

# 2023 Annual Report: a year of artistic excellence and historic milestones



Opera Australia (OA) today released its 2023 Annual Report, revealing a company dedicated to presenting the highest quality productions in the operatic and musical theatre repertoires and a performing arts organisation committed to future-proofing the artform in Australia for generations to come.

In 2023 just over 492,000 people attended more than 450 performances across the country, with first time purchasers to opera performances rising from 50% in 2022 to 60% in 2023. Total box office revenue was just over \$65.7m, down from 2022 which was bolstered by the highly successful season of *Phantom of the Opera*.

In announcing the results, Opera Australia CEO Fiona Allan acknowledged the Company's significant achievements and the challenges ahead.

"It's through the collective efforts and dedication to Opera Australia by so many, that our company will continue to thrive and uphold its reputation on the Australian and global stage as a leading performing arts organisation. Despite the challenges, we look to the future with optimism and the shared purpose that defines our company: pushing boundaries, inspiring today's audiences, and elevating our artform to greater heights," said Ms Allan.

Although still counting the cost of the disruption to programming caused by the pandemic, with cancelled and rescheduled productions, in 2023 OA clearly demonstrated its commitment to its audiences and its more than 1,300 employees, by finally presenting the highly anticipated Brisbane Ring Cycle, after being postponed in 2020 and again in 2021.

Marking the milestone of 50 years of performing at the Sydney Opera House in 2023, the Company's post-covid recovery continues, with the focus on long-term strategies and artistic excellence, financial stability, audience development, commitment to sharing Australian stories and championing Australian talent.

From the historic premiere staging in the Sydney Opera House of Damiano Michieletto's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, starring Australian super-star soprano Jessica Pratt, to the bold presentation of Philip Glass' *Satyagraha* in Concert at Hamer Hall, as well as the brilliant new production of Cameron Mackintosh's hit musical *Miss Saigon*, the triumphant Brisbane season of the Ring Cycle and *Aida*, the celebration of choral singing in *Chorus!* and of diversity in *Opera Up Late* for Sydney WorldPride, 2023 showcased the depth of performing arts talent in Australia and the Company's commitment to excellence.

PATRON-IN-CHIEF  
DR HARUHISA HANDA

HERO PARTNERS

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



It is these outstanding artistic achievements that made 2023 an extraordinary year for the Company.

Visionary director Chen Shi-Zheng delivered a Ring Cycle the world didn't know it needed, until it was universally embraced by critics and audiences alike, and heralded as a shining example of why Wagner's epic masterpiece is known as the pinnacle of opera.

The Brisbane season was hailed a great success for OA artistically and the collaborative approach to its staging with local arts organisations was ground-breaking for the Company. The Brisbane Ring Cycle was nevertheless an enormous undertaking, years in the making, with more than 350 cast and crew, 27 semi-trailer loads of technical equipment, and hundreds of costumes, props and set pieces.

The sheer scale of the event, coupled with additional costs incurred by the three-year delay, contributed to OA's overall operating loss of \$4.9m, a figure the Company anticipated, implementing the necessary contingencies to manage the shortfall.

OA's Capital Fund performed well contributing a \$1m annual endowment through its Distribution to Opera Australia in 2023, helping consolidate the company's financial stability and reduce the overall net deficit to \$1.7m. Further helping secure the future of the national opera company, the Capital Fund's reserves reached \$29.6 million at the end of 2023.

First-time artistic partnerships with Victorian Opera, Opera Queensland and Queensland Symphony Orchestra heralded a new direction for OA and have paved the way for a more collaborative approach for the national opera company.

An expanded national footprint included the all-but-sold-out season at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in Brisbane with the Ring Cycle and *Aida*, while *The Barber of Seville* National Tour travelled across five states and territories performing in 15 different venues in metropolitan, regional and remote locations.

Government support has been crucial to OA's recovery after the pandemic, and the Company has repaid that commitment by working hard to improve its financial independence, through reducing costs and finding efficiencies in programming, reporting that once again 70% of its income was self-generated, with 52% of revenue from box office earnings.

OA is grateful for the ongoing support from many key stakeholders: The Federal Government, through the Creative Australia, along with New South Wales and Victorian Governments.

OA also thankfully acknowledges the investment by Destination NSW and the generosity of Patron in Chief Dr Haruhisa Handa for his ongoing patronage and the annual presentation of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour.

Opera Australia also acknowledges its corporate sponsors for their support and the many donors and subscribers who support the Company year after year.

The 2023 Opera Australia Annual Report and Financial Report are available here:

[opera.org.au/about/opera-australia/annual-reports](https://opera.org.au/about/opera-australia/annual-reports)

### Media enquiries

Janet Glover

Communications Manager

+61 0412 601 816

[Janet.glover@opera.org.au](mailto:Janet.glover@opera.org.au)