

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Szymanowski | Directed by Kasper Holten | Conducted by Andrea Molino

# Highly anticipated Melbourne premiere of Szymanowski's King Roger

19 – 27 May | State Theatre, Arts Centre Melbourne

Starring | Michael Honeyman | Lorina Gore | Arthur Espiritu



A new, highly acclaimed production of Szymanowski's *King Roger* will premiere in Melbourne this autumn, offering audiences a rare opportunity to experience an extraordinary piece of work that is being performed for the first time in Australia in 2017.

It is also the first time a Polish opera is being 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. It's an honour to be bringing *King Roger* to Australia for the first time in 2017, it's a fantastic production and 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. Singing a Polish opera for the first time in their lives, Opera Australia's own Principal Artists Michael Honeyman and Lorina Gore play the challenging title roles of King Roger and Roxana respectively, along with James Egglestone, Dominica Matthews and Gennadi Dubinsky.

They will be joined by sought-after Filipino-American tenor Arthur Espiritu who will play the role of the enigmatic and persuasive Shepherd.

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

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. One by one the people abandon themselves to the worship of desire, pure in its profanity while 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 **Matthew Barclay**  
 Set and Costume Designer **Steffen Aarfing**  
 Lighting Designer **Jon Clark**  
 Video Designer **Luke Halls**  
 Choreographer **Cathy Marston**

**Cast**

King Roger II **Michael Honeyman**  
 Roxana **Lorina Gore**  
 Shepherd **Arthur Espiritu**  
 Edrisi **James Egglestone**  
 Deaconess **Dominica Matthews**  
 Archiereios **Gennadi Dubinsky**

**With Orchestra Victoria and the Opera Australia Chorus**

**Performance information**

**Evenings at 7.30pm**

May 19, 23, 25, 27, 20, 28, 31

**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  
 (03) 9685 3700

[www.opera.org.au](http://www.opera.org.au)

**State Theatre, Arts Centre Melbourne**

**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.**

**Media enquiries**

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