

AustralianChamberOrchestra

RICHARD TOGNETTI - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



# TOGNETTI. MENDELSSOHN. BACH.

DIRECTED BY RICHARD TOGNETTI

## Program in Short

The music you're  
about to hear

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ACO

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# ACO

Australian Chamber Orchestra

**Richard Tognetti**  
Artistic Director

**50 YEARS**

Pushing Boundaries

Igniting Curiosity

Transcending the Ordinary

Leading the Way



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**ACO 2025**

Now on sale at [aco.com.au](http://aco.com.au)

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.

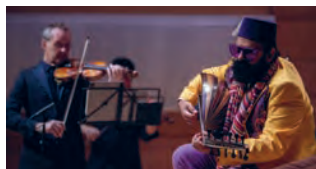
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### Program in Short

The music you're about to hear

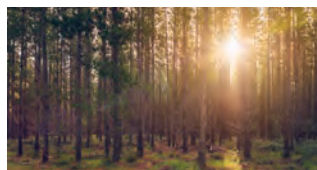
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### The Enigma of JS Bach

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# WELCOME

Welcome to *Tognetti. Mendelssohn. Bach.*

This performance will showcase some of the most beloved music ever written, Mendelssohn's Octet and Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor, alongside two thrilling contemporary works – celebrated Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Illumine* and a world premiere from rising Adelaide composer Jakub Jankowski.

I acknowledge our National Tour Partner for this performance, Mutual Trust, for their invaluable support of this tour, and the ACO more broadly. Mutual Trust has been a partner with the ACO for the past three years and I thank them for their essential support.

We are thrilled to share with you our 2025 Season – the ACO's 50th-anniversary season. ACO 2025 is a celebration of everything that makes the ACO so revered around the globe; groundbreaking collaborations, thrilling performances of music old and new, and of course, the ACO's magnetic combination of musicality, curiosity and virtuosity. I encourage you to explore the full season and secure your subscription for this milestone celebratory year.

To coincide with the announcement of the ACO's 50th anniversary season, we are delighted to welcome Wesfarmers Arts as Principal Partner of the ACO. Wesfarmers has been a deeply valued supporter of the ACO for nearly three decades, and as Principal Partner, will provide essential support in allowing more audiences across Australia and around the world to experience this extraordinary orchestra.

Thank you for joining us today and I look forward to welcoming you back in the concert hall for our final national tour of the year: the long-awaited Australian debut of classical and electric guitar virtuoso Sean Shibe. It promises to be an extraordinary finale for the 2024 Season.



**Richard Evans AM**  
Managing Director

**Join the conversation**

**#ACO24Season** |     

**@AustralianChamberOrchestra**

## NEWS



## 2025 Season

NOW ON SALE

Our 2025 Season is a celebration of 50 years of invention, curiosity and unforgettable music-making.

Featuring extraordinary guest artists from across the globe, groundbreaking world premieres and performances of some of the greatest music ever written, we hope you can join us for the ACO's 50th-anniversary season.

Subscriptions are now on sale. Explore the full 2025 Season at [aco.com.au/2025](https://aco.com.au/2025)



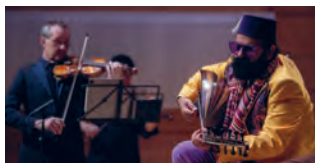
## Wesfarmers

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

We are delighted to announce that Wesfarmers Arts has become Principal Partner of the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

*"After almost three decades in partnership to bring the superb musicians of ACO to Western Australia and to regional communities throughout the country, we are delighted now to become Principal Partner of this truly world-class orchestra. The contribution the ACO makes to the cultural life of our national community at home, and on the world stage, is immense."*

– **Michael Chaney AO**  
Wesfarmers Chairman



## US Tour

OCTOBER

The ACO will soon be returning to North America for a seven-concert tour of The Ottoman Four Seasons, performed in collaboration with oud virtuoso Joseph Tawadros and riq master James Tawadros.

## ACO ON THE PIER

ACO Families:  
There's a Sea in  
My Bedroom

28 SEP – 4 OCT

ACO On The Pier, Sydney

*There's a Sea in My Bedroom* captures the magic of a child's fantasy world through an immersive musical and theatrical performance for young children and their families.

ACO Up Close:  
Phil Slater Quartet

18 OCTOBER

ACO On The Pier, Sydney

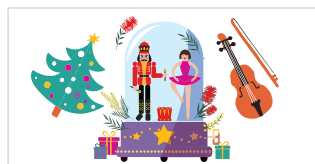
Jazz trumpeter Phil Slater leads his jazz quartet in a one-night-only performance presenting his award-winning recording, *Immersion Lure*.

ACO Up Close:  
Sean Shibe Solo

15 NOVEMBER

ACO On The Pier, Sydney

Innovative Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe brings a solo recital to The Neilson at ACO On The Pier.

ACO Families:  
The Nutcracker

14–22 DEC

ACO On The Pier, Sydney

Join Clara and her Nutcracker on a magical journey in this stunning adaptation featuring live classical music and ballet.

## NATIONAL TOURS



## Scotland Unbound

7–20 NOVEMBER

National Tour

Guitarist Sean Shibe makes his Australian debut in this inspired and thrilling season closer, directed by Richard Tognetti.

# WELCOME

On behalf of Mutual Trust, I warmly welcome you to the ACO's *Tognetti. Mendelssohn. Bach.* national tour, featuring the extraordinarily virtuosic musicians of the ACO.

Mutual Trust is honoured to be the National Tour Partner for this exhilarating program, which showcases the ACO's incomparable Artistic Director Richard Tognetti directing iconic works by Felix Mendelssohn and JS Bach. Complementing the program is a new commission from trailblazing young Australian composer Jakub Jankowski, and music from Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir.

Like the ACO, Mutual Trust is a purpose-driven organisation, dedicated to excellence and inspiration. It is these enduring values which guide everything we do as we help our families achieve what matters most.

As the ACO approaches its momentous 50th Anniversary in 2025, we are delighted to support this remarkable Orchestra's aspirations. We hope you share our excitement in seeing Richard Tognetti direct a thrilling program of music that is close to the ACO's heart. Enjoy the concert!



**Phil Harkness**

CEO and Managing Partner



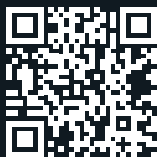
MUTUAL TRUST

# Build a Lasting Family Legacy

At Mutual Trust, our Purpose is to help families achieve what matters most. We do this by caring for our families, our people and communities, not just their finances.

Mutual Trust provides integrated wealth and professional services to some of Australia's most successful families, family businesses, trustees, not-for-profits and individuals. Through a collaborative approach, we empower families to create a lasting positive impact.

Scan the QR code to learn how Mutual Trust can help your family to achieve what matters most.



# SCOTLAND UNBOUND

ACO Australian  
Chamber  
Orchestra



Renowned guitarist Sean Shibe makes his Australian debut, joining Richard Tognetti and the ACO for this thrilling season closer celebrating his Scottish heritage.

**7-20 NOVEMBER**  
Wollongong, Sydney, Brisbane,  
Canberra, Melbourne,  
Adelaide and Perth.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Tickets from \$49\* | **\$35\* for U35s**

\*Transaction fee of \$8.50 applies

**ACO.COM.AU**



# PROGRAM

The Australian Chamber Orchestra acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country, on whose unceded land we perform today. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Richard Tognetti Director and Violin  
Australian Chamber Orchestra

<b>EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA</b>	Pelimannit – Fiddlers, Op.1 <i>I. Närböböläisten braa speli</i> <i>II. Kopsin Jonas</i> <i>III. Klockar Samuel Dikström</i> <i>IV. Pirun polska</i> <i>V. Hypytt</i>	8
<b>JAKUB JANKOWSKI</b>	Ritornello ( <i>World Premiere</i> )*	12
<b>JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH</b>	Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV1041 <i>I. [Allegro]</i> <i>II. Andante</i> <i>III. Allegro assai</i>	13
<b>INTERVAL</b>		20
<b>ANNA THORVALDSDOTTIR</b>	Illumine	7
<b>FELIX MENDELSSOHN</b>	Octet for strings in E-flat major, Op.20 <i>I. Allegro moderato ma con fuoco</i> <i>II. Andante</i> <i>III. Scherzo. Allegro leggierissimo</i> <i>IV. Presto</i>	31

\*Commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, generously supported by Julia Pincus and Ian Learmonth.

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.

*Tognetti. Mendelssohn. Bach.* will be broadcast on Friday 18 October at 1pm and available on demand for 30 days after.

# MUSICIANS

The musicians on stage  
for this performance.

## Discover more

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Learn more about our musicians, go behind the scenes and watch ACO StudioCast films at: [acoondemand.com.au](http://acoondemand.com.au)



**Richard Tognetti**  
Director and Violin

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Richard plays a 1741–44 Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin kindly on loan from the ACO. His Chair is sponsored by Gaby Kennard, Peter McMullin AM & Ruth McMullin, Andrew & Andrea Roberts, and Rosy Seaton & Seumas Dawes.



**Helena Rathbone**  
Principal Violin

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Helena plays the 1732 'ex-Dollfus' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from anonymous Australian private benefactors. Her Chair is sponsored by Margaret Gibbs & Rodney Cameron.



**Anna da Silva Chen**  
Violin

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Anna plays an 18th-century violin made in the style of Pietro Guarneri of Venice, kindly on loan from Jannie Brown. Her Chair is sponsored by Alenka Tindale.



**Ilya Isakovich**  
Violin

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Ilya plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Meg Meldrum.



**Ike See**  
Violin

---

Ike plays his own 2021 Zygmuntowicz violin. His Chair is sponsored by Ian Lansdown & Tricia Bell.



**Tim Yu**  
Violin

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Tim plays an 1800 violin by Raffaele & Antonio Gagliano. His Chair is sponsored by Barbara & Ralph Ward-Ambler.



**Stefanie  
Farrands**  
**Principal Viola**

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Stefanie plays her own 2016 viola made by Ragnar Hayn in Berlin. Her Chair is sponsored by peckvonhartel architects.



**Elizabeth  
Woolnough**  
**Viola**

---

Elizabeth plays her own 1968 Parisian viola by Pierre M. Audinot. Her Chair is sponsored by Terry Campbell AO & Christine Campbell.



**Timo-Veikko  
Valve**  
**Principal Cello**

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Tipi plays a 1616 Brothers Amati cello kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund. His Chair is sponsored by Prof Doug Jones AO & Prof Janet Walker CM.



**Melissa Barnard**  
**Cello**

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Melissa plays an 1846 cello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. Her Chair is sponsored by Jason & Alexandra Wenderoth.



**Maxime Bibeau**  
**Principal Bass**

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Max plays a late-16th-century Gasparo da Salò bass kindly on loan from UKARIA. His Chair is sponsored by Darin Cooper Foundation.

# ACO

Australian Chamber Orchestra

**Richard Tognetti** – Artistic Director



## **BRAHMS & BEETHOVEN**

An epic season opener with Brahms's Violin Concerto and Beethoven's Symphony No.7.



## **ABEL SELAOCOE**

See the international cello sensation in his highly anticipated Australian debut.



## **BACH TO THE BEACH BOYS AND BEYOND**

Discover the thrilling soundworld of the first electronic instrument with theremin superstar Carolina Eyck.



## **DEATH AND THE MAIDEN REVEALED**

A Schubert odyssey directed by the electrifying violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Fifty years in the making, ACO 2025 pays homage to our past while embracing a bold and ambitious vision for the future.



**GERSHWIN & SHOSTAKOVICH**

Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No.1 with pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk.



**A MUSICAL AWAKENING**

Take a breath and lean into the healing music of Beethoven, Pēteris Vasks and Max Richter.



**COCTEAU'S CIRCLE**

An adventure to 1920s Paris featuring the music of Erik Satie and Claude Debussy, with Le Gateau Chocolat as your guide.



**SPECIAL GALA: MOUNTAIN**

The return of one of our most groundbreaking, award-winning and popular cinematic collaborations.

**ACO 2025**  
Now on sale at [aco.com.au](http://aco.com.au)

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## PROGRAM IN SHORT

Your five-minute read  
before lights down.

Pre-concert talks take place 45 minutes before the start of every concert. See the ACO information desk for location details.

**Newcastle City Hall**  
Francis Merson  
Thu 5 September, 6.45pm

**Melbourne Recital Centre**  
Francis Merson  
Sat 7 September, 6.45pm  
Mon 9 September, 6.45pm

**Arts Centre Melbourne**  
Francis Merson  
Sun 8 September, 1.45pm

**Adelaide Town Hall**  
Kane Moroney  
Tue 10 September, 6.45pm

**Llewellyn Hall**  
Francis Merson  
Sat 14 September, 7.15pm

**QPAC Concert Hall**  
Francis Merson  
Mon 16 September, 6.15pm

**City Recital Hall**  
Francis Merson  
Tue 17 September, 7.15pm  
Wed 18 September, 6.15pm  
Fri 20 September, 6.15pm  
Sat 21 September, 6.15pm

**Sydney Opera House**  
Francis Merson  
Sun 22 September, 1.15pm

**Wollongong Town Hall**  
Francis Merson  
Mon 23 September, 6.45pm

Pre-concert speakers are subject to change.



## Einojuhani Rautavaara

(1928–2016)

### Pelimannit – Fiddlers, Op.1

Einojuhani Rautavaara is Finland's best-known composer since Jean Sibelius. *Fiddlers*, a 1952 work for piano, orchestrated for strings in 1972, is based on dances written by an early 18th-century folk fiddler named Samuel Rinda-Nickola. Each movement depicts fiddlers and scenes from Finnish country life: *Närböböläisten braa speli* – The famous fiddlers from Narbo arrive, in a procession full of colour and rustic pomp; *Kopsin Jonas* – In the strange light of the Nordic midsummernight Kopsin Jonas plays for the forest and for himself; *Klockar Samuel Dikström* – Samuel the village organist improvises during a lonely moment of inspiration: he fills the little church with reminiscences of his daily Bach, of wedding tunes heard long ago; *Pirun polska* – a melancholy devil sits on his rock, listening to the dark, mysterious Finnish forest; *Hypyt* – In a stamping, jumping dance they whirl, their broad faces solemn as if in the church, but a strange excitement lurks.



## Jakub Jankowski

(1994–)

### Ritornello World Premiere

*From the composer:*

The title of my work *Ritornello* means 'little return' in Italian, and refers to a specific baroque musical form in which a central musical refrain is continually returned-to and juxtaposed with contrasting musical episodes.

In my *Ritornello*, a recurring and ever-changing musical refrain is gradually revealed. The work's opening notably incorporates the Ukrainian folksong *Verbovaya Doshchekka* (the willow board), and in key moments features the unique sound of the ACO musicians playing their instruments with specially designed wooden comb-bows – which were developed thanks to the generous help of Sebastian Collen.

I have dedicated this work to the 20th-century film director Sergei Parajanov (1924–1990), whose unique stylistic blend of avant-garde and surrealist aesthetics with folk-art inspired many of my musical approaches.



# Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750)

## Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV1041

During his time at the Weimar court (1708–17) Johann Sebastian Bach became well acquainted with the Italian concerto form, making a number of transcriptions of works by Vivaldi and Telemann. When he took up the post of Kapellmeister at Prince Leopold's court of Cöthen, he inherited an experienced orchestra of 17 players with which he could put his experience of concerto form to good use.

Outside of the *Brandenburg Concertos*, much of Bach's music from this period is lost, or its provenance obscured, so little is known about the circumstances that led to the composition of his two violin concertos. It is likely that the Violin Concerto in A minor was performed by the court's lead violinist, Joseph Spiels, one of a number of fine musicians whom Leopold had recruited from the Prussian royal court orchestra in Berlin.

Of Bach's two violin concertos, the first in A minor is more compact and formal. Its first movement boasts a forceful ritornello which returns after multiple solo episodes from the violin. In the second movement, the soloist sings over a stately accompaniment, striving for freedom from some inexorable sorrow. The finale is a lively gigue demanding more virtuosity from the violinist than anywhere else in the work.



# Anna Thorvaldsdottir

(1977–)

## Illumine

Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir writes music as an ecosystem of sounds and materials that are carried from one performer to the next as a piece progresses, growing and transforming throughout the piece. Of her 2017 work *Illumine*, she writes: "The inspiration for *Illumine* is based on the notion of dawn and the relationship between light and darkness – in particular the ignition of the first beams of light and the subtle rhythms that appear through the pulsating dance of light emerging."

From the work's opening we hear the light establishing itself through a sonorous drone in the strings, growing outwards before it is punctuated by violent slap pizzicatos. The textures and melodies undulate in strange shapes and patterns, just as light would as it encounters objects in the natural world, finally arriving at a place that feels as harmonically resolved as a sunrise, and eerie as the night, all at once.





# Felix Mendelssohn

(1809–1847)

## Octet for strings in E-flat major, Op.20

Felix Mendelssohn grew up in a Berlin household that fostered an abundance of music making. It played host to regular salons and concerts in which visitors would enjoy music and dignified conversation with philosophers, artists, diplomats and businessmen. It was out of this environment that the young Mendelssohn composed 13 string symphonies, the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the crowning jewel of his teenage compositions, the Octet for strings – composed when he was only 16 years of age and his first undisputed masterpiece.

We know that Mendelssohn enjoyed the benefit of hearing his compositions performed at home by a private orchestra, but even he could not reasonably expect to have access to a full concert orchestra all the time. The ability to conjure orchestral magic from a chamber ensemble became central to his thinking when creating his Octet, something he later confirmed in writing: “The Ottetto must be played by all the instruments in symphonic orchestral style. Pianos (softs) and fortes (louds) must be strictly observed and more strongly emphasised than is usual in pieces of this character.”

Mendelssohn wrote his Octet as a birthday present for his friend and violin teacher Eduard Rietz, and the Octet boasts a soaring, sparkling first violin part. This is especially evident in the warm and spacious first movement, where the lead violin is often the first among equals. After a gently lyrical second movement, we reach a light and airy scherzo, the first of Mendelssohn’s trademark “fairy scherzos”, apparently inspired here by a section of Goethe’s *Faust* titled “Walpurgis Night’s Dream”, a night of witches and spirits. The finale is a lively Presto containing masterful fugal writing and stomping unisons involving the whole ensemble.

Although dedicated to his violin teacher, the Octet is more than a showpiece for the first violin; it is first and foremost a conversation between eight brilliant musicians which has remained a favourite with audiences ever since.

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Richard Tognetti performing with the ACO. Photo by Daniel Boud.



# THE ENIGMA OF JS BACH

The world wasn't ready for Johann Sebastian Bach's musical genius in his lifetime. Almost 300 years later, we know better.

**Written by Simon Tedeschi**

Simon is an acclaimed concert pianist and writer. His first book, *Fugitive*, was shortlisted for the Judith Wright Calanthe Award at the Queensland Literary Awards and the Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry. In 2022, he was named the winner of the Australian Book Review's Calibre Prize.

Many years ago, I was told a story that went something like this. Upon returning to the stage for an encore at the end of a recital, the great German pianist Wilhelm Kempff began to play the first notes of Johann Sebastian Bach's monumental *Goldberg Variations*. The expectation was that he would play the introductory aria and then leave but instead Kempff did something incredible. He went on to play the entire work – 30 variations – in all of its sublime 75-minute grandeur. By the time he was done, the audience had slipped away – but for one person: Albert Einstein.

This tale – like Beethoven kissing the young Liszt on the forehead or Liszt kissing nuns beneath their habits – is of dubious provenance. If there is any truth to the story, the pianist was most likely Rudolf Serkin and there were not one but three people who stuck around until the very end: the violinist Adolf Busch, the pianist Artur Schnabel and Einstein.

True or not, for me the real resonance of this story is in what it says about the power of Bach, the man who, for classical musicians, is the greatest composer ever known and the foundation of the way we practise, perform and conceive of music as a way of life. Einstein, who revealed the truth behind the most intractable mysteries of time and space, once said of Bach (unlike the Kempff story, this is actually verified): “listen, play, love, revere – and keep your trap shut.” In other words, the greatest scientist of the 20th century could explain why people travelling at vastly different speeds age at different rates, or why matter and energy are equivalent, but when it came to the music of Bach, he couldn't say much at all.

There is no other composer in history for whom the language of worship is so readily applied, and few figures in any artform are spoken about with such awe. We so desperately want to “know” this man, but he remains an enigma. Through various modes of analysis we try and come to terms with his tools; we take the whole apparatus apart to examine the smallest components; we look at the famous portrait of his portly face; we read of the mortal aspects of his life – a botched eye operation, a four-hundred kilometre walk, a stint in jail – to try and console ourselves that he was just like us. But then we hear his music and are shorn of all we thought we were. Even for the tiny minority who aren't moved by his music – Tchaikovsky to name one – no classical musician can escape the parameters that Bach has set. Alongside Plato, Leonardo, Dante and Shakespeare, he is one of the founders of the Western understanding of the world.



Johann Sebastian Bach

True or not, for me the real resonance of this story is in what it says about the power of Bach, the man who, for classical musicians, is the greatest composer ever known and the foundation of the way we practise, perform and conceive of music as a way of life.

Life has changed a great deal in 274 years. Bach's world, no less troubling than ours and in many ways more so, was far more predictable. Matters of life and death were dictated by the Holy Scriptures, a father was the head of the household, a mother took care of her home and (many) children and, apart from the church, the king was the final arbiter. Travel was a logistical nightmare – hence the long walk – and science as we know it was only beginning to take shape in what would come to be known as the Age of Enlightenment. What would Bach have made of our world, riven as we are by religious and cultural conflict, contestable truths and political soundbites, able to access news from other countries in less than a second and confronted by ecological challenges of a truly global scale?

For Richard Tognetti, who performs Bach's A Minor Concerto with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Bach continues to speak to us in our present condition with immediacy and clarity. Tognetti takes the view that even in the absence of absolutes, Bach is the binding force. Nearly a quarter of the way through the 21st century, his music must address the exigencies of our atomised era. But it is also instructive to remember that Bach's position at the summit of the musical firmament was not the case during his own life, much less after his death. There are a number of reasons for his ascension now. For a start, unlike other composers such as Handel, Bach did not seek out publication and self-promotion. His work was,

on the whole, limited to central and eastern Germany. It is also the case that Bach wrote primarily with a purpose in mind: during his life, he was known in professional musical circles as a great organist, teacher, composer and conductor.

The deeper truth is that the world was just not ready for him. Music lovers in the early 18th century generally regarded Bach's music as being overly ornamental, rarified and convoluted, with nary a “melody” in sight. Europe was heading in far more homophonic directions, the glistening and graceful textures of “sentimentality”, as epitomised by Handel and Telemann and later by Mozart, Clementi and Haydn, setting in place the conditions for the impassioned emotionality of romanticism.

History is every bit as intricate as one of Bach's fugues. Things rarely happen in linear fashion but return later in ingenious ways. It is only thanks to the Romantic period, with its rejection of orthodoxies and its drive towards national identity, that Bach, that mysterious master of the past, would come to be venerated as the foundation of the Western music tradition at all. Following the devastating Napoleonic Wars, Germany – a collection of states emerging from the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire – needed a quintessentially German composer. For this to happen history needed its agents. Here we are indebted to two marvellous figures: Sara Itzig Levy, an educated, urbane harpsichordist and artistic patron, and her great-nephew, the composer, pianist, organist and conductor Felix Mendelssohn.

It is only thanks to the Romantic period, with its rejection of orthodoxies and its drive towards national identity, that Bach, that mysterious master of the past, would come to be venerated as the foundation of the Western music tradition at all.



Felix Mendelssohn

Again, just as in one of Bach's fugues, history often seems to have an inevitability to it. These two families, the Mendelssohns and Bachs, seemed always to be within each other's periphery. Levy had studied harpsichord with Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Bach's eldest son, and also commissioned work from Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, one of the most important transitional figures between the baroque and classical periods. While this particular period was not kind to either women or Jews, Levy was fortunate in that she was born into a well-to-do family of intellectuals who valued music and education (and not just for men). Crucially, this was also the period of the *Haskalah* (drawn from the Hebrew *sekhel* meaning "reason" or "intellect"), the drive by European Jews to be accepted more broadly into intellectual and cultural life. It was this movement that gave Levy the impetus to join the *Berliner Singakademie*, a choir led by Carl Friedrich Zelter, a kind of German 19th-century Kodály, and later tutor to the young Mendelssohn. One of the works that this choir rehearsed and performed was Bach's magisterial Mass in B minor.

Mendelssohn's father Abraham was also knowledgeable about Bach and, through no small effort, owned several of his original manuscripts, treasures of inestimable value that were often treated disgracefully after Bach's death, used as marketplace food wrapping, among other things. For discerning minds such as Abraham Mendelssohn and Zelter, Bach's music, though not yet universally known, was passed around like a kind of holy relic.

The course of musical history was set in a new direction when Bella Salomon, Mendelssohn's much-loved grandmother, presented the 14-year-old Felix with a copy of the *St Matthew Passion*. Though we can all agree that a grandmother's love knows no limits, Salomon could hardly have known that hers was ultimately a gift to humanity. Six years later, Mendelssohn, then 20 years old, went on to conduct the first-public performance of the *Passion* since Bach's death, with the audience including Heine and Hegel. "To think," Felix later wrote, "that it took ... a Jew's son to revive the greatest Christian music for the world!"

The two works programmed are emblematic of the through-line that extends from Bach, through Mendelssohn, to the modern day. Bach's A Minor Concerto, one of the glittering jewels in the violin repertoire, follows the traditional three-movement concerto form (allegro moderato, andante, allegro assai). The first movement is in ritornello form, in which the recurring orchestral theme alternates with contrasting



episodes played by the solo violin. The andante is in binary form (AB) and is notable as one of the most exquisite melodies in all of music. The third is also in ritornello form and, like so many of Bach's final movements, is a gigue, a popular dance inherited from the British jig. It is hard to hear this movement and not think of "groove", the term jazz musicians use for music that rouses the human body to dance.

Throughout the concerto, the soloist must demonstrate virtuosity, tenderness and tonal control while ensuring that all the sinuous textures blend seamlessly with the other instruments. When I asked Tognetti how he prepares a work like this, his response was straightforward: he plays the music over and over. This is really the only way to "find oneself into" Bach's music: one grows alongside it, and, indeed, because of it. Almost three centuries after his death, Bach is still the barometer for musicians because his immense output, whether the *Well-Tempered Klavier*, the cantatas or solo cello suites, is a mirror to the deepest contours of the self. In his supple counterpoint and architectural symmetry, his sublime unity and spiritual sincerity, Bach reveals us to ourselves in all our imperfection. Exactly how he does this remains a mystery. As Einstein also wrote: "Never lose a holy curiosity."

Richard Tognetti.  
Photo by Nic Walker.



If not for the influence of Bach, Mendelssohn's Octet would never have been written in the way that it was, or perhaps might never have been written at all. Composed when Mendelssohn was 16 years old as a birthday gift for his violin teacher Eduard Rietz – how much must we thank the great figures of the past for their gifts to each other? – it is a testament not only to his prodigious talent but also his love of Bach.

The work has four movements: the first, *allegro moderato ma con fuoco*, is in sonata form (exposition, development, recapitulation), reflective of Mendelssohn's sensibility as a romantic at heart but a classical craftsman. In this movement, counterpoint – the interweaving of musical voices stating, augmenting, reversing, extending and abbreviating motifs – asserts itself with reckless joy. The second movement, *andante*, is in ternary (ABA) form, demonstrating the composer's seemingly effortless ability to weave a melody out of thin air. Next comes a scherzo: *allegro leggierissimo*. Inspired by Goethe's *Faust*, this movement is lively and mysterious, ebullient and theatrical. Incredibly, even at 16 years of age, Mendelssohn's characteristic "voice" seems fully formed.

Finally comes a presto in sonata-rondo form (ABACAD, then a mix of BCA), virtuosic, joyous and scintillating, bringing the Octet to an exultant conclusion. Throughout the whole work, Bach's ghost is never far away: in the polyphony, in the thematic development, in the ingenious integration of harmony and rhythm, and in the irreducible complexity of the whole. Through Bach and by Bach, we can come just a little closer to understanding that, even though knowledge has its frustrating, even painful, limits, and God might not be who we once thought he was, in the face of seemingly insuperable challenges the human spirit springs eternal. As Bach himself *really* said: "Face to the reality."

Time and time again, no matter what we play, we return to Bach. We never tire of him; his lessons are endless. This is surely why three exceptional men, in the first quarter of a devastating century, sat in their seats 75 minutes longer than they had to. It also goes some way to explaining why Kempff – or, rather, Serkin – played the entire *Goldberg* from beginning to end. Even if this story never actually happened, I choose to read it as a fable. Even when the world seems to be falling apart, when it is harder than ever to trust what is really going on, by listening to, studying, reading about and playing Bach, we are made into more expansive beings. Experiencing a work like his A Minor Violin Concerto, we can hear human voices in all of their wondrous diversity as they come together together as one, glorious tapestry. ●



Richard Tognetti performing the string arrangement of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* with the ACO in 2018. Photo by Julian Kingma.



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# SLOWING TIME

Rising Adelaide composer  
Jakub Jankowski draws from the patterns  
of the natural world and instinct in a new  
work that is both tribute and exploration.

**Written by Neha Kale**

Neha Kale is a widely-published writer and critic. She wrote *The Influence* column for *The Saturday Paper*, is a former SBS columnist and was editor and editor-at-large of *VAULT*. Her literary work has been recognised with a Faber Scholarship for Creative Nonfiction and highly commended in the Ann Moyal Nonfiction Fellowship. She is a 2024 Artist in Residence at Bundanon.

Jakub Jankowski believes that music owes its power to a realm beyond the sonic. The renowned young composer has long been attuned to the relationship between rhythm and image – how a melody can tap into the unconscious or stir emotions to life. Although Jankowski attended his first concerts as a teenager, he was introduced to the classical repertoire through film.

“I recall encountering the music of Krzysztof Penderecki, a 20th-century Polish composer who I found through Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*,” he says. “Music interplays with the imagination. We can use it consciously or unconsciously. We can imagine scenarios.” He pauses. “I have an association with certain sounds – when you can taste or see the music. I love music that is vivid, somehow.”

Jankowski, a gentle presence who weighs his ideas carefully, is speaking from his home in Adelaide. Succulents line the windowsill. The room is filled with dappled light and, in the background, open notebooks sit atop a grand piano. In September Jankowski will premiere a new commission for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, part of a program that includes Mendelssohn’s Octet and Bach’s Violin Concerto in A Minor. It revolves around the ritornello – Italian for “little return” – a musical structure that was popular during the baroque period but was later eclipsed by the sonata.

“The Bach concerto that is featured on the program uses the ritornello form in its first movement,” says Jankowski. “It’s something that all music shares. You have this statement or refrain and the music returns to that.”

Jankowski is a keen observer of patterns in the natural world. Working on the ACO commission, written for 11 strings, he took regular walks, sometimes visiting trails around the Kuitpo Forest, outside Adelaide. “There are frog calls that made their way into the work,” he smiles.

In writing new work, he embraces elements of mystery. “Even the way that material is generated,” he says. “One day, I’ll have a life where I have stability but, for me, the creative process is rather chaotic.”

Jankowski, the son of Polish migrants, didn’t come from a musical family but he started studying classical guitar as a six-year-old. “[My parents] saw learning music as part of a good, well-rounded education,” he says. Later, he became captivated by the cello, playing in the Adelaide Youth Orchestra and going on to study at the Elder Conservatorium of Music. There, with friends, he helped found the Maple String Quartet.



Jakub Jankowski

“You are learning by doing it,” he says. “There is a lot of academically rigorous music-making. But [for me], I think music functions at the level of the instinctual. That is the wellspring.”

In 2017, Jankowski premiered a cello sonata, *Aspects of Return*, performed around the country by pianist Aleksandar Madžar and cellist Nicolas Altstaedt. The work, commissioned by Musica Viva, revolved around three movements that referenced thinkers from psychology, philosophy and poetry: Carl Jung, Heraclitus and T. S. Eliot. For Jankowski, *Aspects of Return* referenced the types of “returning” that recur in music. But it also alludes to the ways in which music can be a portal to former selves.

“Works use what came before to create a dramaturgy of the form,” he explains. “Sometimes in a devastating way – the return of the repressed. But there’s a more beautiful aspect of that. It expands the scope of life [when] you find connections between different experiences.”

To write *Eclogue*, a 2023 trio conceived for Satsuki Odamura, a master of the koto – an ancient Japanese instrument – and cellists Jean-Guihen Queyras and James Morley, Jankowski embraced the spiral, a shape that recurs in nature. “An eclogue is a poetic form to do with a pastoral type of subject matter,” he says. “The work makes use of Fibonacci structures and you can play around because the proportions change.”

This playfulness extends to Jankowski’s ACO commission. The composer, who feels an affinity with works from Eastern Europe, will embed a Ukrainian folk song within the ritornello. It’s a tribute, he says, to the great Armenian director Sergei Parajanov, who struggled with the Soviet authorities.

“I found the song through a wonderful film from 1965 called *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*,” says Jankowski. “It’s this love story set in a Hutsul village in the 19th century. He is an avant-garde filmmaker who draws on lots of folk cultures. There is a surrealism in his work, related to a dream way of thinking.”

Jankowski talks about music as if it can transport us between the everyday and otherworldly. It can shuttle us between the past and the present. Or it can make time stop.

“There is a quote in which Milan Kundera talks about speed in relation to memory,” he says. “In music, it relates to the different materials coming back, the speed at which you change between musical materials.” He grows quiet for a moment. “If you stay with one musical idea, there’s a way in which [time] feels like it’s going by slower.” ●



Richard Tognetti, Helena Rathbone and Satu Vänskä performing Bach's Triple Violin Concerto with the ACO at the Melbourne Recital Centre in 2017. Photo by Zan Wimberley.





# RICHARD TOGNETTI



## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & LEAD VIOLIN

Richard Tognetti is Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. He has established an international reputation for his compelling performances and artistic individualism.

Richard began his studies in his home town of Wollongong with William Primrose, then with Alice Waten at the Sydney Conservatorium, and Igor Ozim at the Bern Conservatory, where he was awarded the Tschumi Prize as the top graduate soloist in 1989. Later that year he led several performances with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and that November was appointed as the Orchestra's lead violin and, subsequently, Artistic Director.

Richard performs on period, modern and electric instruments and his numerous arrangements, compositions and transcriptions have expanded the chamber orchestra repertoire and been performed throughout the world. As director or soloist, Richard has appeared with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Academy of Ancient Music, Slovene Philharmonic Orchestra, Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Hong Kong Philharmonic, Camerata Salzburg, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Irish Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Nordic Chamber Orchestra and all the major Australian symphony orchestras. Richard performed the Australian premieres of Ligeti's Violin Concerto and Lutoslawski's Partita. In November 2016, he became the Barbican

Centre's first Artist-in-Residence at Milton Court Concert Hall in London. Richard created the Huntington Festival in Mudgee, New South Wales and was Artistic Director of the Festival Maribor in Slovenia from 2008 to 2015.

Richard was the co-composer of the score for Peter Weir's *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, starring Russell Crowe; he co-composed the soundtrack to Tom Carroll's surf film *Storm Surfers*; and created *The Red Tree*, inspired by Shaun Tan's book. He created the documentary film *Musica Surfica*, as well as *The Glide*, *The Reef*, and *The Crowd & I*. Most recently, Richard collaborated with director Jennifer Peedom and Stranger Than Fiction Films to create the films *Mountain* and *River*, the former of which went on to become the highest-grossing homegrown documentary in Australian cinemas.

His recordings have received accolades around the world, and he is the recipient of six ARIA awards, including three consecutive wins for his recordings of Bach's violin works.

Richard was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2010. He holds honorary doctorates from three Australian universities and was made a National Living Treasure in 1999. In 2017 he was awarded the JC Williamson Award for longstanding service to the live performance industry.

# THE ACO



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– **The Australian**

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its 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.

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In addition to its national and international touring schedule, the ACO 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, *Beethoven 1, 2, & 3 Eroica* and ARIA award-winning albums *River* and *Indies & Idols*.

In 2023 the ACO launched its digital streaming platform, ACO On Demand, which hosts the Orchestra’s award-winning season of cinematic concert films, *ACO StudioCasts*, alongside live concert streams and premium on-demand content.

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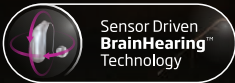


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