

VICTORIAN  
OPERA



GIACOMO PUCCINI

# LA RONDINE

(THE SWALLOW)

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

# LA RONDINE (THE SWALLOW)

LYRIC OPERA

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## CREATIVES

Conductor <b>Tobias Ringborg</b>	Assistant Conductor <b>Phoebe Briggs</b>
Director <b>Stuart Maunder</b>	Associate Designer <b>Louisa Fitzgerald</b>
Set and Costume Designer <b>Richard Roberts</b>	Assistant Director <b>Kate Millett</b>
Lighting Designer <b>Gavan Swift</b>	

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## CAST

Magda <b>Kiandra Howarth</b>	Rambaldo <b>Teddy Tahu Rhodes</b>
Ruggero <b>Won Whi Choi</b>	Yvette <b>Sarah Prestwidge</b>
Lisette <b>Nina Korbe</b>	Bianca <b>Michaela Cadwgan*</b>
Prunier <b>Douglas Kelly**</b>	Suzy <b>Syrah Torii</b>

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## CHORUS

Kate Amos, Jonathon Bam, Elizabeth Barrow, Paul Batey, Paul Biencourt, Kirilie Blythman, Kerrie Bolton, Emily Burke, Robert Campbell, Alastair Cooper-Golec, Stephen Coutts, Rebecca Crabtree, Irving Dekterev, Eamon Dooley, Shakira Dugan, Olivia Federow-Yemm, Naomi Flatman, Teresa Ingrilli, Hannah Kostros, Jerzy Kozlowski, Alister Lamont, Joshua Morton-Galea, Ursula Paez, Alex Pokryshevsky, Kiran Rajasingam, Rebecca Rashleigh, Timothy Reynolds, Juel Riggall, Henry Shaw, Emily Uhrich, Nicole Wallace

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## ORCHESTRA



*Victorian Opera's production of La Rondine is made possible through the generous support of*

**Hans and Petra Henkell  
Peter Laver AM**

\*Michaela Cadwgan is proudly supported by Mary Davidson & the family of the late Frederick R Davidson AM  
\*\*Douglas Kelly is proudly supported by Dr Michael Stubbs and Malcolm Roberts

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**8 - 10 AUGUST**

**PALAIS THEATRE, ST KILDA**

2 hours and 20 minutes, including two intervals  
Sung in Italian with English surtitles

# PRODUCTION

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Manager  
**Rain Iyahan**

Deputy Stage Manager  
**Marina Milankovic**

Assistant Stage Manager  
**Claudia Howarth**

Chorus Manager  
**Emma Mosley**

Costume Manager  
**Mel Serjeant**

Wardrobe Supervisor  
**Xander Reichard**

Wig Build  
**Deb Müller**

Makeup Advisor  
**Deb Müller**

**Kat Payen-Payne**

Lighting Programmer  
**Luke Vare**

Domes **Arielle Roberts**

**Micah Patston**

Mechanists  
**Tiernan Maclaren**

**Mark Lawrence**

Props **Alex Donnelly**

Audio Engineer  
**Daniel O'Callaghan**

Surtitle Operator  
**Finlay Pedler**

## MUSIC STAFF

Head of Music  
**Phoebe Briggs**

Repetiteur  
**Tom Griffiths**

**Phillipa Safey**

## SEASON STAFF

Costume Maintenance  
**Shula Hampson**

Hair and Makeup

**Kat Payen-Payne**  
**Sally Garcia**  
Dressers  
**Catherine Chan**  
**Jemma Eton**  
**Olivia Ryan**  
**Becky Silveira**

Costumiers  
**Catherine Chan**  
**Simon Doe**  
**Jemma Eton**  
**Elizabeth Gooden**  
**Fiona Holley**  
**Olivia Peters**  
**Xander Reichard**  
**Nicole Serjeant**  
**Becky Silveira**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Monitor City  
Imported Theatre  
Fabrics  
LexAV  
Surtitles courtesy of  
**Brian FitzGerald and**  
**Opera Australia.**

# ORCHESTRA

## ORCHESTRA VICTORIA

Violin  
Concertmaster  
**Sulki Yu**  
*Chair supported by Lady Southey AC*  
Deputy Concertmaster  
**Yi Wang**  
*Chair supported by Susan & Leith Campbell*  
Section Principal First Violin  
**Tony Zhai**

Section Principal Second Violin  
**Monica Naselow**  
*Chair supported by Peter Griffin AM & Terry Swann*  
Associate Principal First Violin  
**Tomomi Brennan**  
Associate Principal First Violin  
**Erica Kennedy**  
Acting Associate Principal Second Violin  
**Matt Hassall**  
*Chair supported by Mr Russell & Dr Jenni Jenkins*  
Tutti  
**Binny Baik**  
*Chair supported by The Fielding Foundation*  
**Alyssa Conrau**  
*Chair supported by Leanne Menegazzo*  
**Rachel Gamer**  
**Rachael Hunt** *Chair supported by The Fielding Foundation*  
**Philip Nixon**  
**John Noble**  
**Christine Ruiters<sup>§</sup>**  
**Rebecca Shirley**  
*Chair supported by Mr Andrew Fairley AM*  
**Lucy Warren**  
**Edwina Kayser<sup>+</sup>**  
**Lynette Rayner<sup>+</sup>**  
**Sophia Shaw<sup>+</sup>**  
*2024 Richard Bonynghe Fellow*

Viola  
Section Principal  
**Paul McMillan**  
*Chair supported by Ms Linda Herd*  
Associate Principal  
**Thomas Higham**  
Tutti  
**Jason Bunn**  
**Nadine Delbridge**  
**Phoebe Green<sup>+</sup>**

**Beth Hemming<sup>+</sup>**  
**Matthew Laing<sup>+</sup>**

Cello  
Section Principal  
**Melissa Chominsky**

Associate Principal  
**Diane Froomes**  
Tutti  
**Sarah Cuming**  
*Chair supported by Angela Kayser*  
**Tania Hardy-Smith**  
**Andrea Taylor**  
Double Bass  
Section Principal  
**Stuart Riley**  
*Chair supported by Don & Angela Mercer*  
Associate Principal  
**Kylie Davies**  
Tutti  
**Matthew Thorne**  
Flute  
Section Principal  
**Lisa-Maree Amos**  
*Chair supported by Peter Griffin AM & Terry Swann*  
Associate Principal  
**Jessie Gu**  
Principal Piccolo/Tutti Flute  
**Melissa Doecke<sup>+</sup>**  
**Alyse Faith<sup>+</sup>**  
**Rebecca Johnson<sup>+</sup>**

Oboe  
Acting Section Principal  
**Joshua de Graaf**  
Associate Principal  
**Jasper Ly<sup>+</sup>**  
Principal Cor Anglais  
**Dafydd Camp**  
*Chair supported by Ms Linda Herd*  
Tutti  
**Rachel Bullen<sup>+</sup>**

Clarinet  
Section Principal  
**Paul Champion**  
Associate Principal  
**Justin Beere**  
Principal Bass Clarinet/Tutti Clarinet  
**Robin Henry<sup>+</sup>**  
Tutti  
**Aaron Klein<sup>+</sup>**

Bassoon  
Section Principal  
**Hugh Ponnuthurai<sup>§</sup>**

Acting Section Principal  
**Jack Schiller<sup>+</sup>**  
Associate Principal  
**Colin Forbes-Abrams<sup>+</sup>**  
Tutti  
**Jack Cremer<sup>+</sup>**

Horn  
Section Principal  
**Andrew Young**  
Associate Principal  
**Evan Williams**  
Principal Third Horn  
**Linda Hewett**  
Tutti  
**Sharon Hatton<sup>+</sup>**  
**Benjamin Messenger<sup>+</sup>**

Trumpet  
Section Principal  
**Mark Fitzpatrick**  
Associate Principal  
**Timothy Francis**  
Tutti  
**Sarah Henderson<sup>+</sup>**  
**Sophie Spencer<sup>+</sup>**

Trombone  
Section Principal  
**Scott Evans<sup>§</sup>**  
Acting Section Principal

**Kieran Conrau**  
Associate Principal  
**Iain Faragher<sup>+</sup>**

Principal Bass Trombone  
**Benjamin Anderson**  
Principal Bass Trombone/  
Tutti Trombone  
**Robert Collins<sup>+</sup>**

Tuba  
Principal Tuba/Cimbasso  
**Karina Filipi<sup>+</sup>**  
Timpani  
Section Principal  
**Guy du Blêt**  
*Chair supported by Mr Jim Cousins AO & Mrs Libby Cousins AM with Igor Zambelli*  
Associate Principal Timpani/  
Tutti Percussion  
**Scott Weatherson<sup>+</sup>**

Percussion  
Section Principal  
**Mathew Levy**  
*Associate Principal*  
**Robert Allan<sup>+</sup>**  
Tutti  
**Stephen Falk<sup>+</sup>**  
**Alexander Meagher<sup>+</sup>**  
**Hugh Tidy<sup>+</sup>**

Harp  
Section Principal  
**Julie Raines<sup>+</sup>**  
Associate Principal  
**Melina van Leeuwen<sup>+</sup>**

KEY  
<sup>+</sup> Denotes guest musician  
<sup>§</sup> Denotes on leave

For a complete listing of Orchestra Victoria's musicians and staff, visit: [orchestravictoria.com.au](http://orchestravictoria.com.au)



## CEO'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our production of *La Rondine*.

Ah, the music of Puccini: what a gift to have had those glorious tunes floating through Horti Hall these past four weeks. Add to that this incredible cast, chorus and orchestra, the glorious designs from Richard Roberts – without doubt one of the best designers in this country – and then to witness Stuart Maunder craft all of this into a sumptuous and gorgeous operatic story. The score has been marvelously interpreted by our Conductor Tobias Ringborg and performance partner Orchestra Victoria. Add the final jewel of Gavan Swift's atmospheric lighting, and the performance transports us to various locations, from Paris to the French Riviera. If you are after some serious romance to be swept up in, this is the production to see.

As always, we are grateful to our funding partners, trusts and foundations, without which our annual seasons would not be possible. We also acknowledge our Patrons, who annually trust us to utilise their patronage to further the Company's vast activities. But this evening I pay special thanks to Peter Laver, who has these past years so generously supported our main stage offering. Peter and his late wife Anne are passionate supporters and part of our Leadership Syndicate, and we are grateful for your ongoing generosity.

## DIRECTOR/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*I am no good at love*

*My heart should be wise and free*

*I kill the unfortunate golden goose*

*Whoever it may be*

*With over-articulate tenderness*

*And too much intensity.*

*I am no good at love*

As your state opera company, we will continue to make creative and relevant work for all audiences while acknowledging our traditions and evolving our artform. Thank you for joining us and experiencing the human voice, the indefinable power of music and storytelling at its finest.

With kind regards,



**ELIZABETH HILL-COOPER**  
Victorian Opera CEO

*I betray it with little sins*

*For I feel the misery of the end*

*In the moment that it begins*

*And the bitterness of the last good-bye*

*Is the bitterness that wins.*

**Noël Coward**

Puccini's *La Rondine* (*The Swallow*) is a masterpiece from his mature period, sandwiched between *La Fanciulla del West* and *Il Trittico*. But despite a glorious score, this piece has never achieved the popular success of the rest of the Puccini canon. Many reasons have been cited. Yes, *La Rondine* premiered in 1917 while Italy was at war with Austria and Germany and, like Strauss' *Capriccio* was criticised as being inappropriate; a folly, frivolous and irrelevant. The opera's biggest hit, Magda's aria 'Chi'l bel sogno di Doretta', made famous as the accompaniment to the iconic first kiss in the film *A Room with a View*, happens in the first ten minutes of the night.

The plot borrows incidents from familiar operas, Verdi's *La Traviata* and Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, while the waltz tunes and stand-alone numbers remind one of Viennese operetta. The opera also culminates in an atypical Puccinian way: the heroine does not meet her end in glorious melody. *La Rondine* is a curious, illusive creation.

But taken on its own terms, *La Rondine* is a fascinating work: ridiculously tuneful, stylish, intelligent, poignant, joyous, sensual, subtle, full of wit, elegance and with a sophisticated intensity. It is never sentimental, never morose and never grand.

In his works, Giacomo Puccini set out to chronicle 'Great griefs in small souls' and on the way created some of the most beloved love stories in the operatic canon. Take his three most loved heroines: Tosca, whose love is destroyed because she is loved by a powerful political rival; Mimi, whose simple, idyllic love story is cut short by her fatal illness; and Butterfly, whose love and singular optimism will not allow her to see the truth of her husband's betrayal. In every case, outside forces destroy not only the heroines' loves but also their lives. Not so in *La Rondine*. Here the heroine, Magda, herself destroys her last chance at love and lasting happiness. Outside influences, of course, weigh on the relationship: social mores, familial pressure, guilt. But it is Magda who makes the decision to destroy their love. This may be one of the reasons this wistful, melancholy romance remains the least-

known works of the mature Giacomo Puccini... it is a 'redemptive death' free zone..

*La Rondine* is an opera that celebrates love at its most passionate, and its most honest. It deals with the oft-felt thought that 'it can't last', 'it's too good to be true'; in the words of Noel Coward to 'feel the misery of the end in the moment that it begins'. This is Puccini at his most real in the 'verismo' sense. And truthful – like Magda, how many of us push those thoughts to the side while in the thrall of young love, the 'honeymoon period'?

And then the reality sets in. Magda has been round the block, she ain't falling for it again. Her own pain and the pain she knows she will cause her lover are better dealt with immediately; it can only end in an even greater tragedy if the warning signs are not heeded. Hence, like a swallow, Magda returns to her nest. Rather than grand tragedy we are left with an even more common, some might say sadder, ending: that of a loveless future of comfort, practicality and routine.

And regret.



**STUART MAUNDER AM**  
*La Rondine* Director and Victorian Opera  
Artistic Director

## CONDUCTOR'S MESSAGE

When I was 10 years old, Giacomo Puccini came into my life, and has held a central position ever since. At the time, I was singing in the children's chorus at the Royal Swedish Opera, and *Tosca* was one of the first pieces I took part in. She became my first love, at that time already a grand old lady, 84 years of age. Even when I, a few years later, started falling in love with real, and much younger, women, Floria Tosca has still somehow kept her position as number one. Often have I wondered how Puccini's music could speak so strongly to a 10 year old, who knew nothing about anything – love, hate, jealousy, sex... The only reason I can think of is that his music goes straight to the most private spaces within ourselves, without going through the brain. Therefore it doesn't matter if you are a young innocent boy or an old woman with life experience – Puccini's music will affect you regardless.

After *Tosca*, I discovered *La bohème* and *Turandot*, and *Madama Butterfly* followed a little later. Of course, I was also looking beyond these four most-performed operas. Within 12 years of my career, I had been fortunate to conduct seven of Puccini's 12 operas! However, *La Rondine* was not among them. Although this piece is certainly done more often today than, say, 30-40 years ago, it's still not a standard repertoire piece. Therefore, when Victorian Opera offered it to me, it was difficult to even try to hide my excitement.

For a Puccini-loving conductor, *La Rondine* is a dream to work with. In it you'll find all of Puccini's trademarks – sweeping melodies, a lush and colourful orchestration, and a masterful dramatic sense. Interestingly, in this piece he had no use for the 'exoticism' he had explored in *Madama Butterfly* or *Fanciulla del West* and that later became an essential ingredient in *Turandot*. Instead, he sort of goes back to a core Puccinian tonal language.

A point of difference in *La Rondine*, compared to Puccini's previous, heavier operas, is that

he tries to adopt a lighter touch. After all, the original commission was to create a Viennese operetta, and although that never materialised (due to World War I complications), it's obvious that he wants to approach that genre in charm and lightness. Perhaps that is also part of the reason that *La Rondine* hasn't become as massive a success as some of the composer's other operas – the audience came to expect the weight and hardcore musical dramatism of *Tosca* or *Butterfly*.

I remember getting to know *La Rondine* as a boy, reading the vocal score and listening to the wonderful Maazel recording with Te Kanawa and Domingo. The tune that made the biggest impression on me was the utterly charming A-flat major waltz in Act 2, sung by Magda and Ruggero, and repeated by the chorus: 'Nella dolce carezza della danza'. It'll be interesting to see if this will still be the case after the production in Melbourne, or if I have in any way developed in 40 years. In any case, I'm immensely looking forward to this adventure, and to working with the dear Stuart Maunder again!



**TOBIAS RINGBORG**  
Conductor

## SYNOPSIS

### Act I

In Paris, the wealthy Rambaldo and his mistress, Magda, host a gathering. Prunier, a poet, asserts that romantic love is returning, a notion only Magda entertains. Prunier sings a ballad that Magda completes, hinting at her yearning for genuine love. Rambaldo gifts Magda a necklace, symbolising his materialistic approach to love. Prunier predicts Magda's pursuit of romance in the south. A guest, Ruggero, arrives intent on enjoying his first night in Paris. Inspired by Lisette, the maid, he is sent to visit Bullier's restaurant. After the company leave, Prunier and Lisette declare their secret love as they depart for a night on the town. Magda re-enters and decides to head to Bullier herself, disguised as a grisette.

### Act II

At Bullier's, Magda meets Ruggero by chance. She introduces herself as Paulette, and they quickly fall in love. Prunier and Lisette arrive, and a surprised Lisette spots Magda, but Prunier dismisses it as a resemblance. Rambaldo arrives, confronting Magda, who declares her love for Ruggero and leaves with him.

### Act III

Living modestly on the Riviera, Magda and Ruggero face financial difficulties. Ruggero writes to his mother for approval of their marriage, envisioning an ideal life. Magda, aware of her past, is distressed. Prunier and Lisette visit, and Lisette returns to Magda's service. Prunier conveys Rambaldo's willingness to take Magda back. Ruggero receives his mother's approving letter, but Magda reveals her past, stating she can only be his mistress, never his wife. Despite his love, she leaves Ruggero to avoid ruining his future, returning to her old life.

## CREATIVE TEAM



### TOBIAS RINGBORG

Conductor

Tobias Ringborg, conductor, has established himself on the concert podium and in the opera house, as conductor, soloist and chamber musician. His career started in 1994 when he won the prestigious Soloist Prize in Sweden. The same year he graduated from the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and his violin studies continued at the Juilliard School in New York. Ringborg has appeared with every Swedish and several Scandinavian orchestras, often as both soloist and conductor, and has made over 20 CD recordings. As an operatic conductor, he made his debut in 2001 at the Stockholm Folkoperan and has since then been closely associated with the Royal Swedish Opera. He has also led productions at Malmö Opera, the Norwegian Opera, the Danish National Opera and Oper Leipzig. In 2005 he made his London debut with the English Chamber Orchestra at the Barbican. In recent seasons Ringborg has conducted *La bohème*, *Turandot*, *Fedora* and Larsson Gothe's *Löft* at Royal Swedish Opera, *Turandot* and *L'elisir d'amore* in Gothenburg, *Le comte Ory* and *Aniara* in Malmö, *Turandot* at Dalhalla, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Così fan tutte* in Oslo, *I Puritani* at Danish National Opera, *Così fan tutte*, *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *The Magic Flute* at Scottish Opera, *La bohème*, *Don Giovanni*, *Macbeth*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci* and *Trouble in Tahiti* at Opera North, *Don Giovanni* at Welsh National Opera, *Idomeneo*, *Così fan tutte* and Verdi's *Un giorno di regno* at Garsington Opera, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca* and *La bohème* at New Zealand Opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Wellington Opera, *Madama Butterfly* and *Le nozze di Figaro* in Adelaide, as well as concerts with Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the orchestras of Wuppertal, Aalborg, Auckland and Victoria (Canada).

In 2024/25 he will lead Puccini's *La Rondine* with Victorian Opera in Melbourne, *La bohème* for Aalborg Opera Festival, *Madama Butterfly* at Gothenburg Opera and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Royal Swedish Opera. In 2010 he was awarded the Herbert Blomstedt Prize from the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, of which he has been a member since 2011.



### STUART MAUNDER AM

Director

Stuart Maunder has been directing musical theatre and opera in Australia for over 40 years. He joined the Australian Opera as Stage Manager in 1978, becoming a Resident Director in 1981. In 1992 he joined the Royal Opera House (UK) as a Staff Director while continuing to direct in Australia, UK, France and the USA. In 1999 he was appointed Artistic Administrator of Opera Australia, becoming Executive Producer in 2004. His Opera Australia productions included *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Manon*, *Gypsy Princess*, *Don Pasquale*, *My Fair Lady* and *A Little Night Music*. His OA productions of *Trial by Jury*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *H.M.S. Pinafore* have been televised nationally on ABC TV. From 2014 to 2018 Stuart was General Director of New Zealand Opera, where he directed *Candide*, *Tosca*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Mikado*. In 2018, Stuart joined State Opera South Australia as Artistic Director, directing *Carmen in the Square*, *Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Mikado*, *Carousel*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Bohème on the Beach*, *Turn of the Screw*, *Macbeth* and *Voss*. In May 2023 he helmed Australia's first ever G&S festival

for the company, directing *Pirates of Penzance*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *Trial by Jury* and *The Sorcerer*. In 2021 Stuart directed *The Gondoliers* for Scottish Opera and D'Oyly Carte Opera. This production was subsequently broadcast on BBC TV.

In October 2023, Stuart became Artistic Director of Victorian Opera. His past productions for Victorian Opera have included *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *English Eccentrics*.



### RICHARD ROBERTS

Set and 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.



### GAVAN SWIFT

Lighting Designer

Gavan is a Melbourne based award-winning lighting designer who works with leading companies and directors across Australia and internationally. His work spans commercial musical theatre, opera, theatre, concerts and events. A selection of Gavan's opera designs include: for Victorian Opera: *Salome*; for San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, State Opera of South Australia, Washington National Opera, LA Opera, and Dallas Opera: *Moby Dick*.

His lighting designs for musical theatre include: *Chicago*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Mamma Mia*, *Heathers the Musical*, *Mack & Mabel*, *Chess*, *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Hot Show Shuffle*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Sweet Charity*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Footloose*, *Hair*, *Xanadu*, and *Saturday Night Fever*, both in Australia and on London's West End.



**PHOEBE BRIGGS**  
Assistant 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*, *The Visitors*. 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.



**LOUISA FITZGERALD**  
Associate Designer

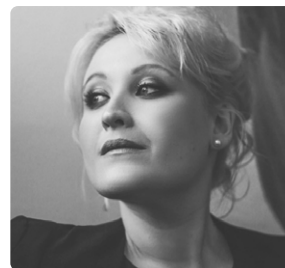
Louisa Fitzgerald (she/her) is a set and costume designer for theatre, opera and dance. Her practice is informed by a passion for design history and her skilled background as an artist and maker. Originally from Sydney, Louisa moved to Melbourne to complete a Master of Production Design at the Victorian College of the Arts. Louisa has worked previously with Victorian Opera as set designer for *The Grumpiest Boy in the World* (2023). Recent credits include Costume Design for the Australian Ballet's *Storytime Ballet: Cinderella* (2023), and Set and Costume Design for *Milked* at fortyfivedownstairs (2024). Louisa is a 2024 graduate ensemble member of Red Stitch Actors' Theatre.



**KATE MILLETT**  
Assistant Director

Described by the *Herald Sun* as 'reinforcing opera with an edge', and by *The Age* as 'too loud', Kate (she/her) is an award-winning opera director, with a focus on creating socially responsible opera. In 2016, she founded BK Opera and has gone on to produce and direct a vast array of operas, ranging from Puccini to Poulenc, Mozart to Massenet, as well as multiple marathon opera performances for White Nights across Victoria. Millett has become known for her dark and intimate work, with her production of *Abduction from the Seraglio* later invited to be a part of London's Opera in the City Festival.

## CAST

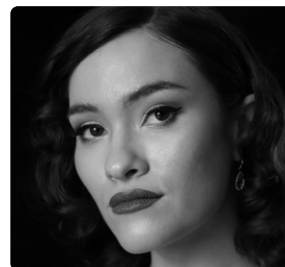


**KIANDRA HOWARTH**  
Magda

Australian lyric soprano Kiandra Howarth graduated with a Bachelor of Music from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in 2010 and went on to be a company artist at Opera Australia. She is currently a company artist at the Staatstheater Hannover.

She was a member of the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden 2013-15 where she performed and understudied many roles, including Eine der Kinderstimmen in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Contessa in *Ceprano* and Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Giannetta and Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, Soeur Constance in *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mimi in *La bohème*, Nannetta in *Falstaff*, Ilia in *Idomeneo* and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*. After graduating from the programme in July 2015, Kiandra was awarded the Culturarte Prize in the 23rd Edition of Plácido Domingo's *Operalia*. In Hannover, roles have included Mimi, the title role in *Alcina*, Desdemona in *Otello*, Fiordiligi / *Così fan tutte* and *Rusalka*.

Recent and future engagements include Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at Theater Basel, the Opéra de Nancy and Opera de Luxembourg, second flower maiden *Parsifal* in Baden-Baden and Berlin with the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle, Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi* for West Australian Opera, Mimi in *La bohème* for the Staatstheater Klagenfurt, Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for the Grange Festival, Pamina at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, Freia in *Das Rheingold* for the Opernhaus Zurich as well as Covent Garden, and Magda in *La Rondine* for Victorian Opera. She has appeared at the Wigmore Hall for the Samling Artist Programme's 20th Anniversary Concert and orchestral concerts include *Stanford Missa Via Victrix* with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, *Dvorak Mass in D* in Winchester Cathedral, *Mozart Requiem* with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.



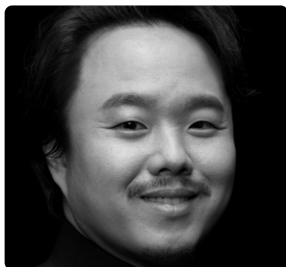
**NINA KORBE**  
Lisette

Nina Korbe is an award-winning soprano who has appeared in Opera Queensland's productions of *La bohème*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Peter Grimes* and Verdi's *Requiem*. She has also performed as a soloist with Camerata Chamber Orchestra, Queensland Ballet, Southern Cross Soloists, and the Goldner String Quartet.

Nina debuted with Opera Australia as Maria in *West Side Story*, and will continue in her position as Artist in Residence with the Queensland Youth Orchestra (QYO), including performances in Europe.

A proud Koorag, Kuku Yalanji, Wakka Wakka woman, Nina champions Indigenous Voices. She sits on the QYO's Reconciliation Action Plan Board, Queensland Symphony Orchestra's First Nations Advisory Board and is the First Nations advisor to the Australian Music Foundation.





**WON WHI CHOI**  
Ruggero

After captivating audiences worldwide with his lustrous voice, elegant musicianship, and sensitive artistry, tenor Won Whi Choi made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2020 as Alfredo in *La Traviata* to rave reviews and was slated to return for productions of *Maria Stuarda* and *Les contes d'Hoffmann*.

Last season, Choi joined the Metropolitan Opera again for both *Rigoletto* and *Fedora*, as well as the Seoul Metropolitan Opera's *Roméo and Juliette* as Roméo, Virginia Opera as Alfredo in *La Traviata*, and New York City Opera as Giorgio in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. This season, he makes house debuts with the Atlanta Opera singing the Duke in *Rigoletto* and Victorian Opera singing Ruggero in *La Rondine*. He also reprises his Arcadio in *Florenzia en el Amazonas* with Nashville Opera, returns to Minnesota Opera as Rodolfo in *La bohème*, and makes his role debut as Cavaradossi in *Tosca* as a part of Artpark's 50th anniversary season in Lewiston, New York.

Recent season engagements include a role debut as Arcadio in *Florenzia en el Amazonas* with New York City Opera; Don José in *Carmen* for Minnesota Opera, Croatia National Theater, the Domstufen Festival, and Theatre Erfurt; Hoffman in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* with Opera Tampa and Opera Orlando; Rodolfo in *La bohème* with Croatian National Theatre in Osijek; Prince Sou-Chong in Franz Lehar's *Das Land des Lächelns* in a debut with Hong Kong Opera, with Theater Erfurt, and with the Morbisch festival; Ruggero in *La Rondine* at Skylark Opera; Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Opera in Williamsburg; Alfredo in *La Traviata* for Williamsburg Opera, Nashville Opera, and på Skåret in Sweden; and the Duke in *Rigoletto* at New York City Opera, Theatre Erfurt, and Opera Idaho.



**TEDDY TAHU RHODES**  
Rambaldo

New Zealand bass Teddy Tahu Rhodes has performed with the international opera companies of San Francisco, Austin, Washington, Philadelphia, Dallas, Cincinnati, Houston, New York, the Hamburg Staatsoper, Bayerische Staatsoper (Munich), Théâtre du Châtelet (Paris), Theater an der Wien (Vienna), Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera.

On the concert platform, he is a regular guest with all the major Australasian orchestras. Other engagements include recitals in Washington DC, three national tours with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the BBC Proms. He debuted at New York's Carnegie Hall in 2009.

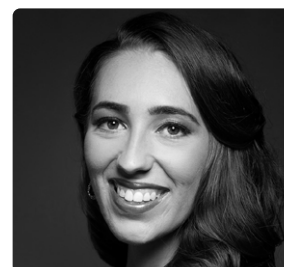
Awards include an ARIA award, two Helpmann Awards, the Limelight Award, a Green Room Award plus a MO Award (Operatic Performer of the Year).



**DOUGLAS KELLY**  
Prunier

Douglas Kelly is an internationally performing tenor who has extensive experience in opera, oratorio and as a recitalist. He has been a prize winner at the Australian Herald Sun Aria (2018), National Liederfest (2018, 2019), and currently an Emerging Artist with Victorian Opera. His performances in the operas Ulmann's *Kaiser von Atlantis* and Kats-Chernin's *Iphis* garnered Green Room Award nominations (Best Supporting Performance and Best Lead Performance in opera). His operatic credits include: Verdi's *Nabucco* (Ismaele), Puccini's *La Rondine* (Prunier), Williamson's *English Eccentrics* (Beau Brummell), Cesti's *Orontea* (Corindo), Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno D'Ulisse In Patria* (Anfinomo and Eurimaco), Mozart's *Le Nozze Di Figaro* (Basilio), Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* (Sellem), Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* (Gherardo), Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (Aeneas) and Jonathon Dove's *Mansfield Park* (Henry Crawford). He's been praised and described as 'charismatic in voice' and 'powerfully convincing' (ArtsHub), and 'A splendid Tenor' and 'suitably fresh and ardent of voice' (*Limelight*). His concert engagements include Berlioz's *L'Enfance Du Christ*, Britten's *War Requiem*, Haydn's *Creation* and Monteverdi's *Vespro Della Beata Vergine*.

Douglas has presented Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* at the Melbourne Recital Centre, as well as presenting recitals of Wolf and Schumann cycles at fortyfivedownstairs, Tempo Rubato and in Baden Bei Wien, Austria, with the Schubert Institute. In masterclass and on stage, Douglas has worked with such musicians as Roger Vignoles, Helmut Deustch, Wolfram Rieger, Graham Johnson, Robert Holl, Elly Ameling and Andreas Schmidt. Douglas Kelly is proudly supported by Dr Michael Stubbs and Malcolm Roberts.



**SARAH PRESTWIDGE**  
Yvette

Sarah Prestwidge, an acclaimed First Nations soprano, holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Sydney Conservatorium of Music and a Master of Music from Royal Northern College of Music with a full scholarship. Sarah also received the Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship and won the Lady Gallegan London Award. Sarah joined the Opera Holland Park Chorus in 2022 and has returned to cover principal roles. Sarah also joined UK's National Opera Studio Diverse Voices programme in 2023/24. In the UK, Sarah has performed several roles including *Queen of the Night* (Mozart) *Susanna* (Mozart), *Controller* (Dove), *Zerbinetta* (Strauss), *Rosina* (Rossini) and *Adele* (Strauss). As a proud Darug woman, Sarah is passionate about providing quality Music Education to First Nations people and has worked closely with Short Black Opera. For Victorian Opera she will perform Yvette/Georgette/Lisette (Cover) in *La Rondine*. In 2024, Sarah is a Victorian Opera Emerging Artist.





**MICHAELA CADWGAN**  
Bianca

Michaela Cadwgan graduated in 2020 with First Class Honours in BMus from the New Zealand School of Music—Te Kōkī, Victoria University of Wellington (NZSM). She holds a BA in German and Italian and is an alumna of the New Zealand Opera School, where she received the Dame Sister Mary Leo Foundation Award. Her notable performances include Suor Angelica in the NZSM Puccini Double Bill, and collaborations with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Opera Australia Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, and Orchestra Wellington. Michaela's accolades include first place in the Wellington Regional Aria Competition and runner-up at the Lockwood New Zealand Aria Finals. She also received the Saluzzo Opera Academy Scholarship, along with the Merenda Travel Prize and the MOST Audience Prize at the 2023 IFAC Handa ASC Finals.

In 2024, Michaela performed Julia Betram in the New Zealand premiere of Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park* with New Zealand Opera, and is also a Victorian Opera Emerging Artist. Michaela is proudly supported by Mary Davidson & the family of the late Frederick R Davidson AM.



**SYRAH TORII**  
Suzy

Japanese-Australian mezzo-soprano Syrah Torii holds a Master of Music (Opera Performance) from the Melbourne Conservatorium, and she is a graduate of Melbourne Opera's Richard Dvall Emerging Artists Programme. In 2023, she won the Victorian Opera Emerging Artist Prize.

Her many appearances with Victorian Opera have included: *Il tabarro* (La Frugola), *Candide* (chorus), *Idomeneo* (Idamante cover), *Capriccio* (Clairon study cover), *Melbourne*, *Cheremushki* (Masha), the World Premieres of *Galileo* (Diavolo 1) and *The Butterfly Lovers* (ensemble), *Elektra* (chorus), and *Il mago di Oz* (Wicked Witch of the West cover).

Syrah is the recipient of the Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship and the Eleanor Blakemore Opera Society Scholarship with Melba Opera Trust.

## ABOUT US

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

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 41 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.

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