

Australian Chamber Orchestra: River

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate end time: 8.50pm, with no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

The music

Antonio Vivaldi Violin Concerto in D major, RV232: Largo*

Richard Tognetti *Deep Time*

Piers Burbrook de Vere *Birth*

Johann Sebastian Bach, arr Tognetti Partita for Solo Violin No 2 in D minor, BWV1004:
Chaconne*

Tognetti/Burbrook de Vere/William Barton *Wildness*

Tognetti/Burbrook de Vere *Intervention*

Tognetti *Magic, Archive*

Jean Sibelius *Voces intimae*, Op 56: Vivace* (arr strings)

Burbrook de Vere *Globalisation*

Tognetti *Pyres*

Jonny Greenwood *Water**

Tognetti/Burbrook de Vere/Barton *Ritual*

Vivaldi Concerto in G minor, RV578: Adagio e spiccato – Allegro*

Tognetti/Burbrook de Vere *Industrialisation*

Tognetti *Greed; Downside of Dams; Pollution*

Pēteris Vasks *Vox amoris**

Burbrook de Vere *Are We Being Good Ancestors?*

Thomas Adès *O Albion*

Greenwood *Water**

Maurice Ravel, arr Tognetti String Quartet: Assez vif – Très rythmé

Greenwood *Water**

Radiohead *Harry Patch (In Memory Of)*

Tognetti/Barton, after Gustav Mahler *How We Feel*

Mahler, arr Tognetti Symphony No 4: Ruhevoll (Poco adagio)*

* This work or movement is abridged for this performance

In their latest collaboration with film-maker Jennifer Peedom, the ACO and Richard Tognetti offer a haunting exploration of the power of rivers.

Stunning visual imagery and sublime music from Europe and Australia flow together for the Australian Chamber Orchestra's extraordinary exploration of the importance of rivers to our world.

Rivers cover less than one percent of the planet's surface, yet they are central to the development of human society. Offering sources of sustenance, power, transport and more, they inhabit roles from familiar settings of home (such as here in London), to awe-inspiring demonstrations of nature's power, and are even worshiped as deities. Nevertheless, we use them, abuse them and ignore their vital role in our existence.

Putting the fundamental nature of these essential elements of planetary forces front-and-centre is the Australian Chamber Orchestra's latest awe-inspiring film-and-concert project *River*. It combines dramatic imagery of the world's great waterways with music by some of the best-known western classical composers and one of Australia's most acclaimed Indigenous musicians, William Barton. Actor Willem Dafoe voices a script written by renowned author Robert Macfarlane.

barbican

'*River* was designed to inspire awe and wonder and connect people back to nature,' says director Jennifer Peedom. 'My hope is that it can also play a role in helping us understand the dangerous consequences of our actions and how our future depends on the natural world.'

Through the power of photography and music, *River* asks us to question our treatment of the world's waterways. And, this being the Australian Chamber Orchestra, an important element of the meditative work is an exploration of the relationship between Indigenous cultures and rivers. Flowing through the programme is a new collaboration between ACO Artistic Director Richard Tognetti, leading didgeridoo player, composer and singer William Barton, and Australian composer Piers Burbrook de Vere.

'We are kin to rivers, connected in ecology and spirit,' says Indigenous writer, critic and researcher Tristen Harwood. 'To speak of Indigenous peoples' connection to rivers is to speak of the essence that sustains us in the world. The river is language, song, philosophy, ceremony, life-source – our social world.'

Barton explains to Harwood: 'As I sing, I'm picturing my "old" people, my uncles and aunties – my ancestors – and it transports me to my home country, even though I might be singing alongside visuals [in *River*] that are from around the world.'

Peedom recalls when Barton came to record his final vocal track: 'William asked if he could take some time to respond emotionally to the film. What followed was an uninterrupted, improvised 15-minute vocal performance. When it was over, I looked around the room, and we were all in tears. It's haunting and sublime. When he returned to the control room, he told me he had channelled his ancestors and ancestral ties to Kalkadunga country.'

Like *Mountain* (performed here in 2018), *River* was conceived primarily as a concert film – with music as the starting point. This created its own technical challenges, says Peedom, who also directed the previous film. 'The foundation of the soundtrack of *River* is pre-existing classical repertoire. In general, this kind of music is very challenging to edit in a way that both maintains its integrity and meets the very specific requirements of the film – its need for music to fit the length of scenes, or to carry and influence the emotional responses of audiences.'

She says Tognetti's decision to include J S Bach's solo violin Chaconne is a prime example of his vision and talent for arrangement. '[The film] includes an amazing drone shot, part of an early scene-setting sequence about the birth of rivers,' she says. 'When Richard saw it, he was adamant that he wanted to use the Chaconne, even though it is 15 minutes long and written for solo violin. For months he explored how he might make the piece work for the smaller ACO ensemble. I was initially sceptical, but every time I watch that sequence in the finished film, I get goosebumps.'

The breadth of the music selected for *River* is a signature of the ACO, International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court. The programme includes works by Radiohead guitarist Jonny Greenwood, Antonio Vivaldi, Gustav Mahler, Jean Sibelius, Maurice Ravel, Pēteris Vasks and Thomas Adès, all of which generated their own creative questions. And Tognetti's response, with his profound knowledge of music and determination to produce unforgettable experiences, is fundamental to the production of another extraordinary concert-hall experience.

For all the damage that humans do to the planet's freshwater systems, there is hope, as this thought-provoking cinematic production shows. Life comes back to rivers – if we give them a chance.

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Produced by the Barbican

Performers

Richard Tognetti director & violin
William Barton voice & didgeridoo

Australian Chamber Orchestra

violin

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

Helena Rathbone †
Chair sponsored by Margaret Gibbs & Rodney Cameron

Satu Vänskä †
Chair sponsored by David Thomas am

Aiko Goto
Chair sponsored by Anthony & Sharon Lee Foundation

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

Ilya Isakovich
Chair sponsored by Meg Meldrum

Liisa Pallandi
Chair sponsored by the Melbourne Medical Syndicate

Ike See
Chair sponsored by Ian Lansdown & Tricia Bell

Véronique Serret*
Riley Skevington*

Touring Team

management

Richard Evans managing director
Toby Chadd director of artistic planning
Luke Shaw director of artistic operations
Antonia Farrugia director of market development
Caitlin Benetatos head of communications
Jill Colvin director, philanthropy & partnerships
Tom Farmer production manager

River

Joseph Cox lighting technician
Bob Scott sound mixing
Jeremy Hoppe sound systems engineer
CVP Events, Film and TV projections

viola

Stefanie Farrands †
Chair sponsored by peckvonhartel architects
Elizabeth Woolnough

Chair sponsored by Terry Campbell ao & Christine Campbell
Meagan Turner*

cello

Timo-Veikko Valve †
Chair sponsored by Prof Doug Jones ao & Prof Janet Walker cm

Melissa Barnard
Chair sponsored by Jason & Alexandra Wenderoth
Julian Thompson
Chair sponsored by the Grist & Stewart Families

double bass

Maxime Bibeau †
Chair sponsored by Darin Cooper Foundation

timpani

Brian Nixon *
Guest Chair sponsored by Mr Robert Albert ao & Mrs Libby Albert

percussion

Evan Mannell *

† principal

* guest musician

The ACO gratefully acknowledge its ACO UK Board, Friends, and members of its Chairman's Council for their support of these performances.

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The ACO is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts and the NSW Government through Create NSW.

Thank you to the ACO's University Partner, The University of Melbourne.

'River' Producers' Syndicate

major producers

Warwick & Ann Johnson

producers

Joanna Baevski
David & Sandy Libling
Martyn Myer ao & Louise Myer
Rob & Nancy Pallin
Peter & Victoria Shorthouse
Peter Yates am & Susan Yates

The Australian Chamber Orchestra Residency at the Barbican is supported by the Australian Government as part of the UK/Australia Season 2021-22.



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