

# DAVID OSBORNE

COMPOSER/ VIOLINIST/ CONDUCTOR

David Osborne is an Australian Composer, Violinist, Conductor and Teacher who has been living and working in Berlin, Germany since 2015. The major project he is currently developing is an opera based on Ethel Pedley's 19th century children's classic 'Dot and the Kangaroo'.

In 2013 and 2014, David was employed by the Sydney based documentary film making company Curiousworks as a music specialist. In this capacity he developed music for a series of short films being made in the City of Hume in Melbourne's northern suburbs involving community members from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. His role also entailed assisting these community members to develop their own musical performance skills. It was an ideal situation for a musician who is passionate about both reaching new audiences and fostering grass-roots participation. In light of this work, he received the City of Hume Arts Award for 2014.



In addition to a rigorous live performance and recording schedule, he has taught violin and viola for 30 years, mostly in private practice but also from 2003 to 2011 at Brunswick South Primary School in inner Melbourne and as a mentor for senior string players at Princes Hill Secondary College.

David is perhaps best known as the founder and director of the Raga Dolls Salon Orchestra- an ensemble that from 1998 to 2012, won a large following through their unique and innovative approach to the performance of classical music. The orchestra performed regularly to large audiences in venues such as the Melbourne Recital Centre's Elisabeth Murdoch Hall, The Famous Spiegel tent, The City Recital Hall Angel Place Sydney, and the Iwaki Auditorium Melbourne from whence three of their concerts were broadcast live on ABC Classic FM. The Raga Dolls made a number of Radio and Television appearances, including on popular quiz show Spicks and Specks, a performance that features on that program's 'best of' compilation. The Raga Dolls released five CDs including 'Late Harvest' on the ABC Classics label and 'Stray Dog Waltz and Other Stories' which was awarded a rare maximum score of five stars in a review by Deborah Jones in the Weekend Australian. He is contracted as a composer to ABC Music Publishing. For more on David's performance philosophy, please refer to the article on the following page, that appeared originally in the Melbourne Age in May 2012.

During an extensive career, David has worked across a variety of different fields including music theatre, popular and world music. As resident arranger at Suite 16 Audio Productions Brisbane he composed, orchestrated and conducted the recording of a Station ID for Channel 7 and a commercial for the Brisbane Courier Mail. He also arranged and conducted the recording of the theme music for current affair show 'State Affair' and the theme music for the 1992 Commonwealth Festival of the Arts. David composed incidental music for the documentary 'The Cape York Connection' broadcast on Channel 7's 'The World Around Us'.

David Osborne grew up in Canberra where he studied violin with Josette Esquedin-Morgan and at the Canberra School of Music with Vincent Edwards. At the age of 15 after receiving a rare A+ Grade for the AMEB 8th grade exam he was offered a scholarship to the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He has played violin as a professional with the Canberra Symphony, Australian Pops and Queensland Theatre (later Philharmonic) Orchestras whom he also conducted. He completed the Symphony Australia conducting course under David Porcelijn in 1998, and has also studied conducting with Richard Gill.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND MUSICAL EXAMPLES PLEASE VISIT [davidrosborne.com](http://davidrosborne.com)**  
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# REVIEWS

*“It is approachable and immediately enjoyable, compositionally assured and performed with polish and verve.”*

**Malcolm Tattersall, MCA Music Forum (July 2009)**

*“This mood was immediately established by the opening piece of the program, Osborne’s lively and welcomingly *Afternoon Visitors*, which as members of the audience we certainly were, introducing us to the fine tonal balance and assurance of this ensemble during the ensuing performance.”*

**W.L. Hoffmann, The Canberra Times (November 2008)**

*“Its musical director, David Osborne, has great verve and energy, as well as composition, orchestrating and conducting skills of a high order, and his ability and enthusiasm stimulate and inspire both players and audience.”*

**Darryl Emmerson, Australian Stage (October 2008)**

*“... it’s good to be reminded of a mythical world of honour, beauty, optimism and even a little wit. Melbourne multi instrumentalist David Osborne has long championed such a world through his music. Now his quartet, the *Raga Dolls*, has grown into a full-blown orchestra, allowing his music to sweep across time and space.*

*... images of Vienna, Budapest and Paris, the crystal glistening in the light of a thousand candles...*

*...Osborne adds weight to his brew by interspersing the frivolity with the occasional realisation of an aching sadness...*

**John Shand, The Sydney Morning Herald (October 2005)**

*“Osborne is clearly a fine musician who delights in transforming the technical challenges of complex violin solos into excellent, personalised performances. His own compositions range in length from the short, whimsical *Watercolour* of two-minutes duration, to the complex and evocative *Masquerade* which leads us up and down narrow stairways, through dark alleyways into smoky dance halls and late-night cafes as we wander a Bohemian path through old Paris.*

*...Stray Dog Waltz, combines alluring solo violin passages and haunting accordion melodies within the sensual momentum of a European waltz. Osborne stretches the melody rhythmically, adding spaciousness and increasing dramatic tension to transform the traditional dance form into a new descriptive genre”.*

**Jennifer Gall, Muse (February 2003)**

*“The Melbourne-based band calls itself a salon ensemble, which conjures up images of red velvet, fringed lampshades and people with a past. On *Stray Dog Waltz* the music lives up to the promise, having the fabulously languorous feel of a slightly louche tea room...*

*...Another Waltz is lushly romantic, Another Tango is slow and sexy and Left Again the full-on, smoky cabaret room tragedy.*

*Exceptionally evocative.”*

*\*\*\*\*\* (Five stars)*

**Deborah Jones, The Weekend Australian (January 2003)**

# Raga Dolls take the starch out of stuffed shirt rituals

By Robin Usher, *The Age* May 11 2012

IT COMES as a surprise when composer and founder of the Raga Dolls Salon Orchestra, David Osborne, nominates Franz Schubert as his favourite composer, because he dislikes much of what classical music has come to represent.

"A lot of classical music puts the performers on a pedestal, playing down to the audience," he says. "It is my greatest love but I have no love at all for the system surrounding it."

Osborne's solution was to start his own group, first as a quartet in 2000, expanding to 14 musicians in 2005.

"We are not a conventional orchestra," he says. "Not many of them feature guitar or piano accordion."

So where does Schubert come in, best known for his piano and chamber works, as well as songs?

"He wrote really good tunes that are incredibly adaptable," he says. "He didn't get many opportunities to play his music in concert halls. It is unique to hear it now played with our array of instruments."

While the Raga Dolls orchestra has played at the Melbourne Recital Centre and is performing at Sydney's City Recital Hall later this month, he prefers smaller venues and community halls, citing the Albert Park Yacht Club where they play on May 18.

He says it has "fantastic acoustics and great atmosphere", with the audience of about 160 people close to the performers.

"We don't care when people clap or try to make anyone feel uncomfortable if they fail to conform to classical music's quasi-religious ritual," he says. "We tell jokes. We laugh at ourselves. We are probably happier playing in the Stanhope Community Hall than the Elisabeth Murdoch Hall."

Osborne studied violin as a teenager in Canberra but was "too rebellious" to continue. Instead he moved to Brisbane and a variety of jobs included playing rock guitar in a band that toured regional centres.

"They were very testing audiences and I slowly realised the need for musicians to listen to their opinions," he says.

"Our concerts now are similar to rock shows in some ways. There is no program and we make sure we talk to the audience between songs to break down barriers. Our main aim is to be entertaining."

He points out how different this is to classical music concerts where the only communication with the audience is likely to come during encores. "People lap it up, so why not start that way, rather than being so formal and intense all the time?"

He says a eureka moment came five years ago when the orchestra was playing in Stanhope's Community Hall. "We played across the hall and the audience was in an arc in front of us and up on the stage," he says. "I realised you could reach out to people using a different dynamic."

The approach of the Raga Dolls - Osborne likes the name because it is catchy, not because of any reference to Indian music - has not alienated traditional classical music audiences. He says the group has entered the musical mainstream "by stealth", mainly through the support of ABC Classic FM.

"It has supported the orchestra from the beginning through its programs, some of which are really diverse. Now we have crossed over into formal programming."

The group has released four albums, and a new live recording is due out this month.

The concerts at the yacht club and in Warburton will also include Osborne's Photo Album, a three-movement work commissioned by Julian Burnside, QC, last year.

"Support like that keeps me going," he says. "We operate on the smell-of-an-oily-rag model, which makes it viable to get by. We get private and corporate support but it remains a huge struggle."