Sweeney Todd
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
A Musical Thriller

Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse
16 - 25 July
Victorian Opera has turned ten! To celebrate this special milestone, your state opera company presents a Tony Award-winning musical thriller, the final instalment in their Sondheim trilogy. 

To everyone past and present who has come on this journey, our audience, our supporters, our artists, the State Government of Victoria, our Artistic Director Richard Mills, our Founding Music Director Richard Gill, our board and staff, we give our heartfelt thanks.

In 2015, a brave new world of opera awaits. Join us and discover a local company that is redefining opera and helping to build its future.

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This production finalises the Sondheim trilogy Victorian Opera undertook in 2013, its precedents being Sunday in the Park with George and Into the Woods. This tripartite project has sat well within the company, focusing on works of relatively modest scale, ideally situated in the Playhouse of Arts Centre Melbourne, and all being under the curation of a single director, Stuart Maunder, whose skill in this repertoire is well established. The three titles have also enabled Victorian Opera to create some interesting opportunities for Australian and Melbourne based performers and theatre practitioners, and have - so far at least - found favour with our public.

Therefore, it is with some excitement and pride that I write to introduce Sweeney Todd, probably the greatest work of the three we have chosen, in a production that I think eclipses the two previous exercises in its theatrical ambition and range. These musicals are ideal for an opera company to engage with, because of the unique fusion of music and text that characterises Sondheim's best work.

They all have elements that need to be sung with a sure and developed vocal technique, as well as elements that need the particular skills of music theatre - but the common thread in all this is the necessity for sparkling diction, achieved in our previous efforts and a current preoccupation in our rehearsal room as I write this.

Of course the sheer quality of the material for this piece is a constant delight for all involved and the work is by far the most involving for the ensemble at large, the company ensemble being consistently engaged throughout, as citizens of London and as a kind of Greek Chorus, commenting on the action. The musical invention for the work is dazzling in its variety and its unity of purpose, songs as diverse as ‘Priest’ and ‘Green Finch and Linnet Bird’ are part of a compositional spectrum knit together with a rich palette of leitmotifs (including references to the ‘Dies Irae’) and a connecting ballad.

Sondheim has described the show as “a black operetta” - indeed speech is the exception, most of the work is sung, as befits an opera company. It presents challenges to opera singers to take on the muscularity of vernacular diction and presents similar challenges to the music theatre performers to embrace the vocal possibilities of the numbers which are best served by the power and resonance of the operatic mode to reveal their musical splendours. Have we got the balance right? Well that remains the glorious uncertainty of our art-form - but we sure as hell have tried, and I am writing this with optimistic anticipation. Enjoy.

Richard Mills
Artistic Director
STUART MAUNDER

‘It was the worst epoch of the Industrial age; there has never been such poverty or drabness of life...It is no wonder that the joys of people took on a somewhat ferocious tinge, that they loved melodrama, crudities of blood and terror and the cheap beauties of tinsel.’

_The Dance of the Quick and the Dead:_ Sacheverell Sitwell, 1936.

In 1978 as a young stage manager and recently converted Sondheim ‘tragic’, (a friend had given me the double LP ‘Side by Side by Sondheim’... addicted) I had devoured the then extraordinary output of this giant of music theatre, from _West Side Story_ to _Pacific Overtures_. _Sweeney Todd_ was my first opportunity to discover a new Sondheim. Knowing not a word of it, with no performance history to guide me, no YouTube, no videos, no libretto just vinyl and photos on the sleeve I listened, and listened loud. Nothing prepared me for the visceral feeling of terror I experienced; the Gothic organ voluntary, the piercing factory whistle, the power of the chorus interjections, the painful and horrific story telling, the tunes, the black humour. My response has not diminished in the 30 odd years since that ‘Road to Damascus’ experience. The terror still thrills.

From the first words ‘attend the tale of Sweeney Todd’ we know this is a period piece, an allegory, a ‘tale’ that has oft been told across the generations, an urban myth, a cautionary tale and it’s deliciously scary; dark, sinister and thrilling.

This grizzly story of our homicidal barber appeared as early as 1825 in a pamphlet entitled _The Tell Tale_ based on an earlier account in Joseph Fouché’s _Archives de la Police_. In these early versions the details of the crimes are the same: a Parisian barber cuts the throats of his clientèle, steals their worldly goods, and then has a pastry chef mince their bodies into pies. A 1846 serial novel _The String of Pearls, A Romance_, by Thomas Peckett Prest captured the popular Victorian imagination. Even Charles Dickens mentions the tale in _Pickwick Papers_ where he warns his readers to only buy pies from cooks they know.

The theatrical ancestor to our Sweeney was a 1847 melodrama by George Dibdin-Pitt titled _The String of Pearls, or the Fiend of Fleet Street_. For today’s audiences the term ‘melodrama’ has judgmental connotations and is associated with mawkish sentiment, delicious villany and a high minded moral. The cast are stock standard: the sweet heroine, a black hearted villain, the buff hero and, of course, goodness triumphs in the end.

Stephen Sondheim and his librettist Hugh Wheeler used as their starting point a 1973 reworking of the melodrama by Christopher Bond. Here Sweeney Todd has a cause: just revenge. This Sweeney murders for reasons other than monetary gain, a man at the mercy of a brutal society and forced to seek out an existence in the underbelly of human suffering that was Victorian London. It
is only after his just pursuit for vengeance is foiled and he realises his impotence against the Victorian social system does he crack and transform into a charismatic homicidal maniac, aided and abetted by a totally charming accomplice who is prompted by two of those great deadly sins: lust and greed.

Although officially subtitled a ‘Musical Thriller’ Sweeney Todd has been categorised as an opera, a musical, a musical play, an operetta and almost every other musical or dramatic form. Sondheim himself describes his Sweeney as “a musical horror.” Does it matter? Perhaps not. The piece is without doubt one of the most powerful, dramatic and theatrical horror tales ever set to music. And all the more thrilling in that for all its melodrama, blood and gore it tells a very universal human story; Revenge, obsession and lust, yes, but also pain, yearning, even love. In a society where the weak get weaker and the powerful more powerful, how easy is it for a man to revert to his base instincts? Violence and brutality are often the result. Not all turn into homicidal maniacs of course, but we still ‘get’ this tale. The language is archaic, the musical is operatic in scale, the setting is Victorian England but in this most thrilling of musical treatments we can make the leap... this is a tale for our times.

’As one reads history, not in the expurgated editions written for schoolboys and passmen, but in the original authorities of each time, one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked have committed but by the punishments that the good have inflicted; and a community is infinitely more brutalized by the habitual enjoyment of punishment than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime.’

Oscar Wilde: The Soul of Man under Socialism 1891.

Stuart Maunder
Director
From the eerie, unsettling organ prelude and the screeching factory whistle that open Sweeney Todd, we know that it’s not going to be a relaxing night in the theatre! Sondheim, with his orchestrator Jonathan Tunick, has created a rich, dark, rhythmic and beautiful score that brings to life the drama and gothic horror of the story of Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, A Musical Thriller. The piece has been described as an opera, a melodrama and a musical thriller. Sondheim said that he wanted the score to be “unsettling, scary and very romantic” and that “the only way to sustain the tension was to use music continually, not to let the heat out”.

As the devastating sound of the whistle fades, the first ballad begins. Sondheim uses a musical quote from the ‘Dies Irae’ in an insistent moving quaver figure which sets up the tension of the show. Sondheim uses this ballad and varies it throughout the show to propel the action forward. Like a Greek chorus, the ensemble sing the ballad, commenting on the action and driving the plot.

Sweeney Todd’s first appearance introduces his motif; a chromatic, dissonant theme that appears throughout the show in various speeds to signify Todd’s restlessness, anger and lust for revenge. In ‘Epiphany’ at the end of Act One the motif is played yet again and builds to a ferocious dynamic moment as his pent up emotions explode.

Sondheim’s choice of music style is often in direct contrast to the text: this lulls his audience into a false sense of security. Todd sings with emotion and love to his razors as he is reunited with them. ‘A Little Priest’ is a joyous waltz, but the subject matter is far from pleasant as Todd and Mrs Lovett sing of the future contents of their pies. ‘Pretty Women’ is a lyrical duet between Todd and the Judge, but it is constantly underlined by the tension of Sweeney’s desire for revenge as he contemplates the Judge’s murder. Dissonance, beauty of melody, rapid fire text passages and unsettling metric instability feature throughout the score.

What an incredible treat it is to be part of Victorian Opera’s season of this masterpiece.

Phoebe Briggs
Musical Director
ANDREW SNELL

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Victorian Opera invites you into the dark and dirty world of Victorian London and to the thrilling finale in our Sondheim trilogy. Over the past three years, we have had the great joy of staging the genius works of this modern musical marvel. Sunday in the Park With George (2013) and Into the Woods (2014) both proved tremendously successful for the company critically and at the box office. Last year’s adventure Into the Woods not only sold out but also received multiple Green Room and Helpmann Award nominations, with Sunday in the Park With George boasting similar results.

Our Sondheim trilogy could also be considered a Stuart Maunder trilogy. We welcome Stuart back to the company to direct our last Sondheim and have been privileged to work alongside someone of his considerable talent in bringing these works to life. We are thrilled to co-produce Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, A Musical Thriller with Stuart and his team at New Zealand Opera.

Such collaborations allow us to produce works on a larger scale, as you will see in this production. The brilliantly talented Tony Award-winning designer Roger Kirk has created the sets and costumes and his design of 19th Century London is genius in its approach; allowing Sweeney Todd to truly sing as a musical in full theatrical effect. If you’re sitting in the first few rows of the Stalls, be aware that the blood washes out!

We would also like to welcome the considerable talents of Teddy Tahu Rhodes and Antoinette Halloran – leading the cast as Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett. Teddy is making his highly anticipated debut with Victorian Opera and Antoinette makes a welcome return to the company – a favourite amongst our audiences. In our tenth anniversary season, we recognise Antoinette as one of the many outstanding artists who have been with us since the very beginning and of course she has also featured in every production in this trilogy!

In the pit, Victorian Opera’s Head of Music Phoebe Briggs leads Orchestra Victoria and picks up the baton again for her second Sondheim having conducted Sunday in the Park With George. It is a true joy to see her back in the spotlight and to also listen to the rehearsals and preparations for this musical fill our Carlton home over the past months.

Whilst we conclude our Sondheim trilogy with this production, we excitedly look forward to a new musical in 2016. For now though, we say goodbye to Stephen though we assure you, we’ve saved the best till last!

Andrew Snell
Managing Director
A moving ANZAC tribute using archival photos and iconic wartime songs, featuring community choirs emerging artists and operatic favourite, David Hobson.

Thursday 13 August 7.30pm
Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

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SWEENEY TODD
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
A Musical Thriller

Music and Lyrics by STEPHEN SONDHEIM
Book by HUGH WHEELER

From an Adaptation by CHRISTOPHER BOND

Originally Directed by Harold Prince
Originally produced on Broadway by Richard Barr, Charles Woodward, Robert Fryer, Mary Lea Johnson, Martin Richards in association with Dean and Judy Manos

By arrangement with Hal Leonard Australia Pty Ltd
Exclusive agent for Music Theatre International (NY)

16 – 25 July 2015
Arts Centre Melbourne
Playhouse

Running time approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes with one 20 minute interval

Presented in partnership with New Zealand Opera

NZOPERA

Creative Team
Musical Director Phoebe Briggs
Director Stuart Maunder
Set & Costume Designer Roger Kirk
Lighting Designer Philip Lethlean
Sound Designer Jim Atkins
Production Manager Darren Cooper
Production Coordinator Luke Hales
Stage Manager Marina Milankovic
Deputy Stage Manager Andrea Corish
Assistant Stage Manager Liam Murray
Head Mechanist Shane Lee
Lighting Technician Peter Darby
Deputy Head Mechanist Kieran Santoso
Repétiteur Phillipa Safey and Loclan Mackenzie-Spencer
Dialect Consultant Anna McCrossin-Owen

Acknowledgments
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Cast

Sweeney Todd  Teddy Tahu Rhodes
Mrs Lovett  Antoinette Halloran
Anthony Hope  Blake Bowden
Johanna  Amelia Berry
Tobias Ragg  Ross Hannaford
Judge Turpin  Phillip Rhodes
The Beadle  Kanen Breen
Beggar Woman  Dimity Shepherd
Adolfo Pirelli  David Rogers-Smith
Jonas Fogg  Jeremy Kleeman

Ensemble

Carrie Barr
Paul Batey
Paul Biencourt
Cherie Boogaart
Danielle Calder
Daniel Carison
Ben Clark
Teresa Duddy
Jerzy Kozlowski
Noni McCallum
Sophie Viskich

Orchestra Victoria

Violins  Matthew Hassall, Katherine Lukey, Philip Nixon
Cello  Diane Froomes, Philippa Gardner
Bass  Matthew Thorne
Clarinet  Robin Henry
Bassoon  Lucinda Cran
Horn  Jasen Moulton
Trumpet  Mark Fitzpatrick
Percussion  Conrad Nilsson
Keyboard  Loclan Mackenzie-Spencer
Sweeney Todd
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
A Musical Thriller

Sweeney Todd returns to London seeking revenge on Judge Turpin, who destroyed his family and sent him on trumped-up charges to the colonies. With him is a travelling companion, a sailor named Anthony Hope. After chasing away a mysterious beggar woman, Sweeney finds his former digs, a barbershop above a rundown pie shop owned by an old acquaintance, Mrs. Lovett. When she recognises him as Benjamin Barker, her amorous objectives are aroused. But Sweeney gets busy instead reviving his razors (his ‘friends’) to help him complete his murderous mission. Elsewhere, Anthony spies Johanna, who unbeknownst to him is Sweeney’s daughter, singing from her window. He wants to save her from the lustful grip of the Judge, whose acting as her ward.

As Sweeney gets on with his plans, a local barber, Adolfo Pirelli, threatens to out him, and promptly becomes Sweeney’s first throat-slit victim to slide down the chute to the ovens below. The Judge’s own close shave is thwarted by Anthony informing Sweeney of his wedding plans to Johanna in front of the Judge who storms off. Seething with rage, Sweeney undergoes an epiphany, sensing a primal need to take out his frustrations on humankind, while Mrs. Lovett, itching for a business lift, spots an opportunity to enrich her pies with the growing body count. As innocent and guilty alike are dispatched by Sweeney’s razor (including eventually the Judge), he discovers the true identity of the beggar woman, causing him to dispatch Mrs. Lovett and to fall victim to his own vengeful device.

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Image Credits:
Charlie Kinross (p.5, p.12, p.14, p.16, p.30)
Martin Philbey (p.15, p.30)
Opera houses are experiencing a Sweeney transfusion. This year, there’s been a call out for fake blood from English National, Houston Grand, San Francisco, Welsh National, and Vancouver. That its musical DNA owes much to opera has helped earn nods of approval by even the most archly browed opera buff. Ironically, as a young man, Sondheim didn’t rate opera. His topdrawer taste was for Ravel and Rachmaninoff, and for film music, not musicals. In fact, listen closely and you’ll hear approximations of Bernard Herrmann’s screechy leitmotifs, which he used in such films as *Hangover Square* and *Psycho*, in some of Sweeney Todd’s piercingly dissonant moments.

Sondheim’s formative training was guided, in composition, by Milton Babbitt, the Princeton guru of serial and electronic music, and for film music, not musicals. In fact, listen closely and you’ll hear approximations of Bernard Herrmann’s screechy leitmotifs, which he used in such films as *Hangover Square* and *Psycho*, in some of Sweeney Todd’s piercingly dissonant moments.

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Milton’s musicology was as far removed from the lacy melodies of Puccini as you can get, and Hammerstein modelled musicals after the literacy of plays and therefore shunned operatic artifice. Yet, forty-two years after Christopher Bond’s modern updating of the titular Victorian melodrama seeded Sondheim’s imagination, the musical is becoming part of the operatic canon, and pre-show notes continue to obsess over what to call it.

Back in 1973, the question was not so much about musical misnomers as misanthropes – why *Sweeney Todd*? It crossed director/producer Harold Prince’s mind when Sondheim first pitched the idea to him after seeing Bond’s play in the UK. The collaboration of Prince and Sondheim generated *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little Night Music* (1973), and before *Sweeney Todd*’s premiere, the boldly experimental, *Pacific Overtures* (1976). Their musicals did not shrink from social commentary even as they reinvented the form, quite brave considering the economic deterioration of Broadway and its audiences of tired businessmen and ladies who lunch.

Commercial theatre was not to be messed with, and social commentary, to quote the local zeitgeist, was “as welcome to most Broadway producers as syphilis is to a whore”. Yet, Prince and Sondheim, with Hugh Wheeler (of *Pacific Overtures*) pressed on with this pitch-black tale.

Sondheim initially thought of writing a small-scale chamber opera (hence its operatic lineage). The intimate scale suited the Guignol-type theatre that he imagined for the *Fleet Street* demimonde. Prince, on the other
hand, wanted things scaled up. The dust and din of Victorian London, Sweeney’s pity-and fear-inducing tale (a la Oedipus), and Bond’s through a looking glass darkly view of class-ridden society, screamed for bigness. Within its moralising compass, the musical’s messages had to be loud and clear. Look around you and you’ll see Sweeney Todd’s world, the perilous conditions of the downtrodden who live literally on a razor’s edge, and over whom the well-heeled Broadway audiences, on any given day, may have gingerly stepped (or run over!) en route to the office or martini lunch. As Sweeney’s Act one ‘Epiphany’ reminds us,

*There’s a hole in the world
Like a great black pit
And it’s filled with people who are filled with shit
And the vermin of the world inhabit it...*

Are such social concerns as resonant today as then, and might this have something to do with the musical’s remarkable afterlife? For consumers of opera and musicals alike, *Sweeney Todd* is a delicious curio shop, with a bit of opera, operetta, and musical comedy. Yet it is also a consummate theatrical realisation of these forms. Its chorus, part Brecht in its audience-confronting moments, and part Sophocles, in its reflective lyrics, is as musically robust and dramatically involved as any found in Verdi. The voice types yield to convention: high voice for innocence and hope espoused by Tobias, Johanna and Anthony, lower down for the malcontent and brooders, Sweeney and Judge Turpin. The dense harmonic texture, leitmotifs, recitative-type moments, spare use of dialogue, and variety of musical forms (from epic solos to dialogical quartets) capture, as Howard Kissel argued back in 1979, ‘all the energy, all the emotional rhythms’ of opera’s aspiration to high art.

Its didactic message – the destructive effect the Haves have on the Have Nots – still resonates today, as those at the top increasingly own more of the wealth, and the bottom bottoms out often with tragic consequences. Thematically, violence (at a distance) repels and also entertains; humans like a close shave with their subconscious fears, and as present-day cultural pundits tell us, we live in a post-Gothic world, obsessed, in a rather matter-of-fact way, with morbidity, immortality and body counts. In television, vampires are us apparently. Life is also like the movies, and so is *Sweeney Todd*, which Sondheim labels, in his commentaries, a “movie for the stage”. Art imitated life most convincingly in a recent cheek-by-jowl production, an authentic Victorian-era pie shop in down and out Tooting, south London. Yes, twere real: meat pies, greasy menus, ovens ablaze...and not a cat to be found.

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PHOEBE BRIGGS
Musical Director
Phoebe completed a Bachelor of Music at the University of Melbourne. She was a member of the Opera Australia music staff between 2002 - 2012 and in October 2012 was appointed Head of Music at Victorian Opera. For Victorian Opera, Phoebe has conducted Sunday in the Park with George, The Play of Herod and Alice’s Adventures in Operaland and assisted on Into the Woods. She was conductor for Opera in the Paddock (Opera Northwest) and was assistant/cover conductor for Don Pasquale (IFAC/Opera Australia, Tokyo), The Magic Flute, The Merry Widow, Die Fledermaus, The Pearl Fishers, Cosi fan tutte, A Little Night Music and The Mikado (Opera Australia) and Guys and Dolls (Ambassador Theatre Group).

STUART MAUNDER
Director
Currently General Director of New Zealand Opera, Stuart made his Victorian Opera debut directing Sunday in the Park with George in 2013. For thirty years Stuart has been directing musical theatre and opera in Australia. In 1999 Stuart returned to Australia to become Artistic Administrator of Opera Australia, becoming Executive Producer from 2004 to 2008. His productions for Opera Australia include Tales of Hoffmann, Manon, Trial by Jury, HMS Pinafore and The Pirates of Penzance. His Music Theatre productions include The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber, Dusty, Shout!, Little Women for Kookaburra and My Fair Lady and A Little Night Music for Opera Australia.

ROGER KIRK
Set & Costume Design
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, and has worked extensively on set and costume design for Opera Australia. Other credits include Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Whistle Down The Wind, Silver Rose and Le Corsaire for Munich Opera House. His Broadway credits include The King & I (Tony Award), Jesus Chris Superstar, and 42nd Street (Tony Award Nomination).
PHILIP LETHLEAN
Lighting Design
Philip Lethlean designs lighting for projects across Australia, Asia, Europe and America including, theatre, opera, dance, circus, puppetry, large cultural events and architecture. Commissions include the 2015 opening ceremony of the Pacific Games in PNG, Clusters of Light in Sharjah UAE (2014), White Night Melbourne in 2013 and 2014, the Australian Pavilion at Expo Shanghai and the opening of Hamer Hall in Melbourne 2012. Theatre works include the English National Ballet, The Australian Opera, MTC, Circus Oz and Into the Woods for Victorian Opera. Lighting Sweeney Todd continues the collaboration.

JIM ATKINS
Sound Designer
Jim Atkins recent work includes design and operation for Victorian Opera’s previous two Sondheim musicals (Sunday in the Park with George and Into the Woods) plus Victorian Opera’s productions The Riders, The Flying Dutchman, Nixon in China, and Maria de Buenos Aires. Other productions; Bliss, The Merry Widow (OA) Chroma, 50th Anniversary Gala (The Australian Ballet); Songs From the Middle (Eddie Perfect/ANAM); Acoustic Life of Sheds, Namatjira (Big hART); En Masse (Genevieve Lacy); Conversations with Ghosts (Paul Kelly, Jim Ledger, ANAM) Myer Music Bowl Free Concerts (MSO); as well as sound design for the 2013 and forthcoming 2016 Opera Australia Ring Cycle.

TEDDY TAHU RHODES
Sweeney Todd
Teddy has rapidly established an international career on the opera stage and concert platform, performing in San Francisco, Washington, Cincinnati, Houston, New York, Hamburg, Munich, Paris, Vienna, Wales, Scotland and Russia. Recent seasons include Don Giovanni (OA, WA Opera), Scarpia/role debut (Tosca - WA Opera), Emille de bec/role debut (South Pacific - OA) and King of Siam/role debut – (The King and I - OA). Awards include an ARIA, two Helpmann Awards, a Limelight Award, a Green Room Award plus a MO Award. In 2015 Teddy will debut the roles of Méphistophélès (Faust OA), the title role in Sweeney Todd (Victoria Opera) and title role in Jekyll and Hyde (OA).
ANTOINETTE HALLORAN
Mrs Lovett

Antoinette Halloran is one of Australia’s most accomplished and best-loved sopranos. She performs regularly with all the major Australasian opera companies and symphony orchestras and appears frequently on national television and radio. Since 2010, Antoinette has sung the title role in *The Merry Widow* for Opera Queensland, Mimi in *La bohème*, Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* and Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* for Opera Australia, Micaela in *Carmen* for State Opera of South Australia, the World Premiere of *Midnight Son* for Victorian Opera and Cio-Cio-San for New Zealand Opera and Melbourne Opera.

BLAKE BOWDEN
Anthony Hope

Roles include Edward Lyons in *Blood Brothers* (Enda Markey Presents); Anthony Pemberton in *Beyond Desire* (Neil Rutherford Prod.); Lt. Joseph Cable in *South Pacific* (Opera Australia/GFO); Pat Matthews in *Moonshadow* (Sue Farely Prod.); Snowboy in *West Side Story* (ATG); *Jekyll and Hyde* (TML); *The Boy From Oz* (Gannon/Fox); *Dirty Dancing* (Jacobsen Ent.); The *Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber* (RUG); Sondheim on Sondheim (Manilla Street Prod.); Lysander in *A Midsummer Nights Dream* (Belvoir) and as Mario Lanza in *MARIO* with Phil Scott. In 2013 Blake held the Gertrude Johnson Fellowship at The Opera Studio Melbourne. And in 2011 Blake was the winner of the ANZ Trustees Rob Guest Endowment Award.

AMELIA BERRY

Amelia Berry is a New Zealand-born soprano who is currently living in New York. Previous roles include Clorinda in *La Cenerentola* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* for New Zealand Opera, Giulietta in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Jenny Hill in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* and Jenny Reefer in *The Mother of Us All* while at the Manhattan School of Music, Corinna in *Il viaggio a Rheims* for Days Bay Opera, Annio in *La clememza di Tito* with Auckland Opera Studio and the title role in Semele at the New Zealand School of Music.
ROSS HANNAFORD
Tobias Ragg
Ross first appeared in professional musical theatre 20 years ago, playing the role of Tiny Tim in Scrooge. Since his debut, Ross has gone on to work extensively with professional credits including, Paul in A Chorus line, Skimbleshanks in CATS, James in Beyond Desire, Jack in Into the Woods, Carbo in Strange Bedfellows, Theo in Pippin and Colin in The Secret Garden. Other credits include King Kong, WICKED, We Will Rock You, and SHOUT. His Production Company credits include Clarius in Camelot, Junior in Little Me, Thoroughly Modern Millie and Sweet Charity. Ross is thrilled to be playing Tobias Ragg in Sweeney Todd and thanks his family and friends for their love and support.

PHILLIP RHODES
Judge Turpin
This season, Phillip Rhodes appears as Scarpia Tosca at New Zealand Opera. He returns to Opera North (UK), scene of many past successes including Aeneas Dido and Aeneas, Marcello La Boheme, Iago (cover) Otello, Balstrode (cover) Peter Grimes and Billy Bigelow, Carousel, as Roucher and Gérard (cover) Andréa Chenier. Recent highlights include Older Man Between Worlds at ENO. Phillip thanks the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, who has provided him with significant support. As a recipient of the 2016 Royal Opera House/KTKF (UK) Cover scheme, Phillip joins Covent Garden for 11 performances of Enrico (cover) Lucia di Lammermoor.

KANEN BREEN
The Beadle
Past engagements for Victorian Opera include Through The Looking Glass. Roles for Opera Australia include Camille in The Merry Widow, Nanki Poo in The Mikado, Emilio in Partenope (Helpmann and Greenroom award), Caius in Falstaff, Alfred in Die Fledermaus, Sellem in The Rake’s Progress, Pong in Turandot, Andres/Cochenille/Pittichinaccio/Frantz/Nathanael in The Tales Of Hoffmann, Pirelli in Sweeney Todd, Albert Herring, and Johnny in Bliss at the Edinburgh Festival. Other engagements include Nanki Poo, Nadir in The Pearlfishers, Ramiro in Cenerentola, and Andy Warhol in The Perfect American for Opera Queensland and Rodolfo in Baz Luhrman’s La Boheme on Broadway.
SWEENEY TODD

BIOGRAPHIES

DIMITY SHEPHERD
Beggar Woman

Roles for Victorian Opera include her Green Room Award-winning performance as Cherubino in Marriage Of Figaro, Orphee in Orphee et Eurydice, Alice in Through The Looking Glass, Arsamene in Xerxes, Nireno in Julius Caesar, Flora in La traviata, her Helpmann Award nominated Lucy in Threepenny Opera, Clara in Midnight Son, and The Riders, Nixon In China and Sunday In The Park With George. She has sung Cherubino for Opera Australia, Rosina in Barber Of Seville and Carmen for Oz Opera, major roles for Opera Queensland and Chamber Made Opera and the title rôle in The Ghost Wife at the Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney festivals and London’s BITE02 festivals.

DAVID ROGERS-SMITH
Adolfo Pirelli

David is a highly regarded concert, opera and musical theatre artist having appeared as Piangi in The Phantom Of The Opera for Really Useful Company, as understudy for Jean Valjean in Les Miserables for Cameron Mackintosh, Canio in I Pagliacci, Pinkerton in Madam Butterfly, Danilo in The Merry Widow, Don José in Carmen and as Faust all for Melbourne Opera and in principal roles in The Merry Widow for EssGee Productions and Funny Girl for The Production Company. With Victorian Opera, he has appeared in Sunday in the Park With George, Into the Woods and The Riders.

JEREMY KLEEMAN
Jonas Fogg/Ensemble

A graduate of Victorian Opera and Melbourne Conservatorium’s Masters of Opera, Jeremy Kleeman is beginning to establish himself as one of Australia’s leading young baritones. Recently, Jeremy made a successful debut in the Brisbane Baroque Festival as Teobaldo in Faramondo. In 2014, Jeremy won the Welsh Male Choir Singer of the Year, and performed Marchese d’Obigny in La traviata and Rapunzel’s Prince in Into the Woods for Victorian Opera. In 2013, Jeremy portrayed Albert the Pudding to critical acclaim in the award winning world premiere of The Magic Pudding - the opera. Jeremy is supported by the Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship with the Melba Opera Trust.
PAUL BATEY
Ensemble
Paul has worked throughout Australia and internationally in contemporary dance, opera, and musical theatre. Graduating from the VCA, he danced with 2 Dance Plus, Tasdance and Danceworks. Paul was in the ensemble for numerous musicals including My Fair Lady, The Boy from Oz (original cast), Les Miserables (the Bishop/Javert cover). In Germany Paul performed the roles Valentine (Kiss of the Spider Woman), Bill Calhoun (Kiss Me Kate) and Frank-n-Furter in The Rocky Horror Show. More recent Australian roles include The Mayor in Albert Herring (Victorian Opera), the Phantom (Phantom of the Opera) and Alphonse Frankenstein in the Australian premiere of Frankenstein the musical.

PAUL BIENCOURT
Ensemble
Paul’s career spans opera, concert and musical theatre starting with Noel Widerberg in Shout The Musical followed by eight shows with The Production Company. Victorian Opera performances comprise all tenor roles in Rembrandt’s Wife (Helpmann and Green Room Award nominated), Tmolus in The Fight between Phoebus and Pan, Brighella in Ariadne auf Naxos (Green Room Award nominated), the Englishman in Angelique, White King cover in Through the Looking Glass and Victorian Opera Chorus. Paul’s engagements with Opera Australia have been Harry cover in La Fanciulla del West and OA Chorus. Other career highlights include Melbourne Opera: Ferrando in Così Fan Tutte and Rodopho in La Boheme.

CARRIE BARR
Ensemble
Carrie is one of Australia’s most versatile performers in Opera and Music Theatre with leading roles spanning the last 28 years. Music Theatre credits - Sunday in the Park with George, Mary Poppins, Les Miserables, Cats, Hair, Return to the Forbidden Planet, Dusty Springfield Story, Nine, Crusade, King of Country, Metro Street, Nostrodamas, Sideshow Alley, Jerry Springer the Opera and Carousel. Opera credits - Falstaff, Don Carlos, Turandot, Don Pasquale, Lucia di Lammermoor, Aida, Otello, Madam Butterfly, Carmen, Un Ballo, Merry Widow, Pirates of Penzance, Rake’s Progress, Lakme, Mozart’s Requiem, Gondoliers, HMAS Pinafore/Trial by Jury, Mikado, Marriage of Figaro, Tosca, Die Fledermaus, Orpheus & Euridice and The Magic Flute.
SWEENEY TODD

BIOGRAPHIES

CHERIE BOOGAART
Ensemble

Boogaart’s credits include Third Lady (Magic Flute), Dorabella (Cosi fan Tutte) and Orlofsky (Die Fledermaus) for Co-Opera; Nefertiti (Akhnaten), Kasturbai (Satyagraha), Giovanna (Rigoletto), Wowkle (Girl of the Golden West), Sandman (Hansel and Gretel), the Messenger (Underneath); Maria (Maria de Buenos Aires) with State Opera SA and Victorian Opera; South Pacific and The Mikado for the Adelaide Festival Theatre; Guys and Dolls with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra; Cindy (The Beauty Spot) and Songs to make you feel Sexy for the Adelaide Cabaret Festival; Ainadamar and El Niño for the Adelaide Festival; I love you, you’re perfect, now change and Elegies for Singular Productions.

DANIELLE CALDER
Ensemble

Danielle holds a Bachelor of Music Performance from the VCA. Awards include the Dame Joan Hammond Greenroom Award. Danielle was a member of VO’s Developing Artist Programme in 2008/09. For this company, she performed Governess Turn of the Screw and Giannetta Elixir of Love. For OA, Sylviane: The Merry Widow, Mabel/Edith: The Pirates of Pembercy, Micaela/Frasquita: Carmen (OzOpera). Other credits include: Margeurite Faust, Mimi La Boheme, Donna Elvira Don Giovanni, Fiordiligi Cosi Fan Tutte, a national tour of The Sound of Music, soloist in An afternoon with Stephen Sondheim, soloist Verdi’s Requiem, Rossini’s Petite Messe Solennelle, Handel’s Messiah and Mozart’s C Minor Mass.

DANIEL CARISON
Ensemble

Daniel Carison is a 22 year-old baritone born and raised in Melbourne and is the 2015 recipient of the Opera Society Vocal Scholarship and the Beleura-Tallis Opera Scholarship, through Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust. Daniel completed his Bachelor of Music at the University of Melbourne with Peter Mander in 2014. Daniel has worked as a soloist for Victorian Opera, Savoy Opera Company, The Royal Melbourne Philharmonic and the University of Melbourne to name a few. Most recently Daniel was awarded first place in the very prestigious Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Aria Competition and was a winner in 3MBS’ Inaugural live radio performance series, The Talent.
BEN CLARK
Ensemble
A Victorian College of the Arts graduate, Ben has spent the last 6 years touring the globe with The Ten Tenors. Highlights include: NBC’s The Today Show, The Melbourne Cup, The Morning Show, The Footy Show, and Oprah’s Ultimate Australian Adventure. Ben also had the opportunity to play the role of Prince Tamino in The Magic Flute for Opera Australia’s schools touring group in 2012. After so many years singing around the world, Ben is proud to finally be making his professional theatre home town debut in the dark and thrilling Sweeney Todd.

TERESA DUDDY
Ensemble
BMUS University of Melbourne, MMUS in Opera Chicago College of Performing Arts. Roles include Lady Thiang (covered and performed) in The King and I with Opera Australia, Lalette in La Rondine (USA), title roles in L’Enfant et les Sortileges and Rita (USA), Susanna in Le Nozze di Figaro (Germany), and Clorinda in La Cenerentola with Lyric Opera of Chicago (USA). Cindy and Wendy in Contact! (MICF), Naomi in Cinderella. Roles with Victorian Opera; Rose (cover) in What Next?, Madame Mao (cover) in Nixon in China. Also a grant recipient from Tait Memorial Trust, Opus 50, and Opera and Arts Support Group.

JERZY KOZLOWSKI
Ensemble
Jerzy has performed in over 60 operas as soloist and chorus member. With Victorian Opera he has performed the role of Christus in Bach’s St John Passion, Trulove in Stravinsky’s The Rake’s Progress, bass soloist in Stravinsky’s Les Noces, toured in Cosi fan Tutte and last year, the Dottore in Verdi’s La traviata and Arthur in Iain Grandage’s The Riders. He has performed in many premieres by Australian composers including David Chisholm, Richard Mills, Johanna Selleck, Helen Gifford and has had two song cycles written especially for him by Michael Bertram and Lawrence Whiffin.
NONI MCCALLUM
Ensemble
Noni McCallum studied Music Theatre at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (2004) and more recently Improvisational Comedy at The Upright Citizens Brigade in New York. Credits include Hi-5 Series 9 & 10 (Nine Network/Kids Like Us) Sunday In The Park With George (Victorian Opera, 2013), Pacific Overtures (Watch This/Manilla Street Productions 2012), and Into The Woods (Victorian Opera 2014). Earlier in 2015, Noni won the Your Theatrics International Cabaret Competition and made her solo cabaret debut at the 2015 Melbourne Cabaret Festival with Tinderella. She looks forward to appearing in Jekyll and Hyde later this year.

SOPHIE VISKICH
Ensemble
Sophie studied at the Victorian College of the Arts and has worked extensively with Opera Australia chorus and Victorian Opera. Credits include: The Sound of Music (Australian tour), Yum Yum in The Mikado (regional tour), Soap Star in Menopause the Musical (regional tour). She covered and regularly played the role of Carlotta in the Asian and Australian tours of The Phantom of the Opera and is currently part of the World Tour, recently performing in Istanbul. For Victorian Opera she performed the Queen of the Night in The Magic Flute (education performances) and covered Pat Nixon in Nixon in China.
International cabaret sensation Meow Meow and Victorian Opera’s next generation of stars bring to life Kurt Weill’s Die sieben Todsünden and then reimagine the seven deadly sins for the 21st century.

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Visit our blog and learn more about the first two instalments in our Sondheim trilogy, Sunday in the Park with George and Into the Woods, and discover how Victorian Opera is redefining opera and musical theatre.

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