

MEDIA RELEASE

5 August 2025

Opera Australia announces 2026 season of Melbourne premieres to celebrate 70th anniversary



Opera Australia today unveiled its 70th anniversary Melbourne season for 2026, made up entirely of premieres and featuring bold productions by three of Australia's leading directors, a contemporary masterpiece, a celebratory Gala and a series of crowd-pleasing concerts and musical celebrations.

Acting CEO Simon Militano said Opera Australia's 70th anniversary season honours the talented creators, performers, loyal supporters and audiences who have shaped the company's legacy across seven decades.

"We're proud to present a season of Melbourne premieres, in particular new interpretations of two of the world's most-loved operas, by two of the most exciting Australian directors, Constantine Costi and Sarah Giles.

"The unwavering support of our generous supporters, among them donors, corporate and government partners allow us to bring these exceptional experiences of music and song to the stage. And we're pleased to have the opportunity to perform at the Regent Theatre and to welcome new audiences while we await our return to a beautifully refurbished State Theatre at the Arts Centre," Militano said.

A highlight of the season is the Australian premiere of a brand-new production of Puccini's perennial and much-loved *La Bohème* by exciting director Constantine Costi at the Regent Theatre. This is the first new mainstage production of *La Bohème* to be commissioned by OA in 15 years. Costi's reputation precedes him with recent stand-out productions of *Il Tabarro* with both OA and Sydney Festival, along with a string of credits across opera and film. Rising star conductor Finnegan Downie will lead a cast of international and Australian talent in this fresh new staging.

Award-winning Director Sarah Giles' production of *La Traviata* will be making its Melbourne debut with conductor Giampaolo Bisanti who will bring his renowned Italian style to Australia for the first time. Starring two outstanding Australian sopranos, Stacey Alleaume and Samantha Clarke sharing the coveted lead role of Violetta, this production is a rich visual experience with opulent sets and stunning 21st-century costumes setting the stage beautifully for a contemporary retelling of Verdi's timeless classic.

Esteemed Australian director Neil Armfield's confronting and affecting *Watershed* will have its Melbourne premiere in the Playhouse, Arts Centre Melbourne. This ravishing opera written by Helpmann Award-winning playwright Alana Valentine and author Christos Tsiolkas, with a passionate score composed by Joseph Twist, captures the events that led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in South Australia, ahead of the rest of the nation.

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An unmissable event for opera lovers, OA will celebrate its 70th anniversary with a gala concert at the Regent Theatre. Directed by Victorian Opera's Artistic Director Stuart Maunder and featuring the full forces of the OA Chorus and Orchestra Victoria and a star-studded line up of Australia's favourite singers. Conducted by Giampaolo Bisanti alongside dynamic orchestral conductor Sam Weller, the concert will bring to life a spectacular program of thrilling operatic highlights.

Lovers of Gilbert & Sullivan will welcome a musical celebration of the legendary composers' finest works. Starring Ben Mingay and Antoinette O'Halloran alongside Orchestra Victoria and directed also by Stuart Maunder, the concert will feature highlights from *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Iolanthe*.

OA will continue its proud tradition of nurturing Australian talent, particularly through its Young Artist Program that in 2026 will see each of the program's current participants - four singers, one repetiteur and one director, all involved with mainstage productions.

As part of the Opera Conference, OA will hit the road with a production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* by renowned director Michael Gow. Also celebrating a milestone, now in its 30th year, the National Tour continues to deliver extraordinary operatic experiences to regional communities taking one of opera's most fascinating characters to Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales where Regional Children's Choruses join OA performers on stage.

With its 70th season, Opera Australia continues its tradition of artistic excellence, community engagement and innovative programming, reaffirming its place as a cultural leader shaping the future of opera in Australia and beyond.

**** See following pages for a more detailed summary of all productions in 2026 ****

Bookings

Opera Australia subscriptions available now.

Prices start at \$142 for two operas.

Single tickets on sale from 23 September 2025

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MELBOURNE AUTUMN 2026

LA TRAVIATA - Verdi | Conductor **Giampaolo Bisanti** | Director **Sarah Giles**

Award-winning director Sarah Giles' production of *La Traviata* will be making its Melbourne debut with conductor Giampaolo Bisanti who will bring his renowned Italian style to Australia for the first time. The season will see two outstanding Australian sopranos, Stacey Alleaume and Samantha Clarke, perform their distinctive and highly acclaimed interpretations of Violetta, accompanied by tenors Filipe Manu making his role debut as Alfredo and Oreste Cosimo who is returning to the role. This production by WAO, SOSA and OQ is a rich visual experience where opulent sets and stunning 21st-century costumes set the stage for a contemporary retelling of Verdi's timeless score. **Regent Theatre, 8 – 16 May**

GILBERT & SULLIVAN: A MUSICAL CELEBRATION | Director **Stuart Maunder** | Conductor **Vanessa Scammell**

Celebrate the greatest operetta hits of acclaimed composer librettist duo, Gilbert and Sullivan in this concert event where soaring melodies and operatic wit collide. Enjoy highlights from works including *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Iolanthe* performed by a star-studded line-up of OA's finest singers, including Ben Mingay and O'Halloran, accompanied by Orchestra Victoria. **Regent Theatre, 22 – 24 May**

70th ANNIVERSARY GALA | Conductors **Giampaolo Bisanti** | **Sam Weller** | Director **Stuart Maunder**

An unmissable event for opera lovers, Opera Australia will celebrate its 70th anniversary with a concert featuring the full forces of the OA Chorus and Orchestra Victoria along with a star-studded line up of outstanding singers including Emma Matthews, Stacey Alleaume, Diego Torre, Olivia Cranwell and Filipe Manu. Conductor Giampaolo Bisanti who has graced the podium of the world's leading opera houses will work alongside dynamic orchestral conductor Sam Weller and directed by Victorian Opera's Artistic Director Stuart Maunder, to bring to life a spectacular program of thrilling operatic highlights that celebrates OA's legacy while also looking ahead to its future. **Regent Theatre, 17 May**

ENCORE! SONGS FROM THE MUSICALS | Conductor **Vanessa Scammell** | Director **Mark Sutcliffe**

A treat for musical lovers, this showcase will pay tribute to some of the world's most beloved musicals that Opera Australia has presented in recent years. From *The Phantom of the Opera* to *My Fair Lady*, *West Side Story* and *Guys & Dolls*, enjoy a concert of toe-tapping, heart stopping showstoppers performed by a cast of the country's brightest musical theatre talents along with Orchestra Victoria that will have you singing along and dancing in the aisles. **Regent Theatre, 28 – 30 May**

MELBOURNE SPRING 2026

LA BOHÈME – Puccini | Conductor **Finnegan Downie Dear** | Director **Constantine Costi**

Australian Premiere One of Australia's most exciting young Directors, Constantine Costi creates a fresh new take of this timeless opera. *La Bohème* captures the raw emotion of Puccini's iconic score that will remind you of the power of love, beauty of youth and the intoxicating feeling of being alive. Rising star conductor Finnegan Downie leads a star-studded cast of international and Australian talent. Galina Cheplakova and Valeria Sepe share the role of Mimi with the support of tenors Kang Wang and Paride Cataldo. Set in the snow-kissed backdrop of Paris, this must-see production breathes new life into the opera that has inspired countless bohemian love stories. **Regent Theatre, 7 – 18 November**

WATERSHED: THE DEATH OF DR DUNCAN – Twist | Conductor **Brett Weymark** | Director **Neil Armfield**

This ravishing opera by opera legend Neil Armfield, written by Helpmann Award-winning playwright Alana Valentine and Christos Tsiolkas, accompanied by a passionate score composed by Joseph Twist, captures the events that led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in South Australia, ahead of the rest of the nation. *Watershed* turns the illicit into the sacred through powerful choral music, solo voices and dance. **Playhouse, Arts Centre Melbourne, 21 – 28 November**

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OPERA UP LATE | Director Shaun Rennie

International comedy and cabaret star Reuben Kaye is back with a naughtier than ever *Opera Up Late*, with a brand-new line up of re-imagined opera hits, musical theatre classics and more. Directed by the award-winning Shaun Rennie this annual night of operatic irreverence is bursting with big laughs and bigger voices. It's the perfect chance for newbies to pop their opera cherries while the aficionados can sit back and enjoy their favourite arias as they've never seen them before. **Regent Theatre, 15 November**

THE TRUMPET OF THE SWAN – E.B White

Adapted for the stage by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Marsha Norman and Tony Award-winning composer Jason Robert Brown, this production is the perfect opportunity to introduce young people to the joy of orchestral music. Bringing E.B White's classic novel to life, this production is a charming testament to the power of music. Paired with the lively narration performed by various actors, Orchestra Victoria will pick up the cinematic lyrical score that is guaranteed to have you leaving with a smile. **Regent Theatre, 20 – 22 November**

Musical**ANASTASIA**

The hit Broadway musical that has captivated audiences around the world makes its long-awaited Australian debut. This romantic and adventure-filled production, by Tony Award winning team Terrence McNally, Stephen Flaherty, Lynn Ahrens and Darko Tresnjak, transports audiences from the twilight years of Imperial rule to the euphoria of 1920s Paris with its much-loved songs including 'Journey to the Past' and 'Once Upon a December' **Regent Theatre, from December 2025**

Touring**DON GIOVANNI – Mozart | Director Michael Gow**

For over 30 years, Opera Australia's National Tour has brought extraordinary operatic experiences to far corners of the country. In 2026 Michael Gow's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* will be performed at a wide selection of venues from art centres to community halls across South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. The production will revitalise one of Mozart's most fascinating characters as he grapples with the reality of his debauched days coming to a sudden and mortal end.

A WINTER'S JOURNEY – Schubert | Director Lindy Hume

Acclaimed Director Lindy Hume brings to life Franz Schubert's song cycle inspired by the poems of Wilhelm Muller in a unique presentation showcasing artist Fred Williams' glowing paintings of Australian landscapes in this collaboration between Opera Australia and Musica Viva Australia. Internationally acclaimed tenor Allan Clayton returns to Australia to perform Schubert's exquisite music accompanied by Australian pianist Kate Golla. **Melbourne Recital Centre, 16 – 17 February**

Booking Information

Subscriptions available now. Prices start at \$142 for two operas.

Opera Australia Box Office | 03 9685 3700

Single tickets on sale from 29 October 2024

www.opera.org.au

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