

Australian Festival of Chamber Music

16 June 2026

From the Concert Hall to Cairns Harbour: Australian Festival of Chamber Music unveils the Community Culture Program making music for everyone

From waterfront pop-ups and family concerts to public masterclasses, cultural collaborations, performances in some of Cairns' most vibrant community spaces and a partnership with the city's beloved Italian Festival, the **Australian Festival of Chamber Music** is bringing world-class music beyond the concert hall and into the heart of Cairns-Gimuy and the region through the just announced, **AFCM Community Culture Program**.

From 24 July to 1 August 2026, over nine glorious winter days in Cairns, AFCM will turn the Far North Queensland capital into a global chamber music capital, where world-class musicians, once-in-a-lifetime performances and unforgettable experiences unfold against the backdrop of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef.

Designed to complement AFCM's main concert program, the Community Culture Program features more than 30 mostly free events, where audiences can discover internationally acclaimed musicians in public spaces, enjoy family-friendly performances, witness the next generation of artists in action, and gain rare insights into the creative process.

The program runs from July 22 through to August 5.

Among the highlights is the **Families' Concert**, where classical instruments become storytellers for young audiences; the **Strike A Chord Showcase**, featuring Australia's brightest young chamber musicians; public masterclasses led by international artists including Berlin Philharmonic principal horn **Stefan Dohr** and celebrated pianist **Piers Lane**; and special collaborations including **Corde di Vivaldi a Cairns**, presented in partnership with the **Cairns Italian Festival** on July 25.

In collaboration with **JUTE Theatre Company** and **Kirtley Leigh**, the program champions powerful regional storytelling. With **James Cook University**, the longstanding partnership continues through the **Colin Roderick Memorial Lecture** series, featuring leading thinkers and writers including **Ivor Indyk**. Meanwhile, **CARO Voices** adds a vital choral and community dimension, supporting inclusive vocal performance opportunities that connect singers of all ages and backgrounds.

AFCM Executive Director Ricardo Peach said the AFCM Community Culture Program reflected a simple philosophy: great music should be experienced by as many people as possible.

"By removing barriers, embracing partnerships and celebrating the unique character of Tropical North Queensland, the program ensures the Festival belongs not only to concert-goers, but to the entire community. We want to create moments where music, place and community meet."

“As AFCM begins its new chapter in Cairns, we want the Festival to be deeply connected to local people, local stories and the extraordinary cultural life of Far North Queensland.”

“This program reflects our belief that great music and art should be accessible, welcoming and connected to people’s everyday lives. Whether it is a pop-up performance, a community collaboration, a regional concert, a schools activity or a conversation with local or international artists, the AFCM Community Culture Program invites people to encounter the Festival in ways that are joyful, informal and deeply meaningful.”

COMMUNITY CULTURE PROGRAM HERE

[AFCM Community Culture Program | Australian Festival of Chamber Music](#)

FREE & ACCESSIBLE HIGHLIGHTS

- AFCM International Public Masterclasses
- CARO Voices
- Strike A Chord Showcase Concert
- Pathways Showcase Concert
- *Corde di Vivaldi a Cairns* (Italian Festival Collaboration)
- FALS’ Colin Roderick Memorial Lecture with author Ivor Indyk
- Rhapsody - A Violin’s Journey Through Time
- Community performances and pop-up activations across Cairns-Gimuy
- Families Concert

ABOUT THE AFCM

“Forget everything you think you know about classical music, because a whole new experience is taking place this year in Cairns,” said Artistic Director and acclaimed British violinist **Jack Liebeck**. “The Australian Festival of Chamber Music is built on surprise, storytelling and extraordinary musicianship,” said Liebeck. “From comic tales of composers’ untimely ends to deeply moving works of remembrance and environmental reflection, these concerts represent the breadth, imagination and emotional power at the heart of this year’s Festival.”

This year’s program is bold, cinematic and unafraid to take risks, from composers who met wildly dramatic ends in *Horrible Histories*, *Composer Edition*, to Schubert’s *Winterreise* reimagined for the tropics, a lost Holocaust-era work completed 80 years on, and a sweeping multimedia tribute to the natural world. It’s chamber music with edge, story and serious emotional punch.

International artists this year include **Berlin Philharmonic Principal Horn Stefan Dohr**, French cellist **Christian-Pierre La Marca**, Irish tenor **Robin Tritschler** and world-renowned ensembles including the **Sitkovetsky Piano Trio**. They are joined by leading Australian musicians including **Piers Lane**, **Karin Schaupp**, **Lloyd Van’t Hoff**, and many more, alongside emerging artists and new works from the AFCM Pathways Emerging Composer in Residence **Sam Wu**.

Imagery of 2026 artists [HERE](#)

Imagery of Artistic Director Jack Liebeck in Cairns [HERE](#)

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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