



# Australian Chamber Orchestra

## International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court

**3–5 Oct 2019**

**Australian Chamber Orchestra**  
**Richard Tognetti** director & violin

**Part of Barbican Presents 2019–20**

**aco** Australian Chamber Orchestra

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### **Please do ...**

Turn off watch alarms and phones during the performance.

### **Please don't ...**

Take photos or make recordings during the performance.

### **Use a hearing aid?**

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.

Programme produced by Harriet Smith; advertising by Cabbell (tel 020 3603 7930)

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# Australian Chamber Orchestra

## International Associate Ensemble

### at Milton Court

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#### Thu 3 Oct

7:30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

##### **Goldberg Variations**

**Stravinsky** Three Pieces for string quartet

**Thomas Adès** The Four Quarters – Nightfalls

**JS Bach, arr Richard Tognetti** 14 Canons on a Goldberg Ground, BWV1087

**interval** 20 minutes

**JS Bach, arr Bernard Labadie** Goldberg Variations, BWV988

**Australian Chamber Orchestra**

**Richard Tognetti** director & violin

**Erin Helyard** keyboards

#### Fri 4 Oct

7:30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

##### **Luminous**

Music from Britten and Janáček to R.E.M. and Pēteris Vasks

**Australian Chamber Orchestra**

**Richard Tognetti** director & violin

**Bill Henson** photography, cinematography & editing

**Lior** vocals

#### Sat 5 Oct

7:30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

##### **The lark ascending**

**Pēteris Vasks, arr Stefan Vanselow** Viatore for 11 solo strings

**Britten** Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge

**interval** 20 minutes

**Vaughan Williams** The lark ascending

**Schoenberg** Verklärte Nacht

**Australian Chamber Orchestra**

**Richard Tognetti** director & violin

**Guildhall Chamber Orchestra**

# Welcome

Welcome to this residency featuring our International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and its brilliantly innovative director Richard Tognetti.

They excel at putting together programmes and projects that allow us to experience music afresh and nowhere is that more vividly illustrated than in this first programme, in which one of the most iconic works in the repertoire – Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* – is presented in a new light, not least because we’re hearing it in the orchestral arrangement by the great Canadian Baroque specialist Bernard Labadie. Prior to this, we have an ear-tingling array of pieces, beginning with Stravinsky immediately post-*The Rite* and continuing with a movement from Thomas Adès’s string quartet *The Four Quarters*, which, like the *Goldbergs*, is concerned with the passing of time, and night-time in particular. After this comes one of Tognetti’s own arrangements – which again is closely related to the *Goldbergs*.

During last season’s residency the ACO presented one of its mesmerising audio-visual experiences – *Mountain*; this season the ACO and Tognetti join forces with legendary Australian photographer and cinematographer Bill Henson for *Luminous*, with a soundtrack ranging from Purcell and Schnittke to R.E.M.

For the final concert, the ACO and Tognetti are joined by the Guildhall Chamber Orchestra, in a follow-up to the highly successful collaborations of 2017 and 2018. Again, the repertoire is typically wide-ranging, from the pastoral ethereality of Vaughan Williams’s *The lark ascending*, via the decadent harmonies of Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht*, to Britten’s *Frank Bridge Variations*; the concert begins in contemplative mood with Pēteris Vasks’s *Viator*.

I hope you enjoy the residency.

Huw Humphreys  
Head of Music

## ACO UK

ACO UK is an independent, charitable company which supports the activities of the Australian Chamber Orchestra in the United Kingdom and provides opportunities for the British public to experience and engage with the ACO.

### ACO UK Directors

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The ACO gratefully acknowledges its ACO UK Friends and members of its Chairman’s Council for their support of these performances.

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# Thursday 3 October 7.30pm

## Milton Court Concert Hall

**Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)**

**Three Pieces for string quartet**

I [Danse] · II [Eccentrique] · III [Cantique]

**Thomas Adès (born 1971)**

**The Four Quarters, Op 28 — I Nightfalls**

**J S Bach (1685–1750), arr Richard Tognetti  
(born 1965)**

**14 Canons on a Goldberg Ground,  
BWV1087**

1 Canon simplex · 2 All' roverscio · 3 Beede vorigen Canones zugleich, motu recto e contrario · 4 Motu contrario e recto · 5 Canon duplex à 4 · 6 Canon simplex über besagtes Fundament à 3 · 7 Idem à 3 · 8 Canon simplex à 3, il soggetto in Alto · 9 Canon in unisono post semifusam à 3 · 10 Alio modo, per syncopationes et per ligaturas à 2 · 11 Canon duplex übers Fundament à 5 · 12 Canon duplex über besagte Fundamental-Noten à 5 · 13 Canon triplex à 6 · 14 Canon à 4 per Augmentationem et Diminutionem

interval: 20 minutes

**J S Bach, arr Bernard Labadie (born 1963)**  
**Goldberg Variations, BWV988**

**Australian Chamber Orchestra**

**Richard Tognetti** director & violin

**Erin Helyard** keyboards

## Igor Stravinsky Three Pieces for string quartet

Classical music is rife with examples of pieces that have become associated in the public consciousness with a single, famed event.

Look no further than the last item on this programme for a work that has become so inexplicably linked with Glenn Gould's landmark 1955 recording as to be defined by it. Perhaps the most famous example of this kind of association is Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, which caused such a scandal at its 1913 premiere that, more than 100 years later, tales of the 'riot' it ignited are permanently ingrained into the narrative of 20th-century music.

In the decades that followed *The Rite*, Stravinsky became something of a chameleon, thanks to his unique ability to take influences from different musical styles – from folk, Baroque and Classical, to jazz and 12-tone – and completely reinvent them within his distinct and hugely influential musical language.

Three Pieces for string quartet of 1914 is one of the first works he composed after *The Rite*'s premiere. One could be forgiven for thinking that these short, peculiar pieces are quite unexpected from a composer who had received both adulation and notoriety for his colourful and groundbreaking large-scale works. But Stravinsky was never one simply to meet the expectations of the concert-going public.

He was born into Tchaikovsky's Russia, whose musical landscape was already being drastically transformed by The Five – a 'Mighty Handful' of musical nationalists which counted Stravinsky's teacher Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov among its members. The young Stravinsky harnessed this nationalist approach in his early ballets – all of which are based on Russian folk material – but by 1913 he had all but exhausted the possibilities of 19th-century Romanticism.

The year that followed *The Rite*'s premiere represents a turning point in history: it saw the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and the beginning of the First World War. Three years later, in 1917, the Russian Revolution resulted in Stravinsky's estate being confiscated and his income from Russian publishers cut off. He was now effectively exiled from Russia and his creative impulses moved away from the folk music of his homeland and towards the Classical

influences that would come to define his neo-Classical period, with works such as *Pulcinella* (1919–20), the Violin Concerto (1931) and the Symphony in C (1938–40).

In this light, Three Pieces for string quartet marks the most important turning-point in Stravinsky's stylistic development, bridging his Russian period and the more innovative periods of neo-Classicism and serialism, both of which were to be major musical movements of the 20th century.

The first piece is like a merry dance for clockwork musicians. Its melody is not unlike those found in *Petrushka*, but the other components have their own rhythmic impulses that seem to have little to do with one another. The second piece is inspired by the clown Little Tich, whom Stravinsky saw perform in 1914. Little Tich's jerky, balletic movements fascinated dancers as eminent as Vaslav Nijinsky, and the sudden changes in the music, which reflect the performer's movements, have more in common with a Webern miniature than with Russian folk music. The third piece is entirely homophonic, with Stravinsky writing that the last 20 bars were 'some of my best music of that time'. He later arranged the pieces for orchestra, giving them the titles 'Danse', 'Eccentrique' and 'Cantique'.

Three Pieces, premiered in 1915 by the Flonzaley Quartet in Chicago, shows us a Stravinsky eager to reinvent the rules – a deep impulse that would have a lasting impact on the direction of 20th-century music.

Programme note © Bernard Rofe

## Romy Ash in conversation with Thomas Adès about his arrangement of 'Nightfalls'

Thomas Adès, the composer, conductor and pianist, is speaking from his home and studio in Los Angeles. He is talking about 'Nightfalls', the first movement excerpted from his string quartet *The Four Quarters*, composed in 2010, prior to its unveiling by the ACO in 2018. He is excited by the character he expects it will have when played by the Australian Chamber Orchestra. 'I hope it will sound very beautiful,' he says. 'String orchestras are a very special medium and [this performance] will give it amplitude in the sound. It's a little like when you play something, or sing something, in a cathedral acoustic: it has more depth and space somehow. I think it will bring out the epic.'

Adès describes the movement as being about the magic of it becoming night, which he refers to as 'the special time in the day'. He adds, 'Of course, that's what nightfall is, but I wanted it to be as if it's only that moment, one day after another. And you hear it in the music – it's always endings. It's as if you continually see the sun disappearing and then you hear that happen ... so the music is always, if you like, going west. It's that atmosphere of the end of the day, the twilight; and at the close of piece, the stars come out.'

Adès speaks about the movement and the way it's composed as if on two separate planes that eventually 'link hands'. He explains: 'The violins at the start are one plane. It's like a cycle and if you imagine the night sky turning, it's always fixed – the notes are fixed and the relationship – but it turns, like a slowly turning cosmos. And underneath are the lower strings. They are the other plane, which is a very slow, sort of sighing, melody underneath. It's always falling. Some of it climbs and then falls. They really turn into one breath, into a single movement. The whole movement actually describes the process where they link hands and become one thing.'

'Nightfalls' will be played as a prelude to Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. In both pieces, Adès says, there's an 'awareness of the cyclical nature of time'.

In Adès's studio there's a piano, a table and, depending on the stage of the piece he's writing, a lot of pieces of paper. 'At the moment,' he says, 'there are hundreds of pieces of paper covered in scribbles of different colours, some of them pinned to the wall, some of them all over the table and the floor. Out of that apparent chaos something, we hope, eventually emerges.'

Looking across the studio, he settles on the piano. 'The piano is a cross between a table and something that ...' he pauses, then: 'I suppose it's like a kind of a palette, though that's not quite the right description.' He half jokes: 'It's somewhere to put your pencils', but goes on, 'it also helps you keep, in the music, a sense of proportion. In places where I've not had a piano and I've been trying to write, it's like things get too long or too short. The proportions get a little harder to judge. I don't know why. I can use other instruments. I sometimes have little toy instruments, little toy violins, or things that I can hit, just to give myself a little – to get out of my own brain,' he explains, laughing.

Of the composition process, Adès says: 'In my experience it usually settles into itself and things that seem to be problems or conflicting possibilities, or versions of things, suddenly start to interlock. Something happens where everything falls into place, and it can't really move again; it doesn't want to move again.'

'Some quite surprising things can happen. You realise that something joins up with something else that you'd never noticed before and it literally seems to have a life and a mind of its own, which is a weird moment. I imagine it might be like, I hear, what friends of mine who have children say: that strange moment when you realise that they're different from you and that they've got their own personalities. I'm not sure if I'm getting that right, but it's a strange, magical moment. And it's really a great relief.'

Adès has been composing in some form or another since he was 10 years old. He wrote his opus 1 at 18, the *Five Eliot Landscapes*, and from that point there was no turning back. He speaks about learning and growing as a composer in the public eye, an incredibly privileged place to be, but one with its own set of problems. Some of his early work he later withdrew from publication. He composed his first opera, *Powder Her Face*, at 24. He has spoken of composing as a compulsion. 'I do it because I don't have a choice, if I didn't do it I don't know what I'd do. I'd become a headline, of some kind,' he laughs. 'A bad headline. No. I can't not do it. I think, as someone famously said, if you can stop, you should. But I can't.'

Programme note © Romy Ash

### **Johann Sebastian Bach (arr Richard Tognetti) Canons on a Goldberg Ground, BWV1087**

In 1974 Bach's personal copy of the *Goldberg Variations* was discovered in Strasbourg. It contains his own handwritten corrections to the score and, inside the back cover, 14 canons based on the first eight notes of the *Goldberg* bass line.

The exact date of these canons isn't known, but they appear to be from around the time of *The Musical Offering* (1747), when Bach was immersed in canonic experimentation. Canon is the strictest form of contrapuntal writing, in which a single theme must imitate itself after a specified duration, sometimes higher or lower than its first statement, and even upside down or back to front.

As with those in *The Musical Offering*, these canons have no specified instrumentation and are written in a kind of shorthand, like riddles. Only a few short bars of music are given, and a clue as to how the puzzle is to be solved.

Richard Tognetti's playful arrangement for strings and piano evokes the energetic Baroque spirit of harpsichordist Richard Egarr, the rhythmic vitality of jazz pianist Jacques Loussier, the bold orchestrations of Leopold Stokowski and the translucent clarity and quiet candour of György Kurtág's Bach transcriptions.

Programme note © Bernard Rofe

**interval** 20 minutes

### Richard Tognetti on interpreting Bach's Goldberg Variations

With interpretation, as with composition, you can be 10 years too early, 10 years too late, or you can be there at exactly the right moment. While the early music movements are still *à la mode*, to an extent, the new way forward is *hybrid*, and hybrid means polystylism – for which Bach is the perfect vehicle.

If you look at Variation 30, the Quodlibet of the *Goldberg Variations*, you find the ultimate demonstration of polystylism. Not only is it ostensibly a random selection of common folk tunes of lighthearted character, but it also sees Bach drawing on many different styles, from the passacaglia and chaconne to South German experimentalism and so on. So how can we deny ourselves in interpretation (polystylism) when the piece itself is so overtly polystylistic?

Given what we know, what we feel, what we hear and what we have heard, can anyone really suggest that we must put in aspic and present these variations in their 'authentic' form on solo harpsichord? Rather, the best way to keep the piece alive is to acknowledge that Bach lives in quantum time. He lives in the then, the now and the future.

This interpretation, in an arrangement by Bernard Labadie that I have further re-imagined, is conceived as a conceit. Yes, it is performed as a *concerto grosso* inspired by the imaginary sounds of the orchestra of Bach's time – for example, you

may think of the Third Brandenburg Concerto when you listen to our Variation 29. But this interpretation takes it into the realm of quantum time, whereby I humbly acknowledge inspiration, equally, from the alleged authenticists from the 1970s and 1980s, the hardware of the gut mob, and the extraordinary fluidity and harmonic wisdom of the jazz genius Jacques Loussier, who could unleash the internal rhythm of Bach like none other.

Adopting a hybrid approach while respecting the integrity of the original – this is polystylism. And rather than being 10 years too early, let's hope that it resonates in the now. You can't do this to Mozart. You can't do it to Beethoven. But there's something about releasing the inner impulses of Bach: the imagination knows no bounds.

### Martin McKenzie-Murray discusses the Goldberg Variations with Richard Tognetti and Bernard Labadie

Bernard Labadie knows precisely when and why he wanted to become a musician. 'Bach was the reason,' he says. 'Some time in December 1974 or 1975. The dead of winter. It was a Christmas concert with the Quebec Symphony Orchestra and Choir. The first piece on the programme was the first cantata of the *Christmas Oratorio*, and I'll never forget the impression the chorus made on me. It changed my life completely. I got so excited. Bach absolutely nailed me. I knew this is what I wanted to do.'

The day I speak with Labadie is the first day in months that the renowned conductor has been able to read. Like Bach, Labadie developed cataracts. Unlike Bach, he hasn't fatally suffered from their removal. Labadie says the hostile frosting is 'the last gift of my cancer from 2014 – induced from all the medication I received, mostly cortisone. Now I need two more laser surgeries and then everything will be perfect. I can literally see the light at the end of the tunnel. I couldn't help reflecting on the fact that if Bach, or Handel, had known my doctor, they'd be in great shape.'

In 2014, Labadie was diagnosed with lymphoma. Its progress was aggressively swift, and he was placed for a month in a medically induced coma. Once he emerged from his deathly suspension, he had to relearn how to walk. When he resumed conducting, he did so from a chair. The fact he resumed is telling. Labadie never stopped thinking about music. Death's hand reordered

his perspective but the pleasure and purpose of music remained. So, too, did the centrality of Bach. Labadie speaks as effusively of the composer's talent as he ever has. 'The *Goldberg Variations* are like the Earth spinning on an orbit,' he says. 'The sun rises at the beginning, and the end. It's like the seasons' cycle. If you know in advance the structure, you can guess what kind of music will come. It's like the planets in revolution.'

Labadie's analogy of cosmic harmony isn't whimsy. For centuries, Bach's work has astonished musicians with its logical purity and fastidious grammar. Bach's scores are often examples of music talking to itself – themes are introduced, elaborated, reversed, inverted. A theme's spawn will diverge, then triumphantly integrate. With the *Goldberg Variations*, Bach's theme is elegantly exhausted – it becomes a self-contained cosmos.

Which might suggest that Bach is bloodlessly intellectual. But he isn't. Bach treated music, in the words of critic Alex Ross, as a 'vessel of divinity' and he worked the laws of music much like those who designed the grand Gothic churches worked the laws of engineering and aesthetics – paths to heavenly communion were paved with rules. And yet, the listener doesn't need any knowledge of these laws to enjoy Bach's music.

'We were giving a concert,' Richard Tognetti recalls, 'and my brother – who isn't musical – said afterwards, "Bach is best, isn't he?" And he wasn't identifying with the symmetry. He didn't know what was under the bonnet. What's incredible is that you can create great mathematical notation that means nothing. But Bach operates on all those levels: under the bonnet, the mechanic can dig around and be amazed by how it's all put together; or you can just sit back as someone who knows nothing at all and let it wash over you.'

It's no different for Labadie. Like Tognetti, he has a rarefied appreciation of Bach's composition – the exquisite geometry beneath the bonnet – but he knew none of this when he first heard Bach one Christmas in Quebec. 'When you're 11 years old, you don't understand architecture,' he says. 'But there was something overwhelming about it that made an impression on me without having the keys to understand it. I was feeling it in my body. But understanding doesn't take the magic away; instead, it actually enhances it.'

In the centuries since Bach's death, there have been many unresolved disputes as to how best to interpret his music. Out of this debate a

question emerges: does reverence inhibit modern interpreters?

Like Shakespeare, little is known biographically about Bach. We know the depth of his faith – he left a highly annotated Calov Bible, the most explicit expression of his Lutheran thought. We know of his commitment to his craft – he trekked 250 miles through snow to watch the famed organist Dietrich Buxtehude play in Lübeck. We know of his influence – Beethoven and Mozart were taking notes, and Goethe said of him that it was 'as if the eternal harmony were communing with itself, as might have happened in God's bosom shortly before the creation of the world'.

Together, this may lead us to wonder where the line exists between a healthy respect for Bach's mastery and dull fetishisation of his gifts. Like most endeavours filled with passionate people, Baroque and Classical music has its own turf wars. Matters of interpretation have long been political. How should one arrange Bach? Transliterate him? Modernise him? Should one do it at all? How much does reverence inspire – and how much does it inhibit? I spoke with both arrangers about the idea of 'authenticity' – and its parallel with the United States' constitution.

For decades now, the question of interpreting the US constitution has, broadly speaking, yielded two groups: originalists, who stress unbending fidelity to its authors' words and intentions; and those who argue that their founding document should be respected in its fundamentals, but also treated as a living, breathing document.

'People talk about authenticity,' Tognetti says. "'Just what the composer intended.'" Excuse me? We have no idea what the composer intended. You know, there are people who claim they can work out how certain words were pronounced at the time of Shakespeare's performances at the Globe – 'historical pronunciation'. We have that in music, too.

'The way I look at it is like this: not for a second would I ever change the gift that Bach has given us. I'm an originalist, actually. The script really is worth revering if you think it works. But that doesn't mean the script can't be adapted, and that you can't make it sing and zing for other people who might enjoy it more if it's adapted.'

Labadie suggests that the insistence on musical 'authenticity' is, ironically, confected. 'One has to understand the concepts of arrangement for a



musician in the 18th century,' he says. 'It's very, very different to how we see it nowadays. Somehow we've been contaminated by the certain rigour that comes with the utmost respect for Bach – because we know what he is and what he means in the history of music. But an 18th-century musician would not have been inhibited by that feeling. Handel borrowed to light the fire. Bach was doing the same thing – he was borrowing from other composers throughout his whole career.

'Bach had no inhibition – his purpose was always to sound as idiomatic as possible. Sometimes he would make some striking transformations, but other times his versions would be very close to the originals. But there's no reference to "authenticity". That's a 20th-century invention. For them, music was a living material which they could transform whenever they thought it was needed.'

Glenn Gould's professional life was bookended by recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*, the first a bestseller that critics still say is smudged by his strange fingerprints. Born in Toronto in 1932, Gould was composing and touring before puberty. He retired from concert life at 32 and died prematurely from a stroke at just 50. Before he died he reclusively wrote essays and recorded radio shows. In the years he did perform publicly, he was known for his tics – humming; gloves and coat, lest he catch a cold; the same squeaky chair. Beneath his feet, he habitually placed a worn square of carpet. Most memorable, though, was his singular, unabashed sense of focus.

For Tognetti Gould's tics didn't obscure his talent – rather, he says, we are conscious of them because of it. 'He was the great Romantic,' Tognetti says. 'Throwing himself into it. The mythology is because of the music. With some artists it's all hype. But Gould was an original, with the technique of Horowitz. Mind-blowing! One of the great pianists of all time.' Today, it's still hard to avoid mention of Gould's 1955 recording when discussing the *Goldberg Variations*. It is fast – very fast – and played with a 'fanatically crisp articulation'. Tognetti tells me that audiences in the past have criticised performances of it because they've measured it against the only recording they've heard: Gould in 1955.

Labadie and Tognetti respectfully disagree on Gould – and other matters. And we, those without their skills, may find pleasure in knowing that music can remain, even for the globally

renowned, a matter of taste and splintering interpretations.

'I've never been able to get through the whole thing once,' Labadie tells me of Gould's 1955 recording of the *Goldbergs*. 'For me, it's unbelievably fascinating, but it sounds more like Gould than it sounds like Bach. It certainly doesn't sound like 18th-century music. This love of short notes, of hyper-articulation. It doesn't sound natural. It's a re-creation by someone with an agenda.'

Tognetti says the first Gould recording of the *Variations* he heard was the one from 1981 – captured not long before Gould's death. 'That's the one I grew up with,' he says. 'I gazed first into the beguiling world of *Goldberg* and Gould, and it was later I heard the 1955 version and thought it sounded too fast.' It might be reassuring to know that the bias of a first encounter exists among the most talented.

We love myths of creation. Stories that adorn our most cherished songs. A popular one is that Paul McCartney wrote the melody of 'Yesterday' in his sleep and on waking – the melody miraculously retained – scribbled down the chords under the working title 'Scrambled Eggs'. McCartney loves the story and so do we. But the story as told ignores individual intelligence and effort. It ignores the fact that inspiration is often the intuitive, subliminal adoption of things already heard – that talent first passionately immerses itself in others' work, before creating its own. But do we care? The pleasure of the story remains, but what matters most is the song itself.

The myth of the *Goldberg Variations* is different: a wealthy patron makes an eccentric commission. The foundation for this story is found in an early biography of Bach, written by Johann Nikolaus Forkel 50 years after his subject's death. For the existence of the *Goldberg Variations*, Forkel writes, 'we have to thank the instigation of the former Russian ambassador to the electoral court of Saxony, Count Keyserling, who often stopped in Leipzig and brought there with him the aforementioned Goldberg, in order to have him given musical instruction by Bach. The Count was often ill and had sleepless nights. At such times, Goldberg had to spend the night in an antechamber, so as to play for him during his insomnia.

'Once the Count mentioned in Bach's presence that he would like to have some clavier pieces

for Goldberg, which should be of such a smooth and somewhat lively character that he might be a little cheered up by them in his sleepless nights. Bach thought himself best able to fulfil this wish by means of variations.'

Which is strange: the saintly Bach, who wrote so much music to awaken others to the glory of God – whose Variations have, for centuries, dynamically implored the genius of his various interpreters – employed to put an ailing count to sleep. The insomnia myth is, in part, about genius servicing banality, about a historically enlivening talent used to render one rich man unconscious.

For Tognetti, the contrast is amusingly subversive. 'My attraction to this is that insomnia is the last thing you'd imagine the great Bach would put his mind to – sending people to sleep.

"Sure, [Bach says], I'll write something to send people to sleep." But he can't deny his own genius doing it. So we can study every note, analysing it and pulling it apart, but here's this humble and anti-artistic positioning as to be a bit of a joke. And I love that, I love that dilemma.'

There's scholarly doubt about it ever happening. But Tognetti laughs mischievously when he says that perhaps 'some myths shouldn't be debunked' – for him they're still instructive, despite the literal truth, or for the fact that, simply, they're too much fun.

Myths blossom around genius; so, too, do debates about its interpretation. But for both Tognetti and Labadie Bach remains as beguiling as when they first heard his music. 'What Bach means to me, in a very direct and objective sense,' Tognetti says, 'is that he's the most travelled composer – even though he's one of the least travelled in a physical sense. His music has even ventured beyond the realm of our solar system via the Voyager spacecraft, which has travelled farther than anyone or anything in history.'

Labadie shares a quote he loves – even if he remains sceptical of it. 'Someone said that Bach was such a complete universe that had he not existed the history of music would have been exactly the same,' he says. 'Isn't that fabulous? But impossible.'

Programme note © Martin McKenzie-Murray

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## About the performers

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Richard Tognetti

**Richard Tognetti** director & violin

Richard Tognetti is Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. He has

established an international reputation for his compelling performances and artistic individualism.

He began his studies in his hometown of Wollongong with William Primrose, then continued 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 of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and that November was appointed as the Orchestra's lead violin and, subsequently, Artistic Director. He created the Huntington Festival in Mudgee, New South Wales, and was Artistic Director of the Festival Maribor in Slovenia from 2008 to 2015.

He 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 and/or soloist, he has appeared with many of the world's leading orchestras and in 2016 was the Barbican Centre's first Artist-in-Residence at Milton Court Concert Hall. He has also composed for numerous film soundtracks, including the ACO's documentary films *Mountain*, *The Reef* and *Musica Surfica*.

Richard Tognetti 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. He performs on the 1743 'Carrodus' Guarneri del Gesù violin, lent to him by an anonymous Australian private benefactor.



Erin Helyard

### **Erin Helyard** keyboards

Erin Helyard is equally acclaimed as a conductor, a performer on the harpsichord and fortepiano, and a scholar who is passionate about promoting discourse between musicology and performance.

He graduated in harpsichord performance from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with first-class honours and the University Medal. He completed his Masters in fortepiano performance and a PhD in musicology with Tom Beghin at the Schulich School of Music, McGill University, Montreal. He was named the Westfield Concert Scholar (Cornell University) on fortepiano for 2009–10, while from 2003 to 2012 he was a central member of the award-winning Montreal-based Ensemble Caprice.

As Artistic Director and co-founder of Pinchgut Opera and the Orchestra of the Antipodes (Sydney) he has forged new standards of excellence in historically informed performance in Australia. He has directed from the keyboard performances of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (Montreal Baroque Festival); Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* and *Giasone*, Purcell's *Dioclesian*, Vivaldi's *Griselda* and *Bajazet*, Salieri's *The Chimney Sweep*, Grétry's *L'amant jaloux*, Handel's *Theodora*, Rameau's *Pigmalion* and *Anacréon* and Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Pinchgut Opera); Handel's *Acis and Galatea* (New Zealand Opera); Handel's *Orlando* (Hobart Baroque); and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Handel's *Faramondo* and *Agrippina* (Brisbane Baroque). Operas he has directed have been awarded Best Opera at the Helpmann Awards for three consecutive years (2015–17) and in 2017 he was awarded a Helpmann for Best Music Direction for Handel's *Saul* at the Adelaide Festival.

As a conductor he has worked with the Adelaide, Tasmanian and Queensland Symphony orchestras and Australian Haydn Ensemble. He also has a duet partnership, performing 19th-century repertoire on historical pianos with renowned Alkan exponent Stephanie McCallum.

In 2017 Erin Helyard was awarded a major Australian Research Council Discovery Grant for a collaborative project entitled *Performing Transdisciplinarity: Image, Music, and Text in Eighteenth-Century Print Culture*. He appears courtesy of Pinchgut Opera.

### **Australian Chamber Orchestra**

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its combination of explosive performances and brave interpretations. The ACO's programmes are steeped in history but always looking to the future, juxtaposing celebrated classics with new commissions, and adventurous cross-artform collaborations.

Since 1990 it has been led by Artistic Director Richard Tognetti and together they give more than 100 concerts across Australia each year. Whether performing in Manhattan, New York, or Wollongong, New South Wales, the ACO is unwavering in its commitment to creating transformative musical experiences.

Last season the ACO began a three-year London residency as International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court in partnership with the Barbican Centre, with which they share a commitment to present concerts that inspire, embolden and challenge audiences.

The Orchestra regularly collaborates with artists and musicians who share its ideology: from

instrumentalists, vocalists and cabaret performers, to visual artists and film makers.

In addition to its national and international touring schedule, the ACO has an active recording programme across CD, vinyl and digital formats. Recent releases include *Water | Night Music*, the first Australian-produced classical vinyl for two decades, and the soundtrack to the acclaimed cinematic collaboration *Mountain*.

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# Australian Chamber Orchestra

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## **Artistic Director/ Lead Violin**

Richard Tognetti  
*Chair sponsored by  
Wendy Edwards, Peter  
& Ruth McMullin, Louise  
Myer & Martyn Myer AO,  
Andrew & Andrea Roberts*

## **Violin**

Helena Rathbone\*  
*Chair sponsored by  
Kate & Daryl Dixon*

Satu Vänskä\*  
*Chair sponsored  
by Kay Bryan*

Glenn Christensen  
*Chair sponsored by  
Terry Campbell AO &  
Christine Campbell*

Aiko Goto  
*Chair sponsored by  
Anthony & Sharon  
Lee Foundation*

Mark Ingwersen  
*Chair sponsored by Prof  
Judyth Sachs & Julie Steiner*

Ilya Isakovich  
*Chair sponsored by Meg  
& Campbell Meldrum*

Liisa Pallandi  
*Chair sponsored by  
The Melbourne Medical  
Syndicate*

Maja Savnik  
*Chair sponsored by  
Alenka Tindale*

Ike See  
*Chair sponsored  
by Di Jameson*

## **Viola**

Ida Bryhn#  
*Chair sponsored by  
peckvonhartel architects:  
Robert Peck AM, Yvonne  
von Hartel AM, Rachel  
Peck & Marten Peck*

Nicole Divall  
*Chair sponsored by  
Ian Lansdown*

Elizabeth Woolnough  
*Chair sponsored by  
Philip Bacon AM*

Nathan Greentree

## **Cello**

Timo-Veikko Valve\*  
*Chair sponsored by  
Peter Weiss AO*

Melissa Barnard  
*Chair sponsored by  
Dr & Mrs J Wenderoth*

Julian Thompson  
*Chair sponsored by The  
Grist & Stewart Families*

## **Double Bass**

Maxime Bibeau\*  
*Chair sponsored by Darin  
Cooper Foundation*

## **Harpsichord & Piano**

Erin Helyard#

## **Theorbo**

Axel Wolf#

\* principal  
# guest principal

*The list of players was  
correct at the time of  
going to press*

## **Touring Team**

### **Managing Director**

Richard Evans

### **Chief Operating Officer**

Alexandra  
Cameron-Fraser

### **Tour Manager**

Lisa Mullineux

### **Assistant Tour Manager**

Tom Farmer

### **Artistic Administrator**

Anna Melville