

Opera Australia Announces 2011 Season

**Two premières, six new productions, fifteen operas, new faces and old friends:
Australia's national opera company announces its 55th annual season.**

Adrian Collette, Chief Executive of Opera Australia, and Lyndon Terracini, Opera Australia's Artistic Director, today announced details of the 2011 mainstage season for Sydney and Melbourne. Opera Australia will present fifteen different productions across the year, covering music from the baroque to the present day.

The 2011 Season includes:

The Australian première of Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*, starring sensational American tenor Anthony Griffey

The Sydney premiere of Richard Mills's *The Love of the Nightingale*, starring Emma Matthews

A further four new productions: *La bohème*, *Macbeth*, *Partenope* and *The Merry Widow*

Another chance to see: *Madama Butterfly*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Pearlfishers*, *Lakmé*, *La traviata*, *Capriccio*, *The Mikado*

International artists including singers Giorgio Caoduro, Elizabeth Connell, Elvira Fatykhova, Anthony Dean Griffey, Takesha Meshé Kizart, Ji-Min Park, Patricia Racette, Teddy Tahu Rhodes, Rinat Shaham, Diego Torre and conductors Philippe Auguin, Christian Badea, Maurizio Barbacini, Christian Curnyn, Emmanuel Joel-Hornak, Marko Letonja, Shao-Chia Lü, Patrick Summers, Guillaume Tourniaire and Mark Wigglesworth.

Internationally-acclaimed Australian artists including: singers Cheryl Barker, Mitchell Butel, José Carbó, Conal Coad, Peter Coleman-Wright, Aldo Di Toro, Rachelle Durkin, Amelia Farrugia, Julian Gavin, David Hobson, Michael Lewis, Emma Matthews, Daniel Sumegi, Elizabeth Whitehouse; conductors Simon Hewett, Benjamin Northey and Antony Walker

Directors including Christopher Alden, Bruce Beresford, John Cox, René Richard Cyr, Gale Edwards, Giles Havergal, Roger Hodgman, Göran Järfefelt, Tama Matheson, Stuart Maunder, Elijah Moshinsky, Moffatt Oxenbould, Ann-Margret Pettersson and Francesca Zambello

Conductors including Brian Castles-Onion, Ollivier-Philippe Cunéo, Andrew Greene, Anthony Legge and Tom Woods;
Composer & Conductor Richard Mills; **Librettists** Amanda Holden and Timberlake Wertenbaker; **Choreographers** including Rosetta Cook, Timothy Gordon, Elizabeth Hill, Stuart Hopps and Arthur Pitta

Designers including Étienne Boucher, Robert Bryan, Russell Cohen, John Conklin, Paule Constable, Derek Coutts, Peter England, Oliver Fenwick, Tim Goodchild, Claude Goyette, Dona Granita, Peter J Hall, Howard Harrison, Kate Hawley, Nigel Levings, Andrew Lieberman, Julie Lynch, Tanya McCallin, Clare Mitchell, Jon Morrell, Carl Friedrich Oberle, Dan Potra, John Rayment, Matt Scott, Adam Silverman, François St-Aubin, John Stoddard, Mark Thompson, Brian Thomson, Leslie Travers and Michael Yeagan.

Plus Opera Australia's own starry ensemble including Richard Alexander, Richard Anderson, Jud Arthur, Stephen Bennett, Kanen Breen, Andrew Brunson, Elizabeth Campbell, Catherine Carby, Henry Choo, David Corcoran, Bradley Daley, Jacqueline Dark, Gennadi Dubinsky, James Egglestone, Tania Ferris, Taryn Fiebig, Christopher Field, Warwick Fyfe, Luke Gabbedy, Lorina Gore, Antoinette Halloran, Roxane Hislop, Anke Höppner, Hye Seoung Kwon, Teresa La Rocca, Rosario La Spina, Shane Lawrence, Jacqueline Mabardi, Graeme Macfarlane, Dominica Matthews, Andrew Moran, Milijana Nikolic, David Parkin, Sian Pendry, Barry Ryan, Stephen Smith, David Thelander, Christopher Tonkin, Amy Wilkinson and John Bolton Wood,

Regional tour of Oz Opera's new production of *La traviata* to 28 venues directed by Rachel McDonald with a chamber orchestra and ten singers. This is the second year of the two-year touring circuit for this production.

And introducing new young artists Nicole Car and John Longmuir who join current Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist Program members Jane Parkin, Samuel Dundas and Andrew Jones.

Lyndon Terracini, Artistic Director, comments: "It's a Shiraz season. I like Shiraz. It's a complex grape, but at the same time very pure. In all sorts of ways you know what it's going to be like but it surprises you too, because there are so many complexities to it."

Adrian Collette, Chief Executive of Opera Australia, adds: "2011 is also about opportunity. Operatunity, even. Because while it is thrilling to hear internationally-acclaimed performers, we must never forget the amazing artists on our doorstep. Several of this year's productions are designed specifically around developing our own ensemble: enabling emerging artists to add a new role to their repertoire; using different combinations of singers; watching for potential, trying new things. Of course, some opera lovers come to see the international stars in roles they love, but we hope that many others will enjoy following the progress of the rich vein of Australian talent within our ensemble."

Terracini continues: "Opera is changing. Australia is changing. Audiences want performers who can sing to the impossible standards of a studio recording, act like Oscar winners, dance like Fred Astaire and look the part, live on stage. It might be a bold claim, but we are confident that the artists we have assembled for 2011 are up to the challenge."

The 2011 Season at a glance:

Sydney Summer 2011

A perfect location. The pick of Summer Season artists. Everyone's favourite opera moments. The Opera Australia **New Year's Eve Gala** in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House has become a grand Sydney tradition. This year's line-up includes **Jacqueline Mabardi, Dominica Matthews, Emma Matthews, Rinat Shaham, Julian Gavin, Andrew Jones, Teddy Tahu Rhodes** and **James Egglestone**, previewing some of the best from the summer season. Hosted by Jonathan Biggins with Andrew Greene conducting the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra.

Madama Butterfly opens the Summer Season, with American lyric soprano **Patricia Racette** in the title role. Rosario La Spina is her Pinkerton, with Antoinette Halloran and David Corcoran taking over in the second half of the season. Philippe Auguin and Tom Woods conduct Puccini's devastatingly romantic score, brought to the stage in Moffatt Oxenbould's exquisite production. **Madama Butterfly opens on 7 January 2011.**

Opera Australia welcomes a new **Carmen** to the stage: **Rinat Shaham** appears as the seductive gypsy in Francesca Zambello's hot and evocative production, with Julian Gavin as Don José and Teddy Tahu Rhodes as bull-fighter Escamillo. Later in the season, husband and wife team Rosario La Spina and Milijana Nikolic take over the central roles. **Guillaume Tourniaire** makes his Australian debut conducting Bizet's blistering score. **Carmen opens on 15 January 2011**

The entire *Carmen* ensemble, along with the Opera Australia Chorus and the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, abandons the Sydney Opera House for one night to present the show, in semi-staged mode, in Sydney's Domain. *Mazda Opera in the Domain* is a free event which attracts over 10,000 people every year. This year, **Mazda Opera in the Domain is Carmen, on 29 January 2011.**

Elijah Moshinsky's production of **The Barber of Seville** is back by popular demand, in all its 1920s slapstick glory. **Giorgio Caoduro**, a young Italian baritone who has just debuted at La Scala, Milan, makes his Australian debut as Figaro, while Dominica Matthews is Rosina and Henry Choo is Almaviva. Australian conductor Antony Walker, currently in great demand in the US, returns to Sydney to conduct. **The Barber of Seville opens on 4 February 2011.**

Opera Australia presents the first Australian performance of Handel's **Partenope** in a co-production with the English National Opera. Directed by **Christopher Alden** and starring **Emma Matthews**, this baroque comedy, in an English translation by Amanda Holden, plays havoc with notions of love, war and gender. An outstanding cast of baroque experts includes Richard Alexander, Kanen Breen, Catherine Carby, Jacqueline Dark and Christopher Field with conductor Christian Curnyn making his Australian debut. **Partenope opens on 12 March 2011.**

Melbourne Autumn 2011

The 2011 Season of Opera at the Arts Centre, Melbourne opens with a new production of **Puccini's La bohème**, directed by **Gale Edwards**. It stars Takesha Meshé Kizart, the American soprano who wowed Sydney audiences as Tosca this year, singing Mimi, alongside Korean-born Ji-Min Park, who has just made his Covent Garden debut as Rodolfo. Designers Brian Thomson, Julie Lynch and John Rayment transport Puccini's bohemians to 1930s Berlin, and Christian Badaea makes his Australian debut conducting Orchestra Victoria. **The Melbourne Season of Opera 2011 opens with La bohème on 12 April 2011.**

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Verdi's stormy *Macbeth* was last performed in 1998 in Melbourne. Now, at last, comes a spectacular new co-production with Opéra de Montréal directed by René Richard Cyr, designed by Claude Goyette, François St-Aubin and Étienne Boucher and starring **Michael Lewis** and **Elizabeth Connell** as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. An impressive cast includes Rosario La Spina as Macduff, Jud Arthur as Banquo and Stephen Smith as Malcolm, plus a large chorus, and Verdi's powerful score is conducted by Simon Hewett. ***Macbeth* opens on 20 April 2011.**

Bizet's *The Pearlfishers* returns after a long absence with the sumptuous production directed by Ann-Margret Pettersson and designed by John Conklin, Clare Mitchell and Nigel Levings. Henry Choo and Luke Gabbedy will be making their vow of eternal friendship, the famous '**In the depths of the temple**' duet, while **Emma Matthews**, as the impossibly beautiful Léïla, will break it. Jud Arthur is her menacing father, Nourabad and Ollivier-Phillippe Cunéo conducts Bizet's exotic score. ***The Pearlfishers* opens on 4 May 2011.**

Mitchell Butel, singer, actor and star of *Avenue Q* (for which he was recently nominated for a Helpmann Award), makes his Opera Australia debut as Ko-Ko in Gilbert and Sullivan's riotous ***The Mikado***. This handsome production, directed by Stuart Maunder, is a glorious showcase for the all-singing, all-dancing Opera Australia Savoyards, including Taryn Fiebig, Kanen Breen, Warwick Fyfe and Jacqueline Dark with Richard Alexander as The Mikado and, of course, the award-winning Opera Australia Chorus conducted by Brian Castles-Onion. ***The Mikado* opens on 17 May 2011.**

Sydney Winter 2011

The Sydney Winter Season opens with a major role debut for one of Australia's greatest artists. **Cheryl Barker** is the Countess, and she leads an outstanding cast in Richard Strauss's final opera, ***Capriccio***. **Michael Lewis** and Kanen Breen play the warring Olivier and Flamand who argue over which is more important, the words, or the music while Conal Coad returns to the role of La Roche. John Cox directs John Stoddart's stylish production and Patrick Summers returns to conduct the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. ***Capriccio* opens on 2 July 2011.**

A new production of Puccini's ***La bohème*** is always a big event. In 2011 the ingenious **Gale Edwards** transports Puccini's classic to 1930s' Berlin, with set designs by **Brian Thomson**, costumes by **Julie Lynch** and lighting by **John Rayment**. After a spectacular Tosca, **Takesha Meshé Kizart** returns to perform Mimì, and appearing alongside her is Korean-born **Ji-Min Park**, who has just made his Covent Garden debut as Rodolfo. Antoinette Halloran and Hyeeseoung Kwon also appear as Mimì, with Mexican tenor Diego Torre and Australian James Egglestone making an important role debut as Rodolfo. Puccini expert Shao-Chia Lü conducts with Brian Castles-Onion later in the season. ***La bohème* opens on 12 July 2011.**

Film and stage director **Bruce Beresford** has long been a champion of American opera. He now directs the Australian première season of **Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men***, based on John Steinbeck's novel and designed by John Stoddart and Nigel Levings. To play Lennie, the childlike giant at the centre of the tragedy, is the celebrated American tenor **Anthony Dean Griffey**. Barry Ryan, Bradley Daley, Jacqueline Mabardi and a grand ensemble cast are conducted by Patrick Summers. ***The Australian première of Of Mice and Men* takes place on 23 July 2011.**

Another new production, and another role debut - **Amelia Farrugia** stars as Hanna Glawari in ***The Merry Widow***, opposite **David Hobson** as the dashing Danilo. UK director **Giles Havergal** creates a ritzy and romantic new production of Lehár's most famous operetta, designed by Leslie Travers and Oliver Fenwick with choreography by renowned choreographer of stage and film, Stuart Hopps. This is a co-production with Opera North. ***The Merry Widow* opens on 4 August 2011.**

Two female voices entwined in song... **Emma Matthews** and **Dominica Matthews** will sing the famous duet from ***Lakmé*** when Delibes' fragrant opera returns in a restudied version of designer Mark Thompson's Hindu-art inspired production. This is a Sydney role debut for Matthews, and another first for Aldo Di Toro as the very English Gerald. Roger Hodgman directs and Emmanuel Joel-Hornak conducts this bel canto delight. ***Lakmé* opens on 24 August 2011.**

Verdi's ***Macbeth*** has not been seen in Sydney since 1998. Now, at last, comes a spectacular new production directed by René Richard Cyr, designed by Claude Goyette, François St-Aubin and Étienne Boucher and starring **Peter Coleman-Wright** and **Elizabeth Whitehouse** as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. An impressive cast includes Rosario La Spina as Macduff, Daniel Sumegi as Banquo, Stephen Smith as Malcolm, plus a large chorus, and Verdi's powerful score is conducted by newcomer Maurizio Barbacini. ***Macbeth* opens on 10 September 2011.**

Mozart's ***Don Giovanni*** returns in the classic Göran Järvefelt production with two exceptional casts. **Teddy Tahu Rhodes** opens the season and then hands over the boots to Opera Australia favourite **José Carbó**. Conal Coad and Stephen Bennett share the role of Leporello and after his triumph conducting *Peter Grimes* in 2009, English conductor Mark Wigglesworth returns, with Australian conductor Benjamin Northey taking over mid-run. ***Don Giovanni* opens on 24 September 2011.**

Emma Matthews and **Anke Höppner** star in the Sydney première of **Richard Mills's *The Love of the Nightingale***. The Greek legend of Philomene and Procne is retold through Richard Mills's music and Timberlake Wertenbaker's words in a restudied production directed by **Tama Matheson**. The cast includes Elizabeth Campbell, Taryn Fiebig, Lorina Gore, David Corcoran and Richard Anderson, conducted by the composer. **The Sydney première of *The Love of the Nightingale* takes place on 21 October 2011.**

Melbourne Spring 2011

Russian-born soprano **Elvira Fatykhova** brings her touching portrayal of Violetta, in ***La traviata***, to Melbourne for the first time for a devastatingly romantic start to the Spring Season. Australian tenor, **Aldo Di Toro**, plays her lover Alfredo, while **Michael Lewis** is his father, Giorgio Germont in this most beautiful of productions, designed by Michael Yeargan, Peter J Hall and Nigel Levings and inspired by Manet and Renoir. Orchestra Victoria soars under the baton of their Principal Guest Conductor Marko Letonja. **The Spring Season of Opera opens on 16 November 2011.**

Bruce Beresford directs the Melbourne première production of ***Of Mice and Men***, by American composer Carlisle Floyd. Based on John Steinbeck's novel, it features celebrated American tenor **Anthony Dean Griffey** as the simple but dangerous Lennie, with **Barry Ryan** as his friend and minder George. John Stoddart designs this major new production with lighting by Nigel Levings, and Tom Woods conducts the beguiling and emotional score. **The Melbourne première season of *Of Mice and Men* opens on 26 November 2011.**

Last time **Teddy Tahu Rhodes** played **Don Giovanni** in Melbourne, he created a sensation. Now he is back for one last season before he hands over the boots to rising star **Shane Lawrencev**. Another young Australian, **Benjamin Northey**, conducts a cast of Opera Australia favourites including Hye Seoung Kwon, Taryn Fiebig, Jacqueline Dark and Stephen Bennett, with David Parkin as the Commendatore and Samuel Dundas as Masetto. ***Don Giovanni* opens on 2 December 2011.**

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