Melbourne Opera presents

Richard Wagner’s romantic drama

Lohengrin

7, 10 & 12 August at the Regent Theatre
19 August at Monash University’s Robert Blackwood Hall

Following the great critical and public success of Tannhäuser last year, Melbourne Opera is returning to the Regent Theatre to stage a new production of Richard Wagner’s magnificent romantic opera Lohengrin, not performed in Melbourne for 15 years.

Melbourne Opera’s second season for 2017 will see an extended company of over 160 singers and musicians fill the Regent Theatre with the powerful sound of opera for the second time in history.

Tickets for the Regent Theatre performances are on sale now via the Ticketmaster website or phone line: 1300 111 011. Tickets for the performance at Robert Blackwood Hall can be purchased via the Monash University website or by calling (03) 9905 1111.

Opening on 7 August, Lohengrin stars international Wagnerian Marius Vlad, who returns to the Regent Theatre to perform the title role following his celebrated performance as Tannhäuser. Marius Vlad is considered one of only twenty voices worldwide that are capable of singing the powerful and demanding title role in Lohengrin.

Globally acclaimed Australian opera star Helena Dix is returning to her hometown to perform the leading female role of Elsa von Brabant. For the first time in fourteen years, Helena will grace Melbourne audiences with the voice that carried her outstanding international career to Europe’s most celebrated opera houses and to the prestigious Metropolitan Opera House (the Met) in New York. Helena has just completed covering a title role at the Met led by one of the world’s best conductors James Levine.

Melbourne Opera’s new production of Lohengrin is in the inspired hands of director Suzanne Chaundy, whose production of Tannhäuser was such a success.
“Wagner set Lohengrin, his version of the myth of the Swan Knight, at a time of enormous change in Germany, as the disparate country sought unification of its peoples and religion,” says Suzanne.

Suzanne’s production suggests the early tenth century and uses cutting edge contemporary technology to create a transformative and mysterious world.

“Inspiration for this production is drawn from the sense fragility and the ephemeral (the ephemeral nature of power, joy, love and life) permeating the work. Fragility is present from the outset as the shimmering strings of the prelude transport us to a distant and yet familiar world. This story is set over just two days and nights. We see how, in the blink of an eye, the fate of a person and a whole nation can change,” says Suzanne.

Digital artist Yandell Walton is making her debut with Melbourne Opera, creating unique video and projection art for Lohengrin. Yandell’s works have been exhibited at Melbourne Festival, VIVID Festival Sydney, White Night Melbourne and internationally.

Helena Dix is equally excited to be making her Lohengrin debut and returning to her hometown to perform it.

“It was so touching to be asked to sing at home again, where it all began and surrounded once again by family and friends that I grew up with. When I won the Wagner prize a few years ago and got to attend Bayreuth for the first time and sing for Richard Wagner’s family I knew it was the start of something magic for me. Lohengrin was the first opera I saw there. As soon as the orchestra played the overture I just sat there and cried. I was so overwhelmed and so excited to be starting my Wagner journey,” says Helena.

Other cast includes Sarah Sweeting (who received a Green Room Nomination for her performance as Venus in Tannhäuser) as the evil Ortrud, while Icelandic helden baritone Hrólfur Saemundsson makes his Australian debut as Telramund. Celebrated Melbourne Opera regulars Eddie Muliaumaseali’i and Phillip Calcagno perform the roles of Heinrich der Vogler (Henry the Fowler) and Der Heerufer respectively.

David Kram and Greg Hocking conduct the 80 strong Melbourne Opera Chorus and 82-piece Melbourne Opera Orchestra.

Lohengrin contains some of Wagner’s most famous arias and stirring ensembles, including the famous Wedding Chorus, Overture and Prelude to Act 3, and Lohengrin’s moving In Fernem Land and Mein lieber Schwann. The opera will be sung in German with English subtitles.

Melbourne Opera, which receives no government funding, is Victoria’s busiest opera company, staging three or four full-scale main stage productions and many concerts including several international tours each year. The company gives emerging singers and
musicians invaluable professional experience in the company of distinguished experienced artists. As well as mainstream repertoire, Melbourne Opera also presents many lesser-known masterpieces.

Melbourne Opera’s 2017 season is dedicated to the memory of Richard Divall AO OBE. The third installment of MO’s Donizetti Tudor trilogy, Roberto Devereux, will come to life at The Athenaeum from 11 November starring Rosamund Illing as Queen Elizabeth I.

Melbourne Opera completed a triumphant sold out concert tour of China in January 2017, with an encore season on Boxing Day 2017, and began their 2017 season with a new production of Gilbert & Sullivan’s nautical comedy H.M.S. Pinafore at The Athenaeum in March, which was lauded for its hilarity and gifted cast.

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Biographies

Marius Vlad – Lohengrin

Most recent highlights for Romanian tenor Marius Vlad include he title role in Tannhäuser at Melbourne Opera and his debut as Florestan in Graham Vick’s staging of Fidelio at the Romanian National opera in Bucharest.

He is scheduled to sing the title role in a new production of Lohengrin at Melbourne Opera and the role of Laios in Enescu’s Oedipe at the BBC Proms with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Vladimir Jurowski.
Other recent engagements include the title role in Tannhäuser at the Romanian National Opera and at Theater Freiburg, the title role in Lohengrin at the Novaya Opera in Moscow, Theater Freiburg and the Romanian National Opera, Jean in Massenet’s Hérodiade at the Novaya Opera in Moscow, Tambourmajor in Wozzeck at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest, Don José in Carmen at Theater Freiburg, the title role in Verdi’s Otello at the Hungarian State Opera in Budapest, Opéra de Marseille, Opéra de Toulon, Prague State Opera, Teatro Massimo di Palermo and the Slovenian National Opera in Bratislava and the role of Froh in Das Rheingold under the baton of Daniel Barenboim at Teatro alla Scala, Staatsoper Berlin and at the BBC Proms in London.

On the concert stage he sang Enescu’s Symphony No.5 with the Philharmonische Staatsorchester Hamburg and the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern with Peter Ruzicka conducting (released on CD for CPO Records), Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde with the Romanian Radio Orchestra conducted by Julien Salemcour, Enescu’s Vox Maris at the Enescu Festival with Zubin Metha conducting, Beethoven Symphony Nr. 9 with the Norddeutsche Philharmonie Rostock and Verdi’s Requiem with the Romanian Radio Orchestra.

Other repertoire includes roles such as Turiddu in Cavalleria rusticana, Canio in Pagliacci, Radames in Aida, Manrico in Il Trovatore, Calaf in Turandot, Samson in Samson et Dalila, Don Alvaro in La forza del destino, Erik in Der fliegende Holländer and the title role in Don Carlo.

Marius Vlad has performed on stages and at festivals throughout Europe, from the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Hamburg Philharmonic Hall, Teatro Verdi in Florence to the Schweriner Festspiele and had the pleasure of working with conductors such as Marek Janowski, Renato Palumbo, Fabrice Bollon, Giuliano Carella, Jan Latham-Koenig and Friedrich Haider.

Helena Dix – Elsa von Brabant

Having sung the title role in Cristina Regina di Svezia for Wexford Festival Opera to five star reviews and being previously nominated as Best Young Singer in The International Opera awards, all eyes are currently on Helena Dix.

Australia-born Helena has had a great deal of success in competitions, most notably representing Australia in the 2005 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World. Helena was also runner up in the prestigious Herald Sun Aria and a finalist in the McDonalds Aria held at the Sydney Opera House. She made her USA debut as a finalist in the Seattle International Wagner Opera competition to great critical review.

Helena’s operatic repertoire includes: The title role in Cristina Regina di Svezia for Wexford Festival Opera, Oldenburg Staatstheatre and Chelsea Opera group, Elettra in Idomeneo and Odabella in Attila for Lubeck opera, Gioconda in La Gioconda for Vallodiad, Flowermaiden Parsifal for English National Opera, Elvira (cover) in Ernani for The Metropolitan Opera, Isabella in Das Liebesverbot for Chelsea Opera, Rosalinde Die Fledermaus and Hanna Glawari The Merry Widow for Scottish Opera where she has also covered Frasquita in
Carmen and Karolina in The Two Widows. Also, Fiordiligi Cosi fan tutte, Donna Anna Don Giovanni, Contessa Le Nozze di Figaro and Nella Gianni Schicchi for The Opera Project, Li-Li Greed for the Glyndebourne Young Artist Project and Musetta in La Boheme for Opera Novella. She has also covered the title role Ariadne auf Naxos for Garsington Opera.


Helena has performed in many of the UK’s leading venues, including The Royal Albert Hall, The Barbican, Cadogan Hall, Westminster Abbey, St. James Piccadilly, St John’s Smith Square, Dorchester Abbey, St. Paul’s, Ripon, Guildford and Gloucester Cathedrals. Her credits with orchestras include the RPO and she has sung under the baton of conductors such as Sir Colin Davis, Sir Charles Mackerras, Simone Young, Anthony Negus and Mark Wigglesworth.

Helena is a regular favourite at The Metropolitan Opera where she has covered the roles of Elvira in Ernani (James Levine), Elizabeth in Roberto Devereux (Maurizio Benini) and Elettra in Idomeneo (James Levine). She is delighted to be returning to The Met next season to cover the Title roles of Norma and Semiramide. She will return to her home town of Melbourne, Australia this August to sing the role of Elsa in Lohengrin for the first time. Helena is delighted to be making her debut at Oper Nurnberg returning to the role of Odabella in Attila.

Sarah Sweeting – Ortrud

After the critical acclaim and a Green Room Nomination for her recent performances in the role of Venus for Melbourne Opera's production of Tannhauser, she performs the role of Ortrud in their production of Lohengrin later this year.

She also continues her association with Opera Australia, covering roles in Cavalleria Rusticana and King Roger for their 2017 season.

A distinctive voice with a large vocal range, she has an extensive repertoire and has performed in the UK, France, Spain, Ireland, Germany, Asia, Barbados, Australia, New Zealand and China, over the past 20 years.

She has appeared with Opera Australia, Melbourne Opera, Opera Holland Park, Opera Queensland, State Opera South Australia, Lyric Opera Dublin, Carl Rosa Opera, London Opera Festival, Jakarta Festival, Travelling Opera UK, Longborough Festival Opera, London City Opera, Macau Music Festival, Holders Barbados Festival, Opera Kernow, Co*Opera, Harbour City Opera and Opera Bites.

Her roles have included Leonora (Il Trovatore), Madama Butterfly, Sieglinde, Carmen, Venus, Liu, Fiordiligi, Countess Almaviva, Donna Elvira, Musetta, First Lady, Second Lady, Third Lady, Le Converse, The Monitoress (Sour Angelica), Orlofsky, La Ciesca, Alma March in the
Australian Premiere of Little Women, Phoebe (Yeoman of the Guard), Iolanthe, Pitti-Sing, Berta, Sister Lillian (Dead Man Walking, Sydney State Theatre), Suzuki and performed the role of Miss Baggott from the opera The Little Sweep at the Hobart Theatre Royal, Tasmania.

On the concert platform, Sarah appeared as a soloist at the Royal Opera House, Linbury Theatre for the Covent Garden Festival, John McCabe's Notturni Ed Alba at the Westminster Central Hall, Opera performances at the Barbican, Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Royal Albert Hall London, Beethoven's 9th Symphony at the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall, Die Erste Walpurgisnacht (Mendelssohn), with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra and with the Tall Poppeas at the Armidale Bach Music Festival.

Sarah began her performing career treading the boards of London's West End Theatres, including the celebrated Broadway version of The Pirates of Penzance at the London Palladium, in which she sang the roles of Edith and Isobel.

She performed the role of Annina in Opera Australia's inaugural Handa Opera on Sydney's Harbour performance of La Traviata and sang the role of Melissa in the Australian Premiere of La Liberazione di Ruggiero dall’isola d’Alcina for Ondine Productions in Sydney.

Sarah performed the role of Cio Cio San in Co*Opera’s Madama Butterfly and Second Lady in the Magic Flute, touring throughout South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. She also starred in the opening gala for the Melbourne Fashion Week.

Eddie Muliaumaseali’i – Heinrich der Vogler

Eddie studied at the Brisbane Conservatorium of Music and was the winner of the McDonald’s Aria Award (Sydney). He then became a member of the Tiroler Landestheater (2000-2005), in Innsbruck, Austria, performing in Opera and Musicals.

In Australia, Eddie has worked with Opera Australia’s OzOpera since 1999 in productions of Carmen (Zuniga), Rigoletto (Sparafucile, Monterone and Ceprano), Madama Butterfly (The Bonze) and Barber of Seville (Basilio) as well La traviata (Marquis and Doctor).

Other roles include: Joe: Showboat; Paul: Kiss me Kate; Horse: The Full Monty; Mephistopholes in Faust; Zuniga and Doncairo in Carmen; Tom in Un Ballo in Maschera; Angelotti and Sacristan in Tosca; Nourabad in The Pearlfishers, Monterone in Rigoletto, Colline in La boheme and the Commendatore, Leporello and Masetto in Don Giovanni and Porgy, Crown, Jake and Jim, in Porgy and Bess. Eddie earned a Helpmann nomination for his role as Joe in Showboat for The Production Company and the role of Lord Cecil in Maria Stuarda for Melbourne Opera for whom he performs Henry VIII in Anna Bolena later this year.

Eddie developed Education Workshops for Opera Australia’s Ozopera Tours from 2006-2014. He facilitated these workshops in each state and territory at schools, conservatoriums and community groups. He has worked for Artology, More than Opera and WotOpera as an educator and team leader, introducing Opera to new audiences.
In concert, Eddie performed the Bass solo in Die erste Walpurgisnacht with Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, the Kodaly budavari te deum with the Beethoven Pastoral Choir and regularly performs with the Queensland Pops Orchestra. Eddie appeared at St. Johns Smith Square and Wigmore Hall, London.

Critically acclaimed performances in 2016 include Osmin in The Abduction from the Seraglio and Hermann in Tannhauser for Melbourne Opera and Bill in Pecan Summer for Short Black Opera. Upcoming performances include Frasier in Porgy and Bess with Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Ferrando in Il Trovatore for CitiOpera.

Phillip Calcagno – Der Heerufer

Baritone Phillip Calcagno began his performing career with studies in Voice, Drama and Movement at Victoria’s National Theatre, before establishing a professional career in which he is a familiar and sought after presence to Australian and International audiences. Phillip studied opera in Melbourne before expanding his craft in Europe with Carlo Ventura and Cesare Rufini. Whilst in Italy, Phillip performed various operatic roles in La Traviata, Don Giovanni, Carmen, Tosca and The Merry Widow. He sang with renowned conductors Marcello Rota and Andre Bernard, and had the opportunity to perform alongside the world famous baritone Renato Bruson. Phillip has sung in historic Italian locations including Teatro Greco in Taormina and Palazzo Barbarini and Caracalla in Rome as well as working with the Accademia d’Opera Italiana in the role of the Don in Don Giovanni. In consecutive years he sang the roles of Silvio in Pagliacci and Germont in La Traviata at the Palazzo Barbarini for the Rome Opera Festival, Danilo for the Singapore Lyric Opera.

Phillip’s operatic repertoire also includes Sciarrone in Tosca, Belcore in L’Elisir d’Amore, Marcello in La Boheme, Ali in The Italian Girl in Algiers, the Count in Le Nozze di Figaro and Figaro in The Barber of Seville.

His much enjoyed success on his return to Australia has seen him perform the title role in Don Giovanni and Figaro in The Barber of Seville for Melbourne Opera. Other roles for Melbourne Opera include Yamadori in Madame Butterfly, Escamillio in Carmen, Marcello in La Boheme, Sir Ricardo in I Puritani, Marquis D’Obigny in La Traviata, The Count in Le nozze di Figaro, Sacristan in Tosca, Silvio in Pagliacci, Valentin in Faust and Guglielmo in Cosi Fan Tutte. Most recently, Phillip made his debut as Zurga in Melbourne Opera’s production of Georges Bizet’s The Pearl Fishers in 2014, starred as Figaro in The Barber of Seville and plays the role of Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury in Mary Stuart.

Suzanne Chaundy - Director

Trained at NIDA as a director, Suzanne’s 30 year career spans opera, text-based theatre, events and outdoor spectacle. She has recently directed COSI FAN TUTTE, DER FREISCHÜTZ, MARIA STUARDA, TANNHÄUSER and ANNA BOLENA for Melbourne Opera and WERTHER and OUR MAN IN HAVANA for Lyric Opera of Melbourne. She has also directed for Opera Australia, West Australian Opera and the Victorian State Opera. Suzanne completed her 3 year appointment as Artistic Director of Stonnington Opera in 2017. She has also worked for Melba Opera Trust, runs an Opera Directors Development Programme for Lyric Opera of Melbourne and is a sought after performance coach for singers. Suzanne
has directed for IMG, Red Stitch Actors Theatre, La Mama, Anthill Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company and numerous tertiary institutions. She has been active in a governance role in a number of key Victorian arts organisations and recently retired as Chair of Melbourne’s leading independent theatre company Theatre Works. Suzanne directed signature productions for Australia’s internationally renowned outdoor performance troupe Strange Fruit. Her productions for that company have been performed in over 400 international festivals and events in more than 40 different countries.

Yandell Walton – Video Designer

Yandell Walton is a Melbourne-based artist whose work encompasses projection, installation, and interactive digital media. Through work that melds architectural space with the projected image, Yandell has become recognised for her public projection works that merge the actual and the virtual to investigate notions of impermanence in relation to environmental, social and political issues.

In 2005 Yandell completed a Masters of Fine Arts by coursework at RMIT and in 2014 she completed a Masters of Fine Arts by Research at Victorian College of the Arts. Yandell has been the recipient of numerous grants from the City of Melbourne and the City of Yarra to produce an extensive body of public artworks; and her work has been commissioned for public projects in Frankston (2006), Albury City (2010), Townsville (2014), Melbourne (2014 & 2015), Wagga Wagga (2016). Yandell’s work has been widely exhibited nationally and internationally in galleries and non-traditional public spaces including Light City Festival Baltimore (2016), Digital Graffiti Florida (2015), Experimenta Speak to Me (Melbourne & Brisbane 2012-14), PUBLIC Festival Perth (2014), Melbourne Festival (2012), VIVID Festival Sydney (2013), ISEA (International Symposium of Electronic Art 2013) and White Night Festival Melbourne (2013/15), amongst others.

Awards include the National Gallery Of Victoria Women’s Association Award (2014), Best of Show Award Digital Graffiti (2015), The Windsor Prize (2014), Highly commended Sunshine Coast New Media Art Award (2015), Special Recognition Digital Graffiti (2016), Best Video Work, Centre for Contemporary Photography Salon (2014) and the recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award.

Yandell has received grants to travel overseas from the Australia Council (2006 & 2008) and the Ian Potter Cultural Trust (2015), to undertake residencies and exhibit site-specific works in Berlin, Germany (Transit Lounge, 2007), Florida, US (Digital Graffiti, 2015), and New York, US (The Gershwin Hotel, 2009 and The Centre for Holographic Arts, 2015).

Alongside her creative practice Yandell is a passionate advocate for projection art. She facilitates community development projects, workshops and masterclasses in projection art, and has collaborated with community groups from refugee backgrounds, indigenous communities and disadvantage youth. Yandell is a board member of The Gertrude Projection Association, and volunteers for the Gertrude Street Projection Festival in many roles, including co-curation of the festival in 2014 and 2015 and the newly formed Centre for Projection Art curating art projects.