

# Australian Festival of Chamber Music

## Jack's Back – with five world premieres and more guilty pleasures!

*The 2023 Australian Festival of Chamber Music program unveiled by Artistic Director Jack Liebeck features world premieres from William Barton, Deborah Cheetham Fraillon AO, Joseph Havlat, Sally Beamish and Stephen Johnson*

*Tickets on sale Wednesday 1 March at 10am AEDT via [afcm.com.au](http://afcm.com.au)*

Australian Festival of Chamber Music (AFCM) Artistic Director **Jack Liebeck** is back; and this year he's bringing more musicians, more music and more thinkers with him, as well as staging five world premieres.

After last year's triumphant post-Covid restarting of the internationally acclaimed event in Townsville-Gurambilbarra - Jack's first as Artistic Director - the famed British violinist has his feet firmly on the podium and has unveiled a stunning 2023 program of 34 concerts and special events.

This year 39 world-class musicians and artists will fly into the North Queensland capital, including 14 internationals, five of whom are making their Australian debut, including Dutch violinist **Rosanne Philippens**, UK-based Taiwanese violist **Ting-Ru Lai**, UK narrator and playwright **Peter Thompson**, fellow Brit and viola player **Sally Beamish**, who will attend as *Composer-in-Residence* and international musicologist **Stephen Johnson**.

Thirteen artists are performing at the AFCM for the very first time, in what will be a joyous 10-day celebration hosted in the glorious tropical winter sun of North Queensland. What's more, guests can expect a deeper dive *into* the science and exploration of music this year.

Liebeck said, "after talking to audiences last year, it made me realise that our audience doesn't just want to experience music in a passive way, they want to understand it on a deeper level. With that in mind we will welcome brilliant British musicologist, composer, and presenter **Stephen Johnson** to Townsville this year."

"Building on the *AFCM Illuminates* lectures introduced in 2022, Stephen will guide us through the music of Messiaen, the psychological power of Shostakovich, the life of a composer in discussion with our composer-in-residence **Sally Beamish**, and the power of the critics in the life of a piece of music," he said.

"Our program will show us that *Romance Is Not Dead, Yet...*, we showcase the winner of the 2023 Sydney International Piano Competition, travel *To The Mysterious Forest*, and discover some *Castigated Classics* (trust me you should hear them!)."

Returning in 2023 is the highly successful 2022 debut series, *Guilty Pleasures*, where Liebeck invites musicians to perform their favourite piece of music – from the eclectic to the unusual; also returning is the incredibly popular *Orpheus-Goolboddi Island Concert*, one of the internationally acclaimed highlights of the Festival.

The Australian artist line-up is led by internationally applauded composer and didgeridoo musician **William Barton** returning with a new commission; the **Goldner String Quartet** as Quartet-in-Residence; dynamic percussionist Claire Edwardes OAM, and harpsichordist **Donald Nicholson**.

In a wonderful nod to Australia's Symphony Orchestras, the program includes Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Principal Flute **Prudence Davis**, Sydney Symphony Orchestra Principal Trumpet **David Elton**, Queensland Symphony

Orchestra Principal Bassoon **Nicole Tait** and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra Artist in Association for 2023 and rising international star **Emily Sun** (violin).

Performing at AFCM for the first time is Spanish oboist and two-time ECHO Award winner, **Ramón Ortega Quero**, recognised around the world as one of the most inspiring musicians of his generation.

#### World Premieres at AFCM 2023:

A powerful world premiere will open the 2023 AFCM at the James Cook University Opening Night Concert on Friday July 28. *Nginda Ngarrini Bi Ngya* by **Deborah Cheetham Fraillon AO**, Yorta Yorta soprano, composer, educator and arts and cultural pioneer will be performed in the language of the Wulgurukaba with the AFCM quartet-in-residence **Goldner String Quartet**. AFCM commissioned Ms Cheetham to create this work two years ago, and although she cannot attend this year, it will be a wonderful celebration and acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land on which the Festival takes place, the Wulgurukaba people of Gurumbilbara. The Opening Night Concert also includes the first of Composer-in-Residence Sally Beamish's pieces, *Carnival Samba for Piano Trio*.

Two world premieres will take place on Monday 31 July. The first at Concert Conversations 2, with the public debut of **Stephen Johnson's** *Nimble and Roguish Paw*, performed by Spanish oboist **Ramon Ortego Quero** and UK clarinettist **Matthew Hunt**.

That evening as a highlight of the *Journeys with Shostakovich* concert, Composer-in-Residence and Shostakovich specialist Sally Beamish will present her special AFCM Commission.

The evening concert on Wednesday 2 August, titled *To the Mysterious Forest* will feature the world première of Australian pianist and composer **Joseph Havlat's** *Water-music of the Styx*. The entire concert promises a journey of sylvan inspiration, beginning with the work of two First Nation composers **Nardi Simpson** and **Brenda Gifford's** exploration of the atmosphere of the forest.

The final world premiere is on Friday 4 August at the Sunset Series concert titled *Night and Day* and is acclaimed musician and composer **William Barton's** special AFCM commission, *Dawn Time Dreaming*.

Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch said the Australian Festival of Chamber Music program for 2023 offered a richly diverse, multicultural collection of accomplished international and local Queensland artists in the state's tropical north.

Important Queensland stories will be narrated through music, with world premieres from William Barton's *Dawn Time Dreaming* together with Deborah Cheetham AO's powerful work *Nginda Ngarrini Bi Ngya*, presented in the language of the *Wulgurukaba*.

"For more than 30 years, the Queensland Government has invested in the Australian Festival of Chamber Music to grow and nurture live music performances, provide a pipeline of employment and economic benefits for the region and our arts workers, and to provide visitors with exceptional cultural tourism experiences.

"AFCM backs-in the priorities of the Palaszczuk Government's *Creative Together*, a ten-year roadmap for Arts and Culture in Queensland, and helps pave the way for the opportunities for all of Queensland from the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games which will further showcase our state's arts and cultural sector on the global stage.

AFCM principal partners include Queensland Government through Tourism and Events Queensland and Arts Queensland, and Townsville City Council. AFCM is supported by the Queensland Government, through Tourism and Events Queensland, and features on the *It's Live! In Queensland* events calendar.

## Australian Festival of Chamber Music

28 July to 6 August 2023 in Townsville-Gurumbilbarra, North Queensland

Concert tickets, Festival passes and holiday packages on sale NOW

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