



Opera Australia recognises and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands and waters across Australia on which we live, perform and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise, celebrate and respect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first storytellers who carry the cultural wisdom, traditions and Dreaming of this ancient land.



Image: A standing ovation at the Sydney Opera House for Jessica Pratt and the Opera Australia Orchestra for *Mad Scenes with Jessica Pratt*. Photo: Rhiannon Hopley

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# WELCOME

TO OPERA AUSTRALIA

## Purpose

An opera company for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Australia

## Mission

To bring an Australian stamp to sharing great stories through music and song

## Values

Curious: We are outward-looking, with an appetite to innovate

Creative: We strive for creative excellence in everything we do

Collaborative: We work together in true partnerships

Brave: We invite courageous ideas and conversations

Inclusive: We respect each other and shine when all diverse voices are heard

*Opera Australia is a not-for-profit company established for the primary charitable purpose of promoting, encouraging and producing opera, musical theatre, music and any other art or performance.*





Opera Australia is one of the world’s most celebrated performing arts companies with an ambition to bring an Australian stamp to sharing great stories through music and song, and with a commitment to developing and nurturing new generations of Australian talent on and off the stage.

From year to year, Opera Australia presents up to 500 performances to as many as 650,000 people. This includes operas, musicals and concerts performed predominantly in our two performance homes: the Sydney Opera House on Gadigal land and the Arts Centre Melbourne on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung land. We also stage exceptional and critically acclaimed performances in other venues in Australia’s major cities and regional communities across the country – from Warrnambool to Wyong and Burnie to Bendigo.

Based in Sydney at The Opera Centre in Surry Hills, and with offices and rehearsal facilities in the Melbourne Arts Precinct, we collaborate actively with other Australian opera companies and arts organisations, and co-produce work with some of the world’s most renowned opera houses and producers of musical theatre. We are resident at the Sydney Opera House and our Orchestra performs in the Joan Sutherland Theatre with both Opera Australia and The Australian Ballet. Our talented Chorus is regarded as among the world’s finest and our musical theatre productions are highly acclaimed.

Opera Australia is the largest performing arts employer in Australia’s \$14.7 billion arts and entertainment sector. Our company includes opera singers, conductors, orchestral musicians, coaches and répétiteurs, with teams also working in the areas of scenic construction and painting, lighting, design, direction, wardrobe, wig-making, management and administration.

Together as a company, we strive to foster talent and delight audiences with our spectacular productions.

Opera Australia's artistic highlights during the year were very many, but perhaps the personal highlight for me was having the privilege to see the company's new production of the Ring Cycle. Twice delayed by the pandemic, it was third time lucky in 2023. What audiences from across the country and around the world experienced encapsulated Opera Australia's commitment to the highest standards of artistic excellence and innovation. Our artists and musicians are truly exceptional. I thank former Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini who, back in 2019, commissioned this new production of Wagner's epic. Recognition is owed to our generous and loyal patron Maureen Wheeler, whose support for this production over the past few years has been unwavering. Sincere gratitude also goes to the late Dr Lydia and Dr Irvine Hunter, and Hans and Petra Henkell for their considerable support. Joining this Ring Cycle endeavour was a large team from Queensland Performing Arts Centre who welcomed us warmly for our first season in Brisbane. The vision of our partners, Tourism and Events Queensland and Brisbane City Council through the Brisbane Economic Development Agency, supported this production, as did our Presenting Government Partner, The National Foundation for Australia-China Relations through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. And, as ever, we were grateful for the steadfast support of our Patron-in-Chief, Dr Haruhisa Handa.

Our artistic achievements are to be celebrated. Financially, however, Opera Australia continues to work through challenges. As Fiona signalled in 2022, the ramifications of Covid-related cancellations would continue to reverberate in 2023. While Opera Australia returned a deficit from operating activities during the 2023 year, it is a notable improvement on the preceding one. In response to these external challenges, Opera Australia is committed to implementing strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing financial sustainability. These include continuing efforts towards cost optimisation, targeted

audience engagement strategies, and the exploration of additional revenue streams, including better utilisation of assets and a commitment to musical theatre productions.

Meanwhile, financial stability of the company is preserved through its financial and property investments. The Opera Australia Capital Fund continues to provide an annual endowment for future artistic activities and, in a favourable result, reserves reached \$29.6 million at the end of 2023.

Which brings me to the pleasurable task of continuing my thanks to the members of our large community of supporters who are assisting us to ensure we recover fully from the pandemic and move towards our exciting future. Firstly, I wish to acknowledge my fellow Board members whose generous time, commitment and expertise is greatly appreciated. We are all sincerely grateful for the amazing contribution, in so many ways, of Philip Bacon AO who retired from the Board in June. Philip also chaired our Capital Fund and will continue to work with us as a close friend of Opera Australia. In late 2023 we welcomed incoming Capital Fund Chair David Armstrong, who is well placed to continue the important work of the Fund.



I also pay tribute to former Board member Michael Lynch AO CBE for his expert guidance. Michael stepped down from the Board in November to work on the NEOM project in Saudi Arabia. That same month we were thrilled to welcome new Artistic Director Jo Davies to the company. An award-winning opera and theatre director throughout the UK and internationally, Jo is bringing more than 20 years' experience across a range of arts to our company. On her arrival to Australia, Jo's first mission was to get to know our fabulous artists and practitioners which of course was no small feat as there are so many!

This year I would like to especially thank Qantas, our Official Airline Partner, for the longstanding partnership of five decades that Opera Australia has enjoyed with our national airline. Qantas helps us connect our artists, creatives and company members with communities and audiences around Australia and overseas. We celebrated this milestone with Qantas in a double-celebration of 50 years of performances at the Sydney Opera House.

I acknowledge and thank all our patrons and donors for their significant and ongoing contribution to Opera Australia this year – the generosity of our community of philanthropists really does make a world of difference to what we can perform and the standards we can reach. We are also proud to enjoy the longstanding support of a large group of corporate sponsors. In 2023, we were pleased to welcome into this community BMW, who assisted us in staging the inaugural *BMW Opera for All* free concert held in Melbourne's Fed Square. This concert was followed by HSBC's *A World of Opera* free concert held at the Sydney Opera House in July. The significance of these concerts that assist us to make opera more accessible for more people cannot be overestimated.

As always, we are exceptionally grateful for the support of the Federal Government through Creative Australia and we are proud to be just one of Australia's many great arts organisations contributing to the vision of our National Cultural Policy, *Revive*, to deliver a better future for our arts sector and for all Australians. I wish to thank the NSW Government and the Victorian Government for their generous and ongoing support. We greatly appreciate the strong working relationship we enjoy with our colleagues at both Create NSW and Creative Victoria. Contributing to the NSW economy and wellbeing through its support of the performing arts, we owe thanks to Destination NSW for its ongoing support of our flagship *Handa Opera* on Sydney Harbour as we staged *Madama Butterfly* in 2023.

In a personally challenging year for her, I would like to acknowledge the continued exceptional work of CEO Fiona Allan, whose strong leadership and forward-thinking approach over the past two years has set us up so well for the future. She is supported by an exceptional Executive Team.

Credit is also due of course to each and every one of Opera Australia's employees. I salute all of you, and thank you for your mastery of our artform and, for those whose roles support our artists and musicians, for your dedication and expertise.

While we have our unique challenges, we have many exciting opportunities ahead. I look forward to working with you all to help ensure we make the most of them and continue to deliver excellence in our wonderful artform.



ROD SIMS AO, CHAIR

Demonstrating the dedication and expertise of our artists, creatives and arts workers to sharing great stories through music and song, it's my great pleasure to report that in 2023 Opera Australia staged 454 performances comprising 14 operas, 13 concerts and recitals and three musicals, for a total of 492,324 attendees.

The year began spectacularly with our New Year's Eve Opera Gala Concert and fireworks at the Sydney Opera House. Mid-year it was marked by *Idomeneo*, our exciting first co-production with Victorian Opera, at Melbourne's Palais Theatre, and it culminated in the much-anticipated Ring Cycle at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in Brisbane. Here, visionary Director, Chen Shi-Zheng, brought together Australia's finest operatic talent and a leading team of global creatives to bring this new production to life. The 15-minute standing ovation at the end of the final Ring Cycle performance was a testament to the dedication, passion and artistry of all involved in this brilliant production.

Two previous attempts to stage this new Ring Cycle were thwarted by the pandemic. We nevertheless upheld our commitment to audiences around the world who had booked tickets, to the creatives and artists that we had engaged, and to the Queensland Government and our artistic partners – in the understanding that this season would bring a planned deficit that would need to be managed in subsequent years.

Throughout the year it was fantastic to see audiences continue to return to live performance around the country. The rising numbers of newcomers to Opera Australia performances demonstrates that opera continues to be relevant to audiences of today – across generations and backgrounds. The increase in purchasers new to our opera productions from 50% in 2022 to almost 60% in 2023 has led to us engaging in an in-depth audience research project to better understand audiences' behaviours and attendance motivations. And with 70% of bookers to our musical theatre productions new to Opera Australia,

we have a wonderful opportunity to build our audiences across the board. This is critical to our commitment to be an opera company for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Australia – one that cultivates a vibrant and inclusive community, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries and ensuring the enduring legacy of opera for generations to come.

In the 13 months separating the tenures of our outgoing and incoming artistic directors, many people at Opera Australia and from our wider community stepped up to help provide artistic oversight and ensure ongoing excellence for the company during the year. In particular, I would like to thank Lindy Hume for agreeing to come on board as Guest Creative Director for the Sydney Summer 2024 season, and Stuart Maunder for being a critical friend to us through several rehearsal periods. Lindy's response to our strategic and artistic ambitions focused on collaboration and showcasing Australian talent and fresh and brave creative voices, was designed to bridge outgoing Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini's final program in 2023 and Jo Davies' first in 2024. Having spent some of 2023 working remotely for us in a consultancy capacity on our **2024-2028 Strategic Plan**,



Jo was well prepared and warmly welcomed when she arrived in Australia to take the artistic reins in November. I very much look forward to Jo's artistic leadership in the years to come as we continue to further develop our artists and our artform.

Whilst the future holds many opportunities, it also presents challenges, which we will use our creativity, innovation and business acumen to navigate. Chief among these is managing ongoing disruptions to our Melbourne performances. With no access to a lyric theatre in Melbourne in 2024, and access limited in 2025, this is a material challenge for our company. We are seeking creative solutions until our Melbourne home reopens in 2027. In the meantime, we will be presenting *Tosca* at Melbourne Park's Margaret Court Arena in 2024 and we have some access to the Regent Theatre in following years. We are grateful to the Victorian Government via Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation and Arts Centre Melbourne for assisting us.

Of ongoing concern is the widening gap between our increased production costs, some of which have risen by as much as 70% post-pandemic, and our income potential. More than ever, it is important that we utilise all of our assets, and look to diversify income streams for our future sustainability. To that end, we remain committed to presenting high-quality musical theatre, scenic art and manufacturing services to other arts companies in the sector, and in 2023 we began scoping ways to develop our Sydney headquarters. Although there is no quick solution, we can see a path to a sustainable financial model is not far away.

During 2023 we farewelled Executive Team member Rebecca Doyle (People Director) and, from the Board, Philip Bacon AO and Michael Lynch OA CBE who retired from their positions in June and November respectively. I am very grateful for their commitment and services to Opera Australia, in particular Philip for his support over several decades to both Opera Australia and the OA Capital Fund. I also thank CFO Simon Militano for acting as CEO for a few months this year while I rehabilitated following a serious accident, and the many people across Opera Australia who provided me personal support during these months. I am delighted that Simon has now stepped into a new role as COO.

As I reflect on the year that was, I extend my heartfelt thanks to all Opera Australia artists, musicians, creatives and arts workers who contribute tirelessly to ensuring the artistic excellence that defines our national opera company. I am very grateful to Chair Rod Sims AO and his fellow Board members for their dedication and expert guidance throughout the year, and I pay tribute to the broader Opera Australia community of donors, patrons, corporate and government partners – thank you for sharing our belief in the power of our artform.

It is 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. 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.



FIONA ALLAN, CEO

It's an enormous privilege and very exciting to have commenced in the role of Opera Australia's Artistic Director. I took on the role in late 2023, after having served in a consultative capacity for the development of the **OA 2024-2028 Strategic Plan**. Arriving in Sydney in November, my first priority was to gain a thorough understanding of the wider cultural landscape and spend as much time as I could starting to get to know our company's many gloriously talented artists and creatives.

I also got to know my way around the magnificent Sydney Opera House. In Victoria I scouted for new venues in which our company can perform over the next couple of years while our State Theatre home is undergoing refurbishment as part of the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation.

An opportunity to think innovatively! With trips to Brisbane for the Ring Cycle and *Aida*, Melbourne for *Miss Saigon* and back to Sydney for the New Year's Eve Opera Gala Concert and Sydney Summer season, my first few months on the ground certainly introduced me to the breadth and busyness of Opera Australia.

It's been uplifting to see the incredible community support for Opera Australia, including from patrons and donors who clearly do so much to ensure the national opera company enriches lives through the power of opera. As a newcomer to Australia, it's wonderful to witness the difference this generosity makes to how our company presents music and song for audiences across the country.

My artistic ambition for Opera Australia is that we explore innovative ways of doing things – discovering new stories and creative collaborations that stretch and challenge us to new ways of working and new ways of seeing. I want us to embrace the very different energies of a host of diverse artists that shape our cities and regions, investing in our social purpose as well as our creative purpose. The opportunity is ours to harness our creativity to enrich people's lives both

inside and outside of an opera house – so that opera remains an essential part of the fabric of our communities. Developing a program of learning and engagement which extends access to and participation in the world of opera for students, families and all communities is a critical aspect of this work.

We are currently living in an age defined by war and mass migration, climate change, cultural and economic inequities and political polarisation. The mission of opera needs to expand. Now more than ever, for the artform to be relevant to our society and to thrive, it must be connected to the social and political dynamics of the community.

May I thank everyone who provides vital support to Opera Australia which in turn enables us to nurture the next generation of Australian artists, musicians and creatives. Thank you also to Lindy Hume who has been the perfect bridge between Lyndon Terracini's final year of programming and mine, which commences with the Victorian season in May 2024.

I look forward to working with you all.



JO DAVIES, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

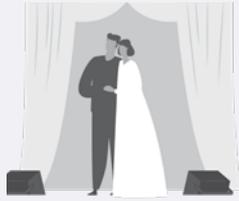
# ARTFORM



# PRODUCTIONS AND ATTENDEES

<b>ADRIANA LECOUVREUR</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	7,240
<b>AIDA</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE AND QUEENSLAND PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE	33,183
<b>THE BARBER OF SEVILLE</b> NATIONAL TOUR: QLD, NSW, NT, VIC, WA	6,716
<b>BMW OPERA FOR ALL</b> FREE CONCERT, FEDERATION SQUARE, MELBOURNE	4,000
<b>CHORUS!</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	5,547
<b>CINDERELLA</b> REGENT THEATRE, MELBOURNE	36,947
<b>DON GIOVANNI</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	13,833
<b>EL KID</b> SCHOOLS TOUR	14,344
<b>FERRUCCIO FURLANETTO IN CONCERT</b> MELBOURNE RECITAL CENTRE AND CITY RECITAL HALL	1,366
<b>GREAT OPERA HITS</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	5,774
<b>HSBC WORLD OF OPERA</b> FREE CONCERT, SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	1,401
<b>LA BOHÈME</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	22,937
<b>LA GIOCONDA IN CONCERT</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	4,223
<b>MAD SCENES WITH JESSICA PRATT</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	1,881
<b>MADAMA BUTTERFLY</b> HANDA OPERA ON SYDNEY HARBOUR	44,697
<b>MICHAEL FABIANO IN CONCERT</b> MELBOURNE RECITAL CENTRE	775
<b>MISS SAIGON</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE AND HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE, MELBOURNE	145,845
<b>NEW YEAR'S EVE OPERA GALA CONCERT</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	2,573
<b>OPERA UP LATE</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	1,667
<b>THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA</b> ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE	94,354
<b>RIGOLETTO</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	9,227
<b>RING CYCLE</b>	
<b>DAS RHEINGOLD</b>	4,863
<b>DIE WALKÜRE</b>	4,907
<b>SIEGFRIED</b>	4,504
<b>GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG</b> QUEENSLAND PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE	4,710
<b>ROBERTO DEVEREUX IN CONCERT</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	1,915
<b>SATYAGRAHA IN CONCERT</b> HAMER HALL, ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE	2,052
<b>TANNHÄUSER IN CONCERT</b> HAMER HALL, ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE	2,139
<b>THE TALES OF HOFFMANN</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	7,256
<b>LA TRAVIATA ON NEW YEAR'S EVE</b> SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	1,448
<b>TOTAL ATTENDANCE</b>	<b>492,324</b>

IN SUMMARY



30  
TOTAL  
PRODUCTIONS



454  
TOTAL  
PERFORMANCES



\$65.7M  
TOTAL  
BOX OFFICE



14  
OPERAS



13  
CONCERTS  
AND RECITALS



3  
MUSICALS



15  
NATIONAL TOUR  
LOCATIONS



18  
NATIONAL TOUR  
PERFORMANCES



274  
NATIONAL TOUR  
CHILDREN'S CHORUS  
MEMBERS FROM  
LOCAL COMMUNITIES



579  
NATIONAL TOUR  
WORKSHOP/  
ACTIVITY  
ATTENDEES



43  
SCHOOLS TOUR  
LOCATIONS



76  
SCHOOLS TOUR  
PERFORMANCES

*“I was riveted from the moment the curtain rose. I really did not want it to end. I walked out still in another world.”*

THE TALES OF HOFFMANN  
AUDIENCE MEMBER

In July we staged the world premiere of Italian director Damiano Michieletto’s new production of *The Tales of Hoffmann*. A magical mix of emotion, eccentricity and stunning music, Jacques Offenbach’s greatest and final work is an arresting, fantastical opera of powerful psychological depth. In the opera, inebriated poet Hoffmann recounts the story of his four great loves, his obscure Muse, and the evil that pursues him.

World-celebrated Australian soprano Jessica Pratt incarnated all four of Hoffmann’s loves – Olympia the mechanical doll, Antonia the young singer, Giulietta the courtesan, and Stella the diva. Because of their demanding nature, these roles are usually performed by four different singers. Pratt now sits alongside Joan Sutherland as one of the few to have taken on all four at once.

Supporting every bewitching performance was our talented team from Props and Wardrobe, who helped bring the spectacular vision of Set Designer Paolo Fantin and Costume Designer Carla Teti to life. Teti’s costuming combined a vintage 1940s look with fantasy. Successfully realising a vision like this calls for both creativity and practicality from our hardworking props and wardrobe departments. “The vision for *Hoffmann* was for it to feel like a fever dream,” said Cassandra Pascoli, Wardrobe Production Coordinator. Teti’s idea, Pascoli continued, “was for it to feel quite absurd and fantastical, but to have these elements of real people as well.” Carla D’Annunzio, Head of Wigs Manufacturing, described the challenges: “We have to think of how it’s going to work, how it’s going to read, and if it’s going to make sense, and if it’s going to portray what the designers are looking for.”



Image: *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Photo: Keith Saunders



Image: Adam Player, Jessica Pratt, Iain Henderson and the Opera Australia Chorus in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Photo: Keith Saunders

## THE TALES OF HOFFMANN, SYDNEY



Both D'Annunzio and Pascoli paid tribute to Teti's skill in helping translate looks from paper onto the stage and to Jessica Pratt's professionalism. "Carla Teti was really good about collaborating with Jessica in the fitting room," Pascoli said. Making a performer feel comfortable is an essential part of a successful transformation. "When we put a wig or a costume on a performer, many will straight away go into that character," D'Annunzio commented. "But if they don't, you can see that it's just not going to work."

Musically, *The Tales of Hoffmann* offers particular challenges and creative opportunities. OA's Music Librarians, Peter Alexander and Jennifer Fung, were an essential part of the process. "Offenbach actually died before he produced a definitive version of the

opera," said Fung. "Other people were engaged to complete it and, as a result, everybody since then has tried to do their own version. The production in 2023 was no different."

In another successful OA shared project, this was a co-production with the Opéra National de Lyon, the Fondazione Teatro La Fenice di Venezia, and Royal Opera House Covent Garden. It was the first time that our company has built and premiered a co-production with any international opera house.

All agreed that the 2023 OA production of *The Tales of Hoffmann* was a triumph; nominated for an International Opera Award for Best New Production, the production transfixed audience members and left them awe-inspired.

“Sixteen hours in this operatic ‘multiverse’ is a five-star experience.”

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD



Comprising more than 2,000 pages of music, any performance of Richard Wagner’s epic Ring Cycle (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*) is always a massive undertaking. Featuring fantastical tales of dragons and gods and mystical forces, the Ring Cycle’s four operas (*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*) together combine to offer audiences one of the all-time greatest artistic masterpieces.

The Ring Cycle demands stamina – from performers, creatives and crew, as well as from audiences. Composing the four operas also demanded remarkable endurance from Wagner himself – the composer took more than a third of his life to complete the work.

Our world premiere production directed by Chinese-born director Chen Shi-Zheng and conducted by veteran conductor Philippe Auguin similarly required staying power: this production was unusually long in the making, with 2020 and 2021 performances postponed due to Covid. Finally erupting on stage at Brisbane’s Queensland Performing Arts Centre in December 2023, the ensemble of over 200 musicians and voices offered a veritable feast for the ears and eyes, supported by hundreds of crew.

Marrying Wagner’s traditional Norse world with touches of Marvel and Chinese mythology, Chen’s was the first digital version of the Ring Cycle and our company’s most ambitious production

to date. Twenty-seven semi-trailers transported technical equipment, costumes, stage pieces and props from Sydney. Fourteen tonnes of LED screens with dazzling visuals left audiences spellbound. Hours and hours of skilful work went into rehearsals, costumes, wigs, scenery, props, and digital content in order to realise the stunning, marathon performance.

Singers Angela Hogan, Jennifer Black, Ruth Strutt and Jane Ede described the demands and rewards of performing the Ring Cycle. "It's a huge feat to put on such a monster of a piece," Hogan commented. Black agreed, pointing to the challenge of performing roles spread over four different operas: "You can't just take your part and interpret it," Black said. "It's continuous dialogue, texts, monologues – epic in the true sense." As storytellers telling a complex story, Strutt added, the singers have to "keep track of a lot of moving parts."

Some moving parts were more literal than others. For the eight Valkyries, among the most daunting challenges was riding the phoenix which descended dramatically from the ceiling. Strutt described herself and her fellow Valkyries as "little danger monkeys". Black recalled the trepidation

of going up on the phoenix for the first few times: "We're all strapped into the harnesses and we were like, 'We got this, we got this, y'all, let's ride, let's ride!'"

The investment paid off, with critics acclaiming the production as outstanding. For *Limelight*, it was "as much a towering musical achievement as ... a visual one" and "one of the finest productions of the four-part epic ever staged".

Audiences were similarly blown away. "I adored the creative use of technical elements, including the visuals, the moving screens, and the aerialists," enthused one audience member. "The sightlines were fantastic throughout the entire venue." Another praised the stunning visuals and "exceptionally clever staging with world-class artists," pegging the production as "probably the best theatrical experience in all the 50 or so years I have been going to the opera."

For cast and crew, the 2023 Ring Cycle was a thrilling experience. On closing night, the audience rose to their feet for an extended standing ovation. "I haven't experienced anything like it in my 24 years singing," commented OA principal singer Jane Ede. "The speed at which people leapt to their feet! It was a very special night in the theatre."



Image: Stefan Vinke, Andrea Silvestrelli and Luke Gabbedy in *Götterdämmerung*. Photo: Wallis Media



Image: Dominica Matthews, Deborah Humble, Jennifer Black, Mariana Hong and Agnes Sarkis in *Die Walküre*. Photo: Wallis Media

*“Reuben Kaye was brilliant, all the soloists were outstanding, and the gay and humorous twist on opera classics was a complete winner.”*

OPERA UP LATE AUDIENCE MEMBER



At 11pm on two fabulous nights in February, when most opera audiences would usually be heading home, the Joan Sutherland Theatre in the Sydney Opera House came alive for Opera Australia’s inaugural *Opera Up Late*.

Presented by glamorous cabaret star and opera aficionado Reuben Kaye and directed by award-winning Shaun Rennie, *Opera Up Late* offered two wildly entertaining evenings of queer romance, drag and the world’s most famous opera arias, all wrapped up in a spectacular package accessible to newcomers to opera and satisfying to seasoned opera lovers alike.

This late-night bespoke arts event, held in association with Sydney WorldPride 2023, saw exclusive performances of classic opera hits reimagined and mixed with songs from musical theatre and pop.

OA performers included tenors Tomas Dalton and Benjamin Rasheed, mezzo-soprano Angela Hogan, soprano Cathy-Di Zhang and rising star of musical theatre Annie Aitken, all under the musical direction of OA Chorus Master Paul Fitzsimon.

The idea for the first ever *Opera Up Late* had been sparked in 2022 when members of the Marketing Team saw opportunities presented by WorldPride being held in Sydney the following year. “Knowing that it was going to be a huge event for the city and

queer communities in Sydney, we felt it was really important we be part of that,” said Ben Neutze, Marketing Manager, Content and Social Media.

*Opera Up Late* put a queer spin on things, bringing songs by Stephen Sondheim, Whitney Houston, Lady Gaga and the like into conversation with classics of the operatic repertoire. And audiences loved it. “This was the best entertainment we have had in years!” said one attendee. Another called it a “great mix of comedy, poignant moments, and superb opera in a different context.”

“It was really incredible,” Neutze enthused. “The audience was so supportive and happy. It felt very special to be walking up to the Sydney Opera House as everyone from the earlier shows was filing out, knowing that you were about to see something that you just wouldn’t get to see any other night of the year at the Opera House.”

As well as delighting audiences, *Opera Up Late* also offered an opportunity to highlight the place of LGBTQIA+ people in the history of Opera Australia. “It was an exciting thing,” Neutze said, “for people to feel like they were part of this sort of naughty, subversive, late-night experience that celebrated the role that LGBTQIA+ people have played in the artform and in the company for the almost 70 years of its existence.”

# IDOMENEIO, MELBOURNE



Set on the ancient island of Crete shortly after the Trojan War, Mozart's *Idomeneo* tells the epic tale of a troubled but tender relationship between a father and son. In the opera, the mythical King of Crete, believed lost at sea, is saved by Neptune who, in return, commits him to sacrifice the first living creature he meets on land. Tragically, that creature turns out to be the king's own son. Idomeneo is thus faced with the impossible task of either taking his son's life or sending him into exile over the seas.

Directed by Lindy Hume, OA's July 2023 production of *Idomeneo* was a landmark collaboration with Victorian Opera presented in association with Melbourne Chamber Orchestra. Performed at the Palais Theatre on Melbourne's St Kilda foreshore, with Benjamin Bayl conducting, the production would then be staged at the Sydney Opera House in early 2024.

The opera's setting in ancient Crete was brought to life in dramatic and unexpected ways. An original set design by Michael Yeargan was reinterpreted by Australian designers Richard Roberts (set), Anna Cordingley (costumes), and Verity Hampson (lighting). And Hume worked with a team of Australian artists, including Tasmanian filmmaker Catherine Pettman and video designer David Bergman, producing immersive epic visuals of the coastline of lutruwita Tasmania, which resonated with audiences in Melbourne.

Hume drew on her experience living and working in Tasmania as director of the Ten Days on the

Island festival to transpose the ancient Crete setting to the craggy coastline of the Australian island state. "Coastal landscapes really inspire me," Hume said. "I'm very aware of the ancient mythologies of our part of the world and also very much drawn to Greek mythology, so to set an opera on an island with wild weather and terrifying storms – a place like lutruwita Tasmania – seemed a resonant idea."

Collaborative projects like this one between Opera Australia and Victorian Opera, Hume pointed out, require a creative openness. Making the musical and the visual work in perfect harmony – down to adjusting the playback speed of the video visuals so that they perfectly matched the varied tempi of the conductors – was imperative. The origins of this particular collaboration were somewhat serendipitous: each company had independently planned their own separate productions before learning of an overlap in the programming.

Paying tribute to the vital contributions of the two companies' CEOs – Fiona Allan and Elizabeth Hill-Cooper – Hume believes that collaboration is the future of opera. Bringing companies together enables the creative sharing and responsible use of valuable resources. "Opera Australia and Victorian Opera," Hume commented, "are two very different scaled companies. The resources that Opera Australia was able to bring to the partnership contributed to a different outcome in Melbourne."

“Sheer sustained musical beauty.”

AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW

In August, Cameron Mackintosh’s acclaimed new Australian production of *Miss Saigon* opened at the Sydney Opera House for a nine-week season. Our production of this iconic, award-winning musical by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, set against the tumultuous background of the Vietnam War, was performed by a 24-piece orchestra and a sensational local cast, representing all corners of the Asia-Pacific and with a range of skills, backgrounds and experiences.

Young Australian singer Abigail Adriano made her mainstage lead debut in the coveted role of Kim, the young Vietnamese woman who falls in love with Chris, an American G.I. (played by Nigel Huckle). With her life torn apart by the fall of Saigon, Kim embarks on an epic three-year journey to find her way back to Chris and introduce him to their young son.

The role of Kim has become a career-defining role in musical theatre, catapulting many performers to stardom and critical acclaim. For her standout performance, Adriano earned the award of Best Newcomer at the 2023 Sydney Theatre Awards.

For Adriano, being cast in the role was a dream come true. “As a kid you’re drawn to characters you can see yourself in,” the 18-year-old said. “Kim was that role. Not only because she is Asian like me, but because in the face of it all she never ever backs down.”

Leading the stellar cast was internationally acclaimed performer Seann Miley Moore in the role of The Engineer. Just prior to the production, Miley Moore told the media, “This show is Asian excellence and this cast is giving Slay-Asian pride! *Miss Saigon* is a story that resonates with so many of us and our families, so seeing all of us together, ready to tell this story, is really empowering. The spotlight is now on our community, and we are going to own the stage and tell our truth.”

Playing to rave reviews, after Sydney, *Miss Saigon* then headed to Melbourne for performances at Her Majesty’s Theatre.



Image: Seann Miley Moore (centre) and cast members in *Miss Saigon* at the Sydney Opera House. Photo: Daniel Boud



Image: Seann Miley Moore, Bryce Li and Abigail Adriano in *Miss Saigon* at the Sydney Opera House. Photo: Daniel Boud

*“Opera Australia’s latest outdoor production is a meta-theatrical masterpiece which moves and seduces its audience to reflect on our own humanity.”*

TIME OUT

Opera Australia’s highly-acclaimed Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour production of Giacomo Puccini’s three-act *Madama Butterfly* made a welcome return to the stunning over-water stage at Mrs Macquaries Point in March and April.

Avant-garde Spanish director Àlex Ollé reinterpreted the opera for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century audience. Thirty-something American naval officer B.F. Pinkerton (played by Mexican-Australian tenor Diego Torre, shared with Paul O’Neill) became a contemporary businessman and developer who eyes off paradise in Japan. There he encounters the young geisha Cio-Cio-San (aka Madama Butterfly, played by Korean-born soprano Karah Son, shared with Korean-Australian soprano Eva Kong), whom he cynically seduces, ultimately shattering the girl’s dreams.

The production was staged in the open air, under the stars. The larger-than-life set included a verdant bamboo grove, a full moon white balloon, a rising sun and even a speedboat that delivered a cast member to the floating stage. The dramatic staging was the perfect complement to Puccini’s music, which tore at the audience’s heart strings as it does so well.

During the season, OA conductor Brian Castles-Onion celebrated his 100th performance of *Madama Butterfly*, having conducted every opera that has been performed at Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour. In 2023 the production was revived by Susana Gómez.

Each year, Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour makes a vital contribution to the visitor economy of NSW, supporting jobs and opportunities in the creative, tourism and hospitality industries. Our partners show their support for Sydney’s cultural life at Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour with the HSBC Platinum Club and Qantas Garden Bar.

The heart-wrenching performance of *Madama Butterfly* under the stars was capped off by nightly fireworks, and audiences were able to wine and dine at a mouth-watering array of bars and eateries. Everything combined to make this an unforgettable evening.





Image: Karah Son and Diego Torre in *Madama Butterfly*, Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour. Photo: Keith Saunders

# NURTURING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG ARTISTS

Opera Australia's nurturing of young artists instils a love for the artform while providing opportunity, guidance and a pathway to a professional opera career.

In 2023, eight of Australia's most promising emerging singers participated in the annual Opera Australia Young Artist Program. This program provides specialist language, acting, stagecraft and choreography training by some of the most experienced and skilled performers in the world.

During the year, on multiple occasions, OA stages were handed over to these eight young artists. They performed in cover roles, recitals, free concerts, and on the National Tour. Among the headline performers was Sophie Salvesani who would later go on to perform the role of Violetta in the 2024 production of *La Traviata* at the Sydney Opera House. The young singers also wowed audiences at sponsor and donor events, including Petah Cavallaro who shared the stage with none other than Jonas Kaufmann.

## **2023 Opera Australia Young Artists**

Petah Cavallaro  
Rebecca Gulinello  
Christian Haotian Qi  
Imogen-Faith Malfitano  
Sophie Salvesani  
Esther Song  
Danita Weatherstone  
Andrew Williams

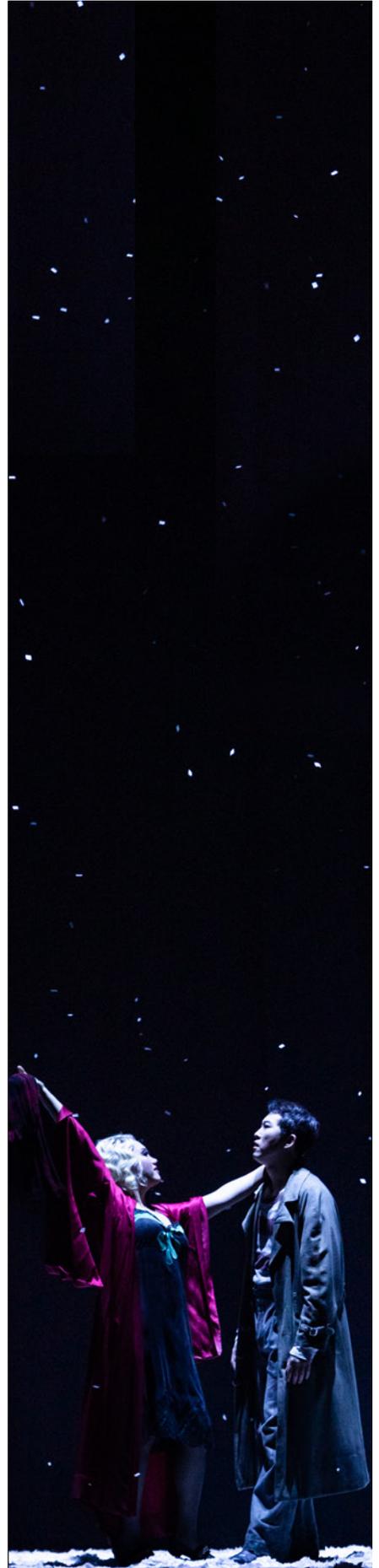


Image: Esther Song and Christian Haotian Qi in *La Bohème*. Photo: Rhiannon Hopley

The George and Nerissa Johnson Memorial Scholarship Bequest provides performing artists the opportunity for overseas study and professional development for up to eight weeks.

### **2023 George and Nerissa Johnson Memorial Scholarship Recipients**

Petah Cavallaro	Daniel Macey
Tomas Dalton	Anthony Mackey
Genevieve Dickson	Sophie Salvesani
Bronwyn Douglass	Rocco Speranza
Rebecca Gulinello	Luke Spicer
Christian Haotian Qi	Leah Thomas
Celeste Haworth	Danita Weatherstone
Iain Henderson	

In 2023, six Te Pae Kōkako (The Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio) students participated in a two-week Opera Australia residency as part of the TANZOS immersive training program for exceptionally promising New Zealand opera singers. This program helps participants to prepare for the international stage through a combination of academic, professional and in-situ industry training.

### **2023 Te Pae Kōkako TANZOS Residency Recipients**

Rhiannon Cooper, soprano  
 Alfred Fonoti-Fuimaono, baritone  
 Emmanuel Fonoti-Fuimaono, tenor  
 Taylor Wallbank, tenor  
 Katherine Winitana, soprano  
 Cecilia Zhang, mezzo

The Patricia H. Reid Fellowship is an annual professional development program for exceptional early career string musicians. Fellows are involved in rehearsals and performances of mainstage opera and ballet works over a period of 12 months with members of the Opera Australia Orchestra.

### **2023 Patricia H. Reid Orchestral Fellows**

Ellen Choung  
 Josef Hanna  
 Nanda Hong  
 Noah Oshiro

*“The wealth of information gained from my coaching in London and Berlin as part of this scholarship was vast. I have newly formed goals for technical improvement, new ways of thinking artistically and tools for preparing my music more thoroughly and efficiently. Across all of the coaches I worked with, there was a great emphasis on language and expression, finding a way to use the text with colour, clarity and beauty.”*

BRONWYN DOUGLASS,  
 GEORGE AND NERISSA JOHNSON  
 MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP  
 RECIPIENT

*“Playing in the Concert Hall in La Gioconda was a highlight, under the baton of Pinchas Steinberg who I learned an immense amount from. He was specific on how to shape a phrase, challenging us to think deeply about each and every note and maintain purpose in direction and mood. He kept us thinking deeply about tone and nuance.”*

NANDA HONG,  
 PATRICIA H. REID  
 ORCHESTRAL FELLOW



The Patricia H. Reid Orchestral Fellowship offers practical and holistic training for talented early career string players in addition to the valuable experience of performing alongside members of Opera Australia. It fosters a love for the artform, and helps open the way to a professional career in opera.

Teije Hylkema, principal cellist in the Opera Australia Orchestra, said the last few years have made him realise that he has something of great value to offer young musicians: experience. “The biggest difference between our fellows and me,” Hylkema observed, “is that I’ve been playing in professional orchestras for 25 years – ten of those with the incredible Opera Australia Orchestra. While the recipients [of the fellowship] are already outstanding musicians when they come to the program, connecting them with experienced professionals is what the Patricia H. Reid Orchestral Fellowship is all about.”

Hylkema outlined the holistic experience offered by the fellowship: “As part of the program,” he commented, “young string musicians are trained to prepare and manage the stressful nature of auditions. They have individual lessons and do mock auditions. They receive training on performance anxiety, prevention of hearing loss and many more practical and psychological aspects of this career.”

For OA’s principal cellist, it’s a rewarding program all round. “It’s a privilege to spend time mentoring our young musicians,” Hylkema enthused. “I hope they get as much out of the program as I do!”

*“The Patricia H. Reid Fellowship allows young musicians to fall in love with opera simply by being immersed in it. They then pass on the love to their peers who come to see the concerts - and a new generation is introduced to this magnificent artform.”*

TEIJE HYLKEMA,  
PRINCIPAL CELLO,  
OPERA AUSTRALIA  
ORCHESTRA

*“It’s a rare phenomenon to hear new and distinctly Australian-themed opera, and the skill and care taken in the preparation and presentation of this score by all parties is impressive and to be much celebrated.”*

LIMELIGHT

Our company continues to develop and grow the artform through new artistic initiatives both on large and smaller scales. With a more collaborative focus that will keep creativity, innovation and excellence at the heart of all the company presents, we are exploring new stories – especially Australian stories – and actively commissioning across a diverse range of voices and a multiplicity of cast members.

This includes the support and creation of new First Nations-led works, one of which was in development with director Leah Purcell in 2023. Opera Australia formed a producing partnership to support workshops with a pianist and singers which was held at Sydney Theatre Company.

The new Australian work *Eucalyptus* was also in planning during the year, commissioned by Opera Australia and Victorian Opera prior to the Covid pandemic. Based on Murray Bail’s celebrated novel, this gothic work is a co-production by Opera Australia, Victorian Opera, Perth Festival and Brisbane Festival. Part Australian fairy tale and part musical evocation of the Australian bush, *Eucalyptus* features a roll-call of all-Australian artists and creatives: Director Michael Gow, Set and Costume Designer Simone Romaniuk, Composer Jonathan Mills, Librettist Meredith Oakes and Conductor Tahu Matheson. In the roles of Ellen and her father are Desiree Frahn and Simon Meadows.

*Eucalyptus* went on to have its world premiere at the Perth Festival in February 2024 as a concert performance with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and West Australian Opera Chorus. Its fully-staged season would continue in Queensland with Brisbane Camerata and the Opera Queensland Chorus, before travelling on to Melbourne, performed with Orchestra Victoria and the Victorian Opera Chorus.



# AUDIENCE



Image: Reuben Kaye, *Opera Up Late*. Photo: Rhiannon Hopley.



492,324

TOTAL ATTENDEES



59.76%

FIRST-TIME OPERA AUSTRALIA PURCHASERS (OPERA)



72.94%

FIRST-TIME OPERA AUSTRALIA PURCHASERS (MUSICAL THEATRE)

### DIGITAL AUDIENCE



FOLLOWERS: **13,057**  
GROWTH: **11.5%**



FOLLOWERS: **14,100**  
GROWTH: **13.7%**



FOLLOWERS: **41,754**  
GROWTH: **16.3%**



FOLLOWERS: **88,670**  
GROWTH: **13.6%**



TOTAL FOLLOWERS: **182,520**  
TOTAL GROWTH: **11%**

### AUDIENCES: TOP TEN OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA



1

USA



2

UNITED KINGDOM



3

GERMANY



4

NEW ZEALAND



5

SOUTH KOREA



6

CANADA



7

HONG KONG



8

SINGAPORE



9

JAPAN



10

CHINA

# ENGAGING AUDIENCES

Understanding audience motivations and attitudes is critical for global opera companies like ours to thrive in today's cultural landscape. The success of Opera Australia relies both on the artistic excellence of our productions and also our ability to make meaningful connections with diverse audiences across Australia and around the world.

Over a period of six months during 2023, Opera Australia undertook an audience research project to assist the company to better understand the preferences, tastes and interests of current and future audiences, as well as barriers to attendance. A better understanding of our audiences will help us sustain the impressive current growth rate of new attendees to Opera Australia performances – approximately 60% of our opera productions and 70% of our musical theatre productions.

Our research highlighted the diversity of existing and potential opera audiences – from the most engaged and loyal opera-goers with high levels of passion for opera as a rich artform, and those who attend performances for a shared social experience or an intellectual pursuit with educational outcomes, through to multicultural audiences seeking a new and different cultural offering and those motivated to attend opera as a special 'bucket list' experience. Our research also identified next generation audiences – both those who are culturally engaged but time-poor and those with strong positive perceptions of opera's ability to stir powerful emotions but who do not currently attend opera.

These insights are invaluable to Opera Australia's long-term audience strategy to engage new and infrequent audiences and ensure the company retains existing audiences and loyal patrons. The data will assist us to identify those who are ready to explore new stories and new ways of seeing and deliver new and exciting works and new collaborations and artistic partnerships that drive audience development.

*“By discerning audience motivations, we can create programming that resonates with diverse audiences, enhancing their experience of the artform and fostering a sense of belonging in the community. The audience development research will also drive decisions about Opera Australia's marketing and communications and business development strategies and, overall, the ways in which the audience experience can be enhanced.”*

SIMON MEILAK,  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING  
AND COMMUNICATIONS



Image: *Aida* audience at Sydney Opera House. Photo: Matthew Longden

*“I discovered something way richer than expected today with way more layers, more dimension.”*

HSBC A WORLD OF OPERA  
AUDIENCE MEMBER

In 2023, our company opened up opera to the community again, with free concert performances in Sydney and Melbourne. Both events were made possible through valuable partnerships with BMW and HSBC.

The sounds of opera reverberated on the cobblestones of Melbourne’s Fed Square in February as Australian audiences experienced their first BMW *Opera for All* concert. A mass audience of 4,000 enjoyed a free concert performed by a stellar line-up of four brilliant OA singers, accompanied by a superb live orchestra of 16 musicians from Orchestra Victoria led by celebrated conductor Brian Castles-Onion.

The product of a multi-year partnership between Opera Australia and BMW, the event was part of a global initiative which has seen similar free concerts held in cities including London, Munich and Berlin. Under summer skies, the all-star OA cast of soprano Sophie Salvesani, mezzo-soprano Dimity Shepherd, tenor Simon Kim and baritone Luke Gabbedy sang crowd-pleasing operatic hits.

Sydney audiences had their turn in July at the Sydney Opera House. Attracting 1,401 attendees, the HSBC *A World of Opera* free concert showcased performers from our company’s Young Artist Program, shining a light on some of Australia’s rising stars of opera and celebrating their remarkable developing talents. The young artists performed powerful opera favourites, including Puccini’s ‘Nessun dorma’ from *Turandot* and ‘O mio babbino caro’ from *Gianni Schicchi*, and Bizet’s ‘Micaela’s Aria’ from *Carmen* and ‘Au fond du temple saint’ from *The Pearlfishers*.

Together these free community events are extending the reach of opera, showcasing the glittering talents of our performers and bringing them to an ever-wider audience.



Images (top-bottom): HSBC A World of Opera, Sydney. Photo: HSBC  
BMW Opera for All, Melbourne. Photo: Andrew Hobbs



With its captivating music, staging and storytelling, opera always takes audiences on a journey. Each year, through its National Tour program, Opera Australia takes the artform itself on an expedition across the country. Since 1996 our company has presented many of Australia's finest singers and musicians to over 300,000 people dotted across 119 locations in metropolitan and regional areas.

In 2023, under the energetic direction of award-winning Priscilla Jackman, Gioachino Rossini's much-loved *The Barber of Seville* took to the road, travelling to communities in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia.

OA's production opened first at Parramatta's Riverside Theatre in July. For Donna Davis, NSW State Member for Parramatta, "the launch of Opera Australia's *The Barber of Seville* at Riverside Theatre demonstrates that Parramatta has what it takes to be a preeminent theatre capital in Greater Sydney."

After Western Sydney, the cast and crew then travelled 14,000 kilometres on a two-month tour around the country, delighting and engaging audiences and communities in 15 venues across New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Victoria. In Goulburn (NSW) and Cleveland (Qld), audiences had their first taste of a local performance by Opera Australia, while remote communities including Cairns, Katherine, Alice Springs, Kalgoorlie and Albany enjoyed a return visit.

Traditionally set in 18th-century Spain, *The Barber of Seville* was given an update for contemporary Australian audiences. The barbershop of the enterprising Figaro was relocated to the real-life Victorian town of Seville, while the man himself was given a hipster moustache. Baritones Christian Haotian Qi and Andrew Williams shared the role of Figaro, while sopranos Esther Song and Cathy-Di Zhang reprised their shared role of Rosina, and tenors Shanul Sharma and John Longmuir shared the role of Count Almaviva.

OA's National Tour is about more than bringing opera to audiences outside of metropolitan areas. Every year, in each location, our company engages in a range of workshops and programs with local communities, initiating new participants into the wonderful world of opera.

It also draws in young singers in regional areas. Under the direction of Children's Chorus Master Jonathon Bam, local students become active participants in the production, joining the professional OA cast in rehearsal and performance. For many, this was their first thrilling experience of live performance in front of an audience.

After this first tantalising taste of opera, who knows where the future might lead?

*"As our community grows, people deserve access to world-class entertainment on their doorstep and I am deeply grateful to Opera Australia for bringing world-class productions to Parramatta."*

DONNA DAVIS,  
NSW MP FOR PARRAMATTA



Image (top): Parramatta Youth Choir in *The Barber of Seville* National Tour.

Image (bottom): Dress rehearsal for *The Barber of Seville*, Riverside Theatre, Parramatta. Photos: Keith Saunders

# MAKING OPERA ACCESSIBLE

A treasure trove of human expression, opera deserves to be accessible to everyone, providing an opportunity for individuals from all walks of life to connect with powerful stories through music and song. In our efforts to democratise the artform and increase community participation, Opera Australia is addressing cost-related barriers to the enjoyment of opera.

In February, we were delighted to present the inaugural BMW *Opera for All* series in Melbourne's Fed Square. The BMW free concert series, an annual event staged in several major cities around the world, sees local opera organisations present exceptional cultural experiences to the public for free.

In July, our HSBC *A World of Opera* free concert brought cultures and communities together at the Sydney Opera House. The afternoon performance brought a selection of some of the best-known and best-loved opera pieces from around the world, creating an unforgettable experience for newcomers to opera.

Across the year, thanks to the generous support of the Wakil Foundation Access Program, we were able to open up attendance to those who might otherwise not have the opportunity to enjoy opera. During the year, 2,780 tickets for \$20

were provided to people to attend OA performances for the first time at Sydney Opera House and Arts Centre Melbourne.

In 2023 as well, we offered a range of initiatives to entice the opera-curious to take the plunge into the exciting world of opera. In celebration of the 200th performance of Gale Edwards' much-loved production of *La Bohème*, we offered '200 tickets for 200 cents' via a ballot system to encourage first-time audience members to experience a world-class opera performance at the Sydney Opera House. Throughout the year we also included 'Student Rush' tickets for \$35 and Under-30s Subscription packages offering a 30% ticket discount.

These initiatives contributed to highly gratifying results: in 2023 almost 60% of our opera audiences attended for the first time and 70% of our musical theatre audiences were first-time attendees.

*"Opera Australia is deeply committed to ensuring that people from all walks of life can access the excitement and drama of this incredible artform."*

FIONA ALLAN,  
CEO, OPERA AUSTRALIA



Image: BMW *Opera for All* audience, Fed Square. Photo: Andrew Hobbs



In 2023, primary school students were presented with a fun entrée into opera with *El Kid* – an OA production based on *Three Billy Goats Gruff* set to the popular tunes of Bizet’s *Carmen*. This marriage of a traditional folktale and world-famous opera music was a great way to introduce young listeners to opera. Full of satire and slapstick, colour and movement, *El Kid* also tackles serious issues for children like bullying, loneliness and sibling rivalry, making it both entertaining and edifying for its young audience.

OA’s Schools Tour program aims to foster a love of the performing arts in children. Throughout Victoria and New South Wales, the program brings high quality opera performance into schools, delighting tens of thousands of young people with a mix of music, singing, drama and design.

The 2023 *El Kid* production for NSW saw greater innovation in embedded learning, which enhanced the engagement of both teachers and students. “The aim of the Schools Tour is to engage primary school kids aged from about seven to 12,” explained Katherine Budd, OA Senior Producer. “When we’re presenting an existing opera production like *Carmen*, what we’re looking for is how it ties into the curriculum. For 2023, we also created education resources that offered the opportunity for teachers to engage with the performance and then continue to teach in the classroom following the performance.”

For teachers, the program sought to develop their confidence, providing music activity for their students. “Quite often teachers find opera a bit daunting,” Budd observed. “So we were looking at ways to open opera up to them.” For the kids, meanwhile, exercises built into the program offered a way for them to be active and engaged, while also developing their familiarity with the music of *Carmen*. “Body percussion keeps the kids moving,” Budd commented, “and also teaches them rhythm and musical terminology as well.”

*“The resources and information that were supplied in the pack were fantastic. The ability to compare music from Carmen to the music in El Kid was a great teaching point. Being able to play with recitative voice was a highly enjoyable activity... We are a small regional school with quite a low socio-economic clientele, so many of our students wouldn’t have this experience if it wasn’t for your company.”*

NSW PRIMARY  
SCHOOL TEACHER

# COMPANY



Image: La Bohème. Photo: Rhiannon Hopley

## EMPLOYEES



TOTAL EMPLOYEES  
1,309



ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS  
55.06%



TECHNICAL  
33.41%



ADMINISTRATIVE  
AND MANAGEMENT  
6.67%

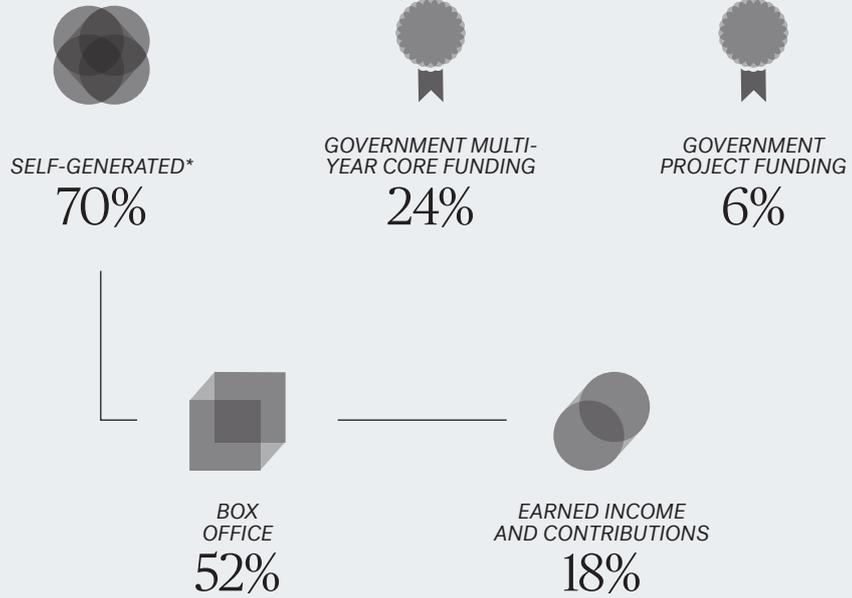


PRODUCING AND  
ARTISTIC MANAGEMENT  
4.87%

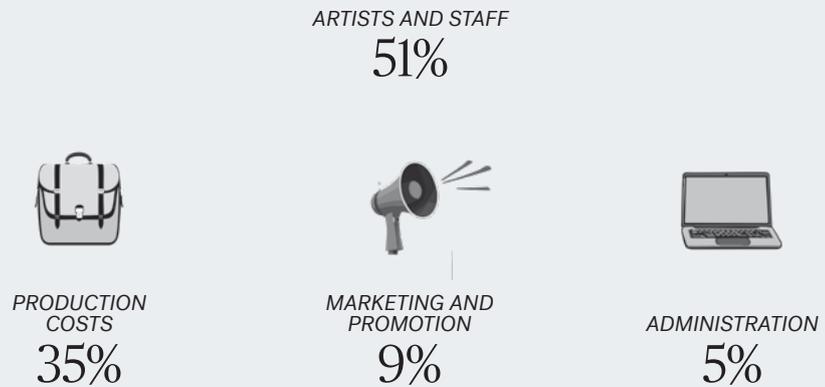
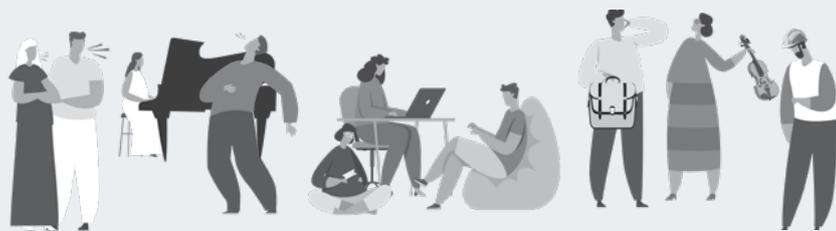


YOUNG ARTISTS SUPPORTED:  
SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS AND RESIDENCIES  
33

## REVENUE



## EXPENDITURE



\*Government project funding was previously classified as self-generating revenue (reported at 75% in 2022)

Our Chorus is considered one of the world's finest. Usually these powerful singers provide the essential backbone to OA productions. But during the Sydney Summer season the 48-strong Chorus stepped into the limelight at the Joan Sutherland Theatre with a brand new work: *Chorus!*

A bespoke production, the aptly named *Chorus!* took audiences through a program traversing three centuries of music performed in five languages, all accompanied magnificently on piano by Assistant Chorus Master Michael Curtain and OA répétiteur Kate Johnson.

At the heart of our Chorus is a strong sense of togetherness, and *Chorus!* paid tribute to this ethos. Devised and directed by Matthew Barclay, with conductor and Chorus Master Paul Fitzsimon at the helm, *Chorus!* celebrated their individual and combined skill. "Performing a variety of choruses across many genres and musical styles offered us many challenges, but the end result showcased the talent that lies with the group both as a collective and individually," Chorus member Katherine Wiles said.

Much in demand, our Chorus performs all year round, in productions in Sydney and Melbourne, and at various venues and open-air sites across the country. In Melbourne in 2023, Chorus members had the opportunity to master the music of Philip Glass for the production of *Satyagraha* - including the Sanskrit - which Wiles described as "refreshing and, for some, extremely moving."

*La Gioconda* in the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall reunited Chorus members with Jonas Kaufmann and Ludovic Tézier, and introduced them to the phenomenal soprano Saïoa Hernández.

The Chorus then performed in new productions, including *Adriana Lecouvreur*. Katherine Wiles praised the approach of Director Rosetta Cucchi who "never sat at her desk during stage calls, preferring to walk amongst us on set, encouraging new reactions, storylines and focus."

The Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour production of *Madama Butterfly* then saw the Chorus 'sing' the Humming Chorus in this special setting night after night. From there, they travelled to Brisbane for the Ring Cycle and *Aida*, where they performed alongside Opera Queensland Chorus colleagues. This, in turn, has helped seed musical collaborations for the future.

In 2023, children across the country were offered the opportunity to share the stage with our artists and Chorus members. Children performed in *La Bohème* and *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the Sydney Opera House and *Madama Butterfly* for Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour.

*"[Chorus!] was a truly beautiful performance and a wonderful way to recognise the importance of the chorus to opera. Like the back-up singers who made such a difference to the rock stars of the 1970s the chorus similarly lifts the stars of opera."*

CHORUS!  
AUDIENCE MEMBER



Image: Chorus! at Sydney Opera House. Photo: Keith Saunders

# CELEBRATING SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE 50 YEARS

Back in September 1973, Opera Australia christened the Sydney Opera House's Opera Theatre (now the Joan Sutherland Theatre) with its first public performance: the Australian premiere of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. At the final rehearsal the night before, one uninvited guest famously showed up: a brush-tailed possum, who scuttled in from the adjoining Royal Botanic Gardens and settled right next to the conductor. In the years to come, that possum became something of an unofficial mascot for our company.

In the 50 years since that first performance, we've been proud to call the Sydney Opera House our Sydney home, with the architectural marvel hosting performances by opera's luminaries – Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Richard Bonyngne, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, to name just three – to hundreds of thousands of Australians.

Throughout 2023, we marked our half-century of performances at the Sydney Opera House with various special events, including two concerts – *Mad Scenes with Jessica Pratt* and *La Gioconda in Concert* – which formed part of the Opera House's official 50th Birthday program.

Under the baton of Johannes Fritzsich, *Mad Scenes with Jessica Pratt* celebrated the talents of Jessica Pratt, one of Australia's most successful operatic exports of recent decades. Pratt treated an ecstatic audience to arias from the bel canto repertoire, which were met with multiple standing ovations.

In *La Gioconda in Concert* we welcomed back Jonas Kaufmann, the world's most popular tenor. Making his role debut as Enzo, Kaufmann was joined by Spanish soprano Saïoa Hernández, who made her OA debut in the title role for which she is internationally renowned. A superb cast of local and international principal artists were supported by the full force of the Opera Australia Orchestra and Opera Australia Chorus, under the baton of Pinchas Steinberg.

After a wonderful year of celebrations, we're looking forward to our next 50 years in the stunning Sydney Opera House, opening the way to new generations of Australian audiences and artists, and forging unforgettable experiences.



Image: Jonas Kaufmann in *La Gioconda in Concert*. Photo: Keith Saunders

*“It was a night of spectacular opera. The spectacle came not from lavish sets and costumes, but from the glorious voices of some of the best opera singers in the world, including the legendary tenor, Jonas Kaufmann, making a role debut, supported by the mighty Opera Australia Orchestra and full Chorus directed by Pinchas Steinberg.”*

CANBERRA CITY NEWS ON LA GIOCONDA IN CONCERT



Image: Deborah Humble, Ludovic Tézier and Saïoa Hernández in *La Gioconda* in Concert. Photo: Keith Saunders

# SHARING OUR RESOURCES

As a company, Opera Australia is committed to supporting others in the industry. Demonstrating this long-term commitment, we share our Opera Centre spaces in Sydney and Melbourne with artists, creatives, arts and entertainment organisations and not-for-profits. Our company offers significantly reduced rates for accessing our audition, rehearsal and performance spaces.

In 2023 over 150 companies made use of two OA studios at Melbourne Opera Centre and three studios at The Opera Centre in Sydney's Surry Hills. The largest of these in Melbourne can accommodate up to 200 people, and in Sydney up to 162 people. Musical coaching rooms and soundproof, acoustically treated rehearsal spaces were also utilised.

At the Melbourne Opera Centre, our offices are shared with Musica Viva, Melba Opera Trust and The Opera Society. The building also houses retail shops and a hotel. In Sydney at The Opera Centre, Pinchgut Opera shares our office and rehearsal spaces.

In keeping with our commitment to supporting First Nations projects, we were pleased to support Narungga/Kurna artist Jacob Boehme at the Melbourne Opera Centre – during the year for a period of eight weeks across six months, the major new theatre work *Guuranda* came to life ahead of its world premiere at Adelaide Festival in 2024.



Image: Luke Currie Richardson in *Guuranda*. Photo: Tiffany Garvie

The monumental new First Nations theatre work *Guuranda*, from Narungga/Kurna theatre-maker Jacob Boehme, tells the Narungga stories of South Australia's Yorke Peninsula. The production was developed during 2023 at the Melbourne Opera Centre ahead of its Adelaide Festival world premiere in 2024.

Further building capacity in the sector, Opera Australia provides a broad range of services to Australian performing arts companies of all sizes, including knowledge-sharing, training, technical expertise and the loan of production assets. In 2023, 16 organisations were provided services in-kind, free of charge or on a loan basis. This included props loaned to Pinchgut Opera and costumes loaned to Melbourne Opera, Sydney Theatre Company and Rockdale Musical Society.

In 2023 Opera Australia hosted work experience students from the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), The West Australian Academy of Performing Arts and Queensland University of Technology. Each year our Wigs and Wardrobe Team provides annual theatre makeup masterclasses to NIDA students, giving them deeper understanding of how wigs, facial hair and bald caps are manufactured, applied and used to create characters.

## **Organisations assisted in 2023:**

- Belvoir Street Theatre
- Ensemble Theatre
- Hayes Theatre Co
- National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)
- Opera Queensland
- Pinchgut Opera
- Queensland University of Technology
- Rockdale Musical Society
- Squabbalogic Music Theatre
- Sydney Catholic Schools
- Sydney Festival
- Sydney Opera House
- Sydney Theatre Company
- Victorian Opera
- West Australian Academy of Performing Arts
- West Australian Opera

Opera Australia's manufacturing teams are regularly engaged by Australian and international performing arts companies to make scenery, props and costumes. In 2023 this included the making of costumes for the Sydney Opera House production of *Amadeus* and the painting of scenic backdrops for productions of *The Phantom of the Opera* in Greece, *Love Never Dies* in Shanghai and *The Tina Turner Musical* in Australia.

In 2023 we embarked on a new strategic ambition, a core feature of which was a determination to put a uniquely Australian stamp on our artform. Developed in consultation with employees and in the context of the Australian Government's 2023 National Cultural Policy *Revive - A place for every story, a story for every place*, **our new strategy** reflects the post-pandemic direction for Opera Australia and outlines our goal of nurturing and extending our artform, audience and company equally. The key financial objective for the next five years is to foster a company that sustains a large and highly specialist workforce and supports an innovative program of opera and musical theatre.

**Building an inclusive and diverse workplace**

Reflecting our greater focus on diversity and inclusion across the company, our inaugural *Reflect* Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) endorsed by Reconciliation Australia was launched in August. Our RAP sets out our vision to advance reconciliation through cultural learning and through providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, art practitioners, administrators and leaders to work in an environment that is culturally safe for First Nations people.

Opera Australia's RAP working group is assisting our company with the development and implementation of the plan and is helping to develop its diversity, inclusion and belonging vision in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diversity goals.

The 2023 RAP working group members were Fiona Allan, Rebecca Doyle, Pella Gregory, Ruth Thomas, Celeste Haworth, Celeste Lazarenko, Lisa Mullineux, Jane Ede, Ben Neutze and Andrew Guy.



Image: Opera Australia Chorus and Circa artists in *Orpheus and Eurydice* at the Sydney Opera House, 2024. Photo: Keith Saunders

**Supporting a First Nations Voice to Parliament**

In late 2023, Australians were asked to vote Yes or No to a proposal to amend the Constitution to include a First Nations Voice to Parliament. Ahead of the referendum, in order to ensure our employees were informed about this proposal, Opera Australia, in partnership with Sydney Opera House, presented a series of 'Learning Teas' to educate our employees about the Voice and to provide them with the information to use their vote wisely. In addition, the Opera Australia Executive and Board issued a Statement of Support for a Yes vote, while acknowledging that others at Opera Australia may hold different views.

**Committing to an equitable and culturally safe workplace**

Opera Australia wants to ensure equal access to and enjoyment of rewards, resources, opportunities and outcomes for all, regardless of gender. We are working towards improvement in workplace equity and we are supporting employees to understand the inequities affecting women. During the year, we made significant strides towards gender equity in creative teams, with further work to be done in this area. Providing expertise, context, and knowledge were the members of our 2023 Gender Equity Working Group: Kathi McCulloch, Chris Yates, Janet Glover, Katherine Wiles, Maddy Heanly, Emily Judd, Hannah Lobelson, Andy Morton, Jennifer Anderson, Kate Herrett and Rebecca Moret.

As a company, Opera Australia represents, supports and reflects the rich diversity of Australian communities. Celebrating the

LGBTQIA+ community in 2023, we created and staged our inaugural *Opera Up Late* concert hosted by international comedy and cabaret star Reuben Kaye. Recognising the diversity of employees at Opera Australia and supporting Opera Australia's LGBTQIA+ employees is our Rainbow Tutti Working Group. In 2023 the Rainbow Tutti Working Group members were Simon Meilak, Greg Moses, Erica Hughes, Lynda Proude, Stephen Adamson, Reena Rihan, Siro Battaglin, Kelly Spice and Andrew Guy.

**Collaborating on enterprise agreements**

OA has four enterprise agreements covering Orchestra, Performers and Music staff, Technical staff and Non-Repertory Production staff which all had nominal expiry dates of 31 January 2024. To provide adequate time for meaningful, detailed and productive bargaining, OA management and employee and union representatives agreed to a two-stage approach to the EAs. The first stage, which was undertaken during 2023, was focused on extending the terms of the current EAs and a wage increase, with the second stage focused on new terms in the EAs aligned to OA's operational requirements, for commencement in 2025.

Stage 1 of the EA's approach was agreed and approved by the FWC with nominal expiry dates of 31 January 2025 which resulted in a 3.5% wage increase for all EA-covered employees, with the exception of manufacturing employees and principal singers who received a 4% wage increase. The collaboration, transparency and trust taken by everyone in Stage 1 has all parties well positioned for Stage 2 in 2024.

In August, we launched our inaugural **Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan** (RAP), joining a network of corporate, government and not-for-profit organisations committed to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Karen Mundine, Reconciliation Australia's Chief Executive Officer, welcomed the *Reflect* plan, commenting that it "enables Opera Australia to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress."

*Reflect* sets down our vision to celebrate and elevate First Nations peoples as the country's original storytellers, to support truth telling, celebration and the honouring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples. It marks a vital step in our company's determination to engage and build meaningful relationships with First Nations people.

During the year, as part of this commitment and in conversation with Opera Australia's RAP working group, Aboriginal artist Jasmine Sarin unveiled an original artwork to represent our company's journey and aspirations.

A proud Dharawal-born Kamilaroi and Jerrinja woman, Jasmine explained the powerful meaning and symbolism behind her artwork: "The artwork is titled *Barabi*, a Dharag word for better with time, as stories get better with time. Circles feature in my artwork and represent people in communities. The rings within those circles represent the different layers of community and the different layers of organisations. Each individual dot represents the people who make up those communities and workplaces. When everyone comes together working towards the same goal we create something beautiful and magical.

"The lines that connect all the people and places represent the past, present and future and flows both ways to create new stories and keep old ones alive. The background is influenced by the coast of the Sydney basin with layers of the eucalypt and ochre to represent the natural landscape we sit in. The black pattern in the background is sound represented as a vibrational pattern, seeing something that you feel."

We are proud to have the *Barabi* artwork hanging in reception at The Opera Centre in Surry Hills for employees and visitors, serving as a constant marker of our commitment to advancing reconciliation.





Through music and song, our incredibly talented artists and musicians share powerful stories with our audiences. Our visionary creatives – from stage management to set and costume designers and lighting technicians – breathe life into every aspect of our productions. And, behind the scenes, our dedicated and highly skilled arts managers and administrators exercise an unwavering commitment to their roles, to the artform, and to supporting their colleagues on stage.

Together they include:

- Artistic Administrators
- AV / Sound and Vision
- Business Services
- Chorus / Children’s Chorus
- Manufacturing and Workshop
- Mechanists
- Music Librarians
- Musicians
- Performing Artists
- Principal Artists
- Producers
- Props and Scenic Art
- Site Operations
- Stage Management
- Stores and Facilities
- Technical Administrators
- Technicians
- Wardrobe, Wigs, Hair and Makeup

Through collaboration, resilience and creativity, we offer our audiences an exceptional experience of opera and musical theatre. We are determined to be a place where our employees can thrive, achieving both individual and company goals. We have a diverse, intergenerational, and highly skilled workforce across all areas of the company who work together to attain artistic excellence.

The exceptional talents and skills of members of the OA team displayed over the course of 2023 were recognised in prestigious awards. Congratulations to the following nominees and recipients:

**2023 Sydney Theatre Awards**

- Abigail Adriano for *Miss Saigon* – Winner, Best Newcomer

**2023 International Opera Awards**

- *The Tales of Hoffmann* – nominated for Best New Production

**2024 Green Room Awards**

- *Idomeneo* – Winner, Best Production (Opera)
- Timo Riihonen for *Tannhäuser* – Winner, Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role (Opera)
- Seann Miley Moore for *Miss Saigon* – Winner, Best Leading Artist (musical theatre – commercial/funded)
- Silicon Theatre Scenery implement by Cam Balfour (Automation) for *Miss Saigon* – Winner, Best Design (musical theatre – commercial/funded)
- Guy Simpson (Supervisor) and Anthony Barnhill (Musical Director) for *The Phantom of the Opera* – Winner, Best Direction, Music (musical theatre – commercial/funded)
- Laurence Connor and Jean-Pierre Van Der Spuy (Stage) for *Miss Saigon* – Winner, Best Direction, Stage and Technical (musical theatre – commercial/funded)

# ACKNOWLEDGING OUR TEAM

## **Board of Directors**

Rod Sims AO *Chair*  
Warwick Bray  
Jonathan Feder  
Jane Hansen AO  
Michelle Kam  
Deena Shiff  
Andrew Sisson AO

The Board of Directors is responsible for Opera Australia's overall governance, strategic direction, and our company's ongoing sustainability. Directors are elected by Opera Australia's members for a three-year term which can be extended by the members. The Board of Directors delegates to the Chief Executive Officer and the Executive team the authority for the day-to-day management of the Company within the parameters set by the Board. The work of the Board is supported by:

The Audit & Risk Committee, responsible for scrutinising the Company's financial processes and the financial prudence of its strategies as well as having general oversight of the Company's risk and compliance activities. The Company's auditors meet with the Audit & Risk Committee on a regular basis and report on their processes and findings.

The People, Remuneration & Nominations Committee is responsible for overseeing the Company's people and culture including oversight of the Company's workforce and remuneration policies.

The Property Committee makes recommendations to the Board regarding the Company's property portfolio.

## **Executive Team**

Fiona Allan  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Simon Militano  
*Chief Operating Officer*  
Jo Davies  
*Artistic Director*  
Chantal Lewis  
*Development Director*  
Chris Yates  
*Technical Director*  
Simon Meilak  
*Marketing and Communications Director*

# ACKNOWLEDGING OUR TEAM

We are grateful for the passion and dedication of all our artists and creatives that brought to life our productions during the year.

## PRINCIPAL ARTISTS

Abigail Adriano  
 Nicholas Afoa  
 Annie Aitken  
 Stacey Alleaume  
 Jonathan Alley  
 Richard Anderson  
 Natalie Aroyan  
 Jud Arthur  
 Atalla Ayan  
 Iván Ayón Rivas  
 Dean Bassett  
 Jonathan Biggins  
 Jennifer Black  
 Jennifer Bonner  
 Valerio Borgioni  
 Gregory Brown  
 Giorgio Caoduro  
 Emma Castelli  
 Petah Cavallaro  
 Annabelle Chaffey  
 Conal Coad  
 Anna-Louise Cole  
 Andreas Conrad  
 Olivia Cranwell  
 Leah Crocetto  
 Michael Curtain  
 Bradley Daley  
 Tomas Dalton  
 Genevieve Dickson  
 Bronwyn Douglass  
 Jeremy Dubé  
 Samuel Dundas  
 Rachelle Durkin

Jane Ede  
 Malcolm Ede  
 Tristan Entwistle  
 Michael Fabiano  
 Alanna Fraize  
 Hubert Francis  
 Ferruccio Furlanetto  
 Warwick Fyfe  
 Luke Gabbedy  
 Elena Gabouri  
 Steven Gallop  
 Simon Gilkes  
 Julie Lea Goodwin  
 Lorina Gore  
 Kerrie Anne Greenland  
 Rebecca Gulinello  
 Tom Hamilton  
 Alexander Hargreaves  
 Celeste Haworth  
 Stuart Haycock  
 Iain Henderson  
 Saioa Hernández  
 Kirralee Hillier  
 Kimberley Hodgson  
 Angela Hogan  
 Michael Honeyman  
 Mariana Hong  
 Nigel Huckle  
 Deborah Humble  
 Ermonela Jaho  
 Kate Johnson  
 Jonas Kaufmann  
 Reuben Kaye  
 Louise Keast  
 Liane Keegan  
 Grace Kim  
 Simon Kim  
 Yuri Kissin  
 Eva Kong  
 Majja Kovalevska

Vitalij Kowaljow  
 Andrei Kymach  
 Rosario La Spina  
 Michael Lampard  
 Nathan Lay  
 Celeste Lazarenko  
 Na Ra Lee  
 Lise Lindstrom  
 John Longmuir  
 Shane Lawrence  
 Eleanor Lyons  
 Anthony Mackey  
 Imogen-Faith Malfitano  
 Roberta Mantegna  
 Virgilio Marino  
 Juan de Dios Mateos Segura  
 Dominica Matthews  
 Najmiddin Mavlyanov  
 Jonathan McCauley  
 Randal McCusker  
 Simon Meadows  
 Bree Meara  
 Marko Mimica  
 Seann Miley Moore  
 Andrew Moran  
 Laurence Mossman  
 Guy Noble  
 Lachlan O'Brien  
 Paul O'Neill  
 David Parkin  
 Bridget Patterson  
 Ernesto Petti  
 Laurent Philippe  
 Adam Player  
 Clifford Plumpton  
 Jessica Pratt  
 Christian Haotian Qi  
 Benjamin Rasheed  
 Agnieszka Rehlis  
 Timo Riihonen



Image: Shanul Sharma, Alexander Sefton and Richard Anderson in *Satyagraha in Concert*, conducted by Tahu Matheson. Photo: Jeff Busby

Sophie Salvesani  
 Agnes Sarkis  
 Roberto Scandiuzzi  
 Alexander Sefton  
 Shanul Sharma  
 Ryan Sharp  
 Sian Sharp  
 Dimity Shepherd  
 Andrea Silvestrelli  
 Karah Son  
 Esther Song  
 Thomas Strong  
 Ruth Strutt  
 Jill Sullivan  
 Daniel Sumegi  
 Sarah Sweeting  
 Ludovic Tézier  
 Leah Thomas  
 Carmen Topciu  
 Diego Torre  
 Margaret Trubiano  
 Harrison Vaughan  
 Stefan Vinke  
 Alexander Vinogradov  
 Amber Wagner  
 Danita Weatherstone  
 Andrew Williams  
 Kathryn Williams  
 Bianca Zatz  
 Cathy-Di Zhang

#### CHORUS

Kyla Allan  
 Jonathan Alley  
 Maia Andrews  
 Pamela Andrews  
 Sean Andrews  
 Zara Ashley  
 Matthew Avery  
 Kylie Bailey  
 Jonathon Bam  
 Emily Barber-Briggs  
 Carrie Barr  
 Philip Barton  
 Dean Bassett  
 Georgia Bassingthwaighte  
 Paul Batey  
 Stephen Beck  
 Joel Berndt  
 Paul Biencourt  
 Henry Black  
 Jennifer Bonner  
 Marcus Bortolotti  
 Catherine Bouchier  
 William Bouchier  
 Kathryn Bradbury  
 Gabriel Brasilio  
 Kate Bright  
 Matthew Broadbent

Gavin Brown  
 Gregory Brown  
 Cameron Bryer  
 Alexander Caldwell  
 Ryan Carlson  
 Emma Castelli  
 Benjamin Caukwell  
 Annabelle Chaffey  
 Elizabeth Chan  
 Thomas Chapman  
 Shannon Cheong  
 Celine Cleveland  
 Christopher Cobcroft  
 Jack Connor Rowan  
 Rachael Cunningham  
 Rebecca Currier  
 Tomas Dalton  
 Andrew Dickson  
 Genevieve Dickson  
 John Donohoe  
 Keara Donohoe  
 Louise Dorsman  
 Bronwyn Douglass  
 David Duketis  
 Natasha Dumlao  
 Malcolm Ede  
 Daniella Ehrlich  
 Gelina Enriquez  
 Tristan Entwistle  
 Dominique Fegan  
 Aaliyah Finkelde  
 Blake Fischer  
 Clarissa Foulcher  
 Anne Fulton  
 Karen Gaydon  
 Simon Gilkes  
 Christian Gillett  
 Estelle Gilmovich  
 Lyndon Green  
 Rachael Griffin  
 Damien Hall  
 Tom Hamilton  
 Rhys James Hankey  
 Annie-Lenore Hanman  
 Alexander Hargreaves  
 Sally Harrison  
 Sara Haruta  
 Celeste Haworth  
 Stuart Haycock  
 Michael Hibbard  
 David Hidden  
 Angela Hogan  
 Brett Holland  
 Leyton Holmes  
 Paul Hughes  
 Phoebe-Celeste Humphreys  
 Mikaila Imaguchi  
 Graeme Isaako

Patrick Jeremy  
 Hongxin Jiang  
 Hamish Johnston  
 Kirsten Jones  
 Louise Keast  
 Paull-Anthony Keightley  
 Steven Kickbusch  
 Jin Tea Kim  
 Nick Kirkup  
 Nicholas Kong  
 Mark Kroon  
 Alister Lamont  
 Andrew Lange  
 Andrei Laptev  
 Nathan Lay  
 Celeste Lazarenko  
 Na Ra Lee  
 Sandy Leung  
 Gabriel Lobelson  
 Camilo Lopez  
 Winchester Lopez  
 Yolanda Lorenzato  
 Cassandra Losurdo  
 Brianna Louwen  
 Jessica Low  
 Mattias Lower  
 Shane Lawrencev  
 Grady Lynch  
 Daniel Macey  
 Anthony Mackey  
 Sebastian Maclaime  
 Jane Magão  
 Zevariah Mann  
 Jon Maskell  
 Alexandra Mathew  
 Shelden Mathieson  
 Jonathan McCauley  
 Randal McCusker  
 Ryan McGreal-Fitzpatrick  
 Kent McIntosh  
 Bree Meara  
 Robbie Mejica  
 David Muller  
 Bailey Nathan-Park  
 Matthew Nguyen  
 John Nicholson  
 Tetsuya Okubo  
 Atsushi Okumura  
 James Olds  
 David Ouch  
 Tony Oxybel  
 Carli Partridge  
 Belinda Paterson  
 Adam Player  
 Clifford Plumpton  
 Alexander Pokryshevsky  
 Kiran Rajasingam  
 Benjamin Rasheed

Joseph Raso  
 Asher Reichman  
 Sam Richardson  
 Shikara Ringdahl  
 Annabelle Rosewarne  
 Katie Rutledge  
 Trevor Santos  
 Laura Scandizzo  
 Shoumendu Schornikow  
 Nick Seidenman  
 Claudio Sgaramella  
 Ryan Sharp  
 Holly Simon  
 Kara Sims  
 Daniel Sinfield  
 Daniel Smerdon  
 Nicole Smeulders  
 Asmara Soekotjo  
 Isaac Sole  
 Ruth Strutt  
 Jill Sullivan  
 Lionel Theunissen  
 Leah Thomas  
 Tamsyn Thomas  
 Simon Tichelaar  
 Margaret Trubiano  
 Emily Uhrlich  
 Louisa Vilinne  
 Nicole Wallace  
 Maurice Wan  
 Sam Ward  
 Leon Warnock  
 Katrina Waters  
 Madeleine Watson  
 Rosina Waugh  
 Katherine Wiles  
 Andrew Williams  
 Kathryn Williams  
 Lynlee Williams  
 Robert Williams  
 Connor Wilmore  
 Jessie Wilson  
 Raphael Wong  
 Jia-Peng Yeung  
 Alexander Hugo Young  
 Ji Zhang

#### ACTORS

Ezana Aga  
 James Bird  
 Isaac Bradley  
 Marcelo Brucy  
 Denzel Bruhn  
 Grace Chance  
 Cheng Chuah  
 Kai Cihlar  
 Shalane Connors  
 Bradley Crockford  
 Dorothea Csutkai

Alyse Davies  
Corey Dohmen  
Pete Evans  
Isabella Forte  
Jason Gao  
Gary Ha  
Chris Haines  
Glenn Hill  
Luke Holland  
Roslyn Howell  
Susan Huang  
Edmundas Jasevicius  
Rhys Johnson  
Paul Jones  
Hiroshi Kasuga  
Heath Keating  
Tristan Kolio  
DoHoon Kwon  
Rod Lara  
Emma Leak  
Jet Leaudais  
Pei Hong Lee  
Jervis Livelo  
Javier Lopez Castrillo  
Tessa Luminati  
Gandhi MacIntyre  
Aiden Malacaria  
Ela Markstein  
Jacob McLean  
Harper Michaels  
Heath Mick  
Jessica Mills  
Caroline Mooney  
Jack Ngu  
Atsuko Pengelly  
Ben Peters  
Mason Phoumirath  
Lily Ratcliffe-Reid  
Toby Redwood

Remy Rochester  
Sudip Sauden  
Miguel Sebastian  
Eloise Snape  
Caleb Tasmin  
Raphael Tefera  
Khanh Trieu  
Natasha Usmar  
Harrison Vaughan  
Rob Wells  
Winston Witharjonkul  
Coco Yamaguchi

#### **DANCERS**

Maverick Azzopardi  
Luisa Baldinetti  
Téah Bell  
Laura Bianchi-Bishop  
Kyle Borg  
Tammy Bouman  
Asher Bowen-Saunders  
Kerrod Box  
Benjy Cartwright  
Sabine Crompton-Ward  
Alyse Davies  
Allira Dever  
Sarah Dimas  
Hsin-Ju Ely  
Kyla Fifita  
Louis Fontaine  
Ashley Goh  
Allie Graham  
Jayden Grogan  
Christian Hart  
Soleil Harvey  
Sophia Hawkins  
Brendan Irving  
Leah Kaneko  
Emalyn Knight

Melody Lewis  
Natalie Lui  
Tiana Lung  
Emily MacDonald  
Brooke MacRae  
Kaitlyn Marsh  
Ella Masters  
Damian Meredith  
Nadia Milford  
Connor Miller  
Genevieve Morris  
Koko Mukai  
Ellena Nou  
Darci O'Rourke  
Avalon Rose Ormiston  
Max Ostler  
Angus Parent  
Tiana Pinnell  
Mia Polinelli  
Hugo Poulet  
Millie Price  
Remy Rochester  
Felix Sampson  
Megan Schoenmaker  
Floriane Sevault  
Mia Sfara  
Laura Shallvey  
Tahlysia Smedley  
Michael Smith  
Jessica Smithson  
Chimene Steele-Prior  
Montanna Stoneman  
Laura Vlastic

#### **CREATIVES AND MUSIC STAFF**

Liesel Badorrek  
Luisa Baldinetti  
Jonathon Bam  
Matthew Barclay

Siro Battaglin  
Lucy Birkinshaw  
Robert Bryan  
Alessandro Carletti  
Lluc Castells  
Brian Castles-Onion  
Shi-Zheng Chen  
Su Choung  
Tony David Cray  
Rosetta Cucchi  
Michael Curtain  
Warwick Doddrell  
D-Wok\*  
Gale Edwards  
Maruti Evans  
Gianluca Falaschi  
Paolo Fantin  
David Finn  
Paul Fitzsimon  
flora&faunavisions\*  
Alfons Flores  
James Galea  
Kate Gaul  
Andrew George  
Giò Forma\*  
Susana Gómez  
Allie Graham  
Eleonora Gravagnola  
Robert Andrew Greene  
Troy Honeysett  
Akasia Ruthy Inchaustegui  
Priscilla Jackman  
Kate Johnson  
Thomas Johnson  
Robert Jones  
Chad Kelly  
Alexander Koppelman  
Anthony Legge  
Davide Livermore



Image: Opera Australia Chorus performing *Tannhäuser in Concert* at Hamer Hall, Melbourne. Photo: Jeff Busby

Peter Lumley  
 Julie Lynch  
 Danielle Maas  
 Adam Mada  
 Matthew Marshall  
 Tahu Matheson  
 David McVicar  
 Damiano Michieletto  
 Rebecca Moret  
 Morgan Moroney  
 Jason Morphet  
 Andy Morton  
 Elijah Moshinsky  
 Sabina Myers  
 Daniele Naldi  
 Michelle Nguyen  
 Theresa Nguyen  
 Guy Noble  
 Àlex Ollé  
 Stefania Panighini  
 Claudia Pernigotti  
 Shane Placentino  
 John Rayment  
 Roberto Recchia  
 Shaun Rennie  
 Leigh Sachwitz  
 Tiziano Santi  
 Michael Scott-Mitchell  
 Natalia Sidorenko  
 Luke Spicer  
 Miranda Summers  
 Carla Teti  
 Mark Thompson  
 Brian Thomson  
 Laura Tipoki  
 Kohan van Sambeek  
 Vandal\*  
 Chiara Vecchi  
 Blake Wells  
 Shanon D Whitelock  
 Jonathan Wilson  
 Alexander Yau  
 Anita Yavich  
 Michael Yeargan

#### ORCHESTRA MEMBERS

Rebecca Allen  
 Sophia Ang  
 Emilia Antcliff  
 Stephanie Arnold  
 Jackson Bankovic  
 Nicola Bell  
 Lillian Bennett  
 Diane Berger  
 Brett Berthold  
 Alexandra Bierl  
 Josef Bisits  
 Bourian Boubbov

Milen Boubbov  
 Sydney Braunfeld  
 Tim Brigden  
 Laura Brown  
 Mark Bruwel  
 Matthew Bubb  
 Colin Burrows  
 Alexandra Castle  
 Jamie Castriso  
 Frank Celata  
 Harriet Channon  
 Tobias Chisnall  
 Tiger Chou  
 Su Choung  
 Chloe Chung  
 David Clarence  
 Brendan Clarke  
 Josh Clarke  
 Anita Cook  
 Anna Cooper  
 Stephanie Cooper  
 Fletcher Cox  
 Jack Cremer  
 Nigel Crocker  
 Kendal Cuneo  
 Michael Curtain  
 Josh Davies  
 Cathy Davis  
 Chris Davis  
 Daniel Dean  
 Michael Dixon  
 Andrew Doyle  
 Craig Driscoll  
 Jenny Druery  
 Alexei Dupressoir  
 Brian Evans  
 Douglas Eyre  
 Kim Falconer  
 William Farmer  
 Alex Farrugia  
 Brett Favell  
 Gabriel Fischer  
 Alex Fontaine  
 James Fortune  
 Scott Frankcombe  
 Paolo Franks  
 Rosie Gallagher  
 David Gardos  
 Richard Gleeson  
 Emily Green  
 Philip Green  
 Colin Grisdale  
 Katy Grisdale  
 Olivia Hans-Rosenbaum  
 Bonita Han-Williams  
 Mark Harris  
 Isabella Harvey  
 Raphael Harvey

Yuki Harwood  
 Bruce Hellmers  
 Daniel Henderson  
 Jonathan Henderson  
 Alan Hicks  
 Joshua Hill  
 Ying Ho  
 Amanda Hollins  
 Ben Jacks  
 Arthur Johnson  
 Kate Johnson  
 Robert Johnson  
 Thomas Johnson  
 Roslyn Jorgensen  
 Kerryn Joyce  
 James Julian  
 Justin Kearin  
 Grace Kim  
 Julie Kim  
 Benjamin Kopp  
 Tijana Kozarcic  
 Stefania Kurniawan  
 Rebecca Lagos  
 Stephen Lalor  
 Genevieve Lang  
 Matthew Larsen  
 Jessica Lee  
 Verna Lee  
 Azumi Lehmann  
 John Lewis  
 Oscar Lewis  
 Andrew London  
 Dominic Longhurst  
 Jasper Ly  
 Gergely Malyusz  
 Kevin Man  
 Chris Martin  
 Tomomi Matsuo  
 Conall McClure  
 Alex McCracken  
 Eve McEwen  
 Jenny McLeod-Sneyd  
 Melanie McLoughlin  
 Craig Mitten  
 Kate Moloney  
 Nicholas Mooney  
 Chris Moran  
 Isabel Morse  
 Timothy Murray  
 Emile Nelson  
 Emily Newham  
 Michelle Nguyen  
 Graham Nichols  
 Lamorna Nightingale  
 Andrew Nissen  
 Brian Nixon  
 Matthew Ockenden  
 Phill O'Neill

Eve Osborn  
 Lisa Osmialowski  
 Brett Page  
 Tim Paillas  
 Jenny Penno  
 Nemanja Petkovic  
 Rowan Phemister  
 Elizabeth Pring  
 Kate Proctor  
 Craig Renshaw  
 Matthew Rigby  
 Mark Robinson  
 Blake Roden  
 Jane Rosenson  
 Craig Ross  
 Richard Rourke  
 Jonathan Ryan  
 Rafael Salgado  
 Marcus Salone  
 Oliver Shermacher  
 David Silva  
 Oliver Simpson  
 Robert Stonestreet  
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 Matthew Tighe  
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Everyone at Opera Australia salutes the remarkably generous individuals who support our creative ambitions. During 2023, this group of inspiring patrons and donors generously contributed to the future of opera in Australia and the staging of Opera Australia's productions. Through their philanthropy, they helped every curtain rise by supporting our orchestra, chorus, wardrobe, technical teams and of course, featured artists.

For 60 years, our patron program has been the bedrock of the company, enabling us to take the necessary creative risks essential to any successful arts organisation. The ongoing support of our patrons is a vote of confidence in the work that we do. We are sincerely grateful to each and every one of them. In 2023 our company celebrated 50 years performing under the sails of the Sydney Opera House. We thank our Golden Anniversary Syndicate who assisted us in marking this anniversary.

We acknowledge the immense contribution of the Wagner Syndicate which enabled us to mount the

monumental Ring Cycle in Brisbane. A work of this scale is simply not possible without private support. Presenting the Ring Cycle provides both artists and audiences with a rare artistic adventure, and we are particularly indebted to Maureen Wheeler AO, whose extraordinary generosity enabled us to bring the opera to Australian audiences in 2023, and previously also in 2013 and 2016.

We also pay tribute to Philip Bacon AO's exceptional support over more than three decades. He has been fearless in his support of bold programming and his investment in the philanthropic activities of Opera Australia has been unrivalled.

Every gift, no matter its size, assists us to invest in new productions – new Australian productions particularly, in audience development and in the very best creative teams in the world.

We sincerely thank our supporters for their belief in the work of our national opera company.



Image: Dinner on Stage: Golden Anniversary Syndicate donors celebrate 50 years of Opera Australia performing at the Sydney Opera House. Photo: Rhiannon Hopley

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# THANKING OUR PARTNERS



We wish to acknowledge our Patron-in-Chief, Dr Haruhisa Handa; the International Foundation for Arts and Culture, which supports Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour; and the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation, which enables many people to experience opera for the first time. We also sincerely appreciate the Patricia H. Reid Foundation's funding of the Patricia H. Reid Orchestra Fellowships program and we are extremely grateful for the George and Nerissa Johnson Memorial Scholarship Bequest which provides performing artists the opportunity for overseas study and professional development.

We gratefully recognise our Hero Partners: HSBC and Qantas. HSBC has been a valued partner of Opera Australia since 2019, supporting our mainstage

opera productions, Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, as well as hosting a free community event each year. Qantas has similarly been a steadfast supporter of our company. In 2023, we celebrated 50 years of support from the national airline. As a Hero Partner of Opera Australia, Qantas continues to demonstrate its commitment to excellence and the cultural fabric of this country. We thank Qantas for partnering with us, helping to carry our artists, creatives and company members around Australia and overseas.

This year we also welcomed BMW as our new Platinum Partner and naming rights partner of our inaugural *BMW Opera for All* free open-air concert in Melbourne's Fed Square. Special thanks also to the Opera Society in Victoria for its continued and generous support over many years.

# PARTNERS

Opera Australia's partners play a critical role as ambassadors for opera as an artform, helping ensure it can be shared with as wide an audience as possible.

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



The Opera Australia Capital Fund (OACF) is now making a tangible impact on the stability of Opera Australia. It is a pleasure to report that the OACF could again contribute \$1 million through its distribution to Opera Australia in 2023, bringing the total funds granted since the Fund's inception to nearly \$11 million.

The OACF was established almost 25 years ago, with the simple but vital goal to build capital reserves to help secure the future of our national opera company. Those reserves reached \$29.6 million at the end of 2023, through a combination of donations, bequests and investment income. This is a remarkable achievement, only made possible thanks to the commitment of our supporters to our fundraising campaigns, special events, and bequest program.

Bequests remain a central part of the Capital Fund's future, and I thank those who notified us during the year of their intentions to remember the Capital Fund in this way. We are now seeing the critical difference that gifts in Wills make. Every bequest to the OACF – large or small – is invested and endures, a gift to the future that opens the door to the magic of opera for generations to come.

During 2023, the OACF invited its supporters to some truly memorable

events, and we are grateful to those who attended and to those who made these special fundraising occasions such successes. I thank in particular our event hosts Tim and Janet Storrier for a delightful afternoon in the Southern Highlands of NSW, Rupert and Annabel Myer for making possible a memorable evening at Cranlana in Melbourne, The Dorchester Collection for their loyal support of our annual dinner in London, and Philip Bacon for an exclusive reception in Brisbane.

In October, the OACF's Council of Governors – our most steadfast supporters who inspire us with their generosity – gathered for their annual dinner. It was a particularly poignant occasion as we recognised and thanked Philip Bacon AO and Neroli Hobbins OAM, both of whom stepped down from their roles in 2023, for their unique contributions to the success of the Capital Fund. Philip as Chair and Neroli as General Manager have been pivotal in the life of the Fund and in the lives of those who support it. On behalf of my fellow Directors and our family of supporters, I pay tribute to their achievements and thank them for the long-lasting impact they have made over many years.

It was my privilege to take on the duties of OACF Chairman in late 2023, and I remain grateful to Fiona Allan, Philip Bacon AO, Shaun Kenny, Justice François Kunc, Roslyn Packer AC, Tania Seary and Rod Sims AO, who as my fellow Directors, are committed to the Fund's goals and founding principles, supporting its work in so many ways throughout the year.

With them, I thank all those who donated or included a bequest to the OACF in 2023. The financial sustainability of Opera Australia is at the heart of the Capital Fund's work, enabled by all who share our vision and who contributed to our fundraising during the year. Your generosity underpins all that we are striving to achieve.

We now look ahead to our 25th anniversary – a significant milestone for the OACF in 2025. It will be a time to acknowledge and celebrate our substantial impact, giving secure financial support to Opera Australia year after year. And it will be an opportunity to prepare for the decade ahead and renew our commitment to grow our capital reserves in order to enlarge our annual grant to Opera Australia.

It fills me with great optimism that, together with your help, we will continue to provide certainty for the Company, and secure the future for this great artform in Australia. Never has the Capital Fund's contribution to that goal been more important.

DAVID ARMSTRONG, CHAIRMAN

The Council of Governors comprises Directors of the Trustee Company and supporters who have either contributed a significant donation or pledged a specific bequest, demonstrating extraordinary commitment to the Capital Fund's goals.

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As the Capital Fund looks ahead to its 25th anniversary in 2025, it continues to grow and now makes a vital annual distribution to Opera Australia. This has been made possible thanks to the generosity of the following donors:

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Bequests sustain every aspect of Opera Australia's work, and the Company is enormously grateful for the enduring support it has received through bequests from the estates of:

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 Dr Charles Frater  
 Mr Jonathon Greening  
 Mrs Nola J Hassall  
 Mrs Elise Herrman  
 Irwin Imhof  
 Ian W Jackson  
 G H Johnson for the George and Nerissa Johnson Memorial Scholarship  
 Mr Stefan Kruger  
 Miss Patricia Lance  
 Peter Lazar AM  
 Barbara McNulty OBE  
 Ivy Marshall  
 Phillip James Meddings  
 Mr Will Noble  
 Miss Robin Potter OAM  
 Dimiter Kanev Stantchev  
 Dr Dawn Thew  
 Elisabeth Turner  
 Mrs Nancy Williamson  
 Dr Donald Wilson  
 Betty Wright  
 Mr Gerald Sidney Wronker

If you wish to discuss either a donation to the Capital Fund or your bequest plans, please contact Nicholas Selman:

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