friedrich Schiller (who penned the words of universal brotherhood in his Ninth Symphony), "I can think of no more fitting image for the ideal of social conduct than that of an English dance … It is the most perfectly appropriate symbol of the assertion of one's own freedom and regard for the freedom of others."

Therefore, the Symphony is not just a depiction and celebration of Napoleon's life, but a depiction of Napoleon and humanity united through triumph, liberty and joy. Beethoven had depicted the leading forces and ideals of his age through music, and had forever changed what a symphony could be. Beethoven's secretary, writing to his publisher, remarked "it is the greatest work he has ever written … I believe that heaven and earth will tremble when it is performed."

"Heaven and earth will tremble when it is performed."

Right. The first page of the *Eroica* symphony, with the dedication to Napoleon violently scratched out.

In May of 1804, Beethoven's secretary delivered news that Napoleon Bonaparte had been declared Emperor of France. The news infuriated Beethoven – Napoleon was in it for himself all along, an ordinary man who would "place himself above everyone else and become a tyrant!" Beethoven took the title page of the symphony, ripped it in two, and threw it away.

The symphony now marked the end of a dream for Beethoven. It was no longer the celebration of a great man, but as the published title would read "composed to celebrate the memory of a great man" (although Beethoven still wrote to his publishers that "The title of the symphony is really 'Bonaparte'.")

The symphony received its premiere in Vienna on April 7, 1805. The audience had no knowledge of the symphony's background – it was not yet titled "Eroica" and could not be titled "Bonaparte" due to recent political tensions between Austria and France. As such, audiences were perplexed and challenged by the new symphony. For critics, it had "great and daring ideas" but was too long and difficult.

But soon, the symphony began to resonate with audiences, and within the next two years public and critical opinion reversed completely. One journal called it "The greatest, most original, most artistic and, at the same time, the most interesting of all symphonies." Until the Ninth, Beethoven considered the "Eroica" his favourite, and it would have lasting impacts on all music that followed.

MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage for this performance.

Richard Tognetti
Director and Violin

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.

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.

Satu Vänskä
Principal 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.

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. His Chair is sponsored by Meg & Campbell Meldrum.

Liisa Pallandi
Violin

Liisa plays a violin made by Elina Kaljunen in 2019. 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.

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.

Stefanie Farrands
Principal Viola

Stefanie plays a 2016 viola made by Ragnar Hayn in Berlin. 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 plays her own 1968 Parisian viola by Pierre M. Audinot. Her Chair is sponsored by Philip Bacon AM.

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.

MUSICIANS

Violin

Meg Cohen ^
Phoebe Gardner ^
Sunkyoung Kim ^
Phoebe Masel ^
Leanne McGowan ^
Mia Stanton ^
Harry Ward ^

Viola

Cora Fabbri ^
Ruby Shirres ^
Kate Worley ^

Cello

Nicholas McManus ^
James Morley ^

Double Bass

Hamish Gullick ^
Caroline Renn ^

Flute

Sally Walker #
Courtesy of The Australian National University, School of Music

Mikaela Oberg

Oboe

Hélène Mourot #
Courtesy of Les Siècles

Lidewei De Sterck

Clarinet

Ernst Schlader #
Courtesy of University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, Austria

Christine Foidl
Courtesy of Camerata Salzburg

Bassoon

Jane Gower #
Courtesy of Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique

Lisa Goldberg

Horn

Olivier Picon #
Thomas Müller
Courtesy of Zurich Chamber Orchestra

Lionel Pointet #

Trumpet

Richard Fomison #
Leanne Sullivan
Courtesy of the University of Sydney, Sydney Conservatorium of Music

Timpani

Brian Nixon #
Chair sponsored by Mr Robert Albert AO & Mrs Libby Albert

^ Courtesy of the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM)

Guest Principal

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Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PETER LEHMANN
Barossa

ON BEETHOVEN

I hated all classical music as a kid. We were all forced to learn the piano from the knuckle-cracking nuns, and I spent the requisite hours on repetitive scales and arpeggios in a vain attempt to minimise the knuckle-strike rate. Most of the early Czerny studies and AMEB pieces felt boring and joyless. Mozart was pretty and melodic, Haydn clean and formal, but they never made me feel anything.

But then along came Beethoven. The gateway sonata for many of us is, of course, the Moonlight's slow movement because it is both amazingly emo but relatively easy to play. In fact, most of his slow movements can bring me to tears as the endless chains of diminished chords hit the heart in a place that no other composer remotely comes near.

We then studied the 'Eroica' at the Conservatorium and I fell in love with the symphonies. Running out of them, I moved on to the piano concertos and No.5 still packs a unique combo-pack of devastation and elation to this very day.

And that's why I love him. He is heavy metal, goth darkness wrapped in delicate melody.

PAUL MAC

Composer, songwriter, musician and producer

PLAYING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Peter Craven on Beethoven's first three symphonies, 250 years on – the immutable pillars of the greatest Romantic who ever lived.

"It has that wonderful gift of leaving you wanting more. I laugh myself silly at the last movement. It's the extraordinary lightness that I love."

Richard Tognetti is a star violinist who also "directs" his orchestra like a conductor, sometimes turning his bow into a substitute baton. But he's also the sort of artist who has an easy general culture: he'll make an allusion to rock music or poetry or Shakespeare or Tolstoy, and you feel talking to him that not only is classical music in sure hands but he also knows his way through the thickets and brambles of art more generally. He is very nimble, very considered and very alert, and creates that sense that however Australians may often be around culture, when we're good we're very, very good.

In this performance, Tognetti's Australian Chamber Orchestra does Beethoven's first three symphonies in sync with his 250th anniversary celebrations. In other words, they are doing the first two symphonies where Beethoven sounds classical in the narrow sense of resembling Haydn, followed by the *Eroica*, No.3, which is the great world-shattering one, ostensibly a celebration of Napoleon, at least to start with, until Beethoven discovered he had gone imperial, but in any case, the moment when he suddenly sounds like the greatest Romantic who ever lived, and a composer of such grandeur that he freezes the soul of any successor.

Tognetti has his own ambivalence about the titanic quality of the *Eroica*, but he adores Symphony No.1. "It serves not as a what we may call a tonic, a grounding, but rather it serves to disrupt, from that very first chord. So that's

Left. ACO Artistic Director Richard Tognetti.

interesting. But yeah, it is in the style of Haydn, with all the humour and the wit of Haydn and sometimes Mozart. And I have to say it's my favourite Beethoven symphony."

This leads him to talk about the metronome markings that are a guide to No.1, and indeed to all the symphonies. "Beethoven ended up putting in metronome marks through as much of his music as he could," he says. "And there's incontrovertible evidence to support the notion that he did believe in the metronome mark, as in strictly telling us what tempo to play – as in if you write 95 beats per minute, you stick to it. Now, what it gives me, the metronome marks, is the sense of proportion. So if you change the tempo of the first movement, you better keep the proportion. But what's quite radical is the way the whole symphony is fast, and arguably has a 'universality'."

He adds, making a literary analogy, "It's got this flair about it. I mean, what would the equivalent play be? Would it be *Much Ado About Nothing*, do you think?" From there, he heads off into a discussion of how one kind of genius can imagine himself the possessor of greater genius than another. Did Hemingway say he could outbox Tolstoy? Beethoven seems to have comparable ideas about the most highly regarded of all generals.

"Beethoven said something along those lines about Napoleon. Along the lines of, 'If I were, with my talent and compositional powers, a general in an army, I'd easily beat Napoleon.'"

"It's got this flair about it. I mean, what would the equivalent play be? Would it be *Much Ado About Nothing*, do you think?"

Above. The ACO performing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in 2018. Photo by Nic Walker.

In Tognetti's mind, this associates with the particular reverence that's brought to Beethoven's score. "But the idea of the score now becomes with Beethoven the inviolable authority," he says. "And the concept of the exegesis, this sort of authority in it, is like the Koran rather than the Bible: you know, like 'these words shall not be doubted'. And so they become the holy scriptures. And I do believe in the metronome, but I don't believe in the holy scripture. I think that unless you violate the score through interpretation you're not allowing the music to live."

This is where Tognetti has the utmost respect for the metronomic marking as a natural guide, but he does not believe in the dogma of original instruments. "A lot of people think – and [conductor and musicologist] Christopher Hogwood was a believer in this – that you just sort of remove the patina of bad taste, if there's such a thing, as opposed to good taste. And you take the patina of bad taste off the score or the interpretation, and you're left with the holy scripture. But I think you need to keep on re-evaluating through the personal as well. I think that's

“The idea of re-creating it just as he heard it, even if were able to do so … well, the first performance would’ve quite possibly been subpar according to our CD-standards.”

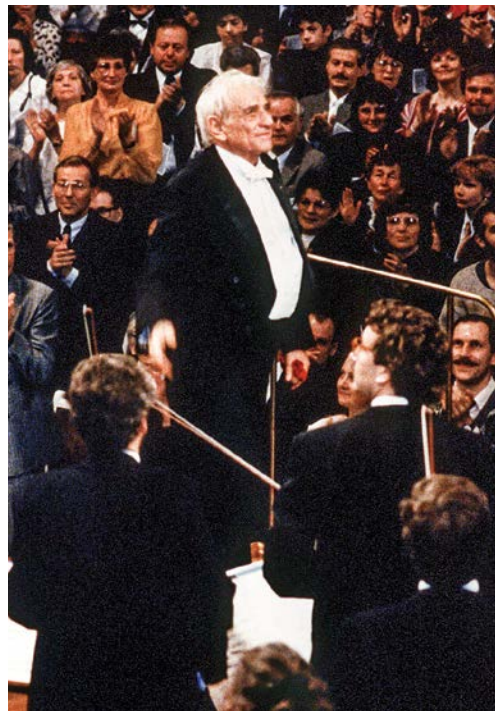
really important, rather than just saying, ‘Okay, these nine holy symphonies, I’ll just play what’s on the page.’”

Tognetti says that he proceeds by hybridisation, sometimes using early instruments, sometimes not. In these concerts the ACO will use full gut strings, early bows and period winds, with brass that might resemble those from the time of Beethoven. But he’s resistant to the idea of recapturing an original sound. “The early music people, some of them say they’re presenting it just as the composer intended or heard it. Of course, the irony is apparent there, because Beethoven was writing his symphonies while losing his hearing; but the idea of re-creating it just as he heard it, even if were able to do so … well, the first performance would’ve quite possibly been subpar according to our CD-standards. And if you didn’t like the performance, would you still be generating a replica of it happily? Surely not.

“The Harold Bloom of music criticism, Richard Taruskin, talks about the early music movement, but it’s not just about going back to what the composer intended, but actually imposing a very Modernist ideal on interpretation, and it’s by removing the romantic and the personal. It’s very much about the geometry, the square geometry of the 20th century. I agree with him: I think the interpretation should always be romantic.”

I ask Tognetti if Beethoven is a kind of bugbear, a colossus blocking the way for further music. He admits that there’s an immobilising aspect to Beethoven in relation to his successors. And he makes no bones about the sort of mixed feelings he has towards him. “I guess you’re meant to,” he says. “You have to.”

Then he jumps back to the anxiety of influence on subsequent composers, the immensity of it. "It's not just an interpretation, it's a fact. And the proof in the pudding is with Brahms. He was immobilised, he was catatonic, and then he forged ahead and created those four symphonies. Certainly, every composer who is going to pen a symphony is more in awe of Beethoven than Mozart. And I think it's because he wrote nine immutable pillars."



Above. Leonard Bernstein is applauded after conducting an international ensemble during the Ost-West-Konzert (east-west-concert) shortly after the Berlin wall came down in Berlin, 25 December 1989.

Tognetti's preference is for a late, great Mozart symphony such as the *Jupiter*, but he's hyper conscious of the world-historical grandeur of Beethoven and the inevitability of the historical parallels. "Thomas Jefferson becomes president and Napoleon proceeds to conquer the world, and you have the *Eroica*," he says. "So these are the historical events, whereas we don't consider Haydn's symphonies in relation to their date, their historical context. But with all of those nine symphonies we do. And we consider them in terms of the social hierarchy. We consider No.9 as having this great sense of the universal. I think we just accept that it is universal. Look at the way it was used at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall."

That was when Leonard Bernstein conducted at the Brandenburg Gate in 1989, and they sang Freiheit (Freedom) instead of Freude (Joy).

"But then he [Beethoven] goes forwards and he's back with the Fourth Symphony, which is this extraordinary sort of Mozart-like work, but he's going forwards, you know – he's proven himself," Tognetti says. "And then the Fifth we don't need to discuss. And then the Sixth, the greatest tone poem written by that time and arguably to this time as well. And then there's the Seventh, as Wagner puts it, 'the apotheosis of the dance'. He goes back and then goes forward with No.8, and then it's a springboard, of course, to No.9. These nine pillars create so much – they stand there, majestic."

"Of course, musicologists love to dispel the mythology of the story, the idea that Beethoven tore off the front page and crossed out Napoleon because he didn't agree with the ascension of Napoleon as an emperor."

Ever conscious of difficulties, Tognetti sees these symphonies as essentially public music, which is always to be distinguished from the enigma of late quartets, which verge on private examination – perhaps, though he does not say so, the way the mysterious Shakespeare sonnets compare with the overpowering, dramatic and emotional force of the plays. Again, we come back to the way he reels in something like horror at the stupendous nature of the *Eroica*. Can he tell me a bit more about it, about its excess? "Well, the first movement, for a start, is long," he says. "Longer than just about any symphony written in what we call the Classical era. Could we argue that No.3 was the beginning of the Romantic era? So it's personal, it's not abstract: it's him, it's me, it's the I pitted against the not I, against everything else. So that in itself is an exceptional narrative. Of course, musicologists love to dispel the mythology of the story, the idea that Beethoven tore off the front page and crossed out Napoleon because he didn't agree with the ascension of Napoleon as an emperor. They now claim that he would've lost his patron's money if he dedicated it to Napoleon."

"But look at the use of the material and its length, the relationship of the melodies, the use of the famous *Funeral March*. It's all 'histrionic', not least because of the extreme dynamic range that Mozart didn't have and which is there precisely to create the sense of exaggerated drama."

Left. Ludwig van Beethoven, by Joseph Karl Stieler, 1820.

Above. Richard Tognetti.
Photos by Nic Walker.

You can hear something like the moody, not quite controllable quality of love-hate as this pensive, very self-possessed musician sets about describing the *Eroica* and then the towering, overpowering quality of Beethoven's influence. "He has these stunning fortissimos," Tognetti says, "and then extremely soft moments which he's asking us to barely play. He uses storm sequences, he uses marches, he's got musica antiqua there. And then he gets to what many people have considered those boring minuets but they're not really minuets, they're very much scherzos, and the scherzo now becomes full of different meaning, so the notion you'd even consider dancing to it is ludicrous. If you start with that bass line and that melody you realise that he's now creating these cohesive universes. And that's the other thing about these nine pillars that created a sense of awe and made his successors impotent: he's creating single-entity universes, but all the nine symphonies are interconnected."

I suggest to Tognetti that it sounds like a level of grandiosity that would seem mad if it were not hand in glove with a genius greater than the madness. It reminds me of that diamond of a novella by Pierre Ryckmans, *The Death of Napoleon*, about a man who's locked up because he says he's Napoleon, but then, as the narrator says, he *is* Napoleon? To imagine that you were a composer of Napoleonic, or greater than Napoleonic powers, would be deranged unless you were Beethoven. Which is why he is Beethoven.

Tognetti is fascinated by the way Beethoven struggled with an extraordinary, embattled humanity to achieve his fate through whatever blood and sweat and iron was in him. He

says he did it with a Tennessee Williams ability to get up every morning and write. “So it wasn’t just the delusions of grandeur, all that ‘I’m Napoleon, I’m an emperor’ stuff. No, he got up every morning even if he was going deaf and put pen to paper with his copious notebooks, which the mind-blowing Mozart didn’t need to have. It was just there in his head. He could go out partying and playing billiards and he had it all over Beethoven. But for Beethoven it was a struggle to get that melody out, to make sure the melody was crafted so it worked, to write the *Fuge* so that it really was working. With Mozart there’s an immaculate conception, whereas Beethoven does feel like a bastard child of all the composers who came before him. And he also had struggles with his relationships, everybody from Napoleon to his Immortal Beloved.”

Tognetti says you could imagine Beethoven getting into fisticuffs with his symphony, and with all his work – “just punching it”. He says Beethoven, “stuck so much into the sack that it’s bursting”.

I ask Tognetti why he likes No.1 so much. His answer is simple: “With No.1, there’s this extraordinary sense of expectation. It has that wonderful gift of leaving you wanting more. I laugh myself silly at the last movement. It’s the extraordinary lightness that I love.”

“Tognetti is fascinated by the way Beethoven struggled with an extraordinary, embattled humanity to achieve his fate.”

The conversation shifts to Symphony No.2, and Tognetti says there's something about second symphonies – it's true of Brahms' also – that means they tend to be ignored. He certainly appreciates the fact that it's not colossal. "No, it's not titanic, not at all," he says. "You do have a slow movement and it's incredibly beautiful. Why we haven't done it isn't because I don't adore it, it's just for practical reasons."

That reason is scale, which is why this performance will be aided by the young musicians of the Australian National Academy of Music. I say that I saw their Bach Mass in B minor a few months ago and it was amazing. Tognetti says he adores them. "Everything they do is amazing. And they're also – much as I hate to use the word – world-renowned."

The other word he hates to use too freely in the context of Beethoven is "beautiful". He says it is a cliché. "You know how people carry on about this too much. 'Look how Beethoven writes such beautiful, exquisite music.' We don't want to use those terms with Beethoven's symphonies. I don't want to use those words with Beethoven's music. Of course, he does have his ineffable sense of beauty and can write the most extraordinary tune that makes you want to cry, like listening to a Beatles song. But no, it's beyond that, way beyond that."

We find ourselves talking about the place of music in Tognetti's life. He says his relationship with making it, with making sound waves, is "one of those extraordinary things". It's a corny question, but who could resist it in the

"He does have his ineffable sense of beauty and can write the most extraordinary tune that makes you want to cry, like listening to a Beatles song. But no, it's beyond that, way beyond that."

context of Beethoven: what would he do if, like the great composer, he went deaf? "Well, we surfers get exostosis," he says. "It's called surfer's ear, actually; I'm in fear of that. The bone that grows inside of the ear then starts protecting itself, a bit like asthma. But if I went deaf … you know, I don't have Beethoven's inner sense of hearing…"

He says he might write, he might do a lot of cooking. He's thoughtful about substitutes, and then he says mildly, "I don't know, I'd miss music." And then, tersely: "I'd kill myself. Yep, that would do."

You don't quite believe this man of iron, but you realise that the touch of rhetoric is an indication of the vehemence he brings to this activity that he talks about so smoothly.

ON BEETHOVEN

I don't hear Beethoven, I feel Beethoven. His music to me is so evocative that I can visualise what I feel. Its visualisation is so clear it's as if his work is a tangible object.

For example, the 'Moonlight Sonata' is monochromatic with a reflection of subtle light. Beethoven's music captures my imagination, but it also touches my soul of thought.

AKIRA ISOGAWA
Fashion designer

My mother was naturally musical so my childhood was filled with music, either with mum at her piano or whistling classical melodies, and of course listening to the ABC.

Beethoven's Symphony No.9 blew me away until I heard the string quartets. While I enjoyed the piano concertos and symphonies, it was the intimacy of the quartets that enthralled me, especially my favourite, No.15 in A minor, Op.132.

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