

# Senza Sord

WINTER 2025







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Cover: Concertmaster Kate Suthers directing  
the ASOL in Renmark.

Photo: Italo Vardaro

Left: QSO in St Stephens Cathedral – Mozart C minor Mass.

Photo: Sam Muller

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# OVERTURE

## **Tania Hardy-Smith**

Cello, Orchestra Victoria

Hello everyone

Finally, an issue for winter 2025!

We have a report from the International Federation of Musicians (FIM), attended by Lachlan Bramble, Sydney Braunfeld, Will Framer and Paul Davies. It's great to see SOMA's participation in this important forum is ongoing.

There's a great contribution from Lachlan about why our union is so important to our wellbeing and why it has been crucial to our survival through the years since its inception in 1996. Thanks Lachlan – it's incredibly worthwhile to keep revisiting this aspect of our strength and why our collegiality and co-operation will continue to keep our orchestras healthy and ongoing.

A feature piece from Shefali Pryor is a lovely interview with Diana Doherty, who has retired from the SSO. I remember fondly our times together in Rantos Collegium at the Spoleto Festival in 1987. How time has flown... All the best Diana for the next phase!

There is a new section now for Departures, Retirements and Obituaries. My apologies in advance if anyone has been left out of the inaugural list! Please keep this in mind if you're contributing to future issues – many agreed it was important to recognise our colleagues for their incredible contribution to the music and to our player cohort over so many years.

I will aim to have another issue of our magazine out before Christmas, so please get in touch if you would like to make a contribution to the next edition, either in words or pictures.

All the very best

Tania



Tania, Diana and Hannah Forsyth (Viola) on the viaduct. Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto, 1987.



# So, what has the union ever done for us?

**Lachlan Bramble**

President, SOMA

Or so the trope goes. But the reality is that we are the union, and the union is us. Together we build our union and through it, our future. Orchestral musicians, working collectively have fought for, won and defended...

- Secure and tenured employment.
- Working conditions that support music making at the highest level.
- Rates-of-pay that are significantly above the award.
- Workplace consultative committees with strong influence.
- Legally enforceable collective agreements, negotiated by and for the musicians.
- A fair audition and recruitment process, run by the musicians.
- Procedures to ensure safe workplaces for musicians.
- Allowances to support our concert dress, instruments, car parking and travel.

- Generous leave entitlements for a healthy work/life balance.
- Moral rights and royalty payments from our recordings.

And through our union we influence politics and policy, advocating for proper recognition and funding for our artform. But there is more work to be done and it doesn't happen by magic. What comes next is up to us. We need YOU to help improve the working conditions for musicians, make our orchestras safer, stamp out dodgy gigs and raise the profile of orchestral music in the community.

To become a member of MEAA-SOMA or get more involved, speak to your local delegate or email [members@meaa.org](mailto:members@meaa.org)



*Tutti con forza!*



# REPORT ON THE 5th FIM INTERNATIONAL ORCHESTRA CONFERENCE

**Lachlan Bramble**  
President, SOMA

**The International Federation of Musicians (FIM) brings together unions representing musicians from over 70 countries including Australia. FIM's 5th International Orchestra Conference was held in Malmö, Sweden in October 2025. The MEAA-SOMA delegation representing Australian orchestral musicians was Paul Davies, Sydney Braunfeld, Lachlan Bramble and Will Farmer.**

Like many orchestral musicians, I cherish memories of my time playing in youth orchestras. There is something very special about sharing this musical coming-of-age with your new, like-minded and very excitable friends. The whole apparatus of a youth orchestra exists for one reason – the benefit of the musicians. Rehearsals, concerts, the conductors, tutors and repertoire are carefully chosen to contribute to meaningful and even life-changing experiences for the young musicians.

When I started working professionally it gradually dawned on me that this was no longer the case – the musician was no longer at the centre of the universe.

This was particularly stark in the trenches with the ever-friendly Orchestra Victoria. We were in the dark pit and the more important performers were on the stage.





This whole ballet thing was not put on for my benefit, that was for sure. But what a spectacle and joy for the public!

Now that I am older and maybe a touch wiser, I understand that professional orchestras exist in Australia because they are considered by their supporters and thankfully our governments (up until this point) as essential pieces of cultural infrastructure. Building and articulating the public interest case for government and other support is existential.

Interestingly, the public interest case for orchestras didn't rate much of a mention in the conference's opening session of FIM's International Orchestra Conference on how orchestras can modernise. Panellists were guest CEOs from European orchestras and concert halls. The usual discussion ensued on how our traditional

audiences are becoming a demographic minority in our communities, yet it is conservative music that fills our halls.

Many of the speakers were enthusiastic about tapping into the energy and expertise of the musicians in their organisations.

Indeed, keynote speaker Beat Fehlmann, a conductor from Germany described a radical new approach. In his orchestra, creativity is shared and decentralised to the extent that musicians spend 20% of their work time developing ideas for projects and repertoire. It is apparently very popular with the musicians who relish the additional agency and more naturally become ambassadors for their artform.

Perhaps this is the underlying thinking underpinning these initiatives – that by opening up the traditional hierarchical

structures of orchestras, orchestras will naturally open themselves to the more diverse society that surrounds them.

I hope at some point the orchestras think to ask the diverse societies what they want.

Diversity and inclusion were front-of-mind for many delegates when discussing how orchestras recruit their members. In some ways, orchestras and their (somewhat) blind process for auditions have led the way. In what other industries are appointments made with such carefully thought-out processes that values anonymity so highly?

Many of us though are becoming increasingly aware of how deeply entrenched our systematic biases are regarding race, gender and other protected characteristics. These processes however don't magically fix unconscious biases, and they don't address the barriers to participation that exist right through the career pathways. There is wonderful work being done by organisations such as Black Lives in Music (UK) and partner organisations from which we could learn a great deal.

But as we heard in the previous session on the future of orchestras and have no doubt experienced for ourselves, the orchestra of the future might very well rely on musicians' roles broadening well beyond just playing the notes.

**Some orchestras are proactively seeking the musicians with the so-called 'soft' skills. Interviews are creeping into audition processes in the search for the ideal candidate with leadership and communication skills.**

As orchestral players and unionists, we all know how great it is to work with colleagues who are team players. But what about

musicians who are skilled presenters, have experience working with special needs children, are geniuses at concert programming or are powerful social media influencers? Such musicians might make excellent contributions to our orchestras but how do we balance those additional skills against their playing skills?

Or should we?

Can we conceive of an audition system that on the one hand can overcome the systematic discrimination that has been part of classical music since forever, and on the other, identify musicians with a broad skill set that will thrive in and build the orchestras of the future? For me the practicalities of these two noble goals are at odds, but it is so important that we explore ways to resolve them. Perhaps we will find that they are not as diametrically opposed as they seem.

Sadly, bullying and harassment remains a problem in orchestras. I'm not aware of any statistics that show it to be worse than any other workplace but, as delegates heard from an excellent panel discussion, the power imbalances in orchestras and the intimacy of performing music together can make our musicians extremely vulnerable.

Delegates described the gender imbalance in leadership positions, teacher-student relationships and 'star' players or conductors behaving with impunity, as critical risk factors.

Actions being taken include training for union delegates and employees, including freelance musicians in the training, improved procedures for probation periods, improved frameworks for reporting and whistleblowing, the introduction of trained contact officers to the workplace and the development of union codes of conduct.





*Paul Davies, MEAA Campaigns Director, challenges the FIM conference delegates to consider the public interest case for orchestras.*

In a session on protecting musicians' minds and bodies, Dr Christine Guptill, a Canadian occupational therapist and oboist, described the rates of injuries in orchestras as 'shocking' – repetitive strain injury, mental health injury, trauma, hearing loss, focal dystonia and the list goes on.

One of the challenges we have as an industry is helping musicians readily admit they have a problem. Our job is to make what we do look easy, and showing vulnerability can be especially difficult for those with insecure work. Speakers encouraged us to promote a 'human' view of musicians, to pull back the curtain and show the public how hard our jobs really are. Injuries in sport are not stigmatised so why should they be in music? After all, we are athletes of the small muscles. Unionists in Belgium had big wins by striking over health and safety claims.

Those issues are now taken very seriously by management.

By this stage in the proceedings, our small MEAA-SOMA delegation was discovering the real benefits of a conference like this. All our problems are similar, but there are orchestras that handle certain things much better than others. It was apparent that entitlements which regulate work-life balance vary greatly around the world. It was fascinating to hear from the Japanese union delegate about the conflict between the Japanese work-ethic and traditional union values.

And it was surprising to contrast the poor leave entitlements of German orchestras with those of Norway. In Costa Rica, known as the friendliest country in the world, there is a big emphasis on emotional and spiritual health.



*The FIM delegation (minus Paul Davies) – Lachlan Bramble, Sydney Braunfeld and Will Farmer.*

We should be aware of campaigns for special leave entitlements for those undergoing fertility treatments, suffering a miscarriage and other reproductive health needs.

By day three and with the help of a lovely reception at Malmö City Hall the night before, the delegates were beginning to relax and get to know each other. What a perfect time to talk about solidarity. For me the energy and passion which came from unionists talking about unionism was well overdue. My notes say that “unionism is not about giving and receiving services, it is not about scattering the ashes, but passing on the fire”. I wish I could credit those inspiring words.

Hearing the lived experience of solidarity from delegates was equally stirring, particularly the stories of musicians taking collective action and strike action. The successes of these higher-risk strategies were always underpinned by sustained organising efforts, solid representative structures, a plan to win, and crucially the solidarity of the musicians.

But the session which had the longest queue of speakers at the microphones was that on freelance rights. I was grateful to present at this session and share the work we have

been doing in Australia to improve the working conditions for freelance orchestral musicians.

From the reaction it was clear that unions in some countries are doing this well and others are catching up. In the Netherlands where their right-wing government famously declared in 2012 that “culture is a left-wing hobby”, many permanent musicians were made part-time and are now competing with freelancers for the remaining work. In Japan,

freelancers do not have the same rates as permanent employees by law, but new legislation will provide better conditions across many industries. The American Federation of Musicians (AFM; representing musicians in the US and Canada) has built solidarity between freelancer and ongoing musicians with an “equal pay for equal play” campaign.

The conference was a great opportunity for the MEAA-SOMA group to observe the powerhouse unions from the orchestral epicentres in action. They had large delegations with experienced and confident delegates. Perhaps even more interesting though was the chance to meet musicians from countries where orchestras have a shorter history – places like Greece, Japan, India, Costa Rica and Kenya.

When it comes to building the social and political license for Australian orchestras, perhaps the most important lessons come not from Germany and the United Kingdom, but from places where orchestras struggle with their colonial legacy. In Kenya, where the population is largely indigenous with only a small proportion descendent from Europeans, the community and youth orchestra scenes are flourishing. We should ask how and why.



# SAME JOB, SAME RIGHTS?

## FREELANCERS PRESENTED AT FIM

**Lachlan Bramble**

President, SOMA

**This article is adapted from a presentation given at the 5th FIM International Orchestra Conference in Malmö, on 26 October 2024, in a session exploring whether freelance musicians can have the same rights as their permanently employed colleagues.**

Freelance musicians are essential to orchestras. Their artistry, adaptability, resilience and pride in their profession allows orchestras to be both functional and aspirational. A thriving community of freelancers sustains the musical ecosystem, without which orchestras could not survive.

Our unions have a moral obligation to support, organise and empower freelance members. In Australia, the Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Association (SOMA) has historically been poor at organising and representing freelance orchestral musicians. I hope we are at an important turning point.

I'm not a freelancer and I can't speak for freelancers, but what I can do is share where we have come from and what we are doing about it.

### **DO FREELANCE MUSICIANS HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS IN AUSTRALIAN ORCHESTRAS?**

No! We fall well short in many areas.

To highlight three:

**Superannuation.** Permanent musicians have negotiated extra employer contributions in many of our orchestras. Freelance musicians do not receive these.

**Allowances.** Musicians working casually are not entitled many of the allowances that permanent musicians receive.

**Pay.** In some Australian orchestras casual rates bear no resemblance to the salaries of permanent musicians and fall well short. In others the casual loading is between 20-25% which barely covers the basics (sick leave and annual leave), let alone compensating for the insecure nature of work. For example, in my orchestra a freelance musician working 250 calls a year earns \$42k/year which is two-thirds of what a salaried musician would receive. It is not a liveable income.

### **SO, HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?**

SOMA was conceived as a way to effectively organise a permanently employed, centralised workforce. Orchestras are comparatively easy to organise compared to other workforces,

with everyone working together at the same time in the same place with an inherent collective spirit.

When musicians came together and formed committees to represent their interest, they excluded freelance musicians. So, whilst we recruited freelance members to our union, they did not have a voice and could not participate in a meaningful way. This is equivalent to taxation without representation.

Unfortunately it is all too easy for permanently employed musicians to neglect the interests of freelance musicians, and this has played out over many years. The outcome is that freelance musicians, whether employed by the call or on fixed-term contracts were an afterthought in our collective agreements, missing out on key conditions.

#### **WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?**

We are doing what unions do best – organising! We are identifying the issues that are widely and deeply felt amongst freelance musicians, educating our members and potential members, developing a plan to win, acting collectively and recruiting along the way.

We are also building political structures to empower freelancers. Our union now has a working group made up of freelance activists supported by union staff.

#### **WHAT ARE THE KEY BATTLEGROUND?**

When SOMA surveyed freelance orchestral musicians, we discovered that their primary concerns are not necessarily the pay and allowances that I talked about earlier. They are even more foundational than that and include:

##### **Transparency of hiring practices.**

This is how freelancers experience job security (or lack of it) – knowing what work

is available/likely. Transparency means proper audition procedures for casual work and procedures for the fair engagement of musicians that minimises favouritism, nepotism and discrimination.

**Workplace safety.** We understand from Thursday's session how vulnerable freelancer musicians are to bullying and harassment.

**Representation.** Freelance musicians must have a strong voice in their union, both in orchestral committees and at the national leadership level.

#### **HAVE WE BEEN SUCCESSFUL?**

We are building momentum within our union and there have been some positive developments so far. Freelance issues are becoming more front-of-mind for all our members and our employers too. Together we are making some gains in working conditions for freelancers, increasing pay and improving the transparency of hiring practices.

As part of the process, we are developing templates of organising and bargaining strategy that get results.

#### **INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS?**

Freelancers telling their stories is essential. Only freelancers can speak with authenticity about their experiences of work. Having freelancers at the bargaining table was a game-changer for us. Equally, having freelancers present and vocal at union meetings helps other members understand their challenges. Support from established union leaders is also important.

**Freelancers need allies who have influence amongst the permanent members. But most importantly, freelancers need to own their wins, and we all need to celebrate with them.**



## THE CHALLENGES?

Identifying and empowering union leaders amongst our freelance members is a process that takes time. The insecure nature of the work makes it harder for freelance musicians to commit to union activism. Freelancers can also be vulnerable. Being identified as an activist or union “troublemaker” can have real consequences.

Sometimes there can be resistance from permanently employed musicians to freelance musicians having a voice in our union. Some feel threatened but most know that solidarity with marginalised groups is a core union value.

Most also understand that a better deal for freelancers is better for everyone long term – for everyone’s job security and for the music.

## AND THE OUTCOMES?

In my orchestra during our latest round of contract negotiations we were able to agree on a transparent process for auditions of casual employment and a basic framework for how the work is offered, and win a 5% increase in the casual loading.

We did this by freelancers speaking authentically about their experiences and presenting their collective strength at the bargaining table.

At one point, the permanent members of the orchestra voted to accept a lower pay rise so that freelance musicians could have more. It was an emotional moment for our freelancer members when they saw the hands of their permanently employed colleagues raised in solidarity.

After all, we all play the same notes regardless of what contract we are on.



*UPDATE: since the time of writing, the SOMA National Executive has expanded to include two elected freelance representatives, though only three out of eight SOMA orchestras have freelance representation on their elected committees.*

# DIANA DOHERTY IN PROFILE AND CONVERSATION

## **Shefali Pryor, Principal Oboe**

Sydney Symphony Orchestra

In 2024 the SSO said a very fond farewell to our Principal Oboe, Diana Doherty, after 28 years in the orchestra. I was lucky to play in the section with Diana for 23 of those years and it's my great pleasure to write a few words in celebration of her tenure.

Diana's contribution to the orchestra and to the broader Australian musical and oboe playing landscape has been so huge that I really don't know where to start. She is a giant on the world oboe scene, a trailblazing musician and role model for so many. She recorded numerous CDs, was a highly active chamber

musician and performed as soloist with all of Australia's state orchestras and many others internationally. In her role in the orchestra Diana was endlessly committed, taking even the most mundane of orchestral duties seriously. She felt the weight of responsibility that came with the job and gave her all to every aspect.

But for me, above all of that, I think it is her generosity, care and friendship that mean the most to me as I look back and the way her approach fostered teamwork and camaraderie within the oboe section, shaping the way we will work for years to come.

So, to avoid gushing any further, I decided to sit down and chat with my dear friend Diana over a cuppa and cinnamon scrolls about her life as an oboist, juggling family and career, reflections on her time in the orchestra, and what's to come.





*So, let's start with some stats... during your time in the orchestra you played approximately 4815 calls and had over 20 separate solo engagements. How do those numbers make you feel?*

Wow! That makes me feel really privileged, just to have had all of those opportunities. The thing is, if you have the chance to do something, then by doing it you learn and make progress at it. So, imagine if we all had those opportunities to play concertos in the orchestra, how much we'd all grow in that respect! It just makes me feel really fortunate.

*Within those concerto performances, you had three highly successful commissions from Graham Koehne, Ross Edwards and Nigel Westlake. Do they hold a special place in your heart?*

Yes. I think that with this too, having had the opportunity to do it several times and to be part of the collaboration process, each time I felt more comfortable. For me the Westlake, being the most recent, I feel "Ah!". I guess it's the freshest in my mind. Now I look back at the others and perhaps I wish I'd been brave enough to say this or that. But at the same time, it wasn't my piece, so my role was to

represent what the composer wanted to the best of my ability. Hindsight always helps, but it's also kind of irrelevant as well.

*Going back to the beginning, you come from a very large family. How did your upbringing influence your decision to become a musician?*

Music was clearly valued in the household and therefore a good way to get some attention! Plus, there was no TV til was ten. All my big brothers and sisters played something as well as piano, and Dad played piano every day. Even if you weren't playing it yourself, someone in the house was and the radio was on as well. So it was a case of just jumping on the bandwagon I guess.

*Who were your big musical inspirations?*

There are too many to list somehow... and each of them are tied to a different context or moment in time. I guess overall, Holliger has been a constant though, not only as an oboist but as an artist.

*You spent many years studying and working in Europe. Thinking back to when you decided to return to Australia, what made you consider the SSO as the next step in your career path?*

I spent ten years overseas and didn't seriously consider coming back until Alexandre and I had our first baby, Julie. I got very homesick then, which made me see the SSO job opportunity in a different light.

*After making the move back to Australia, was it what you expected? How did it meet/differ to your expectations?*

The first year was very hard actually. Both of us had new jobs, a toddler, a whole lot of life admin to do with the move, finding a place to live etc, and Alexandre's English wasn't as strong then as it is now so a lot of the official paperwork fell on me. Living in a big city for the first time, no family nearby to help

out with childcare – we loved it and always felt it was the right move, but that first year was stressful!

*You had two children, a flourishing solo career and a high stakes orchestral job – how did you juggle it all?!*

Messily!! I could never pretend that it was easy or smooth sailing.

*Do you have any particular strategies for dealing with pressure? Pre-concert rituals?*

The first that comes to mind is the “picket fence!” mantra that I used to share with fellow working mum Katie Hewgill. Basically, it's a reminder of what really matters – your family, a rewarding life as a hopefully good human – and that whatever happens or stresses you onstage, you have that core to go back to.

*Have you noticed any particular changes in the orchestra over the time you were a member?*

Yes, definitely. What really strikes me is that it actually never stays the same. If you think of it like a plant, or some kind of living organism, there's always a process of natural attrition and natural growth. The reforming, the regenerating and the recalibrating...that's happening all the time on a very small level in the playing, with the audience, with the repertoire and with the administration. So, I think that was the most helpful way for me to look at it, that it's actually just always changing. It's not that you have to adapt to change, but that change is the natural state somehow.

*Thinking back on the conductors you worked with, were there any highlights/favourites?*

There were some really good ones, but I think I was too easily intimidated by conductors who were very famous or authoritarian and preferred the ones who were more down to earth and collaborative. Yannick Nezet-Seguin, for example – he's super famous now, but back when he came out to Sydney he was



so young and already such a good person and good musician. Those are great memories.

*What was your favourite music to play in the orchestra?*  
Brahms.

*What's the funniest thing that ever happened on stage?*

Once Alex and I accidentally swapped oboes backstage right before starting Schubert Nine. I felt so strange in the first movement, then realised just as the second movement intro started, but he was sitting 4th (doubled woodwinds), too far away to change back. When we were finally able to swap back in the short break between second and third movements, it was very difficult for all four of us to continue playing because of laughing.

*I think for so many musicians and oboists around the world, to think of Diana Doherty is to think of an extraordinary legacy in Australian music making and oboe playing. How do you feel about that legacy?*

*Do you feel proud or is it special to you?*  
Kind of?! Honestly, I try not to think about it too much. Because, authentically, you're just trying to do your best and how it's received is out of your control. What you *can* control is where it's coming from, what you're trying to do, and are you being honest and authentic with yourself and with your reasons for doing things? What people make of that and how it's remembered doesn't change that. It's not actually the truth. The truth is your intention and what you do. So I try not to think about it, to be honest.

Every time I watch the tennis and they say "this is the 16th time that someone has come back from 5-0 in the 4th set etc etc..."



Callum Hogan, Shefali, Alexandre Oguey and Diana.

I just don't know why they would be bothered finding statistics like that. And then they ask the question "did you feel under pressure that this was potentially your 19th Grand Slam blah blah blah..."

Man, if you thought of those things you just wouldn't walk out there!

*Speaking of useless statistics, I've one for you. I did some maths and calculated that over your 28 years and 4815 calls with the orchestra you spent approximately 321 hours playing an A for the rest of the orchestra. Which equates to 13.375 days of 24 hr A or 40 working days of 9-5 non-stop A. After all this time, how do you feel about the note A? (...laughter, lots of...) Still room for improvement! Actually, it's probably feeling a little neglected these days, as it doesn't get as much attention as it used to. But I don't mind it! There are notes that I like less, in spite of that extreme familiarity...*

*What are you enjoying most about life after the orchestra?*

Time to really immerse myself in the repertoire I'm working on – spacing out rehearsals, letting it all really sink in and settle and to live a bit without the oboe too.

*Do you miss us??*

As people, absolutely, but I'm sorry to say, though I loved the job, I don't miss it. I did it for a long time and feel very lucky to have had the privilege of doing it, but I feel very good about moving on.

Ah well, I could but try... You're welcome back any time DD! But we wish you huge love, luck, congratulations, and thank you!

# ANN AXELBY

## VIOLINIST & ACTIVIST

### **Lachlan Bramble**

President, SOMA

Originally from Queensland, Ann Axelby joined the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (ASO) and the Players Association Committee in the early 80s. Never one to take a back seat, she soon found herself merchandising for the orchestra selling T-shirts and hoodies to audience members raising funds for an orchestral touring fund.

Ann has always been pro-active. In the late 90s she became politically active through the campaign to prevent uranium mining at Jabiluka on land belonging to the Mirarr people. When the position of Players President became vacant, Ann put her hand up, bringing her newly energised activist streak back to the orchestra. "Initially everyone giggled at me and my blue clipboard" Ann remembers.

The landscape Ann entered was a challenging one. ASO was the least funded of all the orchestras and without a concert hall. The orchestra was dealt a more serious

blow in 2005 when James Strong delivered his review of orchestras to the Federal Government entitled *A New Era*, but known as the infamous Strong Report. The report recommended downsizing the ASO, QSO and TSO with the slashing of 37 musicians' jobs, 19 of them from the ASO.

It was all hands to battle stations as the musicians of the ASO, QSO and TSO fought to save their orchestras through the first *Great Cities Have Great Orchestras* campaign. Ann was a central figure in building allies with government power brokers. She helped cabinet ministers Alexander Downer and Amanda Vanstone share our vision of a city with culture and art at its core and helped them understand that an orchestra is an investment and not an expense. Political lobbying worked in tandem with a large community campaign of leafletting, petitioning, busking and thousands of yellow bumper stickers.

The response from community was enormous with the orchestra receiving messages of solidarity from The Vienna Philharmonic and Sydney shock-jock Alan Jones.





The ensuing cabinet room revolt in support of *Our Orchestras* is one for the history books. Rumours of a post-it note reading “don’t do it” being passed along the front bench to Prime Minister Howard cannot be substantiated.

With her orchestra saved (for now), Ann continued building political allies. ASO was still the least funded of all the mainland orchestras and still without a concert hall. It was easy to convince musicians of the problem but harder to convince our management and Board to act. The Players Committee mapped the political scene in South Australia and made appointments to see influential MPs from all political persuasions. If managers or Board members asked nicely, they were allowed to join our delegation. This initiative let those in power hear directly from orchestral musicians and also energised the next generation of activists in the ASO.

The musical highlight of Ann's career was the 1998 Adelaide Ring Cycle conducted by the late Jeffrey Tate. She recalls fondly the gravitas through slow tempi that Jeffrey brought to the music. But being an activist brings a whole different flavour of excitement and drama to one's career. Ann was “reported” to the Board by one CEO, yelled at across Hindley Street by another, danced from dusk ‘til dawn at the Mars Bar with a third CEO and once received a marriage proposal from a conductor. You’ll have to ask her who!

When asked to reflect on what we as orchestral musicians could do to ensure bright futures for our orchestras, Ann described the importance of having pride in your orchestra. “Involve your orchestra in your whole of your life” she encourages. “Talking about your orchestra in your community is a wonderful form of activism”.

## Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

**Lachlan Bramble**, Associate Principal 2nd Violin

Bargaining is one of the most important things we do as unionists to improve the lives of our members and indeed all workers. Bargaining is hard and bargaining is time consuming. I wish I knew a way to make it go faster but I'd rather have it done right.

As you can probably guess, at the ASO we are at the tail end of a very lengthy bargaining period, the result of which are in-principal agreements on rates-of-pay, an increase to casual loading and AI protections. I'm itching to announce the details but that will have to wait until the agreement is finalised. Watch this space!

Acknowledging the work of Elise Chidiac and Sana Sheikh from MEAA, Sami Butler, Liz Collins, Natalie Maegraith and Linda Garrett who were right at the coal face in negotiations, and all the members who gave their time and energy at meetings, contributed their ideas and most importantly, their solidarity.

I wish some of the naysayers who dismiss opera as outdated and irrelevant could have seen *Innocence*, by the late Kaija Saariaho, at its Adelaide Festival performances this year with ASO in the pit. It was visceral, relatable, shocking and the kind of artwork that could



Photo: Bri Hammond

*ASO Principal Flute Kim Falconer with Slava Grigoryan at ASO's Light Song Festival.*



silence the critics of opera and opera funding. ASO musicians were proud to be a part of it. The only problem, with its multi-lingual international cast and endlessly rotating set, was the eye-watering cost.

Later in Mad March, ASO presented a two concert mini-festival curated by Cathy Milliken of music written by women. It was interesting to read the discourse at that time about the lack of gender diverse programming by US orchestras during their Women's History Month. ASO's positive contribution would have had us off the charts for that month but not so much for the rest of the year.

Since last *Senza Sord* there have been many comings and goings at the ASO. We welcome Kim Falconer (Flute), Andy Leask (Cello) and Shuhei Lawson (Cello)

whilst farewelling Ann Axelby (Violin) and Jane Collins (Violin). We also farewellled Simon Cobcroft (Cello) and Jono Coco (Double Bass) who have joined the SSO and MSO respectively.

Like in many orchestras, the audition Ferris wheel (or should that be roller coaster) is running at full tilt. Our union representatives, as always, are keeping watch over the process.

At the time of writing, the ASO have returned from a quick but enjoyable trip to the Riverland performing a lovely program directed by our Concertmaster Kate Suthers. And in a week or two we will immerse ourselves in Brahms for our first date with incoming Chief Conductor Mark Wigglesworth.



Photo: Adelaide Festival of the Arts

*The Adelaide Festival of the Arts production of the opera Innocence by Kaija Saariaho, with the ASO in the pit conducted by Clément Mao-Takacs.*



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# Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

**Mike Szabo** Principal Bass Trombone

The past year has seen periods of great upheaval and renewal here at the MSO, culminating in the hiring of Richard Wigley as CEO and Edgar Myer as Board Chair late last year. We feel like our Company has had a breath of fresh air with these and other new hirings and is now well-placed to face any potential challenges that might arise. Complimenting these moves, the MSO is returning to major International touring this year with a swing through Western Europe in August, culminating with a visit to the Royal Albert Hall and the Proms. We last played there in 2014 with our former Chief Conductor, Sir Andrew

Davis, a concert that was very memorable for all in attendance. We will visit this time with our current chief, Jaime Martin, and look forward to this trip as a symbol of our renewal.

Highlights of our season so far have been some wonderful collaborations with our chief conductor, including Mahler's Symphony No. 2 *Resurrection*, the rarely-performed complete *Daphnis and Chloe* ballet by Ravel, and the continuation of our Dvorak Symphony cycle, which we are recording on the LSO label. Please have a look out for some of our other offerings on the



Photo: Laura Manariti

Classic100



*First Voices*

LSO label, including Holst's *The Planets*, which we recorded late last year.

We are nearing the completion of bargaining for our 2025 EBA and look forward to a longer agreement which will begin in 2026. Big thanks go to our players' bargaining committee: Michelle Wood (President), Michael Pisani (Vice President) and Patrick Wong (Secretary).

We have quite a few personnel notes. Firstly, a long time stalwart of the 2nd violins,

Issy Wasserman, retired after many decades of service. We wish Issy well in his retirement!

Quite a few new musicians have joined our ranks here in Melbourne the past 12 months, including, Anna Skálová (Section First Violin), Aidan Filshie (Section Viola) and José Milton Vieira (Section Principal Trombone). Joining us for trials are Johannes Grosso (Section Principal Oboe), Jos Jonker (Associate Principal Second Violin), Emily Beauchamp (Section Violin), and Aurora Henrich (Section Double Bass).



*Winter Gala*



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# Opera Australia Orchestra

**Sydney Braunfeld** Principal Horn  
Secretary, SOMA

The OAO is ecstatic to announce our brilliant new concertmaster Matthieu Arama has passed his trial and formally accepted the position! Matthieu has relocated to Sydney after fourteen years as concertmaster of the *Opéra National de Bordeaux*, France's second largest opera house.

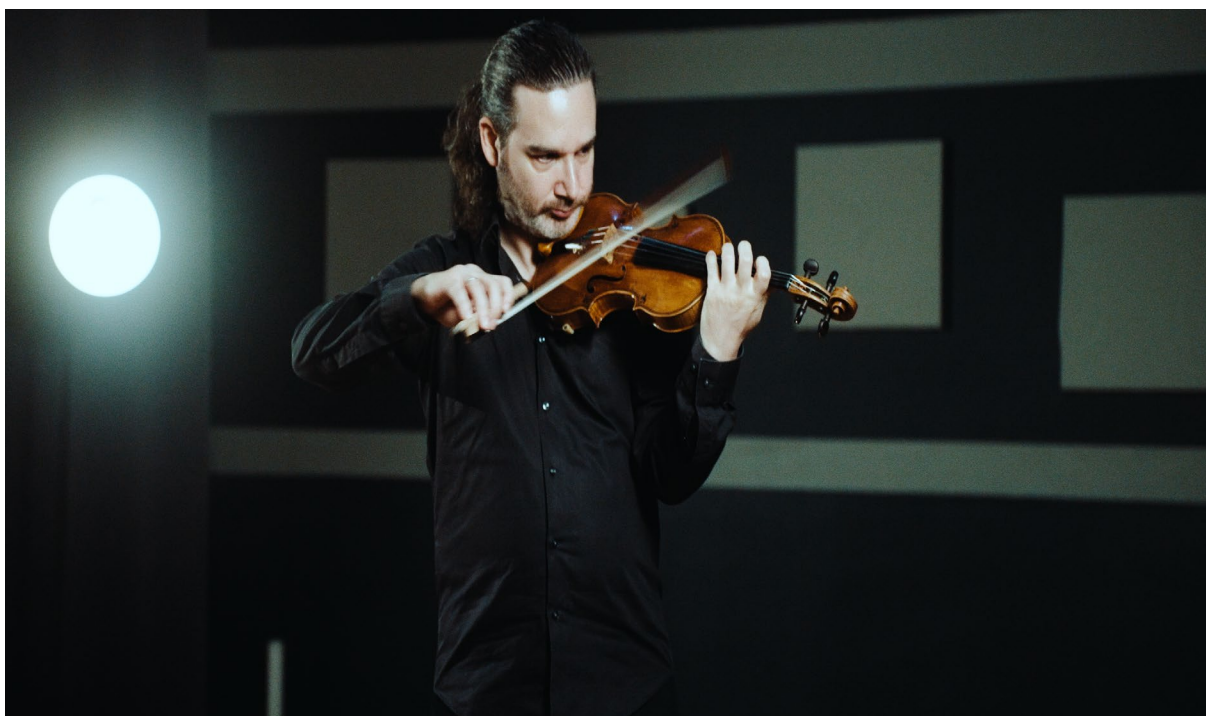
Given his extensive leadership experience, Matthieu's appointment is a major milestone in the long process of rebuilding our orchestra following the tumultuous covid-era redundancies.

Players have absorbed and responded to Matthieu's innate musicianship – we've been particularly inspired by his stellar performances of the Scheherazade solos in the *Nijinsky* ballet.

Special congratulations to OAO Principal Viola Virginia Comerford and Guest Associate Principal Viola Jacquie Cronin for their solo turn outside the pit, performing the Shostakovich Viola Sonata 3rd Movement in the *Nijinsky* ballet programme. Bravi Ladies!

Besides the unshakeable classics of opera/ballet repertoire such as *Tosca*, *Barber of Seville*, *La Traviata* and *Nutcracker*, the OAO has mounted several other noteworthy productions over the past year.

Brett Dean's operatic setting of *Hamlet* was challenging in every way, but very effective story-telling. Joby Talbot's brand new ballet *Oscar*, commissioned by



*Newly appointed OAO Concertmaster, Matthieu Arama*



The Australian Ballet, tells the colourful and devastating life story of Oscar Wilde. We thoroughly enjoyed playing Bernstein's comedic opera *Candide*, a crowd-pleaser starring three of Australia's most cherished show-stealers – Eddie Perfect, Lyndon Watts and Annie Aitken.

Another highlight this year was the vocal prowess of homegrown superstar Anna Dowsley in OA's recent production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* – featuring the extreme physicality and death-defying contortions of contemporary Australian circus ensemble *Circa*.

In March of this year, the OAO said a fond farewell to beloved harpist Jane Rosenson, whose ballet solos and feisty spirit will live on in our collective memories for years to come. Josh Clarke, our principal trumpet of 20 years has decided to put his considerable musical knowledge and people-skills to good use as Music Master at Sydney Grammar School.

The successful candidate in our recent Principal Percussion audition, Shanie Klas, begins her trial period in June this year and her arrival is highly anticipated. Warm official welcomes are in order for Ruben Palma (Cello), Dominic Azzi (Violin), and Lisa Osmialowski (Associate Principal Flute) who have all just passed their trials. And finally, Bethan Lillicrap joins us on trial in the role of Tutti Cello – we wish her and everyone currently on trial success this coming year!

On the industrial front, bargaining at OA is in full swing with all four departments deep into the negotiation process. At the behest of the Company, employee reps spent extra time and energy working within the Interest-Based Bargaining framework, a method intended to improve transparency and trust between embattled parties. Although some initial benefits were detectable, when the going got tough, all traces of IBB were abandoned as we reverted to the more entrenched tactics of fierce debate and occasional brick-throwing.



Farewell party for OAO Principal Trumpet, Josh Clarke (20 years service). L to R Craig Ross, Kendal Cuneo, Alexandra Bieri, Josh Clarke, Dominic Longhurst, Brian Evans, Dan Henderson and Colin Grisdale.

Complicating matters further have been the abrupt departures of CEO Fiona Allan and Artistic Director Jo Davies, leaving a vacuum of executive leadership and a somewhat rudderless opera company treading water, hoping for better times ahead.

The appointment of a high-profile Music Director who is well versed in the operatic lexicon is crucial to our mission – installing respected and inspirational people would have an immediate positive impact on employees' morale and faith for the future. We are hopeful that strong executive appointments will be made soon, so that high-level advocacy for the restoration of the OAO can resume.

The OAO has actually grown in size over the past few years from its low point of only 36 permanent players up to 45 full-timers. I still hesitate to call us an ensemble however, as our current configuration is still woefully understrength considering our busy performance calendar. Filling vacancies and rebuilding this great orchestra is player reps' number one priority and we're doing everything in our power make this happen.

In the meantime however, our forces are bolstered by an incredibly hard-working cohort of freelance musicians whose services we simply could not do without.



*Retirement celebration for OAO Principal Harp, Jane Rosenson (30 years service)*

We're particularly grateful to Nicola Bell, freelance oboe, for enthusiastically taking on extra duties as casual rep for the OAO. Nicola is also one of two freelance reps newly welcomed onto the SOMA National Executive committee this year.

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# Orchestra Victoria

**Tim Francis** Associate Principal Trumpet

The beginning of 2025 saw the approval of a new four-year Enterprise Agreement for Orchestra Victoria. The shift to a four-year agreement was requested so it would align with NPAPF (National Performing Arts Partnership Framework)

funding cycle. In the past, when bargaining in the middle of a funding cycle, the orchestra's management has been more hesitant to commit to financial changes that would cross over into a new round of funding due. Aligning with the funding



*Animateur Janet McLeod with Orchestra Victoria for the family concert Meet the Orchestra! In Shepparton*





*Orchestra Victoria with Conductor Ingrid Martin – Meet the Orchestral Shepparton Arts Festival*

cycle hopes to bring more predictability and allow for more regular financial commitments; i.e. pay rises, increases to casual wages etc.

Notable wins in our new Agreement are:

- The introduction of a danger money clause for those players called in at the last minute to perform a work they have not rehearsed.
- The creation of a new position Associate Principal Timpani/Tutti Percussion
- 10.4% pay rise over the life of the Agreement for both establishment and casual rates of pay

Musically, the year began with the Victorian Opera production of *Follies*. Audiences bore witness to some stunning performances from some of Australia's

great musical personalities – Marina Prior and Rhonda Burchmore to name a couple.

The Australian Ballet's *Nijinsky* (Neumeier) and *Carmen* (Inger) occupied the orchestra through February and March with audiences gladly filling the massive 2100+ capacity in the Regent Theatre to witness both of these stunning productions. In the education space, OV has seen another fruitful side by side collaboration with ANAM, this time combining the brass section and students from OV and ANAM for a performance under the baton of Fabian Russell.

Thanks to successful regional touring funding from the Victorian state government, the orchestra has commissioned and is currently in the final stages of developing a new

education work that will be taken on the road to region centres later this year.

The work, *Quest for Harmony*, is the brainchild of Tim Hansen. It aims to highlight and teach a number of links between music and maths. The work itself has been composed to require interaction from the students in the audience, bringing an element of live, personalised composition to each concert. OV will present this show in Bendigo, Gippsland, Hamilton and Warrnambool this year.

The orchestra's new rehearsal/ performance space, the Blackwood Box, in North Melbourne's Meat Market has finally opened. The OV/ANAM side by side and the orchestra's self presented concert, featuring newly appointed Section Principal French Horn Andrew Young as soloist, launched the space to our audiences.

Over the past year OV has bid farewell to a number of wonderful colleagues.

- Andrea Taylor (Tutti Cello) 45 years
- Chris Ruiter (Tutti Violin) 40 years
- Sarah Cumming (Tutti Cello) 32 years
- Stuart Riley (Section Principal Double Bass) 7 years

Our Associate Principal French Horn Evan Williams has also made the difficult decision to leave OV to return to his position in Germany with the Philharmonisches Orchester Würzburg. He will finish up with OV in August this year. Orchestra manager Louisa Stanway has returned to the UK due to family commitments after a brief period of employment with the orchestra.

We are extremely pleased to welcome a number of new musicians to the orchestra. Andrew Young joins us from the Luxembourg Philharmonic as Section Principal Horn and Tony Zhai is our new Principal First Violin, formerly a Tutti Violin with OV. Will Nichols

(Principal Harp) and Ben Messenger (Tutti French Horn) have recently begun their trials and Lyndon Watts (Section Principal Bassoon) will commence his trial in October. We are also holding auditions for Associate Principal Second Violin, Principal Piccolo, Associate Principal Timpani/Tutti Percussion, Section Principal Double Bass and Tutti Cello before the end of 2025.

OV and conductor Benjamin Northey are thrilled to have been recipients of the award for Outstanding Musical Achievement at the recent Green Rooms Awards for the 2024 Victorian Opera production of *Candide*. The Green Room Awards are Melbourne's premier, peer-presented, performing arts industry awards. Each year, the awards recognise outstanding achievements in Cabaret, Contemporary & Experimental Performance, Dance, Independent Theatre, Music Theatre, Opera and Theatre Companies.



Celli in *Candide*



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# Queensland Symphony Orchestra

**Viv Collier-Vickers** Tutti Horn

As is customary In the QSO reports, I begin with the announcement of our new CEO. Michael Sterzinger is well known to QSO having worked in the Artistic Planning Department of QSO for many years. Then in 2021 took over the Camerata, Queensland's Chamber Orchestra, as Executive Director.

He comes to us with a wealth of experience in the Arts and as a musician, beginning his journey as a Tuba player in the Bavarian Youth Orchestra. He has long been a part

of the QSO family and as it happens, he is also married to our Associate Principal Bassoonist, David Mitchell. So hopefully, with our collective fingers crossed, Michael has a successful and lasting relationship with the QSO and for that matter with his husband as well!

At our home venue of QPAC we performed some truly exciting concerts, including a world premiere with Circa, a presentation of *The Tempest* with the legendary John Bell, and a sold out performance with Nobuyuki Tsujii.



Nobuyuki Tsujii with QSO. Photo: Sam Muller



We were also lucky to venture beyond the concert hall throughout the year, performing everywhere from St Stephen's Cathedral to Fortitude Music Hall. It's a testament to the variety and diversity of concert offerings that we can celebrate St Stephen's 150th birthday with Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* and perform alongside Australian jazz/funk band The Cat Empire all in the same season.

We also continued our regional touring program, travelling to Gladstone's Marina GPC Stage and Toowoomba's historic Empire Theatre among others. We were also lucky to continue actioning our Reconciliation Action Plan, Waarma Piipa.

QSO Academy continues, with eight musicians developing real world skills in orchestral performance.

This year also marked the first QSO Academy member to earn a permanent spot in the orchestra, with Violist Ella Psyden. This is a real testament to the power of the academy, and how we hope it will continue to grow in the future.

Speaking of appointments, we had many exciting new members join us. Glen Christensen has completed his trial and is now officially our Associate Concertmaster, Gregory McNamara



Photo: Nick Hargans

Cat Empire and the QSO at the Fortitude Music Hall

and Ella Psyden both joined the viola section, and we currently have Julian Duthoit on trial for Assistant Principal Viola and Isaac Davis about to join us on trial for Associate Principal Cello respectively.

With appointments come retirements, and this year we've had some true QSO icons wrap up their time with us.

Thank you to Wayne Brennan for 35 amazing years, who's planning to spend his time on his other passion – chamber music and in particular the baroque violin.

We also say goodbye to Tim Marchmont, who after 26 years in Brisbane is hanging

up his bow and has plans to move to Spain (I really hope he does so I can crash his villa, please...)

There's also plenty to celebrate at QSO! Johnny van Gend introduced his baby boy into the world three months before his appointment to Principal First Violin with QSO. Originally a Toowoomba boy, we're proud to have lured him back where he belongs.

The marvelous Nicholas Thin got married, becoming Nicholas Penfold and we also had an orchestral engagement, with Ashley Carter proposing to Sonia Wilson in the QPAC foyer right before a concert.



QSO collaboration for the Waarma Piipa Reconciliation Plan. Photo: Persia Littlewood



The two fell in love as members of our orchestra, bought a house together, and will live happily ever after.

We are finally at the voting stage for our Enterprise Bargain negotiations and if all goes well, we will be back around the table for the next round. It seems to have taken a very long time for a one year agreement, however I think we have made some great progress. While we worked well with management and are gaining some good wins, of course there is still much work to be done.

We will continue to fight the good fight.



Photo: Sarah Marshall

*Retiring after 35 years; Section Principal Second Violin, Wayne Brennan.*



*Academy Musicians. Left to right: Luke Hammer [Violin], Jonah Spriggs [Violin], Hannah McLellan [Horn], Laura Cliff [Flute], Stirling Hall [Cello], Feliz Hughes-Chivers [Viola], Lisa Hall [Violin] and Alyssa Deacon [Bass]. Photo: Georgie McGrath*



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# Sydney Symphony Orchestra

**Alex Morris** Principal Bass Clarinet

As we head towards the halfway point in another very busy year I'm astounded by how much has already happened in 2025.

Our season kicked off, as usual, with our Symphony Under the Stars concert in Parramatta Park. Wild weather almost derailed the performance this year. Rehearsals ground to a halt the day before the concert, as rain and wind battered the outdoor stage. Fortunately, the day of the concert saw a break in the rain and a surprisingly resilient audience still came to enjoy the performance. Recently appointed Conductor-in-Residence, Ben Northey, led the orchestra through the performance confidently, despite losing valuable rehearsal time to the storms the day prior.

Ben takes a more substantial role at SSO beginning this year. His new title of Conductor-in-Residence brings with it responsibilities in conducting more

main stage performances, as well as our touring programs and some learning and engagement activities. We look forward to this exciting new chapter with Ben.

Simone Young returned to start the subscription season with Mahler's 3rd Symphony. Simone is making her way through Mahler's symphonies to start each year of her tenure as Chief Conductor. March also saw Simone lead the orchestra in music of Vaughan Williams and Elgar, including SSO Concertmaster Andrew Haveron as soloist in the beautiful Elgar Violin Concerto.

Regional touring is always a highlight of the year for me. As a kid growing up in regional Queensland I looked forward to any opportunity to hear professional musicians. SSO took multiple programs to venues around NSW, including an all brass program featuring the SSO brass



*2025 Sydney Symphony Fellows in concert Photo: Craig Abercrombie SSO*





Simone Young and SSO

section, an all strings run out and a full orchestra tour featuring Associate Concertmaster Alexandra Osborne as soloist in Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*.

Back in Sydney, the orchestra appeared as part of the Vivid Festival, supporting Icelandic post-rock band Sigur Rós.

Principal Guest Conductor Donald Runnicles is back for large scale works by Brahms and Richard Strauss and we look forward to the third instalment of our four year Ring Cycle with Simone Young, this year being *Siegfried*.

Our list of positions to recruit seems to be finally slowing down a little. Recent auditions have resulted in some appointments from within the orchestra. Associate Principal Oboe, Shefali Pryor, was appointed to trial following the Principal Oboe audition process. Lerida Delbridge was appointed to trial as Principal Second Violin, moving all the way from her seat in the first violin section! Lerida takes over from Marina Marsden who is stepping into a Principal Emeritus role within the second violin section. Anne-Louise Comerford is taking up an Associate Principal Emeritus Viola position.





SSO schools concert Photo: Craig Abercrombie SSO

Robert Smith was appointed to trial as Tutti Second Violin and Olli Leppäniemi has been appointed to trial as Principal Clarinet. Ongoing recruitment processes for Co-Principal Horn and Co-Principal Viola continue with multiple players doing short trials with the orchestra.

2024 saw the departure of Diana Doherty from the SSO. Diana played a huge part in the life and sound of our orchestra for many years, so much so that she is worthy of her own feature in this publication and who better to write it than her successor, Shefali Pryor.

Jane Hazelwood also retired from Sydney Symphony since my last update. Jane was a member of our viola section for over thirty years, so this is truly the end of an era, as Jane quite literally grew up with the SSO. Her father Don Hazelwood was Concertmaster of the orchestra and mother Anne Menzies was a member of the clarinet section.

We wish Diana and Jane all the best in their new endeavours!

Photo: Craig Abercrombie SSO



Tutti Double Bass Richard Lynn spots a camera pointed at him during a show



SSO Oboes – Diana, Callum Hogan, Shefali Pryor and Alexandre Oguey (Cor Anglais)



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# Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

**Tobias Chisnell** Violin

TSO's official season opener this year was a performance with violinist James Ehnes, of the Brahms Violin Concerto and Sibelius' Symphony No.1, conducted by Chief Conductor Eivind Aadland. We were fortunate to have Eivind here for five weeks and performed many concerts with the whole orchestra as well as smaller performances with the strings and brass sections.

The orchestra concluded his first stint of the year with a side-by-side with students from ANAM performing *Don Juan*, Suite No.2 from *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Four Last Songs*

and *Bolero*, which was a wonderful experience for all involved.

TSO has four different recurring concert series: the Federation Concert Hall Series, 6pm series, Obscura and Live Sessions. Each of these aims to create a different experience for the audience and features a variety of repertoire, instrumentation, venues and presentation styles. They are designed to appeal to different parts of our population and aim to overcome hesitancy around going to an orchestra concert for those who are inclined, but not experienced



*Symphony on the Waterfront*

with classical music. It is encouraging that we currently have management who are thinking about the artistic long-term with nuance, experimenting while preserving the excellence of our art and repertoire.

Though there are many opportunities in this approach, it is important to get the balance right between having the flexibility to do different types of productions while retaining our identity as a full symphony orchestra. Amongst our membership we feel strongly that full-orchestra performances are the essence of what we do.

Later this year we have performances such as the Australian debut of American mezzo-soprana Joyce DiDonato;

Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with Associate Concertmaster, Ji-won Kim and violinist Pekka Kuusisto in October; cellist Daniel Müller-Schott for the Elgar concerto in November; the world premiere of Richard Mill's *Fantastic Bestiary* (Double Bass Concerto) with Principal Bass Stuart Thompson; and a concert of the Berio *Sequenzas* with many of our principal musicians featuring dancers, experimental lighting and choreography from Graeme Murphy.

Alongside this we continue our regular work in staging education concerts everywhere around the state; a program for very young children *Mini-TSO*; and our work with both the Australian Conducting Academy and



Photo: Ben Raynor

Obscura with the Tawadros Bros



the Australian Composers School. We are also working on a long-term recording and concert project with Dewayne Everettsmith, a project that aims to produce the first ever Palawa Kani (Tasmanian Indigenous language) album.

We have been fortunate this year to fill important positions with some outstanding musicians. Mel Woodruffe has passed her trial and is confirmed as Principal Contrabassoon/ Tutti Bassoon. Fletcher Cox has passed his trial and is confirmed as Principal Trumpet. Jackson Bankovic is on trial as Tutti Trombone and Curtis Lau is on trial as Tutti Viola. We have also had Lily Bryant on contract as Principal Flute while Katie Zagorski is on maternity leave. Congratulations and many thanks to Lily for her wonderful playing.

We said goodbye to two well-loved members of our orchestra: Mitch Nissen, Principal Bass Trombone, resigned after six years of invaluable work as a principal musician and SOMA rep. Aurora Henrich, Tutti Double Bass, resigning after 10 years with TSO has gone to join the MSO as Tutti Double Bass. We wish them well.

Later this year TSO will hold auditions for the positions of Tutti Double Bass, Principal Bass Trombone, and Principal Oboe.

TSO's current EA runs until the end of March 2026. At the moment we are preparing for negotiations to begin in the second half of this year. We are well-supported by SOMA and the conversations, training and hard-won





Photo: Ben Raynor

*Dance Macabre concert with Jabra Latham (composer and saxophone) and conductor Elvind Aadland.*

experience of our fellow reps in their own negotiations will help us a lot.

Regarding the Macquarie Point Stadium proposal, this is progressing slowly with the support of the two major state parties. There is still a long way to go and there are possibilities for us to influence the process and lessen its impact on us. We are fortunate to have a CEO, Caroline Sharpen, who understands the political landscape and is working on mitigation strategies if we are affected.

Our concert streaming service, TSO On Demand, continues to improve and provides valuable exposure and engagement with our Tasmanian and Australian audiences and internationally through Symphony Live.



Photo: Caroline Tan

*Four Last Songs (Concert 2 with ANAM).*



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# West Australian Symphony Orchestra

**Melanie Pearn** Tutti Violin

The last months of 2024 saw WASO experience many 'last' time moments with the imminent closure of Perth Concert Hall for its redevelopment.

The initial proposal for construction was two years, however, as with all government building projects the timeline for completion continues to extend. We are hoping that WASO can return to the hall sometime in 2028 to coincide with our 100th anniversary.

Our original "farewell" performance was scheduled in September with Asher Fisch conducting Mahler's 8th Symphony with a variety of guests to augment our forces including students from ANAM for a side-by-side experience. This was the work's first performance in WA.

Fast forward to November/December, slowly all the furnishings were being removed from the building and the countdown was on for



*WASO's season opener in Winthrop Hall – Rach Pag with soloist Alexander Gavrylyuk.*





*Beethoven 5 at Winthrop Hall with Asher Fisch.*

WASO to bump out one last time. The final two weeks of subscriptions concerts were now intended as the last WASO performances, comprising a mini-Brahms festival with Vasily Petrenko conducting Brahms' Symphony No.2 and Asher Fisch conducting Brahms' Symphony No.4.

These final performances were quite an emotional occasion for many of our long serving musicians, since these may have been their last in Perth Concert Hall as members of WASO.

Due to some last-minute scheduling changes, WASO was able to accommodate *The Cat Empire* and performed three sold out shows for our final Perth Concert Hall performances. For the musicians involved it was a fantastic end of an era tribute and to see the hall pumping with an enthusiastic audience was a fitting finish.

WASO began 2025 with a number of performances in the wider Perth/WA

community. A run out to Bunbury and Mandurah with our Concertmaster Laurence Jackson directing and performing, our annual outdoor performance of light classics for the Town of Claremont and a run out to Rockingham for an outdoor offering of movie themes and pop/rock ballads.

WASO opened its main subscription series at Winthrop Hall, UWA in early March. We performed three full house performances, largely due to the inclusion of crowd favourites, Rach Pag (Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini), and Beethoven 5. A concert version of Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* rounded out the first two weeks of our new concert venue.

The acoustic of Winthrop Hall has been shrouded in doubt, however some acoustic alterations have been made, and surprisingly the experience did not resemble playing in an over-sized bathroom as feared. There are more alterations to come as the year progresses.





### *Mahler 8*

The early months of 2025 has also seen WASO musicians participate in over 40 Small Ensembles performances through our Education and Community Engagement programs. Community groups, schools, nursing homes and retirement villages all were privileged to performances of our musicians in a smaller context.

WASO's EBA expired in December 2024. Negotiations for its renewal began in November and it was clear management were looking for a swift bargaining period with the intention to wrap it up before we started annual leave. This resulted in many tabled items receiving limited or no discussion and many unanswered questions surrounding our working conditions during the Perth Concert Hall redevelopment.

An offer was made to the musicians and given the rushed circumstances, was voted down with a resounding negative vote. The EB committee will be returning to the negotiating table shortly to recommence the next round.

At the end of 2024, WASO farewelled two long serving musicians with over 70 years of service between them. Many thanks to Violinist Fleur Challen (37 years) and Tim South (36 years) for their enthusiasm and dedication to WASO.

WASO's newest recruits to pass trials are: James Munro (Viola), Jeremy Garside (Cello), Alex Isted (Principal 1st Violin), Sonia Croucher (Piccolo), Chloe Higgins (Tuba) and Jenna Smith (Section Principal Trumpet). Trials are currently underway for Tutti Violin and Tutti Cello.

Since our last instalment, WASO has welcomed two babies into its ranks during 2024. Alex Brogan (Assoc Principal Viola) and wife Wadzi welcomed Amelia in May and Brian Maloney (Section Principal Percussion) and wife Laura welcomed Ava in September. Congratulations to Giovanni Vinci (Tutti Double Bass) on his marriage to Eliza McCracken (freelance violinist) in January 2025. Wishing all of you the very best.

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# New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

**Lyndsay Mountfort** Viola

The NZSO report for the last edition of *Senza Sord* included news of the departure of the Board Chair, the CEO and the Senior Manager, Artistic Planning. Auckland barrister, Carmel Walshe, was appointed Board Chair by the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage in June 2024.

American Marc Feldman, formerly Executive Director of Orchestre National de Bretagne and before that of the Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra, joins NZSO as Chief Executive on May 19 2025, taking over from Acting Chief Executives Kirsten Mason and then Barbara Glaser. And Frances Moore, formerly of

Auckland Philharmonia and NZ Opera, started in the reconfigured role of Director, Artistic Planning early in 2025. Player representatives are preparing to participate in strategy discussions with the refreshed Executive team, commencing in late May.

Highlights of the latter part of 2024 included performing with three prominent violinists: Maxim Venerov in the Sibelius concerto with conductor André de Ridder, Augustin Hadelich in the Tchaikovsky concerto with Dima Slobodeniouk and Christian Tetzlaff in the Elgar Concerto with Gemma New.

Major projects in 2025 so far have included an eight centre tour of music by Handel, Telemann and Locke directed by Concertmaster Vesa-Matti Leppänen, the world premier performances of Guillaume Connesson's *Danses Concertantes: Flute Concerto no. 2*, with Royal Concertgebouw flutist Emily Beynon and Gemma New, and Rachmaninov 3rd Piano Concerto with Daniil Trifonov and Umberto Clerici.

A reprise of *Mana Moana, Songs of the Pacific*, a collaboration with Signature Choir in the Auckland Spark Arena was disrupted by a recent severe weather system. Wellington airport was closed by winds gusting in excess of 160kph. The show was saved by members of the Auckland Philharmonia, who joined the small NZSO contingent who beat the storm system and made it to Auckland. The Signature Choir will also take this programme to the Opera House with the Sydney Symphony in June, and bring it back to Wellington with the NZSO in July.

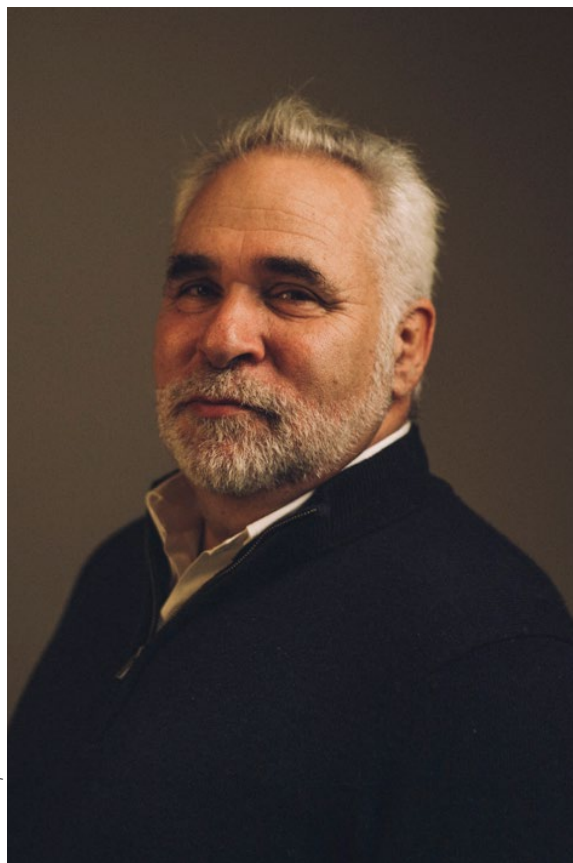


Photo: Stephane Lavoué

NZSO's new Chief Executive, Marc Feldman



The NZSO Education and Outreach programme continues to expand. The appointment of Animater Chris Lam Sam and the training work for musicians and staff with Rachel Leach (from the LSO) in 2024 have both proved very successful.

As well as lifting students' engagement at our orchestral schools programmes, Chris's work includes leading online sessions (introducing musicians and instruments to more than 12,000 kids and teachers in term one 2025), providing digital resources to 100+ schools, and training and leading groups of players delivering in-school composition workshops in primary schools in the lead up to tailored schools concerts that present music reflecting the same themes, helping kids understand and related to the music that they'll hear.

Other projects include side-by-side rehearsals, concerts for neurodivergent children and adults, *Storytime* (kiwi celebs read kiwi stories with bespoke scores by Claire Cowan, including a sign language described performance) and provision of video material for use in prisons.

A late addition to our outreach this year includes a pilot programme in collaboration with Blind Low Vision NZ Guide Dogs Training Division, giving access to pups and their trainers to rehearsals, during our *Setting Up Camp* Education and Outreach tours.

Two long-serving and much loved members of the orchestra have retired from the NZSO in 2025. Cheryl Hollinger, Associate Principal Trumpet Emeritus



Online classroom session with Chris Lam Sam and NZSO musicians.

has been with the orchestra since 2000. Her last performance with us was on March 2. Rachel Vernon, Principal Bass Clarinet joined the NZSO in June 1995. Rachel's last tour was with Umberto Clerici on April 10 and 11. Principal Harpist Carolyn Mills will retire on July 19. Carolyn has been with NZSO since 1989.

Vacancies exist in NZSO for Co-Concertmaster (trials continue), Tutti Second Violin, Tutti Cello (trial in progress), Tutti Double Bass, Bass Clarinet (successful audition held), Associate Principal Bassoon (trials underway), Contrabassoon (awaiting an Associate Principal appointment), Section Principal Horn, Principal 3rd horn and Principal Harp.

And finally, it is with great sadness and respect we note the passing of long-serving NZSO Section Principal Viola, Vyvyan Yendoll, on March 15 at the age of 84.

Vyv moved to Aotearoa from the UK in 1962 and became NZSO's principal viola two years later, retiring in 2009.

He was a flamboyant performer, a highly-respected and supportive friend and colleague, and a dedicated and inspiring teacher (including of many later members of his section).

His sense of humour also diffused many a tense moment in rehearsal, and sometimes in performance!



*Section Principal Viola, Vyvyan Yendoll in 1962*



*Vyvyan Yendoll*



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# Coda

## DEPARTURES

OAO **Josh Clarke** – Principal Trumpet  
OV **Evan Williams**, Associate Principal Horn

TSO – **Mitch Nissen**, Principal Bass Trombone

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## RETIREMENTS

ASO **Ann Axelby**, Violin – 43 years  
ASO **Jane Collins**, Violin – 40 years  
MSO **Issy Wassermann**, Violin  
NZSO **Cheryl Hollinger**, Associate Principal Trumpet Emeritus – 25 years  
NZSO **Rachel Vernon**, Principal Bass Clarinet – 30 years  
NZSO Principal Harpist **Carolyn Mills** will retire on July 19 – 36 years  
OV **Andrea Taylor**, Cello – 45 years  
OV **Sarah Cuming**, Cello – 32 years

OV **Chris Ruiter**, Violin – 40 years  
OV **Stuart Riley**, Double Bass – 7 years  
QSO **Wayne Brennan**, Section Principal Second Violin  
OAO **Jane Rosensen**, Principal Harp – 30 years  
SSO **Diana Doherty**, Principal Oboe – 28 years  
SSO **Jane Hazelwood**, Viola – 30+ years  
WASO Violinist **Fleur Challen** – 37 years  
WASO **Tim South**, Cello – 36 years

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# Final Note

## VALE

NZSO Section Principal Viola, **Vyvyan Yendoll** passed away aged 84

OV **Mary Anderson**, Principal Harp

### WASO JOHN DEAN – AUGUST 16, 2024

WASO is saddened by the passing of Emeritus Musician, John Dean. John was a valued colleague and much-loved member of WASO for 33 years.

Following in the footsteps of his father Horace Dean (WASO violinist from 1942 to his retirement in 1969), John joined the Orchestra in the violin section before moving to the viola section when a permanent position became available in 1956. He held the position of Principal Viola from 1970 to 1989 and is the longest serving Principal Viola in WASO's history.

### WASO LES CROCKFORD – OCTOBER 1, 2024

Les Crockford was a valued member of the WASO viola section and shared a stand with the late John Dean during

the 1970s. Following his playing career, Les continued his association with WASO as a sound technician for the ABC.

### WASO WALTER HAASS – DECEMBER 15, 2024

WASO is deeply saddened by the passing of Walter Haass, our cherished piano technician for over three decades.

Walter was not just a master of his craft, he was a beloved member of our WASO family. With his meticulous attention to detail, unwavering professionalism and gentle spirit, Walter ensured that every pianist who worked with the orchestra performed on an instrument that inspired and enabled their artistry.

The West Australian once wrote, "Perth technician Walter Haass is the maestro the audience never sees." His work, though unseen by most, was profoundly heard by all. For audiences, performers, and conductors, Walter's finely tuned pianos were the foundation of unforgettable musical moments.



# Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance SOMA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (PLEASE USE BLOCK LETTERS)

THIS AUTHORITY WILL REMAIN IN FORCE UNTIL CANCELLED BY ME IN WRITING

A MEAA Member

Surname ..... First name .....

Title (eg Mr / Ms / Mrs) ..... Gender ☐ F ☐ M ☐ Other Date of birth .....

I am an Australian citizen/resident ☐ Yes ☐ No

Home address .....

Suburb ..... Postcode .....

Email ..... Mobile .....

I was previously a member of MEAA ☐ Yes ☐ No

Employment status ☐ Permanent ☐ Casual / Freelance Employer/ Orchestra .....

What is your role? .....

Do you work in any other MEAA workplaces? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, where .....

## PAYMENT METHOD - PLEASE INDICATE EITHER OPTION ONE OR TWO

### OPTION ONE - PAYROLL DEDUCTION ☐

For permanent musicians to have their fees deducted in the weeks that they work for the nominated orchestra where payroll deduction is available.

I hereby authorise the pay officer to make deductions from my pay for MEAA membership fees for the weeks that I work and in accordance with the appropriate scale as advised to the pay office by the MEAA each year.

### OPTION TWO - DIRECT DEBIT ☐ For credit card/debit card deductions

I instruct MEAA to deduct my membership fees (tick one): ☐ Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ 4-Weekly

Credit card ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

Card number \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Expiry date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

----- OR -----

### Direct debit from my bank account

☐ Financial institution ..... Branch .....

Name of account .....

BSB \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ Account number .....

I hereby apply to join the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance as a new SOMA member and agree to be bound by its rules and constitution as amended from time to time. I request to pay my MEAA fees by payroll deduction / periodic credit card payment / periodic direct debit from my bank account until such time that I cancel my membership in writing.

SIGNED ..... Date .....

#### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Membership No: W/ / Rec / Chq No: Paid Date

#### Obligations of Membership

Membership fees are levied annually by Federal Council in consultation with SOMA. All membership fees are tax deductible. Fines and Levies shall be the first charge of all payments by members. If you leave the industry and wish to resign your membership, at least two weeks written notice of resignation must be given to your Regional Director. An unfinancial member, in addition to being liable for all amounts outstanding to the union, shall not be entitled to any of the benefits of membership including voting rights