

MEDIA RELEASE

MARCH 2018

Puccini | Directed by John Bell | Conducted by Andrea Battistoni**Opera trio set to raise the roof in John Bell's gripping, drama-filled *Tosca*****24 April – 10 May** | State Theatre, Arts Centre Melbourne**Starring** | Latonia Moore | Diego Torre | Marco Vratogna

John Bell's critically acclaimed 20th century retelling of Puccini's *Tosca* returns to the Arts Centre Melbourne stage with a stellar cast, featuring some of the best performers in the world.

This is a production that calls for three exceptional singers to take on the challenging roles of Tosca, Cavaradossi and Scarpia.

African American soprano **Latonia Moore** returns to Australia to make her Melbourne debut as Tosca, an opera singer of incredible voice and beauty. Originally planning to study jazz, Latonia was convinced by one of her teachers to study classical music. It was a move that paid off, with Latonia receiving multiple international awards and making her highly acclaimed debut at the Met in 2012.

Australia's favourite tenor, **Diego Torre**, reprises the demanding role of Cavaradossi, a painter and Tosca's lover. Described as The Sydney Morning Herald as "a singer of richness and power", Diego is set to be a standout of the season.

Baritone **Marco Vratogna** will make his highly anticipated Australian debut as Scarpia, Rome's Chief of Police. The Italian superstar's portrayal of the villain in Puccini's *Tosca* has fast become one of his signature roles, receiving praise around the world.

The all-star cast will be joined by the impressive Opera Australia Chorus, and Orchestra Victoria will be under the impressive baton of one of the world's rising young talents in the international music scene, **Andrea Battistoni**.

In this production, Bell keeps the opera's original setting in Rome, but moves the date from 1800 to 1943. Instead of Napoleon's army occupying the city, it is the Nazis. The transition brings the story forward to an era that resonates with today's audiences.

"*Tosca* is not a melodrama," says Bell. "It is a heart-wrenching story of oppression, resistance and a woman blackmailed to save the life of a loved one. The era I have chosen is a time close enough for its history and images to stir our memory and our emotions. *Tosca* is a dark story, but one alleviated by Puccini's glorious music, which celebrates the heroism of those who choose death over loss of liberty."

The curtain rises on a breathtaking recreation of the Sant'Andrea della Valle by award-winning set designer Michael Scott-Mitchell, whose designs propel the story, from the sheer magnificence of the church, to the austerity of Scarpia's quarters, and finally to the stark oppression of the prison. Bell's vision and Scott-Mitchell's designs are complemented by the incredible work of costume designer Teresa Negrofonte, including a stunning evening gown for Tosca.

Creatives

Conductor **Andrea Battistoni**
 Director **John Bell**
 Revival Director **Hugh Halliday**
 Set Designer **Michael Scott-Mitchell**
 Costume Designer **Teresa Negroponte**
 Lighting Designer **Nick Schlieper**
 Fight Choreographer **Nigel Poulton**

Cast

Tosca **Latonía Moore**
 Cavaradossi **Diego Torre**
 Scarpia **Marco Vratogna**
 Angelotti **Gennadi Dubinsky**
 Sacristan **Luke Gabbedy**
 Spoletta **Benjamin Rasheed**
 Sciarrone **Michael Honeyman**
 Jailer **Tom Hamilton**

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

Performance Information

Evenings at 7.30pm

February 24, 26, 28

May 1, 10

Saturday Matinee at 1pm

May 5

Running time

Approximately 3 hours including two intervals

Performed in Italian with English surtitles

Bookings

Tickets from \$46 (fees may apply)

Group and concession prices available for most performances.

Student Rush available for most performances: \$50 (fees may apply)

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