

ABC
COMMERCIAL



Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour

LA TRAVIATA

OPERA AUSTRALIA

WITNESS THE JOY AND HEARTACHE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR OPERA ON SYDNEY'S SPECTACULAR HARBOUR

The story that inspired *Moulin Rouge*, *La Traviata* scales the thrilling heights of Verdi's score with Stacey Alleaume as Violetta opposite tenor Rame Lahaj as Alfredo, the man Violetta falls dangerously in love with.

Verdi's score offers flying melodies, rousing drinking songs and heartbreaking duets. Brian Castles-Onion conducts the opera, with a live orchestra hidden under the stage. From the vivacious chorus of the famous Brindisi to Violetta's soaring *Sempre Libera* and the breathless notes at the opera's tragic end, Verdi's music for *La Traviata* is a thrilling, emotional experience.

La Traviata returns to the Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour stage, with Constantine Costi directing the production based on celebrated director Francesca Zambello's original 2012 production. The original set by Brian Thomson was revived, complete with the breathtaking nine-metre-high chandelier which shimmers out over the stage, a new Paris skyline set against the stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour, and fireworks to light up the night sky.

DURATION · HD 1 X 130'
OPERA AUSTRALIA
LANGUAGE · ITALIAN



MEDIA

‘The perfect potion — the glitzy visuals and hyperactive energy of a Broadway musical mixed with world-class opera’

– Time Out

‘Australian-Mauritian singer Stacey Alleaume gives a stunning performance as Violetta. Her luscious, silvery soprano is clear, gorgeous and expressive across her range, and her dazzling top notes are utterly spine-tingling. What’s more she manages to gasp and cough convincingly without it affecting her singing, while her acting is also heartfelt and believable. It’s a triumphant performance vocally and dramatically.’

– Limelight Magazine

“Bling in spades”

– Artshub

‘Opera Australia’s annual Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour is a spectacular high point of the year. Performed on a giant floating stage at Mrs Macquarie’s Point, the backdrop of Sydney’s world-famous Harbour skyline practically guarantees that any production will have a breathtaking grandeur. It’s the sort of vista that opera – with its soaring passions and life-or-death magnificence – is made for. And this production of *La Traviata*, set in the glamorous 1950s, is really spectacular....such a beautiful production’

– Bachtrack

‘*La Traviata* is opulent, elegant and engaging, combining the beauty and emotion of a wonderful operatic score with the vibrancy of a modern musical. This world class opera set on Sydney Harbour is a breathtaking experience that is not to be missed.’

– Dance Informa Magazine



SOCIAL

A stunning performance

– Margaret Kutschewski

The singing and dancing was superb, and of course, the incredible orchestra. Do not miss the opportunity to see this mind-blowing performance

– Lando Rossi

@operaaustralia I'm now hooked on even the most hardcore operas after seeing this – BRAVO

– mitchandmark



GET TO KNOW *LA TRAVIATA*

Who was the composer?

Giuseppe Verdi – the most famous of Italian opera composers. Verdi was born in 1813 in Italy to a poor family. By the time he died in 1901, his fame was such that more than 200,000 people lined the streets of Milan after his death to pay him tribute.

How do you know you're listening to Verdi?

Verdi wrote big, beautiful melodies and expressive, dramatic orchestral music. As a composer, he was always seeking out strong subjects, demanding his librettists create realistic, human characterisations, even when the characters are in extraordinary situations. He had a special gift for taking a character marginalised by society and putting them centre stage – whether it be a courtesan in *La Traviata*, a hunch-backed jester in *Rigoletto* or an enslaved Ethiopian princess in *Aida*.



GET TO KNOW *LA TRAVIATA*

What happens in the story?

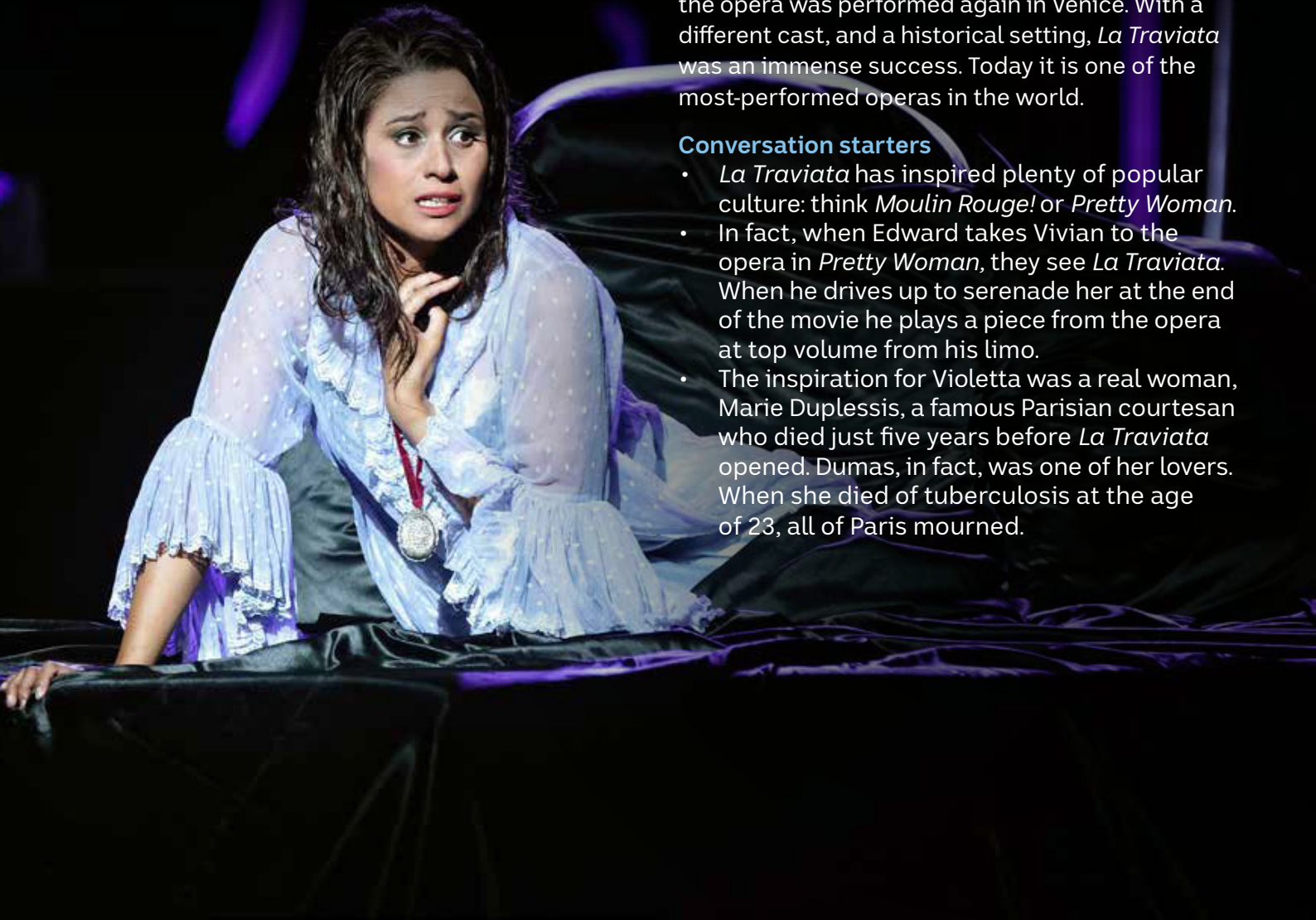
Beautiful and carefree, the courtesan Violetta is the life of every party. But behind that dazzling smile, she knows she is dying. Unaware of her troubles, the shy Alfredo is in love. Violetta is torn: is the promise of true love worth giving up her life of freedom? She takes a chance on a life with Alfredo living in the country, and it seems she could be happy. But Alfredo's father has other ideas. He demands the impossible: Violetta leave Alfredo, for the sake of his family's reputation. Devastated, Violetta agrees, and writes Alfredo a letter of farewell, concealing her love. Alfredo is heartbroken and furious, and, coming face to face with her at a ball, he delivers the ultimate insult. Will Alfredo learn of Violetta's undying love before she succumbs to her illness?

A little history

It was in Paris that Verdi first saw the Dumas play *The Lady of the Camellias*. The composer was inspired – at last, a “provocative idea”. He wrote to his librettist Francesco Piave, “I don’t want any of those everyday subjects that one can find by the hundreds.” Verdi believed the story of the fallen woman was a “subject for our own age”, and inspired, he wrote the score in just under a month – while working on *Il Trovatore*. He wanted the story to confront his audience and so set it in contemporary times. However, the 1853 premiere in Venice was not well received. Consumption causes its victims to waste away, and the overweight, middle-aged soprano in the title role was simply implausible. It seems the contemporary setting was also a mistake. Verdi wrote to a friend, “*La Traviata* last night a failure. Was the fault mine, or the singers’? Time will tell.” The composer refused to allow another performance unless he could be sure of a talented cast. It took nearly a year before the opera was performed again in Venice. With a different cast, and a historical setting, *La Traviata* was an immense success. Today it is one of the most-performed operas in the world.

Conversation starters

- *La Traviata* has inspired plenty of popular culture: think *Moulin Rouge!* or *Pretty Woman*.
- In fact, when Edward takes Vivian to the opera in *Pretty Woman*, they see *La Traviata*. When he drives up to serenade her at the end of the movie he plays a piece from the opera at top volume from his limo.
- The inspiration for Violetta was a real woman, Marie Duplessis, a famous Parisian courtesan who died just five years before *La Traviata* opened. Dumas, in fact, was one of her lovers. When she died of tuberculosis at the age of 23, all of Paris mourned.



KEY TALENT

Stacey Alleaume • Violetta Valéry

Renowned for her voice of remarkable beauty, warmth, character and expression, Australian-Mauritian soprano Stacey Alleaume has established herself with an exciting operatic career ahead. In 2016, the Australian Opera Awards Committee awarded her the Dame Joan Sutherland Scholarship for outstanding Australian operatic talent and she became a member of the Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist Program at Opera Australia. In her first year as a young artist she made three role debuts at the Sydney Opera House: Micaëla in *Carmen*, Leïla in *The Pearlfishers* and Alexandra Mason in *The Eighth Wonder*.

Since then, her principal roles with Opera Australia have included Violetta (*La Traviata*), Fiorilla (*Il turco in Italia*), Sophie (*Werther*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Valencienne (*The Merry Widow*) and 1st Flower Maiden (*Parsifal*).

She has also toured with Opera Australia performing the roles of Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*) and Rosina (*The Barber of Seville*). In 2019, she made her European debut performing Gilda in the Bregenzer Festspiele, as well as covering the title role in *Lakmé* and singing the role of Frasquita in *Carmen*, both for the Royal Opera House Muscat in Oman. She also featured in the romantic comedy film *Falling for Figaro* as the singing voice of Millie (Danielle Macdonald). Directed by Ben Lewin, it premiered at the 2020 Toronto Film Festival as one of 30 Industry Selects and will be released in 2021 in cinemas worldwide.

Stacey Alleaume has enjoyed considerable success in important vocal competitions, winning the Australian Youth Aria in 2009 and the highly esteemed Waiariki Institute of Technology New Zealand Aria in 2011. She has triumphed in Australia's longest-running and most prestigious awards, winning both the Sydney Eisteddfod Opera Scholarship in 2012 and the Herald Sun Aria in 2013.

KEY TALENT

Rame Lahaj • Alfredo Germont

Rame Lahaj was born and raised in Istog, Kosovo, and is now considered one of the most prominent tenors of his generation. His first major success was his Hungarian State Opera house debut in 2011, when he sang the role of Macduff in Verdi's *Macbeth*. More recently he was a prize-winner in Plácido Domingo's Operalia competition (2016), followed by concert appearances with Domingo in London and Mexico.

He returns to Opera Australia having made his Australian debut as Alfredo in the 2015 Sydney Opera House production of *La Traviata*. Recent engagement highlights have included his house debut at Liceu Opera in Barcelona, singing Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*). He has also sung Alfredo for Los Angeles Opera (conducted by James Conlon), Berlin State Opera, Paris National Opera, Hamburg State Opera and Polish National Opera; and Rodolfo (*La Bohème*) for Teatro Verdi Trieste, Opéra National de Montpellier, and at the Royal Albert Hall in London. He has made appearances for the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, singing Alfredo and Rodolfo, and last season he also sang Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) in Madrid, as well as several gala concerts. Other roles include the Duke in *Rigoletto*, with which he made an acclaimed Italian debut at the Teatro Massimo di Palermo and his house debuts at La Monnaie in Brussels and Deutsche Oper Berlin.

He has also sung this role for Finnish National Opera, Savonlinna Opera Festival, Polish National Opera, and in Salzburg. During Semperoper Dresden's 2013–2014 season he appeared as the Duke, Alfredo and Rodolfo. He has also sung Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Paris National Opera and the title role in *Faust* in Tel Aviv.

His concert appearances include Bruckner's *Te Deum* for the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic, the Latvian National Opera's 100th Anniversary gala, Verdi Opera Night Concert in the Arena di Verona, as well as international concert tours, including concerts with Angela Gheorghiu in South Korea. In 2015 he gave the inaugural concert in the new Great Amber Hall in Latvia.



KEY CREATIVES

Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour • Opera Australia

Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour is one of the world's most spectacular outdoor opera experiences, presented annually by Opera Australia. Established in 2012, this grand-scale production transforms Sydney's iconic waterfront into an open-air theatre, featuring breathtaking performances, lavish sets, and stunning pyrotechnics. Each season, audiences enjoy world-class opera under the stars, with the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge providing an unforgettable backdrop.

Brian Castles-Onion • Conductor

Born in Cessnock, Brian Castles-Onion AM is one of Australia's most esteemed opera conductors. With a long-standing relationship with Opera Australia, his international career includes engagements at New York's Metropolitan Opera, Juilliard School of Music, and the Rossini Festival in Italy. He has also served as Artistic Director of Canterbury Opera in New Zealand.

With over 500 opera performances to his credit, he has conducted extensively across Australia, Asia, and New Zealand. His repertoire spans iconic works such as *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Turandot*, *La Traviata*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, and many more.

Castles-Onion has conducted eight seasons of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, including *La Traviata*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, and *La Bohème*. He has also led performances for Opera Australia's milestone celebrations and conducted the internationally broadcast Dame Joan Sutherland State Memorial Service.

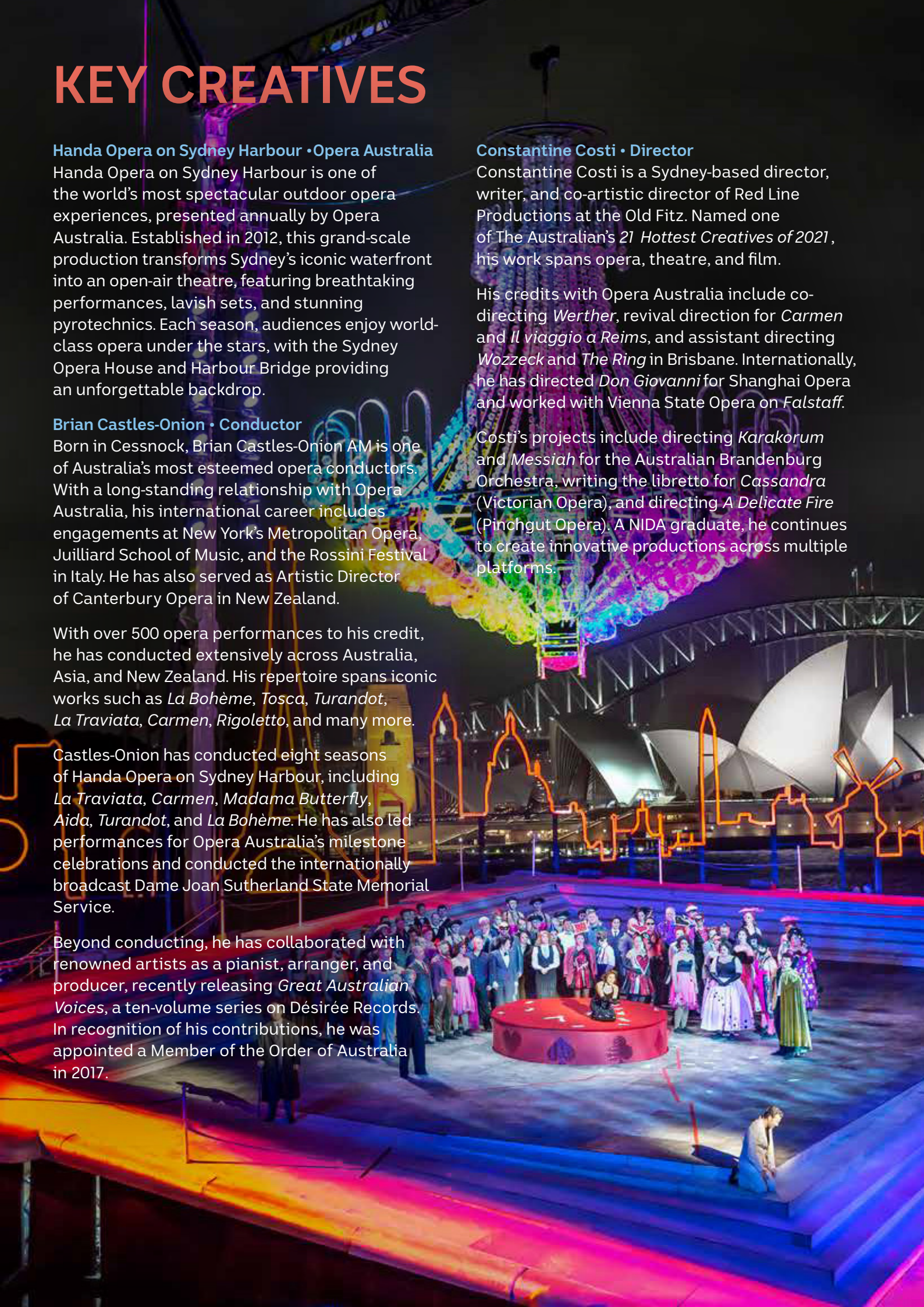
Beyond conducting, he has collaborated with renowned artists as a pianist, arranger, and producer, recently releasing *Great Australian Voices*, a ten-volume series on Désirée Records. In recognition of his contributions, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2017.

Constantine Costi • Director

Constantine Costi is a Sydney-based director, writer, and co-artistic director of Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz. Named one of *The Australian's 21 Hottest Creatives of 2021*, his work spans opera, theatre, and film.

His credits with Opera Australia include co-directing *Werther*, revival direction for *Carmen* and *Il viaggio a Reims*, and assistant directing *Wozzeck* and *The Ring* in Brisbane. Internationally, he has directed *Don Giovanni* for Shanghai Opera and worked with Vienna State Opera on *Falstaff*.

Costi's projects include directing *Karakorum* and *Messiah* for the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, writing the libretto for *Cassandra* (Victorian Opera), and directing *A Delicate Fire* (Pinchgut Opera). A NIDA graduate, he continues to create innovative productions across multiple platforms.



KEY CREATIVES

Brian Thomson • Set Designer

Brian Thomson is an acclaimed Australian set designer, known for his groundbreaking work in theatre, opera, and major live events. He designed *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, winning a Tony Award in 1996 for *The King and I*.

For Opera Australia, his designs include *Bliss*, *Billy Budd*, *Voss*, *Death in Venice*, *Salome*, and *La Bohème*. His Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour productions include *La Traviata*, *Carmen*, and *West Side Story*.

His credits extend to Kylie Minogue's *Intimate and Live Tour*, the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Closing Ceremony, and Sydney's New Year's Eve Harbour Bridge Effect (2005–2010). In 2005, he was awarded the Order of Australia for his contributions to the arts.

Tess Schofield • Costume Designer

Tess Schofield is a multi-award-winning costume designer whose work spans film, television, opera, and theatre. She has received five AACTA Awards for Best Costume Design and multiple accolades in opera and theatre.

Her opera credits include *Sweeney Todd* (Lyric Opera Chicago, Royal Opera House), *Peter Grimes*, and *Jenůfa*. For Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, she designed *La Traviata*. Her film work includes *The Sapphires* and *The Water Diviner*, while her television credits feature *Harrow* and *The Kettering Incident*.

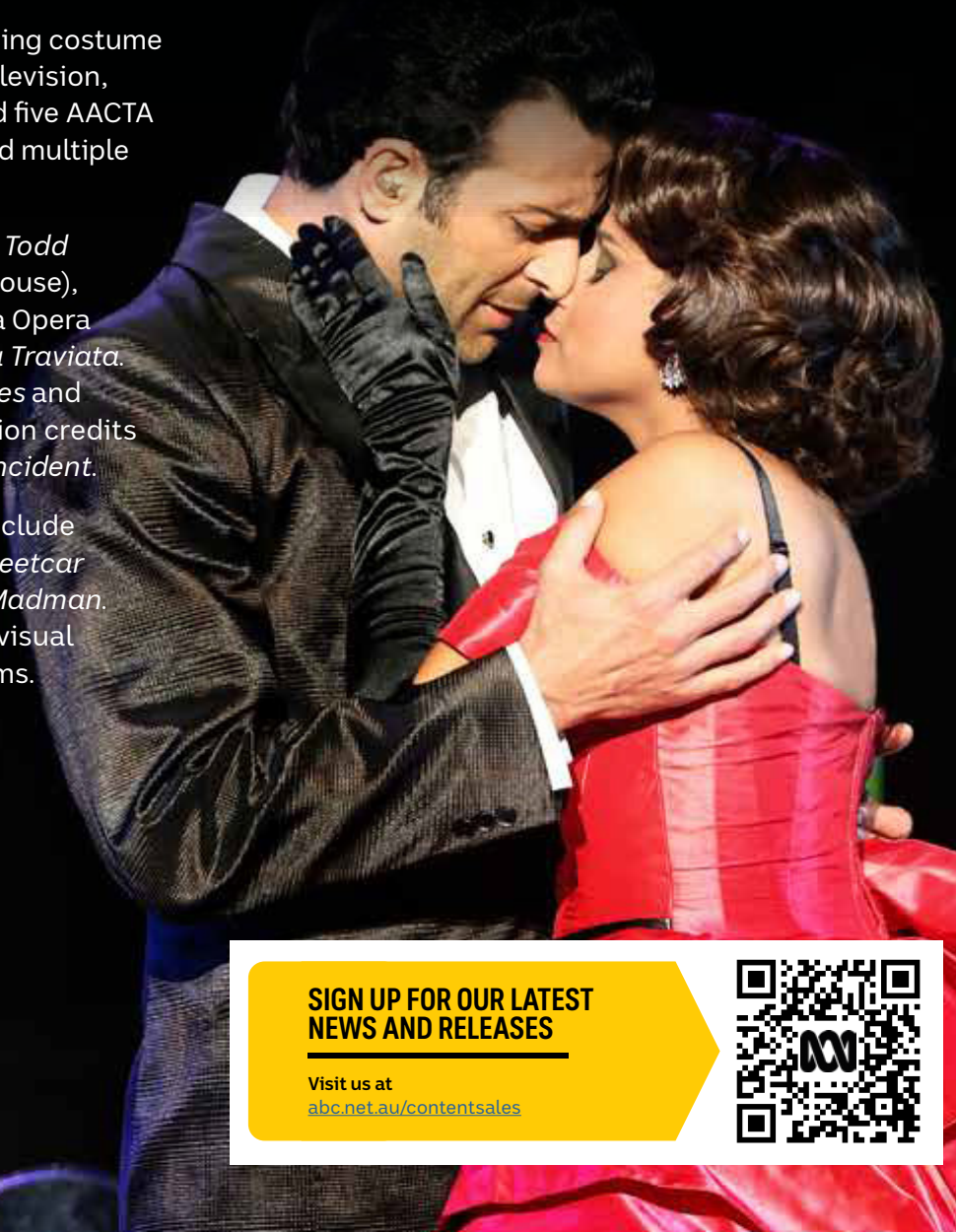
Schofield's theatre contributions include *The Secret River*, *Cloudstreet*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *The Diary of a Madman*. She continues to shape Australian visual storytelling across multiple mediums.

Francesca Zambello • Original Director (2012)

Francesca Zambello is an internationally renowned opera and theatre director. She serves as General Director of the Glimmerglass Festival and Artistic Director of Washington National Opera. Her productions have been staged worldwide, earning her numerous Olivier Awards and France's Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres.

For Opera Australia, Zambello directed *La Traviata* (2012) and *West Side Story* (2019) for Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, the latter winning a Helpmann Award for Best Direction of a Musical. Her additional work includes *The Love for Three Oranges*, *Carmen*, and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.

An American raised in Europe, Zambello is fluent in multiple languages and began her career as an assistant director to Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. She continues to be a leading force in opera and theatre on the global stage.



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