

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY, A LITTLE BIT OPERA: OPERA QUEENSLAND DEBUTS ITS BRAND-NEW PRODUCTION IN MOUNT ISA

Opera Queensland's genre-crossing new production, ***Are You Lonesome Tonight***, will rope in a cast of local singers when it plays Mount Isa's Xstrata Entertainment Centre on **Tuesday 18 May 2021** as part of a seven-week tour of regional and remote Queensland.

The state opera company has partnered with Glencore Queensland Metals, operators of Mount Isa Mines, one of the world's largest mining complexes, to stage the free premiere production and host a raft of community engagement events in the lead-up to opening night.

The partnership will see Opera Queensland stars **Jason Barry-Smith** and **Sofia Troncoso**, along with pianist **Kylie Los**, host a week of workshops at Mount Isa schools from **Tuesday 27 April**.

A 150-strong choir of local students will then take to the stage as a support act before *Are You Lonesome Tonight* to perform the repertoire they learnt.

Opera Queensland Director of Learning, Regional and Community **Mark Taylor** said the workshops would sharpen the students' vocal and presentation skills, stagecraft techniques and self-confidence.

"We will work with students of all ages, across independent and state schools, to present what we know will be a dazzling celebration of young talent," Mr Taylor said.

"That same week, Opera Queensland will host masterclasses with MICE – the Mount Isa Community Ensembles."

Glencore Queensland Metals General Manager for Health, Safety, Environment and Community, Maryann Wipaki said Glencore and Opera Queensland have formed a successful partnership to bring performances and community engagement workshops to Mount Isa, from *La boheme* in 2014 and *A Night with Opera Queensland* in 2017, and again this year with *Are You Lonesome Tonight*.

"Our sponsorship enables local students, teachers and the community a chance to be part of a professional development opportunity from Opera Queensland's artists, building creative skills and capacity in the region."

Are You Lonesome Tonight weaves a story about life on the road through the arias of composers such as Puccini and Verdi and songs by Slim Dusty and Dolly Parton, directed by **Laura Hansford** alongside designer **Penny Challen**, the star-studded cast includes **Irena Lysiuk**, **Marcus Corowa** and **Jonathan Hickey**.

The cabaret-style production explores the extraordinary qualities and surprising similarities of opera and country music while travelling more than 7000km to play close to 30 communities, making it the most significant regional tour in the company's history and a fitting centrepiece to Opera Queensland's 40th birthday celebrations.

Are You Lonesome Tonight Director **Laura Hansford** said the tour is equal parts a celebration of opera and of country tunes, forming a creative and eclectic ensemble of iconic music.

"There is something for everybody, we love that audiences will get a mix of both opera and country music and a bit of something in between," Ms Hansford said.

"Our premise for *Are You Lonesome Tonight* is to just to play good music, no matter where that sits or where it comes from. Good music doesn't belong to a genre, it belongs to the people and the landscapes that we will be embracing wholeheartedly when we perform to audiences across Queensland."

The state-wide tour was made possible through a partnership with Beef Australia and continues Opera Queensland's deep commitment to regional audiences.

Beef Australia Chair **Bryce Camm** said the organisation was proud to partner with Opera Queensland for the unique opportunity to present the world premiere season of *Are You Lonesome Tonight*.

“This exciting partnership celebrates the diversity which exists across our sector. We look forward to bringing some joy and entertainment to regional Queenslanders as the production hits the road for an impressive tour,” Mr Camm said.

Are You Lonesome Tonight will perform under the stars at the Forecourt of Mount Isa’s Xstrata Entertainment Centre – home to the largest rodeo in the Southern Hemisphere – as well as some of Queensland’s most iconic locations including the Roma Saleyards, Longreach’s Australian Stockmans Hall of Fame, Winton’s Waltzing Matilda Centre and the try-line of Townsville’s new 25,000-capacity Queensland Country Bank Stadium.

“This show is designed to be experienced outdoors, whether that’s under stars in the state’s Central West, by the ocean on The Whitsundays coastline or in the wetlands of tropical North Queensland,” Mr Taylor said.

“Come in your jeans and boots or your tuxedos and ballgowns – this is opera at its most diverse, accessible and exciting.”

For performance times, venue information and to reserve tickets, visit oq.com.au.

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Are You Lonesome Tonight

Presented by Opera Queensland in partnership with Glencore Queensland Metals

Proudly Supported by Beef Australia

Tuesday 18 May 2021

Gates open: 5.45pm

Start time: 6.30pm

Duration: 1hr 50mins (inc. 20min interval)

Forecourt, Xstrata Entertainment Centre

Cnr Sutton and George Streets

Mount Isa

Tickets: FREE

Bookings essential via oq.com.au/whats-on/are-you-lonesome-tonight/