

Media Release
11 August 2021

Opera Australia announces new CEO

Opera Australia today announced that eminent international performing arts leader Fiona Allan has been appointed as the Company's next Chief Executive Officer.

Ms Allan will return to Australia following a stellar career in the United Kingdom, where she has led multiple performing arts organisations including the UK's busiest single theatre, Birmingham Hippodrome, and chaired the country's leading theatre and performing arts membership organisation.

She will lead Opera Australia as it continues its recovery from the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and re-enforce the Company's position in a post-pandemic world, as an industry leading, twenty-first century performing arts organisation.

"We are thrilled that such an accomplished cultural and business leader has agreed to return home to Australia," Opera Australia's Chair, David Mortimer AO, said today.

"This is a critical appointment because Opera Australia is the nation's largest and most significant performing arts company, and our successful recovery from COVID-19 will help drive the entire arts sector by rebuilding jobs and activity.

"Fiona's mission will be to build on the extraordinary work that outgoing CEO Rory Jeffes and Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini, together with the entire Opera Australia team have done in recent years, and continue to expand its reach and appeal to ensure the Company's ongoing survival," Mr Mortimer said.

Ms Allan said she looked forward to the new role with great enthusiasm.

"I am hugely excited to be joining the team at Opera Australia. My career has always been about connecting new audiences with great art, so to do this with such an extraordinary company is an opportunity I relish," Ms Allan said.

"Australia has always been home to me. I look forward to rekindling connections with friends and colleagues around the country and working with other arts and cultural leaders to promote the value of a thriving Australian cultural sector," she said.

Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini AM is also looking forward to this next phase of the Company's evolution.

"I've enjoyed a very successful working relationship with Rory over the past few years, we've been through some very difficult and challenging times, as well as celebrated some great achievements.

"I'm looking forward to working with Fiona to consolidate all the hard work that's been done to keep the Company going through this pandemic and emerge as a stronger entity on the other side," he said.

Ms Allan will bring more than 20 years' experience in senior artistic and business roles in the cultural sector.

Prior to joining Birmingham Hippodrome as Artistic Director and Chief Executive in 2015, she was Chief Executive of Leicester's Curve Theatre and Artistic Director of the Wales Millennium Centre.

She is currently President of UK Theatre, Chair of the Midlands Regional Tourism Board and a director of several other arts and business organisations. She has previously been chair or director of Dance Consortium UK, Midlands Arts Council and The Space, a digital arts agency set up jointly by Arts Council England and the BBC.

PATRON-IN-CHIEF
DR HARUHISA HANDA



HERO PARTNERS



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Before leaving Australia in 2008 to pursue a career abroad, Ms Allan was Chief Executive of Sydney Film Festival, the Executive Producer of the REV Festival at Brisbane Powerhouse, a senior producer at Sydney Opera House and General Manager of the Australian National Academy of Music in Melbourne.

Mr Mortimer paid tribute to outgoing Chief Executive Officer Rory Jeffes, who announced his intention to stand down from the position in February this year, agreeing to stay on until a successor could start in the role.

“During his time at Opera Australia Rory has led an exceptional leadership team who have worked tirelessly to deliver artistic excellence, build audiences and achieve significant financial success.

“In particular I would like to acknowledge the work Rory has done to navigate the incredibly complex crisis that is COVID-19. He was forced to confront unimaginable circumstances and make extremely difficult decisions to protect the viability of the Company. Without those actions, Opera Australia would be facing a more challenging future as we continue on the road to recovery,” he said.

Ms Allan will commence in the role by the end of 2021. Mr Jeffes will continue as CEO until that time to ensure a seamless transition.

A high-resolution picture of Ms Allan is available on request.

Media Enquiries:

Janet Glover

Communications Manager | janet.glover@opera.org.au | +61 412 601 816

BIOGRAPHY – FIONA ALLAN

Fiona Allan is an eminent international performing arts leader.

She has worked in positions of both artistic and executive leadership with Curve Theatre, Wales Millennium Centre, Sydney Film Festival, and Sydney Opera House. She was appointed Artistic Director & Chief Executive of Birmingham Hippodrome in October 2015 and since then has taken the organisation on a journey of transformation, more than doubling the number of people reached each year.

Ms Allan is currently President of UK Theatre, Chair of the Midlands Regional Tourism Board, a Director of Women of the Year, West Midlands Growth Company, Stage One and a member of the ACE Midlands Regional Council, Creative Industries Federation Council and Midlands Engine Business Council.

In October 2018 she was presented with the inaugural Women of the Year ‘Woman with Edge’ award and the following year the ‘Outstanding Business Woman of the Year’ Award by the Asian Business Chamber of Commerce. In April 2021 she was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for the West Midlands.

Ms Allan was born in Sydney. Her first degree was a Bachelor of Music (Hons) from the University of Sydney. She worked as a clarinettist for several years before studying a Graduate Diploma in Arts Management and later an MBA from the University of Technology Sydney, where she later became an adjunct lecturer.

She enjoys horse riding and travel and has combined the two on riding holidays in the Western Sahara, Wadi Rum Desert, Atlas Mountains and Eastern Europe.

-Ends-

PATRON-IN-CHIEF
DR HARUHISA HANDA



HERO PARTNERS



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

