

A close-up, low-angle photograph of violinist Richard Tognetti. He is looking upwards and to the left, with a focused expression. His violin is held across his chest, and his bow is positioned over the strings. The background is a solid, warm reddish-brown color.

RICHARD TOGNETTI

Australian Chamber Orchestra

BEETHOVEN BRAHMS

CONCERTOS FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

Live in Concert

Australian
Chamber
Orchestra

50
Years

Brahms and Beethoven with Tognetti: ACO at 50

In 2025, the Australian Chamber Orchestra marks its 50th year – a moment not just for celebration, but for reflection. Over five decades, the ACO has evolved into one of the most distinctive ensembles in the world, defined by its responsiveness, precision, and a spirit of inquiry that continues to shape its sound and identity.

At the heart of this evolution is Richard Tognetti, who also celebrates 35 years as Artistic Director of the Orchestra. His leadership has been transformative – a mix of bold new ideas and deep attentiveness to the music and to the musicians around him. Tognetti's work is imbued with the spirit of those who came before him, drawing from historical recordings and performances, as well as the cultural currents that shaped the works he now interprets. His approach is both grounded and exploratory, engaging with tradition whilst simultaneously demanding it evolves.

The ACO has long operated as a kind of musical hybrid – an orchestra ahead of its time. Long before it became common practice, the ACO integrated period instruments and historically informed techniques, not as a gesture of revival, but as a quiet insistence that these voices must resonate at the centre of the classical canon, while also embracing contemporary repertoire. This duality – of old and new, of reverence and reinvention – has become central to its identity. Tognetti envisioned this from the outset, creating an ensemble that could move fluidly across time and style, drawing from the full gamut of performative tools and interpretative insights available.

This recording of the Beethoven and Brahms violin concertos is not a retrospective, but a continuation of that ethos. These works, now pillars of the repertoire, were once radical and new. Tognetti invites listeners to reconnect with that sense of first hearing – to imagine being present at the premiere, when the ink was still fresh and the ideas still raw. His interpretations are shaped by decades of listening and learning, yet they remain open, alive, and responsive.

The ACO's sound – lean, agile, and emotionally direct – emerges from a collective attentiveness. The ensemble converses. There's a palpable sense of shared purpose, where individual voices merge into a unified expression. This responsiveness – to each other, to the music, and to Tognetti's direction – makes the ACO like musical racehorse: alert, dynamic, and ready to move.

Tognetti's relationship with these concertos is long-standing and deeply personal. The Beethoven has been part of his repertoire with the ACO since 1993 and his relationship with the Brahms extends even further. Over time, he has made these works his own – not by following convention, but by extending it, recrafting cadenzas and interpretations, informed by history yet shaped by the present.

This release reflects an ensemble still in motion – curious, committed, and unafraid to ask what a chamber orchestra can be. It doesn't offer a single answer, but opens a space for dialogue and possibility. In a musical landscape often drawn to spectacle, the ACO offers something quieter and more enduring: a place for depth, for listening, and for the kind of attention that music, at its best, demands.

Ross McHenry
ACO Executive Producer



CD1

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 1770–1827

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

[47'42]

- | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro ma non troppo | 27'02 |
| 2 | II. Larghetto | 10'15 |
| 3 | III. Rondo | 10'25 |

CD2

JOHANNES BRAHMS 1833–1897

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77

[40'08]

- | | | |
|----------|--|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro non troppo | 23'25 |
| 2 | II. Adagio | 8'40 |
| 3 | III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace | 8'03 |

Total Playing Time	87'50
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Richard Tognetti *Artistic Director and Solo Violin*
Australian Chamber Orchestra

Recorded live in concert at City Recital Hall, Sydney.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

Recorded live in concert at City Recital Hall, Sydney in November 2018. Performed on gut strings, with period winds and brass, at A430. Musicians and instruments are listed at the time of recording.

Australian Chamber Orchestra

Richard Tognetti

Artistic Director and Solo Violin

On this recording, Richard plays the 1743 'Carrodus' Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin kindly on loan from an anonymous Australian private benefactor.

Helena Rathbone

Principal Violin

Helena plays a 1759 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin kindly on loan from the Commonwealth Bank Group.

Satu Vānskä *Principal Violin*

Satu plays the 1726 'Belgiorno' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from Guido Belgiorio-Nettis AM & Michelle Belgiorio-Nettis.

Glenn Christensen* *Violin*

Glenn plays a 1728/29 Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

Aiko Goto *Violin*

Aiko plays an 1862 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin made in Paris.

Mark Ingwersen *Violin*

Mark plays a 1989 David Gusset violin made in Eugene, Oregon.

Liisa Pallandi* *Violin*

Liisa plays a c. 1760 Giovanni Battista Gabrieli kindly on loan from Helena Rathbone.

Maja Savnik *Violin*

Maja plays the 1714 'ex-Isolde Menges' Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreae violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

Ike See *Violin*

Ike plays a 1790 Johannes Cuypers violin made in The Hague.

Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba* *Violin*

Nicole Divall *Viola*

Nikki plays a 2012 Bronek Cison viola made in Chicago.

Elizabeth Woolnough* *Viola*

Caroline Henbest *Viola*

Timo-Veikko Valve

Principal Cello

Tipi plays a 1616 Brothers Amati cello kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

Melissa Barnard *Cello*

Melissa plays an 1846 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume cello made in Paris.

Julian Thompson *Cello*

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreae cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, kindly donated to the ACO by the late Peter Weiss AO.

Daniel Yeadon *Cello*

Maxime Bibeau *Principal Bass*

Max plays a late-16th-century Gasparo da Salò bass kindly on loan from a private Australian benefactor.

Guest Musicians

Violin

Benjamin Adler[#]
Harry Bennetts[#]
Zoë Black
Amy Brookman[#]
Caroline Hopson
Elizabeth Jones
Katherine Lukey¹

Viola

Vicki Powell^{*2}
Nathan Greentree[#]
Andrew Jezek

Cello

Eve Silver^{#3}

Double Bass

Axel Ruge⁴
Josef Bisits

Flute

Georges Barthel^{*}

Oboe

Benoît Laurent^{*5}
Katharina Andres

Clarinet

Craig Hill^{*6}
Ashley Sutherland

Bassoon

Brock Imison^{*7}
Sim Walters

Horn

Olivier Picon^{*}
Thomas Müller⁸

Trumpet

Andrew Crowley^{*9}
Richard Fomison

Timpani

Brian Nixon^{*}

^{*} Guest Principal

[#] ACO Emerging Artist Alumni

¹ Courtesy of Opera Australia Orchestra

² Courtesy of Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra

³ Courtesy of West Australian Symphony Orchestra

⁴ Courtesy of Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen

⁵ Courtesy of Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles

⁶ Courtesy of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

⁷ Courtesy of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

⁸ Courtesy of Zurich Chamber Orchestra

⁹ Courtesy of Royal College of Music, London

Johannes Brahms: Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77

Recorded live in concert at City Recital Hall, Sydney in February 2025. Performed on gut strings, with period winds and brass, at A440. Musicians and instruments are listed at the time of recording.

Australian Chamber Orchestra

Richard Tognetti

Artistic Director and Solo Violin

On this recording, Richard plays a 1741–44 Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù violin kindly on loan from the ACO.

Helena Rathbone

Principal Violin

Helena plays the 1732 'ex-Dollfus' Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from anonymous Australian private benefactors.

Satu Vānskä *Principal Violin*

Satu plays the 1728/29 Stradivarius violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

Anna da Silva Chen[#] *Violin*

Anna plays an 18th-century violin made in the style of Pietro Guarneri of Venice, kindly on loan from Jannie Brown.

Aiko Goto *Violin*

Aiko plays the 1714 'ex-Isolde Menges' Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

Ilya Isakovich *Violin*

Ilya plays a 1590 Brothers Amati violin kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

Liisa Pallandi[#] *Violin*

Liisa plays a 1759 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin kindly on loan from the ACO.

Thibaud Pavlovic-Hobba[#] *Violin*

Thibaud plays a 1756 Giovanni Battista Gabrielli violin kindly on loan from Helena Rathbone.

Ike See *Violin*

Ike plays a 2021 Samuel Zygmuntowicz violin made in New York.

Stefanie Farrands[#] *Principal Viola*

Stefanie plays a 2016 Ragnar Hayn viola made in Berlin.

Elizabeth Woolnough[#] *Viola*

Elizabeth a 1968 Pierre M. Audinot viola made in Paris.

Timo-Veikko Valve *Principal Cello*

Tipi plays a 1616 Brothers Amati cello kindly on loan from the ACO Instrument Fund.

Melissa Barnard *Cello*

Melissa plays an 1846 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume cello made in Paris.

Julian Thompson *Cello*

Julian plays a 1729 Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreæ cello with elements of the instrument crafted by his son, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, kindly donated to the ACO by the late Peter Weiss AO.

Maxime Bibeau *Principal Bass*

Max plays a late-16th-century Gasparo da Salò bass kindly on loan from UKARIA.

Guest Musicians

Violin

Harry Egerton[^]
Fiona Qiu[^]
Louise Turnbull[^]
Janet Anderson^{#1}
Beatrice Colombis[#]
Lily Higson-Spence[#]
Riley Skevington^{#2}

Viola

Isabella Bignasca[^]
Martin Alexander^{#3}
Charlotte Burbrook de Vere^{#4}
Thomas Chawner^{#5}

Cello

Jack Overall[^]
Hamish Jamieson[#]

Double Bass

Oakley Paul[^]
Rohan Dasika^{#6}

Flute

Georgia Browne^{*}
Mikaela Oberg

Oboe

Tatjana Zimre^{*}
Stefaan Verdegem⁷

Clarinet

Nicola Boud^{*}
Ashley Sutherland

Bassoon

Jane Gower^{*}
Sim Walters

Horn

Anneke Scott^{*}
Martin Lawrence⁸
Louis-Pierre Bergeron⁹
Dorée Dixon

Trumpet

Leanne Sullivan^{*}
Richard Fomison

Timpani

Brian Nixon^{*}

^{*} Guest Principal

[^] 2025 ACO Emerging Artist

[#] ACO Emerging Artist Alumni

¹ Courtesy of Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

² Courtesy of West Australian Symphony Orchestra

³ Courtesy of Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

⁴ Courtesy of Queensland Symphony Orchestra

⁵ Courtesy of Orava Quartet

⁶ Courtesy of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

⁷ Courtesy of Royal Conservatorium Brussels, Anima Eterna Brugge and Dresden Festival Orchestra

⁸ Courtesy of Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

⁹ Courtesy of National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada



A Note on Cadenzas

For today's listeners, a typical performance of Beethoven's violin concerto will comprise some 35 minutes of Beethoven and five minutes of music by the Austro-Hungarian virtuoso violinist and composer Fritz Kreisler. In performances of Brahms's violin concerto, one normally hears an additional three minutes of music by the Hungarian virtuoso violinist Joseph Joachim.

This is no accident. Kreisler's cadenzas for Beethoven's concerto appear to be the most well-written and compelling, both in style and virtuosic manner. As Louis P. Lochner put it, they 'sum up the essence of Beethoven's music, as a few drops of attar of rose do the fragrance of an acre of flowers.' Similarly, Joachim's connection to Brahms's concerto, as its original dedicatee, makes his own cadenza impossible to ignore.

With Kreisler's and Joachim's cadenzas now considered customary (even *mandatory* to some), it is too often overlooked that an enormous wealth of cadenzas has been written for both concertos by numerous celebrated violinists, and by composers as distinguished as Camille Saint-Saëns. The existence of such a plethora of reactions to these concertos is exactly the point of a cadenza, and a testament to the very spirit in which Beethoven and Brahms composed their concertos.

Beethoven did not provide cadenzas to his concerto, although he did write cadenzas to the version of the concerto for piano and orchestra that he made for Muzio Clementi in 1808, and the only contemporary ones that we know of are by Louis Spohr. No doubt, violinists such as Franz Clement or Pierre Baillot would have been encouraged to extemporise their cadenzas, just as Joachim did on Brahms's invitation.

The cadenzas you will hear in this performance of Beethoven's concerto are a synthesis of those by Henri Vieuxtemps, Ottokar Nováček (whose cadenzas, like Beethoven's in his version of the concerto for piano, incorporate a timpani), Fritz Kreisler, Leopold Auer and Ferdinand Laub. In Brahms's concerto, you will hear a synthesis of cadenzas by Ferruccio Busoni (again incorporating a timpani), Hugo Heermann and Leopold Auer. All are eminent virtuosos in their own right, with a close connection to these two greatest of violin concertos.

Richard Tognetti



Ludwig van Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61

Beethoven's Violin Concerto was written in 1806 during what is often called his 'Heroic' period. Only two years earlier Beethoven had completed the groundbreaking 'Eroica' Symphony before starting work on his Fifth Symphony. In 1806 he would produce a stream of major works that included the Fourth Symphony, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the 'Appassionata' Piano Sonata and the three 'Razumovsky' String Quartets.

The Violin Concerto was commissioned by the 26-year-old violinist Franz Clement, concertmaster at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna. Clement was not known for playing loudly, but he was renowned for his phenomenal technique and fine intonation, and contemporary reviewers described his playing as elegant and delicate, possessing an 'indescribable tenderness'.

Beethoven himself was no stranger to the violin. Well known as a phenomenal pianist, he had also studied violin and viola as a child. Around 1790–2 he had already written an unfinished violin concerto, and by 1806 he had composed the two Romances for violin and orchestra, as well as the massive, concerto-esque 'Kreutzer' Sonata for violin and piano.

With the exception of those by Mozart, violin concertos of Beethoven's era were essentially virtuoso showpieces that weren't taken as seriously as other symphonic forms. Beethoven changed what a violin concerto could be, effectively creating a symphony for violin and orchestra that could equal any of his symphonic works in scope, depth and profoundness.

The slow movement seems especially tailored to Clement's strengths in its song-like delicacy. The first movement, with its heartbeat opening of solo timpani followed by a gentle chorale of woodwinds, shares some of these qualities, but over the course of its 20 minutes the movement's symphonic grandeur and seriousness become fully realised. Leading Beethoven scholar Robin Stowell has even argued that the movement is written in the singing, marching spirit of French Revolutionary music. The playful, rustic finale harks back to Mozart and forward to the ebullient country dance of the 'Pastoral' Symphony all at once.

The concerto's premiere was not a huge success, but the overall concert – in which Clement played a sonata 'on one string with the violin held upside down' – was well received. It was not until 1844, when a 13-year-old prodigy named Joseph Joachim performed the work under the baton of Felix Mendelssohn, that the concerto gained widespread popularity. Despite such modest beginnings, Beethoven's Violin Concerto is now considered by many to be the greatest of the Romantic violin concertos.

Johannes Brahms: Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77

Brahms began composing his Violin Concerto in 1878 while holidaying at Lake Wörth in southern Austria, a place the composer described as so abundant with melodies that he had to take care not to step on them. He dedicated the concerto to his friend, the celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim, whom he had known since 1853 when Brahms was 20 and Joachim 22.

Their collaboration on the concerto was a close one – with Joachim, the leading violinist of his day and a composer in his own right, consulted at every step. Joachim suggested numerous re-writes to the solo part, knowing Brahms was more at home writing for the piano. Brahms sometimes adopted these suggestions, and sometimes ignored them, casually threatening to take his concerto to a 'stricter' violinist. Near the end of the process, Brahms gave Joachim free rein to compose the cadenza.

Joachim gave the first performance on New Year's Day 1879 in Leipzig, with the composer conducting the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Anticipation was high – there were few significant violin concertos apart from those of Beethoven and Mendelssohn, already championed by Joachim. Brahms was tense on the podium, and his soloist unnerved by last-minute revisions. The audience response was underwhelming enough for Brahms to pull out of conducting the Vienna premiere. The Vienna performance, however, was a triumph, with Brahms calling it 'a success as good as I've ever experienced'. The crowd had even launched into rapturous applause mid-performance after Joachim's first-movement cadenza.

Brahms originally intended for the concerto to be in four movements – a symphony for violin and orchestra. The first movement certainly has symphonic proportions, opening with a lengthy introduction out of which the violin explodes into being. Echoes of Beethoven's 1806 violin concerto are present at every turn, with its unsuspecting opening theme that grows to militaristic turbulence in the orchestral tutti. All the while, the violin has the incredibly difficult task of executing a massive and exposed solo above all this for nearly 20 minutes.

The concerto's famous *Adagio* almost never came to be. Two very different movements originally stood in its place before Brahms decided he had written himself into a corner. He swapped out the middle movements for 'a wretched adagio' which, as Pablo de Sarasate complained, gave the oboe 'the only tune', but is the emotional heart of the concerto. In the finale, Brahms returns to his love of Hungarian music with a thrilling rondo boasting 'dashing rhythms and delirious trills in the winds' whose sudden turn before the end is a true Brahms trademark.



Richard Tognetti

Artistic Director & Solo 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 hometown 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. He was appointed the ACO's Artistic Director and Lead Violin in 1990.

Richard performs on period, modern and electric instruments. 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, the Arctic Philharmonic and all the major Australian symphony orchestras. Richard also performed the Australian premieres of Ligeti's Violin Concerto and Lutoslawski's Partita. In 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's arrangements, compositions and transcriptions have expanded the chamber orchestra repertoire and been performed throughout the world. He curated and co-composed the scores for the ACO's documentary films *Musica Surfica*, *The Glide*, *The Reef* and *The Crowd & I*, and co-composed the scores for Peter Weir's *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* and Tom Carroll's film *Storm Surfers*. Richard collaborated with director Jennifer Peedom and *Stranger Than Fiction* to create the award-winning films *Mountain*, which went on to become the highest-grossing homegrown documentary in Australian cinemas, and *River*, which won Best Soundtrack at the ARIA, AACTA and APRA Awards.

His recordings have received accolades around the world, and he is the recipient of seven 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 named a National Living Treasure in 1999. In 2017 he was awarded the JC Williamson Award for longstanding service to the live performance industry.



Australian Chamber Orchestra

'The Australian Chamber Orchestra is uniformly high-octane, arresting and never ordinary.'

– *The Australian*

The Australian Chamber Orchestra lives and breathes music, making waves around the world for its explosive performances that redefine orchestral music. With its fearless leader of 35 years, Artistic Director Richard Tognetti, in 2025 the Orchestra celebrates 50 years of invention, disruption and unforgettable music-making.

The ACO performs more than 100 concerts each year, with programs that embrace celebrated classics alongside new commissions and ground-breaking collaborations, working with artists and musicians who share the Orchestra's ideology: from Emmanuel Pahud, Steven Isserlis, Polina Leschenko, Pekka Kuusisto, Nicolas Altstaedt and William Barton, to Jonny Greenwood, Neil Finn and Meow Meow; to visual artists and film makers such as Bill Henson, Shaun Tan, Jane Campion, and Jennifer Peedom, who co-create unique, hybrid productions for which the ACO has become renowned.

The ACO has its own streaming platform, ACO On Demand, which hosts the Orchestra's award-winning cinematic concert films, *ACO StudioCasts*, alongside live concert streams. The Orchestra also has an active recording program, with Richard Tognetti and the Orchestra winning eight ARIA Awards. Recent releases include *Water | Night Music*, the first Australian-produced classical vinyl for two decades, *Tchaikovsky | Shostakovich* and ARIA award-winning albums *River* and *Indies & Idols*.

In 2022 the ACO opened a new, world-class venue, ACO On The Pier, continuing the Orchestra's dedication to creating and presenting transformative experiences for all music lovers.

aco.com.au

Artistic Director Richard Tognetti AO
Managing Director Richard Evans AM

Beethoven recorded live in concert at City Recital Hall, Sydney on 17, 20 and 21 November 2018.
Brahms recorded live in concert at City Recital Hall, Sydney on 11, 12, 14 and 15 February 2025.

Executive Producer Ross McHenry
Producer (Beethoven) Alex Stinson
Producer (Brahms) Bernard Rofe
Session Producer (Beethoven) Joseph Nizeti
Session Producer (Brahms) Bernard Rofe
Engineer, Mixing and Mastering Bob Scott
Assistant Engineers (Brahms) Matt Hiley and Virginia Read



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The ACO is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

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abc.net.au/classic

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