

# Australian Chamber Orchestra: Indies and Idols

**Start time:** 7.30pm

**Approximate end time:** 9.20pm, including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

## Programme

**Witold Lutosławski** *Musique funèbre*: Prologue

**Bryce Dessner** *Réponse Lutosławski*

1. Resonance
2. Preludio
3. Des Traces
4. Warsaw Canon
5. Residue

**Wojciech Kilar** *Orawa*

**Krzysztof Penderecki** *Three Pieces in Baroque Style*: Aria

String Quartet No 1

**Jonny Greenwood** *There Will Be Blood*: Suite

1. Open Spaces
2. Future Markets
3. HW/Hope of New Fields
4. Proven Lands
5. Prospector's Quartet

**Karol Szymanowski (arr Richard Tognetti)** String Quartet No 2

1. Moderato, dolce e tranquillo
2. Vivace, scherzando
3. Lento

**The ACO, Richard Tognetti and students from Guildhall School take us on a journey from 20th-century Poland to two giants of the contemporary scene.**

'There's always been dabbling from the pop world in contemporary classical,' notes Richard Tognetti, Artistic Director of the ACO. 'Stockhausen appears on The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album cover; Frank Zappa had a big crush on Edgard Varèse. But then came Jonny Greenwood's score for *There Will Be Blood* and it was a coming of age. Jonny wrote every damn note. There was no orchestrator, no "genius" rock star who wrote four notes and then brought in a team of arrangers. It was deeply researched, studied and, most importantly, felt.'

*Indies & Idols* explores the rich affinities between the work of two 'indie' composers, Bryce Dessner and Jonny Greenwood, and their classical influences, specifically post-Second World War Polish music. For Tognetti, this synergy has proved a thrilling discovery: 'Jonny told me about these amazing concerts he put on with Penderecki – this incredible cross-fertilisation. I then read about The National and Bryce Dessner, and I just couldn't believe that his inspiration was one of my favourite composers of all time: Witold Lutosławski.'

Tonight's programme opens with works by Dessner and Lutosławski, each of which was composed as a form of homage. Born in Warsaw in 1913 and forced to contend with the fierce cultural demands of the Communist regime for much of his early career, Lutosławski declared it was only in the late 1950s that he discovered his own musical voice. The composition that heralded this shift was *Musique funèbre*, completed in 1958 to mark (the somewhat overdue) 10th anniversary of Bartók's death. The work's Prologue holds echoes of Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* (1937), with Bartók's taut counterpoint mirrored in Lutosławski's use of a 12-tone row set in strict canon. In turn, Dessner's *Réponse Lutosławski* (2014) is a direct homage to Lutosławski's *Musique funèbre*.

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'I spent months studying the score and recordings of the work ... This was an amazing process of discovering one of the 20th century's great musical minds and allowing his adventurous spirit to influence me. His music pushed open a door, through which I could then pass and embark on a new musical journey.'

Tognetti first came across the Polish composer Wojciech Kilar 'when looking for music to include in our film *The Reef*, and at one point I googled "exciting string piece" as a joke ... and you won't believe this, but the first piece that came up was Kilar's *Orawa*! I gave it a listen and thought it was fantastic.' The title of the hypnotic *Orawa* (1986) refers to a region near the Polish-Slovak border marked by rugged, mountainous terrain. In the words of the composer, 'It is the only piece in which I wouldn't change a single note, though I have looked at it many times ...'

The two works by Penderecki featured here are strikingly different. Composed in 1964, 'Aria' (from *Three Pieces in Baroque Style*) is taken from the film score for *The Saragossa Manuscript* and is stately and affecting, while his String Quartet No 1 bristles with percussive violence: 'it's funny,' reflects Tognetti, 'the String Quartet is the most shocking music in the whole concert and it was written in 1960; I keep on forgetting because you just have no idea when listening to it.'

This same sense of latent violence and restrained emotional power runs throughout Jonny Greenwood's seminal score for *There Will Be Blood* (2007). For Tognetti, hearing this music for the first time 'was a revelation. We were all absolutely bowled over by that score. This is someone who's deeply entrenched in that world of the Polish avant-garde and understands the language not just from an audio perspective but from a written compositional one too. Like Bach, and many of the other great composers, including Brett Dean, Jonny is a violist, so he gets a real perspective of the orchestra – his music has a brilliant sense of drama.'

The concert closes with Szymanowski's String Quartet No 2 (1927), heard here in an arrangement by Tognetti. 'I always bemoan the fact that those Impressionists or Expressionists didn't write anything for string orchestra – so I was forced to arrange string quartets. I was alone there in the world doing this back in the early 1990s, and I was pilloried for it! Critics said: "We can't have a violinist doing this, we need a composer!" They misunderstood what I was doing on every level.' As to the work itself, 'it's neither shockingly avant-garde nor German serialism, it's really overt Expressionism. Szymanowski speaks to us from a place that seems timeless.'

Collaborating with the Guildhall School for this performance also offers further exciting possibilities, observes Tognetti: 'Guildhall School is one of the most vibrant places on earth. It's bristling and bustling with incredible endeavour. It's alive. And it's great to work with the students. They've got gigs left right and centre, exams, solo recitals; they're living the life in London. Engaging with them means that we're engaging with London too.'

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Produced by the Barbican

## Performers

**Richard Tognetti** director & violin

### Australian Chamber Orchestra

violin

**Richard Tognetti**

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**Riley Skevington\***

viola

**Stefanie Farrands †**

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Elizabeth Woolnough*

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Terry Campbell ao &  
Christine Campbell*

**Meagan Turner\***

cello

**Timo-Veikko Valve †**

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Prof Janet Walker cm*

**Melissa Barnard**

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**Julian Thompson**

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double bass

**Maxime Bibeau †**

*Chair sponsored by Darin  
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† principal

\* guest musician

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**Violetta Suvini**  
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viola

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