

VICTORIAN
OPERA

THE VISITORS



Victorian Opera respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work and live: the people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. We acknowledge these original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways and their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to their Elders past and present.

VICTORIAN OPERA PRESENTS

THE VISITORS

AN OPERA IN ONE ACT

Based on the play *The Visitors* by Jane Harrison

Composer **Christopher Sainsbury** Librettist **Jane Harrison**

CREATIVES

Conductor **Phoebe Briggs**

Director **Isaac Drandic**

Set & Costume Designer **Richard Roberts**

Lighting Designer **Rachel Burke**

Sound Designer **Sam Moxham**

CAST

Jacob
Marcus Corowa
Gordon
Zoy Frangos
Lois
Lillian Fromyhr
Joycie
Jess Hitchcock

Albert
Eddie Muliaumaseali'i
Gary
Elias Wilson
Winsome
Shauntai Sherree Abdul-Rahman

Victorian Opera Chamber Orchestra

This production is generously supported by



18 – 21 OCTOBER
ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE, PLAYHOUSE

75 minutes, with no interval

Sung in English

CEO'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the season of *The Visitors*.

New work is in the DNA of Victorian Opera. We have commissioned 36 new works over the lifetime of the company under the Artistic Directorship of both the late Richard Gill AO and Richard Mills AM. Moving into the new Artistic Direction of Stuart Maunder, this baton has been clearly handed over.

The process for development of new work is imperative to get right, so that we ensure the work has the best possible future. Firstly, the creative team is identified, and they present a concept. Then they write the libretto and create the soundscape, and we workshop at this stage with singers and music staff before completing the full score and moving into production. This is a three-year commitment in most cases, giving us time to allow the work to develop and to engage with other practitioners who can offer a different lens, such as the Director and/or Dramaturg.

Jane Harrison's libretto has been beautifully crafted from her original play of the same name. Christopher Sainsbury's score has been written with the cast voices in mind and has become a wonderful synergy of sound. Isaac Drandic has offered much insight into the arc and trajectory of the work, which has made for a powerful piece, and the design team have been essential in making the playing space a supportive environment for the performers. And finally we have sought advice, we have searched for knowledge from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation Elders. We have sought knowledge through training at the Koori Heritage Trust and we have listened to our cast, our Director and all the information they bring with their rich history.

An incredibly rewarding project, an investment for

the future of opera in this country and the telling of a tale from our young history with the insights from the oldest occupants of any land.

Please enjoy.



ELIZABETH HILL-COOPER
Victorian Opera CEO

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Visitors brings together a vibrant First Nations creative team who offer a remarkable re-imagining of Jane Harrison's original and groundbreaking play. I am proud of the leadership that Victorian Opera has demonstrated in its program of First Nations commissioning – which I now note, with not a little satisfaction, has inspired all of Australia's State Opera Companies since we first announced the commissioning of *Parrwang Lifts the Sky* some years ago, in what seem like happier and simpler times in retrospect.

I first met Christopher Sainsbury many years ago when I had the privilege of teaching him. His quiet integrity and highly individual talent have been the perfect match for the fine libretto that Jane Harrison has so beautifully crafted from her very successful play. So – why make an opera from an idea that has been so successfully realised in another medium? I think because our artform – with its alchemy of text, song and ritual theatre – explores the regions of feeling that mere words by themselves cannot encompass. Music adds a dimension of sensibility to the story, manifesting the states of soul of the protagonists and finding the depths of human experience that we can all share as Australians. This work achieves a revelation of a new and deeply moving encounter with the fact of British settlement, which has left a divided and deeply troubling legacy in our national consciousness. The concluding act of welcome to the First Fleet, the result of a magnanimity and spiritual grandeur, is not arrived at via facile process but through profound and communal soul searching. This journey, deliberation and final cathartic action have, I think, the capacity to lead all of us to a deeper understanding of the potential for a future based in real knowledge, mutual respect and generosity of spirit.

This is new work of the most acute and timely relevance as our country meditates on choices that will reflect who we are as a people and our capacity to imagine a new relationship with the complexities of our history.

Enjoy.



RICHARD MILLS AM
Victorian Opera Artistic Director

LIBRETTIST'S MESSAGE

The Visitors tells the story of six Aboriginal Elders and one young initiate who gather on the shores of Warrane (Sydney Cove) on a fateful January day in 1788 as the eleven ships of the First Fleet sail into the harbour. How will these Elders respond? Are these visitors a threat or do they mean no harm? Should the Elders shoo them away, or let them land and have safe passage, as is their protocol? This is the concept for the libretto of *The Visitors*.

It seems surreal that this story evolved into an opera. A series of events has led to the commission by Victorian Opera. The composer, Christopher Sainsbury, worked on the first staging of the play version of *The Visitors*, which premiered at the Sydney Festival in 2020. Christopher had been tossing ideas around for a First Nations-themed opera with Richard Mills from Victorian Opera. One of those ideas was *The Visitors*. Richard agreed that the concept had potential and commissioned both Christopher and myself to write the score and libretto respectively. So began a fruitful collaboration. A distillation of the themes and scenes of the play followed. What in the story was operatic? 'Keep the themes big' was the advice I was given and I stuck with that. 'Let the music tell the emotional narrative' was another piece of prudent advice. It helped that I had worked on the play version for around ten years and was also writing the novelisation: I knew the story so well. It is a tense story with a ticking clock – the repeated arrivals of the ships punctuate the story. Each Elder has their own observations of the 'aliens' and their individual biases, along with stories from 18 years prior – Cook's visit – that enrich their debate. They must vote unanimously regarding their response – what will be the outcome?

This is a story of one of the founding and important

moments of modern Australia. I am thrilled with the team that has collaborated on this production and the wonderful cast that has been hand-picked to reimagine 26 January, 1788. Enjoy.



JANE HARRISON
Librettist

COMPOSER'S MESSAGE

As a musician I enjoy a wide range of musical styles and genres. In writing the opera I was influenced by some of these, including contemporary classical guitar music, aspects of modernism, jazz, and aspects of Aboriginal music. There is also a good measure of impressionist harmony, because we are effectively still 'on the heels of Debussy', even today.

I'm a guitarist, and I have a particular approach stemming from jazz and modernism when writing for guitar. In this work the guitar is the only harmonic instrument in the ensemble, and so it has a large supportive role. Yet at times the modernist harmonies I employ for the guitar cut across the other harmonic material of the ensemble, a metaphor for 'how will this all end' for the characters in the story.

Although I'm not a hard modernist, in conceiving of the textural narrative, composers such as Henze and Birtwistle were not far from my mind – both of whom have written much for the voice in theatrical contexts, including operas – and I was happy for their influence. Texture, being a cousin to orchestration, of course means that their influence was also upon some aspects of my approach to orchestration. And Birtwistle's numbers approach (that is, a sequence of numbers/tunes) was important to me, such as in his *Punch and Judy* (1967). It assisted me to keep the work pacing along with contrasting rhythms and 'feels', textures and tonal indulgences, with showcasing characters and their interplay, in realising form.

I also found synergies in some of Jane's characters and those of characters in some early 20th century operas that I know and enjoy. For instance, I kept Busoni's *Arlecchino* (1913) character partly in mind for the central character of Gordon (played by Zoy Frangos) who expresses similar levels of hype and distortion until later in the work. In Jane's libretto, and I think in my music, the Gordon character keeps a certain intensity in play for all seven characters and for the audience experience.

In terms of jazz influence, I use jazz harmonies in parts of the work, especially in some of the arias, and I use some complex jazz syncopations.

Relating to aspects of traditional Aboriginal music, I listened again to the only couple of traditional songs that are known to stem from Sydney – the place of my own Indigenous heritage. They have limited range, are repetitive in phrase, and are syllabic in nature. I allude to this style in the three votes that the elders engage in throughout the course of the story – points of structural importance in the work, because the votes are cultural business. All of the songs, ensemble pieces and recitative move towards or away from these three votes. I also embed such traditional influence in a few other places, for instance in a short chant – 'Away From Our Country'. To include it suggests a subtext of elders from generations ago, still sounding their songs.

For many years I've been focusing on how to articulate a sense of a place in music, the place one lives in or stems from. In this work I use local birdsong of Sydney – mainly local butcherbird songs – echoes inspired by the natural echoes around sandstone escarpments in the region, and a few words from my own Dharug-Eora language to emphasise my relationship to Sydney and the Central Coast, and an ongoing Dharug-Eora presence of which I am a part, and because it suits the story. It all emphasises the sound-world of latitude 33-34 degrees south and longitude 151 degrees east. I've been exploring the potential unique sounds of this, my region, for some 30 years, so when Jane and Richard and I agreed that *The Visitors* was the story to run with, in many ways I was already prepared for articulating something of the sonic signature of this place with some degree of authority.



CHRISTOPHER SAINSBURY
Composer

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Naarm is one of the most creative cities in the world and I love making theatre here. It's always been a meeting place for Aboriginal people and countless stories have been told on this very country by thousands of generations of storytellers.

The Visitors is a reimagined story of a real event in Australia's history that continues to be highly contentious – the 26th day of January. Some call it Australia Day, some call it Survival Day and some Invasion Day. Whatever you choose to call it, we know it is the day colonisation began and Aboriginal people's lives would be changed forever. *The Visitors* is a story that is ready to be told and there's no better time than now.

Big stories have an uncanny way of timing themselves to coincide with major national events. As I'm writing this, The Voice to Parliament and the referendum is coming up in two weeks, and decisions are being made. Big decisions that will continue to have an impact on the lives of Aboriginal people. Directing this new opera work with writer Jane Harrison and composer Christopher Sainsbury – two leading First Nations creatives – also feels like a significant event. The form of opera feels epic. It's on a grand scale. There's so much to love about it. The potential for high drama and the ability to lift our collective spirits and soar with the sound of music. It's beautifully emotive and journeys us to unexpected places. It feels like it's connected to the earth and deeply embedded into the performers' souls. The parallels between opera and Indigenous forms of expression through song and dance is profound. It's ritualistic and ceremonial. I feel like I'm directing a big ceremony that has important business to discuss and doing it with a cast of Australia's finest song-men and song-women. I want to do more!

Song stories have a way of staying with you forever. I suppose it's why we've always used song to remember important stories. To pass on messages that need to stand the test of time. Big story, big song, big business. Opera is a good fit. I've loved the process of collaborating with performers from the Yuin, Bundjalung, Wamba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Worimi, Samoan and Sabai clans. Thanks to Victorian Opera for this wonderful opportunity and programming First Nations lead work. Thank you to Jane Harrison and Christopher Sainsbury for providing the story source. Thank you to the cast and creatives for making this new work with me here on Naarm. And a huge thank you to my elders for keeping our cultures alive. Without you, we'd have no story to tell.

WOOLAH!



ISAAC DRANDIC
Director



IN REHEARSAL (L-R): E Jess Hitchcock, Elias Wilson, Zoy Frangos, Shauntai Sherree Abdul-Rahman, Lillian Fromyhr.
Photo: Sarah Jackson

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Manager

Lucie Sutherland

Deputy Stage Manager

Rain Iyahan

Costume Manager

Mel Serjeant

MUSIC STAFF

Head of Music

Phoebe Briggs

Repetiteur

Tom Griffiths

Phillipa Safey

ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Jaso Sasaki

Violin II

Cameron Jamieson

Viola

Eunise Cheng

Cello

Nils Hobiger

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet

Lachlan Davidson

Trumpet

Tim Francis

Guitar/Mandolin

Ken Murray

Flute

Kim Falconer

Double Bass

Nic Synot

Horn

Anton Schroeder

Trombone

Trea Hindley

Percussion & Drums

Niko Schauble

SEASON STAFF

ORCHESTRA MANAGER

Noah Chrapot

WARDROBE SUPERVISOR

Tim Corne

DRESSERS

Shelby Addams

Becky Silveira

COSTUMIERS

Lara Barwick

Merideth Clements

Tim Corne

Emma Ikin

Vannessa Roberts

Nicole Serjeant

Becky Silveira

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Imported Theatre Fabrics

Melbourne Theatre Company

SYNOPSIS

The Visitors is set on January 26, 1788. It addresses our nation's defining origin narrative of European settlement, reimagining that day from the Aboriginal perspective. Seven senior men and women – six Elders and one initiate – gather on an escarpment overlooking Warrane (Sydney Cove) where they observe the 11 ships of the First Fleet arriving. The Elders have

gathered to make a decision – and it has to be unanimous – on how to respond to these myalls (strangers). Through a day of conversations, arguments, observations and stories of the previous visit 18 years ago, one by one each Elder prevaricates on their decision – whether to welcome these 'aliens' or to send them on their way.

PRE-SHOW CONTEXT

Performers will slowly gather on the stage and prepare themselves to play characters from different First Nations countries to their own by singing songs in traditional

Dharug language. This shows respect for the culture, customs, and the people of the Eora Nation.

PRE-SHOW SONGS

Warami (wa-ra-me) *bulunga warami – good to see you elder brother, hello*

Ngalawala dji Baiame (na-la-wala ji Bi-ar-me) – *Sit here with us creator spirit*

Warami guwalgaliang (goo-wal-galiang)
warami – *good to see you elder sister, hello*

DHARUG LANGUAGE

Warami – welcome

Nowee – canoe/boat

Wari (wo-ree) – away

Damara – hands

Myall – strangers

Mago – axe

Duwal – spear

Goorabeera – gun

Barangal – skin

Guyi – dead

Wombah – crazy

Garriberri – corroboree

Iyora (e-yor-ra) – people

Winima – closer

Bundi – club

Patyegarang (pat-e-ga-rang) – Eastern Grey Kangaroo

Yi – yes

CREATIVE TEAM



CHRISTOPHER SAINSBURY

Composer

Christopher Sainsbury composes in various genres, and his recent work includes the opera *The Visitors* commissioned by Richard Mills for Victorian Opera (libretto by Jane Harrison), a string orchestra work *String Talk* commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for July 2024 (cond. Simone Young), *A Lithium Fascination* for The UBC Future Minerals Working Group and *Axiom Brass Chicago* as part of *The Heavy Metal Suite* (a collaboration with composers Yao Chen, Augusta Read Thomas and others), *Bark of the 'bidjee* commissioned by Roland Peelman for the Canberra International Music Festival (2019), and *Ocean Song* – an album of ambient surf music for the Random Earth Band that features legendary Australian guitarist Guy Strazz and Chris on guitars. Some past pieces include commissions from the Australian Chamber Orchestra under Carl Pini (1987), and from his beloved home group the Central Coast Symphony Orchestra of NSW (1988). In 1986 Richard Mills conducted Christopher's first professional work (written for the Queensland Theatre Orchestra). Since the mid-1980s he has made a sustained contribution to Australian music through composing, performing and teaching.

Christopher is of mixed heritage, and is a Dharug-Eora person – stemming from the tribal group of Sydney – and some of his forebears were placed in Australia's first mission, the Parramatta Native Institute. In recent years he has strongly advocated for the commissioning and programming of First Nations composers, some with whom he has worked for nearly 35 years; he has also advocated for more programming of all Australian composers. "It's so clear that your work and guidance have been invaluable to help the ABC forge a deeper engagement with Australian composers." (Matthew Dewey – former Music Director, ABC Classic).

Sainsbury is Associate Professor in Composition at the Australian National University (ANU) Canberra. He won the APRA National Luminary Award in 2020 for effecting change within the classical and new music industry through the Ngarra-burria First Peoples Composers program that he directs, and which has assisted the development and careers of some 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander composers to date. A Classical:NEXT Innovation Award was also awarded to the program on the international stage in 2022 for innovation in practice, for implementing what may be next. In the meantime, for Christopher, what is next is an ABC Classic album release of his guitar music, featuring guitarist Ken Murray, and which is due out later in 2023.



JANE HARRISON

Librettist

Jane Harrison is descended from the Muruwari people of NSW. Her first play *Stolen* had productions across Australia and toured internationally. She was co-winner of the 2012 RAKA Kate Challis Award for *Stolen*. *Rainbow's End* (2003) has had numerous productions and won the 2012 Drovers Award for best touring production. *The Visitors* play (2020) premiered at Sydney Festival and won the Sydney Critics Award for Best New Australian Work for 2021. It had a new production at the Sydney Opera House in 2023. Her novel *Becoming Kirrali Lewis* won the 2014 Black & Write! Prize, and was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. She is the Festival Director of Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival (2016, 2019, 2022).



ISAAC DRANDIC

Director

Isaac Drandic is a Noongar man from the south west of Western Australia. He is a highly sought after dramaturg, playwright, and director.

He has directed for some of Australia's leading theatre companies including Queensland Theatre, Belvoir Street, Melbourne Theatre Company, LaBoite and ILBIJERRI. Isaac's productions have earned numerous Green Room Awards, including *Blood on the Dance Floor*, which won most outstanding independent theatre production, and *The Season*, which won best new writing, best direction, and the coveted award for best production in the Theatre Companies category. His highly acclaimed production *City of Gold* won several Sydney Theatre Awards, including a nomination for Best New Australian Work.

Isaac has held the positions of Associate Director of ILBIJERRI, Resident Artist at Playwriting Australia, and Resident Dramaturg at Queensland Theatre, among others.



PHOEBE BRIGGS

Conductor

BMus (University of Melbourne). Opera Australia music staff 2002 – 2012, Head of Music at Victorian Opera since October 2012. For Victorian Opera, Phoebe has conducted *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Play of Herod*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Cendrillon*, *Four Saints in Three Acts* (Green Room nomination), *The Sleeping Beauty* (Green Room nomination), *Lorelei*, *Black Rider* (Helpmann nomination, VO/Malthouse), *A Little Night Music*, *Happy End*, *A Christmas Carol*. Other companies: Opera Australia, OzOpera, Stonnington Opera in the Park, Opera Northwest, IFAC, Ambassador Group, Chamber Made Opera, Melbourne Theatre Company.

Phoebe has appeared in concert in Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Japan.



RICHARD ROBERTS

Set & Costume Designer

Richard is an award-winning designer and educator. His body of work spans theatre, ballet, opera, musical theatre, and film, across Australia and internationally.

Richard is currently Head of Design and Production at the Victorian College of the Arts. He has held positions as Head of Design at The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Head of Production at The Victorian College of the Arts, and Head of Design at The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts.

Richard's designs for opera include: for Opera Australia, *Rigoletto*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Magic Flute* and *Die Fledermaus* (with West Australian Opera); for Victorian Opera, *Parsifal*, *Cunning Little Vixen*, *Nixon in China*, *The Magic Flute*, *Baroque Triple Bill*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Coronation of Poppea* and *Don Giovanni*; for Opera Queensland, *Ruddigore*; and for New Zealand Opera, Seattle Opera and Philadelphia Opera, *Rigoletto*.

For dance, Richard's designs include: for Australian Ballet, *Don Quixote*, *Requiem*, *Molto Vivace* and *Raymonda*; *La Sylphide* and *La Fille Mal Gardée* for West Australian Ballet and Queensland Ballet.

For theatre, Richard's designs include: for Queensland Theatre, *Othello*, *The Sunshine Club*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Noises Off* (with MTC), *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Tartuffe* and *Managing Carmen* (with Black Swan); for Ensemble Theatre, *Black Cockatoo*; for TML, *Fiddler on the Roof*; for Melbourne and Sydney Festivals, *The Season* national tour; for Melbourne Theatre Company, *Last Man Standing*, *Solomon and Marion*, *Next to Normal*, *The Gift*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Macbeth*, *Dreams in an Empty City*, *As You Like It*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Sapphires* and *All My Sons*; for Sydney Theatre Company, *Australia Day* (with MTC), *True West*, *Riflemind*; for Black Swan, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*; for Belvoir, *The Sapphires* (with Black Swan).

For screen, Richard's work includes production design for George Ogilvie's *The Battlers* for the Seven Network, the 12-part series *Five Times Dizzy* for SBS and *I Own the Racecourse* for Barron Films.



RACHEL BURKE

Lighting Designer

Rachel designs nationally and internationally with Australia's leading arts companies, and her body of work has been recognised through numerous industry nominations and awards over more than three decades. Her awards include ten Green Room Awards for Excellence in Lighting Design, numerous IES Victorian & National Awards of Excellence in Architectural Lighting Design, and two Helpmann Award nominations in 2005 and 2015.

Rachel is passionate about lighting design for theatre, architecture, visual arts and education, and her design work over more than thirty years is driven by a strongly collaborative and dramaturgical approach. Rachel was Lecturer in Lighting (Production) at Victorian College of the Arts and Lecturer for Light in Performance for the Bachelor of Design Degree (Performance) at the University of Melbourne 2017-2019. Recent work includes *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* for Melbourne Theatre Company, the critically lauded production of *Yentl* for Kadimah Yiddish Theatre, *Gene Tree: Listen.Now.Again* for St Martins Theatre with the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, and *Wittenoom and The Amateurs* directed by Susie Dee for Red Stitch Actors Theatre.

The Visitors marks Rachel and Richard Roberts' eighth production together since 2000, and presents a wonderful opportunity to continue to refine and extend a stage aesthetic and design vocabulary that has consistently received industry and audience acclaim.



SAM MOXHAM

Sound Designer

Sam Moxham is a seasoned sound engineer specialising in front-of-house mixing, sound design, broadcasting, recording and post-production.

He frequently collaborates with Australia's major Arts Organisations, including the Australian Ballet, Opera Australia, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Victorian Opera.

After successful contributions to the 2022 and 2023 Victorian Opera seasons, he returns as Sound Designer for *The Visitors*.





IN REHEARSAL (L-R):

Marcus Corowa, Eddie Muliaumaseali'i, Jess Hitchcock, Lillian Fromyhr,
Zoy Frangos, Shauntai Sherree Abdul-Rahman, Elias Wilson.

Photo: Sarah Jackson

CAST



MARCUS COROWA

Jacob

Marcus Corowa has established himself as one of the country's most in-demand talents, carving out a vibrant decade-long career that spans performance, mentoring and advocacy. As a performer, Marcus has captured the hearts of Australia with his soulful voice and charming stage presence. Career highlights include the Australian premiere of Broadway blockbuster *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*; Opera Queensland's *Festival of Outback Opera*; Opera Australia's *Bran Nue Dae*; Belvoir's *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*; Sydney Theatre Company's *The Secret River*; and QPAC and Queensland Theatre's *The Sunshine Club*. As a devoted mentor and leader, he draws on his Aboriginal and South Sea Islander heritage to advocate for greater diversity and inclusion within the creative industries.



ZOY FRANGOS

Gordon

A proud Greek and Gourmjanyuk Wemba Wamba man, Zoy graduated with a BA in Music Theatre from the Victorian College of the Arts. Whilst studying, Zoy made his professional opera debut in the world premiere of *Pecan Summer*.

Other theatre credits include *An Officer and a Gentleman* (GFO), *Margaret Fulton – Queen of the Dessert* (Present Tense), *South Pacific* (OA/GFO), *Next to Normal* (Doorstep Arts), *Les Miserables* (Cameron MacIntosh/Michael Cassel), *Dogfight* (Doorstep Arts), *King of the Air – the Charles Kingsford Smith Musical workshop* (GFO), *My Fair Lady* (OA/GFO), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Prod co/Really Useful Group), *Taxithi II Metanastes* (The Taxithi Project), *Tasmanian Requiem* (Gap in the Fence), *Evita* (OA/GFO), *Aeneas* (Madeline Hale), and *Rat Pack Reloaded* (SMA Productions).

Zoy has also performed in many acclaimed events for Short Black Opera Company, including *Karjini Experience – Opera in the Gorge*, *The Dreaming Festival*, *DFAT NAIDOC Week*, The Melbourne Recital Centre's *Song for NAIDOC*, ABC Indigenous Staff awards, *Woven Songs*, and at the launch for *Eumeralla – A War Requiem for Peace*.

In 2022 Zoy created and performed *Variations* at Hamer Hall and Bunjil Place. Zoy's television credits include roles in *Wellmania* for Netflix Australia and *Amazing Grace* for Playmaker Media. Zoy is the recipient of the 2019 American Australian Arts Awards – Rising Star Award.



LILLIAN FROMYHR

Lois

Lillian Fromyhr, a Yuin woman, is developing her life as an artist in areas of Contemporary/Classical Dance, Visual Art and Music performance and composition. She sings a range of styles including Contemporary Opera, Aussie and Alt rock, and Jazz and is completing her BMus in Jazz/Contemporary Voice and Composition at ANU School of Music.

Her compositions draw influence from 70's Pop/Rock icons to Contemporary Jazz. Notable solo performances include Light up the Valley Festival (2017//19), several performances of original compositions for NAIDOC celebrations (2020/21), and composing and performing the graduation song for Dickson College, where Lillian held an ACT Aboriginal Secondary Scholarship. In the 2021 National Eisteddfod, Lillian was awarded First Prize in both Open Musical Theatre and Popular music.

Lillian has appeared in principal roles, including as Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Hunyak in *Chicago*. She is currently in production, at Yil Lull Studio, of an EP of her own original songs to be released in 2023.



JESS HITCHCOCK

Joycie

Jess Hitchcock is a Melbourne-based Saibai/Motuan singer-songwriter who has stirred the Australian music and performing arts scene as a genre-defying force. Her powerful voice and knack for storytelling has seen her shine across pop, country, folk, opera and music theatre, sharing the stage and studio with some of Australia's favourites.

Jess has collaborated with Paul Kelly, Archie Roach, Tina Arena and Kate Miller-Heidke. Her much anticipated album *Unbreakable* was released mid 2023 and reached #4 in the AIR charts

When Jess is not on stage with her own band, or joining forces with Australian music legends, she lends her mezzo-soprano vocals to select performing arts companies, including MSO, SSO, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Victorian Opera and Opera Queensland.



EDDIE MULIAUMASEALI'I

Albert

Playing the role of Wotan in Melbourne Opera's production of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* was the highlight of Eddie Muliaumaseali'i's 35-year career in opera, musical theatre, television and drama.

He has sung roles in New Zealand, Australia, Asia, Europe and the USA. Eddie was a member of the Tiroler Landestheatre of Innsbruck, Austria, after being chosen by the intendantin, Brigitte Fassbender, which enabled him to achieve his goal of being an operatic soloist in Europe.

Versatility in the arts has seen Eddie play roles in musical theatre culminating in a Helpmann Award nomination for playing the role of Joe in *Showboat*, singing the famous song 'Old Man River'. He has recently sung with the Toshi Clinch Big Band in the Duke Ellington Sacred Concerts.

From Porgy to Mephistopheles to Sarastro and Leporello, Beggar, Devil, High Priest to servant, this bass has enjoyed an adventurous journey on the stage. *The Visitors* will be his first opera with Victorian Opera.



SHAUNTAI SHERREE ABDUL-RAHMAN

Winsome

Multi-faceted vocalist and composer Shauntai Sherree effortlessly inhabits the worlds of opera, inspirational soul and gospel, classical composition, and theatre making. A principal artist with Short Black Opera, she debuted with Victorian Opera in 2021 as Mrs Waa in *Parwang Lifts the Sky*. Excited to be back with Victorian Opera for *The Visitors*, Shauntai Sherree is also currently in the process of writing her first Australian Musical, supported by Creative Victoria, inspired by the life of her late father Wally 'Wait a While' Carr, an Indigenous boxer who is inducted in the boxing Hall of Fame in Melbourne.



ELIAS WILSON

Gary

Tenor Elias Wilson is a Biripi man and emerging performer of opera, chamber music and oratorio. Elias holds a Masters in Opera from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and was the 2022 recipient of the Harold Blair Opera Scholarship with Melba Opera Trust. Elias sang the *Messiah* tenor solo in December 2022 in Darwin with Brett Weymark OAM, and has performed with The Song Company since 2018. On the opera stage, Elias has played Lysander in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (NIDA 2021) and Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* (Pacific Opera 2022), and appeared in the chorus of Cavalli's *The Loves of Apollo & Dafne* (Pinchgut Opera 2021).



ABOUT US

Victorian Opera is the state opera company of Victoria. Your state company. We make creative, accessible and relevant work for everyone while acknowledging the traditions and evolving our artform.

Recognised for our unique contribution to the country's operatic landscape, Victorian Opera joined the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework in 2021. Alongside other companies, Victorian Opera holds its rightful position in the national performing arts arena.

Commitment to the development and presentation of new Australian opera and musical theatre is forefront to our mission. We identify relative and topical material, commission and workshop new scores and librettos, and ultimately produce new productions. Victorian Opera premieres at least one new Australian opera or music theatre work each year, and have commissioned 37 new works since the company's formation.

The next generation of talent is developed from the ground up through our Emerging Artists Programs – The Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE), our VO Emerges project and our Emerging Artists Opera Prize scholarship. Creating future pathways for artists, artisans and technicians has become a driving focus for our organisation.

We employ hundreds of people across the creative industries, recruit some of the finest local and national singers, and collaborate with Australia's leading companies, venues and learning institutions.

We embrace the new normal and continue to perform in exceptional theatres and concert halls to give you the best and safest experience. Join us to experience the human voice, the indefinable power of music and storytelling at its finest.

And please, come as you are.



Elizabeth Hill-Cooper
Victorian Opera CEO

OUR TEAM

FOUNDING MUSIC DIRECTOR

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If you would like information on supporting Victorian Opera, please contact Louise Lemke, Head of Development, louise@victorianopera.com.au or by phone on (03) 9001 6405.

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