

# Margaret Court Arena undergoes transformation for first ever opera performance – Puccini’s *Tosca*



Margaret Court Arena (MCA) will undergo a transformation from tennis arena to a grand opera house this May when Opera Australia (OA) presents the Australian premiere of Edward Dick’s acclaimed Opera North production of Giacomo Puccini’s gripping thriller *Tosca* opening Friday 24 May for six performances only.

For this first ever staging of an opera at the MCA, the usual opera house set up will be turned on its head with the orchestra to perform on an elevated platform behind the singers on stage.

A proscenium arch and raked stage will be constructed, taking up half the arena space and transforming it into a 3,000 seat theatre.

Among other theatrical features, one key element of this 5-star production is a suspended gilded dome that rotates above performers, revealing a stunning painted renaissance fresco as the story unfolds.

OA has extensive experience in constructing temporary performing venues in unusual locations, including the annual Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, which sees an overwater stage and 3000 seat grandstand constructed (and deconstructed) on the grassy slope at Mrs Macquaries Point, as well as projects like *Carmen* on Cockatoo Island, *Opera on the Beach* (Gold Coast) and the *Opera Gala* at Uluru.

Innovation and determination are at the heart of the production and technical teams at the company says Artistic Director Jo Davies, who has had to navigate venue challenges with the State Theatre at Arts Centre Melbourne now officially closed for refurbishment.

“We have an incredible team of people whose dedication continues to realise some of the country’s most ambitious theatrical ideas. *Tosca* at Margaret Court Arena is going to transform the space,” said Ms. Davies.

“*Tosca* showcases the dramatic power of opera in every way, the story thrills and the music is breathtaking. I have chosen this production as my first for Opera Australia because I know that this five-star production from Opera North, directed by Edward Dick, will be so suited to the drama and scale of this unusual venue.”

The action of *Tosca* turns on a trio of brilliant performers, and with nightly performances the roles will be shared across two casts. Korean soprano Karah Son makes a welcome return to debut the heroic title role, shared with British star Nadine Benjamin in her Australian debut performance.

OA favourite Diego Torre will perform as Cavaradossi, alongside Korean tenor Young Woo Kim in another exciting Australian debut. Helpmann Award-winning baritone Warwick Fyfe and English singer Robert Hayward will share the formidable role of Scarpia.

Conductor Garry Walker will lead 60 musicians from Orchestra Victoria, 47 members of the Opera Australia Chorus and 12 Children’s Chorus members through this operatic masterpiece.

**Creatives**

Conductor **Garry Walker**

Director **Edward Dick**

Set Designer **Tom Scutt**

Costume Designer **Fotini Dimou**

Lighting Designer **Lee Curran**

Choreographer **Maxine Braham**

Sound Designer **Jim Atkins**

Assistant Director **Warwick Doddrell**

**Cast**

Tosca **Karah Son** (May 24, 26 & 29), **Nadine**

**Benjamin MBE** (May 25, 28 & 30)

Cavaradossi **Diego Torre** (May 24, 26 & 29),

**Young Woo Kim** (May 25, 28 & 30)

Scarpia **Robert Hayward** (May 24, 26 & 29),

**Warwick Fyfe** (May 25, 28 & 30)

Spoletta **Benjamin Rasheed**

Sciaronne **Luke Gabbedy**

Angelotti **David Parkin**

Sacristan **Andrew Moran**

Gaoler **Anthony Mackey**

**Opera Australia Chorus**

**Opera Australia Children's Chorus**

**Orchestra Victoria**

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**Performance information**

**Evenings at 7.30pm**

May 24, 25, 28, 29, 30 at 7:30pm

**Sunday Matinee at 1.00pm**

May 26

**Running time**

Approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes, including two intervals.

Performed in Italian with English surtitles

Please note this production contains depictions of violence, including violence against women, murder and suicide.

**Supporting Partner**



**Tosca is an Opera North production.**

**Bookings**

Adult tickets from \$59 (fees may apply)

Opera Australia Box Office

(03) 9685 3700

[www.opera.org.au](http://www.opera.org.au)

**Margaret Court Arena, Melbourne Park**

**Olympic Blvd, Melbourne**