

2 & 3 May 2025

SOUNDS OF AUSTRALIA

Presenting Partner

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SYDNEY
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WELCOME

Welcome to **Sounds of Australia**, an exciting soiree in the intimate surroundings of the Utzon Room of the Sydney Opera House.

Handpicked Wines is delighted to be the Presenting Partner of Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Cocktail Hour with Handpicked Wines*, now in its second year.

At Handpicked, we understand the power of passion, artistry and the spirit of place.

We draw on both technical skill and creative inspiration to craft wines that elevate and enhance experiences; just as the superb artists of the Orchestra invite us to enjoy music that expresses the soul of our unique landscape.

This captivating concert features chamber music from a range of dynamic Australian composers, each one giving voice to an unexpected aspect of Australian life – from birdsong to a cold cityscape to the creation of our unique natural world.

The carefully chosen wines, the 'up close' experience of the musicians of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and these spirited and vibrant works are the perfect combination for a one-of-a-kind experience.

Handpicked and the Orchestra's shared values of creativity and technical excellence are the hallmark of everything we do, and it has been a great pleasure to see our partnership unfold.

I do hope you enjoy the **Sounds of Australia** concert and the wines we have selected to accompany this distinctive and adventurous performance.



William Dong
Managing Director
Handpicked Wines

2025 CONCERT SEASON

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH HANDPICKED WINES

Friday 2 May, 6pm
Saturday 3 May, 6pm

Utzon Room,
Sydney Opera House

SOUNDS OF AUSTRALIA

EVOCATIVE AND INSPIRED

GENEVIEVE LANG presenter

BRENDA GIFFORD (born 1968)

Walimbaya (Return) (2022)

BENJAMIN WARD double bass

AARON WYATT

Cirrus (2022)

ALEXANDER MCCRACKEN bass clarinet

JOSHUA HILL vibraphone

SOPHIE COLE violin

JAAN PALLANDI double bass

CHRISTOPHER SAINSBURY (born 1963)

From the Deep (2021)

BENJAMIN WARD double bass

HOLLIS TAYLOR AND JON ROSE

Palm & Rags (2025)

World Premiere

ALEXANDER MCCRACKEN clarinet

JAAN PALLANDI double bass

BRENDA GIFFORD (born 1968)

Mungala (Clouds) (2018)

DANA ALISON alto flute

JOSHUA HILL percussion

NARDI SIMPSON

Burruguu (Time of Creation) (2020)

DANA ALISON flute

ALEXANDER MCCRACKEN clarinet

SOPHIE COLE violin

JAAN PALLANDI double bass

BENJAMIN WARD double bass

JOSHUA HILL vibraphone

Estimated durations

Gifford – 15 minutes

Wyatt – 5 minutes

Sainsbury – 4 minutes

Taylor & Rose – 3 minutes

Gifford – 6 minutes

Simpson – 8 minutes

The concert will run for
approximately one hour

Cover image

Jaan Pallandi and Benjamin Ward
Photo by Craig Abercombie

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

BRENDA GIFFORD (born 1968)
Walimbaya (Return) (2022)
Commissioned by Canberra International Music Festival

Brenda Gifford is a contemporary classical composer and a proud Yuin woman from Wreck Bay, Australia. Her music is deeply rooted in her country, community, and culture. She collaborates with ensembles, orchestras, and festivals to create music that resonates with audiences worldwide. Gifford's compositions have been performed at prestigious venues such as the Sydney Opera House. Her work is also broadcast on ABC Classic radio. Some notable highlights of her career include commissioned works for the Australian Art Orchestra, Melbourne Jazz Festival, Luminescence Ensemble and James Kennedy's ABC Jazz Mornings Theme.

Gifford's talent has been recognized with awards and residencies, such as the 2022 Peggy Glanville Hicks residency. Gifford's artistic journey is marked by her dedication to sharing stories, exploring cultural themes and pushing the boundaries of contemporary classical music. To learn more about her work, visit her website at brendagifford.com.



Brenda Gifford

The composer writes:

'Is it possible to scale that dark mass, the highest part of Australia, and then walk all the way from the summit to the sea as the old people are said to have done?'

John Blay, *On Track*

The 360km route from Mount Kosciuszko down to Twofold Bay near Eden crosses some of the nation's wildest, most remarkable landscapes. Walking the track, as the old people did, takes several weeks and would involve serious feasting on bogong moths, hunting wallabies, and above all gathering with other people on the high places. According to Mick Gooda, the Bundian Way – as it is known – also is a reconciliation: "this is a track, a meeting place, that links the freshwater to the saltwater, the beaches to the mountains. People traversed that track for a lot longer than most of us can get our heads around. And it should be a track for all of us to come together now."

ABOUT THE MUSIC

AARON WYATT

Cirrus (2022)

Commissioned by *Ngarra-Burria*

Aaron is an accomplished violist, conductor, composer, programmer and academic. Currently an assistant lecturer at Monash University, he has played in a wide variety of ensembles across many different genres, and is a long term member of the award winning Decibel New Music ensemble. As well as performing with the ensemble, he 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 opera *Speechless*, and is the director of Ensemble Dutala, Australia's first First Nations chamber ensemble. An advocate for Indigenous classical music and musicians, he premiered Deborah Cheetham Frailton's work *Nanyubak*, for viola and orchestra as a soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and during a conducting engagement with them he became the first Indigenous Australian to conduct one of the state symphony orchestras in concert. He has since gone on to work with the Adelaide and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, and conducted the premiere of the first opera in Noongar, Gina Williams' and Guy Ghouse's *Koolbardi Wer Wardong* with West Australian Opera.

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, Ensemble Dutala, and for Kyla Matsuura-miller's Freedman Fellowship project, *Three Conversations*.



Aaron Wyatt. Photo by Jessica Bader Photography

The composer writes:

Cirrus was inspired by the Melbourne sky on a bright but cold day. It reflects and meditates on the view from the Djerring Trail, a path that winds its way beneath the sky rail near my home. Thin wisps of white dot - a deep azure canvas that stretches off into the distance between a frame of concrete. The suburban trains that periodically roll overhead bring their own rhythm, punctuating the stillness above. Written between lockdowns, during a time of great uncertainty, the work seeks to explore these small glimpses of awe and beauty that exist in the ordinary, and in the interplay between the natural world and our modern existence.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

CHRISTOPHER SAINSBURY (born 1963)

From the Deep (2021)

Commissioned by Canberra

Symphony Orchestra

Passionately interested in the interpretation of his home region of the Central Coast of NSW and Sydney, Christopher Sainsbury explores many inspirations and forms of expressions in his music. He is of mixed Irish, English, Dutch and Aboriginal heritage. As a member of the Dharug peoples of Sydney and surrounds (also commonly known as Eora), he draws upon motives and images from his local region and reconstitutes them in new ways through creative works that in turn fortify a sense of regional identity. Its 'stuff' is largely to do with the natural and cultural geography of a region. Working as a regionalist composer has resulted in many works, from *First Light* (Winner of the 2010-11 New England Philharmonic Orchestra Open Call for Scores), and most recently the commissioned piece *Singing Stone* for Ensemble Three – Joel Brennan, Don Immel and Ken Murray, based at the Conservatorium of Music, Melbourne University.

Sainsbury is Associate Professor in Composition at the Australian National University.

Maintaining a commitment to lifting the profile of Indigenous Australian composers, he was previously Head of Department in Aboriginal Visual and Performing Arts at the Eora Centre, an Indigenous Tertiary College in Sydney for 23 years. An extension of that work is now the *Ngarra-burria* First Peoples Composers program, a program for the creative and professional development of Indigenous Australian composers, of which he is founder and director. He also plays a part as a composer mentor for young Australian composers with Artology.

In 2020 he won an Australian music leadership award – the inaugural APRA National Luminary Award – in acknowledgement of his work in the profiling of First Nations composers and effecting a much-needed change in the landscape of the classical and new music industries in Australia, namely establishing the commissioning and programming of First Nations composers. In 2022 the program received international industry endorsement at the *Classical:NEXT* conference (the largest industry gathering of classical and new music professionals in the world) where it won the *Classical:NEXT* Innovation Award.

The composer writes:

The double bass is capable of certain dexterity, and it is also capable of song – yet we don't often hear song from an instrument like the double bass. Essentially *From the Deep* is a song from the deep instrument, being the double bass.

This piece was originally written for Max McBride, Principal Double Bass of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. In 1988 I was commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra in which Max had to play a couple of nasty intervals that I had thrown at him, and was impressed that he was willing to sink his teeth into it. Working with him again on this piece was a nice full-circle moment.



Christopher Sainsbury

ABOUT THE MUSIC

HOLLIS TAYLOR and JON ROSE

Palm & Rags (2025)

World Premiere

Commissioned by Ensemble Offspring and Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Violinist/composer, zoömusicologist, and ornithologist **Hollis Taylor** is Research Fellow at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Previous research fellowships include the Institute for Advanced Study (Berlin) and the Museum of Natural History (Paris). Taylor performs her (re) compositions of avian songs on violin along with her field recordings and also rethinks pied butcherbird repertoire for other human instruments and voices.

Central to her compositional ethos is to celebrate avian achievements rather than adding human ‘improvements’. In addition to her double CD, *Absolute Bird*, and monograph, *Is Birdsong Music?*, she is also author of *Post Impressions: A Travel Book for Tragic Intellectuals*, which documents Jon Rose and herself bowing fences throughout Australia. Her book of notated songs of the pied butcherbird, *Music from Another Species: Australian Birdsong Transcriptions*, will be released later this year.

Jon Rose’s primary life’s work is *The Relative Violin*: the development of a total artform based around the one instrument – it includes innovation in the fields of new instrument design, environmental performance, new instrumental techniques, radiophonic works and the development of interactive electronics. He is featured regularly in worldwide festivals of new music, jazz, performance and sound art.



Hollis Taylor

Rose has appeared on over 100 albums and CDs and worked with many of the innovators and mavericks in contemporary music, such as Kronos String Quartet, Derek Bailey, Alvin Curran, Otomo Yoshihide, Ilan Volkov, Christian Marclay and John Zorn. In 2012 Jon was honoured with the Australia Council’s Don Banks Award for lifetime achievement and contribution to Australian music. His book about the state of music today, *Music of Place: Reclaiming a Practice*, was published by Currency House Press (2013). He curates his own violin museum of 1,000+ artefacts – The Rosenberg Museum.

Hollis Taylor writes:

Thirteen million years ago, pied butcherbirds separated from a common Corvid ancestor and evolved a preference for song. The ancient lineage of the butcherbird reminds us that humans are new on the block vis-à-vis the invention and perception of melody. In spring, each bird performs nocturnal long songs of one to seven hours in duration. No two individuals sing alike, and songs transform annually with new variations and motifs.

In some of our birdsong (re)compositions, human musicians play a detailed transcription (usually simplified) of a birdsong, or complement the recorded birdsong with various strategies such as melodic inversion, augmentation, transposition and counterpoint. This work is a mix of both strategies, and the original bird field recording is heard in its pure state.

Palms and Rags features a Mparntwe/Alice Springs songster who performed on the corner of Palm Court and Ragonesi Road in 2014. The trio is scored for avian field recording, double bass, and bass clarinet.



Jon Rose at The Stone, NYC, 2013

YOUR HANDPICKED COCKTAIL HOUR

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Regional Selections DOC Prosecco

Pale light-yellow with a delicate, complex bouquet of peach, green apple and lemon, intertwined with floral and Mediterranean notes. Fresh and soft on the palate with a delicate creamy foam and balanced acidity. Grapes are gently pressed and fermented at a controlled temperature before blending for secondary fermentation.



Trial Batch Murray River Vermentino

A light and lively Vermentino featuring fresh citrus and pear flavours with a hint of bitter almond. Partial skin fermentation adds texture, while its bright acidity makes it a refreshing match for various foods. Originating from northern Italy and the islands of Sardinia and Corsica, Vermentino embodies Mediterranean charm.



Regional Selections Yarra Valley Chardonnay

Embark on a sensory journey with this Yarra Valley Chardonnay, boasting vibrant aromas of fresh citrus and stone fruit delicately mingled with hints of oak. On the palate, crisp acidity accentuates the bright fruit flavours, complemented by a creamy texture that adds depth and complexity. The result is a harmonious balance of fruit expression and meticulous winemaking, culminating in a clean, refreshing finish.



Regional Selections Barossa Shiraz

Bursting with aromas of ripe blackberry, sweet cherry and vanilla, intertwined with hints of mixed spice and roasted nuts. The palate indulges in the supple texture and juicy flavours, showcasing fleshy richness and a silky-smooth flow. This classic vintage is a testament to the ideal ripening conditions, resulting in outstanding quality fruit with vibrant colour and intense flavour.



Regional Selections Yarra Valley Pinot Noir

With tangy cherry fruits, fresh basil and a hint of menthol, this wine tantalizes the palate with its vibrant flavours and impeccable balance. Awarded an impressive 95 points by James Halliday, this wine is a true standout of the vintage. From the cool weather to the slow flavour accumulation, every element contributes to the allure of this remarkable wine.

Handpicked is delighted to offer Sydney Symphony supporters a 15% discount on online wine purchases.

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

BRENDA GIFFORD (born 1968)

Mungala (Clouds) (2018)

Composed for Claire Chase as part of the Composing Women Program at the Sydney Conservatorium and subsequently co-developed with Lamorna Nightingale and Claire Edwardes of Ensemble Offspring

The composer writes:

Mungala is the word for clouds in composer Brenda Gifford's Yuin country, the South Coast of NSW. The music evokes the experience of watching the clouds build across the sea from a clifftop at Wreck Bay. The clouds dance across the sky bringing thunder and then the relief of gentle rain.

NARDI SIMPSON

Burruguu (Time of Creation) (2020)

Commissioned by Ngarra-Burria

Nardi Simpson is a Yuwaalaraay storyteller and performer living in Sydney. Training as a musician, Nardi began her artistic journey as a songwriter and performer with vocal duo Stiff Gins. This has seen her travel both nationally and internationally for over twenty-five years releasing four albums, two singles, an EP and countless compilations during that time.

Nardi was a winner of the 2018 *Black & Write!* Fellowship for a manuscript that would eventually become her first novel, *Song of the Crocodile*. Published in 2020 by Hachette Australia, *Song of the Crocodile* won the 2021 ASAL Gold Medal and was long listed for the 2021 Stella Prize and Miles Franklin Awards. Nardi's second novel the *belburd* was published by Hachette in October 2024.

Nardi continues to perform with Stiff Gins, works with student ensembles and directs cross-cultural choir Barayagal at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. She is also currently undertaking a PhD with the ANU School of Music. Whatever the creative project in front of her, Nardi remains committed and active in the making and sharing of culture, music and story in both her Sydney and Yuwaalaraay communities.



Nardi Simpson. Photo courtesy Sydney Opera House/Jaimi Joy.

The composer writes:

Burruguu is the Yuwaalaraay word for 'Time of Creation.' I am playing with this concept as not only a musical reference to the beginnings of Aboriginal time (the Lore, the dreaming or everywhen), but also an embodiment of the immediate point of musical creation, allowing space for the ensemble to create within the piece. Ngarra-Burria brings the final piece to this puzzle; its continued growth and development, a promise to the future. *Burruguu* is all around us, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

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Tom Farmer
Production Manager
Elissa Seed
Production Manager
Jacinta Dockrill
Production Administrator
Shanell Bielawa
Production Coordinator

ORCHESTRA MANAGEMENT

Aernout Kerbert
Director of Orchestra Management
Brighdie Chambers
Orchestra Manager
Emma Winestone
Orchestra Coordinator

PEOPLE & CULTURE

Daniel Bushe
Director of People & Culture
Rosie Marks-Smith
Head of Culture & Wellbeing
Yen Sharratt
People & Culture Manager
Keanna Mauch
People & Culture Coordinator
Sue Burnet
Work Health & Safety Specialist

Keep the conversation

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