

MEDIA RELEASE

Verdi | Directed by Elijah Moshinsky | Conducted by Renato Palumbo

Iconic clown-faced *Rigoletto* returns to the stage in full *La Dolce Vita* glamour

6 July – 24 August | Joan Sutherland Theatre, Sydney Opera House



Opera Australia is bringing back one of its most-loved productions this winter, Moshinsky's classic interpretation of Verdi's *Rigoletto*: ritzy, rough and bursting with colour, with characters that are unconventional, music that is unforgettable and a story that is as much about obsession as it is about love.

Director **Elijah Moshinsky's** resplendent vision embraces the full glamour of Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* with sumptuous costumes and an elaborate revolving set, as well as what has become known as OA's famous scene-stealing car.

This season, legendary conductor **Renato Palumbo** returns to Sydney after his acclaimed performances with *La Traviata* in summer 2017, to lead a magnificent cast of local and international singers.

Compelling Slovak baritone **Dalibor Jenis** brings his gripping stage presence to the role of Rigoletto, claiming yet another debut for his repertoire. He is joined onstage by the magnificent Italian tenor **Gianluca Terranova**, returning to the role of Duke of Mantua to sing one of the most popular and recognisable arias in the world of opera – 'La donna è mobile'; and the stunning Russian soprano **Irina Lungu** will be making her OA debut as Gilda.

They will be complemented by a selection of Australia's finest singers including Mezzo Soprano **Sian Pendry** who recently played to great acclaim in the Melbourne season of *Don Quichotte*, **Luke Gabbedy**, **Benjamin Rasheed**, **Gennadi Dubinsky**, **Christopher Hillier** and **Dominica Matthews** to name just a few.

Verdi's *Rigoletto* is a dark story of jealousy and revenge, where secrets are weapons and loved ones are best kept hidden away. One of the most menacing characters to grace the Opera House stage, this Rigoletto is both compelling and repulsive in his accentuated make-up and loud-as-they-come jackets. Verdi's lush music plays out against the backdrop of opulent interiors, designed by **Michael Yeargan**, with a chorus in sharp gangster suits and opulent evening gowns.

Based on a Victor Hugo play, this three-act opera was first performed in Venice in 1851 and is widely thought to be the first of the operatic masterpieces of Verdi's mid-to-late career. The original opening night was such a triumph that the aria that is possibly the most familiar of all Italian operas - the Duke's cynical '**La donna è mobile**' ('Woman is fickle') - was sung in the streets the next morning.

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About the Opera

Giuseppe Verdi was one of the preeminent opera composers of the 19th century. *Rigoletto* was written while he was in his 30s, and is often grouped with *Il trovatore* and *La traviata*. The plot for *Rigoletto* was based on a play by Victor Hugo, which had been banned in France, so from the outset Verdi knew he would be battling the censors. After many rewrites and negotiations, Verdi then had to thwart unauthorised copying by keeping rehearsals under tight control. The tenor was forbidden to even whistle 'La donna è mobile' outside the rehearsal room! As predicted, the opening night at Venice's Teatro La Fenice in 1851 was a huge success. Within a year *Rigoletto* had been performed across Italy, and by 1855 it had premiered in London and New York. It remains one of the most performed operas in the world today.

About the Artists

Elijah Moshinsky has a long and prolific career spanning more than 30 years as a director of both opera and theatre. Renowned particularly for his interpretations of Verdi, his productions have been seen throughout the world and enjoy frequent revival. His work encompasses a large and diverse repertoire, spanning 18th to 20th century composers. He has three times been the winner of the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Opera (*Lohengrin*, *Stiffelio* and *The Rake's Progress*). Mr Moshinsky's productions of *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata* are mainstays of OA's current repertoire.

Slovak baritone **Dalibor Jenis** returns to the Sydney Opera House for the third time after impressing audiences in *Eugene Onegin* (2014) and *Luisa Miller* (2016). Mr Jenis has an impressive repertoire, including being one of the finest Figaro interpreters for Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, a role he has performed in many theatres across Europe. He has been awarded several prizes in international singing competitions, including the Alfredo Kraus competition and the Belvedere competition in Vienna.

Now well-loved by OA audiences for his performances in *Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour: La Traviata* (2012), *La Bohème* (2013, 2016) and *Rigoletto* (2014), Italian tenor **Gianluca Terranova** is a universally sought-after lyric tenor for his ease in the high register and formidable stage presence. He has performed in opera houses including Teatro alla Scala, Los Angeles Opera, Grand Theatre of Shanghai, Grand Theatre of Hong Kong, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Frankfurt Opera and Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. He starred as Enrico Caruso in the 2012 Italian TV-movie *Caruso, la voce dell'amore* and in 2015 he released his second solo album for Warner Classics, *Gianluca Terranova Recital*.

Russian soprano **Irina Lungu** makes her OA debut with the role of Gilda. With a voice described by *The New York Times* as having "brightness, bloom and warmth", Ms Lungu is acclaimed as one of today's leading opera artists. She has performed in opera houses around the world including Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Berliner Staatsoper, Dutch National Opera, Teatro Real Madrid, Arena di Verona and Aix-en-Provence Festival. Recent engagements include Gilda and Musetta at Metropolitan Opera, Violetta at Teatro Real Madrid and Teatro La Fenice Venice, Musetta at Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Marguerite at Dutch National Opera.

Conductor **Renato Palumbo** made his professional debut at the age of 18 with Verdi's *Il trovatore* and has since established himself as one of the most important Verdi conductors of his generation. He is a recognised interpreter of a broad range of works spanning Mozart and Rossini through to Bellini, Donizetti and Puccini. Maestro Palumbo's broad operatic repertoire is paralleled in his symphonic work with works of the classical period as well as those of the 20th century including Mozart, Cherubini, Schubert, Beethoven, Brahms, Dvorak, Mahler, Grieg, Hindemith and Shostakovich. His discography includes *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots* (Meyerbeer), *Hans Heiling* (Marschner), *Germania* (Franchetti), *La Cenerentola*, *Bianca e Falliero* (Rossini) and *Simon Boccanegra* (Verdi).

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Creatives

Conductor **Renato Palumbo**
 Director **Elijah Moshinsky**
 Revival Director **Hugh Halliday**
 Assistant Director **Kate Gaul**
 Designer **Michael Yeargan**
 Lighting Designer **Robert Bryan**

Cast

Rigoletto **Dalibor Jenis**
 Duke of Mantua **Gianluca Terranova** (until 2 Aug)
 Atalla Ayan (from 4 Aug)
 Gilda **Irina Lungu** (until 2 Aug)
 Jessica Nuccio (4-14 Aug)
 Kristina Mkhitaryan (17-24 Aug)
 Monterone **Gennadi Dubinsky**
 Sparafucile **Taras Berezhansky**
 Maddalena **Sian Pendry**
 Marullo **Luke Gabbedy**
 Borsa **Benjamin Rasheed**
 Ceprano **Christopher Hillier**
 Giovanna **Dominica Matthews**
 Countess Ceprano **Ileana Rinaldi**
 Page **Sharon Olde**
 Usher **Ryan Sharp**

Opera Australia Chorus

Opera Australia Orchestra

Performance information

Evenings at 7.30pm

July 6, 11, 14, 17, 20, 25
 August 2, 4, 8, 14, 17, 21, 24

Saturday Matinees at 12.30pm

July 28
 August 11

Running time

Approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes
 including two intervals.

Sung in Italian with English surtitles.

Bookings

Adult tickets from \$46 (fees may apply)
 Group and concession prices available for
 most performances.
 Student Rush available for most
 performances: \$50 (fees may apply)

Opera Australia Box Office
 (02) 9318 8200
www.opera.org.au

**Joan Sutherland Theatre, Sydney Opera
 House**

Media enquiries

Janet Glover | PR Manager
 02 9318 8246 | 0412 601 816
Janet.glover@opera.org.au

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