

Australian Festival of Chamber Music

Monday February 2, 2026

Australia's finest musicians meet international masters: Australian Festival of Chamber Music announces 2026 program

*Australian composer Lee Bradshaw completes Gideon Klein's
lost masterpiece in poignant Festival highlight*

Forget everything you think you know about classical music, because a whole new experience is taking place this year. In July 2026, over nine glorious wintersun-filled days from 24 July to 1 August, the **Australian Festival of Chamber Music** (AFCM) begins an exhilarating new chapter in Cairns–Gimuy, where world-class musicians, once-in-a-lifetime performances and unforgettable experiences unfold against the backdrop of the World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef.

The 2026 program has been announced by Artistic Director and acclaimed British violinist **Jack Liebeck** with tickets on sale now to AFCM Friends, and to the general public on **Monday March 2**.

International musicians leading the line-up include Berlin Philharmonic Principal Horn and global soloist **Stefan Dohr**, much-loved Australian pianist and former AFCM Artistic Director **Piers Lane**, French cello star **Christian-Pierre La Marca**, and Irish tenor **Robin Tritschler**. They are joined by artists from across Europe, Asia, the UK and Australia, alongside exciting emerging musicians, creating a program that balances global excellence with the Festival's deep commitment to artistic discovery, education pathways and collaboration.

Australia's finest take centre stage, including Perth violinist **Emmalena Huning**, Melbourne's expressive oboist **Emmanuel Cassimatis**, Sydney's **Joshua Batty** who dazzles on flute and **Julian Smiles** on cello. Brisbane's **Karin Schaupp** brings guitar mastery, and Sydney-born violist **Stefanie Farrands** adds her exquisite sound. French Horn player **Ben Jacks** (Sydney), clarinettist **Lloyd Van't Hoff** (Adelaide), double bassist **Kees Boersma** (Sydney), lute and theorbo player **Simon Martyn Ellis** (Hobart), and dynamic narrator-actor **Bethany Simons** (Sydney) all join.

Melbourne-born cellist **Charlotte Miles**, now based in Germany, is one of Australia's most exciting young classical exports, recognised internationally for her expressive power and technical command. She returns to the AFCM after making a standout impression at the 2025 Festival.

"This season we're thrilled to welcome back Piers Lane and members of the former **Goldner String Quartet**, alongside first timers to AFCM such as the world-renowned **Sitkovetsky Piano Trio** and German virtuoso pianist **Alexander Krichel**," said Artistic Director Jack Liebeck. "We're also proud to present Gramophone award-winning tenor Robin Tritschler and showcase fresh, daring works from our AFCM Pathways Emerging Composer in Residence **Sam Wu** who is writing two new works for the Festival."

"Importantly, audiences will hear new works that connect us to powerful histories and contemporary voices. Australian composer **Lee Bradshaw** completes 'January 27, 1945', an unfinished work by Czech composer **Gideon Klein**, who tragically died in Auschwitz. Meanwhile, British composer **Alex Turley** presents a new, as-yet-untitled work for flute and string quartet, bringing fresh perspectives to the chamber music repertoire."

“As part of the **Evening Concerts** series, we celebrate our new northern home with *Cairns at 150*, tracing the city’s history through music spanning centuries, and *Wonderful World*, curated by French cellist Christian-Pierre La Marca, pairs breathtaking nature cinematography with music from Fauré to Glass for a moving reflection on humanity and the planet.”

Minister for the Arts John-Paul Langbroek said the AFCM was an outstanding event on Queensland’s cultural calendar, attracting music lovers from across the state, interstate and overseas.

“The Crisafulli Government’s investment in the Australian Festival of Chamber Music enables it to showcase the finest international and national musicians, engage audiences in insightful and entertaining workshops and conversations, and celebrate the natural beauty and heritage of Northern Queensland,” Minister Langbroek said.

“The Festival offers a uniquely Queensland arts experience, delivering on the priorities of our *Queensland’s Time to Shine* strategy including attracting audiences, driving regional economic growth and enhancing our state’s reputation as a premier cultural destination.”

Queensland Minister for Tourism and the Environment, Andrew Powell, said the AFCM was a world-class event, set to deliver around \$3 million to the state’s economy. “Hosting the largest chamber music festival in the southern hemisphere in the idyllic new location of Cairns opens an exciting chapter for the Festival,” Minister Powell said. “This event clearly aligns with our Destination 2045 20-year tourism plan, as audiences stay, spend locally and experience the reef, rainforest and vibrant city precincts.”

Cairns Mayor Amy Eden said the 2026 program is a powerful reminder of what the Australian Festival of Chamber Music will bring to Cairns–Gimuy, with world-class musicians, compelling stories and unforgettable cultural experiences. “Hosting the Festival strengthens Cairns’ position as a vibrant cultural destination, delivering lasting benefits for our arts sector and local economy, while increasing visitor appeal,” she said.

The Opening and Closing Night Concerts bookend the Festival with style and celebration. *Cairns Crescendo* marks AFCM’s debut in Cairns with a sweeping program from Mozart to the world premiere of composer Sam Wu’s work, a perfect way to introduce audiences to the artists shaping the Festival’s bold new chapter. The *Governor’s Gala: Mozart – The Marriage of Figaro* offers a vibrant, narrated reimagining of the opera with AFCM’s stellar ensemble. Finally, *So Long, Farewell, for now...* closes the Festival joyfully with music by Dvořák, Ravel, and Rodgers & Hammerstein, celebrating shared experiences until the next gathering. The famous **AFCM Concert Conversations** will return, with six across the Festival; a much loved blend of music, insights and more often than not, a wonderful dose of humour

There are five concerts in this year’s **Ray Golding Sunset Series**. *Twilight’s Embrace* envelops listeners in evening reflections, with works from Berkeley, Piazzolla, Bloch and Chopin. *Baroque Sunset* restores balance and calm with centuries-old music full of intricate beauty and rhythmic vitality. *A Tale of Two* brings past and present together as Artistic Directors Jack Liebeck and Australian piano legend Piers Lane perform works by Elgar and Brahms. *Usonia Dreams* explores the American musical landscape through Ives, Carter, and Bernstein, and finally, *Epoch Echoes* pairs Mendelssohn’s Piano Trio in C minor with Australian composer Lee Bradshaw’s completion of Gideon Klein’s unfinished work, *January 25, 1945*, a poignant act of remembrance.

Two special events complete the program: the first a stunning concert cruising aboard a luxury yacht in the tropical waters off the Cairns coast, and the second an intimate concert by the world-leading Sitkovetsky Trio.

Australian Festival of Chamber Music: 24 July – 1 August, 2026

MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY: tickets on sale to AFCM Friends

MONDAY 2 MARCH: tickets on sale to the general public.

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AFCM is supported by the Queensland Government through Tourism and Events Queensland and Arts Queensland; Cairns Regional Council; the Ian Potter Foundation; and the Australian Government through Music Australia and Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.

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