

# Opera Australia announces 2026 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary season



Opera Australia today unveiled its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary season for 2026, featuring visionary works by some of the greatest opera directors of our generation alongside bold new productions by Australia's rising stars and international talent.

Acting CEO Simon Militano said Opera Australia's 70<sup>th</sup> 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 extraordinary productions that revive some operatic masterpieces and crowd favourites and invest in new productions that shine a light on emerging talent and stories that reflect the diversity of Australian communities.

"The unwavering support of our generous supporters, among them donors, corporate partners and government investors allows us to bring these exceptional experiences of music and song to our stages," Militano said.

The 2026 season will showcase some of the significant creative talents in OA's history, including revered directors Elijah Moshinsky, Moffat Oxenbould, Neil Armfield and Graeme Murphy and our more recent collaborators including Leah Purcell, Sarah Giles, Ann Yee and Constantine Costi.

In Melbourne, the entire season is made up of premiere productions and performances including grand opera, gala concerts, contemporary works and musical celebrations.

In Sydney a newly commissioned opera, in partnership with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Leah Purcell's poignant adaptation of *The Drover's Wife* will see grand opera traditions intersect with powerful First Nations storytelling. Starring Nina Korbe and Marcus Corowa and featuring a score by George Palmer, this new opera will be a standout production of the 2026 season.

2026 also marks the 100th birthday of the late Dame Joan Sutherland. OA will present *La Stupenda: A Joan Sutherland Celebration*, in the theatre that bears her name at the Sydney Opera House. Paying homage to the legendary soprano and honouring her pivotal role in elevating the company's global profile will be one of Australia's most exceptional sopranos, Jessica Pratt who has famously followed in Sutherland's footsteps as only the third Australian to sing *Lucia di Lammermoor* at La Scala.

New productions of perennial crowd favourites *Turandot*, by international director and choreographer Ann Yee at the Sydney Opera House, and *La Bohème* by Constantine Costi at the Regent Theatre in Melbourne are among the most eagerly anticipated highlights of the season.

Keeping the anniversary celebrations rolling, OA welcomes the return of two of the world's most iconic musicals. *The Phantom of the Opera* - staged at Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour - marking 40 years since its West End debut and, in a double celebration with OA, *My Fair Lady* celebrates its platinum 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary to open at the Sydney Opera House next September.

The 2026 season will open in Sydney with one of the most beloved productions in OA's repertoire, Moffatt Oxenbould's magical *Madama Butterfly*, closely followed by Elijah Moshinsky's enchanting production of Humperdinck's *Hansel & Gretel* - a fitting follow-up to the success of last summer's *Cinderella*. Moshinsky's brilliance is further recognised with his acclaimed production of *Rigoletto* programmed for the Sydney winter season.

Continuing to celebrate the visionary directors who have helped shape the company, Neil Armfield's confronting and affecting *Watershed* will premiere in Melbourne and Graeme Murphy's delightful *The Merry Widow* returns to the Sydney Opera House.

OA will celebrate its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a gala concert at Melbourne's Regent Theatre directed by Stuart Maunder and featuring the full forces of the OA Chorus and Orchestra Victoria along with a star-studded line up of Australia's favourite singers conducted by Giampaolo Bisanti alongside dynamic orchestral conductor Sam Weller, to bring to life a spectacular program of thrilling operatic highlights.

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 répétiteur and one director, all involved in 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 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 2026 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

## Opera Australia Box Office

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## SYDNEY SUMMER 2026

**MADAMA BUTTERFLY - Puccini** | Conductors **Andrea Battistoni** | **Paul Fitzsimon** | **Erina Yashima** | Director **Moffatt Oxenbould**

2026 will begin with the return of Moffatt Oxenbould's award-winning production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. A truly poignant experience, the timeless score from Cio-Cio-San's dazzling aria, 'Un bel di' to the 'Humming Chorus' takes audiences on a journey of soaring heights and exquisite stillness. OA welcomes four international stars to make their Australian debuts including Guanqun Yu and Vittoria Yeo sharing the role of Cio-Cio-San along with local talent Olivia Cranwell, while tenors Robert Watson and Oreste Cosimo singing the role of Pinkerton. From the onstage moat lined with flowers to the colourful costumes, this production creates a serene backdrop to stage the emotion and passion of this must-see opera. **Sydney Opera House, 3 January – 25 March and New Years Eve Performance on 31 December 2025**

**TURANDOT – Puccini** | Conductors **Henrik Nánási** | **Nicholas Milton** | **Andrea Battistoni** | **Tahu Matheson** | Director **Ann Yee**

**\*World Premiere\*** International award-winning director and choreographer Ann Yee brings a dramatic new production of Puccini's fabled opera, *Turandot* to the Joan Sutherland Theatre. With monumental sets, immersive visuals, mesmerising dance and Puccini's atmospheric score that includes the most universally adored aria in the opera canon, the electrifying 'Nessun dorma', this is a captivating piece of theatre that promises to be a season highlight. Taking on the title role are two of Australia's most exciting dramatic sopranos, Rebecca Nash, returning home from the Metropolitan Opera of New York, and Anna-Louise Cole who triumphed in OA's Brisbane Ring Cycle. Together these leading ladies will bring to life Turandot's courage, strength and resilience in this unmissable grand spectacle. **Sydney Opera House, 15 January – 27 March**

**HANSEL & GRETEL – Humperdinck** | Conductor **Tahu Matheson** | Director **Elijah Moshinsky**

Following the success of last summer's staging of Massenet's *Cinderella (Cendrillon)*, OA welcomes another fairytale opera in Elijah Moshinsky's whimsical production of Humperdinck's *Hansel & Gretel*. The story audiences know and love will unfold on a larger-than-life storybook stage with vibrant and quirky costumes and a magical score filled with German folk tunes. Revived by OA's Young Artist Director Claudia Osborne and featuring an all-star cast of Australian favourites including Margaret Plummer and Stacey Alleaume as the titular children and Jane Ede as the witch, this production, performed in English, is filled with plenty of humour and heart that will be an enchanting and nostalgic treat for opera lovers and newcomers alike. **Sydney Opera House, 27 January – 28 February**

**EUGENE ONEGIN – Tchaikovsky** | Conductor **Anna Skryleva** | Director **Kasper Holten**

Tchaikovsky's celebrated opera *Eugene Onegin* makes an exciting return to the Joan Sutherland Theatre to round out the summer season. Kasper Holten's deeply moving production brings to life this story of passion and the devastation of unrequited love with themes of reminiscence and regret taking centre stage. The powerful, romantic score will be conducted by German conductor Anna Skryleva, making her OA debut. Internationally acclaimed Australian soprano, Lauren Fagan returns home to perform the hopelessly romantic dreamer, Tatyana, while Ukrainian baritone Andrei Bondarenko plays the title role and Australian tenor, Nicholas Jones, performs as Lensky. **Sydney Opera House, 17 – 28 March**

**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. **Sydney Opera House, 21 February**

## SYDNEY WINTER 2026

### **THE MERRY WIDOW – Lehár** | Conductor **Vanessa Scammell** | Director **Graeme Murphy**

Graeme Murphy's lively rendition of *The Merry Widow* returns to the Sydney Opera House to kick off OA's winter season with a bang. Combining Murphy's signature choreography with glamorous costumes and sets, this is a visually stunning production; an all-singing, all dancing operetta that encapsulates the beauty of the Art Deco era. New Zealand-born international star Emma Pearson and Australian soprano Julie Lea Goodwin will share the role of Hanna, each bringing their own unique and captivating energy. Alexander Lewis returns to OA to reprise the role of Danilo along with rising star Alexandra Flood who portrays Valencienne. Performed in English and packed with frothy comedic timing, familiar waltzes and tuneful melodies, this production is an opulent party filled with glitz, glamour and old-fashioned romance. **Sydney Opera House, 8 July – 18 August**

### **RIGOLETTO – Verdi** | Conductor **Sesto Quatrini** | Director **Elijah Moshinsky**

Elijah Moshinsky's much-loved production of *Rigoletto* returns to the Sydney Opera House, complete with its delightful La Dolce Vita inspired sets and costumes, including the scene-stealing Fiat 500. Led by Italian conductor Sesto Quatrini, making his Australian debut, this production is a sensational reinvigoration of Verdi's iconic score, which he demanded be kept under complete secrecy at the time of its premiere. Award-winning baritone Dalibor Jeniš reprises his acclaimed performance as the tortured jester, supported by Kang Wang as the Duke and rising star Gemma Nha as the jester's daughter. **Sydney Opera House, 21 July – 21 August**

### **THE DROVER'S WIFE – Palmer** | Conductor **Tahu Matheson** | Director & Librettist **Leah Purcell**

**\*Sydney Premiere\*** *The Drover's Wife* is a stunning new opera co-commissioned and co-produced with Queensland Performing Arts Centre based on the play, novel and film by one of Australia's leading artists, Leah Purcell who also directs the production and has written the libretto. With an entrancing score by George Palmer, this new adaption reveals the symphonic soul of Purcell's modern classic which promises to intertwine grand opera traditions with contemporary First Nations storytelling. Australia's newest opera star and proud Koa, Kuku Yalanji, Wakka Wakka woman, Nina Korbe, returns to OA after her stunning portrayal as Maria in *West Side Story* on Sydney Harbour to take on the titular role. She will be joined by in-demand First Nations tenor Marcus Corowa who captured the hearts of Australian audiences with his soulful voice and charming stage presence in acclaimed performances in *Bran Nue Dae*, *The Rabbits* and the hit musical *Beautiful: Carol King the Musical*. **Sydney Opera House, 7– 15 August**

### **LA STUPENDA: A JOAN SUTHERLAND CELEBRATION** | Conductor **Speranza Scappucci** | Director **Stuart Maunder**

When Joan Sutherland sang the world listened. To mark what would be her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, OA will celebrate the soprano, known as La Stupenda (the stupendous one), in a tribute performance that will re-live her great successes in the very theatre that bears her name. Opera sensation Jessica Pratt who has famously followed in Sutherland's footsteps as only the third Australian to sing Lucia di Lammermoor at La Scala, will take centre stage to honour Dame Joan's career with her own unique coloratura soprano voice. She will be joined by rising star Australian Chinese tenor Kang Wang, both of whom will be led by one of opera's most exciting musical forces, Speranza Scappucci in her highly anticipated OA debut for this celebration of the voice of the century. **Sydney Opera House, 20 and 22 August**



## HANDA OPERA ON SYDNEY HARBOUR

### **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA –Lloyd Webber | Conductor Guy Simpson | Director Simon Phillips**

To mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Andrew Lloyd Webber's global phenomenon, *Phantom of the Opera* will make a triumphant return to the larger-than-life Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour stage. The story that has captivated more than 160 million people in 205 cities across 58 territories, and in 21 languages will be celebrated in spectacular fashion. At the helm is Australia's master of musical theatre, director Simon Phillips, who will revive his critically acclaimed 2022 production. Music extraordinaire Guy Simpson will conduct the OA orchestra through the iconic score that will be complemented by Simone Sault's choreography while Gabriela Tylesova's audacious costumes and sets will bring a whole new level of grandeur in this tribute to the original musical theatre classic. **Sydney Harbour, 27 March – 26 April**

## 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 the 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'. **Sydney Lyric Theatre, From April 2026**

### **MY FAIR LADY – Lerner and Loewe | Co-Directors Julie Andrews and Karen Johnson Mortimer**

Celebrating 70 dazzling years since its debut, Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady* returns to the Sydney Opera House. Winner of six Tony Awards, the musical catapulted Julie Andrews to superstardom with its heartwarming story of transformation and identity and its equally glorious score including classics 'Wouldn't It Be Lovely' and 'I Could Have Danced All Night'. Now, ten years since its last graced the Australian stage, *My Fair Lady* returns to delight audiences with the experience of a true classic piece of musical theatre. **Sydney Opera House, from 10 September**

## 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 Antoinette Halloran, accompanied by Orchestra Victoria. **Regent Theatre, 22 – 24 May**

**70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY GALA** | Conductors **Giampaolo Bisanti** | **Sam Weller** | Director **Stuart Maunder**

An unmissable event for opera lovers, Opera Australia will celebrate its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a concert featuring the full forces of the OA Chorus and Orchestra Victoria along with a star-studded line up of Australia's favourite singers. 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 the 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 Mimì 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**

**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 2026

### **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**

**City Recital Hall, Sydney, 22 – 23 February**

### Booking Information

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

#### **Opera Australia Box Office**

Melbourne 03 9685 3700

Sydney 02 9318 8200

Single tickets on sale from 23 September 2025

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