

CASTING BRIEF – *English Eccentrics*

Victorian Opera is calling for submissions from artists who wish to audition for its production of *English Eccentrics*, as part of the VO Emerges Program. The work is composed by Malcolm Williamson, with libretto by Geoffrey Dunn, based on the book by Edith Sitwell. The work will be sung in English.

KEY DATES

Rehearsals commence in Melbourne on Monday 11 June 2024, with performances at the Union Theatre, University of Melbourne from Thursday 4 July to Saturday 6 July 2024.

Auditions will be conducted in Melbourne on Wednesday 14, Thursday 15 and Friday 16 February 2024.

Artists are required to be Melbourne based for the duration of the production period.

BACKGROUND TO *ENGLISH ECCENTRICS*

Where English wit and Australian larrikinism collide, *English Eccentrics* offers a sideways look at a collection of quirky characters from English society. Bonkers and barking mad, each character more bizarre than the last, the opera introduces us to a weird and wonderful palette of aristocracy, tradesmen, maids and clergy and exploring the eccentricities that lie within.

Williamson's music is heavy on pastiche, from Mozart to Gershwin, and even sets a bit of *Romeo and Juliet* to a rumba, in *Eccentrics* we meet a total of 39 characters based on real eccentrics in Regency England. The scenes are bookended and divided by the observations of a twelve person SATB ensemble.

ROLES TO BE CAST

- MISS TYLNEY LONG (Soprano): Mad for her hatter.
- LORD PETERSHAM (Tenor): Snuff is enough.
- THOMAS PARR (Bass) and THE COUNTESS DESMOND (Mezzo): Putting the "age" into marriage.
- REVEREND JONES (Tenor): The Church of England has never been the same.
- MISS BESWICK (Soprano): A firm believer in her own resurrection.
- LORD ROKEBY (Baritone): A complete 'bath-kit' case.
- LADY LEWSON (Mezzo): Can't bathe, won't bathe.
- JOHN WARD (Tenor): He holds freeholds, he wants to be sure.
- MRS DARDS (Soprano): The reincarnation of fish stocks in stocks and in carnations.
- MAJOR PETER LABELLIERE (Bass): The only sane person in an insane world.
- ROMEO COATES (Tenor): An amateur Creole actor whose lack of talent and taste is no bar to popularity.
- SARAH WHITEHEAD (Soprano): Abandoned by her brother. A bank clerk, he loved her too well and after frittering away their money was hanged for forgery. Unknowing, she

would wait every morning outside the Bank of England where he worked hoping to see him once again and to find their fortunes restored.

- DR DALMAHOY (Bass), DR GRAHAM (Tenor) and DR KATTERFELTO (Baritone): Fraudulent doctors in the park.
- BEAU BRUMMELL (Tenor): The great dandy and the greatest gossip.
- PHILIP THICKNESSE (Bass): An old military man and self-professed ornamental hermit denounces his libeller Labellierre and mourns the imminent loss of his ornamental hermitage.
- PRINCESS CARABOO (Soprano): Who appeared mysteriously at the door of a cottage in rural Gloucestershire and speaking no recognisable language conveyed that she was a Princess from an unknown foreign land.

ENSEMBLE TO BE CAST

- An SATB ensemble will perform several smaller roles.

The cast is completed by a comparatively sane company of additional characters to be cast from principals and ensemble members:

- Thomas Parr (Bass)
- The Countess of Desmond (Mezzo)
- John Ward (Tenor)
- Miss Fitzhenry (Mezzo)
- The Prompter (Bass)
- A Governor of the Bank of England (Bass)
- Young Whitehead (Tenor)
- Alderman Birch (Baritone)
- Mrs. Birch (Mezzo)
- Roberts the Forger (Bass)
- Bank clerk (Tenor)
- Lord Rothschild (Baritone)
- Lady Jersey (Mezzo)
- The Duchess of Devonshire (Soprano)
- Mr. Worrall (Bass)
- Mrs. Worrall (Mezzo)
- The Vicar of Almondsbury (Tenor)
- Mr. Clanronald Macdonald (Tenor)
- Parish Constable (Bass)
- Dr. Wilkinson (Tenor)
- First Nun (Soprano)
- Second Nun (Mezzo)
- Etienne (Baritone)

WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

Conductor: Susan Collins

Director: Stuart Maunder

Designer: Louisa Fitzgerald

WHO WILL BE AT THE AUDITION?

The auditions will be led by Artistic Director Stuart Maunder and Head of Music Phoebe Briggs.

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

Emerging artists who have less than 10 years professional experience. Please include your professional experience in your CV.

Named Roles

- Must be available for all rehearsal dates Monday – Saturday, from 11 June – 6 July.
Note: some evening work will be required through this period.

Ensemble

- Positions in the Ensemble are on a voluntary basis.
- Rehearsals for the ensemble will be held on Wednesday evenings and Saturday days.
- Ensemble may also be required the evening of Thursday 27 June.
- Ensemble must be available for onstage rehearsals on the afternoon and evening of 29 June, 1, 2 and 3 July in addition to all performance dates.

Victorian Opera seeks to work with the very best talent available. We value diversity, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, cultural background and ethnicity, and encourage all to apply.

HOW TO APPLY

Please register to audition via the [online registration form](#). Then submit your headshot and CV as a single document, with your full name in the title, to [this Dropbox link](#).

The cut off for submissions is **12 noon Thursday 25 January 2024**. No submissions will be accepted after this time. Notification of audition date and time will be sent approximately 2 weeks prior to the audition dates.

Please only apply if you are fully available for the entire production period and all or part of the audition dates.

WHAT TO PREPARE

For the audition, please prepare a song of your choice in English (no longer than 3 minutes). A repetiteur will be provided on the day, and you will have the opportunity to do a short rehearsal with them before auditioning. Sheet music must be provided in the correct key with any cuts noted.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Hannah Bullen

Company Manager

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