

The background of the poster is a photograph of a music rehearsal room. In the foreground, a grand piano is partially visible, with several sheets of music resting on its surface. The room is dimly lit, with a warm, golden light source, possibly a lamp, creating a soft glow on the piano and the music. In the background, there are shelves with various items, including what looks like a green plant and some papers, all slightly out of focus.

O|PERA AUSTRALI|A

# FRENCH OPERA SCENES

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 7pm

Warwick Fairfax Studio

O|A YOUNG  
ARTIST  
PROGRAM

# French Opera Scenes

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 7pm  
Warwick Fairfax Studio, The Opera Centre

## PROGRAM

Jacques Offenbach

**Les Contes d'Hoffmann**  
Barcarolle Act 2

**CAST** (in order of appearance)  
Giulietta: Chelsea Burns  
Nicklaus: Shikara Ringdahl  
Chorus: Elias Wilson, Leon Vitogiannis

Scenes from Act 3

Antonia: Chelsea Burns  
Hoffman: Elias Wilson  
Miracle: Leon Vitogiannis  
Une Voix: Shikara Ringdahl

Jules Massenet

**Werther**  
Scenes from Act 3

Charlotte: Shikara Ringdahl  
Sophie: Chelsea Burns  
Werther: Elias Wilson

Charles Gounod

**Faust**  
Avant de quitter ces lieux Act 2

Valentin: Leon Vitogiannis

Scenes from Act 3  
Scène de la Prison Act 5

Méphistophélès: Leon Vitogiannis  
Marguerite: Chelsea Burns  
Faust: Elias Wilson

## CREATIVE TEAM

Claudia Osborne\* *Director*  
Marie-France Lefebvre *Music Director*  
Jem Herbert\* *Répétiteur*  
Francis Greep *Music Preparation*

## CAST

Chelsea Burns\* *Soprano*  
Shikara Ringdahl\* *Mezzo-soprano*  
Elias Wilson\* *Tenor*  
Leon Vitogiannis\* *Baritone*

\* *Opera Australia Young Artist*

## PRODUCTION

Jane Hennessy *Young Artist Producer*  
Dominic Jones *Production Manager*  
Alex Lynn *Head of Lighting*  
Hannah Burton *Surtilist*  
Rebecca Ritchie *Wardrobe & Wigs Manager*  
William Dunshea *Head of Store, Sydney*  
Sammie Bailey *Young Artist Coordinator*

---

OPERA AUSTRALIA IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY PRINCIPAL PATRON MAUREEN WHEELER AO.

PATRON-IN-CHIEF  
DR HARUHISA HANDA

HERO PARTNERS

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS





# About the Artists



**Claudia Osborne** is a director, writer and dramaturg. Claudia's work on stage and screen is heavily influenced by her visual arts training, often working in an image-led capacity, drawing on her background in visual arts to create distinctive theatrical landscapes. In 2014, torn between studying Creative Writing or Sculpture and Performance Art she began a double degree in Fine Arts and Arts at UNSW and UNSW Art and Design (formally COFA). In 2019 she completed a MFA in Directing for Performance at NIDA. Since then, Claudia has worked with Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Griffin Theatre Company and Bell Shakespeare. Claudia was a 2022 Gloria Payten and Gloria Dawn Foundation Fellow, giving her the opportunity to travel to Germany to work with Lydia Steir and the Berlin Philharmonic on Strauss's *Die Frau Ohne Schatten*. What began as an observational role quickly turned into a formal assistant directing position – a true baptism by fire. In 2020, Claudia was one of four emerging practitioners who completed a three-month theatre residency as part of the Create NSW and Griffin Theatre Company Incubator Fellowship. In 2024, Claudia wrote and directed her first short film, *Rash*, which premiered at the Festival des Antipodes, Saint-Tropez. In August she will direct/co-create Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *Life Is A Dream* across the road at Belvoir's downstairs theatre.



**Marie-France Lefebvre** is a renowned collaborative pianist, conductor, and vocal coach. She has worked regularly with major opera companies, including The Metropolitan Opera (since 2007), Washington National Opera (1994–2004), Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and others. She served as Program and Music Director at the Banff Centre and has taught at the Collaborative Piano Institute and other institutions. As a prompter, she has collaborated with top opera houses and world-renowned singers such as Plácido Domingo, Renée Fleming, Diana Damrau, and Benjamin Bernheim, and has assisted conductors like Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, and James Levine. Marie-France was the official pianist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (DC District) until 2019 and has performed widely as a chamber musician, notably with Matthew Polenzani, Samuel Ramey, and Denyce Graves. She maintains a strong passion for song repertoire and has an ongoing relationship with the Cincinnati Song Initiative. She holds a DMA from the University of Michigan and an MM from the Manhattan School of Music. Since 2008, she has been a Professor of Opera at CCM, following faculty roles at Michigan State University and guest teaching at The Curtis Institute and University of Maryland. This is Marie-France's Australian debut.



**Jem Herbert**, originally from Mansfield in north-east Victoria, grew up learning cello and piano. At age 8, he joined the Australian Boys' Choir, sparking a lifelong love for vocal and choral music. He attended the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School (VCASS), gaining early operatic experience in concert performances of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. A versatile musician, Jem also studied composition and conducting, graduating with top music awards. He later completed a Piano Performance degree at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, earning first-class honours. While at university, he sang with the Choir of Trinity College, Melbourne, becoming the Conducting Scholar and received commissions for chapel and concert works. In 2022, Jem composed *Mageia: A Musical Fable* for Trinity's 250th anniversary—blending opera, operetta, and Broadway—which deepened his passion for theatrical music, especially opera. Bringing together his skills as pianist, singer, composer, and conductor, the role of répétiteur felt like a natural fit. In 2024, he returned to the Conservatorium for a Graduate Diploma in Opera Performance, working on Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief* and conducting Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*. He also composed a mini-opera for the students titled *Eulogies and Entanglements*.



**Chelsea Burns** comes from country Western Australia and never imagined opera would be a part of her life. She grew up playing sport with her father and singing in choirs and musicals with her mother and sister. A transformative event for her was the day she saw a touring production of Opera Australia's *Carmen*. She was blown away by the music, the voices and the spectacle. Pursuing a degree in Classical Music had her falling in love with opera, the music's story-telling and the complex characters, a passion that was singled out and fostered by her acting teacher. This is one of the reasons that she so admires the artistry of Maria Callas, a true singing actress. Chelsea has been lucky enough to sing and cover some amazing roles, her favourites; Puccini's *Tosca* and Dvorak's *Rusalka*. In 2024, Chelsea was able to draw on her extensive dance training as she also performed as the Second Wood Nymph in a heavily choreographed production of *Rusalka*.



**Shikara Ringdahl** a Chinese-Australian mezzo-soprano, is a graduate of the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU) and holds a Bachelor of Music. She made her professional debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra singing Elgar's *Sea Pictures* Op. 37 under the baton of Benjamin Northey and was the first vocalist invited by the SSO to tour with the orchestra in their 80 years of regional touring. Shikara was a Young Artist with Opera Queensland in 2023/2024 and has previously been a resident Young Artist with the Israeli Opera's Meitar Opera Studio. For Opera Queensland Shikara has appeared in the statewide tour of "Do We Need Another Hero?", Festival of Outback Opera, as Second Witch in *Dido and Aeneas* and as Second Apparition in *Macbeth*. She has also performed with the OQ chorus in *Macbeth*, *Così fan tutte*, *Aida*, *Dido and Aeneas* and *Eucalyptus*. Shikara's other opera credits include Der Komponist in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* conducted by Simone Young AM, Larina in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* conducted by Richard Hetherington, and Mrs Herring in Britten's *Albert Herring*, directed by Bruce Beresford for QCGU and Brisbane Festival.



First Nations tenor **Elias Wilson** grew up in Western Sydney with parents who were children's entertainers. Between learning his mother's choreography at community musical theatre rehearsals and school holidays spent helping his father stage manage the live shows of Play School and Bananas in Pajamas, theatre was part of his every day. Despite this influence, Elias wasn't bitten by the showbiz bug until he was 22 when, having never seen an opera, George Torbay cast him in the chorus of *La Traviata* at Opera New England. The music had him hooked, and he knew right away he had to quit his call-centre job to enroll at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Elias studied with Dr Rowena Cowley, and sang everything from Monteverdi to Musical Theatre. He finds the joy of music and opera in its diversity, and has since played classic romantic roles like Lysander and Nemorino, channeled gravitas and turmoil as an Elder in *The Visitors* or in excerpts of Peter Grimes, and relished the fun of rule-breaking character roles, adapting *Cendrillon*'s stepmother for Tenor as a monstrous bearded drag queen. In every role Elias finds something personal – a part of himself to take with him, on-stage and off.



**Leon Vitogiannis** is establishing himself as one of the most exciting baritones of his generation. After completing degrees at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with Mr. Andrew Dalton and Dr. David Greco, Leon continues to build an impressive list of stage and concert credits. Leon's stage credits include: Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*), Aeneas (*Dido and Aeneas*), Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Count Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), and Mr. McC. in (*Introductions and Goodbyes*) by Foss. His concert appearances include *Requiem* (Mozart and Fauré), *Messiah* (Handel), *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (Brahms), *Paulus* (Mendelssohn), *Crucifixion* (Staïner), and the Australian premiere of *Requiem for an Angel* (Carr). As Leon continues to expand his opera and oratorio repertoire, he also holds Lieder and Art Song to equal importance, focusing on the song cycles of Schubert, Schumann, and Mahler. Leon held a position as a Young Artist with Pacific Opera Studio in 2023 and 2024, working closely under Co-Artistic Directors, Cheryl Barker AO and Peter Coleman-Wright AO. Most recently, Leon was selected as an Opera Australia Young Artist in their 2025-2026 program.



Thank you to Maire-France Lefebvre for her inspiring coaching

## UPCOMING YOUNG ARTIST PERFORMANCES

### VOYAGE À PARIS

*French Song Recital*

with Guest Artist Marie-France Lefebvre

**Sunday 15 June, 3pm**

The Church, Alexandria

### ITALIAN OPERA SCENES

Directed by Guest Artist Stefano Vizioli

**Monday 28 July, 7pm**

The Opera Centre

### GREAT OPERA HITS

**Wednesday 30 July, 7pm**

Melbourne Opera Centre

### GREAT OPERA HITS

**Sunday 3 August, 2pm**

Joan Sutherland Theatre

Sydney Opera House

For ticket information and upcoming performances email  
[youngartistprogram@opera.org.au](mailto:youngartistprogram@opera.org.au)