

MEDIA RELEASE

Opera Australia brings one of children's favourite fairy tales to primary schools:

Hansel & Gretel NSW schools tour launches at Marrickville West Primary School



Belinda Dalton as *Gretel* and Angela Hogan as *Hansel*. Photographer: Prudence Upton.

February 2016: Opera Australia's touring program will present the opera version of *Hansel and Gretel* to NSW schools, launching at Marrickville West Primary School on Friday 19 February, 2016.

Hansel and Gretel toured Victorian schools last year to the delight of thousands of children. Over all, this production will be performed over 200 times in more than 150 primary schools to approximately 45,000 children.

Based on the classic Brothers Grimm fairytale, the opera has been a favourite of young audiences for over one hundred years. With familiar characters performed by an energetic and talented cast, *Hansel and Gretel* is sure to delight children across the state from February to early September 2016.

The primary school tours have been run by Opera Australia since 1998, performing to well over one million children in this time. Showing people of all ages, especially children that operas come in all shapes and sizes is a strong way to develop a foundation of knowledge and interest in opera within the wider community.

Opera Australia's Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini said, "Taking opera to primary schools across NSW is an important part of Opera Australia's commitment to new audiences, and one that we particularly enjoy, not only for its importance in education, but also for the pure fun of entertaining and engaging with our youngest audiences."

Hansel and Gretel was originally devised and directed by **Christine Anketell** especially for a younger audience. She worked closely with **Tim Sexton** and **Ian Bone** who adapted the music and libretto to under one hour. This 2016 production is directed by **Sally Blackwood**, in conjunction with Musical Director **Michael Curtain** and features a highly talented rotational cast of six Opera Australia performers - **Emily Barber**, **Belinda Dalton**, **Angela Hogan**, **Jared Lillehagen**, **Eugene Raggio** and **Jessica Westcott** - to make the production captivating and entertaining.

"Opera Australia prides itself on engaging some of Australia's finest emerging singers to perform on our Schools Tours." says Sandra Willis, Executive Producer of Touring and Outreach at Opera Australia. "These productions provide a wonderful opportunity for children all around NSW to experience the magic of opera and live performance in their own school."

Creatives

Composer **Engelbert Humperdinck**

Directed by **Sally Blackwood**

Musical Director **Michael Curtain**

Originally Devised & Directed by **Christine Anketell**

Music and Libretto adapted by **Tim Sexton & Ian Bone**

Cast

Father **Eugene Raggio / Jared Lillehagen**

Gretel **Jessica Westcott / Belinda Dalton**

Hansel **Emily Barber / Angela Hogan**

Mother/Witch/Fairy **Angela Hogan / Belinda Dalton**

Pianists **Michael Curtain / Bradley Gilchrist**

Performance information

Tour Dates

22 February – 2 September 2016

Running time

60mins, no interval. Includes Q&A Session.

Performed in English. Teachers are sent Education Kits about the performance beforehand, in order to introduce the children to the opera and the music.

Schools Enquiries

Teachers can book performances by contacting
Pie Productions

1800 804 707

02 9386 9022

admin@pieproductions.com.au

Media enquiries

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About Opera Australia and the Schools Tour

Opera Australia is Australia's national opera company, presenting more than 700 performances and playing to more than half a million people each year.

Opera is a vital part of Australia's cultural landscape. We perform the world's best loved operas under the iconic sails of the Sydney Opera House and at Arts Centre Melbourne, as well as in school halls and outback towns, on Sydney Harbour and the Gold Coast beach. Our performances are broadcast in cinemas, on national television and ABC radio. We also present lavish musicals and concerts around the country.

We bring exciting international talent to the Australian stage, and support the careers of hundreds of Australian singers, musicians and artisans. It is committed to work that communicates to all Australians through an operatic medium which resonates with 21st century audiences and contemporary society.

About the Opera

Hansel and Gretel was written by 19th century composer Engelbert Humperdinck, who described it as "a fairytale opera". The libretto was written by the composer's sister, based on the famous Brothers Grimm story of the same name. It has many songs familiar to families around the world, the most famous being the *Abendsegen* ("Evening Benediction") from Act 2.

The opera was first performed in Weimar, Germany in 1893, conducted by the celebrated composer Richard Strauss. This was followed by a Hamburg premiere the following year, conducted by the equally renowned composer, Gustav Mahler. Its timeless appeal may be attributed to the story's classic themes of children seeking independence and adventure, overcoming fear, finding comfort in family, and through the opera's beautiful, easy-to-sing melodies that bring to life this enduring fairy tale.

-ENDS-

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