

Opera Australia releases 2021 Annual Report

After another year of limited programming, travel restrictions and border closures due to the ongoing pandemic, Opera Australia (OA), the country's largest performing arts organisation, today released its 2021 Annual Report, posting an operating loss of \$22,645,371.

Crucial to the Company's survival in 2021 was the sale of its Alexandria warehouse, and the covid rescue packages and grants from both Federal and State Governments.

The \$37m surplus from the sale of the Alexandria warehouse, coupled with covid-related government support totaling \$21.1m, provided the support needed to ensure the Company's viability and provide a solid foundation for it to rebuild its financial position in the coming years.

Although nowhere near the dizzying heights of its last full year of pre-pandemic programming in 2019, the Company did experience a modest increase in revenue, compared to the disastrous year of 2020 when more than 570 performances were cancelled resulting in lost ticket sales of more than \$73 million.

Between covid outbreaks and subsequent lock-downs, OA staged 348 performances* and achieved box office revenue of \$17.3m, up from \$10.6m in 2020. In all, 59% of OA's revenue in 2021 was self-generated.

In 2021 OA presented limited seasons in both Sydney and Melbourne as well as Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, however for the second year running, the coveted Ring Cycle Brisbane had to be cancelled due to the delta outbreak and resulting border closures.

The National Tour managed to stay one step ahead of the closures and although still having to cancel 12 shows, 31 performances were staged across NSW, VIC, QLD, NT and WA, playing to more than 17,000 people.

The return to the stage however, came with the increased costs of performing in a pandemic. In January 2021 OA was the first performing arts company to introduce rapid antigen testing for its performers and support staff. A testing program that has evolved with the changing environment and continues through to this day. It has cost OA an estimated \$1.5m to implement covid-safe measures.

Opera Australia CEO Fiona Allan said that despite positive signs of recovery, and the current surplus due to the warehouse sale, the Company still faces enormous challenges.

"I had anticipated on arrival at OA in November 2021 that I would encounter a company that was well into a recovery phase, but covid still had plenty of sting in its tail and wasn't through with us yet. Instead of launching a new season we were again navigating another lockdown and an uncertain return to the stage.

"As Rory noted in his report, there are so many at OA who worked tirelessly throughout 2021 to bring the Company through the crisis, their dedication, passion and energy was unwavering. In particular our Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini who never faltered in his commitment to get the Company back on stage and doing what all the OA team do incredibly well. I take this opportunity to thank every one of them, and look forward to working with them to continue on the road to recovery.

"I'd also like to acknowledge the support from our Patron-in-Chief Dr Haruhisa Handa and the International Foundation of Arts and Culture, along with our treasured patrons, donors and sponsors who have supported us through these difficult times. And of course our loyal fans, as well as all those new to opera who bought tickets to support the arts and satiate their culture-starved appetites as we emerged from the various lock-downs," said Ms Allan.

Outgoing Chairman David Mortimer AO paid thanks to the Government support OA received.

"I want to recognise our government partners for their crucial support during 2021: the Federal Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, the Sustainability Fund and JobKeeper payments, Create NSW, Destination NSW and Creative Victoria. Without their support we would be a much diminished organisation," said Mr Mortimer.

"I must also acknowledge the work and dedication of Lyndon Terracini. I have felt privileged to have worked with Lyndon as our Artistic Director throughout my term as Chairman. Lyndon is a remarkable talent, energetic, visionary and a genuine 'doer'.

"I would also particularly like to pay tribute to Rory Jeffes who finished his term as CEO last November. Rory has, with unceasing commitment, steered the Company over these last four years, his commitment has been exceptional," said Mr Mortimer.

* includes National Tour and Schools Tour performances

Ends.

The 2021 Opera Australia Annual Report and Financial Report are available for download here:

<https://opera.org.au/about/opera-australia/annual-reports/>

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