

VICTORIAN  
OPERA

A photograph of two women in elaborate Victorian opera costumes on a stage. The woman on the left wears a brown and red patterned dress with a large pink bow and a floral headpiece. The woman on the right wears a dark purple and blue dress with a large blue bow and a white lace headpiece. Both women have dramatic expressions, looking upwards and to the right. The background shows a blurred audience and stage lighting.

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2023**

## CHAIR'S MESSAGE

As I conclude my second term as Chair of Victorian Opera, I wish to pay tribute to outgoing Artistic Director, Richard Mills AM. Richard has led Victorian Opera for 11 years and given our audiences and patrons many memorable performances. The conclusion of 2023 saw the presentation of Maestro Mills' opera *Galileo*. The work has been in development for several years, delayed multiple times due to the pandemic, but finally realised with an all-Australian cast, Orchestra Victoria and La Compañia at the Palais Theatre. A fitting tribute to his incredible composition skills and dedication to the Australian operatic landscape during his highly productive tenure at the artistic helm of Victorian Opera.

In a year when cost increases and general labour shortages, particularly in the technical fields of the performing arts, had a significant impact on financial results, the Company enjoyed many achievements. Highlights include collaborations with partner companies and our second work with a First Peoples focus that told a compelling version of the landing of the First Fleet from the perspective of the First People. Victorian Opera also enjoyed critical acclaim for several of our main stage presentations and the development of new relationships to further the presentation of opera and musical theatre.

I wish to acknowledge and thank former Board member Stephen McIntyre AM, who has retired after two terms as Board Director and Chair of the Artistic Committee. The unstinting support that Stephen offered our Artistic Director and Executive team has been exceptional.

Artistic highlights of the Company included the concert presentation of Richard Strauss' *Capriccio* led by Simone Young AM and the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM). We also enjoyed the talents of international opera diva Jessica Pratt, with long-time collaborator Richard Mills AO, in a Bel Canto concert of delicate gems from the repertoire.

Of immense importance to us is the ongoing, inspirational and generous support of our partners, sponsors and donors. Without them, Victorian Opera could not continue to thrive.

I wish to warmly thank my fellow Board and Committee members for their invaluable contributions, along with the tireless endeavours of our Chief Executive, Staff, Technicians and Artists of Victorian Opera in delivering another year of remarkable artistic achievements.

**Genevieve Overell AM**  
Chair, Victorian Opera

## OUR BOARD

**Chair**  
Genevieve Overell AM

**Board of Directors**  
Vivienne Corcoran  
Richard Kurth  
Selina Lightfoot  
Stephen McIntyre  
Grant Powell  
Patricia Stebbens

**2023 Board Observers**  
William Stoltz

## WELCOME

As we reflect on the events of 2023, Victorian Opera embraced the new normal, post-pandemic way of life with careful thought and preparation. The energy and desire to present all our proposed program drove our team and collective artists to consider new protocols and preventative actions while building, rehearsing and presenting our productions. Thank you to all who came on the journey and made the presentation of live performances viable once more.

2023 was a special transition year for the company, one in which we farewelled long serving Artistic Director, Richard Mills AM, whilst welcoming the incumbent, Stuart Maunder AM. Together they shaped what we were able to present across the year, and as the impact of the rising cost of living took hold, we were grateful for their artistic leadership during this challenging time. While the global downturn also took its toll on our final financial outcomes, the Company enjoyed a stellar artistic result and saw some incredible audience engagement activities.

Victorian Opera presented eight main stage productions that included our first collaboration with the national company, Opera Australia, presenting Mozart's masterpiece *Idomeneo*. The ground-breaking new work *The Visitors* re-examined the nation's founding day, and struck a chord with its five performance season in the midst of the Australian referendum. *The Butterfly Lovers* had its premiere in Singapore with packed-out performances, and we presented 43 performances of *Sweeney Todd*, *the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* in the Sydney Opera House. We were also part of the *Ten Days on the Island Festival* with a collaboration with Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra on a work produced and directed by Roger Hodgman called *Memento Mori*. We assisted Short Black Opera with their presentation of *Parrwang Lifts the Sky* during NAIDOC Week. Furthermore, we workshopped two new works for realisation in 2024 and 2025 respectively, one of which had five youth participants devise a new work for primary schools based on personal experiences whilst in residence at Montsalvat Arts Precinct in Eltham.

I want to express my sincere thanks to all the Staff, Board, Patrons, Trusts and Foundations, along with Creative Australia and the State Government of Victoria through Creative Victoria, for the incredible support and words of encouragement throughout the course of 2023. The Company does not take this support lightly and will continue to strive for excellence, engagement, relevance and accessibility for this magnificent art form.

With sincere thanks,  
Elizabeth Hill-Cooper  
CEO, Victorian Opera

# 2023 OVERVIEW: PERFORMANCE

## MELBOURNE, CHEREMUSHKI

22 - 25 March, 2023

Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse

Total Audience  
**3333**

## HIGHEST U40 ATTENDANCE

*Melbourne, Cheremushki had the most diverse audience in terms of age, with almost 20% of its audience below the age of 40.*

## CAPRICCIO

31 August, 2023

Palais Theatre, St Kilda

Total Audience  
**1512**

## HIGHEST SINGLE PERFORMANCE PAID ATTENDANCE

*"Victorian Opera's Capriccio was an indulgent treat for music lovers and wordsmiths alike."*

– ★★★★★, Arts Hub

## 2023 ARTIST ENGAGEMENT

- 278 singing artists received
- 3710 hours of coaching across
- 575 coaching sessions

## WORLD PREMIERE FIRST NATIONS OPERA

*The Visitors*

- World premiere on Wednesday 18 October at Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse
- 7 singers involved
- 12 musicians
- 5 creatives
- 13 production staff

## DIGITAL ACCESS

- 810 online attendees across four performances between *The Grumpiest Boy in the World*, *Capriccio*, *The Visitors* and *Galileo*



## INSPIRING AUDIENCES

Victorian Opera reached a national and international audience of

# 75,095

across

# 182

performances, activities and streamed events.

# 21,180

audience members for *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* at Sydney Opera House.

# 3,546

audience members attended *Idomeneo*.

# 26,523

unique views of the Access All Areas: Livestream Program's four workshops and performance, streamed live and on-demand to 2752 students and 182 teachers.

# 1789

attendees at the one-night-only performance of *Galileo* at Palais Theatre, St Kilda.



### LA CENERENTOLA (CINDERELLA)

"Mills illuminated the overture – Rossini's own recycled overture from *La Gazzetta* a few months earlier – to reveal most appealing respiration and tension in the music. The finesse continued throughout with particular beauty and gradation in Rossini's signature crescendos and pitter patter."

– *Australian Arts Review*



### MELBOURNE, CHEREMUSHKI

"The surprises keep coming in this English-language production from the VO Emerges program, which provides experience for young performers, technicians and musicians. From some fine singing to Constantine Costi's amusing and inventive writing and direction, this Australian premiere is an unexpected treat."

– *Limelight Magazine*



## PRODUCTIONS IN 2023

### THE GRUMPIEST BOY IN THE WORLD

"As Zachary, Joshua Morton-Galea was electrifying, bouncing around as if on springs, his energy seemingly inexhaustible."

– *Limelight*



### IDOMENEO

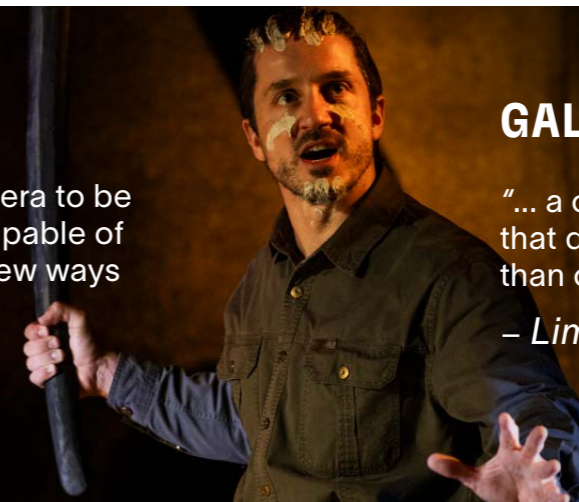
"This collaboration of a vast array of talents – musical, creative, theatrical and administrative – has resulted in allowing Melbourne to experience (finally!) a great work in an outstanding production."

– *Classic Melbourne*

### THE VISITORS

"*The Visitors* proves opera to be a malleable art form, capable of leading audiences to new ways of thinking."

– *Arts Hub*



### GALILEO

"... a complex and powerful work that deserves closer examination than one hearing can offer."

– *Limelight*

# 2023 GREEN ROOM NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS

## OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN A LEAD ROLE

Olivia Cranwell (*Idomeneo*)  
Simon Meadows and Vida Miknevičiūtė (*Capriccio*)

## OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Carlos Barcenas, Kathryn Radcliffe (*Capriccio*)  
Dimity Shepherd **WINNER**, Stacey Alleaume, Raphael Wong (*Galileo*)

## DESIGN

Dann Barber, Sabina Myers, and Lisa Mibus (*Melbourne, Cheremushki*) **WINNER**  
Louisa Fitzgerald, Jodi Hope, Peter Darby (*The Grumpiest Boy in the World*)  
Michael Yeargan, Anna Cordingley, David Bergman and Catherine Pettman (*Idomeneo*)

## MUSICAL ACHIEVEMENT

Ensemble (*Melbourne, Cheremushki*)  
Conducting and Orchestra: Simone Young / ANAM Orchestra (*Capriccio*)  
Conducting: Richard Mills (*Galileo*) **WINNER**

## NEW AUSTRALIAN OPERA

Christopher Sainsbury / Jane Harrison (*The Visitors*)  
Richard Mills / Malcolm Angelucci (*Galileo*) **WINNER**

## BEST DIRECTION

Eizabeth Hill-Cooper (*The Grumpiest Boy in the World*)  
Constantine Costi **WINNER** (*Melbourne, Cheremushki*)  
Lindy Hume (*Idomeneo*)

## BEST PRODUCTION

*Melbourne, Cheremushki*  
*The Grumpiest Boy in the World*  
*Idomeneo* **WINNER**

# GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Address diversity areas outlined in the Partnership Framework (33. iv) with particular reference to artists, key creatives, programming and audiences.

Build capacity in the Victorian sector; collaborate with Partnership organisations and those outside the Framework; and demonstrate leadership on sector specific concerns.

Develop pathways for Victorian opera artists and opportunities for youth through opera education and learning programs.

Commission, develop and present new Australian works that reflect contemporary Australia.

Tour and present work for Victorian and Tasmanian communities (at least every two years).

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**OPERA**



Photography Credits:  
 Charlie Kinross (Cover, p.3-13, p.16), Sarah Jackson (p.10),  
 Ben Waterhouse (p.10), Dan Rabin (p.10)



## EDUCATION

2023 saw the Education & Pathways opportunities at Victorian Opera continue to grow and expand.

The family and education opera *The Grumpiest Boy in the World*, by Finegan Kruckemeyer and Joesph Twist, focussed on a young boy discovering his uniqueness. Art Centre Melbourne saw 1696 students attend an in-theatre performance, and a staggering 4552 students took part in the Access All Areas livestreamed Program. We thank the Victorian Education Department, who provides funding through the Strategic Partnerships Program, as well as the Marian & E.H. Flack Trust and the William Angliss Charitable Fund, whose generosity assists in the delivery of the relaxed performance and digital outreach to regional cinemas.

A successful grant application through the Victorian Challenge and Enrichment Series with the State Education Department allowed Beyond the Stage to be delivered as the flagship education program for secondary schools. Exploring the commission process of new works, a suite of 4 workshops were created with a focus on libretto writing, melody writing, orchestration, and staging, all centred on *The Visitors*. This is a significant step in developing a relationship with the secondary school sector, and after a development phase in Semester 1, Semester 2 saw 143 students attend an in-theatre performance of *The Visitors* and 558 students participate in the workshops.

In 2024 the focus of these workshops

will move to *Eucalyptus*.

The Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE) began the year with 39 participants who gained their place by audition. Overall numbers were down slightly from 2022 due to several participants graduating and moving on. However, we warmly welcomed two participants from Ballarat and one from Geelong who made the commitment to commute to weekly rehearsals. The ensemble had a successful year of performances, and the establishment of an agreement with the University of Melbourne as a venue partner has allowed the ensemble to rehearse on the Southbank campus when Horti Hall is unavailable, and to use Melba Hall on the Parkville campus for performances. Access to such facilities allowed participants the opportunity to perform in purpose-built auditoria and improved the audience experience. The 2023 Youth Opera, Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, was received with high acclaim, and the annual Showcase Concert featured Emerging Artist Prize winners, Alistair Cooper-Golec and Syrah Torii. VOYCE also participated in the televised Carols by Daylight, run by local music school Hello Music as a fundraising effort for the Starlight Foundation, and three participants were cast as the children of Galileo in Richard Mills' final commission as Artistic Director.

A substantial philanthropic grant from Emeritus Professor Barbara Van Ernst gave financial security to our Youth Ambassadors Program and saw the

establishment of the New Work Opera Studio in partnership with Montsalvat.

In 2023, seven Youth Ambassadors were appointed from a broad range of secondary schools. These young people were given the task of inviting guests who had not attended opera before to each mainstage production. Youth Ambassadors and their guests took part in a pre-show education session over a meal, which allowed all present to immerse themselves in the context, outline, and design of the piece before attending in-theatre.

The New Work Opera Studio was established to drive the creation of new works on the beautiful grounds of Montsalvat. In its first year, a group of six participants brainstormed and workshopped a concept with composer Peter Rutherford and educator/performer Paul Scott-Williams. With characters based on Australian native animals, the piece explored how migrant children can find a sense of belonging in their new home. This piece will be further explored and expanded with the intention of performing excerpts in the 2024 season.

Victorian Opera is a proven and trustworthy provider of Education & Pathway opportunities, and planning is well-underway to reinforce and develop this reputation further in 2024.

**Tim Ryan**  
 Education Manager, Victorian Opera

# DEVELOPMENT

In 2023 Victorian Opera announced a change in our Patron-in-Chief. The Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner, accepted our invitation to take on the role and we are delighted and grateful for Her Excellency's endorsement.

Our generous Patrons continued to demonstrate their support for the work we do by making an annual gift to the Company. 2023 was a challenging year; however, we continued to grow our patronage support both in numbers and financial growth.

The introduction of our Opera Prize Scholarship, together with a number of other special projects, provided Patrons with the opportunity to be involved firsthand in making a difference to the lives of young and emerging performers.

We remain eternally grateful to each and every one for their encouragement and ongoing commitment.

**Louise Lemke**  
Head of Development,  
Victorian Opera



## PATRONS

### Patron-in-Chief

The Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC

### Founding Benefactors

The Late Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC  
Lady Potter AC

### Leadership Syndicate (\$40,000+)

The Family of the late Frederick R Davidson AM  
Jane Hemstritch AO  
Hans & Petra Henkell  
Peter & the late Anne Laver  
Simone Lourey & William Randall  
Prof Dimity Reed AM & Dr Garry Joslin  
Joy Selby Smith  
Dr Michael Stubbs & Malcolm Roberts

### Artistic Director's Circle (\$10,000+)

A/Prof Tony Buzzard AM and Dr Pam Craig  
John & Diana Frew  
Linda Herd  
The Gailey Lazarus Foundation  
Suzanne Kirkham  
Stuart Maunder  
Richard Mills AM  
Michael Rigg & Gerard Condon AM  
Nigel Simpson & Madeleine Coulombe in Memory of Joseph H. Coulombe  
Prof Barbara van Ernst AM  
Secret Admirers (1)

### Platinum Patrons (\$5,000+)

D&T Brown  
Carolyn & Stephen Coffey  
Mary-Jane Gething AO

Elizabeth Hill-Cooper  
Marg Flatman  
Angela Kayser  
Peter Lovell & Michael Jan  
Kaye E Marion  
Mercer Family Foundation  
Ian Merrylees  
Tony & Genny Nunan  
Grant Powell & Sally McCutchan  
Dr Richard Reed & Vivienne Reed OAM  
Marian & Ken Scarlett OAM  
Greg Shalit & Miriam Faine  
Lady Southey AC  
Earl of Wilton  
Secret Admirers (2)

### Gold Patrons (\$2,500+)

Joanna Baevski  
Ian Baker & Cheryl Saunders  
Philip Benjamin & Sandy Benjamin OAM  
Warwick & Paulette Bisley  
Margot Brenton  
Pam Caldwell  
Alan Chuck & Wendy Hughes Chuck  
Jennifer Darbyshire & David Walker  
Freda Freiberg  
John & Gaye Gaylard  
Nance Grant AM MBE & Ian Harris  
Peter & Jenny Hordern  
Ian Kennedy AM & Dr Sandra Hacker AO  
Angela & Richard Kirsner  
Ms Linley Martin AO  
Dr Paul Nisselle AM & Mrs Sue Nisselle  
Greg Noonan  
Tom & Ruth O'Dea  
Profs Michael Quinn AM & Susan Carr  
Tomasz & Elzbieta Romanowski  
Sage Foundation  
Lynne Sherwood  
Secret Admirers (1)

### Silver Patrons (\$1,000+)

Dr Zita Ballok  
Laurie Bebbington & Elizabeth O'Keeffe  
Margaret Billson  
Nancy Bomford  
Stuart Brown & Lisa Banks  
Andrew Buchanan & Peter Darcy  
The Hon David Byrne  
Elise Callander  
Paul and Sheryl Coughlin  
Jim Cousins AO & Libby Cousins AM  
Dr Ester Davis  
Beatrice & Richard Donkin  
Dr M Elizabeth Douglas  
Charles Edmonds  
The late John Haasz  
Peter & Melissa Hebbard  
Hartmut & Ruth Hofmann  
Helen & Drew Horsell  
Anne Houlihan  
Simon L Jackson & Brian Warburton  
Barry Jones AC & Rachel Faggetter  
Louise Kummrow & Jude Munro AO  
Richard Laslett & Colin Gunther  
Dr Kathy Laster AM  
Anne Lierse AM  
Selina Lightfoot  
Denise & William Logan  
Jane Lowther  
Prof H & Ms G Lueckenhausen  
Ian Manning & Alice De Jonge  
Ian Marshman AM & Judi Marshman  
Margaret Mayers  
Christopher McCabe  
Graham McCallum & Mary Kehoe  
Jocelyn & Andrew McLeish  
Ann Miller AM  
Gillian Montgomery  
Isobel Morgan OAM  
Jillian & George Pappas AO

Jane Patrick & Robert Evans  
Campbell & Christine Penfold  
Merlyn Quaife AM  
Mary & Paul Reid  
John Rickard  
Lisa Savige & Douglas Savige - in memory of  
Diane Moseley  
John E Smith  
Libby Smith & John Middleton  
Sparky Foundation  
Christine Stott  
James Syme  
Rosemary & Dr Alan Tait  
Teresa Tjia  
Caroline & Richard Travers OAM  
Peter and the late Elisabeth Turner  
Chris & Helen Trueman  
Russell Waters & Marissa Barter-Waters  
Ian Watts OAM  
Margot & Richard Welton  
The late Rev Noel Whale  
Diana & Robert Wilson  
Ann & Alan Wilkinson  
Secret Admirers (5)

### Bronze Patrons (\$500+)

Prof Dennis Altman AM  
Jenny Anderson  
Margaret Astbury  
Lesley Bawden  
Ines & Dr Donald Behrend  
Kirsty A Bennett  
Cheryl R Benson  
David Bernshaw & Caroline Isakow  
Stephen & Maura Best  
Ms Shirley Breese  
Malcolm & Marcia Carter  
Vivienne Corcoran  
Professor David Forrest  
Dennis Freeman  
Mr G Grossbard

Alan Gunther  
David & Rosemary Houseman  
Dr Irene Irvine & Prof Iain Wallace  
Dr Jenni & Russell Jenkins  
Evelyn Kolar  
Dr Shirley Lanning  
Roger & Louise Lemke  
Dr Justus Lewis  
Dr Kristina & Bruce Macrae  
Anne T Myers  
Jill Page OAM & Roy Page  
Elspeth Riggall  
Michael Riordan & Geoff Bush  
Graham Ryles OAM KSJ  
Colin Simson  
Dr Rosalyn Smith  
Hugh Taylor AC & Elizabeth Dax AM  
Christina Turner  
Raymond Wilkinson  
Secret Admirers (5)

### Bequestors

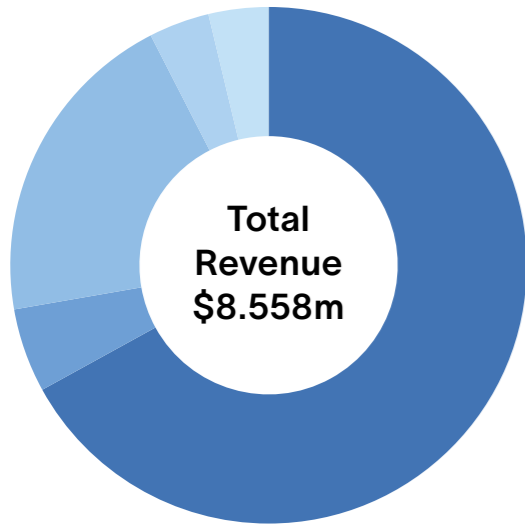
Jenny Anderson  
Lesley Bawden  
Frank & Danielle Chamberlin  
Peter Hourigan  
Len de Kievit and the late Graeme Bawden  
Jane Kunstler  
Richard Laslett & Colin Gunther  
Gregory J Reinhardt AM  
Lorraine Weiner & Geoffrey Blick  
Tony Wildman & Robert Gibbs  
Secret Admirers (6)

*All details current at time of printing.*

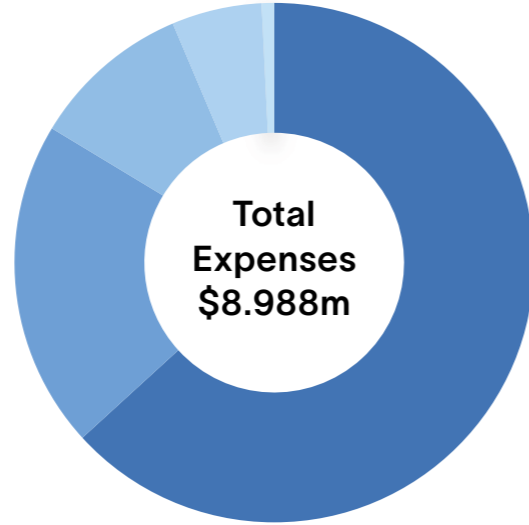
If you would like information on supporting Victorian Opera, please contact Louise Lemke, Head of Development, [louise@victorianopera.com.au](mailto:louise@victorianopera.com.au) or by phone on (03) 9001 6405.

# FINANCIALS

## 2023

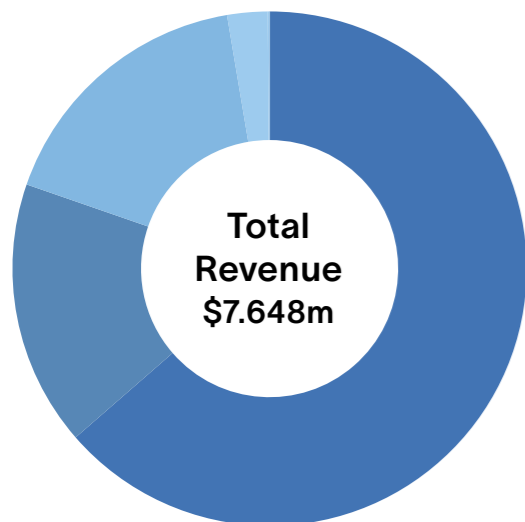


- Government funding 55%
- Box office and performance 21%
- Sponsorship, philanthropy and donation 19%
- Lease and other income 4%
- Bequests income 1%

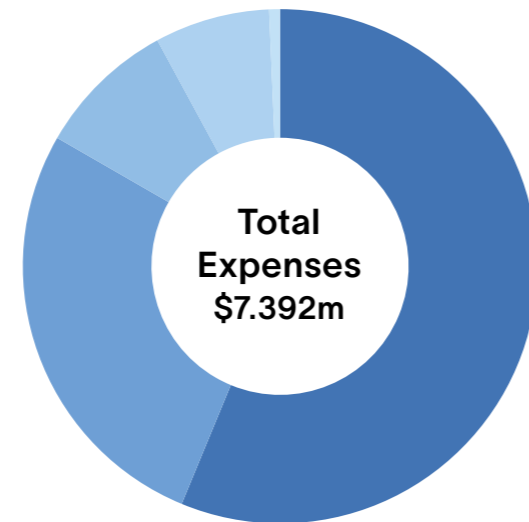


- Personnel (including artists and production staff) 60%
- Production 25%
- Administrative 8%
- Marketing and Development 6%
- Lease finance costs 1%

## 2022



- Government funding 64%
- Box office and performance 16%
- Sponsorship, philanthropy and donation 17%
- Lease and other income 3%



- Personnel (including artists and production staff) 56%
- Production 27%
- Administrative 9%
- Marketing and Development 7%
- Lease finance costs 1%

# OUR PARTNERS

We acknowledge and thank our partners who make our work possible

## GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Victorian Opera is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body.

Victorian Opera is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.

## FOUNDATION PARTNER



## UNIVERSITY PARTNER



## PRODUCTION PARTNER



## TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS



The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust   Gailey Lazarus Foundation   William Angliss Charitable Fund   Circle5 Foundation

Henkell Family Fund   Ballandry (Peter Griffin Family) Fund   Perpetual Foundation – R Wilkinson Endowment

## AWARDS



## OFFICIAL PARTNER



## MEDIA PARTNERS



## MAJOR PARTNER



## SUPPLY PARTNERS



## CORPORATE MEMBER



## PERFORMANCE PARTNERS





# VICTORIAN OPERA

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