



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

GOVERNOR'S PERFORMANCE SERIES:

MICHELLE NICOLLE QUARTET

Tuesday 21 April 2026

Acknowledgments

This evening's musicians, **Michelle Nicolle, Ronny Ferella, Tom Lee and Geoff Hughes**

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Eastern Kulin Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It is a pleasure to welcome you all here for the latest instalment of the Governor's Performance Series.

This Ballroom has, for a long time, been used as a space to celebrate the achievements of our State and to tell the stories of its people.

Tonight, we gather to enjoy one of the longstanding strengths built and sustained by Victorians – that being our vibrant cultural landscape, and our depth of local musical talent.

The enjoyment of music is found in all cultures across the world and, importantly, it acts as a bridge between them.

Though its appreciation is universal, the ways in which music is created and performed are deeply anchored in time and place.

Music can speak without language, and yet its rhythms and notes have dialects, and its expression says different things to different audiences.

Today, there is a well-established jazz scene on our shores, with its origins as far back as the 1920s.

And for almost three decades, the Melbourne International Jazz Festival has built on this strength.

It is a jazz scene with a distinct creative flavour.

We might – as we often do – put that uniqueness down to our geographic separation from the rest of the world.

But that doesn't tell the full story.

Creative identity doesn't evolve in isolation – it relies on people collaborating with one another to generate shared meaning.

Renowned composer Paul Grabowsky put it well when he opined of Australians:

“...we have been forced to look to our own scene to find the inspiration we need...”

“[We] turn out to be extremely resourceful people... This is why great jazz music does come out of Australia because we are great improvisers, we have to be... Australia is an improvisation.”

As Paul sees it, our freedom and willingness to experiment is one of the reasons why we are home to so many talented players who don't sound like anyone else.

Australians – and Victorians – have been pioneering (or improvising) across our cultural landscape for many decades.

Many of them have been recognised in this very ballroom, and we could name any number of them who have made a profound contribution to the local jazz scene.

But music cannot be measured by 'accolades', and the work of no one person can define a style or genre.

It can only be felt – and to be felt you need to have an audience.

Our jazz scene would not be possible without passionate and attentive listeners to appreciate it.

That includes all of you, gathered here tonight.

In building that shared meaning over a long time, the outcomes are clear:

It is more than simply jazz performed in Australia – it is *Australian jazz*.

In many ways, Australia continues to be an improvisation in the broad sense – and each day we navigate the questions concerning who we are and where we want to go as a nation.

These are no doubt important questions to ask.

Yet it is fair to say that without having a thriving arts and cultural scene, no matter what our answers are – it would all feel much emptier.

In that spirit, I hope you enjoy tonight's performance as another shining example of this great strength of our State.

Thank you.