

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 9 June 2017

Opera Australia's 2016 Annual Report reveals 60th Anniversary was a year of outstanding financial and artistic success



Opera Australia capped off its 60th Anniversary year with an outstanding financial and artistic result, making exceptionally strong gains on the previous year's financial performance that resulted in a significant trading surplus of \$3.0 million.

Opera Australia Chairman David Mortimer AO said, "The 2016 financial outcome is a remarkable turnaround year-on-year for the Company and a tribute to Chief Executive Craig Hassall's leadership and Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini's inspired programming. It is also a tribute to the considerable output from the hard-working, productive, creative and administrative workforce, that forms the backbone of Australia's largest performing arts company."

The resoundingly successful artistic program presented in 2016 was integral to Opera Australia's achievement, particularly the company's decision to embrace new technologies and new initiatives designed to consolidate its standing as an opera company firmly positioned in the 21st century.

Over the year, the Opera Australia Capital Fund group returned a comprehensive income of \$0.59m, which along with the proceeds from the sale of the Company's Melbourne property of \$9.6m, the result was a net consolidated income of \$13.3m for 2016.

In 2015 the Company ended with a trading surplus of \$0.24m, plus the Opera Australia Capital Fund Group return of \$0.32m resulting in a net consolidated comprehensive income of \$0.55m.

Opera Australia Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini noted, "In honour of Opera Australia's 60th Anniversary we presented a diverse program that was overwhelmingly embraced by opera and music lovers, new audiences and subscribers alike, it's been an incredibly rewarding year on so many levels."

Highlights from 2016 include the multi-award winning production of *The Rabbits* that continued with sell-out seasons in Sydney and Brisbane while the critically acclaimed *Sydney Opera House – The Opera* (formally *The Eighth Wonder*) broke new ground with its staging as a 'silent opera' on the Forecourt of Sydney Opera House with the iconic sails taking mainstage focus as both set and background and the innovative use of the latest technology in sound engineering.

The revival of Wagner's epic *The Ring Cycle* in Melbourne was highly praised and a further acknowledgement that only opera companies of an international standard with the resources, talent and infrastructure such as Opera Australia can successfully mount what's commonly known as "the Everest of opera".

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In a first for Opera Australia, the Company presented a co-production with Lausanne Opera of the early Verdi work, *Luisa Miller*. The brilliant young Opera Australia star Nicole Car sang the title role in Sydney and Melbourne, winning the 2016 Helpmann Award for Best Female Performer in an Opera for her performance.

At the Sydney Opera House audiences embraces a new production of *The Pearlfishers* created by director Michael Gow and set and costume designer Robert Kemp and were treated to a new production of *Carmen*, directed by the great John Bell with set design by Michael Scott-Mitchell.

Francesca Zambello's production of the rarely performed Prokofiev opera, *The Love for Three Oranges*, returned to the Sydney stage with an all-Australian cast led by Opera Australia's revival director Matthew Barclay.

Opera Australia had the privilege of acquiring the services of English director Sir David McVicar for all three of Mozart's 'Da Ponte' trilogy, with the final production of *Così fan tutte*, presented in 2016 to great acclaim, following the Helpmann award-winning productions *The Marriage of Figaro* in 2015 and *Don Giovanni* in 2014.

Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour returned in March with *Turandot*, with a lavish production that merged contemporary and traditional Chinese aesthetics to present a world of splendour and passion. Taking more than \$7.7m at the box office, it also had a cinematic release across 740 international theatres and DVD sales of 27,000.

The 60th Anniversary production of *My Fair Lady* broke records by selling more tickets than any other production in the history of the Opera House with over 112,000 tickets sold. The faithful recreation of the original 1956 Broadway musical, directed by stage and screen legend Julie Andrews, received rapturous reviews when it opened in September at the Joan Sutherland Theatre.

El Kid, a new opera for children in association with the Arts Centre Melbourne had its premiere. Designed to introduce the drama of opera to primary school students, over 240 performances are scheduled in more than 145 primary schools to around 45,000 children.

In addition, Opera Australia Regional Student Scholarships were awarded to four teenagers selected from more than 50 finalists who auditioned during the regional tour of *The Marriage of Figaro*. The winners received professional training from artistic, music, language and drama coaches at Opera Australia, and spent time backstage at the Sydney Opera House, gaining insights into a professional operatic career.

2016 was also a significant year organisationally with a restructure of the Company's business and staff model, the resignation of Chief Executive Craig Hassall, the sale and relocation of the Melbourne offices, the release of the final report of the National Opera Review and the extension of Lyndon Terracini's contract through to 2021.

David Mortimer said, "I am excited about the future of Opera Australia. With such a strong financial result for 2016, an exceptional management and artistic team in place, a refreshed Board and a stronger business structure, Australia's premier arts company is well-placed to embrace the 21st century and succeed in the years ahead."

The full 2016 Opera Australia Annual Report is available here:

https://opera.org.au/aboutus/opera_australia/annual_reports

Opera Australia's continued national and international expansion and evolution is only possible due to the support of many key stakeholders. The Federal Government, through the Australia Council for the Arts, is the Company's primary government supporter with funding from Playing Australia essential for regional activities.

The New South Wales and Victorian Governments' ongoing support is vital and Opera Australia acknowledges the investment of Destination NSW and the generosity of Dr Haruhisa Handa for the annual presentation of *Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour*. The *Melbourne Ring Cycle* would not have been possible without the support of Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO.

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