

MELBOURNE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Report to the Community 2020



From the Executive Director

The global pandemic has given many of us the opportunity to reflect on what is most important in our lives. I know that many people, one of those core values is music. These unprecedented times have proven the power of music in uplifting the spirit. Although our musicians aren't classified as essential workers, we can't imagine a world without music!

Shortly after we opened our 2020 season with *Italian Guitar*, pandemic-related restrictions began to affect our work. Of the 53 events we had planned for 2020, we were only able to deliver six. We responded quickly with a new 2020 program featuring streamed concerts. That program provided a lifeline for both musicians and music-lovers through much of the lockdown period. For several weeks, we weren't permitted to rehearse or perform at all, and musicians performed from home for a social media series.

The MCO needed to be nimble and adaptable over this period: performer and audience numbers for in-person concerts were capped due to social distancing requirements. For digitally-streamed concerts, both prices and audience numbers varied from traditional concerts.

Thanks to donations; grants received from the state of Victoria; and a number of philanthropic trusts, concerts continued to run. Philanthropic funds meant we were able to continue to support careers of Victorian artists and develop and sustain Victoria's chamber orchestra and chamber music practice during this difficult year. This support also enable our quick return to live chamber music again when restrictions were lifted. We were also able to make significant grants to support the artistry of musicians who missed out on income due to cancellations.

Thank you for enabling these concerts to continue to be delivered to audiences across metropolitan and regional Victoria. We are now ever more grateful for the moments we can gather safely to again to present live chamber music and chamber orchestra and look forward to seeing you in person soon!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Jackson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard Jackson
Executive Director

2020 at a glance

	2019	2020	'19-'20 % change
Total number of attendees (all events)	12,139	1,161,757¹	↓ 56.4%²
Mainstage (Melbourne Season) attendances	6,321	1,244 ³	↓ 80.3%
Paid (Melbourne Season) attendances	5,537	1,790 ⁴	↓ 67.7%
Income generated for artists	440,250	201,115	↓ 54.3%
Number of performers employed	75	45	
Number of performances & events	60	30	
Number of different locations	23	15	
Number of touring performances	33	12	
Number of new works and arrangements presented	3	0	

Notes:

1. Includes Junior Masterchef Finale performance audience of 1,157,000. Without this audience, attendance was 4,757.
2. Change calculation excludes 2020 Junior Masterchef Finale performance audience
3. Only one mainstage project was presented in Melbourne in 2020, compared to six mainstage projects in 2019.
4. We have included physical attendances at non-mainstage (chamber music) performances in Melbourne in this number, as these concerts effectively became our Melbourne season.



Melbourne Chamber Orchestra provided an orchestra for the finale of Junior Masterchef, conducted by MCO collaborator Nicholas Buc. This was the only orchestral performance in Melbourne in the middle of 2020, permitted under the broadcast exemption. The finale was viewed by over 1.1 million people nationally.

2020 in review

In 2020, the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra (MCO) planned a season with at least 53 performances and events. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, only six performances were able to proceed as planned with only one large-format orchestral project, *Italian Guitar* in February and early March.

Following the introduction of COVID-19 related restrictions, the orchestra responded quickly and began digitally streaming small-format chamber music performances in mid-April 2020. In total the orchestra still presented 30 performances and events over the course of 2020 and reached an audience of approximately 4,700 attendees and online viewers. These performances included 11 digital streaming performances on Melbourne Digital Concert Hall.

The orchestra engaged leading Victorian artists including Louisa Breen, Michael Dahlenburg, Slava Grigoryan, Benjamin Martin, Hoang Pham and Josephine Vains.



Melbourne Chamber Orchestra musicians performed as part of the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall's 2020 series, streamed from the Athenaeum. Live audiences were either not permitted or heavily restricted throughout the 2020 program.

Touring

In February 2020, the orchestra brought *Italian Guitar* to Casterton before COVID-19 related restrictions prevented further touring until the end of the year.

The Melbourne Chamber Orchestra demonstrated its continued strong commitment to regional audiences when, in December, a string quartet brought 11 performances to live audiences across East Gippsland in celebration of Beethoven's 250th anniversary. The Orchestra's touring work also included an education workshop in Mallacoota.

That we were able to so quickly deliver live chamber music again so quickly after the restrictions were eased in Victoria is testament to the generosity of our partners, supporters and donors in enabling us to continue to support the careers of Victorian artists while rehearsals and performances were cancelled due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

The orchestra's touring work was funded by Touring Victoria with assistance from Creative Victoria's Strategic Investment Fund.

2020 Touring Destinations

Casterton	Omeo
Daylesford	Sales
Glengarry	Sarsfield
Mallacoota	St Albans



MCO musicians perform a Beethoven Quintet at Mallacoota Golf Club to a socially-distanced audience.

Digital streaming

After COVID-19 shut down the entire arts sector almost overnight, Melbourne Digital Concert Hall (MDCH) was rapidly created by musicians for musicians, as a means for Australian artists to continue their profession, and to connect to audiences through music and technology. Melbourne Chamber Orchestra is an MDCH ensemble-in-residence and supports the initiative in its growth toward the vision of a sustainable long-term digital platform for musicians. MDCH operates as a social enterprise, with the sale of digital tickets providing a critical source of income for musicians.

Over the course of 2020, 11 performances by the orchestra's members were streamed live over the internet, and a further six were rebroadcast on MDCH with a total attendance of approximately 3,000 online viewers.

During the period of Stage IV lockdown rehearsals and performances were not permitted. In response, the MCO launched *Moments Musicaux*, featuring its leading artists performing at home in series of short videos available on Vimeo, Instagram and Facebook.

The orchestra's streaming initiative was funded by COVID-19 Response grants from Creative Victoria, the Helen McPherson Smith Trust, the Cranbourne Foundation, the Serp Hills Foundation and the Robert Salzer Foundation.



Screenshot from *Moments Musicaux* #1: Katherine Lukey & Paul Ghica

A Note on Other Initiatives

Masterchef Finale

The Melbourne Chamber Orchestra performed at the 2020 Junior Masterchef Finale in November where the final three Junior Masterchef contestants competed, and the winner was announced. This was recorded in August. This 23-artist performance is estimated to have reached a national audience in excess of 1.1 million.

A number of initiatives that the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra presented in prior years had to be postponed or suspended. These include:

- **A Feast of Music**, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra's Festival in Daylesford, with five events including a musical dinner at the Lake House. A large number of our supporters who had purchased tickets to the 2020 festival donated the value of their festival passes to the MCO.
- **Encounter the Orchestra!**, where primary students in Grades 3 to 6 in regional areas are provided with a live encounter with Melbourne Chamber Orchestra. The structured, narrated events include performances, interaction, explanations, demonstrations and an opportunity for students to sing accompanied by the orchestra. The purpose of the program is to provide a strong stimulus for students' achievement in their music study.

Thank you

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra thanks its 2020 partners and supporters. It is only through the support of many contributors that Melbourne is home to its own acclaimed professional small orchestra.

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