

Royal Albert Hall to host immersive portable 52-seat 'concert hall in a box' for 10 days in September

The Royal Albert Hall will host a **new, immersive chamber music venue** for 10 days in September, presented by Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) in collaboration with the Royal College of Music. The **ANAM Quartetthaus** is presented as part of the **UK/Australia Season 2021-22**, a major programme of cultural exchange taking place across the two nations.

Making its **first appearance outside Australia**, the ANAM Quartetthaus is a temporary structure designed for listeners to experience the theatrical and visceral art of quartet playing. It seats just 52 patrons in two circles around an **imperceptibly rotating central stage**. No audience member is more than two metres from the performers.

Part of a wider drive around innovation and accessibility at the Hall, it will be on site from 18-28 September 2022 with six performances each day by a mixture of **Australian and British quartets and repertoire**. UK composer **Hannah Kendall** and Australian **Jack Symonds** have each been commissioned to compose new works specifically for the series.

Each concert programme will feature two different quartets and be scheduled on a rotating basis. British artists will include the **Marmen String Quartet, Fiora String Quartet** and **Oriole String Quartet**, joined by Australian groups including the **Affinity String Quartet, Artamidae String Quartet**, and **Australian String Quartet**. ANAM Quartetthaus will be the first performance on the Hall's pedestrianised 1851 Place, following redevelopment of the north side of the venue.

The ANAM Quartetthaus was commissioned by the **Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM)** from Melbourne-based design company 'bluebottle' in 2011, and has previously been presented by a number of Australian arts festivals. Visiting the structure at its debut in Australia **David Harrington, founder of the Kronos Quartet** described ANAM Quartetthaus as representing "the biggest leap in immediacy and potency for the string quartet as an art form since microphones and speakers arrived...like having a portable 54-seat Esterhazy Palace."

The UK/Australia Season is a major new cultural exchange celebrating the diverse and innovative artist communities and cultural sectors of each nation. A collaboration between the British Council and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Season is a vibrant programme spanning theatre, film, visual arts, dance, design, architecture, music, literature, higher education and a public engagement programme.

The Season launched in both countries in September 2021 with the theme - "Who Are We Now?", reflecting on the countries' joint history, current relationships, and future together.

ANAM Quartetthaus is supported by the Australian, Victorian and South Australian Governments, and a consortium of philanthropists as part of the UK/Australia Season 2021-2022.

ENDS

Quotes

Lucy Noble, Artistic Director of the Royal Albert Hall, said: "We're delighted to be taking part in the UK/Australia season and to host such an innovative performance concept for the first time outside Australia – as well as opening up new performance spaces around our site. The design of the ANAM Quartetthaus creates a completely new way of experiencing live music and we can't wait to get inside."

ANAM Artistic Director Paavali Jumppanen said: “ANAM Quartetthaus grew from a simple idea: to create a space shaped at every turn by the music to be performed within it. A venue released from the expansive rhetoric of traditional concert presentation, just as the intimate musical form of the string quartet is stripped of the heavier rhetoric of larger scale genres. Bringing together six string quartets, 24 musicians, 12 from Australia and the UK each to perform music composed by past and present Australian and British composers in the ANAM Quartetthaus, provides an up-to-date vehicle to examine the question “Where Are We Now?”

Michael Naphthali, UK/Australia Season Director, said: “When confronting the provocation — “Who Are We Now?” — posed by the UK/Australia Season, a colossal creative response is heard literally and figurative in the shape of ANAM Quartetthaus. At once a study in cross-discipline collaboration, ANAM Quartetthaus fuses the need for acoustic intimacy along with our desire for improved access to that performance. Who Are We Now? We are a nation of innovators who, in the case of ANAM Quartetthaus, honour the traditions of chamber music whilst turning its presentation on its head. The UK / Australia Season is excited to support this unique endeavour bringing together the most comprehensive celebration of Australian and British quartet writing ever performed, resting in the shadow of the iconic Royal Albert Hall. It’s truly a highlight of the Season.”

David Harrington (Kronos Quartet) said after attending the inaugural season in Melbourne: “ANAM Quartetthaus represents the biggest leap in immediacy and potency for the string quartet as an art form since microphones and speakers arrived. ANAM Quartetthaus is like having a portable 52-seat Esterhazy Palace. I want one in my back yard! When people begin to realize how visceral the experience can be of hearing the flesh of fingers and rosined horse hair attack the strings, when the life-altering experience of being able to be so close together with the inner voice of music becomes known, then the reason the string quartet is so alive and thriving will be clear: because it sounds so intensely and wondrously human.”

Listings info

Royal Albert Hall
Kensington Gore
London SW7 2AP
020 7589 8212

ANAM Quartetthaus

Sun 18 – Wed 28 September

12PM, 1:30PM, 3PM, 4:30PM, 6PM, 8PM, 9:30PM (Fri 23 – Sat 24 only)

Tickets from £16.50

Press contact: Paul Bernstein, paulb@royalalberthall.com

About the Royal Albert Hall

The Royal Albert Hall is the world’s most famous stage. Throughout its 150-year history, it has welcomed a who’s who of world-renowned figures: artists, athletes and activists. No other place on earth has played host to Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein and Muhammad Ali; Ella Fitzgerald, The Beatles and Adele. This was the Suffragettes’ “temple of liberty” – the site of Votes for Women rallies that helped change the course of British history – the home of the Stonewall concerts, and a place of celebration during Nelson Mandela’s state visit. But its eccentric history has also seen it used for a séance, an indoor marathon and the world’s first bodybuilding contest (judged by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle).

From 2021 to 2023, the Hall celebrates its 150th birthday, with a special programme of events including major commissions from British artists, headline performances from musical legends, and a series of showcases promoting the next generation of talent. The season is designed to reflect Prince Albert’s founding vision of the venue: to promote the arts and sciences, and to offer a place of celebration, inspiration and commemoration for the country as a whole.

In an ordinary year, the Hall's extraordinary auditorium presents around 400 world-class events: encompassing rock, pop and classical music, theatre, dance, films, Cirque du Soleil and sport. It typically welcomes 1.8 million visitors a year, while its 1,000 events in secondary spaces help to attract a young, diverse audience. Its Engagement programme includes music therapy, concerts in the community, and workshops with A-list artists, often in collaboration with other charities, such as Nordoff Robbins.

About UK/Australia Season 2021-22: The UK/Australia Season is a joint initiative by the British Council and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Season highlights the breadth of partnership between Australia and the UK and aims to deepen and extend cultural connections. The Season started in September 2021 and concludes in March 2022 in Australia and in December 2022 in the UK. The theme 'Who Are We Now?' will reflect on our history, explore our current relationship, and imagine our future together. The Season will feature programming for all ages and will celebrate the diversity of cultures and languages in both countries. It will emphasise Australia's First Nations voices, enable cultural exchange with Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, and the diverse societies that have emerged in both Australia and the UK through migration.
ukaustraliasession.com

About the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: The Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) works closely with a broad range of partners to advance Australia's security and prosperity globally. Relationships are at the heart of DFAT work. Through initiatives like the UK/Australia Season, DFAT works with partners to showcase Australia as an innovative, creative, diverse, and tolerant nation, which assists with strengthening Australia's influence, reputation, reach and relationships overseas.
dfat.gov.au

About the British Council: The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education, and the English language. In 2019-2020 the British Council reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934 the British Council is a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body and receives 14.5 per cent core funding grant from the UK government.
britishcouncil.org.au

About The Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM): ANAM is regarded as one of the world's leading performance training academies. It takes in the most brilliant musicians from Australia and New Zealand and sends them out into the world as artists with the skill, courage and imagination to be the next music leaders. ANAM is a central part of Australia's cultural life. ANAM musicians may find themselves sitting on the floor with a class of local third graders one day, and performing alongside the world's finest artists on stages across the country the next. Its musicians regularly perform with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Melbourne, West Australian and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras and present over 180 performances each year. ANAM alumni work in orchestras and chamber ensembles around the world, perform as soloists, contribute to educating the next generation of musicians, and are the recipients of major national and international awards. ANAM's partners increasingly include the world's great academies and music organisations.