

MEDIA RELEASE

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OPERA QUEENSLAND'S VISIONARY 2025 SEASON: Bold productions, global stars and community impact

Brisbane – 13 November 2024 – Opera Queensland (OQ) has been central to the evolution of the artform in Queensland. Under the direction of the visionary CEO & Artistic Director, **Patrick Nolan**, recently reappointed to lead the company until 2028, Opera Queensland continues to boldly reimagine the classic repertoire, commission new works and bring some of the greatest singers in the world to Queensland.

The season showcases OQ's mission to make opera accessible to all, combining innovative mainstage and touring productions that will resonate throughout Queensland, across Australia, and overseas.

"In putting our 2025 season together we set out to explore how we connect with each other in ways that are born of kindness and empathy. What might we learn if we open ourselves to the beauty and wonder of opera? Be it the majesty of *La Bohème* or the grand horizons of the Outback, 2025 invites us to look for moments of connection through the music and stories we experience together." Opera Queensland CEO and Artistic Director, Patrick Nolan said of the 2025 season.

The **Brisbane Bel Canto Festival** returns for its second year, with a program of concerts covering music from the beginnings of operatic song in Italy to a song cycle composed in Australia over the past few years. At the festival's centre, Rossini's ***La Cenerentola* (Cinderella)**, celebrates the generous, compassionate and kind heart that beats so strongly within the title character.

Opera Queensland welcomes two rising stars to Queensland for the first time, **Mara Gaudenzi** as Angelina (Cinderella) and **Petr Nekoranec** as Don Ramiro, the man whose heart she captures. As befits artists involved in a bel canto festival, they have been widely praised for the beauty of their voices. With Conductor **Richard Mills AM** leading the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, this promises to be a great night in the theatre.

"*La Cenerentola* is at its core tale of heart and humour. I am excited to flip the classic Cinderella story on its glass slipper and welcome everyone to a Once Upon a Time that is brimming with clever disguises, midnight balls, unlikely heroes and the triumph of kindness." *La Cenerentola* (Cinderella) Director, **Laura Hansford**.

The festival in March includes the return of Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, with a presentation of Andrew Ford's ***Red Dirt Hymns***, a contemporary Australian collection of secular hymns with lyrics by some of Australia's finest writers.

New additions to the festival include The University of Queensland School of Music, who join us for Rossini's ***Petite Messe Solennelle*** (Little Solemn Mass). With **Liam Viney** and **Anna Grinberg** playing the piano parts accompanied by a mass choir in The Cathedral of St Stephen. Emerging Brisbane ensemble One Equal Music are also joining us for ***The Birth of Bel Canto***, tracing the roots of bel canto back to the madrigal.

"With Brisbane Bel Canto, we take our inspiration from the virtuosity of a singer in full flight. This is a privilege to behold. Be it at a recital of Monteverdi madrigals or a contemporary Australian song cycle by **Andrew Ford**, this year's program offers audience a broad array of opportunities to connect with performers and the music they make across the city," said Nolan.

"Opera Queensland has begun a major festival initiative which will bring visitors to Queensland to hear some of the greatest singers in this repertoire. This is becoming a must see for opera enthusiasts from around Australia and I am proud to conduct the performances of music for which I have a heartfelt affinity with such a great group of singers from Australia and Europe and enjoy the partnership of our wonderful Queensland Symphony Orchestra - please join us," says conductor Richard Mills AM.

The **Long Lunch** will be curated by **Stefano de Pieri**, who promises to mix flavours and songs that celebrate Queensland and Italy in a way that only an Italian Australian chef as renowned as Stefano could.

In May, Opera Queensland heads west to the towns of Winton and Longreach to present the fifth **Festival of Outback Opera**, affectionately known as 'FOO', where Grammy-winning coloratura soprano **Sumi Jo** will perform, underscoring OQ's commitment to bringing world-class talent to regional audiences. Unlike any other music event you have experienced, the Festival of Outback Opera is a series of outdoor concerts in iconic locations and scenery on a grand scale. Events range from formal galas to casual singalongs in the pub, from large-scale concerts under night skies to afternoons of beautiful singing and fine dining.

The Grammy Award-winning, Oscar nominated coloratura soprano **Sumi Jo**, in constant demand for special events such as the World Cup and The Beijing Olympic Games, will headline the Festival of Outback Opera. Her stratospheric upper range, technical brilliance and endearing diva playfulness have made her the highest-selling classical singer in the world.

"This is the little festival that could, one of those happy coincidences in which the joy of what we bring as an opera company is in perfect harmony with the majesty of the outback and the warmth and generosity of the locals. Such is the magic of the festival that anyone who has been wants to return again and bring more of their friends, leaving us with the fortunate problem of not having enough rooms to accommodate everyone. Having Sumi Jo, one of the world's most renowned sopranos, joining us this year gives some sense of how the reputation of this festival is growing," remarked Nolan.

In September, OQ presents ***La bohème***, one of the world's most beloved and famous operas, exploring the lives of four bohemians struggling to realise their dreams on the fringe of society in Paris. Puccini's classic masterpiece is the original bohemian love story and has inspired numerous adaptations on stage and in film, (*Rent* and *Moulin Rouge* to name a few), with its true-to-life characters, Rodolfo and Mimi.

This original co-production by Opera Queensland and West Australian Opera premiered in Perth in 2023 and is being presented in association with Brisbane Festival. It is being directed by **Matt Reuben James Ward** alongside Associate Director **Laura Hansford**.

Italy-based Western Australian born Soprano **Elena Perroni** who plays Mimi has carved out an enviable career for herself both here and abroad as one of the brightest stars in the opera world, training at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. **Valerio Borgioni** will play Rodolfo, a rising star from Rome, performing in Queensland for the first time.

Award-winning First Nations soprano, **Nina Korbe**, will play the role of Musetta, her creamy tone and brilliant top notes continue to delight critics and audiences. Nina debuted as Maria in Opera Australia's *West Side Story* in 2024 to five star reviews and recently as Lisette in Victorian Opera's *La Rondine*.

"My first opera with OQ was *La Bohème* in 2014 when I was a chorus member, so it feels fitting that my first principal role with the company is in that same opera. Musetta is bold, unapologetically passionate, and brings a fire to every scene she's in. Exploring her spirit and complex heart is a gift, and I can't wait to bring that energy to the stage and share her story with our audience." said Nina Korbe as she looks forward to the role of Musetta.

Are You Lonesome Tonight, OQ's most successful regional tour in its history, will be on the road again in 2025 thanks to a Playing Australia grant. The national tour visits communities in remote locations and historic towns across Australia, including the Festival of Outback Opera. The cast including one of the country's most in-demand talents, First Nations artist **Marcus Corowa**, will perform the arias and songs from **Puccini to Slim Dusty and Dolly Parton**.

"After *Are You Lonesome Tonight* toured Queensland in 2021, I have been repeatedly asked when it was coming back. *Are You Lonesome* is proof that music is the great connector, bringing people across genres together to celebrate a love of storytelling." Director, *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, Laura Hansford.

Entering its sixth year, Opera Queensland's Studio Series affirms OQ's commitment to musical excellence and innovation. Bridging the classical and the modern, the Studio Series is an inspired collection of intimate, cabaret-style performances and exclusive recitals. Audiences will experience world-class artists, exhilarating musical interpretations, and genre-blending performances in the heart of South Bank.

This season features an eclectic array of talents and genres, bringing the worlds of opera, art song, jazz, and contemporary music together for unforgettable evenings in close, immersive settings.

First up in 2025 is American singer, performance artist and musician, **Joseph Keckler**, celebrated for his unique fusion of opera, art, and rock, who returns to Australia following his acclaimed appearances at QHM Festival and the Adelaide Fringe. Praised by the New York Times as a major talent who shatters conventional boundaries, Keckler's magnetic stage presence and powerful voice promise an evening of mesmerizing and genre-defying performances.

In March, acclaimed Australian baritone **James Roser** joins pianist **Alex Raineri** for *An die Musik*, an evening dedicated to Schubert's timeless lieder. Audiences will be transported through poetic landscapes as Roser and Raineri explore Schubert's mastery of melody and storytelling.

Amy Lehpamer, the dazzling star of musical theatre, returns in June to perform *Amy Lehpamer Sings Cole Porter*, celebrating Porter's witty and sophisticated songs. With a setlist including classics like *I Get a Kick Out of You* and *Night and Day*, this recital is set to be a highlight of the season.

In July, Brisbane's own **Voxalis Opera** presents *Ravel 150*, an enchanting tribute to Maurice Ravel on his 150th birthday. Featuring soprano **Katie Stenzel**, pianist **Alex Raineri** and baritone **Camilo Lopez**, the program includes Ravel's vocal works alongside pieces by his friends and inspirations, such as Debussy and De Falla, capturing Ravel's playful, imaginative spirit.

The series concludes in October with Brisbane's beloved lyric soprano **Leanne Kenneally** in *Songs of Light and Sky*. Joined by **Alex Raineri**, Kenneally will showcase the power and beauty of the lyric soprano voice, with selections spanning languages and musical periods that explore themes of love, hope, and light.

In 2024, OQ's mainstage productions have travelled far and wide. *The Barber of Seville* was co-produced in Seattle and Des Moines, while its productions of *La traviata* (a co-production with State Opera South Australia and West Australian Opera) and *Orpheus and Eurydice* (in association with Circa) were staged by Opera Australia at the Sydney Opera House. *Orpheus and Eurydice* recently opened in Perth with West Australian Opera. Patrick Nolan's production of *Così fan tutte* was also picked up by State Opera South Australia this year. Next year, OQ's second collaboration with Circa, *Dido and Aeneas* opens in Sydney, while *Orpheus and Eurydice* will be presented at the Edinburgh International Festival before returning for Opera Australia's 2025 Melbourne season.

The company's expanding national and international presence is a testament to its innovative approach to engaging new audiences, ensuring the art form's evolution for future generations.

From the vast horizons of the Outback to the two mainstage productions at QPAC, and from the intimate, cabaret-style events in the Opera Queensland studio to the boutique recital series in Brisbane's historic churches, the 2025 season offers a program rich in immersive collaborations. This season brings together the finest ensembles, soloists, choirs, composers, and partners from across the state and globe for unforgettable musical experiences.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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2025 SEASON PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Brisbane Bel Canto Festival

Brisbane Bel Canto Festival returns for a second year with a program full of exquisite music, exploring the many wonders of the art of beautiful singing.

La Cenerentola (Cinderella)

CONCERT HALL, QPAC

TUE 4 MAR 7PM

SAT 8 MAR 1.30PM

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Richard Mills AM

Director Laura Hansford

Costume Karen Cochet & Bianca Bulley

Lighting Christine Felmingham

Assistant Director Eugene Lynch

Chorus Master Narelle French

CAST

Angelina (Cinderella) Mara Gaudenzi

Don Ramiro Petr Nekoranec

Dandini Samuel Dundas

Don Magnifico James Roser

Alidoro Shaun Brown

Clorinda Sarah Crane

Tisbe Hayley Sugars

OPERA QUEENSLAND CHORUS
QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Petite Messe Solennelle

ROSSINI

The Cathedral of St Stephen, Brisbane
FRI 7 MAR 7PM

Conductor Richard Mills

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND CHAMBER SINGERS
THE UQ SINGERS
LUMENS CHAMBER CHOIR

Piano Anna Grinberg

Piano Liam Viney

Organ Graeme Morton

Long Lunch with Stefano de Pieri

FRI 7 MAR 12PM

Venue to be announced

Red Dirt Hymns

OQ STUDIO

SAT 8 MAR 7.30PM

Composer Andrew Ford

Director Patrick Nolan

Music Director Steve Newcomb

Featuring Jazz Department vocal and instrumental students from Queensland
Conservatorium Griffith University

The Birth of Bel Canto

City Tabernacle Baptist Church, Brisbane
WED 5 MAR 7PM

Presented by Opera Queensland in association with One Equal Music

Musical Director Tomasz Holownia

Soprano Louise Prickett

Soprano Madeline Gibbs

Alto Eleanor Adeney

Tenor Tomasz Holownia

Bass James Fox

The Festival of Outback Opera

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Vanessa Scammell

Director Patrick Nolan

Lighting Bernie Tan-Hayes

QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

UQ PULSE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA AND SINGERS

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

WINTON

TUE 13 MAY Festival Opening

WED 14 MAY Are You Lonesome Tonight

THU 15 MAY Cultural Conversations

THU 15 MAY Dark Sky Serenade

FRI 16 MAY Long Lunch

FRI 16 MAY The Sundowner

FRI 16 MAY Music Trivia Night

LONGREACH

SAT 17 MAY Singing in the Night

SUN 18 MAY Sing Sing Sing

SUN 18 MAY Opera Ball & Sunset Cruise

MON 19 MAY Are You Lonesome Tonight

La bohème

LYRIC THEATRE, QPAC

THU 4 SEP 7.30PM

SAT 6 SEP 12.30PM

TUE 9 SEP 6.30PM

THU 11 SEP 7.30PM

SAT 13 SEP 1.30PM

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Umberto Clerici

Director Matt Reuben James Ward

Set & Costume Charles Davis

Lighting Christine Felmingham

Associate Director Laura Hansford

Chorus Master Narelle French

CAST

Mimi Elena Perroni

Rodolfo Valerio Borgioni

Marcello Samuel Dundas

Musetta Nina Korbe

Colline Luke Stoker

Alcindoro Shaun Brown

Benoit Bradley Daley

OPERA QUEENSLAND CHORUS

OPERA QUEENSLAND CHILDREN'S CHORUS

QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OPEERA QUEENSLAND STUDIO SERIES

Opera Queensland Studio

Joseph Keckler

An Evening with Joseph Keckler

FRI 14 FEB 7PM

SAT 15 FEB 2PM

James Roser & Alex Raineri

An die Musik – Schubert's Art of Song

FRI 14 MAR 7PM

SAT 15 MAR 2PM

Amy Lehpamer and Steve Russell

Amy Lehpamer Sings Cole Porter

FRI 27 JUN 7PM

SAT 28 JUL 2PM

Voxalis – featuring Katie Stenzel, Camilo Lopez and Alex Raineri

Ravel 150

FRI 25 JUL 7PM

SAT 26 JUL 2PM

Leanne Kenneally & Alex Raineri

Songs of Light and Sky

FRI 10 OCT 7PM

SAT 11 OCT 2PM

Are You Lonesome Tonight

CREATIVE TEAM

Concept Patrick Nolan

Director Laura Hansford

Design Penny Challen

Lighting Wesley Bluff

Musical Director Steve Russell

Music Consultant Opera Dane Lam

Music Consultant Country Sara Storer

Tour dates and venues TBC visit oq.com.au for updates
