

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH ROSEMARY CURTIN

30 & 31 JANUARY 2026

Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House



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WELCOME

Welcome to **Cocktail Hour with Rosemary Curtin**, the first concert in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Cocktail Hour with Handpicked Wines* series for 2026.

Handpicked Wines is delighted to be presenting this Series, now in its third year, which brings together beautiful music and the exquisite venue that is the Utzon Room at the Sydney Opera House.

At Handpicked, we understand the power of passion and artistry. We draw on both technical skill and creative inspiration to craft wines that elevate and enhance experiences, just as the musicians of the Orchestra draw on their expertise and artistry to enrich lives.

Throughout history, musicians have adapted and arranged well-known pieces and arranged them for their own purposes – taking something old and putting their own spin on it. Sometimes for practical reasons, sometimes for aesthetic ones and occasionally as an exercise in instrumentation and orchestration.

Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante was originally written for two solo instruments and small orchestra, but today you will hear it reduced to just seven instruments, each part coming through clearer and stronger as a result. It's not unlike the way wine was brought from Europe to Australia – the same famous grapes finding new expression and character in their new environment.

The carefully chosen wines, the intimate experience of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra musicians and this riveting music create the perfect combination for a memorable evening.

Handpicked and the Orchestra share values of creativity and technical excellence, which are the hallmark of everything we do. It has been a great pleasure to see our partnership flourish so successfully.

We hope you enjoy the concert and the wines we have selected to accompany this performance.



William Dong
Managing Director
Handpicked Wines

2026 CONCERT SEASON

COCKTAIL HOUR WITH ROSEMARY CURTIN

MOSTLY MOZART

Genevieve Lang presenter

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Horn Quintet, K407 (1782)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Rondo: Allegro

Lucy Smith horn

Sophie Cole violin

Anne-Louise Comerford viola

Rosemary Curtin viola

Fenella Gill cello

MOZART arr. Oguey

Adagio, K580a (1789)

Alexandre Oguey cor anglais

Sophie Cole violin

Rosemary Curtin viola

Fenella Gill cello

David Campbell double bass

MOZART arr. ANON

Grande Sestetto Concertante,

after Sinfonia Concertante, K364 (1779)

- I. Allegro maestoso
- II. Andante
- III. Presto

Sophie Cole violin

Alexander Norton violin

Anne-Louise Comerford viola

Rosemary Curtin viola

Kristy Conrau cello

Fenella Gill cello

David Campbell double bass

Friday 30 January, 6pm
Saturday 31 January, 6pm

Cocktail Hour with
Handpicked Wines

Utzon Room,
Sydney Opera House

Estimated durations

Quintet – 20 minutes

Adagio – 5 minutes

Sestetto – 30 minutes

This concert will run for
approx. 1 hour

Cover image

Rosemary Curtin.

Photo by Jay Patel

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ABOUT THE MUSIC



Photo by Christie Brewster

Welcome to tonight's concert, the first Cocktail Hour performance for 2026. This is the ninth year that Sydney Symphony Orchestra musicians have been curating this series in the Utzon Room, delighting audiences with closer contact to the performers and giving us musicians the opportunity for creative expression as chamber musicians away from the concert hall stage.

This year we are trying something a little different with Cocktail Hour – each of the six concerts in this Series has been curated by one musician, making for a focused showcase on our instruments and providing deeper insights into the individuals that make up the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

This program is a little bit of an homage to my early musical development.

When I was asked to put together a program for January that had meaning to me, I thought back to my early days as a very young student musician. In the mid-80s there was a Mostly Mozart Festival in Sydney which took place in the summer months. A program of all or mostly Mozart still seems like a perfect summer program to me.

For any violist, Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante is one of the pinnacles of our repertoire and has always held significance for me. It was one of the first works for viola I ever heard after my parents bought me an LP of the work when I commenced at the Conservatorium High School and changed from violin to viola.

It was the perfect way for a twelve-year-old to hear the difference between the two instruments and I immediately fell in love with the viola's lower tones. This chamber arrangement of the Grande Sestetto, which shares the solo lines across the ensemble, has long been on my wish list to perform.

A couple of years later the horn quintet was one of the very first pieces of chamber music I played with class mates while still at high school.

For me, performing chamber repertoire is all about enjoying music with friends. Regulars at Cocktail Hour will have heard some of Alexandre Oguey's wonderfully creative arrangements for our ensemble 'Cor plus Four'. His beautiful arrangement of this Mozart Adagio is one of our favourite small party pieces.

I am grateful to all of my colleagues for joining me for this celebration of Mozart's music this evening. Keen observers will note that we are performing the Quintet as a Sextet and the Sestetto as a Septetto - everything is better with bass! We hope you'll join us for another Cocktail Hour later this year to hear David Campbell's musical selection in October.

Rosemary Curtin
Viola

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ABOUT MOZART

Mozart began to compose at the age of five, and made his debut as a performer a year later. His father, Leopold, genuinely believed that his son was a 'miracle that God had allowed to be born in Salzburg', while being keenly aware of the commercial potential of having a child prodigy to exhibit on tours of London, Paris, and various cities in Italy and the German-speaking world. He played before aristocrats and crowned heads, and composed everything from solo sonatas to operas.

The Mozarts were employed by the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, but, reaching adulthood, Wolfgang decided to settle to Vienna in 1781.

His career there was largely very successful. Around 1782 he was Vienna's star composer and performer of piano concertos, but composing *The Marriage of Figaro* changed the course of his career, and the nature of opera, forever.

Mozart's pre-eminence in opera – whether it was fully appreciated at the time stemmed in part from his exposure to Baroque music, and especially that counterpoint of composers such as J S Bach. Mozart was not the only Viennese composer to come within the orbit of Baron Gottfried van Swieten, a friend of CPE Bach and connoisseur of the Baroque, but it was his great insight that counterpoint – where two or more independent melodic lines are sounded at the same time – could make music drama even more exciting: characters could now (as they do in *Figaro*, especially) deliver their lines simultaneously yet coherently.

From mid-1788 to the beginning of 1791 things were difficult for Mozart. As happens in show-business, his popularity in Vienna had temporarily waned for various reasons. Also, the city's musical life was put on hold while the Austro-Hungarian Empire went to war with the Turks – theatres closed and many of Mozart's patrons left town so as not to be conscripted. Short of cash, Mozart and his wife Constanze suffered ill-health and Mozart was depressed at his prospects.

By 1791 the economy had recovered, and, in the last year of his life, Mozart fulfilled numerous commissions such as the Requiem and *The Magic Flute*, which, had he lived, would have made him rich and famous. His death at 35 was probably the result of kidney failure, certainly not poisoning; his burial in a mass grave was in accordance with the practice mandated by the imperial government.

ABOUT THE QUINTET

With friends like Mozart, maybe you can't blame Joseph Leutgeb for giving up his career as a horn player and opening a cheese shop. Leutgeb and Mozart knew each other from Salzburg days, when Leutgeb played in the Archbishop's orchestra, but moved to Vienna around the time that Mozart established himself there. The composer constantly abused his friend: one day when Leutgeb called in to see how a piece was going, Mozart scattered sheets of the manuscript all over the floor and insisted that the poor horn player put them in order again. Often Leutgeb would find 'messages' scrawled on his music by the composer: 'Go it, Signor Asino' [little ass] – 'Take a little breath' – 'Wretched pig' – 'Thank God, here's the end.' And Mozart's dedication of one of the horn concertos notes that he 'has taken pity on Leutgeb, ass, ox and fool, at Vienna, 27 May 1783...'

Whether or not he was ass, ox or fool, long-suffering Leutgeb was clearly a player of the highest quality, and it was for him that Mozart wrote his four concertos, a rondo and, perhaps most challenging of all, the Quintet K407. This work has been described as a mini-concerto, and certainly the fast outer movements are written in what might be called a concertante style; Mozart, does, however, give the strings some wonderful quartet-style writing in the slow movement – quartet-style because even though there are four string instruments, the work has two violas rather than violins as in the conventional string quartet. Mozart, of course, was a violist as well as many other things, and particularly enjoyed playing viola in chamber music as it gave him a sense of being inside the texture. (In his string quintets, too, Mozart uses two violas to enrich the middle strata of the texture.)



Portrait of Mozart (c.1819) by Austrian painter Barbara Krafft (1764–1825).

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The work was completed in late 1782, the time of his early successes in Vienna (notably the German opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*) and his marriage to Constanze Weber. After Mozart's death, it was Leutgeb, 'ass, ox and fool', who helped Constanze collect and order the composer's scores, thus doing us all a great favour. And he did open a cheese-shop (though kept playing professionally) with money he had borrowed from Mozart's father Leopold.

ABOUT THE ADAGIO

The F major Adagio KVAnh 94/580a is a fragment of 73 bars' length, probably composed in 1789 for clarinet and three bassoon, the clarinet's larger cousin. But, as Alexandre Oguey has said, 'someone wrote "Englisch Horn" on the top (possibly because the piece is in F), so people started completing and arranging it for cor and string trio. I made my own with an added bass, so it's more a completion than arrangement.'

Alexandre has transposed the piece to C which shows the cor anglais' timbre beautifully. Mozart's melodies are deceptively simple, at first. But even in the open two bars there is a quiet, chromatic 'dying fall', which prepares us for the increasing emotional intensity and ornamental development of the piece.

ABOUT THE GRANDE SESTETTO

By the mid-1780s when he was ensconced in Vienna, Mozart had written a number of stage works including his breakthrough comic opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. While still in his hometown of Salzburg, however, Mozart had composed *Idomeneo*, a masterly example of the waning *opera seria* ('serious opera', whose gods and tragic heroes would soon be largely replaced on stage by clever valets, chambermaids and countesses). Stylistic aspects of opera can be heard in Mozart's instrumental music throughout his career, especially his concertos, and the influence of *opera seria* can be heard in the *Sinfonia concertante* K364, written at the same time as *Idomeneo*. *Opera seria* was high-minded in tone, moral in message, and tended to use elaborate formal models left over from the Baroque; comic opera was sung, at first by

singing actors, so was simple and catchy, and this left its mark on much instrumental music of the classical period.

Works like the *Sinfonia concertante* represented classical-era rethinking of the Baroque *concerto grosso*, where a small group of soloists is pitted against the full orchestral ensemble. This work, originally for violin and viola solo, was most probably written for the section leaders of the Prince-Archbishop's orchestra, though it was just such music that annoyed the Archbishop as he believed that in such works Mozart was composing to further his own career abroad, rather than glorifying the Salzburg court.

The *Sinfonia concertante* is certainly a substantial piece, and one which Mozart would include in a portfolio of work when seeking commissions in the following years. The opening *Maestoso* movement is broadly designed, with an expansive orchestral introduction – very much in Mannheim style – before the solo instruments enter in music that explores the different characteristics of each. Significantly, the musical material taken up by the soloists is, as Stanley Sadie has noted, completely unrelated to the orchestra ritornello, or refrain. This arrangement seeks to maintain something of that sense of distance.

The operatic mode is most obvious in the *andante* slow movement, which as scholar Maynard Solomon writes, uses 'copious dramatic gestures and recitative-like interjections to impart a somewhat objectified sense of the tragic or pathetic.' Here, as in the first movement, the interweaving of the solo parts suggests a vocal duet; the finale suggests a playful dance and contains some of the flashiest writing in the piece. The arrangement for string sextet that we hear today was made by persons unknown and appeared in 1808, and has been more recently edited by Christopher Hogwood.

Notes by Gordon Kerry

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2022 Collection Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula

Delicate layers of yellow and pink grapefruit define this vintage, offering a refreshing and pure expression of Chardonnay. The palate is soft yet poised, with seamlessly integrated flavours and texture, finishing with a graceful, lingering elegance.



2024 Trial Batch Pinot Gris, Tasmania

A bright, pale straw hue flecked with glittering green zest.

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Generous fruit sweetness on the palate is framed by structured acidity, and a leading fine minerality which gives way to a long silky finish.



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2022 Collection Barossa Grenache

Bright and expressive, with aromas of cherry, raspberry and subtle floral notes.

The palate is silky and generous, showing ripe red fruits, gentle spice and fine, supple tannins, finishing fresh and balanced.

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A woman with blonde hair is playing a violin. The background is a warm, reddish-pink color. The image has a unique visual effect where the background and the violin are blurred into a series of vertical, overlapping bands of color, creating a sense of motion and sound.

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