

SYDNEY  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA



# SPINIFEX GUM

& THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY

21 June, 2023  
Sydney Opera House

Principal Partner



# SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON **Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley** AC KC

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Fremaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdenek Macal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

## **Simone Young**

Chief Conductor

## **Donald Runnicles**

Principal Guest Conductor

## **Vladimir Ashkenazy**

Conductor Laureate

## **Andrew Haveron**

Concertmaster

*Chair supported by  
Vicki Olsson*

## **FIRST VIOLINS**

### **Fiona Ziegler**

*Assistant Concertmaster*

Jennifer Booth

Sophie Cole

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Alex Norton

Leone Ziegler

Anna Skálová

Amanda Chen<sup>o</sup>

Sercan Danis<sup>o</sup>

## **SECOND VIOLINS**

### **Marina Marsden**

*Principal*

Victoria Bihun

Emma Hayes

Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Wendy Kong

Riikka Sintonen<sup>o</sup>

## **VIOLAS**

### **Anne-Louise Comerford**

*Associate Principal*

Graham Hennings

Stuart Johnson

Justine Marsden

Amanda Verner

Leonid Volovelsky

## **CELLOS**

Kristy Conrau

Timothy Nankervis

Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis

Miles Mullin-Chivers<sup>o</sup>

Ariel Volovelsky<sup>+</sup>

## **DOUBLE BASSES**

David Campbell

Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Benjamin Ward

## **FLUTES**

### **Joshua Batty**

*Principal*

### **Katie Zagorski<sup>o</sup>**

*Principal Piccolo*

## **OBOES**

### **Alexandre Oguey**

*Principal Cor Anglais*

## **CLARINETS**

Christopher Tingay

Alex McCracken\*

## **BASSOONS**

### **Todd Gibson-Cornish**

*Principal*

## **HORNS**

### **Euan Harvey**

*Acting Principal*

Marnie Sebire

Lee Wadenpfuhl<sup>o</sup>

## **TROMBONES**

### **Ronald Prussing**

*Principal*

Nick Byrne

Brett Page\*

## **TUBA**

### **Antonio Neilley-Menendez de Lano\***

*Guest Principal*

## **TIMPANI**

### **Mark Robinson**

*Acting Principal*

\* = Guest Musician

<sup>o</sup> = Contract Musician

<sup>+</sup> = Sydney Symphony Fellow

SYDNEY SYMPHONY PRESENTS  
Wednesday 21 June 2023, 7pm

Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House

# SPINIFEX GUM & THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY

**FELIX RIEBL** creator, composer and featured artist

**AARON WYATT** conductor

**MARLIYA** choir

**LYN WILLIAMS** choir director

**SYDNEY CHILDREN'S CHOIR & GONDWANA VOICES** stage choir

**ASCHAM SCHOOL, NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL OF THE  
PERFORMING ARTS, SCEGGS DARLINGHURST** massed treble choir

**ROSS IRWIN, FELIX RIEBL, OLLIE MCGILL, ASTRID JORGENSEN**  
arrangements

**DEBORAH BROWN** choreography

**MICHAEL WOODLEY** Yindjibarndi story, texts and translations

**LARA MILLER, GRACE MILLER** movement rehearsals

**DOMINIC ALLEN** film

**WILLIAMS** *Acknowledgement of Country*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Spinifex Gum*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Wandangarli*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Mine Steal Tender Ore*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Yurala*

**RIEBL / MCGILL / QUAYLE** *Battle Cry*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Sisters*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Lang Interlude*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Ghosts Whisper*

**RIEBL / MCGILL / WOODLEY** *Ganalili*

**RIEBL / MCGILL / WOODLEY / DONOVAN** *Take This Silence*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Ready or Not*

**REV AND VEGA** *Dream Baby Dream*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Voice Treaty Truth Now*

**MURRAY** *My Island Home*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Gawarliwarli*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Ms Dhu*

**RIEBL / BRIGGS / MCGILL** *Locked Up*

**BRIGGS / GURRUMUL / EVERETTSMITH** *The Children Came Back*

**RIEBL / MCGILL** *Marliya*

## ESTIMATED DURATION

This concert will run for  
approximately 90 minutes,  
with no interval

## COVER IMAGE

Photo by Mark Gambino

## SOUND DESIGN

Des O'Neil – aFX Global

## LIGHTING

Matthew Tunchon

## MARLIYA SOUND

Matthew Lambe and  
Mark Myers

*Tonight's performance is  
generously supported by  
the Oranges & Sardines  
Foundation*

ORANGES



SARDINES

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **FELIX RIEBL** creator, composer and featured artist

Felix Riebl is best known as the co-founder, band leader and principal songwriter of internationally acclaimed band The Cat Empire, who have created multi-platinum albums and performed on the world's most legendary stages. On the local stage from his home in Melbourne/Naarm, Felix is a singer, songwriter and composer who has released two solo albums and composed music for films, fireworks and major ceremonies and festivals.

In 2015 Felix, alongside fellow Cat Empire band member Ollie McGill, created the award-winning show *Spinifex Gum*. As key collaborators, songwriters, beats-makers, composers, instrumentalists, and creative directors, Felix and Ollie have led the charge in musical storytelling with the *Spinifex Gum* show and recordings seeing the duo engage with the Yindjibarndi community of Western Australia.

Across his projects, The Cat Empire, Felix Riebl, and Spinifex Gum there are threads that tie all three together: a sense of community, collaboration, and respect for the craft. In his most recent work, Felix celebrates the wonder and obscurities of life by shining a light on the interplay of insular domestic moments and very extrovert overflowing international moments that present themselves with joy and exuberance.



Felix Riebl

## **AARON WYATT** conductor

Aaron is an accomplished violist and was a regular casual with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra before moving to Melbourne to take up an assistant lectureship at Monash University. He has played in a wide variety of ensembles across many different genres, and has toured internationally with a number of groups including the award-winning Decibel New Music ensemble. As well as performing with the ensemble, Aaron is the developer behind the Decibel ScorePlayer app, the group's cutting edge, animated graphic notation software for the iPad.

An emerging conductor, he was nominated for a Helpmann Award for his role as musical director of the premiere season of Cat Hope's new opera, *Speechless*, at the 2019 Perth International Arts Festival, and has recently taken on the role of director of Ensemble Dutala. The brainchild of Yorta Yorta soprano and composer Deborah Cheetham AO, the group aims to bring together Indigenous classical musicians from around the country.

Most recently he premiered Cheetham's new work, *Nanyubak*, for viola and orchestra as a soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and become the first Indigenous Australian to conduct one of the state symphony orchestras in concert when he directed the MSO playing Cheetham's musical acknowledgement of country, *Long Time Living Here*, at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. Aaron conducted his first *Spinifex Gum* performance with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra at the opening of the Adelaide Festival in 2023.

As a composer, he has been a participant in the Ngarra-Burria First Peoples composer program, writing for Ensemble Offspring. He has also written a number of electro-acoustic works, using a mix of traditional and animated graphic notation for Decibel, GreyWing Ensemble and Ensemble Dutala.



Aaron Wyatt

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



### MARLIYA

Marliya was formed from members of the Gondwana Indigenous Children's Choir, based in Cairns, to perform *Spinifex Gum* by Felix Riebl. Currently the members are aged 11–22. Led by conductor Lyn Williams, Marliya have performed *Spinifex Gum* all across Australia, from Roebourne in the Pilbara to the Sydney, Adelaide and Perth festivals, WOMAdelaide and the Garma Festival. Marliya's recent performances of *Spinifex Gum* have included the Woodford Folk Festival, the opening of Adelaide Festival with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and BluesFest Byron Bay in 2023.

Marliya members take on solo roles within performances. The older members teach and mentor their younger sisters and several have contributed text and composition to the group's latest album *Ganalili* (2023), which followed earlier releases *Spinifex Gum* (2017) and *Sisters* (2019).

Larina Biehler  
Zariah Biehler  
Jayleana Brutton  
Kaya Durante  
Emily Iverach  
Kimberley Jackson

Grace Miller  
Tiarna-Rae Mills  
Kyleja Namok-Majid  
Kiyani Namok-Majid  
Ziva Osborne James  
Jaala Sadler

Annika Seden  
Georgiana Thomas-Peddell  
Ashleigh Ung  
Taylah Ung  
Sara Van Gelderen

### LYN WILLIAMS **AM** choral director

Lyn Williams is widely regarded as one of the finest conductors of choirs around the world. She is the Artistic Director and Founder of Gondwana Choirs which includes the world-renowned ensembles the Sydney Children's Choir, Gondwana Voices, the Gondwana Indigenous Children's Choir and Marliya.

Lyn has commissioned over 200 works from composers across Australia and around the world and her ability to forge innovative and meaningful collaborations is widely recognised. She continues to foster strong relationships with First Nations artists across Australia, bringing together cultural custodians and composers to create new works which preserve and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages and cultures. Lyn enjoys a long-standing collaboration with singer-songwriter Felix Riebl of The Cat Empire and the singers of Marliya, presenting the critically-acclaimed show *Spinifex Gum*.

Lyn Williams' outstanding and sustained contribution to music in Australia has been recognised widely including through the Australia Council for the Arts' Don Banks Music Award in 2017 and as a Member of the Order of Australia in 2019.



Lyn Williams

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **OLLIE MCGILL** arranger

Ollie McGill is a genius behind the piano. For over two decades, McGill has shown his authentic versatility as a musician through composing, songwriting and being a vibrant player at the keys. Whilst McGill is best known for his work as a founding member of The Cat Empire, the pianist's stylistic and raw musical works can be seen and heard across collaborative sessions and compositions with musicians around the world. McGill has enjoyed his chaotic touring and recording life over the past two decades, performing in a number of bands and toying with musical genres spanning neo classical, fusion, avantgarde, jazz, electronic and improvisational compositions.

Ever-present in the music world, whether touring, composing, recording or writing advertising songs (McGill composed the award-winning *Dumb Ways to Die* for Metro Trains Melbourne in 2012), the artist is not one to sit still when it comes to music projects.

*Silhouettes of Mockingbirds* (2002) is Ollie McGill's latest solo piano release, an intimate EP of four tracks inspired by the ocean.



Ollie McGill

## **DEBORAH BROWN** choreographer

Deborah Brown is a director, choreographer and award winning dancer. She spent 15 years as a Senior Artist at Bangarra Dance Theatre, where she created works including short dance film *dive* in 2013 and *IBIS* for Bangarra's national tour of *lore* in 2015. She won the 2013 Helpmann Award for Best Female Dancer in a Dance or Physical Theatre Production for *Terrain*. She has created *hide*, for Campbelltown Arts Centre and has choreographed and collaborated on *Spinifex Gum*. Deborah was assistant director on STC's *The Long Forgotten Dream*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Wonangatta* and Belvoir's *Winyanboga Yurringa*.

Deborah has a Masters in Screen Directing at The Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS). Her capstone film *Bala* has featured at film festivals around the globe and is currently screening on ABC iView. She has directed for the NITV children's series *Barrumbi Kids*, released in 2022.



Deborah Brown

## **MICHAEL WOODLEY** Yindjibarndi story, texts and translations

Michael Woodley is the Chief Executive Officer of the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC), a Registered Native Title Body Corporate, and co-founder of the Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation (JGAC), Yindjibarndi's language and cultural recording organisation, as well as being a Yindjibarndi spokesperson, Bindarra Law carrier and community leader. His leadership has a history of more than a decade in the Yindjibarndi community, and more generally in the community of Roebourne.

Prior to this Michael has undertaken training through Rio Tinto's Aboriginal Training and Liaison (ATAL) division, and from 2002–11 took JAC from a small organisation to a thriving archiving, publishing, digital media, television broadcasting, media training, cultural consultancy, and advocacy enterprise. In 2007 Michael was appointed as CEO of YAC where his responsibilities included heritage management, policy and research services, and retaining professional legal and anthropological services to strengthen Yindjibarndi's position as a leader in Native Title development, self-determination and sustainability. Through culture, community and commerce, Michael is advancing change through real partnerships and long-term commitments.



Michael Woodley

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## THE SYDNEY CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Founded by Lyn Williams AM in 1989, the Sydney Children's Choir has forged a reputation for artistic innovation and spell-binding performance. Close to the choir's heart is its repertoire of over 200 specially commissioned works, and it continues to premiere new music from leading and emerging composers annually. The choir enjoys collaborations with artists from a wide range of cultures such as Suara Indonesia Dance and Mongolian singer and horsehead fiddle player Bukhchuluun Ganburged. The Sydney Children's Choir has a long history of performing with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and its chief conductors including Simone Young, David Robertson and Vladimir Ashkenazy. Recent highlights include the premiere of the daring staged work *Hypnopompia*, directed by Alexander Berlage and William Barton's *Of the Earth* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Simone Young to celebrate the re-opening of the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

Sara Andrew  
Elias Buggy Axton\*  
Etta Buggy Axton\*  
Heidi Campbell  
Rachel Carpenter  
Osandu Dharmawardana  
Astrid Durrant  
Paige Easson\*  
James Emmett  
Maddie Fletcher  
Divyan Gnanasivam  
Sonya Gussak

Angela Han  
Daniel Hirst  
Finley Humberstone\*  
Zoe Humberstone\*  
Yuhansa Jayakody\*  
Lucia Juarez  
Teresa Mayo  
Paisley Motum\*  
Nathan Nguyen\*  
Sofia Nicholas  
Katie Nielsen\*  
Juliette Pfeil

Chelsea Porritt\*  
Mira Prasad  
Pyari Qureshi  
Mia Rogers\*  
Elizabeth Samuel  
Reva Shinde  
Liam Ullman  
Miranda Vaz\*  
Erin Winsbury  
Evelyn Zhu

\*Also a member of Gondwana Voices

## GONDWANA VOICES

Founded by Lyn Williams AM in 1997, Gondwana Voices is Australia's national children's choir for treble singers aged 10-17. The choristers of Gondwana Voices come from all around Australia, from the cities, the suburbs and the bush. It regularly performs with the country's leading ensembles and has built a reputation for performances of outstanding musicianship. The choir has toured widely and in 2007 was the first Australian children's choir to perform at the BBC Proms. In 2019, Gondwana Voices was invited to perform Brett Dean's *Vexations and Devotions* with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowksi at the Berlin Philharmonie. In 2022, Gondwana Voices performed in the premiere of a new orchestral version of *Spinifex Gum* with Marliya and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Benjamin Northey. As Ensemble in Residence with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for 2023, they have recently performed Britten's *War Requiem*, and are looking forward to a second collaboration in July.

Milla Baddock  
Sureyya Brennan  
Isabella Bulstrode  
Aida Choo  
Gracia Clifford  
Johanna Collins

Isabelle Epps  
Gemma Golding  
Hannah Green  
Bethany Hopkins  
Beatrice Hossen  
Matilda McQuie

Bessie Mizrahi Davies  
Claire Moulds  
Carmela Reznik  
Eleanor Tehan  
Avara Williams

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## GONDWANA CHOIRS

**Lyn Williams AM** Artistic Director & Founder

**Louisa O'Toole** Executive Director

**Sam Allchurch** Associate Artistic Director

**Alice Neldner** Manager, Gondwana Indigenous Children's Choir & Spinifex Gum Producer

**Sarah Thomas** Artistic Producer

**Lachlan Massey** Artistic Associate

**Lyn Williams AM, Sam Allchurch, Lachlan Massey** choral preparation

## MASSED TREBLE CHOIR

**Ascham School**

**Lindy Montgomery, Coordinator of Vocal Studies** Choral Preparation

**Newtown High School of the Performing Arts**

**Amber Johnson, Director of Junior Choir** Choral Preparation

**SCEGGS Darlinghurst**

**Allison Harrigan, Musical Director of Choirs** Choral Preparation

## Acknowledgement

Spinifex Gum has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and the Major Festival Initiative in association with the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festival Inc., Adelaide Festival, Sydney Festival and Monash Academy of Performing Arts; Ryan Cooper Family Foundation, The Aranday Foundation, The Myer Foundation, The Yulgilbar Foundation, Limb Family Foundation, SALT Catalyst, Mamoma Foundation, Annamila Foundation, Lightfolk Foundation, The Humanity Foundation, The Dara Foundation, Canny Quine Foundation, Igniting Change, The Wilson Foundation, many generous individuals, and by Creative Partnerships Australia through the Australian Cultural Fund and ACF Boost.

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Part protest, part celebration, *Spinifex Gum* is an Australian festival show created by Felix Riebl (The Cat Empire). It has been created in close collaboration with Michael Woodley, Chief Executive Officer of the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation whose texts are featured throughout. It features the all-female ensemble, Marliya – an ensemble of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait singers, conducted by Lyn Williams. The music is composed and arranged by Felix Riebl and Ollie McGill, and the choreography is by acclaimed First Nations artist Deborah Brown. Having performed alongside artists such as Emma Donovan, Briggs and Peter Garrett, on this occasion Marliya are joined on stage by Felix Riebl.

*Spinifex Gum* confronts challenging political and environmental issues in contemporary Australia: social disparity present in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, land rights, disproportionate incarceration and deaths in custody. Marliya sing in both English and First Nations languages, primarily Yindjibarndi, disarming and inspiring us in a way that no individual voice can.

Since its premiere in Adelaide in 2018, *Spinifex Gum* has been performed at every major Australian arts festival. Equally at home in the concert hall and on the festival stage, the show has received repeat invitations to BluesFest Byron Bay and the Woodford Folk Festivals.

In 2022, a new symphonic version of the show, with orchestrations by Ross Irwin, was premiered by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Marliya with Emma Donovan, Felix Riebl and Gondwana Voices. In tonight's performance Marliya, Felix Riebl and the Sydney Symphony will be joined by members of the Sydney Children's Choir and Gondwana Voices as well as 100 Sydney school students.

The music in the show is drawn from the Spinifex Gum albums *Spinifex Gum* (2017), *Sisters* (2019) and recently released *Ganalili* (2023).