

simon Bruckard | EMMA MUIR-SMITH



Victorian Opera presents The Selfish Giant

A CHILDREN'S OPERA IN ONE ACT

Based on Oscar Wilde's short story 'The Selfish Giant'

Composer Simon Bruckard Librettist Emma Muir-Smith

CREATIVES

Conductor **Simon Bruckard** Director **Cameron Menzies** Set and Costume Designer **James Browne** Original Lighting Designer **Eduard Inglés** Lighting Realised **Peter Darby** Performance Sound Designer **Samuel Moxham** Choreographer **Elizabeth Hill-Cooper**

CAST

The Giant Stephen Marsh First Fairy Eliza Bennetts O'Connor Second Fairy Miriam Whiting-Reilly Spring Lucy Schneider Snow Joshua Morton-Galea Wind Nick Sheppard Frost Christopher-Jack Andrew Winter Hannah Kostros Child 1 Uma Dobia Child 2 Cen Wei Child 3 Hartley Trusler Child 4 Jack Jordan

CHORUS

Nick Beecher, Isaac Burgess, Joel Dow, Zoya Mclean, Caitlin Rowe, Breanna Stuart

Victorian Opera Chamber Orchestra

This production features student performers from the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne, including students from the Master of Music (Opera Performance), Bachelor of Music (Honours) and Bachelor of Music (Voice).

Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse

World premiere was staged on Wednesday 16 October 2019 Running time is 50 minutes, no interval Sung in English

Production

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Manager Daniel Gosling

Stage Manager Will Lewis

Production Stage Manager Felicity Hollingbery

Assistant Stage Manager Erin Handford

Costume Supervisor Mel Serjeant

Head of Wigs & Make Up
Taylor-Jade Elliot

Original Costume Build (2019)

Nicole Serjeant Bridie Wilkinson

Orchestra

Violin 1 Matthew Rigby Violin 2 Jennifer Kirsner Viola Susanna Ling Cello Rebecca Proietto Harp Melina van Leeuwen Oboe / Cor Anglais Jasper Ly Clarinet / Bass Clarinet Andrew Fong Piano Phillipa Safey Percussion Arwen Johnston

Music Preparation

Phoebe Briggs Phillipa Safey Tom Griffiths Jacob Abela

Costume Season Staff

David Anderson Tim Corne Drew-Elizabeth Johnstone Nicole Serjeant

Acknowledgements Arts Centre Melbourne The University of Melbourne



Composer's Message

It's an extraordinary privilege to have a work performed for a return season. Especially in opera, it is very rare for a commissioned piece to be performed again. I couldn't feel more excited to get to conduct *The Selfish Giant* again, this time for a young audience.

When The Selfish Giant was first performed, it had a cast made up of high school and university-age students. This time, the cast is made up of students from the Master of Music degree at Melbourne University. What is incredibly thrilling is seeing some of the people who were in the chorus the first time round singing lead roles and pursuing music professionally. It's wonderful to see these singers developing through Victorian Opera's education programs.

In writing *The Selfish Giant*, I tried to find a musical language that is both interesting and accessible, something that matched the energy and fun of Emma Muir-Smith's incredibly clever text. The very opening of the show was the first musical idea that I wrote, and a lot of the piece is developed from that motif. Most of the characters, however, inhabit quite different musical worlds. You might hear the influence of Strauss in the Spring fairy's song, and Kurt Weill and Cole Porter in the slapstick buffoonery of Snow, Wind and Frost. There are a few specific references to opera that afficionados will hopefully appreciate!

Even though the show is aimed at a younger audience, we haven't shied away from the big emotions. After the last few years, where it feels like so much has changed, I hope that *The Selfish Giant* reminds us of the things that haven't – generosity, playfulness and a love of beauty and the natural world.

SIMON BRUCKARD

Composer / Conductor

Librettist's Message

Firstly and most importantly, I want to thank you, our audience — our young people, and the carers and teachers that have brought them today to see *The Selfish Giant*. It hardly bears repeating that the last few years have wrought havoc on the arts and on the education of young people. I well and truly tip my hat to all of you who navigated the challenges (and occasional horrors) of remote learning with patience, passion, and generosity – we are thrilled to take the baton from you for the next hour.

We are beyond excited to be back performing for audiences again, and truly grateful for the opportunity to inspire kids through the magic of music and theatre. This has been programmed as Victorian Opera's education show for children, but for me, an adult (allegedly), this story always reminds me of the deep wisdom of children and the reciprocal nature of education – that we can learn as much from young people as they can from us.

In our current global climate, we hope that this performance of *The Selfish Giant* sparks conversations in the classroom and around the dinner table – conversations about the magic of storytelling through music and performance, about fun costumes and silly characters, but also discussions around the importance of trying to understand others through generosity and kindness, and our role as custodians of nature privileged to live on First Nations land.

The Selfish Giant was first performed in 2019 as Victorian Opera's Youth production. It's rare that new Australian works see the light of day beyond their premiere season, so I want to extend a huge thank you to Victorian Opera for bringing this show to life once more. We fell in love with this story while writing it, and we hope you do too.

EMMA MUIR-SMITH Librettist

Synopsis

Every day, the local children play in the Giant's beautiful garden. When he returns from holiday, the Giant is outraged that the children have taken over his garden and puts up a fence with a sign saying NO CHILDREN ALLOWED.

The next morning, Spring and her fairies attempt to wake up the garden but it doesn't work, and they leave feeling distressed.

Snow, Wind and Frost are looking for a place to call home when they spot the Giant's sign. Winter encourages them to take over the garden and they waste no time, destroying the garden and accidentally putting a hole in the fence.

Years pass and the Giant wonders what has happened to Spring as Winter continues to rule his garden. The children wander past, reminiscing how much fun it was to play in the garden. The Giant sings about his sadness after years of winter and wonders what he has done to end up with a garden so grey.

One day, the children are playing when their ball goes through the hole in the fence. They start climbing into the Giant's garden, but one child is hesitant to enter, afraid that the Giant will catch them. Winter, Wind, Snow and Frost are horrified by all the children filling the garden. Slowly, the garden begins to change; flowers bloom and Spring returns. Seeing all her friends having fun, the hesitant child summons up the courage to enter but gets stuck in the hole.

When he discovers the children in his garden, the Giant storms out in a rage and pulls out the child stuck in the hole. He berates them for entering the garden, but they help him understand that his wonderful garden is the best place to play and draws his attention to the change occurring. The Giant is convinced to play with the children, pulls down the fence and invites them to return every day.

Years pass, the seasons turn, the Giant becomes an old man, and children continue to play in his garden. The Giant reflects on how wonderful his life has been and the joy that his garden has brought him. The next morning, Spring and her fairies start waking up the garden. The Giant does not get up from his chair, and the children come together to lay flowers over his body.

Cast and Creatives



SIMON BRUCKARD Composer / Conductor

Composer, conductor and pianist Simon Bruckard is one of the busiest young stars of the Australian music industry. He is a member of music staff with Opera Australia and conducts regularly for Victorian Opera in Melbourne. Bruckard's youth opera *The Selfish Giant* premiered to a sold-out audience as part of Victorian Opera's 2019 season. It won a Green Room Award for Musical Achievement - New Australian Opera and was nominated for another three awards. Commissioned during the lockdown of 2020, Simon's opera *Cassandra* premiered in March 2021. It was Simon's second opera commissioned by Victorian Opera. Simon conducted the world premiere alongside *Echo and Narcissus* by Kevin March. In March 2022, Simon conducted *La Bohème* for State Opera of South Australia with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra to an audience of over 5000 people. Simon will be Simone Young's assistant conductor for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2022.



EMMA MUIR-SMITH Librettist

Based in Melbourne and London, Australian writer, director, and performer Emma Muir-Smith is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist whose work encompasses theatre, opera, and classical music. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Emma's work as a dramatist includes: Carnival of the Animals (Melbourne Symphony Orchestra), La Juive (Opera Australia), Die Freunde Von Salamanka (Victorian Opera), Peter and the Wolf (Melbourne Symphony Orchestra), Listen to my Story (Co-Opera South Australia), Remembering (RADA Festival), The Selfish Giant (Victorian Opera), Alice Through the Opera Glass (Victorian Opera 2019), Missing (National Youth Orchestra Great Britain), Top of the Hill (RADA), Cool Air (Old Red Lion theatre London), Terra Nullius (RADA). In 2021, she wrote and directed Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's Performance of a Lifetime COVID-19 vaccination campaign, working with artists including Tim Minchin, Virginia Gay, Rhonda Burchmore, Meow Meow, Deborah Cheetham and more. The campaign went viral on social media and trended at #2 on YouTube. In 2022, Emma's upcoming shows as a director include A Christmas Carol for Victorian Opera, and a new commission for Children's Theatre Digital UK.



CAMERON MENZIES Director



JAMES BROWNE Set & Costume Designer

International director Cameron Menzies works consistently across opera, music theatre, theatre, cabaret and with many international festivals. His work has been seen throughout Australia, United Kingdom, Europe, South Africa, Japan and China. He has worked for Shakespeare's Globe, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Diva Opera UK, Opera Australia, Victorian Opera, Malthouse Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, MSO and SSO. He is a Helpmann and Green Room nominated director. Some credits include the national tour of *Hair the Musical, Sister Act The Musical, The Vaults* UK, *Lucia di Lammermoor* UK and Australia, Yma Sumac: The Peruvian Songbird, Don Giovanni, Madama Butterfly, and La Bohème.

James' credits as Set and Costume Designer include for Hayes Theatre: Cabaret, The Detective's Handbook, Dogfight, Xanadu; for Monkey Baa Theatre Company: Pete the Sheep, Josephine Wants to Dance; for Regal Theatre: Strictly Ballroom; for Seymour Centre: Fat Swan; for Sydney Opera House: Just for Laughs, Velvet, Miracle City, Limbo Unhinged, HAIR; for Theatre Royal/Shanghai: Side by Side; for CDP: Spot the Dog, Mr Stink, Turns, The Very Hungry Caterpillar; for Griffin: Diving for Pearls, Beached, Ladies Day; for NTOP: The Red Tree; for TOHO: Ghost the Musical (Tokyo); for SLS Las Vegas: Blanc de Blanc. Next year James will design The Bridges of Madison County in Sydney and Menopause the Musical - new Australian tour.





EDUARD INGLÉS Lighting Designer



Eduard has created lighting designs for some of the most prestigious dance, theatre, and opera companies in both Europe and Australia. Since moving to Melbourne from Barcelona in 2004, he has worked as a designer for theatrical productions and exhibitions including; *The Key* (Dislocate), *Dance of the Bee* (Astra), *Rembrandt's Wife* (Victorian Opera), *If These Walls Could Talk...?* (Dislocate), *Bradman Hall Of Fame* (Bradman Museum), *Leap of Faith* (National Institute of Circus Arts), *Racing Gallery* (National Sports Museum), *A Newcastle Story* (Newcastle Museum), *Silverscreen* (Callum Morton), *Last Orders* (National Institute of Circus Arts), *Curiosity* (Dislocate).

Currently tenured with Arts Centre Melbourne, Sam Moxham is a seasoned engineer in all aspects of sound including front-of-house engineering, sound design, recording and broadcast. Sam works with many of Australia's major presenters including The Australian Ballet, Opera Australia and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and has toured internationally with Grammy Award-winning Soweto Gospel Choir.

SAM MOXHAM Sound Designer



STEPHEN MARSH The Giant

Australia. He currently studies under the tutelage of the Welsh/ Australian Baritone, Roger Howell. Stephen made his professional debut in Victorian Opera's *Sleeping Beauty* in 2017 and was a developing artist for the company for both the 2017/2018 seasons. He has performed several roles with the company, which include: Zurga in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (Bizet) The Woodcutter in *Sleeping Beauty* (Respighi), Peter in *Hansel und Gretel* (Humperdinck) and The Giant in the Australian premiere of *The Selfish Giant* by Simon Bruckard and Emma Muir-Smith. In 2021 Stephen also made his European debut as Marcello in Puccini's *La Bohème* at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. Stephen was a scholar with the prestigious Melba Opera Trust Programme for 2018/2019 as well as an inaugural member of Melbourne Opera's Richard Divall Emerging Artist Program. He is the recipient of several other awards, including an lan Potter Cultural Trust Scholarship and the Australia Council Sir Robert Askin Operatic Scholarship.

Stephen Marsh is a 30-year-old Baritone who resides in Geelong,





First Fairy Eliza Bennetts O'Connor

Second Fairy Miriam Whiting-Reilly

Spring Lucy Schneider



Snow Joshua Morton-Galea

Wind Nick Sheppard

Frost Christoper-Jack Andrew





victorianopera.com.au

Share Your Thoughts

Let us know what you thought of The Selfish Giant

Visit victorianopera.com.au/survey

Supported by Jane Hemstritch

We acknowledge the support of



Education and Training





Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

Relaxed performance is supported by

William Angliss Charitable Fund The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust



Australian Governme







/ictorian Opera Digital Outreach made possible through Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund an Australian Government initiative