

VICTORIAN
OPERA



JANE HAMMOND, THERÈSA BORG

THE SPARE ROOM

Based on the book by Helen Garner

Victorian Opera respectfully acknowledges the people of the Eastern Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the unceded land upon which we work and create.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent and their continuous connection in Caring for Country.

We reflect on our shared responsibility to honour and respect this land and its stories, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Victorian Opera presents

THE SPARE ROOM

Based on the book by **Helen Garner**

Composer **Dr Jane Hammond**

Librettist **Therèsa Borg**

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor **Phoebe Briggs**

Director **Sarah Goodes**

Set and Costume Designer **Harriet Oxley**

Lighting Designer **Paul Jackson**

Projection Designer **Rhian Hinkley**

Sound Designer **Samuel Moxham**

CAST

Helen **Natalie Jones**

Nicola **Antoinette Halloran**

Leo & Others **Adrian Tamburini**

Dr Caplan & Others **Emily Bauer-Jones**

Lucy & Others **Carrie Barr**

Iris & Others **Rachael Joyce**

Bessie **Scarlett Sheludko / Juliette Tancredi**

ORCHESTRA

Victorian Opera Chamber Orchestra

Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse

7 – 10 October 2026

2 hours and 20 minutes, including interval

World Premiere

***Opera Prize Recipient*

The Spare Room is co-produced in association with Monstrous Theatre.

PRODUCTION PATRON

We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Peter Laver AM.

WELCOME

Welcome to Victorian Opera's world premiere season of *The Spare Room*!

Commissioning and presenting new Australian work is part of the company's DNA and in our 21st anniversary year, we're extremely proud to present an opera adapted from such a treasured book, written and set here in Melbourne.

Helen Garner's award-winning novel has captured the hearts of readers since its publication in 2008 with this incredibly intimate and familiar story of the complexities of friendship, care and those truths that test us all. Composer Dr Jane Hammond and librettist Thérèse Borg have tenderly realised it as an opera, and we congratulate them on their years-long journey developing it.

Under the guiding hands of conductor Phoebe Briggs, director Sarah Goodes and the extraordinary team on-stage, behind-the-scenes and in the pit, this production has been beautifully brought to life.

We must share a special acknowledgement too of Natalie Jones and Antoinette Halloran, whose performances sit at the heart of this remarkable work.

Thank you to the entire Victorian Opera team for bringing this moving production to the stage. Our thanks, as always, to Victorian Opera's patrons, sponsors and funding partners — your continued support makes everything we do possible.

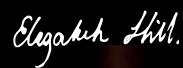
If this is your first time joining us, we hope you enjoy a truly memorable experience.

And if you're returning, welcome back to Victorian Opera!

STUART MAUNDER
Artistic Director,
Victorian Opera



ELIZABETH HILL-COOPER
CEO, Victorian Opera



FROM THE CONDUCTOR

From the opening celeste number to the final explosive flamenco rhythms of Thèresa Borg and Jane Hammond's opera, the music of *The Spare Room* traverses the emotions, fears, dark humour and sensitivity of the relationship between Nicola and Helen and the time they shared during Nicola's treatment for cancer.

Jane Hammond's music is both expansive and intimately detailed. She captures the shifting moods of hope, despair, frustration, anger and sadness through the use of driving rhythm, soaring vocal harmonies, gentle waltz, angular percussion, subterranean bass clarinet murmuring and lush string writing.

The music highlights the friendship and tension between the two friends, with moments of humour (the ozone tent scene and Peggy's house), jazzy dance-like rhythms of the Dr Kaplan scene and Helen's moment of intense frustration where her true emotions are revealed through insistent rhythms and an impassioned vocal line.

Each scene in the opera has its own distinct character and many are linked by a woodwind flourish reminiscent of morning birdsong (affectionately known as the sunshine theme).

Jane Hammond uses the ukulele throughout the opera, (played both on stage and in the pit) perhaps as a symbol of hope, of domesticity and humour. The three commentators step in and out of the action and voice Helen's fears and hopes, as well

as stepping into roles as different characters throughout the work, leaving one male voice to personify various quacks and friends. The orchestra (made up of 13 players) at times sounds like a full symphony orchestra and in the next moment like a small chamber group, with the writing reflecting the heightened emotion or intimacy of each scene.

It has been a real pleasure working on *The Spare Room* over the past couple of years, from workshops with piano to the orchestral readings earlier this year. Watching the work come to life in the rehearsal room has been thrilling. Having seen a number of Sarah Goodes' productions in the theatre recently, it is especially exciting to work with her on this opera and I have loved watching her shape the work with such imagination and vision. It has been a privilege to work with this cast and creative team and all involved on *The Spare Room*. I hope Thèresa Borg and Jane Hammond's opera becomes part of the modern operatic canon.

PHOEBE BRIGGS
Conductor

FROM THE DIRECTOR

In 2014, while working as a resident director at Sydney Theatre Company, I read Helen Garner's *The Spare Room* and immediately thought it would make a wonderful stage adaptation. When Stuart Maunder called unexpectedly last year and asked me to direct an opera adaptation, I could hardly believe my luck—it felt like a gift from the heavens. I was also terrified, having never directed an opera, but the moment I heard the music, I fell in love.

Jane Hammond and Thèresa Borg have created something so special, tapping into the subterranean world of Helen's writing - the huge emotions and mythic struggles that her writing sits on are beautifully elevated through the music and libretto. The character of Bessie dances along the fine line between life and death becoming the conduit between these two women's entirely opposite world views. Opera unlocks something so physical and central to the human experience. The beautiful collision between this art form and Helen's writing taps into a deep mystery about life, death and friendship which of course was always in Helen's fine novel, but this art form elevates it in a way that makes it other worldly.

And of course, getting the opportunity to work with artists like Natalie Jones, Antoinette Halloran, Adrian Tamburini, Rachael Joyce, Emily Bauer-Jones and Carrie Barr as well as Scarlett Sheludko and Juliette Tancredi has been a career highlight. They are all incredible theatre performers, with a deep understanding

of the complex emotions of this story and being able to bring that to life through their presence and exquisite voices has been incredible to witness.

A huge thank you to the beautiful creative team - Harriet Oxley, a designer whose understanding of colour and texture are the finest I have ever seen - creating this world together has been a joy, filled with jellyfish and forests. Paul Jackson a lighting designer who sculpts with light and is very comfortable in the spirit world, to Rhian Hinkley for the video design, and Samuel Moxham for the sound design.

A huge thank you to the incredible conductor Phoebe Briggs who has so generously guided me through this journey. Watching her work, threading together the music and singing - the joy and incredible talent she holds with such ease is a thing to behold! I am in endless awe of her and cannot thank her enough.

To the whole team at Victorian Opera for their support and incredible hard work - what they are able to achieve with half the resources they deserve is incredible.

Thank you to Thèresa and Jane for trusting me with their beautiful work. And to Stuart and Elizabeth Hill-Cooper for giving me my first ride on the glorious Opera Unicycle.

SARAH GOODES
Director

FROM THE COMPOSER AND LIBRETTIST

Helen Garner's remarkable novel, *The Spare Room*, unravels the tenderness, fury and complexity of a friendship under duress. Thérèse brought the book to Jane's attention in 2021; we were both blown away by the courage of the diametrically opposed main characters: 'Helen', practical, direct and cynical about the efficacy of alternative practitioners and Nicola, waging war on her terminal condition to the point of magical thinking. Their epic scale of feeling waxed opera, opera!

We made some decisions very quickly: to retain the novel's narrator voice and psychological space we would employ a multi-generational chorus of women, also available to play additional roles. A lone divo would take on all the male characters. Helen requested an ensemble of ethereal ukuleles - definitely in! Bringing the story to the stage, however, has been a collaborative effort of five years and four workshops.

The compositional choices are eclectic given Helen's references to multiple musical styles in the book: the psychiatrist Leo playing a Chick Corea album while cooking, for instance, and Bessie practising her flamenco dance routines. There are two direct quotations from pieces by J.S. Bach, inspired by Helen's passion for his music. Additional influences include traditional and contemporary opera scores from Puccini to Brett Dean and John Adams and composers such as Sofia Gubaidulina and Schönberg.

The instrumental allocations are often character or location-specific in the manner of Britten - for instance, the bass clarinet that evokes the watery underworld of The Theodore Institute.

Jane dedicates this season to her mother Mary Hammond whose love of opera seeded Jane's soul and career (Mary once said to Jane, "Why can't you write more like Verdi?").

To the following multitudes our heartfelt gratitude: Stuart Maunder AM and Elizabeth Hill-Cooper, our accomplished and dear colleague Phoebe Briggs, the glorious and inspired combo of Harriet Oxley and Sarah Goodes who have found the piece as we felt it, the luxurious cast, designers, band and backstage company, diva of divas Antoinette Halloran, Ken Mackenzie-Forbes AM, John Hay-Mackenzie, Tom Gutteridge, all the artists and producers who participated in the workshops, the team at Victorian Opera, all at Lowther Hall, Creative Australia and Jane Novak. And above all, thanks to our partners Jen and Anton for their patience and scrutiny, and keeping us fed and watered, and to Helen Garner, who trusted us with her magnificent book and encouraged us at every turn.

DR JANE HAMMOND, Composer
THERESA BORG, Librettist

SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

A little girl, Bessie, invites the audience to 'her show' before asking them a question she doesn't quite have words for. She crosses an otherworldly path with Nicola, who Bessie seems to sense is near death. Nicola in turn seems haunted by Bessie, who perhaps reminds her of her younger self.

Here in Melbourne, Helen makes the bed in her spare room - her dear friend, Nicola, is coming to stay. Helen's friend Leo alerts her that Nicola, who has stage four cancer, might need Helen's help to absorb her situation. Nicola arrives, clearly very ill.

Nicola rallies and ropes Helen into accompanying her to 'The Theodore Institute' where she is kept waiting, is brusquely addressed by 'specialists' and takes surprising alternative 'treatments'. Meanwhile, the eponymous Dr Theodore, who promised Nicola his personal attention, has travelled overseas without notice. Helen works night and day to keep Nicola comfortable and comforted despite her own cynicism about the Institute. Bessie, who is Helen's granddaughter, flits in and out of Helen's house. Nicola is not keen on Bessie, who has a cold.

Helen takes courage from a flashback where she remembers a boat trip to Nicola's bush home but eventually confesses that she's struggling with the care regimen. Helen suggests that Nicola should take the morphine she's been prescribed by the GP, Dr Caplan, and also give Helen permission to call on palliative care. Nicola reluctantly concedes but infuriates Helen when she tells a mutual friend, Peggy, that Helen is

not coping. Helen hears the pair laugh at her expense and has an epiphany: Nicola's refusal to countenance death is poisoning their friendship. Nicola tries out new 'treatments': coffee enemas and apricot kernels. Helen is touched by Nicola's attachment to living but has her own laugh at Nicola's expense when she lunches with her sister, Lucy.

ACT 2

Nicola's niece Iris arrives just in time to witness Helen confront the elusive Dr Theodore, who makes an unplanned house call when he escorts a collapsing Nicola home from the Institute. Dr Theodore insists he is doing nothing reportable. Nicola gives Helen a juicer for her birthday and then requests Helen squeeze her an orange juice.

Helen looks forward to Nicola flying home but Nicola's condition worsens. A surgeon, Dr Hathaway, insists that Nicola must stay in Melbourne for a life-saving operation. With no end to Nicola's stay in sight, Helen loses her temper and imagines killing Nicola in a car accident. Nicola makes plans to move on and stay with other Melbourne friends. She punishes Helen by banishing Bessie from her Nanna's house in Helen's absence.

Helen, reunited with Bessie, remembers travelling to Sydney to nurse Nicola through her final days with a team of Nicola's friends. She acknowledges, and perhaps regrets, the fury she felt in the last hours of Nicola's stay in the spare room.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Company Manager
Matt Bebbington

Stage Manager
Lucie Sutherland

Assistant Stage Manager
Morgan Clyne

Child Chaperone
Nikola Gucciardo, Emma Mosley

Surtitle Operator
Eleanor Smith

Head Mechanist
Taylor Joynes

Props Artisan / Scenic Artist
Alex Donnelly

Illusions
Lee Cohen

Costume Manager
Cortnee Jarvis

Workroom Supervisor and Backstage
Wardrobe Supervisor
Xander Reichard

Principal Costumiers ('Backstage Dressers')
Tilda Luca
Ezmeralda Gulian
Rheia Herbert
Ines Kustura
Olivia Peters (Costume Maintenance)
Nicole Serjeant

Work Placement Student
Emily Gazzola (Melbourne Polytechnic)

MUSIC TEAM

Repetiteur
Tom Griffiths

Orchestra Manager
Chelsea Hyde

VICTORIAN OPERA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Violin 1
Jaso Sasaki

Violin 2
Cameron Jamieson

Viola
Lachlan McKie

Cello
Rachel Morton

Bass
Matthew Thorne

Flutes
Laila Engle

Oboe/Cor Anglais
Rachel Curkpatrick

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet
Luke Carbon

Bassoon
Stephanie Sheridan

Horn
Anton Schroeder

Guitar/Concert Ukulele
Sophie Marcheff

Percussion
Felix Gilmour

Piano/Celeste
Tom Griffiths





DR JANE HAMMOND COMPOSER

Jane Hammond is a composer, pianist and musical director whose vividly imagined works connect performers and audiences with music, history and the more-than-human world. Informed by her work as an opera repetiteur, collaborative pianist, and teacher her catalogue encompasses opera, music theatre, community projects and concert works. Her five children's operas have toured Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom with Opera Australia, Lyric Opera Queensland and Victoria State Opera; *Software: The Tale of a Virtual Valkyrie* alone reached more than 80,000 children. *Sea Voyage* premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe and received an international award, while *Voicing Emily* was acclaimed as "a work of ravishing beauty and rare artistic distinction". Other works include *Dancing With Ghosts*, *In a Room with Rachmaninoff*, *A Lyrebird in Paris* and *Songs of the Helmeted Honeyeater*. Hammond's music is published by Wirripang, with recordings available through Move Records, Lyrebird Productions, Spotify and iTunes.



THERÈSE BORG LIBRETTIST

Thérèse Borg is a Maltese-Australian writer, director and performer.

Thérèse was the 2022 National Library of Australia Creative Fellow for Australian Writing towards her play *Cissie and Jean* and wrote the citizen science project *Songs of the Helmeted Honeyeater* with Jane Hammond. She wrote and directed many family musicals for Life Like Touring including *Scooby-Doo Live!*, *Musical Mysteries*, *Octonauts Live: Operation Reef Shield* and *Elmo's World Tour*. These musicals toured nationally and internationally.

Her recent directing credits include *The Happiest Man on Earth*, *Titanic*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *Disney Under the Stars*, *Prima la musical / The Impresario*, *The Consul* and *La Cenerentola*. Thérèse was Resident Director on *An American in Paris* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and Associate Director on *Death of a Salesman*.

Thérèse's roles include Christine, Cosette, Zerbinetta, Angélique, Queen of the Night, Jellylorum, Musetta, Philomel, Hope Harcourt, Emily Dickinson, Eliza Doolittle and Fosca.



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*, *Mansfield Park*, *Follies*, and *The Magic Pudding: The Opera*. 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.



SARAH GOODES DIRECTOR

For Melbourne Theatre Company, Sarah's work includes *Sunday*; *Cyrano*; *The Sound Inside*; *Home*, *I'm Darling*; *Così* (with the Sydney Theatre Company); *Golden Shield*; *Arbus & West*; *Astroman*; *A Doll's House: Part 2*; *The Children* (with Sydney Theatre Company); *Three Little Words* and *John*. As Resident Director at Sydney Theatre Company Sarah directed *The Hanging*; *Disgraced*; *Orlando*; *Battle of Waterloo*; *Switzerland*; *The Effect*; *Vere (Faith)*; *The Splinter* and *Edward Gant's Amazing Feats of Loneliness*.

Sarah's other directing credits include *Grace* (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre); *The Sugar House* (Belvoir); *The Sweetest Thing*; *The Small Things*; *Elling* and *Black Milk* (B Sharp Belvoir); *Vertigo* and *The Virginia*, *The Shelling Point*; *Hilt* and *What Happened Was...* (Old Fitzroy Theatre). *Scorced* at NIDA and *Earthquakes in London* at VCA.



HARRIET OXLEY SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

A graduate of VCA (Theatre Design) and RMIT (Fashion Design), Harriet has been designing for performance since 2005.

Collaborations in recent years include *Vigil* (Outer Urban Projects/ Arts House), *The Chronicles* (Stephanie Lake Company), *Red* (Dancenorth QLD), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Set and Costume design, Sydney Theatre Company, GWB, Andrew Henry Presents and Red Stitch), *Pendulum* (Lucy Guerin Inc), *La bohème*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Lucrezia*, *The Ring Cycle* (Melbourne Opera), *Midnight the Cinderella Musical* (Aspect Entertainment), *Lucie in the Sky* (Australasian Dance Collective QLD), *Sunday* (Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company), *MASS MOVEMENT* (Stephanie Lake Company/Adelaide Festival), and *I'm in a Parasocial Relationship with Britney Spears* (Back to Back Theatre).

Harriet has also designed for Sydney Dance Company, Victorian Opera, Chunky Move, Circus Oz, and Malthouse Theatre, and for many independent creators and producers.

Harriet has been nominated for multiple Green Room Awards, winning for design in Opera. She was nominated for a Production Designers' Guild award for costume for live performance in 2025 for Stephanie Lake's *The Chronicles*. She tutors in costume design in the Bachelor of Design at the University of Melbourne.



PAUL JACKSON LIGHTING DESIGNER

Paul Jackson is a multi-award-winning lighting and set designer, dramaturg, and theatre maker whose practice encompasses theatre, opera, dance, music theatre, concerts, and live events.

Lighting design credits for opera include *Abduction*, *Happy End*, *Cassandra / Echo & Narcissus* (Victorian Opera), *Lorelei* (Victorian Opera, Opera Queensland); *Breaking the Waves* (Opera Australia), *Rusalka* (Opera Conference), *La traviata* (Opera Australia, Opera Queensland / West Australian Opera / State Opera South Australia); *La traviata on New Year's Eve*, *Carmen* (Opera Australia).

Paul has won a Helpmann Award, two Sydney Theatre Awards, seven Green Room Awards, a Critics' Award for Theatre in Scotland, and five Australian Production Design Guild Awards. He has also received four Helpmann Award nominations, thirty-two Green Room Award nominations, five APDG nominations, and four Sydney Theatre nominations. Paul is a Churchill Fellow, an Australia Council Fellow, and is accredited with the Australian Production Design Guild.



RHIAN HINKLEY PROJECTION DESIGNER

Rhian Hinkley is a filmmaker and artist based in Naarm/Melbourne. He has a longstanding relationship with Back to Back Theatre, designing the video elements for *Multiple Bad Things*, *The shadow whose prey the hunter becomes*, *Lady eats Apple*, *Ganesh Versus The Third Reich*, *Food Court* and *Soft*. He has directed numerous versions of *The Democratic Set* and *Radial* film projects for Back to Back Theatre including Hong Kong, Edinburgh, Freiburg, Berlin and Dundee. His work with choreographer Sandra Parker includes *Out of Light*, *Document*, *The Recording*, *Small Details* and *All Day and All Night*. Other design credits include *Origami* (BalletLab) and Stephanie Lake's *Aorta* (Chunky Move) and *The Black Woman of Gippsland* (Melbourne Theatre Company). In 2024, Rhian and his daughter Ivy were guest artists for Mammalian Dive Reflex at the Humboldt Forum Berlin where they directed *Break It Make it Fake it*.



SAMUEL MOXHAM SOUND DESIGNER

Sam is a live sound professional specialising in Sound Design, Broadcast, FOH and Recording. He frequently collaborates with Australia's major arts organisations including Victorian Opera, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, Australian Ballet, and Opera Australia.

His recent collaborations include: Orchestra Victoria – Indie Symphony, Parasite, King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard (2025), Melbourne Symphony Orchestra – The Whitlams, Lime Cordiale, *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars* (2025), Opera Australia – *Candide* (2025), Victorian Opera – *Candide*, *Abduction*, *Follies*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Ned Kelly: The Musical* (2024–2026).

After successful contributions to previous Victorian Opera seasons, he returns as Sound Designer for *The Spare Room*.



NATALIE JONES HELEN

As a principal soprano with Opera Australia, Natalie has performed Juliette in *Romeo et Juliette*, the title role in *Manon*, Konstanze & Blondchen in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Musetta in *La bohème*, Königin der Nacht in *Die Zauberflöte*, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*, Morgana in *Alcina*, Eurydice & Cupid in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Josephine in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Casilda in *The Gondoliers*, Hero in *The Love of the Nightingale* and Bubba in *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (Richard Mills). She has sung Königin der Nacht for the Volksoper in Vienna; Woglinde in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* for State Opera South Australia; Adele in *Die Fledermaus* and the title role in *Patience* for West Australian Opera; Adina and Königin der Nacht for Opera Queensland as well as Gilda and Königin der Nacht for OzOpera National Tours. Alongside her operatic work, Natalie has performed extensively on the concert platform throughout Australia and New Zealand.



ANTOINETTE HALLORAN NICOLA

One of Australia's most accomplished sopranos, Antoinette Halloran returned to Victorian Opera in 2025 to star as Sally (*Follies*) and sing Kabanicha (*Katya Kabanova*). Previous seasons have seen Antoinette perform Mrs Lovett (*Sweeney Todd*) across Australia and New Zealand, Brunnhilde in Melbourne Opera's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, the title roles in *Tosca* for West Australian Opera and *The Merry Widow* for State Opera South Australia, and Lady Macbeth (*Macbeth*) in Perth. She also appeared as the associate artist for José Carreras' National Tour.

For Opera Australia, Antoinette has performed the title roles in *Madama Butterfly* and *Rusalka*, Mimì in *La bohème* and Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Green Room Award); for Opera Queensland – the title role in *The Merry Widow*; for New Zealand Opera – Mimì and Cio-Cio-San.

Earlier this year, she starred as Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance* and is proud to originate the role of Nicola in *The Spare Room* for Victorian Opera.

In 2027, she stars as Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* for Victorian Opera.



ADRIAN TAMBURINI LEO & OTHERS

An opera singer, concert performer, music educator, director and producer, Adrian Tamburini most recently was nominated for a Sydney Theatre Award (*Hadestown*) and an Opera Chaser Critic's Award (*Katya Kabanova*). In 2024, he won his second Green Room Award for his performance as Hagen in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* and has won Australia's prestigious singing award, the Australian Opera Awards (YMF, MOST).

His singing has featured on cinema releases of opera, DVD, international recordings, motion picture soundtracks, radio, and television. He has worked with Opera Australia, Pinchgut Opera, Victorian Opera, West Australian Opera, Melbourne Opera, Lost and Found Opera, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Zelman Symphony Orchestra, Sydney University Graduate Choir, Melbourne Bach Choir, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Canberra Symphony Orchestra and the Inventi Ensemble.

Adrian has championed new Australian works including Jane Hammond's *The Spare Room*, Nicholas Buc's *Origins*, Christopher Bowen's *Redfern Oratorio* and Luke Styles' *No Friend but the Mountains*. Adrian has worked with renowned conductors and directors such as Asher Fisch, Andrea Molino, Andrea Battistoni, Jonathan Darlington, Pietari Inkinen, Carlo Montanaro, Guillaume Tourniaire, David McVicar, and Francesca Zambello, as well as Australians Jessica Cottis, Sarah Goodes, Erin Helyard, Barry Kosky, Bruce Beresford, and John Bell. Adrian is proudly represented by Ian White Management.



EMILY BAUER-JONES DR CAPLAN & OTHERS

Emily is a graduate of London's Royal College of Music and Royal Northern College Of Music in Manchester. She has appeared for Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opera North, Welsh National, Scottish Opera and Opera du Rhin, Strasbourg.

On the concert and oratorio stage her experience is vast and includes appearances at Royal Festival Hall in Rodrigo's *Triptic de Mosen Cinto* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Elgar's *Sea Pictures* in Vienna and *The Dream of Gerontius* at Smetana Hall in Prague, *Messiah* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and *A Child of Our Time* and the Verdi *Requiem* at Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Emily's past roles for Victorian Opera include Nancy in *Albert Herring*, Stella in Elliott Carters' *What Next* and The Third Secretary in *Nixon in China*, a role in which she has also appeared at the Auckland Festival.





CARRIE BARR LUCY & OTHERS

Carrie is a versatile performer with a celebrated 38-year career in Australian opera and music theatre. She made her musical theatre debut as Cosette in the 1989 Australian cast of *Les Misérables*. Since then, she has performed in prominent national productions, including *Cats*, *Mary Poppins*, *Hair*, *The Dusty Springfield Story* and *Jerry Springer the Opera*. Her outstanding performance as Carrie in *Carousel* earned her a prestigious Green Room Award for Best Supporting Actress in 2005.

On the opera stage, Carrie's extensive credits with Victorian Opera include *Sweeney Todd* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. For Opera Australia, she has performed in timeless masterpieces like *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *Turandot*, *Aida*, *Lakmé*, *Marriage of Figaro* and *La bohème*. Her talents also extend to television, featuring appearances on *Good Morning Australia* and a recurring role as Jenny McKenna on *Neighbours* from 2005 to 2006.



RACHAEL JOYCE IRIS & OTHERS

Soprano Rachael Joyce is a current recipient of Victorian Opera's 2026 Opera Prize. She was also a recipient of the 2025 Opera Prize. This scholarship is proudly supported by Dr Michael Stubbs and Malcolm Roberts.

Rachael was previously a member of both Melbourne Opera's Richard Divall Emerging Artist Programme and Opera Scholars Australia. A Monash University graduate, Rachael received First Class Honours after completing a Bachelor of Arts (French) and Music (Honours).

Her recent roles include Drusilla in *The Coronation of Poppea*, Ellen Sherritt in *Ned Kelly: The Musical*, Edith in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, the Lyrebird in *The Lyrebird's Voice*, Princess Caraboo in *English Eccentrics* (Victorian Opera); Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* (Melbourne Opera) and Chiara in *Biographica* (Lyric Opera of Melbourne).

Notable accolades include First Prize in the 99th Herald Sun Aria Competition, runner-up in the Opera Scholars Australia Aria competition and Boroondara Eisteddfod Vocal Championship Winner. In 2024, Rachael travelled to Germany as the recipient of the Melbourne Opera & Rotary New Generations Service Exchange, where she made her concert debut at the Bayreuth Festival.



SCARLETT SHELUDKO BESSIE

Scarlett is delighted to make her Victorian Opera debut in *The Spare Room*, performing the shared role of Bessie in this original Australian work. She made her professional stage debut in 2025 as Little Cosette in the Australian tour of *Les Misérables: The Arena Spectacular* (Cameron Mackintosh/Live Nation), before joining Opera Australia's *Carmen* as a member of the children's chorus, where she discovered her love of opera.

Scarlett has trained in dance since the age of four, alongside singing and drama, and currently trains at Showfit Studios in Brunswick. Her screen credits include the role of Lulu in Jacaranda/New Canvas' VR project *Coltrane*, as well as television commercials for Coles and the AFL. She continues to develop her skills across singing, dance and acting, with a particular passion for musical theatre and opera.

She is proudly represented by IWM Next Gen and is grateful to her agents Melissa Quinn and Ian White, her family, teachers and vocal coaches Sarah Landy and Jason Wasley for their ongoing support. Outside of performing, Scarlett enjoys reading and playing trumpet and piano.



JULIETTE TANCREDI BESSIE

Juliette Tancredi is honoured to make her professional stage debut with Victorian Opera, alternating in the role of Bessie in the world premiere of *The Spare Room*.

Later this year, she performs the title role of Charlie Bucket in her upcoming junior school production of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

A deeply committed young artist, Juliette is also studying classical violin and performs regularly with school string ensembles and choirs. She is currently pursuing her AMEB classical syllabus in both violin and voice, studying her vocal repertoire under the guidance of Joanne Carroll at Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School. Having recently competed in the Classical Voice Singing Competition, Juliette brings vibrant energy and a deep, family-inspired love of Italian opera to her debut.

Outside of performing, Juliette is an active girl who enjoys ballet, gymnastics, swimming and participating in Parkrun.



ABOUT US

Victorian Opera is Victoria's state opera company.

We honour the centuries-old history of opera's boundless creativity while captivating audiences with relevant, creative and accessible work.

We create productions that inspire, challenge and stir the soul. Since our inception in 2005, our annual commission program has seen more than 40 new Australian works written, produced and performed.

In 2021, Victorian Opera was admitted to the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework in recognition of our outstanding contribution to Australia's artistic landscape.

This acknowledgement and added financial investment enable us to deepen collaborative ties throughout the industry, and stage productions across the state, the country and beyond.

In 2026, our 21st anniversary, we are delivering more productions and concerts that showcase and promote Australia's

vibrant performing arts scene. We employ hundreds of singers, instrumentalists, theatre-makers and technicians to bring our creative vision to life, and engage audiences with this glorious art form.

A key focus of our organisation is to uncover and develop the talent of emerging artists, both on-stage and behind-the-scenes.

From singers to prop makers to costumiers and everyone in between, artists work on productions with Victorian Opera to enrich their career. We delight in the hunger of these practitioners to learn and, ultimately, give back to the future of opera and music theatre.

Our community of Patrons, funding partners and creative industry professionals is truly remarkable. This vibrant network continues to champion Victorian Opera's artistic vision in its vital role sustaining and advancing our creative practice.

We invite you to join us.
See you at the opera.

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Photography credits:

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IN REHEARSAL

The Spare Room in rehearsal
Photography: Casey Horsfield



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Helen Garner writes novels, stories, screenplays and works of non-fiction. She is the winner of the Melbourne Prize for Literature, the Windham Campbell Prize for Non-Fiction, the Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature and the Australian Society of Authors Medal. Her books include *Monkey Grip*, *The Children's Bach*, *The First Stone*, *Joe Cinque's Consolation*, *The Spare Room*, *This House of Grief*, *The Season*, *How to End a Story: Collected Diaries*, which won the prestigious Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction, and *The Mushroom Tapes*, with Chloe Hooper and Sarah Krasnostein.

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Let us know what you thought of
The Spare Room

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