

New direction for opera

Opera is changing under the direction of new leaders. Story by Chris Herden



Amazing costumes and characters are being created for the Brisbane performance of *The Magic Flute*

More than two decades have passed since our national opera company last visited the Sunshine State but artistic director Lyndon Terracini says the spectacular productions Opera Australia (OA) has planned for Brisbane in 2012 will make the wait worthwhile.

“From the moment I joined OA, I knew I had to bring the company to Brisbane,” he told *bmag* on a recent visit to Brisbane. Terracini’s ambitious blueprint for Australia’s largest and busiest arts organisation is to present to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane an extravagant operatic project unique to each city. In 2012, Melbourne will play host to Wagner’s 15-hour epic *Ring Cycle* and *La Traviata* will play out on a floating stage on picturesque Sydney Harbour.

Brisbane’s treat is a visually stunning program to be staged at QPAC: Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, directed by Julie Taymor, director of Broadway sensation *The Lion King*, and the lavish Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin

production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Already accustomed to delivering large scale arts events via his former roles as director of the Brisbane Festival and Queensland Music Festival, Terracini has quickly stamped his vision upon Opera Australia by presenting the family-friendly opera events, Broadway-style musicals and spectacular new productions he believes necessary in order to appease discerning modern-day audiences. Next year, Opera Australia will deliver a mammoth season of 337 main stage performances.

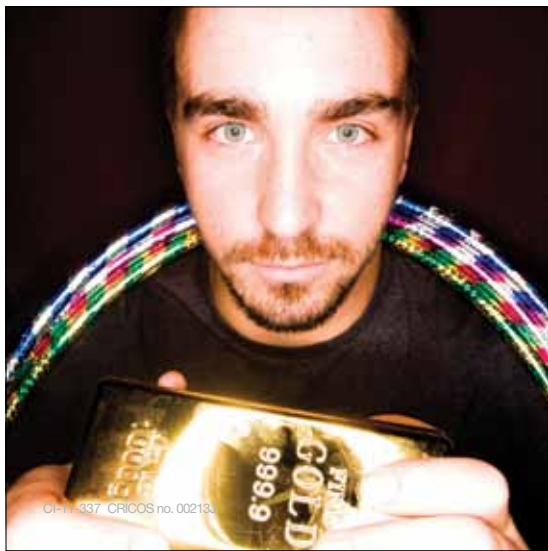
“They’re all big shows in big theatres and because we’ve got so much activity, and on most nights of the year, we need to operate like a festival,” he says. “We’re not playing *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* anywhere else in Australia and so, if people want to see it, they come to Brisbane.”

Terracini is a mover and shaker on a mission to win the hearts, minds and ears of contemporary Australian music lovers and has

shown he is prepared to defy opera’s captive traditions. He refers to other cutting-edge Australian musicals such as *Keating – the Musical* and *Shane Warne – the Musical* and his keenness for OA to explore musical works that connect with popular culture (such as a recent workshop based on the “Wikileaks” saga), contending that many 19th century composers were indeed connected to the world about them. “Verdi’s first big success, *Nabucco*, concerned political life in Northern Italy at the time and Mozart was writing pieces that connected to the culture of his time.”

Opera Australia’s artistic director is not one to shy away from the collaborative possibilities the shake-up of our own state opera company may present. “I know people have talked about new beginnings and re-inventing Opera Queensland and a complimentary program to what we at OA are doing could ideally present the best possible range of performances for Queenslanders.”

Opera Australia’s first Brisbane season



Work your passion

Our creative postgraduate degrees focus on contemporary technology and entrepreneurship – supporting you to gain a competitive edge in your professional and personal development.

Take your creative passion to the next level and enhance your career with a masters or graduate certificate in animation, creative advertising, creative writing, journalism and music to name a few.

Pathways are available for anyone looking to change careers and those with no degree but with extensive professional experience.

More information

Phone 3138 8117, email cifpg@qut.edu.au or visit www.qut.edu.au/work-your-passion.

a university for the **real world** 

EDUCATION FOR SUCCESS



YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE WITH APM COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & COMMUNICATION

Our nationally recognised diplomas and degrees are designed to give you an edge, while our flexible study options mean you can earn while you learn.

With courses developed by industry professionals, paired with a breakthrough internship program, we’ll ensure you get the experience and connections you need to succeed in your dream career!

Open Day, 17th January - RSVP Now!

W apm.edu.au T 1300 880 610 E enquiries@apm.edu.au

Marketing • Event Management • Public Relations • Business • Management

Think Colleges Pty Ltd trading as APM College of Business and Communication, RTO 0269, CRICOS Provider Code NSW 00246M, QLD 03107J, HEP NSW 602B.





Opera Australia's lavish production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

in 24 years comes at a time when our own opera organisation tries to reposition itself in Queensland's increasingly dynamic cultural landscape. Opera Queensland recently announced a new executive team to fill the dual roles of outgoing chief executive and artistic director, Chris Mangin.

Arts industry veteran Russell Mitchell takes over as general manager in January and acclaimed director Lindy Hume will be OQ's new artistic director. Lindy Hume and Russell Mitchell already have worked successfully as a team for Oz Opera, Opera Australia's regional touring arm. Hume has directed more than 50 major productions throughout Australasia, Europe and America and has won numerous awards. She takes up her new OQ role in February next year, immediately following her final year as director of the Sydney Festival, and says she'll be looking to make Queensland's opera company sustainable and relevant.

"My interest is what the OQ brand can

embrace that allows it a pure opera outcome as well as some stuff that is more tangential and radical. We need to hold our head high and do the grand operas but it doesn't mean staying between those goal posts and becoming a portfolio company. The idea of risk, fearlessness and boldness is important and if we don't go there, we aren't worth our jobs."

Hume sees the value of the national company venturing north of Sydney. "The synergy between Opera Australia and Opera Queensland is glaringly obvious and it's impossible not to notice the changed landscape that Opera Australia is bringing to the Brisbane scene."

Terracini sees it as a new beginning. "I'd like to shape a Brisbane program that you wouldn't see anywhere else in the southern hemisphere so that tourists will come to see the productions and hang out in this beautiful climate and go to GoMA and Brisbane's fabulous restaurants – an opera festival in Brisbane each May."

Mary's magic

The children's classic still delights

The night I went to see *Mary Poppins* in Sydney I wish I'd had her magic parrot-handled broom. Firstly, just because it was raining cats and dogs and the collapsible travel model I had with me blew inside out in minutes; and secondly, to lift me high above the maddening crowd that was making passage down a congested George Street on a Friday night slow and soggy...a trifle I'm sure the "practically perfect" nanny Ms Poppins could have sorted in a jiffy. But once inside the Capitol Theatre, where Mary has been playing to a packed house since May, the atmosphere was magical – dimly lit with just the twinkle of fairy lights above the rooftops created by lighting designer Howard Harrison in collaboration with set designer Bob Crowley.

Once the curtain goes up the wonderful sets put the audience in the middle of the well-to-do Banks family home in Edwardian London (the kitchen is particularly clever), the park, Mr Banks' bank and, of course, the chimney-riddled rooftops.

But while the production values are high, befitting a Disney and Cameron Mackintosh co-creation, it's the energetic

song and dance routines – particularly *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* – that really make the audience take notice, especially the children. Even the teenage boy sitting next to us, who looked like he'd been dragged in under duress as the curtain went up, was smiling and on the edge of his seat by the time Mary was taking her first flight over the rooftops.

None of the star performers who will play the lead roles in Brisbane were on stage on this particular night but it didn't detract from the show and the children who play Jane and Michael Banks will be rotated regularly between five girls and five boys throughout the production in Brisbane as they have in Sydney.

Parents will remember the songs that they heard as children (most likely from the 1964 film version starring Julie Andrews) – *A Spoonful of Sugar*, *Let's Go Fly a Kite* and *Step in Time* are all there – and some new songs have been added, including *Anything Can Happen (if you let it)* which is an uplifting highlight of the night.

Mary Poppins opens at the Lyric Theatre, QPAC, with previews from 30 December. To win tickets see page 8

Words: Heather McWhinnie

 THE CITY

DISCOVER THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

16-23 DECEMBER ⇨

MYER CHRISTMAS PARADE & PANTOMIME

7PM, QUEEN ST MALL

Proudly sponsored by

MYER

Media sponsors

bmag 973

bncity.com.au

Brisbane Marketing
BRISBANE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



brisbane
australia's new world city

LDRYBN037028

FREE PARKING ⇨

Receive five hours free parking when you spend \$50 or more anywhere in The City every Sunday in December (excluding Christmas Day). It's our gift to you this Christmas!

Valid at The Myer Centre Car Park, Secure Parking Wintergarden and King George Square Car Park. See bncity.com.au for terms and conditions.