



Image credit: Keith Saunders



Image credit: Sarah Cresswell

AF26 DIGITAL DAYBILL

Brodsky Quartet with William Barton

Saturday 28 February 2026, 7pm

Elder Hall

Duration: 2hrs, including interval

William Barton yidaki

Brodsky Quartet

Krysia Osostowicz violin

Ian Belton violin

Paul Cassidy viola

Jacqueline Thomas cello

Music history takes sonic form in this extraordinary pairing of master yidaki artist William Barton with the legendary Brodsky Quartet.

Tracing an arc through time and across cultures, this performance showcases a profound musical dialogue between traditions, where First Nations wisdom converses with the rich textures of European chamber music.

The program is a feast of storytelling; Andrew Ford's *Eden Ablaze* written during the bushfires of 2019 and Peter Sculthorpe's *Jabiru Dreaming* sit alongside Janáček, selections from Purcell and Stravinsky, and Barton's own compositions.

Britain's Brodsky Quartet are phenomenal collaborators with a 50-year legacy and Barton is Australia's most celebrated yidaki virtuoso. Together this performance exquisitely evolves the idea of what a string quartet can become.

Supported by the
British Council



WILLIAM BARTON	Soundscape	3'
(b.1981)		
HENRY PURCELL	<i>Fantasia</i> in D minor Z.739	3'
(1659–1695)		
PETER SCULTHORPE	String Quartet No 11 <i>Jabiru Dreaming</i>	12'
(1929–2014)	i. Deciso	
	ii. Liberamente – Estatico	
ROBERT DAVIDSON	<i>Minjerribah</i>	8'
(b.1965)		
LEOŠ JANÁČEK	String Quartet No 1 <i>Kreutzer Sonata</i>	22'
(1854–1928)	i. Adagio – Con moto	
	ii. Con moto	
	iii. Con moto – Vivace	
	iv. Con moto (Adagio)	
Interval		20'
IGOR STRAVINSKY	<i>Danse</i> from Three Pieces for String Quartet	3'
(1882–1971)		
ANDREW FORD	String Quartet No 7 <i>Eden Ablaze</i>	10'
(b.1957)		
SALINA FISHER	<i>Tōrino – echoes on pūtōrino improvisations by Rob Thorne</i>	11'
(b.1993)		
TRADITIONAL IRISH FOLK SONG	arr Paul Cassidy	
	<i>She Moved Through the Fair</i>	4'
WILLIAM BARTON	<i>Square Circles Beneath the Red Desert Sand</i>	10'



Introduction

How many different ways has humankind produced sounds with a hollowed-out piece of wood...from drumming to blowing to plucking and scraping, the variations through the ages and across continents are endless. Thousands of years ago, the Aboriginal yidaki, possibly the world's oldest musical instrument, was created from eucalyptus trunks hollowed out by termites; not long afterwards ancient lyres emerged in the Middle East and later, viols in Europe paved the way for today's violins, violas and cellos; around the same time, whilst crumhorns developed into oboes and flutes, the wind instrument of the Māoris, the pūtōrino, was shaped and carved to mimic the cocoon of a case-moth. And the source of all these instruments; the noble tree, the life-breath of the planet, a species endlessly tenacious through millions of years of challenges to its very existence.

Tonight these elements converge, along with the human voice, to bring a rich and varied sound world through a sonic dialogue spanning millennia, an extraordinary arc through time and culture, where First Nations wisdom converses with the rich tradition of European chamber music and composers of today.

We begin with an improvised introduction on the yidaki, giving way to the pure sounds of the young Henry Purcell's *Fantasia in D minor*, a meandering exploration of falling 4th and rising 5ths.

William Barton's improvisation takes us seamlessly into Peter Sculthorpe's *Jabiru Dreaming*, a tribute to his beloved Kakadu and featuring the sounds of tribal music, the gait of the Jabiru stork and insects of the Interior. In both yidaki and strings, the boundaries are pushed open to create wind, string and percussive sounds, embracing the inspiration behind this powerful music.

Robert Davidson's evocation of the island *Minjerribah* (or North Stradbroke) pulsates with the heat and rhythms of sea and land, a joyous celebration of life; originally written for strings, this is a specially adapted version by the composer for these forces.

Janacek's String Quartet No 1, titled *The Kreutzer Sonata* after the Tolstoy short story of the same name, is a four movement work exploring the tragic and murderous tale of a husband's jealousy. It is a fine example of Janacek's unique musical language; fast, often indecipherable patterns mimicking verbal utterances and speech patterns, as well as folk-influenced themes and dramatic outpourings of emotion.

After the interval, a peasant dance from Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for String Quartet*, like a carnival of players each absorbed in their own part in the parade, leads us into Andrew Ford's *Eden Ablaze*. This one-movement work is a lament to the 'Black Summer' of 2019, when the subtropical rain forest of Gondwana was largely destroyed. Unlike regular regenerative bushfires, this forest never usually burns; the notes depict this loss of innocence for the environment and its emotional impact. First a ghostly evocation of Handel's *Xerxes* aria praises the shade of trees whilst burning embers crackle, then comes the raging inferno, exploding and jumping, eventually dying down whilst ashes float in the air.

Next we hear the calling sounds of the pūtōrino, as reimagined by New Zealand composer Salina Fisher in her one-movement String Quartet *Tōrino*. The instrument has three distinct voices; the trumpet (male voice), the flute (female), and a 'middle' voice with an eerie quality, inspired by the case-moth of its origins. Quarter-tones and variations of pitch are used to dramatic effect, echoing the haunting timbres of the instrument.

The calming sounds of ancient folkloric Ireland emerge with the traditional song *She Moved Through the Fair*, transcribed and sung by Paul Cassidy, and the improvised vocals of William Barton take us through to the final work on the programme, his own *Square Circles Beneath the Red Desert Sand*. The piece is deeply connected to the spirits of his country, Mount Isa and Kalkadunga, and plays with the juxtaposition of the different elements – organic, created and spiritual – in this vast arid landscape.

Jacqueline Thomas, Brodsky Quartet

Brodsky Quartet

Bringing an unrivalled authority to the performance of the string quartet repertoire, since their formation in 1972 the Brodsky Quartet have performed over 3,500 concerts on the major stages of the world and have released more than 70 recordings. A natural curiosity and an insatiable desire to explore has propelled the group in a number of artistic directions and continues to ensure them not only a prominent presence on the international chamber music scene, but also a rich and varied musical existence. Their energy and craftsmanship have attracted numerous awards and accolades worldwide, while their ongoing educational work provides a vehicle to pass on experience and stay in touch with the next generation.

Having recently celebrated their 50th anniversary, the Brodsky Quartet continue to enjoy a busy international performing schedule, extensively touring the major festivals and venues throughout Australasia, North and South America, Asia, South Africa and Europe, as well as in the UK, where the quartet is based. Over the years, the Brodsky Quartet have undertaken numerous performances of the complete cycles of quartets by Schubert, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Britten, Schoenberg, Zemlinsky, Webern and Bartok. It is, however, the complete Shostakovich cycle that has now become synonymous with their name: their 2012 London performance of the complete string quartet cycle resulted in their taking the prestigious title 'Artistic Associate' at London's Kings Place – a residency which lasted ten years, culminating in a triumphant repeat cycle of the fifteen works over two days. It therefore seems fitting that the legacy to their inimitable 50 years as a quartet has been to offer complete Shostakovich cycles around the world, allowing the full immersive experience to be accessible to all in the coming seasons.

The Brodsky Quartet have always had a busy recording career and enjoyed an exclusive and fruitful relationship with Chandos Records for many years. Releases on the label include a live recording of the complete Shostakovich cycle as well as quartets and quintets by Brahms, Elgar, Janacek, Debussy and more, with a stellar line-up of fellow musicians. Their set of the Late String Quartets of Beethoven was released in 2020 to great critical acclaim and one of their most recent releases, *Homage to Bach*, comprises the phenomenal premiere recordings of Bach's three Solo Violin Sonatas arranged by Paul Cassidy. The Quartet marked their 50th anniversary with three diverse releases: the hugely celebrated Schubert Quintet with cellist Laura van der Heijden, *Rocking Horse Road* with long-term collaborator Jacqui Dankworth and *Golden Oldies*, a compendium of encores arranged by the Quartet in celebration of this milestone. The Quartet are regularly recorded for television and radio with their performances broadcast worldwide and have been the recipients of several awards for recordings, including the Diapason D'Or and the CHOC du Monde de la Musique, as well as receiving a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for their outstanding contribution to innovation in programming. As well as partnering many top classical artists for their performances and recordings, the quartet have made musical history with ground-breaking collaborations with some of the world's leading artists across many genres and have commissioned and championed many of the world's most respected composers.

The quartet have taught at many international chamber music courses and have held residencies in several music institutes including, at the start of their career, the first such post at the University of Cambridge. More recently, they have been named as visiting International Fellows in Chamber Music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and they have developed relationships with the Royal College of Music, and specialist music schools including Wells Cathedral, Chethams and the Yehudi Menuhin School. They were awarded Honorary Doctorates by the University of Kent and an Honorary Fellowship at the University of Teesside, where they were founded. The quartet took their name from the great Russian violinist Adolf Brodsky, the dedicatee of Tchaikovsky's violin concerto and a passionate chamber musician. Krysia Osostowicz plays a violin made by Francesco Goffriller, 1720; Ian Belton's violin is by Giovanni Paolo Maggini, c.1615. Paul Cassidy plays on La Delfina viola, c.1720, courtesy of Sra. Delfina Entrecanales and Jacqueline Thomas's cello is by Thomas Perry of Dublin, 1785.

William Barton

Composer, producer, multiinstrumentalist and vocalist William Barton is widely recognised as one of Australia's leading didgeridoo players and composers. A proud Kalkadunga man, his work brings together the world's oldest living musical culture with Western classical traditions on international concert stages.

Raised on a cattle station near Mount Isa in northwest Queensland, William began learning the didgeridoo at an early age from his uncle, Arthur Peterson, an elder of the Wannyi, Lardil and Kalkadunga peoples. Influenced equally by Beethoven and Vivaldi on ABC Classic FM, Elvis Presley, AC/DC and jazzfusion, the instrument became a lifelong language. By the age of twelve, William left school to pursue music fulltime, later receiving the rare cultural honour of inheriting his uncle's didgeridoo.

At just seventeen, William made his debut with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, becoming both its first Artist-in-Residence and Australia's first didgeridoo Artist-in-Residence with a symphony orchestra. The full, rapturous embrace of the classical music world came in 2004, when Peter Sculthorpe's *Requiem*, a major work for orchestra, chorus and didgeridoo, was premiered in the 2004 Adelaide Festival, with William Barton as soloist. This is widely regarded as the first full symphonic work to feature the didgeridoo. Tours to Japan, the United States and New Zealand followed, cementing a close creative partnership with Sculthorpe.

Over the past two decades William has performed with orchestras including the London and Berlin Philharmonic, at ANZAC day ceremonies at Anzac Cove, the Beijing Olympics and at Westminster Abbey for Commonwealth Day 2019. Often collaborating with his mother, singer, songwriter and poet Delmae Barton, he has appeared on stages from the Vatican to the Spanish Royal Court, while also pursuing projects spanning jazz, rock and contemporary music.

William's many honours include the ARIA Award for Best Classical Album (*Birdsong at Dusk*, 2012), Best Original Score for a Mainstage Production at the 2018 Sydney Theatre Awards, the Don Banks Music Award (2021), the AACTA Award for Best Original Score in a Documentary for *River* (2022) with Richard Tognetti and Piers Burbrook de Vere, the 2022 ARIA Award for Best World Music Album (*History Has a Heartbeat*, with Joseph Tawadros), and the 2023 AIR Award for Best Independent Classical Album (*Heartland*, with Véronique Serret). In 2023 he was named Queensland Australian of the Year, and became the first Indigenous recipient of the Richard Gill Award.

William has held residencies at the Peggy Glanville-Hicks Composers' House and Melbourne Recital Centre, holds honorary doctorates from Griffith University and the University of Sydney, and has released five albums on the ABC Classics label.

"I'm doing what I love. I want to take the oldest culture in the world and blend it with Europe's rich musical legacy. I guess what I'm doing is giving back: giving back to my culture and my people because I was given something when I was very young and like the old fellas who taught me years ago, I'm just passing it on."