

Aida

Giuseppe Verdi



Opera Australia

Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House
July 7, 11, 15, 18 (matinée), 21, 25 (matinée), 29
August 1, 5, 8, 15, 19, 22 (matinée), 28, 31
September 3, 8, 11, 15, 19 (matinée) 2009



Giuseppe Verdi

Aida

Opera in four acts by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni, after a
scenario by Auguste Mariette and a French
prose version by Camille du Locle

Sung in Italian with surtitles

*Aida was first performed at the Opera House, Cairo, on
24 December 1871*

*This production was first performed by West Australian
Opera at His Majesty's Theatre, Perth, on 28 October 2008*

*An Opera Conference production commissioned in 2008 by
The Opera Conference, the national partnership of professional
opera companies, assisted by the Australian Government
through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.*



Australian Government



Australia Council
for the Arts

*Cover: James Clayton as the King
Aida, West Australian Opera, 2008*

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Production Sponsor

Aida

Conductor	Sir Richard Armstrong Simon Hewett (Aug. 15-31; Sept.)
Director	Graeme Murphy
Creative Associate	Janet Vernon
Set Designer	Roger Kirk, concept by Graeme Murphy
Costume Designer	Roger Kirk
Lighting Designer	Damien Cooper
Projection Design	The Brothers Gruchy
Assistant Directors	Shane Placentino Christopher Dawes

CHARACTERS, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Radamès, <i>a captain in the Egyptian army</i>	Dongwon Shin Rosario La Spina (Aug. 15-31; Sept.) Jud Arthur Gennadi Dubinsky (Aug. 15-31; Sept.)
Ramfis, <i>a High Priest</i>	
Aida, <i>an Ethiopian slave, handmaiden to Amneris</i>	Tamara Wilson Claire Rutter (Aug. 15-31; Sept.) Milijana Nikolic Elizabeth Campbell (Aug. 15-31; Sept.)
Amneris, <i>princess of Egypt</i>	David Parkin
King of Egypt, <i>Amneris' father</i>	Graeme Macfarlane
Messenger	Amy Wilkinson
High Priestess	Teresa La Rocca (Aug. 15-31; Sept.)
Amonasro, <i>King of Ethiopia, Aida's father</i>	Michael Lewis Barry Ryan (Aug. 15-Sept. 3) Warwick Fyfe (Sept. 8-19)
Musical Preparation	John Haddock Tahu Matheson
Italian Language Coach	Renato Fresia-Verdino
Surtitles	Peter Bloor
Stage Manager	Crissie Higgins
Deputy Stage Manager	Eugenia Farrell
Assistant Stage Manager	Miranda Summers
Stage Management Intern	Jayne O'Hara
Lighting Supervisor	Simon Lefort

OPERA AUSTRALIA CHORUS

Chorus Master	Michael Black
Assistant	Anthony Hunt

AUSTRALIAN OPERA AND BALLET ORCHESTRA

Concertmaster	Aubrey Murphy
Leader	Huy-Nguyen Bui, Associate Concertmaster

The performance lasts approximately three hours and fifteen minutes
including two twenty-minute intervals
Casting correct at time of publication but subject to amendment

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The Story of the Opera

Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs

Act I, Scene i *A hall in the royal palace at Memphis*

The advancing Ethiopian army is threatening the Nile Valley and the city of Thebes. Ramfis, the High Priest of Isis, tells Radamès that the goddess has chosen the general who will lead the Egyptian army into battle. Radamès hopes that he has been chosen and that he may return victorious and win the hand of Aida, an Ethiopian slave who is handmaiden to Princess Amneris. Amneris secretly loves Radamès herself and suspects from his reaction to Aida's presence that he prefers the slave to her. The King enters with the priests and his court and announces that Isis has chosen Radamès as the Egyptian commander-in-chief. Amneris presents a standard to Radamès and urges him to return as conqueror. Radamès leaves for the temple where he will be consecrated for battle. Aida is horrified that she has joined in a chorus swearing to destroy her own people. She is the daughter of the Ethiopian king Amonasro, a fact unknown to the Egyptians, and is torn between her love for her country and for Radamès.

Scene ii *Temple of Vulcan*

Sacred rites are performed by the priests and priestesses in the temple of Phtah. Radamès is presented with a consecrated sword and blessed for war and victory.

Interval

Act II, Scene i *The apartments of Amneris*

Amneris and the court ladies prepare for the triumphal return of Radamès until she dismisses them at Aida's approach. Amneris tricks Aida by telling her that Radamès has been killed in battle. Aida's misery and subsequent joy when Amneris admits that it is not true confirm Amneris' suspicions and she now declares herself the rival of a mere slave. Aida is about to retort that she too is a princess when she remembers her danger and pleads in vain for a chance for love with Radamès.

Scene ii *Before the city gates at Thebes*

Soldiers, bearing spoils of war, form a procession celebrating the triumph of Radamès. Amneris crowns him victor and the King offers him any reward he may name. Radamès asks that the prisoners of war be brought in. Aida

recognises her father among them. He warns her not to betray his rank. He relates to the Pharaoh how Amonasro died on the battlefield and pleads for mercy for the captured Ethiopians. Radamès begs for the freedom of the Ethiopians and the King agrees to this provided Aida and Amonasro remain as hostages. The King then announces that as reward for his bravery he will offer Radamès Amneris' hand in marriage. Amneris exults at her triumph and Aida expresses her misery.

Interval

Act III *The banks of the Nile*

Ramfis welcomes Amneris, on the night before her marriage, at the temple of Isis to pray. Radamès has chosen a place nearby for a last meeting with Aida, who sings sadly of her homeland. She is surprised in revery by her father who demands that she help him discover the route which Radamès plans for the next Egyptian invasion. Aida is reluctant but finally yields to his plan. When Radamès arrives she suggests that they flee together and live happily far away from Egypt. She asks which path they should take to avoid the Egyptian troops. He tells her, whereupon Amonasro steps forward triumphantly and declares himself as the Ethiopian king. Appalled that he has unwittingly betrayed his country, Radamès refuses to flee with them. Amneris and Ramfis emerge from the temple. Aida and Amonasro escape, and Radamès surrenders his sword to the High Priest.

Act IV, Scene i *In the Temple of Vulcan*

Amneris summons Radamès to her presence and pleads with him to declare his innocence. She offers love and the throne on condition that he vows never to see Aida again. Radamès refuses and is led away to his trial. Three times the voice of Ramfis is heard accusing Radamès of treason and each time Radamès is silent. He is sentenced to be buried alive under the altar. Amneris vents her rage against Ramfis and the priests, calling down the curse of heaven upon them.

Scene ii

Radamès has been left to die, and the altar is being put in place above his tomb. He sees a form and thinks it is a vision, but it is Aida who has come to die with him. Together they bid farewell to earth while, above them, Amneris prays that the gods may grant eternal peace to Radamès.





The première

Filippo Filippi, *La Perseveranza*, Milan, 27 December 1871

...I attended many stage rehearsals and production rehearsals, in which all took part with exemplary assiduousness and care, even the masses [orchestra and chorus], accustomed in these theatres to hasty rehearsals of repertory operas. Bottesini for the orchestra, Devasini for the chorus, D'Ormeville for the staging, have not had a moment's rest for a fortnight. The musical rehearsals always proceeded regularly; those of the staging, on the contrary, were slow, incomplete, so that at the pre-dress rehearsal not one set, one wing, one platform was in place, and the big moving platform for the final scene was still to be finished, the one where above there is the temple of Vulcan, below the cave where Aida and Radamès die.

When, at the pre-dress rehearsal, I saw the production so unready, I could not believe that a good dress rehearsal could be held on Saturday and that, on Sunday they could risk the première. But a higher will ordained the miracle, and the miracle took place. The Viceroy had said he was leaving on Tuesday for a long excursion to Upper Egypt, and that on Sunday he wanted to attend the première of *Aida*. No sooner said than done. Saturday's dress rehearsal was an heroic effort for all; suffice it to say that it lasted from seven in the evening to three-thirty in the morning, with the presence of subscribers, almost all of whom stayed in their places till the end, including the ladies in the boxes, and the Viceroy himself with his suite.

This dress rehearsal decided the success, because, with the subscribers there, the theatre illuminated, the artists dressed in their costumes, it differed from the first performance only in the far longer intervals between the acts, caused by the still incomplete and untried stage machinery. As at the performance, there was applause, ovations, cries of enthusiasm, and then, in the animated conversations during the intervals, exchanges of admiration for the great work and a private satisfaction at this signal honour bestowed on the Cairo theatre, that of giving life to such a grand and beautiful musical composition. All the numbers, from the prelude to the final duet, were applauded and even interrupted by the excessive fervour of the impatient. In the hymn that closes the first part of Act I there is a loud suspended chord, which was followed by a burst of applause; Bottesini, irked by the untimely interruption, turned to the audience, shouting in distinct Milanese accent: 'L'è minga finiii!' [It's not over!]. At three-thirty, when we left the theatre, after the end of the dress

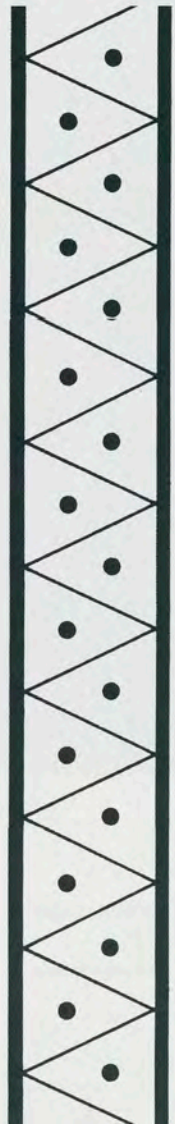
rehearsal, we were all overjoyed and happy at having heard the great Maestro's new music, which, even to those who already knew it by heart, having heard it at the rehearsals, with the prestige of the beautiful sets, the sumptuous decorations, the glow of arms and jewels, and specially the action, seemed to increase and redouble a thousand times in beauty and dramatic efficacy; for theatrical effect is a distinct, salient character of the operas of Verdi, and it is singular how they gain in performance, whereas many very beautiful compositions, admirable when read at the piano and in score, on the stage become faded, monotonous, boring; in this respect the genius of Verdi has a great affinity with that of Wagner, *mutatis mutandis*, naturally. [. .]

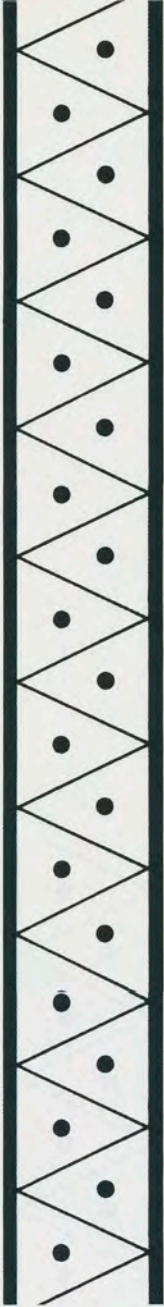
[. .] For this splendid Italian creation [*Aida*] the Viceroy had the satisfaction not only of the excellent result but also of seeing how all the public which crowded into the theatre, on Sunday evening, recognized at once what a debt of gratitude art and civilization owe to this rare prince, unique in his intelligent munificence. The applause for him, universal, long, frenzied, was not long in exploding; the softly high, last notes of the violins had hardly died away when a cry of 'Long live the Khedive!' was heard reechoing throughout the theatre; in the midst of that polyglot mob the Italian accent dominated; all the ladies stood up; handkerchiefs waves, a thousand voices acclaimed, and the Khedive, rising, greeted with a smile, at once of thanks and of personal satisfaction. [. .]

Ernest Reyer, *Journal des débats*, Paris, 31 December 1871

[. .] When I accepted the invitation to come to Egypt, to attend the première of *Aida*, it was clearly agreed that I would not submit to any influence and that I would express my opinion with the greatest frankness. Had M. Verdi's opera been mediocre, I would have said so directly; it has succeeded; it deserved to succeed; I am happy to spread the good news and to congratulate the composer, towards whom, as is well known, I have never shown either great admiration or much fondness.

This then is a very interesting, very remarkable work, which will surely be appreciated in France as in Italy, and which was written at the instigation of an Egyptian prince. No matter how magnificent and absolute the sovereign of this country may be, he did not have the power to decree a masterpiece,





and he knew this well when, to give a novelty to the Cairo theatre, he asked for a new score from the most popular of Italian composers. With the best intentions in the world, M. Verdi could easily have responded to the Khedive's wish as he responded, some years ago, to the invitation of the Czar, with *La forza del destino*...He has even found in it [*Aida*] the opportunity to create some local colour, which does not happen to him often, and which he did not seem to seek in his previous works. [. .]

To those who deny movement in music, M. Verdi has just replied like the ancient philosopher: it has walked. To be sure, the old Verdi still survives; one finds him in *Aida* with his exaggerations, his brusque oppositions, his carelessnesses of style and his transports. But another Verdi tinged with Germanism is also shown, very skilfully using, with a learning and a tact that one did not suspect in him, the artifices of fugue and counterpoint, combining timbres with a rare ingeniousness, breaking the old melodic moulds, even those which were peculiar to him, caressing in turn the grand recitatives and the long melodic lines, seeking the newest harmonies, at times the strangest, the most unexpected modulations, giving the accompaniment more interest, often more value, than the melody itself. [. .]

No one can tell me any more that M. Verdi lives in the most complete isolation and remains absolutely indifferent to all new works, to any new system. A few years ago I was assured that he had never read *Don Giovanni*. That is quite possible, but he has read it since, and has even ventured much farther. I am quite certain that the works of Richard Wagner are familiar to him, and those of Berlioz as well. He must also have studied the scores of Meyerbeer a bit and have considered the procedures of M. Gounod, which are not those of just anyone. His studies in these different genres were perhaps only sketches when he wrote *Don Carlos*; they are much advanced, if not absolutely complete today. And if he persists in his new manner, Maestro Verdi, while some enthusiasms will cool around him, will make many conversions and will win many adepts, even in the circles where until now he was not admitted. [. .]



James Clayton as the King, Charles Mellor as the Messenger (centre) and West Australian Opera Chorus
Aida, West Australian Opera, 2008

**Richard Armstrong** - Conductor

Background: Has appeared as a guest conductor with major orchestras and opera companies worldwide. Music Director of Scottish Opera, 1993-2005, and Welsh National Opera, 1973-1986

OA repertoire: *Il trovatore, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

Other Companies: Conducted regularly at Covent Garden and ENO and overseas engagements have taken him to Frankfurt, Geneva, Paris, Munich, Berlin, Amsterdam, Rome, Brussels, and Los Angeles as well as to Canada and Australia. Conducts a broad operatic repertoire centred around the works of Verdi, Wagner, Strauss and Janáček. Conducted regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival, the BBC Proms and the Vienna Festival. Worked with the London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Halle, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and abroad with orchestras including the Japan Philharmonic, Berlin Symphony Orchestra, and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Recent engagements include *Tosca* (Los Angeles Opera); *Gluck's Orfeo* (Royal Opera Stockholm); *Eugene Onegin* (Toronto)

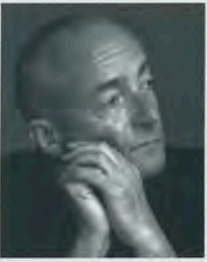
**Simon Hewett** - Conductor

Background: Studied at the University of Queensland and the Franz Liszt Hochschule für Musik in Weimar, Germany. Member of Opera Australia's Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist Program, 2003. Awards: German Government Scholarship (1998), Inaugural recipient, Hephzibah Tintner Memorial Fellowship (2004), Brian Stacey Award for Young Conductors (2004)

OA repertoire: *Les pêcheurs de perles, Il barbiere di Siviglia, Tosca, Turandot, Otello*

Other Companies: Kapellmeister and GMD Assistant at Hamburg State Opera 2005-2008 where his repertoire included *La traviata, Die Zauberflöte, Il barbiere di Siviglia, Tri Sestri, Carmen, L'elisir d'amore, La bohème, Tosca, Hänsel und Gretel, Don Giovanni, Cinderella, The Nutcracker*, Mahler Symphony No. 7, *Il turco in Italia; Der Barbier von Sevilla, Die Entführung aus dem Serail (Komische Oper Berlin); Giselle* (Staatsoper Berlin); *Parzival* (ballet) at Baden Baden Festspielhaus. Brandenburg Symphoniker, Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, TQO, OV, ASO, WASO, Elision Ensemble; The Seymour Group; Mahler Symphony No. 3 (Paris Opera)

Recordings/Videos: CD - *Opening of the Mouth* (ABC Classics)

**Graeme Murphy** - Director

Background: Born, Australia. Studied The Australian Ballet School. Danced The Australian Ballet, Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, London, Ballets Felix Blaska, France. Appointed Artistic Director Sydney Dance Company 1976. Awards: AM, 1982; Sydney Opera House Honours, 1993; Hon D Litt Tas, Hon D Phil Qld, Hon D Litt UNSW; National Living Treasure, 1999, Centenary Medal, 2003; ABAF Cultural Leader of the Year, 2004; Australia's 50 Most Glamorous Exports, 2005; Cultural Exchange Award (PR of China, 2008)

OA Repertoire: Directed *Metamorphosis, Turandot, Salome, The Trojans*

Other companies: Created more than 50 works including 30 full-length (Sydney Dance Company); *Nutcracker, Swan Lake, Firebird* (The Australian Ballet); *Tivoli* (TAB/SDC co-production); *VAST* (Australian Bicentennial Authority); *Hua Mulan* (SDC/Shanghai Song and Dance Ensemble); *Die Silberne Rose* (Bayerisches Staatsballet, München); *Song of the Night* (Nederlands Dans Theater); *Embodied* (Mikhail Baryshnikov); choreography *Death in Venice* (Canadian Opera), *Samson et Dalila* (Metropolitan Opera, NY); choreographer/director Torvill and Dean World Tour Company; directed *Ainadamar* (Adelaide Festival)

**Janet Vernon** - Creative Associate

Background: Studied: The Australian Ballet School; Danced: The Australian Ballet, Ballets Félix Blaska (France), Sydney Dance Company; Associate Artistic Director/Dancer, Sydney Dance Company (1976-2007). Awards: AM, Services to Dance, 1989; Sydney Opera House Honours, 1993; Dance Australia named her 'One of Australia's Five Best Female Dancers Ever'; Green Room Award, Concept and Realisation *Swan Lake*, 2003; Centenary Medal, Services to Society and Dance; Lifetime Achievement, Australian Dance Awards, 2006; Green Room Award, Outstanding Contribution to Dance, 2006

Other Companies: Roles created include, *Shéhérazade, Some Rooms (The Bathroom), After Venice, Nearly Beloved, King Roger* (Queen Roxana), *Berlin, The Protecting Veil, Salome* (Herodias) Andromaque in *The Trojans* (SDC/Opera Australia). Creative Associate: *Swan Lake, Nutcracker - The story of Clara, Firebird* (The Australian Ballet); *Hua Mulan*, (SDC/Shanghai Song & Dance Ensemble); *The Silver Rose* (Bayerisches Staatsballet Munich); *Ainadamar* (The Adelaide Festival)

**Roger Kirk** - Designer

Background: Tony Award, Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Friends of New York Theatre Award for Best Costume Design for Broadway production *The King and I*. AFI Awards for Best Costumes for *Bloodoath* (1990), *Rebel* (1985).

OA repertoire: Costumes: *Manon Lescaut, The Gypsy Princess, Pirates of Penzance and My Fair Lady*. Sets and Costumes: *Iolanthe, HMS Pinafore, Trial by Jury, Manon, The Tales of Hoffmann, Don Pasquale, A little Night Music*

Other Companies: Costumes: *Jesus Christ Superstar* (NY, UK); *Whistle Down the Wind* (London); *42nd Street* (NY, Stuttgart, Tokyo); *The Boy from Oz, The King and I*; Hugh Jackman's *The Boy from Oz Arena Spectacular*. Sets and Costumes: *Pirates of Penzance* (D'Oyly Carte, UK); *Aspects of Love* (Aus/UK Tours); *The Silver Rose, Le Corsaire* (Munich Opera House); *Dusty: The Original Pop Diva; SHOUT!*. Film credits include *Brilliant Lies, Dad and Dave: On our Selection, Turtle Beach* (aka *The Killing Beach*), *Blood Oath*



Damien Cooper - Lighting Designer

Background: Graduated from NIDA in 1996 and his designs have toured nationally and internationally. Has won numerous awards including a Green Room Award (*Body of Work*) for Best Lighting Design for Theatre, 2007

OA repertoire: *The Magic Flute, Death In Venice, Alcina*

Other Companies: *Chorus!* (Houston Grand Opera); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Houston Grand Opera/Canadian Opera Company); *Aida* (West Australian Opera); *The Navigator* (Elision Ensemble/Brisbane Festival); *Women of Troy, The Great, Riflemind, Ying Tong, Self Esteem, Fat Pig, The Lost Echo, A Hard God, The Cherry Orchard, Boy Gets Girl, Julius Caesar, Bed, Far Away, The Shape of Things* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Exit the King* (Malthouse/Company B); *Keating!, Stuff Happens, The Chairs, Spook, In Our Name, Underpants, Threepenny Opera* (Company B); *Honour Bound* (Malthouse/Sydney Opera House); *Directors Cut, Grand* (Sydney Dance Company); *Firebird, Swan Lake, Tivoli* (The Australian Ballet). *Exit the King* (ETK) is Damien's Broadway debut



Mic Gruchy - Projection Designer

Background: Born, Australia. Trained as an actor and acrobat at QUT in Queensland and the Ensemble Studios in Sydney, working in theatre and television throughout the 1980s. Collaboration with his brother Tim, creating multimedia performance works, developed the video and computer graphic skills which now form the basis of Mic's art practice and business. Edits and produces feature film *The Combination*, documentaries *Stelarc Psycho Cyber*, and TV commercials. Mic's video artworks have been shown around the world and are included in collections such as MOMA in New York. Mic wrote a syllabus for Visual Production in Theatre and teaches at NIDA

OA repertoire: *Love in the Age of Therapy, A Streetcar Named Desire, Aida, Acis and Galatea*

Other Companies: Has produced visuals for theatre and opera including: Sydney Dance Company *Underland*; commercial musicals *Dirty Dancing*, Sydney Theatre Company *A Man with 5 Children*, Griffin Theatre *King Tide* and *The Flowering Tree* for the Perth Festival 2009



Tim Gruchy - Projection Designer

Background: Originally studied architecture and later music at UQ. His art practice is performative and as a designer of interactive installations, often in collaboration with his brother Mic. In demand as a designer for Dance, Theatre, Museums, Opera and a variety of other emerging mediums.

Other Companies: His work has featured in international and Australian festivals including the Festival of Visual Arts, Adelaide (1986-2008); Auckland Festival (2009); Taranaki Arts Festival (2007); People's Day, Major Brisbane Festivals (2006); Sydney Festival (2004). Theatre and opera credits include *Ainadamar* (Adelaide Festival); *The Leningrad Symphony* (Adelaide Symphony Orchestra); *Luminous* (Australian Chamber Orchestra and Bill Henson - Slovenia and Australia); *HAIR*. Visual designs have featured in works produced by Oz Opera, STC, ATYP, Performing Lines and ADT. Design and video art exhibited in the Museum of Brisbane, Museum of Sydney, MCA as well as Holland, Belgium, the UK, Japan, France, Thailand, USA and NZ



Shane Placentino - Assistant Director

Background: Born, Australia. Graduated from The Australian Ballet School; then with The Australian Ballet, 1991-2000

Other Companies: Worked with Graeme Murphy and Janet Vernon appearing in Murphy's *Nutcracker* and *Beyond Twelve*. Joined Sydney Dance Company, 2002. Sydney Dance Company repertoire: *Ellipse, Air and Other Invisible Forces, Salome, Free Radicals*, the role of Jack in *Tivoli, Underland, Random Play, Some Rooms, Grand, Hua Mulan, Berlin* and *Ever After Ever*. Other credits: The Australian Ballet repertoire including *Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, Giselle, Don Quixote, The Merry Widow, Sinfonietta, Jardi Tancat, Manon* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In 2008 Shane assisted and performed in Meryl Tankard's *Inuk2*; Sydney Dance Company's Stage Manager for *360°*; and Deputy Stage Manager for *We Unfold*



Christopher Dawes - Assistant Director

Background: Born, Australia. 1973 contract with Wurzburg City Theatre. 1983 joined Opera Australia

OA repertoire: Monostatos: *The Magic Flute*, Duchess: *Gondoliers*, Trabuco: *Force of Destiny*, Pedrillo: *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Basilio/Curzio: *Marriage of Figaro*, Spoletto: *Tosca*, Pang/Emperor: *Turandot*, Goro: *Madama Butterfly*, Tinca: *Il tabarro*, Bardolfo: *Falstaff*, Missal: *Boris Godunov*, Rector/Bob Boles: *Peter Grimes*, Remendado: *Carmen*, Triquet: *Eugene Onegin*, Baron Zsupan: *Countess Maritza*, Moser/Vogelgesang/*The Mastersingers*, Rustighello: *Lucrezia Borgia*, Baron Zeta/Njegus: *Merry Widow*, Blind: *Fledermaus*, Schreiber: *Tannhäuser*, Premier: *The Eighth Wonder*, Feri: *The Cypsy Princess*, Incredible: *Andrea Chénier*, Pirelli: *Sweeney Todd*, Tolloller: *Iolanthe*, Normanno: *Lucia di Lammeemoor*, de Morfontaine: *Manon*. Assistant Director - *HMS Pinafore/Trial by Jury, Turandot, La bohème, Werther, Cavalleria rusticana, Pagliacci*

Other Companies: David: *The Mastersingers* (NZ Festival); Piangi: *Phantom of the Opera* (Cameron Macintosh); Tolloller, Benoit/Alcindoro, Goro (Opera Old); Monostatos, Pimpinelli: *Paganini* (SOSA)

Videos: *Voss, Tosca, Mastersingers, La traviata, Merry Widow, Adriana Lecouvreur, Nabucco, Fledermaus*



Michael Black - Chorus Master

Background: Recipient 2007 Churchill Fellowship, 2005 Green Room Award, Opera Foundation Bayreuth Scholarship, Sydney University Staff Research Grant. Graduate of Sydney Conservatorium and UNSW with degrees in Education, Performance and Musicology. Has performed as accompanist at the PIAF, Wigmore Hall Touring Chamber Music Series, Utzon Room Series, Brisbane Biennial and Sydney Festivals. Recorded many programs for ABCFM. Lectured at Sydney Conservatorium before joining Opera Australia in 1997. Chorus Master since 2001

OA repertoire: Chorus Master for more than 80 operas and choral works including Verdi's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Requiem*, *Carmina Burana*, *Chichester Psalms*, Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Holst's *The Planets*, Borodin's *Polovetsian Dances*, Beethoven's 9th Symphony and gala concerts

Other Companies: Sydney Philharmonia Choir, Sydney Motet Choir, Cantillation, Opera Holland Park (UK)

Recordings: Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Verdi's *Requiem* (ABC Classics); *The Love For Three Oranges*, *Rusalka* (Chandos); Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Cantata della vita* (SSO/Cantillation); *Pirates of Penzance*, Opera Australia's *50th Gala* (DVD)

Michael Black is proudly sponsored by Sterling Mail Order Pty. Ltd.



Aubrey Murphy - Concertmaster

Background: Born, Dublin, Ireland. At the age of ten he was the first Irish student to enter the Yehudi Menuhin School. In 1983 he began his studies at Indiana University, Bloomington, under Franco Gulli and Henryk Kowalski. Aubrey has been guest leader with Scottish Chamber Orchestra and BBC Ulster Orchestra. He then spent eight years with the Orchestra of Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Principal Violinist and regular guest leader, working with conductors such as Georg Solti, Bernard Haitink and Colin Davis. Founding member of the Soloists of the Royal Opera House, 1993. Founding member of the Utzon Ensemble 2002. In Sydney, regularly leads the Sydney Soloists. Awards: Artists Diploma and Performers Certificate (Bloomington); Centenary Medal for services to music in Australia. Aubrey plays a rare 1853 Joseph Rocca violin



Huy-Nguyen Bui - Leader, Associate Concertmaster

Background: Born, Japan. Started learning violin at age six in Japan. Studied with Jan Tawroszewicz at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, 1988-1994. Studied with Charmian Gadd at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, 1995-1998. Second place in New Zealand National Concerto Competition, 1992. Third place in Gisborne International Competition; recipient of the Montana Study Grant, 1993. Accepted into Tchaikovsky International Violin Competition, 1998. Accepted into Jacques Thibaud Competition. Member of the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra since 1998. Appointed Deputy Concertmaster of AOBO in April 2003



Teresa La Rocca - High Priestess

Background: Drama/music degree from Adelaide University. Finalist: ABC's Young Performers Award; winner - State Opera Aria; finalist: Robert Stolz Scholarship. Former Young Artist with State Opera of South Australia. Winner - Herald Sun Aria and Metropolitan Opera Award

OA repertoire: Rosina: *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Queen of the Night: *Magic Flute*, Milliner: *Der Rosenkavalier*, Susanna: *Le nozze di Figaro*, Sister Infirmareess/Nella: *Il trittico*, Masetta: *La bohème*, Witch: *Dido and Aeneas*, Micaela: *Carmen* - Oz Opera

Other Companies: Fifi La Touche/Sophie: *Diary of a Madman* (Barossa Music Festival); Pamina/Queen of the Night, Masetta/Mimi, Micaela, Susanna, Violetta: *La traviata*, Despina: *Così fan tutte*, Nedda: *Pagliacci* (Co*Opera); Norina: *Don Pasquale*, Parasha: *Mavra*, Yum-Yum: *The Mikado*, Despina (SOSA); *Symphony Under the Stars*, *A Viennese Concert*, *Messiah*, Vaughan Williams' *Symphony Antarctica* (Adelaide Symphony Orchestra); *Messiah* (Surabaya Symphony Orchestra, Indonesia); highlights from *Rigoletto* (Tokyo Philharmonic); appeared with SSO and in the movie *Shine*

Recordings: *Priscilla the Musical* (Sydney, London)



Claire Rutter - Aida

Background: Nominated for the Maria Callas Award following her US début as Fiordiligi for Dallas Opera

Other Companies: Roles include Amelia: *Un ballo in maschera*, Tosca, Elvira: *Ermani*, Violetta: *La traviata*, Donna Anna: *Don Giovanni*, Countess: *Le nozze di Figaro*, Miss Jessel: *Turn of the Screw*, Lucia di Lammermoor, Mimi: *La bohème*, Maddalena: *Andrea Chénier*, Gilda: *Rigoletto*, Elettra: *Idomeneo*, Rosalinde: *Die Fledermaus*, Alice Ford: *Falstaff*. Recent engagements have included a concert of Verdi arias with the CBSO, Beethoven 9 at the Wales Millennium Centre with Bryn Terfel, Mahler and Strauss programme with The Ulster Orchestra and BBC Radio 3. Sang her first Aida for ENO in their new production in the 07-08 season to unanimous critical acclaim, which resulted in an invitation for the revival this year. Other engagements in 08/09 season include Tosca (title role) for Opera National de Bordeaux and title role: *Norma* in a new production at Grange Park



Amy Wilkinson - High Priestess

Background: Born, Australia. B.Mus. - Queensland Conservatorium. Awarded: Sir Mostyn Hanger Opera Scholarship; Dame Joan Sutherland Award; Brisbane Club Award; Alton Budd Memorial Award; Metropolitan Opera Auditions Award, 2004; Australian Singing Competition's Opera Awards, 2006. Young Artist with Opera Queensland, 2003

OA repertoire: Frasquita: *Carmen*, Oberto: *Alcina*, Zerlina: *Don Giovanni*, First Lady/Papagena: *Die Zauberflöte*, *Dorinda: Orlando*, *Giulietta: I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Second Lady: *Dido and Aeneas*. Micaëla: *Carmen* (Oz Opera)

Other Companies: Rose: *Ruddigore*, Elsie: *Yeomen of the Guard*, Yum-Yum: *Mikado* (Queensland Musical Theatre); title role: *Suor Angelica*, Frasquita, Countess: *Marriage of Figaro*, Pamina: *Magic Flute* (Queensland Conservatorium); Barbarina: *Le nozze di Figaro*, Gretel: *Hansel and Gretel*, soloist: *Opera in the Rainforest*, *Music Beneath the Stars and Moonlight*, *Mozart and the Movies* (Opera Queensland); *Messiah*, Proms concert (The Queensland Orchestra). Recitals - *Jane Austen: The Music of her Time* (4MBS); *Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle*; title role: Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*, *Haydn's Seasons* (Queensland Choir)

Amy Wilkinson is a member of the Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artists' Program sponsored by Australia Post



Tamara Wilson - Aida

Other Companies: With a voice of steely beauty and great power," (*Houston Chronicle*) soprano Tamara Wilson made her Canadian Opera Company debut as Amelia Grimaldi: *Simon Boccanegra*. "A bona fide Verdi soprano." First Lady: *Die Zauberflöte* with James Conlon conducting (Los Angeles Opera). Other Mozart heroines include Konstanze: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Houston Grand Opera showing "excellent control of her considerable power as well as good coloratura and range" (*Houston Chronicle*). In the 2009 – 2010 season she will sing Elettra: *Idomeneo* conducted by Harry Bicket (Canadian Opera Company) and Alice Ford: *Falstaff* (Washington National Opera). In 2009 – 2010, she will also be heard as Miss Jessel in Houston Grand Opera's production of *The Turn of the Screw* and will be soprano soloist for performances of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* with John Nelson and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in Lisbon, Portugal to be recorded for DVD release



Elizabeth Campbell - Amneris

Background: Born, Australia. Graduated Sydney Conservatorium. Australian representative: Singer of the World; Bayreuth Scholarship. Green Room and Helpmann Awards

OA repertoire: Julius Caesar, *Carmen*, Xerxes, Dido: *Les Troyens*, Countess: *Lulu*, Azucena: *Il trovatore*, Charlotte: *Tannhäuser*, Sesto: *Julius Caesar/La clemenza di Tito*, Bradamante: *Alcina*, Preziosilla: *La forza del destino*, Magdalene: *Die Meistersinger*, Gertrude: *Hansel and Gretel*, Mrs Sedley: *Peter Grimes*, Amneris: *Aida*, Pearl: *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, Orlovsky: *Fledermaus*, Clairon: *Capriccio*, Maddalena: *Rigoletto*, Maria: *Batavia*, Mrs Grose: *Turn of the Screw*, Defence Counsel: *Lindy*, Frugola/Abbess/Zita: *Il trittico*

Other companies: Fricka/Waltraute: *Der Ring*. Countess de Coigny/Madelon: *Andrea Chénier*, Mrs de Rocher: *Dead Man Walking*, Cecilia March: *Little Women*, Maddalena (SOSA); Dorabella, *Carmen*, Azucena (WAO); Arnalta: *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (VO); Jocasta: *Oedipus Rex* (OQ); Symphony Australia Orchestras, NZSO, ACO, Musica Viva

Recordings/Videos: Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Mahler's 2nd Symphony, Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (ABC Classics); *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Julius Caesar*, *Lindy* (OA), *Woman's Song* (Tall Poppies)



Milijana Nikolic - Amneris

Background: Born, Serbia. Graduate of University of Belgrade, 2001. Attended the Academy for Soloists at Teatro alla Scala, Milan

OA repertoire: Ježibaba: *Rusalka*, Principessa: *Suor Angelica*, Voice of Antonia's Mother: *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Venus: *Tannhäuser*, Adelaide: *Arabella*, title role: *Carmen*, Ulrica Arvidson: *Un ballo in maschera*

Other Companies: Third Lady: *The Magic Flute*, Tisbe: *La Cenerentola* (Belgrade National Theatre); Una Grecha: *Iphigenie en Aulide*, Cuniza: *Oberto*, Emma: *Ugo Conte di Parigi* (Teatro all Scala); Maddalena: *Rigoletto* (Serbia, Teatro Comunale di Atri); title role: *Carmen* (Serbia, Tuscany); Marchesa di Berchenfeld: *La figlia di reggimento*; Delilah (National Theatre of Serbia); Fenena: *Nabucco* (Theatre of Cagliari, Sardinia); Eboli: *Don Carlo* (Korea, Hong Kong). Concert appearances include a Gala at La Scala Theatre; Rossini's *Petit Messe Solennelle*, Sardinia; Mozart's *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah* (The Queensland Orchestra)

Recordings/Videos: CD - Emma: *Ugo Conte di Parigi* (Teatro G. Donizetti, Bergamo); DVD - Marchesa di Berchenfeld: *La figlia di reggimento* (NAXOS)



Rosario La Spina - Radamès

Background: Born, Australia. Trained at the Queensland Conservatorium with Joseph Ward OBE then Young Singers' Course at La Scala, Milan, studying with Luciana Serra and Leyla Gencer. First prize in the "Mario Del Monaco International Opera Competition", 2002

OA repertoire: Rodolfo: *La bohème*, Cavaradosi: *Tosca*, Prince: *Love for Three Oranges*, Pinkerton: *Madama Butterfly*, Duke: *Rigoletto*, Alfredo: *La traviata*, Calaf: *Turandot*, Prince: *Rusalka*, Hoffmann: *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Don José: *Carmen*

Other Companies: Radames: *Aida* (Seattle); Arturo: *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Bern Stadttheater); Messenger: *Samson and Delilah*, Riccardo: *Oberto* (La Scala); Riccardo (Genova); Duke: *Rigoletto* (Tuscany, NZ); Pinkerton (WAO); Arvino: *I lombardi* (Teatro Regio di Parma); Alfredo: *La traviata* (Modena, WAO); Luigi: *Il tabarro* (Osaka, Japan). Soloist with Ulster Orchestra, Cairo Symphony Orchestra, MSO, SSO, TQO, Stanford University Orchestra, Taiwan Symphony Orchestra

Recordings/Videos: *Classical Spectacular* (MSO); *Puccini Romance* (TQO/ABC Classics); *Rusalka* (Chandos)

Rosario La Spina's performances are proudly sponsored by Maersk Line

**Graeme Macfarlane** - Messenger

Background: Born, Australia. Graduate of Sydney Conservatorium (Operatic Art). Won Sydney Sun Aria, 1979; studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. Sang with Scottish, Welsh, North Ireland Opera Companies
OA repertoire: Includes Goro: *Madama Butterfly*, Leicester: *Maria Stuarda*, Snout: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Beppe: *Pagliacci*, Roderigo: *Otello*, Fenton: *Falstaff*, Basilio/Curzio: *The Marriage of Figaro*, Maintop/Squeak: *Billy Budd*, Monostatos/Priest: *The Magic Flute*, Spalanzani: *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Sailor: *Tristan und Isolde*, Beadle Bamford: *Sweeney Todd*, Guillot de Morfontaine: *Manon*, Gregorio: *Roméo et Juliette*, Dr Caius: *Falstaff*, Hadji: *Lakmé*, Gastone: *La traviata*, Ruiz: *Il trovatore*, Tinca/Gherardo: *Il trittico*, Remendado: *Carmen*, Normanno: *Lucia di Lammermoor*
Other Companies: Major roles with SOSA, Canberra Opera. Roles in *The Barber of Seville*, *Fledermaus*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Così fan tutte*, *Falstaff*, *Don Giovanni* (WAO); Alfredo in *La traviata* (Perth). *Messiah*, *Childhood of Christ*; Bach's *St Matthew Passion* (WA Choral Society)
Recordings/Videos: Several broadcast recordings for the ABC

**Dongwon Shin** - Radamès

Background: Born, Korea. BM in Music from Seoul National University; attended Indiana University; graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. National Finalist: 2003 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions; Licia Albanese Puccini Foundation Competition; first place and audience favorite: 2003 Giargiari Competition; Grand Prize and Conductor/Director's award: 2003 Giargiari Competition
OA repertoire: Calaf: *Turandot*
Other Companies: Title role: *Edgar*, Gennaro: *Lucrezia Borgia*, Aegisth: *Elektra* (AVA); Radamès: *Aida* (Opera Company of Philadelphia, Savonlinna Festival, Houston); Canio: *Pagliacci* (Opera Delaware); Calaf (Santa Fe Opera, Thessaloniki Concert Hall Association, Dayton Opera); Turiddu: *Cavalleria rusticana* (Metropolitan Opera); Pollione: *Norma* (Michigan Opera Theatre). In concert with Dayton Opera and Delaware Symphony (Verdi *Requiem*), Samson: *Samson et Dalila* (Dayton Opera, Lecce Italy); Future: Manrico: *Il trovatore* (Dresden Semperoper, Arena di Verona)

**Warwick Fyfe** - Amonasro

Background: Born, Australia. Awards include: Bayreuth Scholarship (2007); McDonald's Aria Winner (1998); Bayreuth Bursary (2000); Moniuszko Aria Prize, Warsaw (2001). Young Artist: VSO, 1995; OA, 1998
OA repertoire: Mandryka: *Arabella*, Wolfram: *Tannhäuser*, Rigoletto, Leporello: *Don Giovanni*, Dutchman: *Der fliegende Holländer*, Dr Schön: *Lulu*, Papageno: *Magic Flute*, Germont: *La traviata*, Peter: *Hansel and Gretel*, Jupiter: *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Schaunard: *La bohème*, Frank: *Fledermaus*, Kothner: *Die Meistersinger*, Herald: *Lohengrin*, Bartolo: *Il barbiere di Siviglia/Le nozze di Figaro*, Capulet: *Roméo et Juliette*, Ottokar: *Der Freischütz*, Junius: *Rape of Lucretia*, King: *Aida*, Frederic: *Lakmé*, Ping: *Turandot*, Chief of Police: *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*
Other Companies: Fasolt: *Der Ring* (SOSA); Taddeo: *L'italiana di Algeri* (NZ); roles: *Le nozze di Figaro* (Hong Kong); Falstaff (WAO); *Masked Ball* (NZ). Concerts: SSO, MSO, TSO, QSO, WASO, ASO; Singapore/Warsaw Symphony Orchestras
Recordings: Brahms' *Liebeslieder Walzer* (Move); *Love for Three Oranges* (Chandos); *Classic 100 Opera Concert*, *Operatunity Oz*, *OA 50th Birthday Gala* (ABC)
Warwick Fyfe's performances are proudly sponsored by Citilease Property Group

**Michael Lewis** - Amonasro

Background: Born, Australia. Studied – Adelaide and London. Broad opera and concert repertoire throughout Europe, UK, USA, Australia, in Mexico, New Zealand, Malaysia. Green Room Award for Rigoletto. Received an OAM, 2008
OA repertoire: Principal baritone in *Ba-Ta-Clan*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Don Pasquale*, *I puritani*, *Tales of Hoffmann*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Faust*, *The Pearlfishers*, *Carmen*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Manon*, *Tannhäuser*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Rigoletto*, *La traviata*, *I masnadieri*, *A Masked Ball*, *Falstaff*, *Il trovatore*, *La forza del destino*, *Macbeth*, *Don Carlo*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Nabucco*, *Manon Lescaut*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Batavia*, *Madeline Lee*
Other Companies: Amsterdam, Berlin, Venice, Frankfurt, ENO, WNO, Opera North, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Scottish Opera, Pittsburgh, San Diego, Opera Queensland, State Opera of South Australia, West Australian Opera, New Zealand Opera. Festivals: Glyndebourne, Henze (Munich), Wexford, Adelaide, Perth
Videos/Recordings: *Die Fledermaus* (AO); *Schubert Lieder Orchestrations* (ABC Classics)

**Barry Ryan** - Amonasro

Background: Born, Australia. Graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium Opera School. Awards include the Vienna State Opera Award, the Marten Bequest for Singing and the Shell National Aria
OA repertoire: David: *Die Meistersinger*, Tichon: *Katya Kabanova*, Erik: *Der fliegende Holländer*, Laca: *Jenufa*, Barney: *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, Alfred: *Fledermaus*, Edwin: *Gypsy Princess*, Wiebbe Hayes: *Batavia*, Painter/Negro: *Lulu*, Narraboth: *Salome*, Peter: *Hansel and Gretel*, Count di Luna: *Il trovatore*, Gamekeeper/Huntsman: *Rusalka*, Reinmar von Zweter: *Tannhäuser*, Count Lamoral: *Arabella*, Obstinate/Watchful: *Pilgrim's Progress*, Redburn: *Billy Budd*, Sharpless: *Madama Butterfly*, Marcello: *La bohème*
Other Companies: Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; La Scala, Milan; Paris Opéra Bastille; Komische Oper, Berlin; Flemish Opera, Antwerp; Basel Opera, Switzerland; Cologne Opera; Canterbury Opera, NZ; London Philharmonic Orchestra; Royal Scottish National Orchestra; Bergen Symphony Orchestra, Norway; Shinei Nihon Orchestra, Tokyo and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Broadcasts: BBC, WDR, Radio Tokyo, ABC
Recordings/Videos: *Manon Lescaut* (Flemish Opera); *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Rusalka*, *Lindy* (OA)



Jud Arthur - Born, NZ
Background: Born, NZ

Other Companies: Tosca, Sarastro/Speaker: *Magic Flute*, Colline: *La bohème*, Nightwatchman: *Die Meistersinger*, Soldier: *Salome*, Lodovico: *Otello*, Theseus: *Midsommer Night's Dream*, Nourabad: *Les pêcheurs de perles*, Mikado, Le Comte de Guéux: *Mignon*, Ben: *Madeline Lee*, Chelio: *Love for Three Oranges*, Zuniga: *Carmen*, Duke: *Koméo et Juliette*, Bonze: *Figaro*, Ferrando: *il trovatore*, Ribbing: *Masked Ball*, Commandatore: *Don Giovanni*, Convit: *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Great Opera Encores* (SOSA). Raimondo: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Varlaam: *Boris Godunov*, Banquo: *Macbeth*, Zaccaria, Ramfis, Sparafucile/Montorone, Zaretski: *Eugene Onegin*, Masetto/Commandatore, Wagner: *Faust*, *Madama Butterfly*, Grenvil: *La travata*, Nilakantha: *Lakme*, Montorone: *Rigoletto*, Timur: *Turandot*, Bartolo: *Marrage of Figaro*, *Legends* (NZSO), *Love for Three Oranges* (Chandos)



Gennadi Dubinsky - Ramfis

Background: Born, Russia

Other Companies: Priest: *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Lorenzo: *l Capulet e i Montecchi*

Theatre of Opera and Moscow State Concert organization performing major roles in Kalmán's *Circus Princess*, *Die Fledermaus* and Pfitzkin's *Women's Revolt*. Performed in many concerts and frequently appeared on radio and television. In Australia, appeared as soloist with the SBS Youth Orchestra, the Sydney Concert Orchestra and many clubs and entertainment centres. A featured artist on *Opera Afloat* – a nightly performance of operatic highlights performed on the waters of Sydney Harbour. A featured member of the Showstoppers troupe which won the Mo Award in 1998 for 'Best Show of the Year'. Has performed his one-man show in the style of Ivan Rebroff, touring to Russia and Turkey

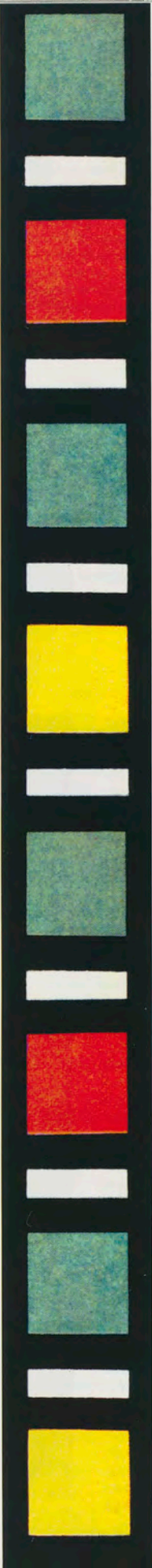


David Parkin - King

Background: Winner of Australia's first *Operatunity* Oz competition (Opera Australia/ABC). Studied Computer Engineering at the University of Sydney. Since winning *Operatunity* Oz, has undertaken vocal and language coachings with Glenn Winslade, Sheryl Kimmorley, Anna Connolly and David Harper. Finalist in the McDonald's Operatic Aria and Opera Foundation New York Award

Other Companies: Ghost of Samuel: *David and Jonathan* (Pinchgut Opera); *La fanciulla del West*, *Classical Spectacular*, *Verdi Gala* (Melbourne Symphony Orchestra); Opera in the Vineyard (Stanthorpe, Queensland); Concerts include *Faure Requiem*, Dvorak and Berlioz *Te Deum*, Mozart *Mass in C Minor*, *Carmina Burana*. Musical Theatre performances included *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Into the Woods*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *City of Angels*. Future engagements: Sparafucile: *Rigoletto* (Opera Queensland)

Recordings: *Operatunity* Oz - *The Winners* CD (ABC Classics); *Heart's Delight* (ABC Classics)



Verdi's *Aida* - *more than grand*

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is its choral finale; Vivaldi (bewilderingly prolific) is *The Four Seasons*; Borodin is the tunes from *Kismet*; Liszt is *Liebestraum* and Pachelbel is always being shot out of his canon.

Where art is concerned, public sentiment is very single-minded: it hones in on the essence of something and hangs onto it for dear life, generation after generation, so that (for example) record companies know exactly what to put on CDs called "Classical Brunch" or "Mozart for Mothers to Be" (a CD which actually exists; I am not making this up).

Over the last 50 years or so, our knowledge of Verdi's achievements has broadened dramatically, so that now virtually every note of his theatre music has been recorded and many more of his operas have a place in the repertory. Despite this, *Aida*, for many people, stands as an exemplar of Verdi's work and, even more broadly, as the most widely known example of 'grand opera.' To reduce the case to its essence, if Verdi had written nothing except *Aida*, he would still be one of the most widely-performed of all composers for the theatre, in the same way that Bizet's reputation rests so thoroughly on *Carmen*.

If you ask the hypothetical person in the street what *Aida* is about, you are likely to be told something about elephants, Egypt and spear carriers. Yet one of the splendid facts about a great popular work of art

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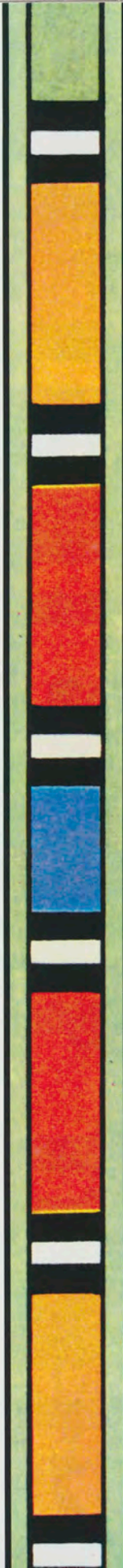
Production Sponsor

(see any of the above) is that its greatness is almost inexhaustible. *Aida*, which was a popular success in its day, is still full of marvels and contradictions. It is epic, intimate, complex, simple, absurd and sublime. It is an anomaly in Verdi's output, yet is deeply representative of the dramatic situations that moved him, and of his ability to create indelible musical identities for the characters who populate his creative universe.

Verdi at the crossroads

Like Liszt and Wagner, Verdi seems to us to have strode the 19th century like a colossus. After all, he had his first opera performed in 1839 and his last in 1893. Yet *Aida* comes at a time in Verdi's life when he had reason to regret the recent past and to feel uncertainty about the future. His previous opera, *Don Carlos* (1867), had been written for the Paris Opéra, with all the trappings expected by that house and its audiences: a lengthy ballet (completely expendable to the narrative), big choruses, plenty of scenic spectacle and an epic – and frequently lopsided – five-act structure. The production process had been lengthy and complicated, and in the midst of it Verdi's father died. Now one of Verdi's most admired and





widely-discussed operas, *Don Carlos* was not a success at the time and the experience left Verdi feeling deeply disenchanted. In 1870 he told Camille du Locle, *Don Carlos*' librettist:

I am no composer for Paris. I don't know whether I lack the talent or not, but certainly my ideas about art are very different to those of your country. I believe in inspiration; you believe in construction.

In the intervening years Verdi had, at best, only toyed with the idea of writing a new opera, for he had other things on his mind: his farm, his plan to present a requiem to mark the first anniversary of Rossini's death and his supervision of a revival of *The Force of Destiny*, for which he made substantial revisions. Much to Verdi's dismay that Requiem, for which the leading Italian composers of the day wrote one movement each, was never performed, but it led, over time, to the Requiem Verdi composed in honour of his hero, the novelist and patriot Alessandro Manzoni in 1874.

***Aida's* origins**

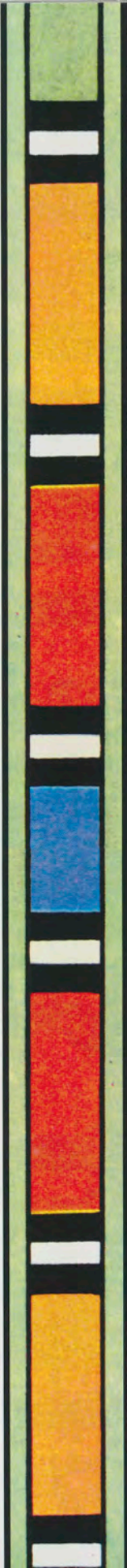
Du Locle, though, was anxious to renew his partnership with Verdi, doubly so as he was now director of the Opéra-Comique, and wanted a Verdi opera for his own theatre. Verdi did not put him off too forcefully, suggesting that he was, at least, open to persuasion if the circumstances were right. So emboldened, du Locle came up with ever-new suggestions: *Patrie!* by Sardou (the author of the of the play which became Puccini's *Tosca*), Molière's *Tartuffe* and *Acté* by Dumas père were all considered and discarded. Then du Locle sent Verdi a copy of a comedy by the Spanish playwright López de Ayala, along with a four-page synopsis of an opera set in

ancient Egypt. Verdi had no interest in the play but was fascinated by the Egyptian story. "It is well done," he wrote to du Locle, "the *mise en scène* is splendid and it contains one or two situations which, if they aren't entirely novel, are certainly fine. But who did it? It shows a very expert, experienced hand who knows the theatre very well."

The answer to "who did it," in this case, may not be as complicated as the denouement of a Perry Mason novel, but it's more involved than the credits attached to the libretto suggest. The story du Locle had turned into a synopsis was by the French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette, who had been given the title 'Bey' by the Khedive of Egypt for, among other achievements, his discovery of the temple of Serapis and tombs of the Apis bulls. He had had his story published privately and had been told by the Khedive that a Great Composer was to turn it into an opera. "If M. Verdi doesn't accept," Mariette had written to du Locle, "HE [the Khedive] begs you to knock on another door...Wagner could do something really *grandioso*."

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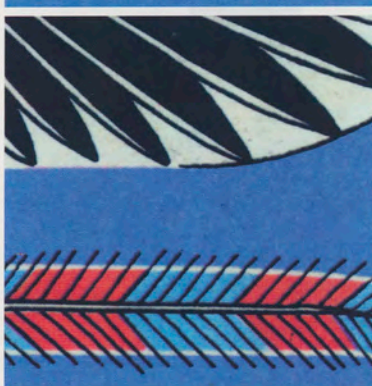
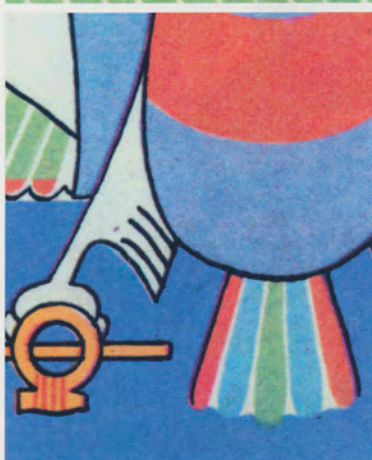
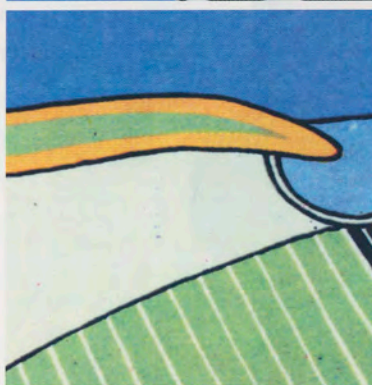
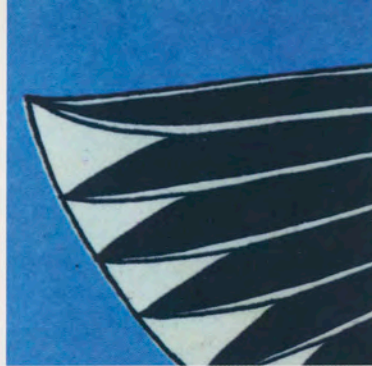
Aida: it was not written for the opening of the Suez canal. Verdi first read the *Aida* synopsis in the northern spring of 1870; the canal opened in November of 1869. If you have also read that this opera was created for the opening of the Cairo Opera House, that is not true either. That building opened two weeks before the canal, with a performance of *Rigoletto*.


Verdi at work

In any case Verdi agreed to write the opera, his contract stipulating a première in January 1871. This meant that he would have to complete the work in six months. This seems to have emboldened him even more than usual to browbeat anyone working on the sung text for his music. Du Locle drafted a libretto in French, only to be told immediately by Verdi that the opera would have to be in Italian. Most commentators move on to the next part of the "making of *Aida*" story at this point, but I think it's worth pausing to contemplate Verdi's early insistence that the opera be in his own language. His relationship with Paris had been equivocal at best, virtually from the moment he began work in 1853 on his first work for the Opéra, *Les vêpres siciliennes* (better known now as *I vespri siciliani*, as it is more commonly performed in Italian), when he had written to a friend of the Paris Opéra's bloated requirements "A work for the Opéra is enough to stun a bull! Five hours of music. Phew!" Just before du Locle sent his Egyptian synopsis to Verdi, Verdi had told him that one project he was considering for operatic treatment was Boito's libretto for *Nerone* (which, in time, Boito would set himself.) Verdi wrote that it "could be the subject for a grand opera, and *naturally done in my own manner* – which would be impossible at the Opéra, but distinctly possible here." (My italics.)

Verdi's determination to learn from his Paris experiences, and therefore not to compromise his vision of what he felt Grand Opera could be, was bolstered by the speed with which the Khedive met Verdi's terms (Mariette signed the contract on his behalf). No sooner had Verdi told du Locle of his decision about the opera's language than he hired journalist Antonio Ghislanzoni, ten years Verdi's junior, to translate the French libretto into Italian. He and Verdi had worked together a few months' earlier, when Ghislanzoni had created some new text for the revision of *The Force of Destiny*.

Their working relationship on *Aida* was marked by Verdi's determination to create a Grand Opera that would be true to his aesthetic of powerful dramatic situations, linear storytelling and theatrical effectiveness. Remarkably, Verdi composed *Aida* in only four months, during which time he moulded all the source material to his will. He wrote to Mariette asking for specific details of ancient Egyptian life to ensure that he avoided errors, and in the hope that one of Mariette's answers might provide further ideas for the staging. He told Ghislanzoni the line lengths in which to set the verses, how many





stanzas to use in certain scenes and so on and so on. Most telling of all, parts of the correspondence make it clear that, in ways large and small, Verdi's contribution to the *Aida* libretto was in no way marginal. Here are two excerpts from Verdi's letters to Ghislanzoni which make his involvement clear:

I've thought of something for the consecration scene [Act I, Scene ii]...it would consist of a litany chanted by the priestesses, to which the priests respond. Then a sacred dance with slow, sad music, a short recitative powerful and solemn, like a biblical psalm, then a prayer of two stanzas for the Chief Priest, and repeated by everyone. It should have an air of serenity about it, as different as possible from the choruses and the end of the first scene and of the second act finale, which have a touch of the Marseillaise about them.

At the end [of the opera], I should like to avoid the conventional death scene, and not have words like, 'My senses fail me. I go before you. Wait for me. She is dead, but I still live' and so on. I want something sweet, ethereal, quite a short duet, a farewell to life. Then Aida should sink quietly into the arms of Radamès while Amneris, kneeling on the vault above, should sing a Requiescat in pace, and so on. I shall write out the last scene, to make my meaning clearer.

In both cases, the finished scenes in *Aida* are virtually identical to Verdi's descriptions in these letters. So much so that the text for the last scene, which Verdi wrote out for his librettist, is exactly what we now hear in the opera.

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There is, by the way, some question about how parts of *Aida* appear to have been inspired by earlier sources. In

particular, scholars have identified similar situations in an 18th century libretto by Metastasio (who was the librettist for Mozart's *The Clemency of Titus*), *Nitteti*; and a parallel for the Aida/Amneris relationship in Racine's tragedy *Bajazet*. These things are, perhaps, inevitable when one is working to a deadline.

Aida - the music

Aida may be grand opera, but it very often behaves like an intimate drama of romantic conflict that happens to be set in an exotic locale. If we come back to Verdi's wish to create "grand opera...done in my own manner," we can better understand how Verdi's particular juxtaposition of the epic and the intimate makes *Aida* unique.

Orchestrally, this is an instance where size is important, but not necessarily for the obvious reasons. As 'grand' as *Aida* is, it requires an orchestra smaller than that for his previous 'grand' opera, *Don Carlos*. In fact the key points about *Aida*'s orchestration are subtlety and originality. If we take the primary colours and big orchestral gestures of *Il trovatore* (1853) as an example – the orchestration of which has been famously described as a "big





Eduardo Villa as Radamès, Zoe Kikiros as The High Priestess
and West Australian Opera Chorus
Aida, West Australian Opera, 2008





guitar" – we can see how great a journey Verdi made in orchestral colouration in 17 years.

No detail was too small for his attention. For the La Scala première in 1872, he decided to jettison the cimballo, which he felt did not blend properly with the other brass instruments, and to replace it with the fourth trombone. This set the pattern for his orchestras in his last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. He also had the trumpets which are played on stage in the triumphal scene (Act II, Scene ii) made in Milan to his specifications, so that they looked, in his words, "long, straight, in the Egyptian form."

Yet if one were to nominate a dominant instrumental colour in *Aida*, it would not be the brass section, but sub-divided strings playing softly. In the opening bars of the opera's Prelude, *Aida*'s theme is given to the violins, sub-divided in to four parts, and the violas; the opening conversation between Radamès and Ramfis features the cellos divided into three parts; the delicate accompaniment to 'Celeste Aida' includes a striking passage in which hushed figures are played by six muted solo violins, playing a separate part to the first and second violins. And the final scene is dominated by what Verdi called a "vaporous" accompaniment – pianissimo writing in which the violins are divided into as many as seven parts. This sensitivity to string timbre is one scholars associate with such later figures as Richard Strauss and Debussy, and Verdi must have known how novel his ideas were, for he wrote to the conductor of the Cairo première, the double-bass virtuoso, Giovanni Bottesini, after the first performance, as follows: "I'm interested to have exact and detailed news of the effect of this final duet. Please understand I am not referring

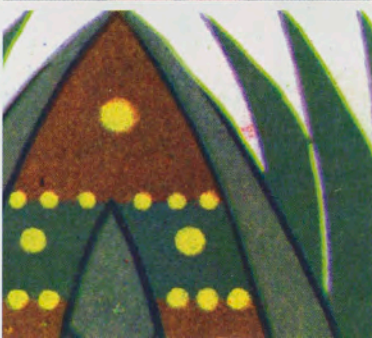
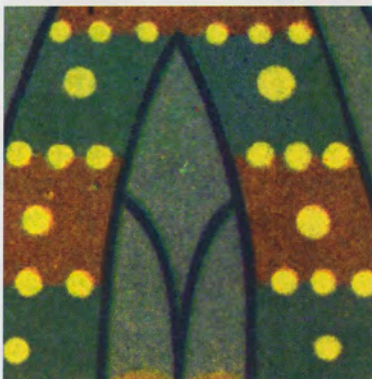
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to the merit of the music but only to its effect.”

It is in the orchestra that much of the “Egyptian” colour appears. I use inverted commas because there is nothing remotely authentic about the parts of *Aida* in which Verdi invests the score with local colour. The opera’s locale does not inhabit the score in the pervasive manner of Puccini’s *Turandot*; in fact, Verdi’s response to *Aida*’s Egyptian setting is remarkably restrained. We are well into the first scene when the messenger arrives to bring the news that Egypt has been invaded, and with him comes the first music (on woodwinds) that suggests an eastern setting. The most intensely “exotic” scene in the opera is the consecration scene which follows. Thereafter, Verdi spreads his orientalisms around fairly discretely, and when he does, there is really nothing specifically Egyptian about them. Which is to say no more than that, for Verdi, the music served his vision of the drama and its characters.

This is another salient feature of *Aida*: freed from the strictures imposed on him when writing grand opera for Paris, Verdi could pace the opera’s events as he saw fit. The real spectacle is isolated to the first scene





of Act I and the triumphal scene which concludes Act II, and in both places the personal conflicts that drive the story are intertwined with the pomp and ceremony. The romantic entanglements between Aida, Radamès and Amneris are put before us so early in the first scene that we are fully aware of them by the time the chorus calls for war and Radamès is declared General. When, on hearing Amonasro's name, Aida cries 'my father,' we may dismiss it as melodramatic but (aside from the fact that the moment is illustrated with superbly dramatic music) it means that, before the first scene of the opera is over, we know of all the conflicts that are going to play out over the course of the opera. This is one of the things that makes *Aida* unique: an epic opera that tells its story compactly. Another is the ballet music. Verdi wrote a great deal of ballet music for his operas, but that for *Aida* is the only one performed at all frequently. After all, freed from the need to place it where convention prescribed, he could scatter it throughout the opera as he wished and make it as long or as short as he wanted. As a manifestation of his mature theatrical instincts, it is both characteristic and memorable.


In the triumphal scene, Verdi's flair for depicting the intermingling of private anguish and public triumph reaches its highest point in his work up to this time (and there are similar key moments in earlier operas as diverse as *Macbeth* and *La traviata*.) Aida's predicament is intensified by her father's arrival as a prisoner and his eloquent pretence that he is not the king of his people, while Amneris clearly smells the sweet scent of vengeful triumph. Radamès, on being offered her hand, is now caught between duty and feeling in the most humiliatingly public manner.

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The heart of the opera is Act III, the so-called Nile Scene. It demonstrates Verdi's ability to create complex multi-movement structures, for what appears to be a seamless musical fabric is actually several distinct sequences, beginning with a short, haunting scene-setting orchestral introduction. Aida's recitative and aria 'O patria mia' was the only music added to the opera after the Cairo première, and it is surely one of the most moving of all of Verdi's soprano arias. Its orchestral postlude is cut short by the arrival of Amonasro. Although he is not at all a sympathetic figure, Verdi gives him some of the finest music in the opera, and its variety is astonishing: in a few minutes he will move from the beautiful tune to which he paints a picture of Aida's life with Radamès in her homeland to the violent curses he places on her when she refuses to betray her lover. And just to show how sophisticated Verdi's musical thinking is, Aida's duet with Radamès, which follows, includes the last example of a *cabaletta* in Verdi's work, at the point where the lovers sing of their determination to flee Egypt together. As Act III moves towards its tragic final moments, we realise that Verdi has created a





virtual crescendo over the course of the scene, from the quiet, shimmering opening to the violence of the final moments.

Some scholars have complained that the characters in *Aida* are not as well drawn as, for example, King Philip in *Don Carlos* or Iago in *Otello* (1887), but I don't believe the musical public agrees. If *Aida* were really no more than its Triumphal Scene, then it would be a work known by an excerpt, like Godard's *Jocelyn* or Massenet's *Hérodiade*. In *Aida* and *Amneris*, particularly, we have characters who, while they may not develop greatly over the course of the piece, express their conflicts and desires eloquently. It's all there in the music: *Amneris*, seductive, vindictive, self-destructive, imperious; *Aida*, vulnerable, prone to manipulation by the men around her, her courage gradually failing her as time progresses. The opera's uncannily quiet ending says it all: this has been far more a deeply human tragedy than a spectacular epic.

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Planning and Travel Coordinator: Charlotte Walker
Artistic Administration Coordinator: Li Li Fisher
Artistic Administration Assistant: Gillian Maddern
Music Department Coordinator: Tanja Binggeli
Dance Supervisor: Matthew Barclay
Resident Directors: Matthew Barclay, Cathy Dadd
Music Librarian: Peter Alexander
Music Library Coordinator: Jennifer Fung

COMPANY OFFICE

Company Manager: Allana Sheard
Company Office Assistant: Phillip Moore,
Company Office Assistant - Extras casting:
Steven Gregory

Marketing and Communications

Director: Liz Nield
Marketing Manager: Amanda Smith
e-Marketing and Communications Officer:
Mary-Louise Limbrey
Marketing and Communications Officer:
Katy Woods
Groups and Tourism Planner: Lara Bohdanowicz
Tessitura Business Manager (Acting): Megan Bridge
Sales and Customer Relations Manager, Sydney:
Byron McDonald
Database Coordinator: Lesley Diskin
Groups and Tourism Coordinator:
Arnold Klugkist
Customer Service Representatives, Sydney:
Bill Hockenull, Jon Guile
Sales and Customer Relations Manager, Melb.:
Robin Kempe

National Publicist: Emma Williams
Assistant Publicist: Milou de Castellane
Archivist: Pauline Bell

Publications Manager: Michael Pedersen
Design Manager: Linda Matthews

Development

Head of Development: Nicholas Selman
Corporate Account Managers, Sydney:
Brendan Day, Meredith O'Rourke
Corporate Account Manager, Melbourne:
Clare Vella

National Patron Manager: Greeba Pritchard
Patrons and Friends Manager, Melbourne:
Sally Percival
Friends' Coordinator, Sydney: Emma Kersey

National Events Manager: Irena Taseveska
Special Events Coordinator: Andrew Whitelaw
Special Events Consultant, Sydney: Susie Gibson

Artistic Liaison: Elizabeth Hill

Opera Australia Capital Fund

General Manager: Neroli Hobbins
Administrator: Jennifer Meek

Technical

Director - Technical Administration: Chris Yates
**Technical Operations and
Projects Manager:** Sue Olden
Director - Technical Production: Chris Potter
Production Manager: Paul Spillane
Technical Coordinator: Pip Rigter
Recording, Broadcast and New Media Producer:
Samantha Russell

Stage

Acting Head Mechanist: Dan Paine
Deputy Head Mechanists: Eric Wright, John Mackay,
Todd Westbrook
Mechanists: Stephen Matthews, Chris Nimmo,
Dominic Seeber, Paul Greenhalgh, Jeremy
McComish, Hepi Mahi, Dan Klay, Matthew
Barnes, Leigh Friend, James Chatsfield, Andy
McClintock, Sean Newton
Head Flyman: David Deans
Head of Lighting: Colin Alexander
Deputy Head of Lighting: David Parsons
Senior Lighting Supervisors: Catherine Alexander,
Simon Lefort, Simon Tye
Lighting Technicians: Jennifer Hind, Daniel Perrin
Lighting Supervisor: Oscar Meek
Head of Properties: Gerard Foley
Deputy Head of Properties: Clive Criddle
Props Technician: Michael Robinson
Senior Stage Manager: Crissie Higgins
Stage Managers: Bianca Esther, Zana Forster, Ben Lynch
Deputy Stage Managers: Eugenia Farrell,
Kylie McOmish
Assistant Stage Managers: Tamsin Martin,
Miranda Summers, Alex Dick, Sophie Baker
Stage and Stores Coordinator: Neil McClintock
Head of Stores: Steve Edwards
Stores Staff: Terry Colclough, Greg Bartlett, Serge
Bayndrian, Richard Cardinale
Props Hire Coordinator: Simon Calton
Head of Performing Wardrobe: Bobby McKenzie
Wardrobe Performance Supervisor: Trish Allen
Wardrobe Technician: Valentine Turner
Head of Performing Wigs/Makeup: Andrew Keshan
Deputy Head of Performing Wigs/Makeup:
Simon Thomas
Props and Hire Coordinator, Melb.: Gilles Gundermann

Workshop

Workshop Director: Duncan Stemler
Workshop Administrator: Janikka Valttila-Eriksson
Head of Props Manufacturing: Mat Lawrence
Props Buyer: Alice Kruger
Props Technicians: Carlos Johnson, Roswitha
Adldinger, Simon Craw
Head of Technical Drawing Office: Matt Tindale
Construction Draughtsperson: David Spark
Workshop Supervisor: Charles Chen
Head of Scenic Art: Angeline Drinan
Scenic Artists: Clare Thackway, Jo-Anne Parkin
Head Steel Fabricator: Lech Podsiadlik
Deputy Supervisors: Carlos Muniz-Paris, Robert Yi
Min Dai, Włodzimierz Juraszek, Veronique
Delaunay, Jerzy Smolka, Brenden Toon
Scenery Technician: David Hindrup

Wardrobe/Wigs

Wardrobe/Wig Director: Lyn Heal
Wardrobe Production Manager: Rebecca Ritchie
Wardrobe Production Coordinator: Bronwyn Jones
Assistant Wardrobe Production Coordinator:
Corrine Heskett
Wardrobe Buyer: Miranda Brock
Wardrobe Administration Coordinator:
Cassandra Pascoli
Wardrobe Technical Supervisor: Thorsten Ohst
Senior Ladies Cutter: Sarah Murgatroyd
Costumiers: Zahara Bin Saleh, Maruska Blyszczak,
Trish Barker, Gabriele Schmidt,
Head of Manufacturing Wigs: Philip Cox
Costume/Wig Makers: Patricia Butterworth,
Sharyn Pierce, Cheryl Ball, Lynn Berry, Christine

Yarker (Millinery), Susannah Keneally, Julie
Beach, Angela Perry, Kate Herrett, Sonja Forza,
Jennifer Harrington, Glenndon Casey, Ellen
Doyle, Teresa Hinton, Erika Schwarz, Susannah
McRae, Kerry-Ann McPadden, Julie Pritchard,
Samuel Jelinek (art department), Sarah
Lumsden, Emma Theobald, Emma Wallace,
Rick McGill (millinery)
Costume Storage Supervisor: Bonnie Harris
Wardrobe Assistant: Emma Howell

Oz Opera

Manager, Oz Opera: Jennifer Kerr
Oz Opera Administrator: Lara Luitingh

Finance and MIS

**Finance Director and
Company Secretary:** Narelle Beattie
Finance Manager: Tracie Cordeiro
Financial Accountant: Ann Wang
Payroll Supervisor: Carlos Gutierrez
Payroll Officer: Irina Nefodova
Accounts Payable: Ayumi Kato
Assistant Accountant: Prateek Kumar
Accounts Officer: Zulma Estella Bareiss
Education and Government Relations Manager:
Frances Gordon
Education Coordinator: Marijana Jevremov
**Finance and Government Relations
Coordinator:** Caroline Davis
Planning and Analysis Manager: Ban-Foo Leong
Business Analyst: Silvana de Oliveira
IT Manager: Grant Cresswell
IT Coordinator: Lyndal Hansby

Opera Enterprises

General Manager, Melbourne and Enterprises:
Alex Budd

Human Resources

Director - Human Resources: Anton Dolk
Human Resources Officer: Annalouise Paul

Orchestral Management

General Manager, Orchestra: Ed Hossack
Orchestra Manager: Gérard Patacca
Orchestral Operations Manager: Simon Thew
Assistant Orchestra Manager: Ella Howard
Orchestral Administration Coordinator:
Emma In der Maur
Staging Assistant: Scott Moon

Executive Staff

Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive:
Wendy Hill

Opera Centre

Facilities Manager: Neal Hughes
Assistant Facilities Manager: Grant Shaw
Office Administrator, Melbourne: Emily McClean
Office Assistant: Adam Grubner
Receptionist: Susie Bennetts