

AUSTRALIAN  
WORLD  
ORCHESTRA

AUDACIOUS. EXHILARATING. LIMITLESS.

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Embargoed until 9am, 9 December 2025**

**CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF ARTISTRY, IMAGINATION AND EXTRAORDINARY  
ORCHESTRAL COLLABORATION**

**THE AUSTRALIAN WORLD ORCHESTRA RETURNS IN 2026  
WITH A BOLD NEW PROGRAM**



**Stravinsky. Mills. Shostakovich.  
Three towering pieces.  
One extraordinary orchestra.**

**[Tuesday 9 December]** The Australian World Orchestra (AWO) will celebrate 15 years of ambitious programming, and visionary collaborations in 2026 with a bold new three-part program, conducted by Artistic Director and Chief Conductor Alexander Briger AO. Following the success of the 2025 concerts of Mahler's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> symphonies performed back-to-back, the AWO will triumphantly return to Melbourne and Sydney for two special anniversary performances in August 2026.

Described by Riccardo Muti as "the most flexible orchestra I have ever conducted" the AWO will bring together the finest players from home and across the globe to present two monumental classic pieces, Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and Shostakovich's Symphony No.10 in

conversation with the world premiere of Jonathan Mills's *Songs for a Stranger*, performed by Australian tenor Michael Petruccelli.

For Briger, the Australian World Orchestra's 15-year anniversary program symbolises the extraordinary artistic collaboration and deep respect and commitment for classical music in Australia.

"It is a real joy to be celebrating our 15th anniversary of bringing an incredible repertoire of music to Australians played by this country's finest musicians," says Briger.

"The AWO stands as one of the nation's great cultural ambassadors – an orchestra that celebrates imagination, tradition and connection and the enduring power of musical artistry on the world stage. This year's three mighty works showcase the musical complexity and vibrant energy that the Australian World Orchestra brings to every performance."

First performed in 1911, *Stravinsky's Petrushka's* kaleidoscopic ballet, bursting with rhythmic energy and orchestral colour, remains one of the composer's most vivid and inventive scores. In contrast, *Shostakovich's* Symphony No. 10 stands as one of the great post-war symphonies, a vast emotional landscape that moves from darkness and oppression to fierce defiance and ultimately, a sense of liberation.

In a special collaboration Jonathan Mills and Alexander Briger will present *Songs for a Stranger*, a new orchestral song cycle expanding upon Mills' celebrated opera *Eucalyptus* based on the novel by Murray Bail. Combining two existing songs with two newly written compositions exclusively for the AWO, the work unfolds as a sequence of musical meditations exploring landscape, love and the spaces that connect them.

Speaking about the special collaboration for the AWO's 15-year anniversary season, Mills said, "It's wonderful to be given the opportunity to write music for such a renowned and multi-faceted orchestra. Alexander Briger has a real commitment to Australian culture. He's allowed me to compose a suite of songs that focus on love and an exploration of how people perceive the world. I feel somewhat privileged to be able to write music for the Australian World Orchestra to be performed in this country."

*Songs for a Stranger* is the fourth work exclusively commissioned by the AWO from an Australian composer.

The Australian World Orchestra will perform its 2026 anniversary season at the Arts Centre Melbourne on 19<sup>th</sup> August, and the Sydney Opera House on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2026.

Tickets will go on sale on Wednesday 10 December.

For more information visit [australianworldorchestra.com.au](https://australianworldorchestra.com.au)

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**AWO 2026 CONCERT SERIES**  
**CONDUCTED BY ALEXANDER BRIGER**

Stravinsky's *Petrushka*  
Jonathan Mills *Songs for a Stranger*  
Shostakovich Symphony No.10

Wednesday 19 August : Hamer Hall, Arts Centre Melbourne

Thursday 20 August : Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

Bookings & Information: [www.australianworldorchestra.com.au](http://www.australianworldorchestra.com.au)

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Biographies**

- Alexander Briger AO – [Read here](#)
- Sir Jonathan Mills AC – [Read here](#)

**About the Australian World Orchestra**

The Australian World Orchestra brings together Australia's finest classical musicians – from across Australia and around the world – to create something uniquely electrifying, while their AWO education program has helped foster the next generation of Australian musicians. The AWO's musicians are drawn from the world's finest orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouw and Australia's orchestras and ensembles. The immense talent, coupled with its grand, award-winning sound, has seen many of the world's great conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Zubin Mehta AC, Riccardo Muti and Simone Young AM lead the orchestra both in Australia and overseas. The Australian World Orchestra has been hailed by audiences and critics alike as charismatic, inspiring and one of a kind.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

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