

Media Release

24 October 2023

Opera Australia unveils new Artistic Director's inaugural season



Opera Australia (OA) today announced the keenly anticipated inaugural season by incoming Artistic Director Jo Davies, marking an exciting new chapter for the country's largest performing arts company.

"I'm excited to introduce a season comprising new Australian works and exhilarating renditions of audience favourites presented by some extraordinary creative teams and casts, featuring some of the world's best artists," said Ms Davies.

"I'm particularly delighted to be presenting new repertoire and stories by some brilliantly talented Australian composers and teams, who are creating exciting new opportunities for opera to engage and form new connections as well as, of course, entertaining our existing audiences with productions that haven't been seen before in these theatres."

CEO Fiona Allan said, "Opera Australia's new direction is as a company that is more collaborative, more committed to diversity, and developing and showcasing the best Australian talent, all of which is well demonstrated in Jo's first season as Artistic Director. In 2024 we will broaden our offering to audiences old and new across the country with a varied and interesting artistic program. The fact Jo has been able to address all of our strategic ambitions, having not yet commenced full time in her role as incoming Artistic Director, is remarkable and a sign of exciting times to come for Opera Australia."

Highlights of Ms Davies' 2024 Sydney Winter Season include Australian composer Brett Dean's internationally acclaimed *Hamlet* starring British tenor Allan Clayton, renowned Australian director Neil Armfield's production of *Watershed*, and Sydney Theatre Company's Artistic Director Kip Williams' new production of *Gilgamesh*, along with new productions of *Tosca* and *Il Trittico*.

Demonstrating the depth of talent in Australia, *Il Trittico* will showcase the creativity of exciting young local directors Constantine Costi, Imara Savage and Shaun Rennie, and across the season some of the country's best singers will be on stage including Stacey Alleaume, Pelham Andrews, Kanen Breen, Lauren Fagan, Warwick Fyfe, Lorina Gore, Simon Meadows, Mark Oates, Alexandra Oomens and Helen Sherman plus a cast of contemporary opera specialists in *Gilgamesh*.

Ms Davies' reputation as a strong advocate for gender equality has carried over to her new role with OA, increasing the percentage of female creatives across the board with Francesca Zambello returning to direct *West Side Story* on Sydney Harbour, BAFTA winning costume designer Fotini Dimitou bringing her design eye to *Tosca*, director Imara Savage will be joined by lighting designer Verity Hampson on *Il Trittico*, while conductors Lidiya Yankovskaya and Zoe Zeniodi will lead the Opera Australia Orchestra through *Il Trittico* and *Così fan tutte* respectively.

OA will present several new works in partnership with local arts organisations including Carriageworks and the Sydney Opera House as well as the Australian String Quartet and Ensemble Offspring. 2024 will also mark the first time OA joins forces with Sydney Chamber Opera, which is renowned for achieving new visions with contemporary opera.

Opera Australia is also reprising its most popular Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour production of the smash-hit musical *West Side Story*, touring a new production of *La Bohème* around the country, and introducing an all-new production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* starring one of music theatre's true icons Sarah Brightman.

Ms Davies' inaugural season for Opera Australia follows on from the 2024 Sydney Summer Season curated by guest Creative Director Lindy Hume, comprising five productions making their Sydney Opera House premieres: *La Traviata*, *Orpheus & Eurydice*, *The Magic Flute*, *Idomeneo* and *Theodora in Concert*.

[Further details about each production below]

Booking Information

Subscriptions available now. Two operas from \$142.
Opera Australia Box Office | (02) 9318 8200
Explore the season with our digital brochure opera.org.au/discover-2024
Single tickets on sale from 5 December 2023
www.opera.org.au

Media enquiries

Janet Glover | Communications Manager | +61 412 601 816 | janet.glover@opera.org.au
Christy Seddon | Senior Publicist | +61 411 675 490 | christy.seddon@opera.org.au
Caitlin Eames | Publicist | +61 433 746 644 | caitlin.eames@opera.org.au

Images available <https://opera.org.au/about/media-centre/>

Sydney Winter 2024

PUCCINI: *Tosca* | Conductors Johannes Fritzsch | Tahu Matheson | Director Edward Dick

Marking 100 years since the death of legendary Italian composer Giacomo Puccini, leading UK arts organisation Opera North's spectacular staging of his political thriller *Tosca* will make its SOH debut. Receiving five stars from The Times UK for its dramatic power, director Edward Dick presents Puccini's gripping drama and sensational music amid a blend of Renaissance Roman grandeur and contemporary references in a highly theatrical design by Tom Scutt. **Sydney Opera House, 25 June – 16 August**

PUCCINI: *Il Trittico* | Conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya | Directors Constantine Costi, Imara Savage, Shaun Rennie

Continuing the celebration of Puccini, his rarely performed final work of three one-act operas offers one of the most varied evenings in opera. Each presenting its own characters, story and genre, the triptych is a contrasting exploration of love, lies and death via gritty melodrama in *Il Tabbaro*, intimate tragedy in *Suor Angelica* and surprising satire in *Gianni Schicchi*. Three inspiring young Australian directors navigate thrilling drama, cinematically intense music and controlled comic chaos, featuring famous aria 'O mio babbino caro' and tight ensemble singing, with a feast of Australian operatic talent. **Sydney Opera House, 3 – 19 July**

DEAN: *Hamlet* | Conductor Tim Anderson | Director Neil Armfield

One of the most successful operas ever composed by an Australian, Brett Dean's astoundingly raw, visceral interpretation of Shakespeare's murderous *Hamlet* will make its SOH debut. Having received great acclaim at the 2017 Glyndebourne Festival, the immensely complex score features electronic music and cinema-like surround sound effects with Matthew Jocelyn's thrilling libretto. Reprising his 2022 Met Opera debut, British tenor Allan Clayton MBE will make his Sydney Opera House debut opposite Australian soprano Lorina Gore reprising her 2018 Adelaide Festival Helpmann Award-winning Ophelia and tour-de-force American baritone Rod Gilfry as Claudius. **Sydney Opera House, 20 July – 9 August**

MOZART *Così fan tutte* | Conductor Zoe Zeniodi | Director David McVicar

Sir David McVicar's popular 2016 production of Mozart's funny and sublime *Così fan tutte* returns to the Joan Sutherland Theatre. Set in the early 1900s, the comic yet poignant drama about love, sex, fidelity and loss will play out among ravishing costumes and a set bathed in glorious sunlight. Mozart's exquisite arias will be performed by a cast including some of Australia's brightest young talented singers.

Sydney Opera House, 1 – 17 August

TWIST: *Watershed* | Conductor **Brett Weymark** | Director **Neil Armfield**

The ravishing new Australian operatic work, *Watershed* will make its Sydney debut after receiving five star reviews and emotional standing ovations at its sold-out premiere season at the 2022 Adelaide Festival. A team of Australia's most acclaimed creative talents pay tribute to the infamous drowning of Dr George Duncan which led to South Australia decriminalising homosexuality ahead of the rest of the country. Australians Pelham Andrews and Mark Oates will deliver powerful performances in this thrillingly physical production that fuses inquest transcripts, press clippings, and a luscious score. **Sydney Opera House, 14 – 16 June**

SYMONDS: *Gilgamesh* | Conductor **Jack Symonds** | Director **Kip Williams**

With Sydney Chamber Opera and in association with Carriageworks, OA will present the world premiere of the first opera written in English based on 'The Epic of Gilgamesh'. The world's oldest yet strikingly relevant epic poem explores mortality, sexuality and humanity's relationship with nature. After his sold-out success *The Picture of Dorian Gray* opens in London's West End in January, visionary Sydney Theatre Artistic Director Kip Williams will direct a cast of contemporary opera specialists, accompanied by virtuosic chamber music ensembles Australian String Quartet and Ensemble Offspring. **Carriageworks, 26 September - 5 October**

In Concert

Great Opera Hits

The world's greatest arias will ring out in the Joan Sutherland Theatre. Performing classics by eminent composers, such as Bizet, Mozart and Verdi, familiar to both opera lovers and newcomers alike, this light-hearted presentation will be 90 minutes of entertainment and music for the soul. **Sydney Opera House, dates across the Summer and Winter seasons**

Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour 2024

BERNSTEIN: *West Side Story* | Director **Francesca Zambello** | Musical Director **Guy Simpson**

Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour's highest selling production to date will return to the overwater stage after its record-breaking 2019 season. Some of the world's most loved musical theatre tunes and Stephen Sondheim's memorable lyrics will ring out over the Harbour in an electrifying, larger-than-life staging, in combination with a live orchestra, pop-up restaurants, the stunning Harbour backdrop and fireworks to present the perfect night out. **Fleet Steps, Mrs Macquaries Point, 22 March – 21 April**

Musical

LLOYD WEBBER: *Sunset Boulevard* | Director **Paul Warwick Griffin**

One of musical theatre's true icons, Sarah Brightman, will star in the world premiere of a new production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's masterpiece *Sunset Boulevard*. Sarah reached global stardom when she played Christine in *The Phantom of the Opera*, a role designed to showcase her unique gifts. Now she returns to the stage for her first musical in almost three decades, singing Lloyd Webber's beautiful melodies once more. **Sydney Opera House**, join waitlist for date opera.org.au/events/sunset-boulevard-sydney

National Tour 2024

PUCCINI: *La Bohème* | Director **Dean Bryant**

A new production will breathe fresh life into one of the world's favourite operas. Award-winning director Dean Bryant brings his trademark wit and vivacity to a new staging of *La Bohème* with set and costume designer Isabel Hudson and lighting designer Damien Cooper. Known for drawing on emotions that only music can express, this bohemian love story will touch hearts across Victoria, Tasmania and NSW on Opera Australia's annual national tour. Locations and dates available at opera.org.au/on-tour.

Ends.