

**MEDIA RELEASE**

4 March 2021

**Opera Australia to reopen the State Theatre with the Melbourne premiere of its digital production of *Aida***



Opera Australia today announced it will return to the State Theatre in May 2021, with two major productions, when Arts Centre Melbourne returns live performance to its stages after a year of closure due to COVID-19 and completion of the \$40m replacement of the State Theatre Flying System.

The critically acclaimed production of *Aida* by director Davide Livermore will have its premiere on 6 May, marking the first of OA’s digital productions to be staged in Melbourne. It will be followed by one of Verdi’s rarely performed works, *Ernani*, a co-production with Teatro alla Scala, that will also be a Melbourne premiere.

Earlier this year, OA announced that the Company would be releasing the year’s program season by season in order to minimise the risks involved with potential changes or cancellations to projects due to ongoing COVID restrictions.

OA’s Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini is thrilled to be heading back to Melbourne for the first time since spring 2019.

“It’s fantastic to be in a position to announce a Melbourne season, we are so proud to be part of the vibrant cultural fabric of the city as it re-awakens from the pandemic shutdown.

“We are bringing grand opera to the State Theatre and we know opera fans are keenly anticipating our return to the stage, I know they’re going to love these two big Verdi masterpieces.

“*Aida* is always popular and this digital production is particularly spectacular, with magnificent singing and music, as well as amazing sets and costumes.

“And *Ernani* is a fabulous production with its challenging yet breathtaking music, we have one of the world’s best conductors Renato Palumbo, along with the finest opera singers to navigate the tricky score.

“I think Melbourne audiences will appreciate the extraordinary talents in both of these casts.”

Arts Centre Melbourne CEO, Claire Spencer, AM, said after nearly a full year of closure due to COVID-19, opera would soon return to its Melbourne home.

“We are absolutely thrilled to welcome back our much-loved Opera Australia to the State Theatre stage. Our audiences have deeply missed the joy of live performance during closure, and with our newly commissioned State Theatre Flying System, OA’s remarkable talent and creativity will look better than ever. The new system is safer and more flexible and supports the contemporary production techniques that have transformed the live theatre experience”.

This 2021 autumn season will operate within a COVID-safe environment, making the health and wellbeing of audience members and all artists the number one priority.

PATRON-IN-CHIEF  
DR HARUHISA HANDA



HERO PARTNERS



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



**VERDI: *Aida* | Conductor Tahu Matheson | Director Davide Livermore**

Davide Livermore's thrilling *Aida* is OA's first digital production to be staged in Melbourne. Ten towering LED screens create an immersive theatrical experience, as ever-changing floor-to-ceiling set pieces present video design that ranges from rich symbolism to vivid landscapes.

Soprano Leah Crocetto and tenor Stefano La Colla will lead an outstanding cast of more than one hundred musicians, singers, dancers and actors in this extravagant production. Mezzo-soprano Elena Gabouri will reprise her role as Amneris and bass Alexander Vinogradov is Ramfis

In this classic opera Egypt needs a hero to lead their army against Ethiopia and the chosen Radamès hopes to win not just the battle but also the hand of beautiful slave girl Aida. However she is secretly an Ethiopian princess and is torn between her love for the Egyptian hero and her homeland. Verdi's monumental music makes this historic epic an enduring favourite.

**Arts Centre Melbourne, 6-21 May 2021**

**VERDI: *Ernani* | Conductor Renato Palumbo | Director Sven-Eric Bechtolf**

Sven-Eric Bechtolf's production of Verdi's *Ernani* will open its premiere season in Melbourne in May. Part of Verdi's early repertoire and based on the play by Victor Hugo, *Ernani* tells the story of a former Don turned outlaw whose desire to be with the woman he loves is outweighed only by his duty to honour a vow he once made.

This rarely performed opera requires an extremely talented cast to tackle the demanding roles. Celebrated tenor Diego Torre will reprise his role as *Ernani* starring opposite highly regarded Verdian soprano Natalie Aroyan as *Elvira*. Performing alongside them will be two powerhouse singers and internationally renowned interpreters of the roles; baritone Vladimir Stoyanov as *Don Carlo*, King of Spain and bass Alexander Vinogradov as *Don Ruy Gomez de Silva*.

Verdi specialist, conductor Renato Palumbo, will lead Orchestra Victoria and the Opera Australia Chorus in their performance of this rousing score. With passionate choruses, emotional arias and flawless ensemble writing, this opera will have the audience in raptures from the opening notes.

**Arts Centre Melbourne, 13-22 May 2021**

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