

Australian Chamber Orchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ACO UP CLOSE



**STEFANIE
FARRANDS**

SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER, 2.30PM
THE NEILSON, PIER 2/3

TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER, 7.30PM
HANSON DYER HALL



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DAVID GRECO

Internationally regarded for his interpretations of Schubert lieder and the works of JS Bach, ARIA-nominated baritone David Greco has sung on some of the finest stages across Europe, and has appeared as a principal in the world's most exciting opera festivals including Aix-en-Provence Festival and Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

David regularly appears as a soloist with Australian ensembles including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Pinchgut Opera and Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. Most recently he made his debut in Helpmann Award-winning concerts of music of JS Bach with the Sydney Symphony.

David was the first Australian appointed a position with the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Vatican, Rome.

David is an active researcher into historical performance practice of 19th-century voice and recently received his doctorate from Melbourne University. His PhD has led to the first Australian recording project into the historically informed performance of Schubert's songs cycles *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* on the ABC Classic label, the latter receiving an ARIA nomination for Best Classical Album in 2020.

STEFAN CASSOMENOS

Melbourne pianist and composer Stefan Cassomenos is one of Australia's most vibrant and versatile musicians. He has been performing internationally since the age of 10 and has been the recipient of multiple prizes including the Second Grand Prize in the prestigious International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn. He regularly performs in Australia, Germany and the UK and has played concertos with several major Australian symphony orchestras.

Stefan is a founding member of chamber ensemble PLEXUS, which since launching in 2014 has commissioned and premiered over 110 new works. Cassomenos' own compositions are regularly commissioned and performed throughout Australia. Cassomenos is joint Artistic Director of Port Fairy Spring Music Festival with violinist Monica Curro.

Stefan is generously supported by Kawai Australia.

A VIOLA INSIDE A VIOLA

Garth Knox's solo viola work, titled *Still*, was a surprise birthday gift to me from my family. They certainly know me well.

I care so much about new music being written for the viola. Firsthand knowledge from a composer is such a treat and allows us to interpret a work with the rawest information on hand. We need to be present, be aware and react to the times we are living in. It inspires and pushes me to be the most honest musician I can be.

Still is inspired by the harmonic progression of Thomas Tallis' third tune, which appears in Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* for string orchestra. This piece had a big impact on me growing up.

I've been waiting at the blocks to premiere this work, and this recital felt like the right place. There is something special about playing a piece for the very first time and translating these fresh dots on paper into a world of new sounds.

The viola is such a versatile instrument, and it has the capability for so many different complex colours and sounds. We need to look after it. And we need to look after our composers, too. I feel incredibly grateful to my family for this precious gift, and to Garth for trusting this piece with a violist other than himself. It means the world to me.

Beethoven, Mozart, Dvořák, Bach, Britten, Haydn and Schubert all played the viola. Brahms was a pianist, but I have always felt if he were to play a string instrument, it would have been the viola. He writes the most exquisite viola parts which always seem to show how expressive, colourful and malleable the viola can be.

I'm grateful to the ACO for letting me smuggle in the superb baritone David Greco to join us for this recital to sing Brahms' Two Songs. I fell in love with these songs and the sextets when I was a teenager, and I'd say that Brahms penning these to paper had a life-changing effect on me. All I wanted to do was express myself through my viola. My instrument is my voice box, and these glorious two pieces show the viola in its best light.

Rebecca Clarke's Viola Sonata is a treasure and arguably one of the greatest sonatas in our repertoire. Clarke was a powerhouse violist herself, and her writing is idiomatic to say the least. She had a difficult life as a female musician and wasn't encouraged to write, like all too many women. Her father abused her, banished her from the house and cut her funds off as a student. Her Viola Sonata tied for first place in a competition (next to a work by Ernest Bloch), but the work was later withdrawn as reporters speculated that it must not have been Clarke who wrote the piece. The idea that a woman could write such a beautiful work was socially inconceivable. Her music *is* simply beautiful – and we need beautiful music to be played and heard in this world.

Richard Tognetti once proclaimed (proudly, too) that our beautiful new hall, The Neilson, was a viola – rich, warm and enveloping. It made me feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

So I'll be basking in the glory of being able to give you a concert full of my favourite sounds in the world, but twofold. A viola inside a viola.

Voilà.

Stefanie Farrands

PROGRAM

Stefanie Farrands Viola
David Greco Baritone
Stefan Cassomenos Piano

Kumi Taguchi Host (Sydney)
Toby Chadd Host (Melbourne)

GARTH KNOX

Still (world premiere)

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Two Songs for Voice, Viola and Piano, Op.91
1. *Gestillte Sehnsucht. Adagio espressivo*
2. *Geistliches Wiegenlied. Andante con moto*

REBECCA CLARKE

Sonata for Viola and Piano
I. *Impetuoso – Poco agitato*
II. *Vivace*
III. *Adagio – Allegro*

STEFANIE FARRANDS

Stefanie Farrands was born in Melbourne and began learning the violin at six before swapping to the viola at 16.

She has performed extensively throughout Europe, America, Asia and Australia with orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Camerata Salzburg and as Guest Principal Viola with the Strasbourg Philharmonic, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Australian World Orchestra, and many orchestras in Australia. She returned to Australia in 2015 to take up the role of Principal Viola with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Five years later, Stef joined the ACO as Principal Viola, a job she calls a “dream come true”.

Stef studied at the Australian National Academy of Music, where she was a member of the award-winning Hamer Quartet, before continuing her studies with Tabea Zimmermann at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin.

Stef has won numerous awards including the Asia Pacific Chamber Music Competition and has been the recipient of the Freedman Classic Fellowship, which helped support her lifelong passion of commissioning new music for the viola. She has appeared as soloist with major orchestras across Australia, including the ACO, and in 2022 recorded and premiered Holly Harrison’s *Hotwire* with the TSO.

Stef has been a member of the String Faculty at the Hobart Conservatorium of Music and has given masterclasses through the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Australian National Academy of Music, ACO’s Emerging Artist Program and AYO’s Young Symphonists Program.

Stefanie Farrands’ Chair is sponsored by peckvonhartel architects.