

Australian Festival of Chamber Music

Locked out, run over and stabbed by a baton: Classical music gets a darkly funny twist at this year's Australian Festival of Chamber Music

Think chamber and classical music is serious, stuffy and a little intimidating? Think again.

At this year's **Australian Festival of Chamber Music** (AFCM) in Cairns-Gimuy at the end of July, audiences are invited to laugh, gasp and marvel at the wildly bizarre lives – and deaths – of some of history's greatest composers in one of the Festival's most entertaining events, ***Interrupted Endings, Composer Edition***.

This delightfully irreverent concert takes audiences on a journey through centuries of extraordinary music and extraordinary misfortune, proving that behind every masterpiece is a very human story.

Did you know composer **Henry Purcell** allegedly froze to death after being locked out of his own home? Or that French composer **Jean-Baptiste Lully** accidentally stabbed himself in the foot with his conducting staff, leading to a fatal infection?

Australia's own **Isaac Nathan**, often described as the father of Australian music, became the victim of Sydney's first recorded fatal tram accident in 1864. And French composer **Ernest Chausson** tragically cycled headfirst into a wall.

The stories may be grim, but the music is glorious.

Presented on **Sunday 26 July at the Cairns Performing Arts Centre, *Interrupted Endings, Composer Edition*** is exactly the kind of bold, playful programming that is redefining what a chamber music festival can be.

In 2026, AFCM enters an exciting new chapter, transforming Cairns-Gimuy into a global chamber music capital where extraordinary performances unfold against the backdrop of two World Heritage-listed wonders – the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest.

Under the direction of acclaimed **British violinist and Artistic Director Jack Liebeck**, this year's program balances global excellence with powerful storytelling and unforgettable experiences that invite new audiences to discover classical music in entirely unexpected ways.

"This concert is a wonderful reminder that composers weren't distant historical figures; they were people with extraordinary lives, quirks and sometimes extraordinary bad luck," said Liebeck. "Once you know their stories, the music becomes even more powerful because you connect with the humanity behind it. That's what AFCM is all about – creating memorable experiences that bring audiences closer to the music."

The event forms part of a Festival program that is bold, cinematic and unafraid to take risks, sitting alongside performances that reimagine Schubert's *Winterreise* for tropical North Queensland, complete a Holocaust-era work left unfinished for 80 years, and celebrate humanity's connection with the natural world through breathtaking music and film.

Because at AFCM, even dead composers get a second act.

Interrupted Endings, Composer Edition

Sunday 26 July | Cairns Performing Arts Centre

For tickets and program information visit www.afcm.com.au

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

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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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