A new, highly acclaimed production of Szymanowski's *King Roger* will have its Australian premiere at the Sydney Opera House this summer, offering audiences a rare opportunity to experience not only an extraordinary piece of work that has never been performed in this country, but also the first Polish opera staged by Opera Australia.

Szymanowski’s intoxicating, iridescent music is rarely heard on the opera stage so this is a highly anticipated staging of a 20th-century Polish masterpiece.

A co-production with the Royal Opera House and Dallas Opera, it was first staged in Covent Garden where critics described director Kasper Holten’s arresting staging as a “major artistic triumph” (The Telegraph, UK).

“Composer Karol Szymanowski is simply wonderful. This is the first time *King Roger* has been performed in Australia and it’s an extraordinary piece of music,” said Opera Australia Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini.

“Szymanowski was fascinated by the melting pot of people and cultures in the Mediterranean, particularly in Sicily. The Arabic musical influences in the score of King Roger reflect the many parallel and integrated cultures that existed there during the early part of the 20th century.

“Under the direction of Kasper Holten, who also directed *Eugene Onegin* for Opera Australia, the company is delighted to continue its association with Covent Garden. It’s a terrific relationship,” he said.

Italian maestro Andrea Molino returns to conduct a brilliant cast including Opera Australia’s own Principal Artists Lorina Gore and Michael Honeyman in the challenging title roles of King Roger and Roxana respectively along with James Egglestone, Dominica Matthews and Gennadi Dubinsky.

They will be joined by one of today’s great tenors, Albanian / Italian Saimir Pirgu, making his debut with Opera Australia in the role of the Shepherd. Mentored by Pavarotti, Pirgu comes to Sydney from the London premiere of this production.

Adding to the spectacle are the incredible costumes and an unforgettable set under the direction of Danish Set and Costume Designer Steffen Aarfing.

The opera traces the enlightenment of the Christian King Roger II by a young shepherd who represents pagan principles. The shepherd’s voice is seen as lyrical and exotic, his message is dangerously seductive, and one by one, the people abandon themselves to the worship of desire, pure in its profanity. *King Roger* struggles with his own passions: choosing between the sacred love he knows and the sensuous, glittering realm of hedonism preached by the shepherd.
Creatives
Conductor Andrea Molino
Director Kasper Holten
Revival Director Amy Lane
Assistant Director Matthew Barclay
Set and Costume Designer Steffen Aarfing
Lighting Designer Jon Clark
Video Designer Luke Halls
Choreographer Cathy Marston
Fight Coordinator Nigel Poulton

Cast
King Roger II Michael Honeyman
Roxana Lorina Gore
Shepherd Saimir Pirgu
Edrisi James Egglestone
Deaconess Dominica Matthews
Archiereios Gennadi Dubinsky

With the Opera Australia Orchestra and Opera Australia Chorus

Performance information
Evenings at 7.30pm
January 20, 28, 31
February 2, 4, 8, 15
Saturday Matinee at 1pm
February 11

Running time
Two hours including one interval
Performed in Polish with English surtitles

Bookings
Adult tickets from $72 (fees may apply)
Group and concession prices available for most performances.
$50 Student Rush available for most performances (fees may apply)
Opera Australia Box Office (02) 9318 8200
www.opera.org.au

Joan Sutherland Theatre, Sydney Opera House

Co-production with the Royal Opera House and Dallas Opera.
Organised in collaboration with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as part of the Polska Music program.

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