

VICTORIAN
OPERA

A large, illuminated marquee sign for the musical 'Follies' is the central focus. The sign is rectangular with a decorative border of small, glowing yellow lights. The word 'FOLLIES' is written in large, stylized letters, each composed of many small, glowing yellow lights. The sign is set against a dark background, and the theater's ceiling and stage lights are visible in the background, creating a dramatic atmosphere.

FOLLIES

Book by
JAMES GOLDMAN

Music and Lyrics by
STEPHEN SONDHEIM

VICTORIAN OPERA PRESENTS

FOLLIES

Book by **James Goldman** Music and Lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim**

Produced originally by **Harold Prince**
Orchestrations by **Jonathan Tunick**

By special arrangement with Cameron Mackintosh.
Licensed exclusively by Music Theatre International (Australasia).

Victorian Opera respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia.

We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waterways and communities through song, dance and storytelling.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their Elders past and present.

Always was, always will be.

CREATIVES

Musical Director Phoebe Briggs	Lighting Designer Gavan Swift
Director Stuart Maunder	Sound Designer Sam Moxham
Set and Costume Designer Roger Kirk	Associate Designer Louisa Fitzgerald
Choreographer Yvette Lee	Assistant Choreographer Mitchell Fistrovic Doidge

CAST

Phyllis Rogers Stone Marina Prior	Heidi Schiller Merlyn Quaife
Sally Durant Plummer Antoinette Halloran	Young Phyllis Taao Buchanan
Benjamin Stone Adam Murphy	Young Sally Mia Simonette
Buddy Plummer Alexander Lewis	Young Ben Jack Van Staveren
Carlotta Champion Anne Wood	Young Buddy Jacob Steen
Stella Deems Rhonda Burchmore	Roscoe/Max Deems Stephen Smith
Emily Whitman Colette Mann	Theodore Whitman Tom Blair
Hattie Walker Geraldene Morrow	Dimitri Weismann Grant Piro
Solange La Fitte Evelyn Krape	Young Heidi Nina Korbe

ENSEMBLE

Jared Bryan	Mitchell Fistrovic Doidge	Emily Lodge	Kristina McNamara
Sienna Embrey	Mikaela Jade	Callum Marshall	Max Patterson
Mia Fenelon	Pip Keltie	James Maxfield	Michael Ralph
			Carter Rickard

ORCHESTRA

Orchestra Victoria

1 – 6 FEBRUARY
PALAIS THEATRE, ST KILDA
2 hours and 15 minutes, plus one interval



CEO'S MESSAGE

Welcome to 2025 and all that Victorian Opera has to offer. This year, we'll present grand opera, children's opera, opera by emerging artists, and musical theatre. There's something for everyone, and we'd love to invite you to find a friend to join us for one, or more, of our productions across the season. As Victorian Opera's Artistic Director Stuart Maunder says: "Step through our doors, anything can happen."

Follies catapults you into the grand scale of our annual offerings. From the moment we committed to this production as part of the 2025 program, we have been gathering a legendary musical theatre cast and a brilliant creative team to bring you this incredibly touching work.

In *Follies*, James Goldman and Stephen Sondheim have created a tale that spans decades and brings to life some of musical theatre's most iconic tunes, performed by Australia's most spectacular artists.

As always, we are grateful to our funding partners, Creative Australia, Creative Victoria and the Robert Salzer Foundation. To all our Patrons, Partners and Corporate Sponsors, thank you. You are what makes this company so rich with inspiration. You inspire all of us to create beautiful, challenging and moving productions.

We look forward to seeing you all over the coming year.

ELIZABETH HILL-COOPER
CEO, Victorian Opera

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

One fateful day in 1977, a friend lent me the double album of the current West End hit: *Side by Side by Sondheim*. I marvelled at the extraordinary output from this giant of music theatre. As wonderful and varied as every song was, the title most represented in the compilation show was the 1971 musical *Follies*.

I subsequently bought all the original Broadway cast albums of the then available Sondheim shows. Finally, songs that had captivated me in the four-hand piano accompanied *Side by Side* burst through the speakers. Of these remarkable albums, the most striking was *Follies*, beginning, as it does, with a thunderous timpani roll, moving to dark, ghostly brass chords, which finally morph into a spidery, spectral theme. There followed a parade of glorious songs of astonishing variety; new minted standards, many pastiche but with particular Sondheim attitude. This show was unlike any other Sondheim — haunted, beautiful and full of exquisite pain and wonder.

Like most people who had not seen the 1971 original season of the show, I had no idea of the full force of *Follies* until I experienced the show in a full production. Concert versions had showcased the entire score, but necessarily truncated James Goldman's acerbic book and changed the ending to one more hopeful. And of course, the physical productions were minimal. These, often thrilling, occasions were

licenced as *Follies in Concert*. But that's a different experience to the full show.

Follies, the show, is greater, much greater, than the sum of its parts. No musical is more informed by its every ingredient: a masterful blend of a revelatory score, showbiz spectacle and existential exploration. *Follies* is a celebration of regret, of resilience, of resignation.

Set against the backdrop of a reunion for former performers of a Ziegfeld *Follies*-style revue, *Follies* is a smash up of derelict theatre and fantasy world — bugle beads and tinsel and rubble. Within the walls of a crumbling theatre the action shifts between present and past, the ghosts of their former lives emerging and retreating, echoing memories of lost dreams, forcing the characters to confront their past selves and inviting audiences to confront their own ghosts. *Follies* challenges us to reckon with our lives and the choices we've made.

"Never look back," warns the old opera singer, Heidi, in the duet 'One more Kiss'. But who will listen?

STUART MAUNDER
Artistic Director, Victorian Opera
Director, *Follies*

MUSICAL DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Composed by Stephen Sondheim, with a book by James Goldman, *Follies* opened on Broadway in 1971. To audiences more used to musical comedy that featured escapist nostalgia, the work was daring and new.

In *Follies*, the past and present collide both musically and emotionally through a thrilling score bursting with a variety of musical styles and clever lyrics. Indeed, Stephen Sondheim's music and lyrics conjure up a world of reflection, joy and pain as we witness the reunion of a group of Weismann's Follies girls.

The score features some of Sondheim's best known and most loved songs, including 'Broadway Baby', 'I'm Still Here' and 'Losing My Mind'. From a song reminiscent of one found on an MGM movie soundtrack ('Beautiful Girls'), to Sondheim's more modern sound of 1971, the score uses pastiche to reflect the joy, heartbreak, celebration and reflection of the reunion.

The opening sequence — with its dramatic timpani roll and eery, fragile, almost filmic waltz — immediately takes us into a world of nostalgia, regret, hope and memories. It suspends us for a moment, before building to a musical climax that finally breaks into a joyous 1920s-style party scene as the reunion begins and the guests arrive.

Inspired and influenced by composers and lyricists such as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and Oscar Hammerstein, Sondheim takes us back to a style featured between the World Wars when the annual Follies shows were performed. A more 'modern' style is used for the 'present' of 1971 as the characters reminisce about their time in the Follies, and the past and present intertwine.

In the Loveland sequence, a surreal reenactment of the Follies, each song reflects the characters' inner turmoil, with torch song, vaudeville, and a suave character song which disintegrates into the final, unsettling chaos scene.

In his book about the making of *Follies*, Ted Chapin writes of the excitement of the cast and Sondheim himself upon hearing Jonathan Tunick's orchestrations for the first time. The orchestrations are lush and full of character, with close harmonies from the reeds (the score calls for reed players who can play up to seven different instruments each) and bright brass sections in the 1920s and '30s style numbers.

What a thrill and real joy it has been working on this production of *Follies*.

PHOEBE BRIGGS
Musical Director



SYNOPSIS

The story takes place in 1971. The Weismann Theatre, home to the Weismann Follies, is about to be torn down. Dimitri Weismann, the impresario who produced the shows, is giving a party on the stage of the theatre, and has invited all the living performers, along with their husbands and wives, to celebrate the nostalgia of the occasion. During the course of the party we meet them all, but the action chiefly involves two chorus girls from the 1941 Follies, Sally Durant and Phyllis Rogers, who were best friends then and haven't seen each other since. They are escorted by their husbands, Buddy Plummer and Benjamin Stone, who courted them when they were in the show.



PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Manager
Will Barker
Assistant Stage Managers
Lucie Sutherland
Morgan Clyne
Ensemble Manager
Lexie Jaensch
Mechanists
Emily Van Dyk
Mark Lawrence
Props & Scenic Art
Alex Donnelly
Josh Meadows
Brooke Painter
Set Construction
Jesse Chabrier-Pope
Head Electrician
Jamie Turner
Lighting Programmer
Robert Cuddon
Lighting Technicians
Jack Willis-Hall
Sammy Victoria
Dome Operators
Isabel Caneleo
Sophie Daniels
Radio Microphone Technicians
Em Holgate
Owen Arnold
Systems Engineer
Daniel O'Callaghan

INTERNS

Directorial Intern
Noah Gullan
Stage Management Interns
Annabelle Rossi
Ellie Roth

MUSIC STAFF

Repetiteur
Kath Gillon
Tom Griffiths

SEASON STAFF

Costume Supervisor
Becky Silveira
Costumiers
Becky Silveira
Simon Doe
Fiona Holley
Olivia Peters
Xander Reichard
Liz Gooden
Ines Kustura
Olivia Stephenson
Kim Bishop
Merideth Clements
Aleeah Gabriel
Shula Hampson
Bianka Gunay
David Andersons
Wig Designer
Cheryl Williams
Wig Builders
Deb Muller
Gabi Havens
Nadia Semanic

Dressers

Kim Bishop
Olivia Peters
Ines Kustura
Olivia Ryan
Olivia Stephenson
Hair and Makeup
Elena Cavazzana
Kat Payen-Payne
Lou McLaren
Kartika Stanley
Costume Maintenance
Shula Hampson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Imported Theatre Fabrics
Monitor City
Lex AV
PRG
Moving Containers

ORCHESTRA

ORCHESTRA VICTORIA

Violin
Concertmaster
Sulki Yu
Chair supported by Lady Southey AC
Deputy Concertmaster
Yi Wang
Chair supported by Susan & Leith Campbell
Associate Principal
First Violin
Tomomi Brennan
Tutti
Alyssa Conrau
Chair supported by Leanne Menegazzo
Rebecca Shirley
Chair supported by Andrew Fairley AM

Viola
Associate Principal
Thomas Higham
Matt Laing +
Tutti
Nadine Delbridge
Chair supported by Kangaroo Ground Nominees Pty Ltd

Cello
Associate Principal
Diane Froomes
Tutti
Tania Hardy-Smith
Zoe Wallace +

Double Bass
Acting Section Principal
Kylie Davies
Associate Principal
Sam Anning +

Reeds
Reed 1
Tony Hicks +
Reed 2
Martin Corcoran +
Reed 3
Brendan Toohey +
Reed 4
Melissa Edwards +
Reed 5
Luke Carbon +
Horn
Section Principal
Andrew Young
Associate Principal
Roman Ponomariov +

Trumpet
Associate Principal
Timothy Francis
Tristan Rebien +
Tutti
Louisa Trewartha +

Trombone
Acting Section Principal
Kieran Conrau
Associate Principal
Robert Collins +
Principal Bass Trombone
Benjamin Anderson
Principal Bass Trombone /
Tutti Trombone
Iain Faragher +

Timpani
Section Principal
Guy du Blêt
Chair supported by Mr Jim Cousins AO & Mrs Libby Cousins AM with Igor Zambelli
Associate Principal Timpani/
Tutti Percussion
Matthew Brennan

Percussion
Section Principal
Mathew Levy
Drumkit
Dave Beck

Harp
Section Principal
Melina van Leeuwen +

Guitar
Principal
Doug de Vries +

Piano/Celesta
Kath Gillon +

KEY
+ Denotes guest musician

For a complete listing of Orchestra Victoria's musicians and staff, visit: orchestravictoria.com.au

Current as at 14/01/2025



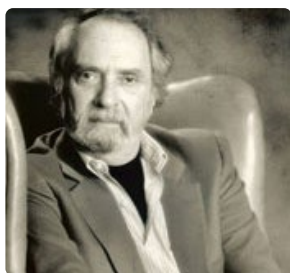
BIOGRAPHIES



STEPHEN SONDHEIM
Music and Lyrics

Stephen Sondheim (1930–2021) wrote the music and lyrics for *Saturday Night* (1954), *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* (1962), *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *The Frogs* (1974), *Pacific Overtures* (1976), *Sweeney Todd* (1979), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), *Sunday In The Park With George* (1984), *Into The Woods* (1987), *Assassins* (1991), *Passion* (1994), *Road Show* (2008) and *HERE WE ARE* (2023), as well as the lyrics for *West Side Story* (1957), *Gypsy* (1959), *Do I Hear A Waltz?* (1965) and additional lyrics for *Candide* (1973). *Side By Side By Sondheim* (1976), *Marry Me A Little* (1981), *You're Gonna Love Tomorrow* (1983), *Putting It Together* (1993/99), *Moving On* (2001), *Sondheim On Sondheim* (2010) and *Old Friends* (2023) are anthologies of his work as composer and lyricist. For films, he composed the scores of *Stavisky* (1974), co-composed the score for *Reds* (1981), and wrote songs for *Dick Tracy* (1990). He wrote songs for the television production *Evening Primrose* (1966), co-authored the film *The Last of Sheila* (1973) and the play *Getting Away With Murder* (1996) and provided incidental music for the plays *The Girls of Summer* (1956), *Invitation To A March* (1961), *Twigs* (1971) and *The Enclave* (1973). He won the Tony Award for Best Score for *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Into the Woods*, and *Passion*, all of which won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, as did *Pacific Overtures* and *Sunday In The Park With George*, the latter also receiving the Pulitzer Prize for Drama (1985).

Stephen Sondheim was born and raised in New York City. He graduated from Williams College, winning the Hutchinson Prize for Music Composition, after which he studied theory and composition with Milton Babbitt. He served on the Council of the Dramatists Guild, the national association of playwrights, composers and lyricists, and served as its president from 1973 to 1981. In 1983 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 1990 was appointed the first Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theatre at Oxford University. He was awarded the Kennedy Center Honors in 1993, the National Medal of Arts in 1996, the MacDowell Medal in 2013 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015. His collected lyrics with attendant essays have been published in two volumes: *Finishing the Hat* (2010) and *Look, I Made a Hat* (2011). In 2010 the Broadway theater formerly known as Henry Miller's Theatre was renamed in his honor, and in 2019 he became the first living artist to have a theatre named in his honor on Shaftesbury Avenue when the refurbished Queen's Theatre in London's West End was renamed the Sondheim Theatre to commemorate his 90th birthday, by Sir Cameron Mackintosh.



JAMES GOLDMAN
Author

James Goldman was born in Chicago and graduated from the University of Chicago; he did postgraduate work at Columbia University. He has written numerous plays, including *Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole* (1961; co-written with his brother, William Goldman), *They Might Be Giants* (1961) and *The Lion In Winter* (1966). In addition to *Follies* (1971), he has been the bookwriter of *A Family Affair* (1962; co-author with William Goldman, music by John Kander), the television musical *Evening Primrose* (1967, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim) and *Follies* (1987, London—a re-conception of the original piece). His screenplays include *The Lion in Winter* (1968—Academy Award; British Screenwriters Award), *They Might Be Giants* (1970), *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1971), *Robin and Marian* (1976) and *White Nights* (1985, co-writer). Goldman's work for television has included an adaptation of *Oliver Twist* (1982), *Anna Karenina* (1985), *Anastasia: The Mystery of Anna Anderson* (1986). He is also the author of a novel, *Waldorf*.



PHOEBE BRIGGS
Musical Director

Phoebe Briggs has appeared in concerts in Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Japan.

BMus (University of Melbourne). Opera Australia music staff 2002 – 2012, Head of Music at Victorian Opera since October 2012. For Victorian Opera, Phoebe has conducted *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Play of Herod*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Cendrillon*, *Four Saints in Three Acts* (Green Room nomination), *The Sleeping Beauty* (Green Room nomination), *Lorelei*, *Black Rider* (Helpmann nomination, VO/Malthouse), *A Little Night Music*, *Happy End* and *The Visitors*. Other companies: Opera Northwest, IFAC, Opera Australia, Ambassador Group, Chamber Made Opera, MTC, OzOpera.



STUART MAUNDER
Director

Stuart Maunder has been directing musical theatre and opera in Australia for 44 years. He joined The Australian Opera as Stage Manager in 1978, becoming a Resident Director in 1981. He returned to Opera Australia as Artistic Administrator in 1999, becoming Executive Producer in 2004. His OA productions include *Tales of Hoffmann*, *Manon*, *Gypsy Princess*, *Don Pasquale*, *Trial by Jury*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *H.M.S Pinafore* and *My Fair Lady*. From 2014 to 2018, Stuart was General Director of New Zealand Opera, before joining State Opera South Australia as Artistic Director in 2018. In May 2023, he helmed Australia's first ever G&S Festival for that company. In 2023, Stuart became Artistic Director of Victorian Opera. His past productions for VO have included *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd*, *A Little Night Music*, *Cunning Little Vixen*, *English Eccentrics* and *La Rondine*.



ROGER KIRK
Set and Costume Designer

Roger Kirk is a Tony Award-winning set and costume designer for theatre, film and television. He has designed costumes for productions such as *The Boy From Oz* with Hugh Jackman, *The King and I* and *King Kong the Musical*. Roger was the costume designer for the film *Jesus Christ Superstar*, other credits include Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Whistle Down The Wind* (London), *The King and I* (London Palladium), Hugh Jackman's *The Boy from Oz Arena Spectacular*, *Silver Rose*, *Le Corsaire* for Munich Opera House, *Dusty – The Original Pop Diva*, and *Shout!*. His Broadway credits include *The King & I* (Tony Award), *Jesus Chris Superstar*, and *42nd Street* (Tony Award Nomination). Roger's most recent credits include *Sweeney Todd* for Victorian Opera, *Miracle City* for Luckiest Productions, *King Kong* on Broadway, *42nd St* in London and the sell-out Australian tour of Hugh Jackman's *Broadway to Oz: Hugh Jackman Live in Concert, World Tour 2019*.



YVETTE LEE
Choreographer

Yvette Lee is a go-to in the world of dance, choreography and show design. She has worked across all genres and industries, from film and television to musical theatre and stadium shows. Her most recent work includes the AFL Grand Final pre-show entertainment for KISS, Robbie Williams, Baker Boy, as well as for Dreamtime at the G.

Yvette is proudly the Artistic Director of the Victorian Dance Festival and the Dance Director for the Victorian State School Spectacular. She has just completed Jessica Mauboy's *Yours Forever Tour*, and was the show director for the *Bridgerton Queensball Immersive* for Netflix. Choreography for Television highlights include *The Masked Singer*, *Dancing With The Stars*, *So You Think You Can Dance Australia* (& Greece), Chris Lilley's *Ja'mie Private School Girl* and much more. Other artists for whom Yvette choreographed and creatively produced include Tim Minchin, Tones & I and Guy Sebastian.

Her fresh take on theatrical choreography includes *Candide*, *Young Frankenstein*, *In The Heights*, and the slasher hit musical *American Psycho*, for which she won a Sydney Theatre Award for Best Choreography.



GAVAN SWIFT
Lighting Designer

Gavan is a Melbourne-based, award-winning lighting designer who works with leading companies and directors across Australia and internationally. His work spans commercial musical theatre, opera, theatre, concerts and events. A selection of Gavan's opera designs include: for Victorian Opera, *Salome*; for San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, State Opera of South Australia, Washington National Opera, LA Opera, and Dallas Opera, *Moby Dick*. His lighting designs for musical theatre include: *Chicago*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Mamma Mia*, *Heathers The Musical*, *Mack & Mabel*, *Chess*, *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Hot Shoe Shuffle*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Sweet Charity*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Footloose*, *Hair*, *Xanadu*, and *Saturday Night Fever* both in Australia and on London's West End.



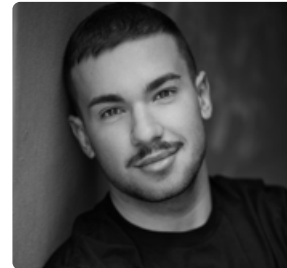
SAMUEL MOXHAM
Sound Designer

Sam Moxham is a seasoned sound engineer with extensive experience in front-of-house mixing, sound design, broadcasting, recording and post-production. He frequently collaborates with Australia's major arts organisations, including The Australian Ballet, Opera Australia and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. After his successful contributions to the 2022, 2023 and 2024 Victorian Opera seasons, he returns as Sound Designer for *Follies*.



LOUISA FITZGERALD
Associate Designer

Louisa Fitzgerald is a set and costume designer for theatre, opera and dance. Her practice is informed by a passion for design history and her skilled background as an artist and maker. Recent design credits include Set and Costume Design for Victorian Opera's *English Eccentrics* (2024) and Set Design for *The Grumpiest Boy in the World* (2023), Costume Design for The Australian Ballet's *Storytime Ballet: Cinderella* (2023), and Set and Costume Design for *Milked* at fortyfive downstairs (2024). Recent associate design credits include Red Stitch's *Your Name Means Dream* (2024), and Victorian Opera's *La Rondine* (2024). Recent award nominations include a 2024 Green Room Award nomination for Opera Design, and 2024 APDG Award nomination for Outstanding Emerging Designer. Louisa is a graduate of the Master of Production Design at the Victorian College of the Arts, and was a 2024 Graduate Ensemble Member of Red Stitch Actors' Theatre.



MITCHELL FISTROVIC DOIDGE
Assistant Choreographer

Mitchell is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School. Mitchell's most recent credits include *Frozen*, *Chicago*, *Saturday Night Fever*; the 10th anniversary celebration tour of *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and the Australian premiere of Disney's *Aladdin*.

Further credits include Hugh Jackman's *Broadway to Oz*; Tommy Arbut in Baz Luhrmann's *Strictly Ballroom the Musical*; the 10th anniversary Australasian tour of *Wicked*; Neleus in the original Australian cast of *Mary Poppins*; *Revenge is Sweeter* tour supporting The Veronicas, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and *Oliver!*. Television credits include Dami Im's *Eurovision Sound of Silence*, Vanessa Amorosi's *Mr Mysterious* video clip, *Carols by Candlelight*, *Australia's Got Talent*, *The X-Factor*, *The TV Week Logie Awards* supporting Jessica Mauboy and *The Rogue Traders*.



MARINA PRIOR
Phyllis Rogers Stone

Marina Prior is known as Australia's Leading Lady of Musical Theatre and was recently appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her service to the Arts. Marina has performed more than 40 lead roles throughout her career thus far. These include: Mabel (*The Pirates of Penzance*), Guinevere opposite Richard Harris (*Camelot*), Cosette (*Les Misérables*), Christine Daae (*The Phantom of the Opera*), Maria (*West Side Story*), Lily (*The Secret Garden*), Miss Adelaide (*Guys and Dolls*), Mrs Banks (*Mary Poppins*), Baroness Schraeder (*The Sound of Music*), Dolly Levi (*Hello Dolly*), Violet Newstead (*9 to 5 – The Musical*), and the roles of Birdwoman and Miss Andrew (*Mary Poppins*). For Melbourne Theatre Company, Marina has played Rona (*The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*), Elmire (*The Hypocrite*), Frances (*Jump*) and Judith Bliss (*Hayfever*). For Sydney Theatre Company, Helen Bechdel (*Fun Home*).

In April, Marina will join the international touring production of *Les Misérables* in the role of Madame Thénardier. She will then perform the lead role of Kimberly in the State Theatre Company South Australia and Melbourne Theatre Company production of *Kimberly Akimbo*.



ANTOINETTE HALLORAN
Sally Durant Plummer

One of Australia's most accomplished and best-loved sopranos, Antoinette Halloran performs regularly with all the major Australasian opera companies and symphony orchestras, and appears frequently on national television and radio. In 2024, she returned to Victorian Opera as Mrs Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* and sang Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance* in Brisbane. Other recent appearances include the first two cycles of Melbourne Opera's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* as Brünnhilde; the title roles in *Tosca* for West Australian Opera and *The Merry Widow* for State Opera South Australia; and *Lady Macbeth (Macbeth)* in Perth. She also starred in State Opera South Australia's *Gilbert & Sullivan Festival* and was associate artist for José Carreras' National Tour. For Opera Australia, Antoinette has performed the title roles in *Madama Butterfly* and *Rusalka*; Mimi in *La bohème*; and Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Green Room Award). For Opera Queensland, she performed the title role in *The Merry Widow*. For New Zealand Opera – Mimi, Cio-Cio-San and Mrs Lovett.



ADAM MURPHY
Benjamin Stone

Adam last performed with Victorian Opera in *Happy End* and is delighted to make his return. He has appeared in various productions for the Melbourne Theatre Company, including *Fun Home*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *True Minds*, *His Girl Friday*, *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Urinetown*.

Other stage credits include *Wicked* and *The Mousetrap* (Crossroads Live); *Aladdin* and *Mary Poppins* (Disney Theatrical); *Georgy Girl* (GG Productions); *Dirty Dancing* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Skyline Theatricals); *The Graduate* (Kay & Mclean); *Guys and Dolls* (Donmar Warehouse); *Mamma Mia* (Dainty Consolidated) and *Les Misérables* (Cameron Mackintosh). He has enjoyed performing in 15 shows for The Production Company. Some favourites include *Ragtime*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Crazy For You*, *42nd St* and *Kiss Me Kate*.

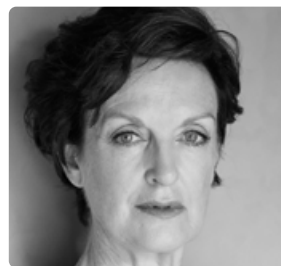
Screen credits include *Ricky Stanicky*, *Sucker*, *MyChonny Moves In*, *Utopia*, *House Husbands*, *City Homicide*, *Halifax f.p.*, *Neighbours*, *Blue Heelers* and *The Forest*.



ALEXANDER LEWIS
Buddy Plummer

Most recently, Alexander Lewis appeared in *Candide* for State Opera South Australia and Victorian Opera, and he took the tenor solo in *Messiah* for the Queensland Symphony. He sang Anatoly in the national tour of *Chess* and *Andres* in *Wozzeck* for Orchestra Wellington. Alexander's musical theatre credits include Tony in *West Side Story* and Anthony Hope in *Sweeney Todd* for Opera Australia; Enoch Snow in *Carousel* for Houston Grand Opera; and Raoul in *The Phantom of the Opera* for the Really Useful Group.

Operatic performances include Laca (*Jenůfa*) for Santa Fe Opera; Danilo (*The Merry Widow*) in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth; the title role in *The Nose* with Opera Australia, Komische Oper Berlin, Royal Opera Covent Garden and The Metropolitan Opera; Hoffmann (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*) with Komische Oper; Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) with West Australian Opera, *Flask (Moby Dick)* with Washington National Opera; and St. Bricioche (*The Merry Widow*) and Borsa (*Rigoletto*) for The Met.



ANNE WOOD
Carlotta Campion

Anne Wood is a multi-award-winning actress, known for originating the role of Donna Sheridan in the premiere Australian production of *Mamma Mia! The Musical* (Dainty Consolidated Entertainment), which she also reprised in the 10th anniversary tour (Littlestar Productions).

Other Australian highlights include *An American in Paris* (GWB Entertainment); *Crazy For You*, *The Sound of Music*, *Wicked* (Gordon Frost Organisation); *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Michael Cassel Group); *The Rocky Horror Show* (New Theatricals); *Beauty and the Beast* (ALG Management); *Cats* (Really Useful Productions); *Dusty, Gypsy, Anything Goes*, *Damn Yankees*, *Follies*, *Carousel* (The Production Company); *Follies* (Storeyboard Entertainment); *Assassins* (Watch This); *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (James Anthony Productions); *City of Angels* (Life Like Company). Overseas credits include *A Swell Party*, *Into the Woods*, *Crazy For You*, *Barnum*, *Aspects of Love*, *Closer Than Ever*, *Romance Romance*. Anne's screen credits include *A Swell Party* (BBC); *Blue Heelers* (Seven Network); *The Doctor Blake Mysteries* (ABC).



RHONDA BURCHMORE
Stella Deems

From Sydney to London's West End to the depths of the South African jungle, Rhonda Burchmore has endeared herself into the hearts of all Australians. Her favourite stage credits range from *Hairspray* to *Hot Shoe Shuffle* and include *Mamma Mia*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Mame* and numerous others. Rhonda performed on the West End in *Sugar Babies* featuring Mickey Rooney and Ann Miller, and *Stop The World I Want To Get Off* with Anthony Newley.

Her screen credits include *I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here*, a lead recurring role in Channel Seven's sitcom *Fam Time*, *Hey Hey It's Saturday*, *The Don Lane Show*, *The Midday Show*, *GMA with Bert Newton*, *Spicks and Specks*, all of the morning shows, *Carols in the Domain* and *Carols by Candlelight*. She has also appeared as a guest on *Kath & Kim* and Nine Network's *Love Child*.

Rhonda made her film debut in the role of Kate in *The Pirate Movie* and more recently as Cheryl in *The Wedding Party*. Rhonda has recorded five albums, including last year's tropical release, *A Red Hot Swingin' Christmas* with ABC Records.



COLETTE MANN
Emily Whitman

Colette is a versatile Australian performer with a rich career across theatre, television, film, and radio. Her recent theatre highlights include *Witch Mauvaise* in the London pantomime *Beauty and the Beast*, *Nessa* in Queensland Theatre's *Head Full of Love*, and *Harmony in Dumped: The Musical*. Notably, she starred in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert: The Musical* from 2007 to 2009, and made her Opera Australia debut in *HMS Pinafore* alongside Anthony Warlow.

On screen, Colette is best known for her iconic role as Doreen Burns in *Prisoner* and, more recently, as Sheila Canning on *Neighbours* from 2012 to 2021. Her TV credits include *Fisk*, *Blue Heelers* and *MDA*, along with hosting roles on *What's Cooking* and *New Idea's Saturday Kitchen*.

A published author and experienced director, Colette has studied at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London and continues to inspire through her dynamic and multifaceted career in the arts.



EVELYN KRAPE
Solange La Fitte

Evelyn Krape is a Melbourne-based actor, director and currently the Artistic Director of the Kadimah Yiddish Theatre (KYT). She was a founding member of the Australian Performing Group (APG) at the Pram Factory. Previous notable performances with Melbourne Theatre Company include *A Floating World*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It* and, most recently, the highly successful seasons of *Bloom* and *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*.

Evelyn has received multiple prestigious awards, such as Best Actress for her role as Nellie Melba in *A Toast to Melba* (APG) and the Green Room Award for Best Actress in *Ginger at the Playbox*. She also shared the Best Actress Award at Tropfest 2019. Her remarkable performance in KYT's *Yentl* garnered a Green Room Award nomination.

In 2023, she directed KYT's captivating *YIDDISH DIVAS: Into the Red Tent*, appeared in a return season of *Yentl* at the Malthouse in 2024, and will be appearing in *Bloom* for Sydney Theatre Company in 2025.



MERLYN QUAIFE
Heidi Schiller

Merlyn has enjoyed a long and varied career. In 2013, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia, was a Valkyrie in the Opera Australia *Ring*, and retired from Opera. She has premiered many works and created the roles of Betty Joy (Brett Dean's *Bliss*), Medea (Gordon Kerry's *Medea*), Grazia (Gillian Whitehead's *Bride of Fortune*), and Mrs Samsa (Brian Howard's *Metamorphosis*). She still sings at St Francis Church in the heart of Melbourne on Feast Days and does the occasional recital. She recently sang Mahler 2 with the Bendigo Symphony Orchestra.

Heading Vocal Departments for The University of Melbourne and Monash's Sir Zelman Cowan School of Music was another side to her career. Her website merlynquaife.com details the extent of her operatic roles, Australian composers performed, and major symphonic repertoire. She is also Artistic Patron for the Bendigo Youth Choir and the Gisborne Singers. *Follies* is her second foray into Sondheim, having also performed a *Liebeslieder* in the Melbourne Theatre Company's acclaimed production of *A Little Night Music*.



GERALDENE MORROW
Hattie Walker

Born in 1941, Geraldene Morrow's career began at age 16 as a dancer in a Bobby Limb Revue at His Majesty's Theatre, Perth. At age 17, she was cast as the understudy Eliza in J C Williamson's record-breaking production of *My Fair Lady*. She spent two years in England, starring in roles such as Eliza in *My Fair Lady* and in the title role of the musical *Cindy* on London's West End.

Geraldene starred as Charlie, opposite John Farnham, in J C Williamson's production of *Charlie Girl*. She also starred in the Australian premiere of *Side by Side by Sondheim* and is featured on the Australian cast recording. Geraldene has appeared on several TV series, including *Prisoner: Cell Block H*. She appeared in the Royal Variety Performance for the now King Charles, as Madame Giry in the Australian premiere of *The Phantom of the Opera*, and as Jack's Mother in the MTC production of *Into the Woods*.

Geraldene regularly performs with concert group Merry Melodies around Melbourne.

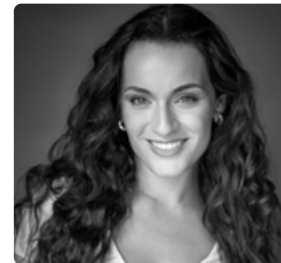


TAAO BUCHANAN
Young Phyllis

Taao Buchanan (she/her) grew up on the sunny shores of Perth and graduated with a Bachelor of Music Theatre from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA).

Most recently, Taao appeared in *Carousel in Concert* with Enda Markey Productions and the Australian feature film, *He Ain't Heavy*. Notable WAAPA credits include Daisy Hilton in *Side Show*, Polly (u/s) in *Crazy for You*, Virginia in *The Pajama Game*, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*.

Proudly represented by Hansen Management, Taao thanks her family for their endless support and is thrilled to join the cast of *Follies* with Victorian Opera!

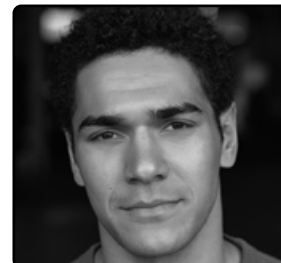


MIA SIMONETTE
Young Sally

Mia Simonette holds a first-class honours degree majoring in Jazz Music from The West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). During her time at WAAPA, she completed a summer school exchange program at New York University.

Over the last few years Mia's theatrical highlights have included; Natalie Haller in *All Shook Up* (Crown Theatre); The West Australian Opera's 2023 season of *Into The Woods* as Lucinda (His Majesty's Theatre); Mayzie LaBird in *Seussical the Musical* (Regal Theatre); Miss Bell and U/S Carmen Diaz in *Fame The Musical* (Crown Theatre); U/S Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard Of Oz* (Crown Theatre); Nicola in *Kinky Boots*; Magenta in *Dirty Cabaret/Rocky Horror Experience*; and Ancestor in *The Addams Family Musical*.

Most recently, she has been involved in the development of new Australian Musical *Children of the Air*.



JACOB STEEN
Young Buddy

Jacob Steen made his professional musical theatre debut in *Mary Poppins* (Musical) for Michael Cassel Group and went on to perform as part of the inaugural Australian ensemble for *Groundhog Day the Musical* (GWB Entertainment), *Seaweed J. Stubbs* in *Hairspray* at Crown Theatre Perth, and as Ted Hanover in *Holiday Inn* at the Hayes Theatre.

He completed his first year of the Bachelor of Music Theatre at the Victorian College of the Arts, as well as training in Jazz, Ballet, Tap, Acro, Musical Theatre and Contemporary under Renie Ann Martini OAM at the May Downs School of Dance. Jacob's training began with jazz and tap under Jodie Greenwood at Upstage Dance Academy.



*Marina Prior and Ensemble in rehearsal.
Photography: Casey Horsfield*



JACK VAN STAVEREN

Young Ben

A graduate of Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), Jack recently appeared in *A Christmas Carol* and the Australian premiere of *2:22 A Ghost Story*.

Other credits include *School of Rock* (GWB Entertainment), Ambrose Kemper in *Hello, Dolly!* (The Production Company), and the original cast of *Dream Lover* (The Gordon Frost Organisation).

Jack has toured South Africa and New Zealand with *Scooby Doo Live* (Life Like Touring) as Fred Jones, as well as the Australian tour of *Scooby Doo: Level Up!*.

Other credits include the Australian premiere of *Dogfight* (Hayes Theatre Co.) and Opera Australia's *The Divorce*. Jack is proudly represented by Ian White Management.



TOM BLAIR

Theodore Whitman

Tom began his career at age 19 in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1995, Tom has appeared as Dickon in *The Secret Garden* (The Gordon Frost Organisation); understudied as Mr Sowerberry and Fagin in *Oliver!* (Cameron Mackintosh); The Choreographer in *Sunset Boulevard* (Really Useful); Mendel in *Fiddler on the Roof* with Topol; Cascada in *The Merry Widow*; Lea Sonia/Lana in *Only Heaven Knows*; and Charlie Cameron in *Brigadoon*.

Other productions include, *HMS Pinafore*, *My Fair Lady*, *Anything Goes*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Me and My Girl*, *Born Yesterday* (STC), and, for Garry Ginivan Attractions, *Noddy*, *Peter Rabbit*, *Puff the Magic Dragon*, *Possum Magic* and *The Magic Faraway Tree*.

Tom was a member of the VSO Chorus in *Fidelio*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Carmen*. Concerts include *A One Night Stand*, the grand re-opening of The Regent Theatre and Sondheim's *Follies in Concert*. After a 16-year absence from the stage, Tom was thrilled to appear in Steve Martin's *Bright Star* in 2019.

Stephen Smith's performances over the last quarter of a century include those for Opera Australia, Victorian Opera, Melbourne Opera, South Australian Opera and Opera Queensland.

Major role credits include Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Otello (Rossini's *Otello*), Duca (*Rigoletto*), Alfredo (*La Traviata*), Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Don Jose (*Carmen*), Nadir (*Les Pêcheurs des Perles*), Arturo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*), Nanki-Poo (*The Mikado*), Mercury (*Orpheus in the Underworld*).

As a survivor of the foster care system and homeless teenager, Stephen is passionate about creating opportunities and levelling the playing field for those less privileged in our community. His talents as a singer, performer, estate agent and auctioneer combine to see him in high demand as a charity auctioneer, raising funds through auctions and performances for local and high-profile charities.



STEPHEN SMITH

Roscoe / Max Deems



NINA KORBE

Young Heidi

Award-winning soprano Nina Korbe is quickly establishing herself as one of Australia's leading young sopranos. She received her Bachelor of Music from the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University and her Master of Arts from the Royal Academy of Music in London. For Opera Queensland, she has appeared in *La bohème*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Peter Grimes* and Verdi's *Requiem*.

In concert, she has been engaged as soloist by Camerata Chamber Orchestra, Queensland Ballet, Southern Cross Soloists and the Goldner String Quartet, and was a recent artist with Melba Opera Trust as the recipient of the Ruskin Opera Scholarship.

In 2024, Nina made her Opera Australia debut as Maria in *West Side Story* and as Lisette in Puccini's *La Rondine* for Victorian Opera. She has been welcomed back as Artist in Residence with the Queensland Youth Orchestra and, in this capacity, has sung Ravel's *Shéhérazade* at the Musikverein in Vienna, Stiftung Mozarteum in Salzburg and Laieszhalle in Hamburg.

As a proud Koa, Kuku Yalanji, Wakka Wakka woman, Nina sits on Queensland Youth Orchestra's Reconciliation Action Plan Board, Queensland Symphony Orchestra's First Nations Advisory Board and the board for Playlab Theatre. She has recently been appointed as the First Nations advisor to the Australian Music Foundation.

In 2025, Nina is proud to host *The Musical Show* on ABC Classic.



GRANT PIRO

Dimitri Weismann

Grant began his career in the early 1980's soap opera *Sons and Daughters* and has since appeared in more than 100 productions. His work has been recognised with several Green Room Award nominations and two wins (*The Merry Widow* and *The Producers*) as well as AACTA and Helpmann nominations.

Grant has worked prolifically across screen with more recent screen highlights that including *Utopia*, *The Newsreader 3* and working alongside Daniel Radcliffe in *Escape from Pretoria*. However, Grant's true love as a performer is theatre. Highlights have included the world premiere of *Realism*, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, *The 39 Steps*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *His Girl Friday*, and *The Odd Couple* all for the Melbourne Theatre Company. As well as *Moby Dick*, *The Merry Widow*, *Taking Steps*, *The Producers*, *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, *Under Milk Wood*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Hairspray*, *Hand to God*, *Oklahoma*, *Death Of A Salesman*, *A Christmas Carol*, and credits his ultimate highlights as being Connor McPherson and Bob Dylan's *Girl From The North Country*, and performing opposite his wife Marina Prior AM in *Hello Dolly!*

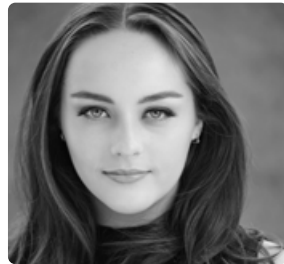
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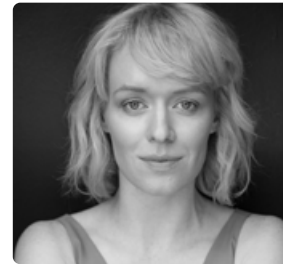
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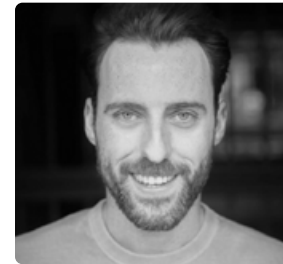
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La Rondine (2024)
Photography: Charlie Kinross

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Recognised for our unique contribution to the country's operatic landscape, Victorian Opera joined the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework in 2021. Alongside other companies, Victorian Opera holds its rightful position in the national performing arts arena.

Commitment to the development and presentation of new Australian opera and musical theatre is forefront to our mission. We identify relative and topical material, commission and workshop new scores and librettos, and ultimately produce new productions. Victorian Opera premieres at least one new Australian opera or music theatre work each year, and has commissioned 39 new works since the company's formation.

The next generation of talent is developed from the ground up through our Emerging Artists Programs – The Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE), our VO Emerges project and our Emerging Artists Opera Prize scholarship. Creating future pathways for artists, artisans and technicians has become a driving focus for our organisation.

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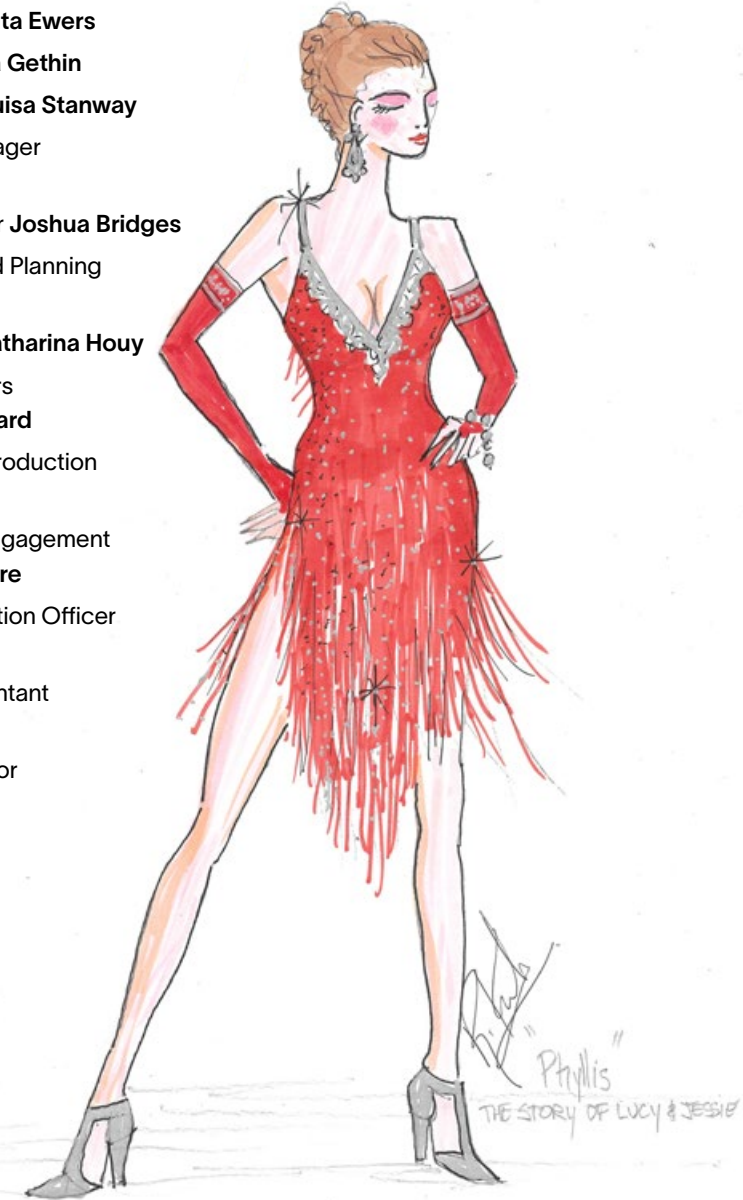
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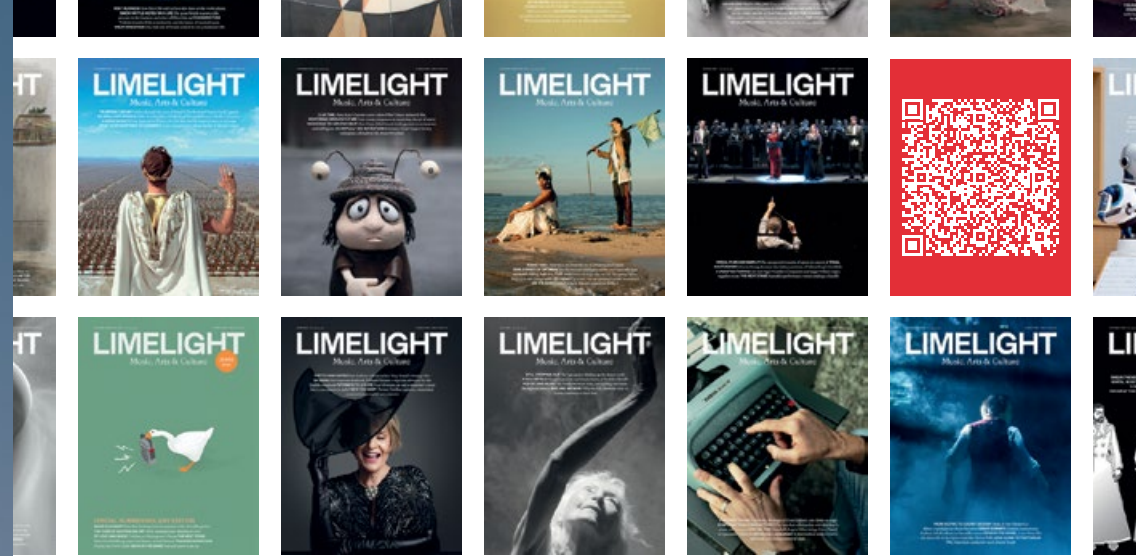


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*Follies, in rehearsal.
Photography: Casey Horsfield*

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