

VICTORIAN OPERA



ANNUAL REPORT 2019



WELCOME

Based in Melbourne, Victorian Opera is a national leader in presenting unforgettable opera and musical theatre experiences.

As the state opera company of Victoria, we are committed to making creative and accessible opera for everyone, and evolving the art form in adventurous ways.

From opera diehards to first-timers, over 30,000 people experience our work annually through live performances, streamed events and activities in Victoria and Tasmania.

We premiere at least one new Australian work each year and have staged 22 new works since the company formed in 2005.

We employ hundreds of people across the creative industries, recruit some of the finest singers from Australia and around the world, and collaborate with Australia's leading companies, venues and learning institutions.

The next generation of talent is developed from the ground up through the Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE) and our innovative Access All Areas: Livestream Program. As part of our commitment to developing the art form, we also stage opera in Tasmania.

Recognised for our unique voice and contribution to the country's operatic landscape, Victorian Opera was awarded Major Performing Arts company status in 2019.



REIMAGINING THE POTENTIAL OF OPERA AND MUSICAL THEATRE, FOR EVERYONE

Victorian Opera entered a new age in 2019 as our young company marked one of its most significant years to date.

In addition to presenting a broadly diverse season, we joined the ranks alongside many of Australia's most esteemed organisations as a Major Performing Arts company; a proud reflection and celebration of the contribution that our company has made to the Australian cultural landscape.

We opened our season with a return to the Palais Theatre, St Kilda to stage Wagner's final masterwork, *Parsifal*. An opera of serene and ethereal beauty, it was a monumental undertaking for our company and represented a great accomplishment. The Australian Youth Orchestra (AYO), director Roger Hodgman and Victorian Opera reunited once again, following our 2015 collaboration: Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. It was a privilege to work with these fine young musicians and an exceptional international cast, featuring many of the world's greatest Wagnerian singers: Burkhard Fritz, Katarina Dalayman and Peter Rose.

It is always a special honour for our company to welcome local artists back home from their distinguished international careers to make their Australian debuts. In this instance, we celebrated the homecoming of both baritone James Roser and bass-baritone Derek Welton - in his signature role as Klingsor, a role supported by the Richard Wagner Society of Victoria.

Our base Horti Hall's Hemstritch Studio became a social hub in 2019; extending beyond our primary rehearsal room as a site for so much more. We welcomed audiences for a variety of events including a talk series and intimate recitals across Five Fridays in August.

Primary students, teachers and families were greatly entertained by the company's latest operatic invention for kids, *Alice Through the Opera Glass*. An amusing and musically rich hour of opera's great arias, duets and ensembles woven together in a whimsical adventure guided by Alice and the White Rabbit.

Following Victorian Opera's much-loved Sondheim Trilogy from 2013-2015, we presented another of his masterworks: *A Little Night Music*. Director Stuart Maunder and Music Director Phoebe Briggs lead an enviable cast of Australia's most loved music theatre performers, including Nancye Hayes, Simon Gleeson, Verity Hunt-Ballard and Alinta Chidzey.

Ali McGregor returned to Victorian Opera to head the cast as Desirée Armfeldt, delivering a captivating performance and rendition of 'Send in the Clowns'.

The glories of Italian opera were performed in the concert *Heroic Bel Canto* featuring the sublime Jessica Pratt, the Australian debut of Italian mezzo Daniela Barcellona, and Orchestra Victoria.

In October, we premiered our latest commission, *The Selfish Giant*. The adaptation of Oscar Wilde's parable

was beautifully reimaged by two of Victorian Opera's promising former Developing Artists: composer and conductor Simon Bruckard and librettist Emma Muir-Smith.

It was another moment of immense pride for our company as the pair displayed the depths of their talents with this new creation. As our annual Youth Opera, it was performed by a cast of emerging artists, featuring singers aged 13-25 and members of the Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE).

Ending a season with Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* is a delicious treat for artists and audiences alike. It was a special joy to collaborate as conductor and director on a semi-staged concert version of this *opera buffa*. Jose Carbo reprised one of his signature roles as Figaro alongside Italy's most celebrated Rosina, Chiara Amarù, in her local debut. We welcomed the return of Paolo Pecchioli in the role of Don Basilio and rising star Brenton Spiteri as Count Almaviva.

This production toured to Launceston and was performed with our colleagues at the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, before performances in Melbourne together with Orchestra Victoria.

Diverse and enriching; a year to celebrate.

Dr Richard Mills AM
Artistic Director, Victorian Opera

Elizabeth Hill-Cooper
Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Opera

Following the formation of Victorian Opera in October 2005, the state opera company has taken many important steps in each year of its existence. Across this time, our dedicated staff and artists have worked tirelessly for each performance staged and helped develop our reputation for reimagining the potential of opera and musical theatre, for everyone.

These many years of hard work and artistic excellence resulted in a significant achievement for Victorian Opera in 2019, as we became a Major Performing Arts company. We thank the many individuals behind this success and celebrate our increased capacity for even further growth.

In May 2019, following a rigorous executive search, we unveiled Victorian Opera's new CEO Elizabeth Hill-Cooper. Drawing upon her nationwide career across the arts and extensive career in management at both Opera Australia and Victorian Opera, Elizabeth was a natural selection for this role. Under the stewardship of Elizabeth and Richard Mills, Victorian Opera is poised for a bright artistic future.

Our Season 2019 demonstrated bold artistic diversity: Wagner, Sondheim, Rossini, both a concert and family opera, as well as a world premiere and a myriad of intimate recitals. Our diversity was matched with artistic excellence of the highest standard and extraordinary audience enthusiasm.

At the heart of Victorian Opera is a dedication to the next generation of operatic talent. Our greatly valued association with the University of Melbourne continued with student singers, undertaking either a Bachelor of Music or Master of Opera Performance, cutting their teeth on the professional stage in our productions of Wagner's *Parsifal* and family opera *Alice Through the Opera Glass*.

Similarly, we introduced over 2,500 primary students statewide to the magic of our art form with the second instalment of our popular Access All Areas: Livestream Program.

The result of such an attitude toward nurturing emerging talent was especially evident with the world premiere of

The Selfish Giant; a new opera deftly realised by former Developing Artists Simon Bruckard and Emma Muir-Smith. It sold out a five-performance season at Gasworks Theatre and was met with both audience and critical acclaim.

Victorian Opera continued to extend its reach interstate in 2019. In addition to our concert staging of *The Barber of Seville* in Tasmania, Victorian Opera's productions *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* and *Cunning Little Vixen* were staged by West Australian Opera and State Opera of South Australia, respectively. Our relationship with Sydney Chamber Opera yielded another rewarding collaboration with the world premiere of Elliott Gyger's *Oscar and Lucinda*.

Victorian Opera acknowledges our many key supporters for enabling us to realise another highly successful season.

It is always a great privilege to recognise the commitment we receive from these individuals and organisations. In February 2019, we were proud to name our primary rehearsal studio after our former Chairman Jane Hemstritch. This was an important acknowledgement of Jane's commitment to our company and many years of generous patronage.

Our thanks to the Australia Council for the Arts, The State Government of Victoria through Creative Victoria, our long-standing Foundation partner the Robert Salzer Foundation, our Trusts and Foundations, Patrons, Corporate Partners, and audiences.

Genevieve Overell
Chairman, Victorian Opera

PRODUCTIONS IN 2019

Parsifal

“This was one of most compelling *Parsifal*'s I have experienced. The quality was excellent, the Australian Youth Orchestra full of poise and maturity, all the singing impressive. Victorian Opera should be proud.”

★★★★★ - *Bachtrack*



A Little Night Music

“The production positively drips with wit and charm, with a sumptuous visual palette to accompany the show's myriad musical and dramatic pleasures. And best of all, it has a cast without a single weak link; it's the most consistent *Little Night Music* the city has ever seen.”

★★★★ - *Time Out Melbourne*

The Selfish Giant

“A highlight of Victorian Opera's season.”

- *Classic Melbourne*



The Barber of Seville

“Victorian Opera has not only presented an exceptionally good *Barber*, it has provided Melbourne a truly world-class, technically flawless celebration of the art of singing.”

★★★★½ - *The Age*

Heroic Bel Canto

“A deliciously crafted program of lesser performed arias, duets and ensembles in praise of the art of *bel canto* spun its dazzling charms from go to whoa.”

- *Opera Chaser*



Alice Through the Opera Glass

“A thoroughly engaging show that some lucky Victorian children will be singing about for a long time.”

- *Opera Chaser*



INSPIRING AUDIENCES

Victorian Opera reached a national audience of

23,760

across

253

performances and activities.

8,138

audience members for *Parsifal* and *A Little Night Music*.

11,639

audience members engaged with our livestream activities.

SOLD OUT

5 performances of *The Selfish Giant*



Photography Credits:
Beata Bowes (pp. 9)
Jeff Busby (cover, pp. 6, 10, 12-13)
Nick Hanson (pp. 8, 14)
Charlie Kinross (pp. 2-3, 4, 6, 7)



REIMAGINING THE POTENTIAL OF OPERA THROUGH EDUCATION

The wonders of opera were encountered by many students statewide in 2019 through Victorian Opera's Education Programs.

The Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE) saw one of its biggest cohorts yet with 45 young singers aged 13-20 participating in the ensemble. Eighteen members began the year by performing in the chorus of Victorian Opera's production of *Parsifal*. This experience allowed them to gain an understanding of the inner workings of staging opera at a professional level and had them working closely with high calibre international and local opera singers and creatives.

Led by Music Director Angus Grant and Victorian Opera music staff, VOYCE performed a wide range of repertoire in concerts throughout the year, including sections of Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*, Ravel's *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* and Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*. The year concluded with a series of workshops given by guest singers Timothy Reynolds, Merlyn Quaife and Paolo Pecchioli.

Victorian Opera's annual Youth Opera featured a new work written by two of the company's former Developing

Artists, Simon Bruckard and Emma Muir-Smith, called *The Selfish Giant*. Directed by Cameron Menzies and featuring a cast of young, aspiring singers, the production highlighted the promising future of opera, showcasing the next generation of singers and opera makers.

More than 2,500 primary school students from across Victoria tuned in to learn about opera and the creative process in Victorian Opera's Access All Areas: Livestream Program. The program was presented in conjunction with the company's 2019 schools' production, *Alice Through the Opera Glass*.

Over four 45-minute workshops livestreamed into classrooms on a weekly basis, students met members of the cast, creative team and orchestra; learnt about the different voice types; and took part in a variety of live activities which included learning *Carmen*'s 'Toreador' chorus in French and following the director as he directed a scene.

The program concluded with a performance of *Alice Through the Opera Glass* which students watched either live at Arts Centre Melbourne,

Playhouse Theatre, or streamed to their classroom, depending on the location of their school.

Overall, the program received very positive feedback; with one school reporting that the knowledge they gained from the workshops helped them stage their own production later in the year.

Victorian Opera continued its close association with the University of Melbourne, providing a range of performance opportunities for singers undertaking either a Bachelor of Music or Master of Opera Performance. Students featured in the chorus of Victorian Opera's productions of *Parsifal* and *Alice Through the Opera Glass*, while some successfully auditioned for principal roles in *The Selfish Giant*.

In 2019, Victorian Opera hosted five Year 10 students as part of its Work Experience Program. Eager to learn about the inner workings of an opera company, students spent time with members of each department, assisted in wardrobe, and observed orchestral readings as the company prepared for its production of *A Little Night Music*.

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 2019, Victorian Opera engaged hundreds of people in the creative industry.



277

performers, musicians and creatives

76

creative design and technical employees

244

casual workforce

2,043

audience development activities

OUR PARTNERS

WE ACKNOWLEDGE AND THANK OUR PARTNERS WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Victorian Opera is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



Victorian Opera is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.

FOUNDATION PARTNER



UNIVERSITY PARTNER



AWARDS



TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust | Gailey Lazarus Foundation | Leo & Mina Fink Fund | William Angliss Charitable Fund



Henkell Family Fund 2 | Ballandry (Peter Griffin Family) Fund

MAJOR PARTNERS



OFFICIAL PARTNERS



MEDIA PARTNERS



SUPPLY PARTNERS



PERFORMANCE 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

VICTORIAN OPERA PATRONS

For the year 2019

If you would like to get more involved in the work of Victorian Opera by becoming a Patron, please contact Louise O'Loughlin, Development Manager via phone on (03) 9001 6405 or via email louise@victorianopera.com.au



Patron-in-Chief

The Hon. Linda Dessau, AC, Governor of Victoria

Founding Benefactor

The late Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC
Lady Potter AC

Leadership Syndicate (40K+)

Hans and Petra Henkell
Jane Hemstritch

Artistic Director's Circle (10K+)

John & Diana Frew
Suzanne Kirkham
Peter & Anne Laver
Greig Gailey and Dr Geraldine Lazarus
Simone Lourey
Mercer Family Foundation
Michael Rigg & Gerard Condon AM
Joy Selby Smith
Dr John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith
The Richard Wagner Society
Maureen Wheeler AO & Tony Wheeler AO

Platinum Patrons (\$5K +)

Beth Brown
Carolyn & Stephen Coffey
Mary-Jane Gething
Elizabeth Hill-Cooper
Peter & Jenny Hordern
Siobhan Lenihan
Kaye E Marion
Grant Powell and Sally McCutchan
Marian & Ken Scarlett OAM
Greg Shalit & Miriam Faine
Prof. Barbara van Ernst AM

Gold Patrons (2.5K +)

Joanna Baevski
Alan Chuck & Wendy Hughes Chuck
Jim Cousins AO and Libby Cousins
Earl of Wilton
Freda Freiberg
Bob Garlick
John & Gaye Gaylard
Murray Gordon & Lisa Norton
Peter J. Griffin AM & Terry Swann
Linda Herd
Ian Kennedy AM & Dr Sandra Hacker AO
Richard Laslett & Colin Gunther
RJ-AM Charitable Trust
Peter Lovell & Michael Jan
Linley Martin AO
Ian Merrylees
Dr Paul Nisselle AM & Sue Nisselle

Ruth & Tom O'Dea

Tomasz & Elzbeita Romanowski
Ian Baker & Cheryl Saunders
Phillip & Sue Schudmak
Craig D'Alton & Peter Sherlock
Lynne Sherwood
The late David Valentine
Secret Admirers (2)

Silver Patrons (1K +)

Laurie Bebbington & Elizabeth O'Keefe
Kirsty A Bennett
Nancy Bomford
Box Family
Stuart Brown
Susan Brownrigg
Anthony Buzzard and Dr Pamela Craig
The Hon David Byrne
Ms Pam Caldwell
Elise Callander
Rob & Caroline Clemente
Jennifer Cook
Bea & Richard Donkin
Dr M Elizabeth Douglas
Rosemary Faraone
Dr Helen M Ferguson
Bill Fleming
Brian Goddard
Nance Grant AM MBE & Ian Harris
John L Harrison & David J Wright
Hartmut & Ruth Hofmann

Simon L Jackson & Brian Warburton
David Joseph
Graham McCallum & Mary Kehoe
The Hon Rod Kemp AM & Daniele Kemp
Pat & Alun Kenwood
Angela & Richard Kirsner
Pamela Knight and the late Robert Knight
John Landy AC & Lynne Landy
Paul & Glenys Lejins
Dr Anne Lierse
Selina Lightfoot
Douglas & Rosemary Meagher
Gillian Montgomery
Isobel Morgan OAM
Jillian Pappas & George Pappas AO
Helen Paton
Jane Patrick & Robert Evans
Dr Garry Joslin & Prof. Dimity Reed AM
Dr Richard Reed & Vivienne Reed OAM
Prof John Rickard
Angela & Michael Rodd
John & Thea Scott
Sparky Foundation
Dush Shan
John E. Smith
Lady Southey AC
Peter Stirling
James Syme
Rosemary and Dr Alan Tait
Andrea Tappe
Caroline & Richard Travers OAM

Chris & Helen Trueman
Prof. Belinda Tynan
Caroline Vaillant
Ian Watts OAM & Rex Swanson
Russell Waters & Marissa Barter-Waters
Rev Noel Whale
Secret Admirers (7)

Bronze Patrons (\$500+)

Seonaid Alexander
Prof Dennis Altman AM
Jenny Anderson
Lesley Bawden
Ines & Dr Donald Behrend
Philip Benjamin & Sandy Benjamin OAM
Cheryl R Benson
David Bernshaw & Caroline Isakow
Marc Besen AC & Eva Besen AO
Stephen & Maura Best
Shirley Breese
Mal Carter
Brenda Every
Dennis Freeman
Dr Irene Irvine and Prof. Iain Wallace
Joan Janka
Angela Kayser
Jack & Marie Kirszenblat
Joan & George Lefroy
Dr Kristina Macrae
Jocelyn & Andrew McLeish
Greg Noonan
Genevieve Overell

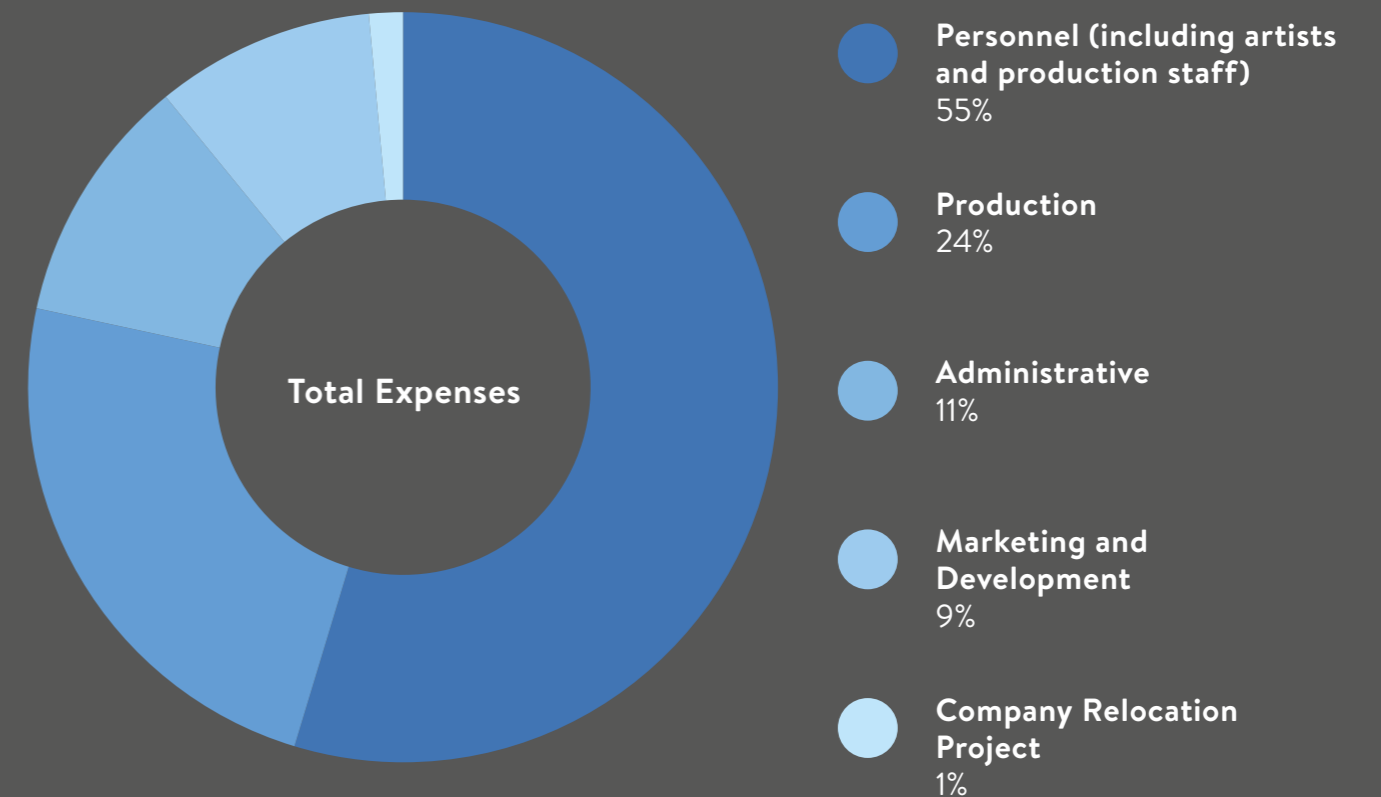
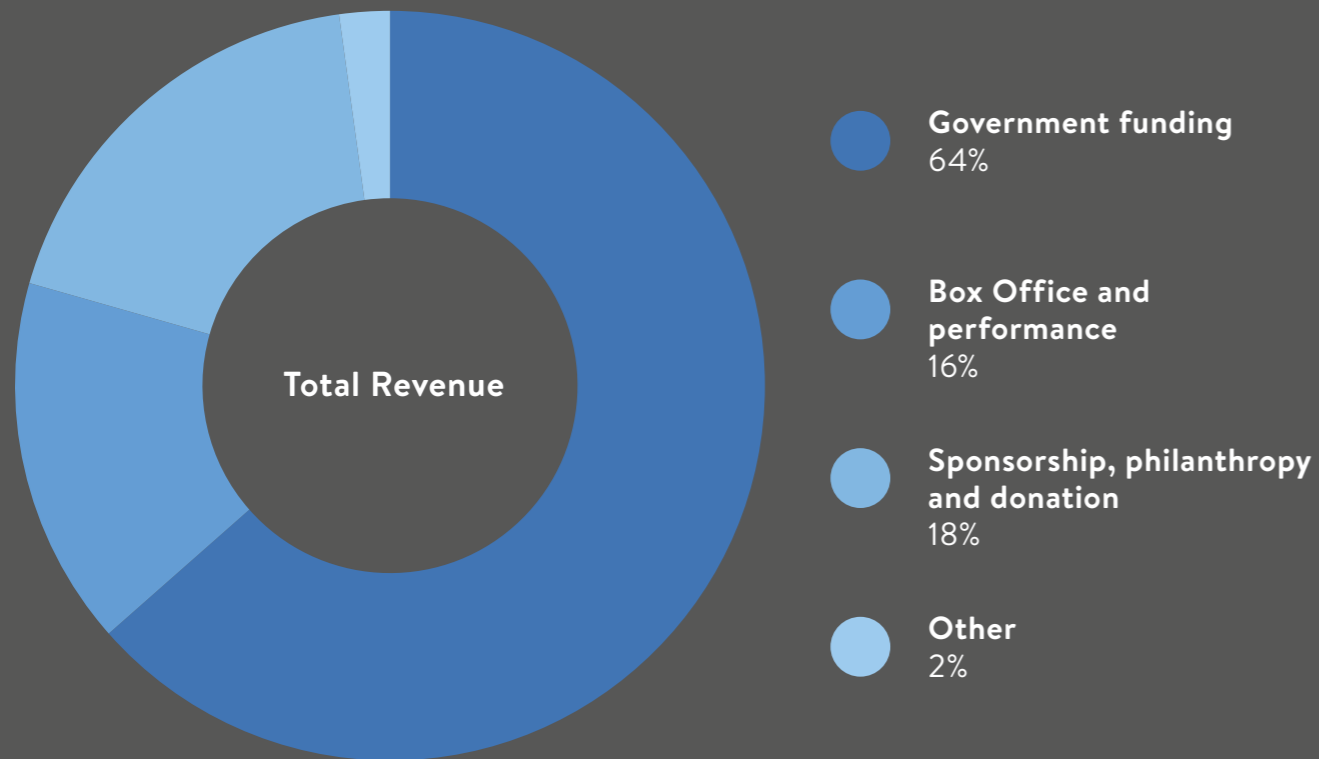
Jill Page OAM & Roy Page
Campbell & Christine Penfold
Gregory J Reinhardt AM
Aubrey Schrader
Libby Smith & John Middleton
In memory of Helen Robertson
Dr Rosalynd Smith
Michael Smith & Sonnia Fuenteseca
Christine Stott
Neil Twist
Catherine Walter AM
Diana and Robert Wilson
Secret Admirers (8)

Bequests

Jenny Anderson
Lesley Bawden
Graeme Bawden & Len de Kievit
Richard Laslett & Colin Gunther
Dr Garry Joslin & Prof. Dimity Reed AM
Frank & Danielle Chamberlin
Jane Kunstler
Tony Wildman & Robert Gibbs
Gregory J Reinhardt AM
Helen and Chris Trueman
Secret Admirers (7)

Estates
The late Felicity Teague

FINANCIALS



OUR BOARD

Chairman

Genevieve Overell

Roger Box

Vivienne Corcoran
(Chair of Marketing Committee)

Siobhan Lenihan

Selina Lightfoot

Stephen McIntyre
(Chair of Artistic Committee)

Grant Powell

(Chair of People and Culture Committee)

Penny Stragolinos (retired in May 2019)
(former Chair of Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee)

Patricia Stebbens (appointed in Aug 2019)
(Chair of Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee)

Anna Pitt (Board Observer)

VICTORIAN OPERA

victorianopera.com.au

