

Media Release



ACO Australian Chamber Orchestra

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University of Melbourne and Australian Chamber Orchestra partnership renewal highlights music and education at every level

The University of Melbourne has extended its exclusive partnership with the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) for another seven years, with students, staff, and Victorian primary school students among the primary beneficiaries. Launching in 2025, the year of the ACO's 50th anniversary, this renewed partnership will combine the world-class musical expertise of the ACO with the University's educational excellence and wide-reaching influence.

The renewed partnership builds on and extends the existing five-year collaboration (2020-2024) by enhancing professional training opportunities for students at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music within the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music. It also expands the partnership's reach to benefit the broader University community. Additionally, the agreement will support the launch of the renowned ACO Foundations program in Victoria, set to begin at a Melbourne primary school, selection pending.

University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor, Professor Duncan Maskell, said: "The ACO partnership renewal, generously supported by the Sidney Myer University Trust, ensures our continued investment in the life-changing potential of music education.

"My own life trajectory was transformed by music education from an early age. I learned several woodwind instruments then went on to play in orchestras and bands ranging from classical to rock. These experiences led to enriching, formative opportunities that would otherwise have been out of reach."

ACO Managing Director Richard Evans said the partnership renewal builds on the successful collaborations of the past five years and paves the way for significant advancements in music education through improved training, research, and program development.

"The ACO is delighted to renew its extraordinarily successful partnership with the University of Melbourne," Evans said.

"Over the past five years the ACO has been honoured to contribute to the musical education and training of the string students enrolled in the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, as well as work alongside the University's world-class music and education researchers. We very much look forward to continuing to play a role in developing the next generation of Australia's professional string players through this partnership."

A key new element of the partnership is the introduction of the ACO Foundations program in Victoria. This unique, intensive music education initiative, shown to enhance cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development in primary school children, will provide free music and instrumental lessons to students in low socio-economic schools. Based on research highlighting the beneficial changes to brain function through playing an instrument, the five-year pilot program will be delivered by the ACO and modeled on its successful program in New South Wales.

"Learning a musical instrument from a young age has been proven to have deep and far-reaching benefits, and we are thrilled that the University has made such an important commitment in changing the lives of

young Victorians — particularly those who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to receive a quality music education,” said Evans.

The Faculty of Fine Arts and Music Melbourne Conservatorium of Music Director, Professor Richard Kurth said: “Our Conservatorium students will grow from strength-to-strength through exceptional opportunities that foster their career pathways by learning from and performing alongside the national orchestra’s musicians.

“The launch of the ACO Foundations program in Victoria will bring the joy and focus of music making to a new generation of children, and also pave the way for developing wider access to music in elementary schools by facilitating new teacher training and education research collaborations by music education experts in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music and the Faculty of Education.”

Throughout the seven-year renewed partnership, students at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music— from bachelor to doctoral levels—will benefit from two annual intensive ensemble training sessions and side-by-side experiences with elite ACO musicians. They will also have access to masterclasses and professional development workshops. ACO musicians will perform in concerts at the Conservatorium’s Hanson Dyer Recital Hall, with additional opportunities for collaborations and research projects anticipated.

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