

oq OPERA  
QUEENSLAND

PRESENTS

# ARE YOU LONESOME

★ TONIGHT ★



A CELEBRATION OF  
**COUNTRY MUSIC AND OPERA**

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY BEEF AUSTRALIA

40 YEARS OF  
oq OPERA  
QUEENSLAND

 **BEEF 2021**  
ROCKHAMPTON AUSTRALIA

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Council  
for the Arts**

## Welcome

Welcome to Opera Queensland's production of *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, a show created to celebrate our 40th anniversary with audiences across Queensland.

When we share the idea of a performance about Country music and Opera, we are sometimes met with a queried look, "How on earth does that work?" As you're about to see and hear, there are many great and remarkable connections between the two forms.

Our initial instinct for this show grew out of the many strong relationships we have built with regional communities over the years. Spending time with local artists and audiences, we came to understand that beyond the opportunity to reveal hidden talents, what draws people to an Opera Queensland show or workshop is a love of a good tune and a great story – qualities that are at the heart of Opera and Country music.

This is the most extensive regional tour we have ever undertaken, and it would not be possible without the extraordinary commitment of a number of people and organisations. Sincere thanks to the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, whose ongoing support of our Learning, Regional and Community programs enables us to dream big and challenge ourselves to create better experiences for our artists and audiences.

Thanks also to Arts Queensland and the Playing Queensland Fund, whose investment in our regional tours and programming allows us to fulfil our commitment to creating work for all Queenslanders.

Through this tour we are also launching two major new partnerships with Beef Australia and The Southport School, two organisations that share our commitment to connecting communities and enriching their lives and we are thrilled to have them as our major partners on the road.

Finally, a special thank you to our Director of Learning, Regional and Community, Mark Taylor and his team, who took on the challenge of creating a tour that honoured the extraordinary history of Opera Queensland and delivered in spades. Their hard work and dedication to bringing *Are You Lonesome Tonight* to as many communities as possible is a great expression of what lies at the heart of everything we do — a desire to share the joy and wonder of music with audiences far and wide.



**PATRICK NOLAN**  
CEO & Artistic Director



Opera Queensland acknowledges the First Peoples of the Lands across Queensland upon which we perform. We pay our respects to all of Queensland's First Peoples, their ancestors and Elders and to our shared future.

Front & back cover photos: Dylan Evans

## Director's Note

Once upon a time, when I was merely a six-year-old musical enthusiast, I didn't know the meaning of the word genre. Squashed alongside my brothers into the back seat of the Nissan Pulsar, my Dad either had the radio tuned to ABC 612 Classical, or my Mother was DJ'ing her way through our CD collection, from Crowded House and Herman's Hermits to the Very Best of Shania Twain. At the time I didn't know any better, but today Spotify would call this an eclectic playlist. Back then, I just knew I loved it when Mum and Dad let us turn the volume up loud.

Creating *Are You Lonesome Tonight* handed us all the opportunity for a childhood moment, to forget the word 'genre' and all the rules about music we have learned as grown-ups. A moment to turn to each other, to our brothers and sisters, and say; 'Hey what music do you like? Okay, let's give that a listen and let's turn it up loud.'

Letting go of the rules and immersing ourselves in the worlds of Opera and Country music we found they shared more common ground than we could've imagined. Shared histories, pivotal figures, vocal techniques and the sublime art of storytelling, as we dug into the music, we unearthed more and more connections. Two beloved art forms each so unique and yet each surprisingly similar, how do you begin to do them justice?

In the end we decided the best thing to do was to do what Country or Opera do best: To just tell their stories.

How did country come to be? Who helped Opera grow up? Where do their roads cross? And why does the music break our hearts over and over again? These are the questions we are looking to answer.

Country musician Harlan Howard once said 'All you need to write a country song is three chords and the truth'. The *Are You Lonesome Tonight* family band; Marcus, Irena, Jonathan, Steve, Dane, Sara and Penny have dedicated themselves to speaking and singing authentically, to finding the truthful moments of Country and Opera and laying them out simply for us all to enjoy. As multidisciplinary artists they each in their own way epitomize the soul of this show; you don't have to follow the grown-ups rules, you can make and enjoy music however you like.

As a far-north Queensland gal myself I could not be more excited to have been a small part of the big story that is *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, to travel across the state with the story of Opera and Country, the strum of a guitar, the echo of a piano, a little bit of twang and a whole lot of heart.



**LAURA HANSFORD**  
Director



## Where Country and Opera Meet

When Sara Storer took the stage at Winton's Way Out West Festival this April it was her first gig in fifteen months.

"Yeah, it's been a while," said Storer.

The Golden Guitar and ARIA award winning country music star may not have been playing gigs during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic but she was still busy, most recently on an innovative creative partnership with Opera Queensland.

Working closely with conductor Dane Lam and director Laura Hansford, Storer developed *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, a celebration of Opera and Country music set to tour regional Queensland in 2021, including Winton.

"It was a wonderful time working with [Opera Queensland] on finding songs that connected between opera and country music," Storer said.

The storytelling strengths of both genres shone through.

"I could say, hey, these are some of the major country classics that we've had over the decades that everyone knows, and the story is this," Storer said.

"And of course, [Opera Queensland] would say, well here's our stories and our songs, hey, those two really connect."

For the production's Musical Consultant for Opera Dane Lam the immersion in country music expanded his thinking of both art forms.

Lam was fascinated to explore the ways in which Country music has become synonymous with the Australian bush and stories of the land.

"There's an excerpt from Kate Miller Heidke's opera, *The Rabbits*, which uses native Australian animals juxtaposed with these invading rabbits as a way to illustrate invasion and colonisation," said Lam.

"And we put that up against certain Indigenous country music and these stories go around each other. And they're both telling the same story in different ways and in different styles. I think that's quite a powerful thing to see how two distinct musical forms deal with the same issue."

*Are You Lonesome Tonight* reflects Opera Queensland's commitment to regional Queensland. The pandemic has only sharpened that mission.

"This last 12 months... it's been wonderful to be part of a company like Opera Queensland that does have this local mindset, that presents the art of song and the art of opera in a way that we hope speaks to many people across a wide cross section of our state," said Lam.

Storer thinks the magic for audiences is in hearing two genres come together as one.

"You know, regional Queensland will be familiar with country music. But to bring the opera into it, it's going to be really special."

"Once they start singing, they blow you away because opera singers have just the most amazing, beautiful voices," Storer said.

"I know, myself, as a bit of a bushie and a country music singer, I can't help but be besotted."



**DANE LAM**  
Music Consultant  
Opera



**SARA STORER**  
Music Consultant  
Country



## 40 years of Opera in Regional Queensland

Being the state opera company for Australia's most decentralised state, regional touring in Queensland proves to be a challenging but rewarding element of Opera Queensland's annual offering. We have proudly toured traditional operas and new productions every year in our 40 years history. Over the course of those 40 years while our commitment to touring quality works hasn't changed, the model of delivery and the way we engage with audiences has continued to evolve.

Over the next two months, our new production, *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, will travel more than 7,000 kms on its two month journey around Queensland. The cast and crew will travel in two Toyota LandCruisers and an 8-tonne truck with full set and costumes. This is a stark contrast to our regional touring in the early 80's, when our journey was made by train, travelling only to communities the Queensland Rail network reached, with a carriage hitched to a train to transport our shows across the state, predominantly sticking to coastal communities.

Our 40th anniversary tour is Opera Queensland's most extensive tour to date, performing in 30 locations across Queensland. Each location is as unique as the next, celebrating the diverse landscapes of our state from the Great Barrier Reef to the Outback and everything in between. In addition to performing in traditional theatres, the production embraces the landscape and community hubs as possible stages; performing in settings that include a cattle selling arena, rodeo grounds, a football stadium, museums, showgrounds and race tracks.

It's not just how we travel and where we perform that has evolved. Particularly in the last ten years, how we engage with Queenslanders of all ages and from all walks of life has changed through our Learning, Regional and Community programs. In 2020, our engagement activities include a 70-piece community chorus for the world premiere of *Are You Lonesome Tonight* in Rockhampton, school and community workshops, pop-up performances at aged care centres and professional development opportunities for arts workers.

The *Are You Lonesome Tonight* regional tour has been made possible thanks to the generous support of our government partners and corporate sponsors. Our principal partner, Beef Australia understood the opportunity in premiering this new work in Rockhampton and supporting the state-wide tour. We are also grateful to The Southport School, who are supporting this tour to connect with regional families across the state. Opera Queensland will continue to collaborate with partners across Queensland to deliver vibrant and virtuosic works. We look forward to another 40 years of growing community through the transformative power of opera.



**MARK TAYLOR**

Director — Learning,  
Regional and  
Community

## Creative Team

Concept **PATRICK NOLAN**

Director **LAURA HANSFORD**

Designer **PENNY CHALLEN**

Lighting Design **WESLEY BLUFF**

Musical Director **STEVE RUSSELL**

Music Consultant Opera **DANE LAM**

Music Consultant Country **SARA STORER**

### CAST

**IRENA LYSIUK**

**MARCUS COROWA**

**JONATHAN HICKEY**

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opera package in Brisbane.



Photo: Dylan Evans



**LAURA HANSFORD**  
Director

Laura Hansford is a Queensland-based artist who has been working on operatic productions for the last decade as both a creative and technical collaborator. Beginning her career as a part of the Stage Management team

at Opera Queensland in 2012, she has been instrumental in many of the company's most memorable works, most recently as Assistant Director for the company's 2019 production of *Tosca*. Recently Laura has worked as an Associate Director for Victorian Opera on productions of *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *The Barber of Seville*. Laura has worked with companies such as Opera Australia, the State of South Australia, New Zealand Opera, Circa and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, but her true passion lies in her engagements with Opera Queensland's and the Learning, Regional and Community Department, where she was a part of the last six regional touring programs. In 2020 Laura was nominated as an Emerging Female Artist at the Matilda awards.



**WESLEY BLUFF**  
Lighting Design

Recent Lighting Design credits include: *Cinematic* (Queensland Symphony Orchestra), *A Very Naughty Christmas* (Woodward Productions), *Dinner* (QUT), *Love and Money* (QUT), *A Very Naughty Christmas*

(Understudy Productions), *State of Origin The Beginning* (Home Ground Productions), *YANK!* (Understudy), *Wicked* (Matt Ward Entertainment), *The Revisionist* (Refraction Theatre), *Reagan Kelly* (Rocket Boy Ensemble), *Fame* (MWE), *Spring Awakening* (Underground Broadway), *Strictly Ballroom* (IMTC), *RENT* (MWE), *This is Our Youth* (Underground Broadway) *Les Misérables* (IMTC), *Don't Call Me Ishmael* (Underground Broadway), *Rock of the ages*, *Miss Saigon*, *Mary Poppins* (HOTA).

Outside of theatrical works, Wesley has also created lighting designs for seasons of *The Little Mermaid*, and *The sleeping Beauty* (Ballet Theatre QLD), *Song to The Earth* (Bleach).



**PENNY CHALLEN**  
Designer

Penny Challen has over 20 years' experience in creative & production design. Having trained at QCA and NIDA, she has worked with some of the leading names in world theatre on productions for companies such as the

UK's The Royal Opera House, Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre. Locally she has created designs for Opera Queensland, The State Library of Queensland, Queensland Theatre and La Boite. She is Co-Artistic Director of Little Match Productions, an independent Brisbane performing arts organisation specialising in new classical vocal works in contemporary contexts for adults and children. Penny is a passionate advocate for women in the performing arts and telling women's stories.





**STEVE RUSSELL**  
Music Director

Long regarded as one of Australia's finest jazz pianists and accompanists and a highly accomplished composer and arranger, Steve Russell has appeared with a vast array of national and international jazz,

blues, pop and cabaret artists in an eclectic career spanning some forty years. His performance credits include Rodriguez, Chrissy Amphlett, Dan Sultan, Wendy Matthews, William Barton, Katie Noonan, James Morrison, Troy Cassar-Daley, Kate Miller-Heidke and Shellie Morris.

Steve is also a passionate educator, currently teaching at the Jazz Music Institute and Southern Cross University.

Previous musical directorships include the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's Songs of Justice, Queensland Music Festival productions, the Mount Isa Blast, the Yarrabah Band Festival and The Isaac Project, as well as *Snow White*, Opera Queensland's co-production with La Boîte Theatre, and five seasons of the iconic Women in Voice.



**DANE LAM**  
Music Consultant  
Opera

Australian-Chinese conductor Dane Lam is Principal Conductor of the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra and Opera Queensland's 2021 Resident Conductor and Associate Music Director. Operatically, he enjoys a

close relationship with London's Opera Holland Park, Opera Australia and Scottish Opera.

Dane made his debut, aged eighteen, with the Sydney Symphony and has since conducted: the Queensland, Adelaide, Canberra, Dunedin, Kunming, Shandong and Suzhou Symphony Orchestras, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Het Residentie Orkest, City of London Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata, South Bank Sinfonia, Liverpool Philharmonic Ensemble 10/10, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Verbier Festival Orchestra and the Juilliard Orchestra.

Recent engagements include concerts with Angela Hewitt, Stephen Hough, Ning Feng, Barry Douglas and Kirill Gerstein with XSO; *La bohème* and *Don Giovanni* at Opera Australia; *L'arlesiana* and *Così fan tutte* for Opera Holland Park; *Giulio Cesare* for Bury Court Opera; *Orfeo ed Euridice* for Opera Queensland; and *The Rake's Progress* and *La traviata* for Scottish Opera.

In 2021, Dane Lam will lead seasons of *Le nozze di Figaro* in Brisbane and *La clemenza di Tito* in Canberra, and will conduct the Xi'an Symphony (with Martha Argerich as soloist) and the Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras.



**SARA STORER**  
Music Consultant Country

Sara Storer is a renowned Australian country music singer-songwriter and former teacher. She won a record breaking seven Golden Guitar awards in the Tamworth Country Music Festival in January 2004, and as of 2017, she has won 21 in total.

Three of her six studio albums have reached the top 30 on the ARIA Albums Chart, *Firefly* (July 2005), *Lovegrass* (August 2013) and *Silos* (March 2016). *Silos* also won Best Country Album at the ARIA Music Awards of 2016. Storer has been a member of a country music trio, Songbirds (2007–09) alongside Beccy Cole and Gina Jeffries.

**IRENA LYSIUK**

Singer 1

Since graduating from Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University in 2016 with a Graduate Diploma in Music Studies and in 2014 with a Bachelor of Music, Irena Lysiuk has worked extensively for Opera Queensland.

Irena played the role of Gretel in Opera Queensland and shake & stir theatre co's school touring production of *Hansel and Gretel* (2017–18) and Adina in *FiZZ!* (2016), as well as chorus roles in Opera Queensland productions including Gilbert & Sullivan's *Ruddigore* (2017), *Don Giovanni* (2018) and *A Flowering Tree* (2019).

Turning to musical theatre, Irena played Carmen in *Sweet Charity* at the Brisbane Powerhouse (2019) and Anne Egerman in the Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra's production of Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* (2018). In 2018, Irena debuted the role of the Pussycat in Little Match Productions' new opera *The Owl & the Pussycat*, and performed at CommGames Festival and Brisbane Festival 2018 at QPAC. During her time at the university, Irena's roles included Damigella in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (2015), Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro* (2013), Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte — scenes* (2012), and Una Novizia in *Suor Angelica* (2011).



Photo: Dylan Evans





Photo: Jade Ferguson

**MARCUS COROWA**

Singer 2

Marcus Corowa has captured the hearts of Australians with his silky, soulful voice and charming stage presence. An award-winning First Nations entertainer, Marcus is an accomplished singer/songwriter, composer, actor and mentor who has been turning heads for more than a decade.

Drawing on his Aboriginal and South Sea Islander heritage, Marcus creates captivating music with elements of blues, jazz and funk; a combination that won him the 'Most Promising New Talent in Music' award at the 2012 Deadly Awards and that can be heard on his EPs *Water & Air* and *The Greater You*. Since then, Marcus has found success as an independent recording artist, composer and actor.

Marcus is an exceptional live entertainer which has resulted in amazing partnerships. He was part of the 30-year anniversary celebrations for Australian Catholic University's Indigenous program, Yalbinga, performed with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra at The National Centre for Indigenous Excellence Reconciliation Action Week, and has secured residencies with both *Voyages Sails* in the Desert and on the Indian Pacific. He is a positive role model and advocate for diversity and inclusion, committed to using his voice to mentor and inspire young Australians.



**JONATHAN HICKEY**

Singer 3

Jonathan Hickey is a musical theatre performer and multi-instrumentalist. He most recently played Tobias in TEG's 40th anniversary production of *Sweeney Todd*, performing at the Darling Harbour Theatre, ICC Sydney and Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne.

Other notable roles are Alex in *Aspects of Love* (Hayes Theatre, Sydney), Fabrizio in *The Light in the Piazza* (Melbourne Arts Centre), for which he was nominated for a Green Room Award for best supporting actor, and Matt in *The Fantasticks* (Hayes Theatre, Sydney).

Jonathan has toured regional Queensland as part of Opera Queensland's Open Stage school touring program in *FiZZ!* (2015, 2016) and *Hansel & Gretel* (2018). Other theatre credits include Opera Queensland's *The Pearlfishers*, Matt in *Bare*, Henrik in *A Little Night Music* with Brisbane Philharmonic. He also enjoys composing and performing in his family band Chinatown Carpark.



Photo: Jade Ferguson

# Opera Queensland Team

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Dane Lam

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Timothy Newton  
Xenia Puskarz Thomas  
Sofia Troncoso

## PRODUCTION AND TECHNICAL CREDITS

### Tour Manager

Laura Hansford (to 05 June)  
Teagan Thompson (from 05 June)

### Stage Manager

Ben Shaw

### Touring Technician (Lighting/Staging)

Ben Neucom

### Touring Technician (Audio/Staging)

Wesley Bluff  
Joshua Braithwaite

### Set Realisation

A Noble Event

### Set Electrics Team

Brandon Duncan  
Caitlyn Kidney

### Head of Wardrobe

Karen Cochet

### Assistant Head of Wardrobe

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### Costume Makers

Josephine Clarke-Liebke  
Ella Lollback

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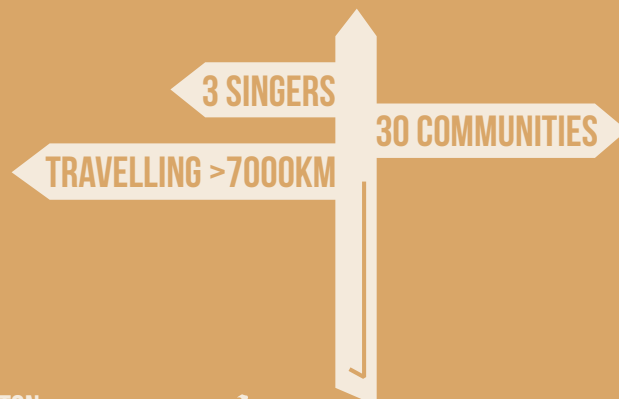
Annette Kerwitz

### Learning, Regional & Community Coordinator

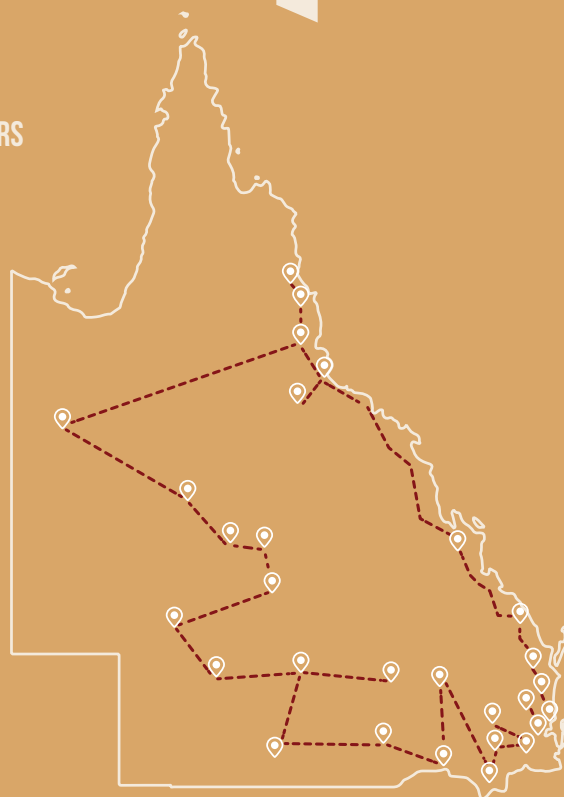
Aaron Dora

# ARE YOU LONESOME

## ★ TONIGHT ★



TUE 4 MAY ROCKHAMPTON  
 FRI 7 MAY BOWEN  
 SAT 8 MAY CHARTERS TOWERS  
 TUE 11 MAY CAIRNS  
 WED 12 MAY INNISFAIL  
 THU 13 MAY INGHAM  
 FRI 14 MAY TOWNSVILLE  
 TUE 18 MAY MOUNT ISA  
 THU 20 MAY WINTON  
 SUN 23 MAY LONGREACH  
 MON 24 MAY BARCOLDINE  
 TUE 25 MAY BLACKALL  
 THU 27 MAY WINDORAH  
 SAT 29 MAY QUILPIE  
 SUN 30 MAY CHARLEVILLE



MON 31 MAY CUNNAMULLA  
 TUE 1 JUNE ST GEORGE  
 THU 3 JUNE GOONDIWINDI  
 FRI 4 JUNE WARWICK  
 SAT 5 JUNE STANTHORPE  
 SUN 6 JUNE REDLAND CITY  
 WED 9 JUNE TOOWOOMBA  
 THU 10 JUNE BEAUDESERT  
 SAT 12 JUNE CALOUNDRA  
 TUE 15 JUNE KINGAROY  
 WED 16 JUNE MARYBOROUGH  
 THU 17 JUNE BUNDABERG  
 SUN 20 JUNE GOLD COAST  
 WED 23 JUNE ROMA  
 FRI 25 JUNE REDCLIFFE  
 SUN 27 JUNE BRISBANE

TOURING REGIONAL  
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Beef Australia is a proud partner of Opera Queensland's new production — *Are You Lonesome Tonight*.

Queensland boasts half of the nation's beef cattle herd and we are thrilled to see the tour visit many of our resilient, world-leading producers.





*On our stage, there is a role  
for everyone to play.*

**This is TSS.**



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ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT

# AIDA



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