



Victorian  
Opera

# VICTORIAN OPERA 2016



# Welcome

In eleven years, over 300,000 audience members have experienced a performance by Victorian Opera – over 20,000 of those attending regional performances.

During our short history, we have created 17 new Australian works and collaborated with some of Australia's leading companies, venues and learning institutions. We employ hundreds across the theatre industry and recruit some of the finest singers from Australia and around the world. We are committed to the accessibility of opera through tactile tours, and audio described and relaxed performances. We have inspired over 500 young singers through our Youth Opera Program and developed over 30 emerging artists. Our vision – to create a state opera company that is a state icon and a national leader.

## 2016 Highlights

An audience of over 59,000.

A fully-staged opera with Circus OZ.

Three new works: *Voyage to the Moon*, *Banquet of Secrets* and the Family Opera *The Pied Piper*.

Over 4,900 students and teachers engaged through Education Workshops and Performances.

Victorian Opera operated its first live-streamed concert, *The Darkest Night*.

Victorian Opera extended its reach nationally with a coproduction with Musica Viva touring in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane.

On the international scene, 12,317 New Zealanders saw Victorian Opera's coproduction with New Zealand Opera, *Sweeney Todd*, in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

Victorian Opera received City of Melbourne's Melbourne Award.

The National Opera Review recommended Victorian Opera joins the Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG).

“We continued to re-imagine the potential of the art-form and ensured that opera remained accessible to everyone.”



## A Year to Celebrate

From an artistic perspective, Victorian Opera's 2016 Season was immensely satisfying; a year filled with many milestones and daring new approaches to our art form. From collaborations with Circus Oz to our biggest regional tour to date, our company worked tirelessly to create vibrant and meaningful productions to engage the imagination of every member of our community.

*Voyage to the Moon*, a new Baroque pasticcio, was assembled with such inventiveness and respect for the heritage of this form, though not without unexpected challenges. When the production's original composer Dr Alan Curtis died suddenly during the opera's creation, various hurdles presented themselves: the sadness of losing a colleague as well as the loss of a world renowned expert with very particular specialist knowledge. Co-produced with Musica Viva Australia and in association with The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, our talented creative teams and cast worked diligently to finish it

accordingly. It opened to great acclaim in Melbourne before touring nationally.

Victorian Opera celebrated Melbourne itself in *Banquet of Secrets*: a musical about enduring friendships and our love of fine food and wine. This production boasted a rare intimacy between its cast and creative team; a musical written by lifelong friends Paul Grabowsky and Steve Vizard, then performed by lifelong friends Antoinette Halloran, Kanen Breen, Dimity Shepherd and David Rogers-Smith. Naturally, the poignancy of this work was palpable.

As a conductor, I led two of the company's major productions in 2016: Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Laughter and Tears*, featuring Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*. I applaud the creative teams and casts behind both operas. Both works thrilled Melbourne with their musical richness and emotional intensity.

Working alongside Jessica Pratt on *Lucia di Lammermoor* was a memorable highlight of the year, as it was her co-lead Carlos E. Bárcenas. An

artist whom shares a long association with our company, Carlos is a former VO Developing Artist and, with great tenacity and talent, has continued to develop to become one of the country's finest singers.

One of the other great joys of our 2016 Season was writing and composing community opera, *The Pied Piper*. This work was specifically crafted to engage community choirs state-wide and invited the involvement of singers aged eight to eighty. Following its Melbourne season, the opera was performed in Port Fairy, Mildura, Bendigo, Warragul, Shepparton and Albury-Wodonga. It was a pure delight seeing it performed in so many different communities and noting the joy it provided.

I must thank all members of the Victorian Opera community for enabling us to produce such a rich and rewarding season.

**Richard Mills AM**  
Artistic Director, Victorian Opera

## State Icon, National Leader

In 2016, Victorian Opera continued to grow, develop and define itself as a state icon and national leader in the Australian operatic landscape. The company's 11th season featured three distinctly different new works, new approaches to classic repertoire and an Australian premiere of one of the world's quirkiest operas.

It was a year of great pride for our young company. The National Opera Review's Final Report acknowledged Victorian Opera's ongoing contributions to Australian opera with the recommendation that the company joins the Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG). Similarly, City of Melbourne also recognised Victorian Opera with an esteemed Melbourne Award.

Our season opened with our first co-production with Musica Viva Australia, *Voyage to the Moon*. The work was inspired by Ariosto's poem *Orlando Furioso* and featured music from various period composers drawn together to create a new Baroque opera. A star cast of singers, including soprano Emma Matthews in her Victorian Opera debut, and period instrumentalists toured the acclaimed production in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide.

One new work was immediately followed by another, *Banquet of Secrets*: A new musical from the creative talent of two iconic Melbournians: Paul Grabowsky and Steve Vizard. The celebrated new Australian work brought four of Victorian Opera's audience favourites back to the stage: Antoinette Halloran, Kanen Breen, Dimity Shepherd and David Rogers-Smith. It was presented in association with Arts Centre Melbourne and the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival. It also toured to Brisbane, in collaboration with Brisbane Powerhouse.

In the first Australian performance of her career-defining role, soprano Jessica Pratt made our production of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*: one of the country's most anticipated opera performances in 2016.

Victorian Opera also marked its first co-production with Circus Oz; a

joyously comic and tragically dark double bill: *Laughter and Tears*. As a prelude to Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*, a new work was created from 16th and 17th century music to form a classic commedia dell'arte first act. A true highlight to our season!

Children and families across Melbourne and regional Victoria were treated to two offerings: Massenet's *Cinderella* and a new community opera, *The Pied Piper*, written and composed by our Artistic Director Richard Mills. Performed across the state, community choirs in six regional Victorian towns participated in the new opera, performing as the citizens, schoolchildren and rats of Hamelin.

Victorian Opera continued to embrace new technologies and advance our art form. We presented the Australian premiere of Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts* featuring a youth cast and quirky 3D digital scenery created by Deakin Motion.Lab. The company also launched podcast *The Art of Opera* and ventured into live-streaming with an exclusively online concert, *The Darkest Night*, on the eve of Winter Solstice.

Critical to Victorian Opera's success is the ongoing support of the State Government of Victoria, through Creative Victoria's Organisations Investment Program, The Robert Salzer Foundation and Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. We also thank our generous Patrons and Supporters, particularly our Artistic Director's Circle and New Work and Education Syndicates, as well as our loyal subscribers and audiences. As always, we must thank our Board and Staff for their ongoing dedication and hard work – without them, none of this would be possible.

**Jane Hemstrich**  
Chairman, Victorian Opera

**Andrew Snell**  
Managing Director, Victorian Opera

# Productions in 2016

## Lucia di Lammermoor

“For a piece of operatic history...This Lucia is a must see.” ★★★★★  
 – Herald Sun



## Banquet of Secrets

“Of all the company’s new work in recent years , it’s probably the most accomplished.... *Banquet Of Secrets* can be harmony on the palate: sweet and salty, bitter and umami. Get it while it’s hot.” ★★★★★  
 – Daily Review

“The company’s 16th commission, *Banquet of Secrets*, is an elegantly crafted, emotionally complex and superbly evocative work that explores the affirming role of enduring friendships in our imperfect lives.”  
 – The Australian

“The audience was totally caught up in the characters and drama on stage. An absolute triumph.”  
 – Stage Whispers



## Lucia di Lammermoor

“Jessica Pratt’s Lucia truly worthy of international acclaim.”  
 – The Australian

## Laughter and Tears

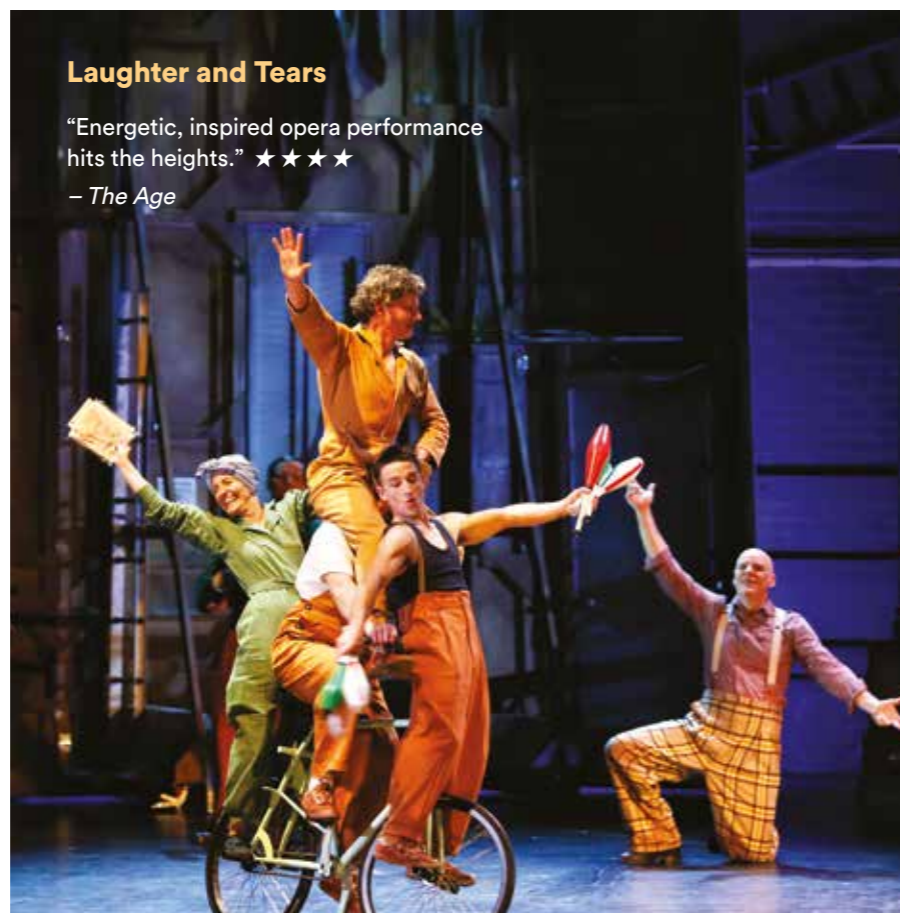
“*Laughter and Tears*, staged with drive and imagination, is a tribute to the company. This is not simply another opera performance: it is something to make you reflect and rejoice as well as laugh and cry.”  
 – The Age

## Laughter and Tears

“Conductor Richard Mills drew a splendidly nuanced performance from Orchestra Victoria.”  
 – The Australian

## Laughter and Tears

“Energetic, inspired opera performance hits the heights.” ★★★★★  
 – The Age



## Voyage to the Moon

“A work of pure gold ... I hope this partnership between Victorian Opera and Musica Viva leads to other enterprises. Now they have the moon, they can reach for the stars.”  
 – The Age



# Inspiring Audiences

Victorian Opera reached a national audience of

**59,176**

across

**338**

performances, activities and streamed events.

**7,292**

audience members attended the creation work *Voyage to the Moon* in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane.

**8,542**

audience members including students, teachers and families from Melbourne, Mildura, Warragul, Bendigo, Shepparton and Albury-Wodonga attended the fairy-tale opera *Cinderella*.

**4,797**

people acclaimed Victorian Opera's returning soprano and international star Jessica Pratt in Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lamermoor*.

**SOLD OUT**

*Four Saints in Three Acts* featuring 3D scenery and performed by Victorian Opera's young artists.



"Thank you so much for today's (*Cinderella*) amazing performance. The children were totally engaged (.....) I know the children will carry this experience for life."

"Ken and I want to send the company our hearty congratulations on this latest production (*Laughter and Tears*). We found it a sheer delight and loved the sets, the light (...) It was a touch of brilliance including Circus Oz and we were enchanted by the delightful orchestration (...)"

"Many thanks to all concerned at Victorian Opera for the opportunity to participate in *The Pied Piper*. My impression was that all in the Adult Community Chorus greatly enjoyed the experience"

"(*Lucia*) was a stunning production. We were so lucky to be able to hear and see Jessica Pratt - a consummate artist. The Mad-Scene was unforgettable-and the inclusion of the glass harmonica wonderful. The orchestra and conducting were first rate."

"VO is ours, ie Victorian. The standard is as good as I have seen at Covent Garden. Can I have multiple "most"? There is a great emphasis on training singers and giving them opportunities as well as the Education projects and opera for children. You present an elite art form in an egalitarian way"

"I really, really appreciate the spiritual depth, commitment, quality and innovation Richard Mills brings to VO. Plus his conducting of the orchestra is superb."



## Education and the Community

In 2016, Victorian Opera reached record heights with its Community Engagement and Education projects. Two productions were staged in Melbourne and across the state in the longest regional tour of the company's history. Massenet's *Cinderella* was reduced to a fifty-minute production for primary students, and Victorian Opera's Artistic Director, Richard Mills composed the Community Engagement production, *The Pied Piper*.

While both productions were ideal for children and family audiences, *The Pied Piper* specifically invited community members of all ages to be involved. Victorian Opera toured *Cinderella* and *The Pied Piper* to Port Fairy, Mildura, Bendigo, Warragul, Shepparton and Albury-Wodonga after premiering in Melbourne. A total of 375 community members across the seven locations rehearsed with Victorian Opera and joined the professional principal cast and chamber orchestra on stage in their hometowns. Children and adults

from across Melbourne and regional Victoria performed in varied roles as the schoolchildren, rats and citizens of Hamelin.

Prior to students seeing Victorian Opera's production, *Cinderella*, students were given a pre-show workshop at their school to prepare them for their visit to the theatre. Facilitated by Victorian Opera's Education Officer alongside an opera singer and pianist, the workshop introduced students to opera and discussed how to have the best experience as an audience member. Funding from the Department of Education and Training made these in-school workshops possible, along with comprehensive learning resources. This engagement was provided for free to all schools that booked tickets to the production. A total of 52 in-school workshops were conducted for 3,083 students and teachers at metropolitan and regional schools across Victoria.

"Many of our students had never been to an Arts Centre and none had ever been to an opera. An important experience for them."

- Mildura English Language School

Learning resources including videos, podcasts, and teacher's resource kits were freely available online for all mainstage, education and community productions in Victorian Opera's 2016 Season.

Also within the company's Education Program, the Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE), entered its third year of existence and continued to flourish. As Australia's only year-round youth opera chorus, teenagers participate in weekly rehearsals learning, rehearsing and performing classical repertoire. In 2016, VOYCE also featured as a crucial part of the company's annual Youth Opera production, *Four Saints in Three Acts*. VOYCE performed this Australian premiere to a sold-out season at Malthouse Theatre on the AFL Grand Final Weekend!

# Our People

Putting on a Victorian Opera mainstage performance takes a large and talented group of people months of preparation – planning, building, painting, tailoring, coaching and rehearsing – to create an unforgettable night at the opera. In 2016, Victorian Opera engaged hundreds of people in the creative industry.



Photographic Credits:  
Jeff Busby (pp. cover, 6, 7),  
Charlie Kinross (pp. 2, 4, 8, 9, 10,12)

# 700

performers, musicians  
and creatives across

# 32

mainstage performances

# 82

creatives, from directors and  
designers to technicians and  
production staff.

# 513

performers, including international  
guests, local singers and chorus,  
and young developing artists.

# 166

musicians including appearances  
from Orchestra Victoria.



# Victorian Opera Patrons

If you would like to get more involved in the work of Victorian Opera by becoming a Patron, please contact Pooja Dutt, Individual Giving Manager on 03 9001 6408 or [poojad@victorianopera.com.au](mailto:poojad@victorianopera.com.au)

## Founding Patrons

The Late Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC DBE  
Lady Potter AC

## Patron in Chief

The Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria

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Maureen & Tony Wheeler  
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## Artistic Director's Circle (\$10,000+)

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Dr Richard Mills AM  
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Peter Lovell  
Ian Merrylees  
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Lady Southey  
Felicity Teague  
Earl & Countess of Wilton  
Anonymous (1)

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Brian Goddard  
Nance Grant AM MBE & Ian Harris  
Richard & Isabella Green  
Lesley Griffin  
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Sean Kelly  
Rod & Daniele Kemp  
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John & Lynne Landy  
Dr Paul & Glenys Lejins  
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Douglas & Rosemary Meagher  
Jane Morris  
Greg Noonan  
Ruth & Tom O'Dea  
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Jane Patrick & Robert Evans  
Lynette Payne  
Prof Margaret Plant  
Prof Dimity Reed AM  
Prof John Rickard  
Tomasz & Elzbeita Romanowski  
Graeme Samuel AC & Jill Davies  
Michael Sassella  
Aubrey Schrader  
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Penny Stragalinos  
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Hugh & Elizabeth Taylor  
Caroline Travers OAM  
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Caroline Vaillant  
David Valentine  
Catherine Walter AM  
Russell Waters & Marissa Barter-Waters  
Ian A Watts  
Youth Music Foundation of Australia  
Anonymous (3)

## Bronze Patrons (\$500+)

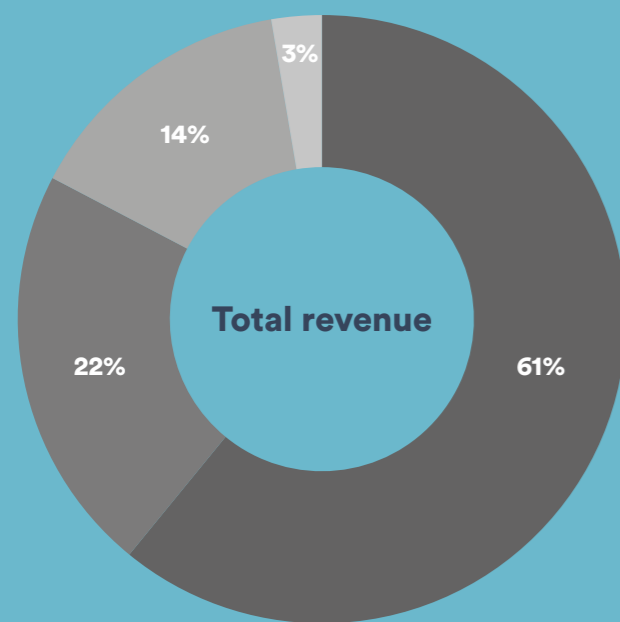
Jenny Anderson  
Ines & Dr Don Behrend  
John & Nancy Bomford  
Pam Caldwell  
Dr Jennifer Coghlan-Bell & A/Prof Simon Bell  
Laurie David  
Beatrice & Richard Donkin  
Dr M Elizabeth Douglas  
Jean Dunn  
Dennis Freeman  
Jill & Robert Grogan  
Dr Irene Irvine  
Dr Garry Joslin  
Angela Kayser  
I Kearsey & M J Ridley  
Michael Kirwan  
Robert & Pamela Knight  
Jane Kunstler  
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Carmel Morfuni  
Ian Morrey & Dr Geoffrey Minter  
Prof Margaret Plant  
Greg J Reinhardt  
Michael Rigg  
Aubrey Schrader  
Dr John & Thea Scott

Prof Michael Smith  
Prof Elsdon Storey  
Tam Vu & Cheryl Tillman  
Bart Wissink & Kaye Salisbury  
Anonymous (8)

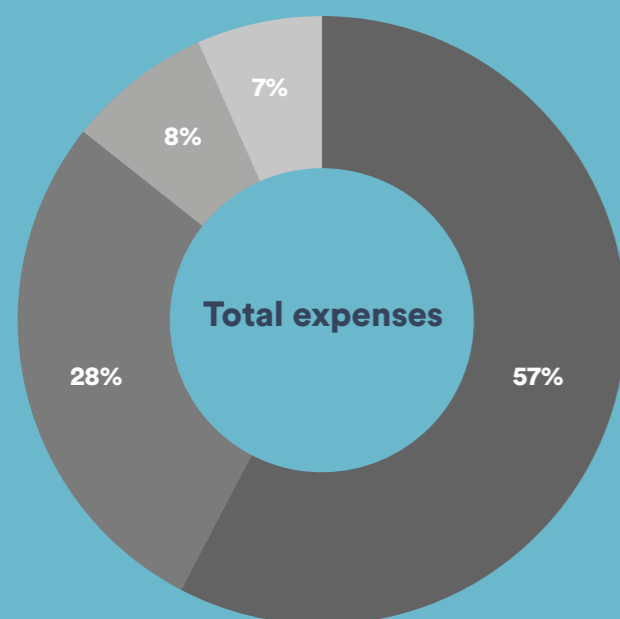
## Bequests

G Bawden and L DeKieviet  
Lesley Bawden  
Frank and Danielle Chamberlin  
Colin Gunther and Richard Laslett  
Jane Kunstler  
Tony Wildman and Robert Gibbs  
Anonymous (3)

# Accounts



- Government funding revenue**  
61%
- Box Office and performance income**  
22%
- Sponsorship, philanthropic and donation income**  
14%
- Other income**  
3%



- Personnel expenses (including artists and production staff)**  
57%
- Production expenses**  
28%
- Administrative expenses**  
8%
- Marketing and Development expenses**  
7%

# Partners

Victorian Opera is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. Victorian Opera would also like to acknowledge, with great appreciation, the contribution of the partners listed on this page.

## Government Partners



## Award



## Foundation Partner



## University Partner



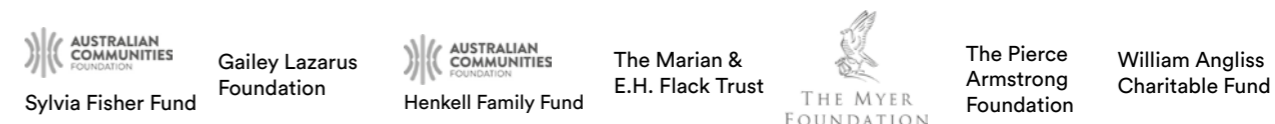
## Regional Partner



## Supporting Partners



## Trusts & Foundations



## Performance Partners



## Technology & Lighting Partners



Victorian Opera creates tailored partnerships to enable businesses to meet their strategic priorities. For a discussion about how your business can benefit from a partnership with Victorian Opera, please contact Louise O'Loughlin, Development Manager, on (03) 9001 6405 or [louise@victorianopera.com.au](mailto:louise@victorianopera.com.au)





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