

MEDIA RELEASE

22 August 2019

Opera Australia's innovative digital production of *Madama Butterfly* headlines a 2020 season full of Melbourne premieres



Opera Australia today revealed its 2020 Melbourne program announcing a full season of Melbourne premieres, including Graeme Murphy's *Madama Butterfly*, which will be the first of the Company's critically acclaimed digital productions to be performed in the State Theatre.

Speaking at the 2020 season launch, Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini highlighted the variety and calibre of shows to be presented in Melbourne.

"Opera Australia's 2020 Melbourne season highlights how we as a company, are constantly seeking to deliver new and exciting programs. We are thrilled to be presenting one of our new digital productions, and along with three other new productions, including one of the most renowned musicals of all time, *Fiddler on the Roof*, it will be a showcase of the finest talent both on and off the stage."

"In particular, Graeme Murphy's production of *Madama Butterfly* is one of the most original and visually stunning versions ever seen on the Australian stage and it showcases how the digital screens can be used to enhance the storytelling and opera experience," said Terracini.

The digital production incorporates fourteen 7 metre high, suspended LED screens that are choreographed to move seamlessly around the stage and create a dynamic backdrop. In Murphy's arresting and contemporary production of *Madama Butterfly*, the spectacular digital designs are complemented by choreography performed on a large scale revolve, capturing the grace and gravity of the heartbreaking tale.

The production received widespread acclaim following its world premiere in Sydney with *The Australian* review stating "Murphy's restrained and thoughtful direction created a production of probing insight, compelling drama and intense emotional power."

The 2020 program will also include the Melbourne premieres of acclaimed Italian Director Davide Livermore's production of Verdi's *Attila* and Olivier Py's take on Wagner's romantic opera *Lohengrin*.

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Following the success of *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg* in 2018, OA is excited to present another of Wagner's epic operas. A co-production with Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, director Olivier Py sets this production in the ruins of Berlin in the aftermath of World War II, using a monumental revolving tiered set to depict a decaying theatre where emblems of German Romanticism gather dust.

Conductor **Johannes Fritzs** will lead a star cast including English tenor **David Butt Philip** in the titular role and soprano **Jennifer Davis**, both making their Australian debuts. Joining them on stage will be mezzo-soprano **Elena Gabouri** and bass-baritone **Alexander Krasnov**, making their Melbourne debuts.

Verdi's *Attila* will be performed in both Sydney and Melbourne in 2020, marking the first time the opera has been staged in Opera Australia's history.

A co-production with Teatro alla Scala, visionary Director Davide Livermore's production received widespread acclaim following the premiere in Milan in 2018. Livermore fuses video projections with LED screen backdrops and colossal set pieces to create an awe-inspiring world, adding two real horses on stage for grandeur.

This production will feature a world-class cast including Ukrainian bass **Taras Berezhansky** as Attila and Italian soprano **Anna Pirozzi** as Odabella under the baton of Italian Maestro **Renato Palumbo**.

Under the Opera Conference banner, OA is excited to present *Bran Nue Dae* in Melbourne. Recognised as the world's first Aboriginal stage musical, this hit musical was written by the late **Jimmy Chi** in collaboration with the band **Kuckles** and has been described as a "beacon of light" in Aboriginal and Australian cultural history. Marking its 30th anniversary, the first major revival of this hit musical will tour nationally in 2020.

After sold-out seasons in New York, *Fiddler on the Roof*, will be performed at Melbourne's wonderfully restored Comedy Theatre. One of the most renowned musicals of all time, this new production will be directed by Oscar and Tony Award winner **Joel Grey** and performed entirely in Yiddish.

Due to its temporary closure, no opera productions will be presented at the State Theatre in spring 2020, however internationally acclaimed Australian soprano **Jessica Pratt** will perform alongside **Varduhi Abrahamyan** and **Giuseppe Gipali** for a one night only, not to be missed concert staging of *Lucrezia Borgia* at Hamer Hall.

In addition, Opera Australia will continue its exploration of chamber opera with *Rembrandt's Wife* at The Coopers Malthouse in September.

AUTUMN 2020

PUCCINI: *Madama Butterfly* | Conductor Pier Giorgio Morandi | Director Graeme Murphy

The creative dream team of Director/Choreographers Graeme Murphy and Janet Vernon, designer Michael Scott-Mitchell and costume designer Jennifer Irwin have reunited along with video designer Sean Nieuwenhuis to bring us the most innovative and visually stunning version of *Madama Butterfly* ever seen on the Australian stage. An outstanding cast will perform, including star Japanese soprano Hiromi Omura in the role of Cio-Cio San, the ever popular Sian Sharp as Suzuki and powerhouse tenor Andeka Gorrotxategi as the much maligned Pinkerton. **Arts Centre Melbourne May 6–28**

WAGNER: *Lohengrin* | Conductor Johannes Fritzs | Director Olivier Py

Wagner's romantic opera returns to Melbourne with tenor David Butt Philip as the gallant Lohengrin and soprano Jennifer Davis as the ill-fated Elsa, both making Australian debuts under the baton of Johannes Fritzs. Director Olivier Py sets this production in the ruins of Berlin in the aftermath of World War II, using a monumental revolving tiered set to depict a decaying theatre where emblems of German Romanticism gather dust. **Arts Centre Melbourne May 16-29**

VERDI: *Attila* | Conductor Renato Palumbo | Director Davide Livermore

A co-production by Teatro alla Scala and Opera Australia, visionary Director Davide Livermore's production of *Attila* fuses video projections with colossal set pieces to create an awe-inspiring world. This production will feature a world-class cast including Ukrainian bass Taras Berezhansky as Attila, Italian soprano Anna Pirozzi as Odabella, Albanian tenor Giuseppe Gipali as Foresto and Bulgarian baritone Vladimir Stoyanov as Ezio, all under the baton of Italian Maestro Renato Palumbo.

Arts Centre Melbourne, May 25-30

ANDREW FORD AND SUE SMITH: *Rembrandt's Wife* | Conductor Warwick Stengards | Director Tabatha McFadyen

The first revival of this 2009 chamber opera by the ABC's *The Music Show* host Andrew Ford and playwright Sue Smith is directed by Tabatha McFadden who returns to Opera Australia as a director under the Young Artist Program. This chamber opera features a nine-piece ensemble and stars Richard Anderson as Rembrandt, Taryn Fiebig as Saskia as well as Rembrandt's maid and muse, Hendrickje, along with Agnes Sarkis and Benjamin Rasheed.

The Coopers Malthouse, Merlyn Theatre, Southbank, September 23-26

IN CONCERT

DONIZETTI: *Lucrezia Borgia* | Conductor Carlo Montanaro

For one night only superstar soprano Jessica Pratt returns to Melbourne to perform one of her most celebrated roles. Pratt will perform alongside Varduhi Abrahamyan singing Maffio Orsini, Giuseppe Gipali as Gennaro, Michael Honeyman as Duke Alfonso and Virgilio Marino as Rustighello in Donizetti's famous opera. They will be joined on stage by the Opera Australia Orchestra and conductor Carlo Montanaro leading the performance in all its glory.

Hamer Hall, Arts Centre Melbourne, October 13

Mazda Opera in the Bowl

Returning again in 2019, *Mazda Opera in the Bowl* offers audiences the opportunity to hear opera under the stars. This free event is the perfect opportunity for first-timers or seasoned operagoers to dig out the picnic rug, kick back and relax with family and friends, and enjoy opera at its best.

Sidney Myer Music Bowl, November 30 2019

Opera for the People

Anthony Pratt has teamed up with Opera Australia to present *Opera for the People*, a free performance that will bring together some of Australia's best singers along with Orchestra Victoria and a secret special guest for an evening of exhilarating performances of opera's best known arias. **Sidney Myer Music Bowl, February 1**

MUSICAL

JIMMY CHI AND KUCKLES: *Bran Nue Dae* | Director Andrew Ross

The Opera Conference presents the 30th anniversary revival of the hit musical *Bran Nue Dae*. Written by the late Jimmy Chi in collaboration with the band Kuckles, *Bran Nue Dae* was recognised as the world's first Aboriginal stage musical when it premiered to great acclaim in 1990. Touring nationally in 2020, it will mark the first major revival of this musical described as "a beacon of light" in Aboriginal and Australian culture. **The Comedy Theatre, June 11 – July 12**

***Fiddler on the Roof* | Director Joel Grey**

One of the most renowned musicals of all time comes to Melbourne in an award-winning production performed entirely in Yiddish. Celebrated as authentic and emotionally impactful, *A Fidler afn Dakh* comes to Australia after multiple sold-out seasons in New York and worldwide critical acclaim.

The Comedy Theatre, November 12 - December 20

NATIONAL TOUR

BIZET: *Carmen* | Director Matthew Barclay

Matthew Barclay makes his directorial debut with a vibrant new production of *Carmen* in OA's 25th anniversary tour. *Carmen* tours across Victoria, New South Wales, Canberra, and Tasmania, bringing the traditional operatic experience to communities across the nation. This production will include a Regional Children's Chorus, giving 24 young singers from each community a chance to perform onstage. Sung in French with English surtitles, *Carmen* is supported by the Opera Conference and QBE.

BRISBANE 2020

WAGNER: *The Ring Cycle* | Conductor Philippe Auguin | Director Shi-Zheng Chen

Opera Australia, in partnership with the Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council is proud to present, a brand new, fully digital production of Wagner's epic Ring Cycle at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, in November 2020.

VERDI: *Aida* | Conductor Francesco Lanzillotta | Director Davide Livermore

Celebrated Italian Director and designer Davide Livermore's epic production of Verdi's mighty opera will be presented in Brisbane. The set features Opera Australia's integrated digital technologies, transporting the audience experience to a whole new level. Coupled with Gianluca Falaschi's magnificent costume designs, this production is a feast for the senses.

Queensland Performing Arts Centre, November 17 – December 4

Bookings

Subscriptions available now. Three shows from \$108

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