

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** GSAF 2013.03.31

**DATE:** Sunday March 31, 2013

**LOCATION:** The incident reportedly took place in the Tasman Sea at Terrigal Beach, New South Wales, Australia.

**NAME:** Richard Tognetti. He is the Australian Chamber Orchestra director and lead violinist whose DVD *The Reef* has just been released.

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 47-year-old male, and he was wearing a wetsuit.



*Richard Tognetti*

## **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 83% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, March 27, 2013.

**NARRATIVE:** According to the press report (see next page), Tognetti was riding the waves for a series of action shots in an extreme sports magazine. He was carrying a \$10-million violin with him on the water to feature as part of the daredevil shoot. The 1743 Carrothus violin, made by Italian luthier Guarneri del Gesù, was on loan from a private donor. It was the photographer who first noticed a large shark had ventured into the shallow waters and was circling them. "It all happened so fast," Tognetti said, "But that violin is like an extension of my body, so I reacted like a lioness defending her cubs." Tognetti managed to protect the precious instrument, his wet-suited body as a barrier, and warded off the shark by stabbing it in the nose with the bow.

**INJURY:** It was reported that the surfer was not injured, but his board was damaged. The violin sustained some damage: the chin rest is missing and some teeth marks and splintered particles of wood are clearly visible. "The prognosis is good and the violin is expected to make a full recovery," said Tognetti. Several of the world's renowned luthiers have already volunteered their services and expertise for the repair job, said an ACO spokesperson, and initial damage assessment suggests that the rich sound of the instrument can be preserved.

**SPECIES:** The incident was alleged to involve a white shark, two metres in length, **but this incident was a hoax — an April Fool's joke — possibly for additional publicity for *The Reef*.** The Photoshop image on the next page was a give-away (and who would take a \$10 million violin to sea on a surfboard?). On April 4th, both Al Brenneka of Shark Attack Survivors and John West of the Australian Shark Attack File concurred that the alleged incident was a hoax.

### Great white takes chunk out of \$10-million instrument as surfing violinist wrestles instrument from its jaws.

Richard Tognetti had a terrifying brush with death yesterday morning when he encountered a rogue shark at a favourite surfing spot at Terrigal Beach.

The Australian Chamber Orchestra artistic director and lead violinist, a national treasure, escaped unscathed – but his \$10-million violin, on his person at the time, did not fare so well.

Tognetti's surfboard, valued at over \$1,000, also sustained damage, and the soloist lost his earring in the tumult.



*Richard Tognetti: Escaping from white shark*

A keen surfer whose DVD *The Reef* has just been released, Tognetti was riding the waves for a series of action shots in an extreme sports magazine, having brought the instrument out on the water to feature as part of the daredevil shoot. It was the photographer who first noticed that a large shark had ventured into the shallow waters and was circling them. Eyewitness accounts suggest it was a great white spanning over two metres in length. And it was heading straight towards the violinist and his rare, 250-year-old Guarneri. "It all happened so fast," Tognetti recalls, "But that violin is like an extension of my body, so I reacted like a lioness defending her cubs."

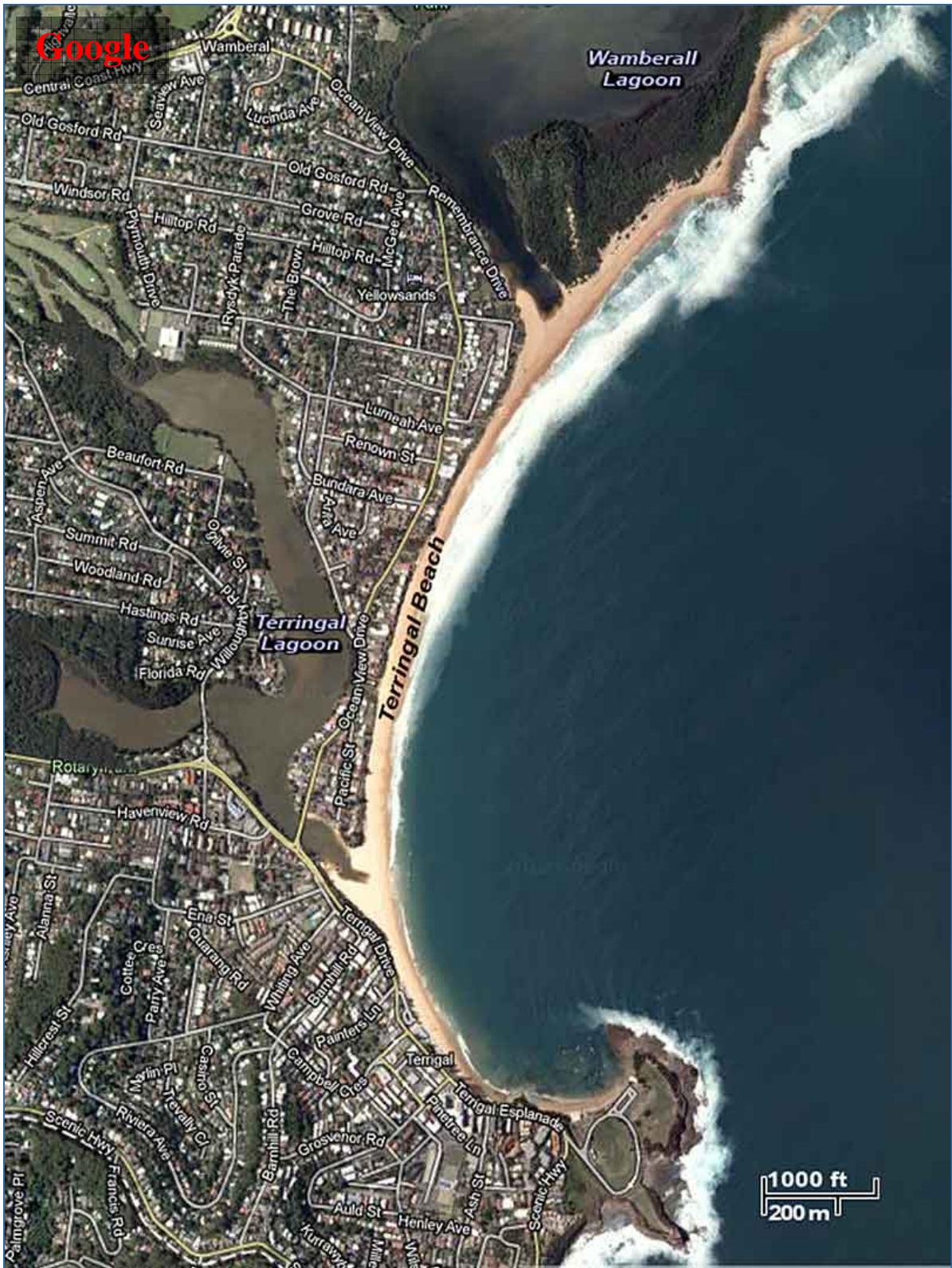
Tognetti managed to protect the precious instrument with his wet-suited body acting as a barrier, and warded off the shark by stabbing it in the nose with the bow. Nonetheless, the 1743 Carrodus violin made by Italian luthier Guarneri del Gesù, on loan from a private donor, sustained some damage: the chin rest is missing and some teeth marks and splintered particles of wood are clearly visible.

"I'm shocked and heartbroken," said Tognetti from his beachside home, "But the prognosis is good and the violin is expected to make a full recovery." Several of the world's renowned luthiers have already volunteered their services and expertise for the repair job, said an ACO spokesperson, and initial damage assessment suggests that the rich sound of the instrument can be preserved.

The sonic adventurer and surfing enthusiast has faced the elements before, notably when he starred in and co-created the 2008 documentary *Musica Surfica*. In *The Reef*, musicians and surfers traveled along the coast of northern Western Australia to visit and perform at the heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef. But Tognetti is adamant yesterday's attack was his first close encounter with a shark.

Tognetti has been offered trauma counselling and was advised to remain hospitalised for overnight observation. But the intrepid violinist has resumed his touring schedule and says he is already itching to catch a wave in the near future. "The ACO is all about taking risks," he said.

**SOURCE:** Melissa Lesnie, Limelight Magazine, April 1, 2013, <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/338257,tognettis-violin-damaged-in-shark-attack.aspx>



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**Orchestra evokes life and death on the reef**  
*Unusual artistic project is immersed in music and surfing.*

SURFING is not a prerequisite to playing with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. But given its artistic director and lead violinist Richard Tognetti's known passion for the pursuit, "it doesn't hurt", cellist Julian Thompson says.

In fact, he's one of only three classical musicians riding the deep blue cliffs off north Western Australia in *The Reef*, the ACO's latest union of surf film and live music. The folk, indigenous and hard rock elements were blow-ins from down the beach. "Some of the music Richard had brought along to suit various moods he was after," Thompson says of the two weeks of filming in Gnaraloo last May. Pieces by Bach, Beethoven, Shostakovich and Rachmaninov will be performed against the final cut. "But when we were on the ground up there, Steve Pigram came down from Broome and Mark Atkins came up with his didge so we'd be sitting around the fire playing all kinds of stuff.



*A still from The Reef, which combines classical and contemporary music with surfing footage shot at Gnaraloo, Western Australia.*

"It was quite an evolution. It happened that a bunch of Avalon surfers were up there and at one point they were jamming on this Alice In Chains tune, *Them Bones*. So we dragged them into the show, too." The sprawl of the final repertoire is no more than the film's concept demands. It was hatched by Jan Juc-based director Mick Sowry, who first worked with Tognetti on the documentary *Musica Surfica* in 2008. But whereas that film was conceived to explore the parallels between physical and creative risk, *The Reef* had a bigger wave to catch. "My initial thing was, OK, we can compress two weeks into one idealised day, 'the mythic day'," Sowry says. "But while I was up there something else occurred to me. This day is a metaphor for your life.

"In a sense, *The Reef* is birth to death. Within it, there are 22 sequential pieces of music that take you through an emotional journey as much as they do a journey of the day. "There's birth and hope and tribulation and struggle and joy ... all of these things we're trying to invoke as we go through the performance."

To surfers and non-surfers alike, the filmmaker's near religious tone is a clear sign of a lifelong practitioner. In fact it was Sowry, as an advertising creative with a sense that his life purpose was slipping away, who first contacted Tognetti to consider a meaningful union of surf, film and music. "I'm not trying to make some kind of mystical thing. It's not trying to be *Morning of the Earth*," he says. "What I'm hoping for is a set of metaphors for stuff that we go through in life. Part of the reason Richard is doing this is to help people hear classical music, too, and to hear it differently."

That mission was accomplished, according to Julian Thompson, on *The Reef's* premiere run from the Top End down the Western Australian coast last spring. "There's some pretty wild contemporary art music in there: George Crumb and [Gyorgy] Ligeti; things those audiences would probably never choose to go hear in concert, but in this semi-cinematic context, they loved it," the cellist says.

Even from the beach, so did Mick Sowry. "One of the things you enjoy about surfing as your powers start to fail is just being there," he says. "With cameras as they are now, you can get such subtlety of detail. There's a lot of very slow motion stuff in the film so you can just take it all in. For non-surfers, the response is generally 'God, it's a wonderland out there.'" The ACO and guests perform *The Reef* at Hamer Hall on February 24 and 25.

**SOURCE:** Michael Dwyer, February 18, 2013, Sydney Morning Herald, <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/orchestra-evokes-life-and-death-on-the-reef-20130217-2el59.html>