

A photograph of a violinist in a dark jacket playing a violin. The lighting is dramatic, with warm tones. In the foreground, another violinist is blurred, their hands and the body of their instrument visible, creating a sense of depth and focus on the main performer.

OMEGA ENSEMBLE

INNER LANDSCAPES

2026 NATIONAL CONCERT SEASON



OMEGA ENSEMBLE
2026 NATIONAL CONCERT SEASON

INNER LANDSCAPES

John Corigliano
Soliloquy

Franz Schubert
String Quartet No. 14, Death and the Maiden
(arr. Gustav Mahler)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Scherzo: Allegro molto
- IV. Presto

Jessie Montgomery
Rounds

Paul Stanhope
Paludarium Dreams

- I. In Flight
- II. Nocturne
- III. The Carollers

Newcastle
Saturday 11 Jul 2026
Newcastle City Hall

Melbourne
Monday 13 Jul 2026
Elisabeth Murdoch Hall,
Melbourne Recital Centre

Sydney
Wednesday 15 Jul 2026
City Recital Hall

Penrith
Thursday 16 Jul 2026
The Joan

Duration

This performance is approximately 90 minutes without interval.

Please check your phone

This performance may be recorded. Please take a moment to ensure your phone and any electronic devices are switched off or silenced.

Photos and video

We encourage you to take photos of your concert experience. To avoid unintended disruptions to the performance, the best time to take a photo is during applause.

MUSIC NOTES

John Corigliano (1938 –)

Soliloquy

1977 • 10 minutes

John Corigliano continues to add to one of the richest, most unusual, and most widely celebrated bodies of work any composer has created over the last forty years. Corigliano's scores have won the Pulitzer Prize, the Grawemeyer Award, five Grammy Awards, an Academy Award, and have been performed and recorded by many of the most prominent orchestras, soloists, and chamber musicians in the world.

From the composer:

Soliloquy was written in memory of my father, who died on September 1, 1975. He had been a concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for 23 years, and I still find it hard to think of that orchestra without him sitting in the first chair. So the idea of an extended dialogue for clarinet and violin seemed not only natural but inevitable.

The *Soliloquy* begins with a long, unaccompanied line for the violin. The other strings enter, and a mood of sustained lyricism introduces the clarinet. The prevailing feeling is that of desolation. I deliberately avoided an emotional climax in the *Soliloquy*, feeling that sustaining the same mood throughout the music would achieve a heightened intensity.

Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)

String Quartet No. 14, *Death and the Maiden* *(arr. Gustav Mahler)*

1824 • 40 Minutes

In 1817, **Franz Schubert** composed a song setting of Claudius' poem *Death and the Maiden*. While death was a concept of little consequence for the 20 year old composer at the time, only seven years later his health

had seriously deteriorated from symptoms of syphilis, then a terminal disease. Schubert returned to the dark thematics of his earlier song as the basis of material for his String Quartet No. 14.

The first movement, with its imposing unison opening and the ebb and flow of emotional tension that ensues, is said to represent the Maiden's terror. The movement's dramatic surges and enigmatic ending make for a perfect contrast with the chorale-like chords and simple rhythm that follows. In Schubert's original song, the Maiden's music is agitated and unstable, while Death has a serene, hymnal voice. Death is depicted as a comforter and not something to be feared.

In the Quartet's slow second movement, Death's grounded theme is the stimulus for a set of five emotional variations and a coda. The movement closes as it began, in resigned serenity.

The pithy Scherzo has a deliberately strenuous manner, contrasting with long-breathed lyricism in the central trio. The opening theme's insistent triplets return for a dance-like finale recalling a tarantella. The second theme – passed from instrument to instrument amid a scampering of triplets – recalls in contour, rhythm and phrasing another song of Schubert which deals with the ambiguities of fear and seduction as another young person is taken before his time: Erbkönig.

Jessie Montgomery (1981 –)

Rounds

2022 • 15 minutes

An important voice for her generation and one of the most sought after collaborators in contemporary classical music, **Jessie Montgomery** is a GRAMMY Award-winning composer and violinist whose work

interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness, making her an acute interpreter of 21st-century American sound and experience.

From the composer:

Rounds for solo piano and string orchestra is inspired by the imagery and themes from T.S. Eliot's epic poem *Four Quartets*.

In addition to this inspiration, while working on the piece, I became fascinated by fractals (infinite patterns found in nature that are self-similar across different scales) and also delved into the work of contemporary biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber who writes about the interdependency of all beings. Weber explores how every living organism has a rhythm that interacts and impacts with all of the living things around it and results in a multitude of outcomes.

Like Eliot in *Four Quartets*, beginning to understand this interconnectedness requires that we slow down, listen, and observe both the effect and the opposite effect caused by every single action and moment. I've found this is an exercise that lends itself very naturally towards musical gestural possibilities that I explore in the work – action and reaction, dark and light, stagnant and swift.

Structurally, with these concepts in mind, I set the form of the work as a rondo, within a rondo, within a rondo. The five major sections are a rondo; section "A" is also a rondo in itself; and the cadenza – which is partially improvised by the soloist – breaks the pattern, yet, contains within it, the overall form of the work.

Paul Stanhope (1969 –)

Paludarium Dreams

World Premiere • 20 minutes

From the composer:

Composers have long been drawn to nature by way of inspiration, whether it's the

act of seeking the sublime, escape or for inspiration of sonic material. In the case of this new Clarinet Concerto written for David Rowden and The Omega Ensemble, all of these apply! The piece is in response to the invitation to create a new work to explore the theme of 'Inner Landscapes', and the journey charted in this piece is very much a celebration of abundant natural life found in a busy city.

A paludarium is a sanctuary where water environments meet and overlap with the land. I live up towards the Parramatta end of Sydney Harbour and am often curious as to the copiousness of birds, frogs and other varieties of life. The sounds and behaviours of this wildlife has helped shape the different movements of this piece, while often also taking on a dream-like quality.

The first movement In Flight is written from an imagined birds-eye view, and deals with the beauty and perhaps even ecstatic sense of freedom of flight. There is an ever-present sense of energy that begins quite gently with rippling string harmonic arpeggios, followed by simple but effervescent piano patterns which gradually build into longer sweeping phrases. Drama is found in swooping shapes in the solo clarinet part undulating between higher and lower parts of the register. Busy, interlocking string patterns seem to emulate the activity of the city below. An extended cello solo seems to hint at the idea of levels of flight from various birds and this interactivity is borne out in the darting and weaving of various parts of the ensemble around each other. The movement ends with a release of energy and a return to the gentle 'wing flapping' of the string harmonic arpeggios which open the piece.

The Nocturne was inspired by walks through local park and marsh lands in the dead of night. The movement begins with an interpretation of frogs calling out to each other, imitated by the clarinet in a low register, echoed by the piano. These accelerating 'frog' motifs ripple through



the movement and are juxtaposed against a more still, step-wise descending 'chorale' theme which is first heard in a smooth high-register clarinet line. This melody gradually accumulates a quasi-baroque chordal accompaniment which is presented in different variations each time it appears, interrupted by more rhapsodic flourishes from the clarinet and piano. The chorale figures are first presented in creeping and eerie episodes with sustained string harmonics, but they gradually becoming more grotesque and nightmarish until a climactic section where the accelerating frog-calls transform into a quite gothic-baroque section in the strings with an exaggerated clarinet call-and-response. This scenario disappears with a snap pizzicato in the double bass and the sound palette returns to the mysterious, natural calls of amphibians and insects at night.

The Carollers is a Scherzo-like movement inspired by the quirky calls and behaviours of corolling birds such as magpies, currawongs and pied butcher birds. The opening clarinet cadenza is based on a clutch of bird calls that I heard in our local

park and which I subsequently transcribed. Rhythmic cells found in some of these bird calls also inform the quirky rhythmic language of the almost jazz-fusion type character of the music. Despite these exotic-sounding ingredients, this movement is written in a fairly standard sonata form to wrangle potentially chaotic sounds into a coherent shape. A middle development section sees the jagged bird calls of the opening transform into a pulsing, city-inspired section which gradually rises in register, before releasing into a quite free 'cacophony' of bird calls, similar to the shrill overlap of bird sounds we might hear at dusk. Once this chaos dissipates, a return to the earlier jazz-inflected music is re-established—with a few new opportunities for the clarinet to explore cadenza-like sections—before a short, fast-tempo coda concludes the piece.

This work was commissioned by Omega Ensemble as part of the Living Music project with support of Penrith Performing & Visual Arts, Ian Plater, and Gaston Nguyen in memory of Robert Veel.

ON STAGE

David Rowden
Clarinet and
Artistic Director *

Vatche Jambazian
Solo Piano *

Emma McGrath
Violin I **

Monique Irik
Violin I

Dominic Azzi
Violin I

Asmira Woodward-Page
Violin II **

Marcus Michelson
Violin II

Rain Liu
Violin II

Neil Thompson
Viola *

Andrew Jezek
Viola

Paul Stender
Cello *

Mee Na Lojewski
Cello

Adrian Whitehall
Double Bass **

* Principal Musician
** Guest Principal Musician



PAUL STANHOPE

Paul Stanhope is an award-winning Sydney-based composer. He has had prominent performances of his works in the UK, Europe, Asia as well as North and South America. After studies with Peter Sculthorpe at the University of Sydney, Paul studied at the Guildhall School of Music in London. His work explores themes of reconciliation, particularly through major collaborations with Australian First Nations musicians and storytellers, as well as having a focus on ecological issues and humanist concerns.

Beauty of craft and the power of collective listening marks Paul's work, recognised by the 2004 Toru Takemitsu Composition Prize and Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship 2013-14; five APRA AMCOS Art Music awards and the 2021 David H. Tribe memorial Symphonic Prize.

He was Musica Viva Australia's Featured Composer in 2010, where he had national tour performances of his chamber and choral pieces for the Pavel Hass String Quartet, the Atos Trio, the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge and the virtuosic violin piano duo of Alina Ibragimova and Cédric Tiberghien. His music has also featured at the Vale of Glamorgan Festival in 2009 (including performances by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales), the City of London Festival in 2011, the Australian Festival of Chamber Music in 2015 and the Melbourne International Chamber Music Festival in 2018.

Stanhope has composed a number of major works in recent years for large forces including Jandamarra: Sing for the Country a dramatic cantata based on the life of the Western Australian Indigenous resistance hero, premiered by the SSO in 2014 in collaboration with members of the Bunuba community from North Western Australia. This piece has been recognised as a "milestone in Australian Music" (The Australian).

In the last decade, he has composed concertos for piccolo, cello and trombone. His most recent orchestral work Ocean Planet was commissioned and premiered by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in December 2022. In 2021, his Requiem was premiered by the Sydney Chamber Choir who have also recorded the piece, to be released in 2025. A new work for voice and strings, nyilamum – song cycles, was co-composed with dja-dja wurrung singer Dr Lou Bennett AM and premiered by Lou and the Australian String Quartet at the String Quartet Biennale in Amsterdam in February 2024. A new choral-orchestral cycle Mahasagar will be premiered by the West Australian Symphony Orchestra in 2025.

An Associate Professor of Composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Stanhope is also the Artistic Chair of the Australia Ensemble at the University of New South Wales.

SUPPORTERS

Our music simply would not exist without the shared vision of our supporters and partners who help us to deliver our exciting projects and important work on and off the stage.

We invite you to join this like-minded community of music lovers and arts philanthropists by making a tax-deductible donation. Explore options at omegaensemble.com.au/support.

Artistic Director's Circle

Terrey Arcus AM
Richard Cobden SC
Jennifer Darin
Paul Flynn
David Gonski AC
John Kaldor AO
Renata Kaldor AO
Julianne Maxwell
Sam Meers AO
Fiona Menzies
Dr Shane Simpson AM
Max Stead
Kim Williams AM

\$100,000 +

The Abbott Foundation
Anonymous

\$50,000 +

Darin Cooper
Foundation ☆
Paul Flynn
Metal Manufacturing
Pty Ltd
Nelson Meers
Foundation
The Neilson Foundation

\$20,000 +

David Gonski AC
Ezekiel Solomon AM
Geoff Stearn ☆
Geoffrey White OAM &
Sally White ★
Anonymous ★

\$10,000 +

Richard Cobden SC
Norman Gillespie ☆
Ian Plater and Evgeniya
Kriel
Julianne Maxwell
Gaston Nguyen ☆
Dianne & Peter
O'Connell ☆
Ian Plater and Evgeniya
Kriel

\$5,000 +

The Helens Gift
John Claudianos ☆
Bernard Coles ★
Di Jameson OAM &
Frank Mercurio
John Kaldor AO
Nicholas and Toula
Cowell
Peter Howard
John Kaldor AO
Penelope Seidler
Simpson-Michel
Foundation ☆
Geoff Stearn
Nick and Kate Thomas
Mark Wakely in memory
of Steven Alward ★
Australian Philanthropic
Services

\$1,000 +

Lillian and Peter
Armitage ☆
Phillipa Birkett
Anthony Browell
Prof. Glyn Davis AC
Reg Graycar
Robert and Lindy
Henderson ☆
Rory and Jane Jeffes
Elena Kats-Chernin AO

Andrew & Renata Kaldor
Diccon and Elizabeth
Loxton ★
Kevin and Deidre
McCann
Fiona Menzies
Rupert Meyer
Angela Murphy
Robbie Nicol
James Phillips
Dr Robert and Dr Tessa
Phillips ★
Justin and Jacqueline
Playfair ☆
Trish Richardson in
memory of Andy Lloyd
James
David Robb
Julie Robb and Michael
Furlong
Stephanie Smee & Paul
Schoff ☆
Simpsons Solicitors
Dalia Stanley and the
late Tom Stanley ★
Kim Sutherland OAM
Bruce & Mary Anne
Terry ★
Michael Thompson ☆
Anonymous ☆

\$500 +

Sarah Bennett
Phillip Bird
Stephen Booth
Alan & Philippa Clark ★
Dr Ian Cook

Mary Delahunty
Kees and Diny de Leeuw
Kathryn Fagg
Heather Flood
Cathie Hull ☆
Leigh Johns OAM
Elisabeth McDonald
Robin Miles
John Mitchell
Karen Moses
Justine Munsie
The Hon. George Palmer
AM KC ★
Trevor Parkin ☆
Dr Robert and Dr Tessa
Phillips ☆
Naomi Richards
Jann Skinner
Nasima Sparks
Angus and Brigitte Uren

\$250 +

Sarah Bennett
Colin Boston ☆
Charles and Anne
Edmondson ★
Stuart Love
John and Jo-Ann
Negrine ☆
Felicity O'Brien
Paul O'Donnell ☆
John Vaughan and
Margaret Foley ☆

Supporter levels are based on total giving within the past 12 months. For full acknowledgement of all supporters and partners, or to find out more about supporting, please visit our website

★ Denotes visionary donors who have supported the Omega Ensemble for five (☆☆) or ten (★) years or longer.

PARTNERS

Foundation Partners



DARIN COOPER
FOUNDATION



The Abbott
Foundation

Government Partners



Industry Partner

BUNDANON

Commissioning Partners



Ben Goldscheider

2026 Presenting Partners



Media Partner

The Saturday
Paper

Touring Partner

Adina
apartment hotels

Management

Michael Naphthali
CEO

David Rowden
Artistic Director

Ian Whitney

Director of Artistic
Planning

Ariel Bonnell
Producer

Amy Church

Head of Marketing
and Audience
Development

Ben Robinson

Marketing Coordinator

Publicity
Kabuku PR

About us

omegaensemble.com.au

PO Box 525
Surry Hills NSW

contact@omegaensemble.com.au
1300 670 050

Omega Ensemble (ABN 40 120 304 725) is listed on the Australian Government's Register of Cultural Organisations maintained under Subdivision 30-B of Part 2-1 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 (Cth).

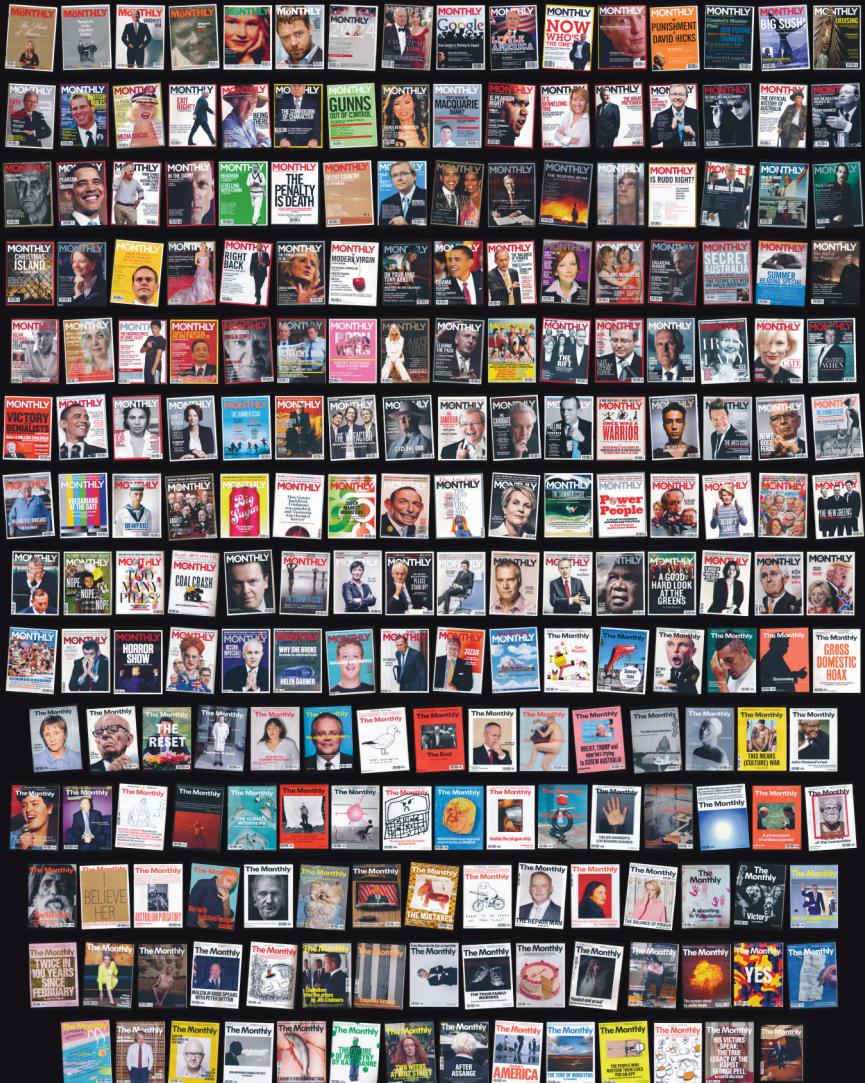
Photo Credits

2026 Season photography by Saskia Wilson
Additional photos: Moo's View (Pg 2), Gabrielle Mary Clement (Pg 6), Keith Saunders (Pg 8).

Acknowledgment of Country

Omega Ensemble acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we work and perform, and honour their continued connection to Country, culture and storytelling.

The Monthly



20 years of Australia's best magazine **M**
subscribe at themonthly.com.au/subscribe