

**MEDIA RELEASE**

22 June 2016



(L – R) The late David Clarke AO (former Chairman of Opera Australia), Prof The Hon Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO, Susan Wakil and Isaac

**Susan and Isaac Wakil give \$1.5m to Opera Australia to enable greater access to performances**

For more than three decades, Susan and Isaac Wakil have been loyal subscribers and patrons of Opera Australia and have expressed the desire to find ways of sharing their love of opera. In an extraordinarily generous gesture, the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation has given Opera Australia \$1.5m over five years to provide greatly discounted tickets to people who have yet to experience an opera in either Sydney or Melbourne.

Opera Australia will administer the access program, which includes \$20 tickets to all regular seasons at the Sydney Opera House and Arts Centre Melbourne. The access program aims to attract newcomers to the opera, enabling them to attend at a significantly reduced ticket price. Opera Australia will also work with its charity partners to raise awareness of the program amongst disadvantaged groups.

“Susan and I have experienced the joy of opera and have had countless memorable evenings at the Sydney Opera House. We were therefore delighted when Craig Hassall approached us to support a new access program which will make it easier for people to experience a night at the opera for the first time” said Isaac Wakil.

The Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation is also sponsoring the forthcoming production of *Turandot* which opens at the Sydney Opera House on June 24. This magnificent production, directed by Graeme Murphy, is an audience favourite and the Foundation chose to sponsor it to highlight the importance of popular productions in introducing new audiences to opera.

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The donation to Opera Australia comes shortly after the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation gave \$10.8m to the University of Sydney Faculty of Nursing in appreciation of the contribution nurses made to the community.

“We are absolutely thrilled by the significant contribution Susan and Isaac Wakil have made to the life of Opera Australia over many decades. They have been loyal Patrons for more than 30 years and now, have made a substantial donation to help Opera Australia develop a new audience. This gives us great encouragement to develop this program”, said Craig Hassall, Chief Executive of Opera Australia. “This donation allows us to fulfil one of our greatest ambitions – enabling audience members to sample opera for the first time”.

In order to give people the best possible first experience of opera, Opera Australia will offer the best available tickets to popular operas using a ballot system with tickets available before the performance. Further information about how to register for the Susan and Isaac Foundation Access Program will be announced shortly.

### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

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