

# Opera Australia 2012 Sydney Season

**Big, Bold and Beautiful – Lyndon Terracini’s vision for 21<sup>st</sup>-century opera**



Images: Lyndon Terracini; *The Magic Flute* Metropolitan Opera production photo © Cory Weaver/ Metropolitan Opera 2009; South Pacific poster image; *Madama Butterfly* Opera Australia 2010@Branco Gaica; *Salome* Opera Australia 2010

**Opera Australia’s Artistic Director, Lyndon Terracini, has announced details of the national opera company’s 2012 Season – his inaugural program as Artistic Director. It is stamped with his vision for a changing opera company that is more in tune with 21<sup>st</sup>-century Australia. His vision is one of ‘opera events’: Broadway-style music theatre, family-friendly opera experiences and spectacular new productions. At the other end of the spectrum are projects that take opera to the people: Community Choirs, wide national touring, and community-specific collaborations.**

For the first time in many years, Opera Australia will present a mainstage season in Brisbane, in addition to Sydney and Melbourne, with a total of fourteen operas across three east coast cities including seven new productions plus a touring Broadway musical. In celebration of this new expansion, all three cities will experience one of the highlights of the 2012 Season: the spectacular Julie Taymor production of *The Magic Flute*. It’s an energetic and bold vision for the national company, as it moves into a new era of opera to inspire Australian audiences across the country.

“**Big. Bold. Beautiful.** It says it all,” says Terracini. “**Big**, because with opera we are dealing with big ideas, intense emotions, and larger-than-life characters. **Bold**, because here in Australia, we have a unique opportunity to create an opera company that is different from any other. And **beautiful**, because in everything we do we are responding to the incredible beauty of this art form.”

**A Summer of Mozart:** The 2012 Sydney Season opens with a new production of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, directed by Julie Taymor (director of Broadway sensation *The Lion King*). It features handmade silk puppets, special effects, spectacular costumes and a new English translation. In the spirit of Mozart’s original, it is aimed at a family audience, with reduced ticket prices for selected performances in the school holidays..

“Composer Festivals are a great way to contextualise the experience, to really get under the skin of a composer,” says Terracini. “It is also nice to remember that this is how our national opera company started out, with a tour of four Mozart operas, and to look at how far we have come! All three productions are **in English**, all three are **modern takes on classical works**, and yet all three have very **different aesthetics**. It will be fascinating to compare.”

The Mozart Festival comprises Taymor’s *The Magic Flute*, Jim Sharman’s re-studied 2008 production of *Così fan tutte* and the long-awaited new production of *The Marriage of Figaro* directed by Benedict Andrews. Arguably the most cutting-edge director working in theatre today, Andrews conjures a contemporary *Figaro* for a contemporary Australia, sung in English and featuring charismatic Joshua Bloom in the title role, fresh from his Met debut. The summer season also includes Puccini’s epic final opera, *Turandot*.

In March 2012 Sydney will come alive to the sights and sounds of the inaugural **Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour**. Emma Matthews and Rachele Durkin alternate as the tragic heroine of **Verdi’s *La Traviata***, while international tenors Gianluca Terranova and Ji-Min Park alternate as Alfredo. It is a new production designed by **Brian Thomson** and directed by **Francesca Zambello**. Performed on a purpose-built stage out on the water of Sydney Harbour and with the city skyline as

backdrop, it will be a star-studded event held for three weeks. This will be Opera Australia's most ambitious production yet, featuring a magnificent nine metre **chandelier**, special effects and **fireworks**.

**A Winter of Firsts:** The 2012 Winter Season is framed by two key works of the twentieth century, Erich Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* and Richard Strauss's *Salome*, in new productions by Bruce Beresford and Gale Edwards, and both starring Cheryl Barker.

There are two more new productions. First, a new *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Emma Matthews, created as a co-production between Houston Grand Opera and La Fenice, Venice. And finally, the Lincoln Center Theater production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway musical, *South Pacific*, starring Teddy Tahu Rhodes. The season also features revivals of *The Pearlfishers*, *Aida* and *Madama Butterfly*.

**Digital technology for 21<sup>st</sup>-century opera:** In a first for Australian theatre, Erich Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* will feature three-dimensional holograms and cinema-style surround sound. The Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra will be playing live in The Studio of the Opera House for each performance to allow the stage to be extended forward into the theatre. The production also features innovative special effects. Using 3D holograms, leading soprano Cheryl Barker will play two roles on stage simultaneously. "In the twenty-first century we need to use all the technology at our disposal to create stunning theatre," says Terracini.

**South Pacific - a Broadway musical tours nationally:** Teddy Tahu Rhodes stars in the award-winning Lincoln Center Theatre's production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, directed by Bartlett Sher. It runs for four weeks at the Sydney Opera House before embarking on a national tour (further details will be announced later in 2011). "*South Pacific* is a ground-breaking musical. It is full of romantic and uplifting show-stoppers, but it also confronts the issues of mixed-race marriage, prejudice and tolerance," says Terracini. "*South Pacific* is a work which resonates with modern Australia in many ways. It is about our issues and our part of the world."

**Michael Gow creates a new Don for Oz Opera :** Oz Opera, the touring arm of Opera Australia, gets a makeover with a new production of Mozart's 'perfect' opera, *Don Giovanni*, in 2012. Directed by Australian theatre legend Michael Gow, *Don Giovanni* will bring a fresh and polished production to regional Australian audiences. "Michael Gow is one of the most exciting directors in Australia today," says Terracini. "We're thrilled to have him working with us to create a tailor-made *Don Giovanni* that speaks to regional Australia."

**Lyndon Terracini concludes:** "The 2012 season is about articulating what an opera company can be within an Australian context for the twenty-first century. This is a time of great opportunity, a time for asking 'what if?' and 'why not?' It is an exciting time for opera in Australia."

**Adrian Collette**, chief executive, Opera Australia says "Welcome to OA's first program of opera under Lyndon's artistic direction, with all its abundant energy and variety. I think this is a program that will inspire the most ardent opera fan while ensuring that our national company also engages with the broadest possible audience. I trust you enjoy the journey."

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