

HSBC a world
of opera



Sunday 16 July 2023
Joan Sutherland Theatre
Sydney Opera House

OPERA AUSTRALIA



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HSBC and Opera Australia

HSBC is proud to bring you **HSBC a world of opera**. As a leading international bank, HSBC's partnership with Opera Australia opens up a world of cultural diversity and speaks to the timeless connectivity of music that touches audiences around the world.

Together with Opera Australia, we hope to spread the passion of opera to all by introducing you to some of Australia's rising stars and celebrating their exceptional talent as we bring you a selection of some of the most famous and well-loved opera pieces from around the world.

This year also marks 50 years of Opera Australia performing at Sydney Opera House. We congratulate Opera Australia on this milestone and are proud to celebrate the passion of opera with everyone.

We hope you enjoy the performance.

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HSBC a world of opera – Program

Conductor and Host: Brian Castles-Onion AM

Sopranos: Petah Cavallaro, Rebecca Gulinello, Imogen-Faith Malfitano, Sophie Salvesani, Danita Weatherstone

Tenor: Tomas Dalton (member of the Opera Australia Chorus)

Baritone: Alex Sefton (alumnus of the Opera Australia Young Artist Program)

- 1. VERDI** 'Ritorna vincitor'
from *Aida* **Petah Cavallaro**
- 2. VERDI** 'Caro nome'
from *Rigoletto* **Imogen-Faith Malfitano**
- 3. GOUNOD** 'Jewel Song'
from *Faust* **Sophie Salvesani**
- 4. PUCCINI** 'Che gelida manina'
from *La Bohème* **Tomas Dalton**
- 5. BIZET** 'Micaela's Aria'
from *Carmen* **Danita Weatherstone**
- 6. MOZART** 'Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen'
from *The Magic Flute* **Alexander Sefton**
- 7. MOZART** 'Queen of the Night'
from *The Magic Flute* **Sophie Salvesani**
- 8. PUCCINI** 'O mio babbino caro'
from *Gianni Schicchi* **Rebecca Gulinello**
- 9. BIZET** 'Au fond du temple saint'
from *The Pearlfishers* **Tomas Dalton & Alexander Sefton**
- 10. PUCCINI** 'Nessun dorma'
from *Turandot* **Tomas Dalton & tutti**

ORCHESTRA

Concertmaster

Catalin Ungureanu

1st Violin

Catalin Ungureanu
Ben Smith

2nd Violin

Airena Nakamura
Darcy Dauth

Viola

Virginia Comerford
Amanda Murphy

Cello

Eszter Mikes-Liu*
Margaret Addison

Double Bass

Andrew Meisel*

Flute

Amanda Hollins

Oboe

Matthew Tighe*

Clarinet

Phillip Green*

Bassoon

Doug Eyre

Horn

Bourian Boubbov*

Trumpet

Craig Ross*

Trombone

Gregory van der Struik

Harp Kate

Maloney

* associate principal

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Opera Australia Young Artist Program

Opera Australia's Young Artist Program provides an exceptional opportunity for some of Australia's most promising emerging artists to participate in an intensive program over the course of two years.

Each participant receives specialised language, acting, stagecraft and choreography coaching, and performance opportunities with Opera Australia. This is a unique experience that enables them to focus on refining their artistic skills with mentoring by some of the most respected performers in the opera world.

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CATALIN UNGUREANU – CONCERTMASTER

A graduate of the George Enescu Conservatory, Romania, Catalin also studied in Germany and has toured Europe extensively with the Moldova Philharmonic Orchestra [...more](#)



PETAH CAVALLARO – SOPRANO

Recently returned from studying in New York, London, Denmark and Italy [...more](#)



REBECCA GULINELLO – SOPRANO

Rebecca Gulinello is a dual citizen Italian/Australian Soprano. She earned a Bachelor of Music performance (Honors) [...more](#)



IMOGEN-FAITH MALFITANO – SOPRANO

Multi award-winning soprano Imogen-Faith Malfitano completed her Bachelor of Music [...more](#)



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Fun Opera Facts – Did You Know?

- Opera singers can project their voices over a full orchestra because they sing at a different sound frequency to the instruments. They're also experts of projection, bouncing sound around their mouths and sinuses to make sure their voices resonate.
- In the 1800s, some opera composers would hire a group of people to cheer their works or boo the works of their rivals. This group was called a clique.
- Mozart penned his first opera at just 12 years of age. If you think that's impressive, he composed his first piece of music when he was just five.
- JS Bach was famously addicted to coffee, consuming up to 30 cups a day. He even wrote a mini-opera about this addiction. A caffeine high can take you to strange places.
- Action movie star Jackie Chan is a classically trained opera singer. He still sings, having released 20 albums since the 1980s.

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Brian Castles-Onion AM

Born in Cessnock, Brian Castles-Onion is one of Australia's most exciting and well-known opera conductors. Completing his tertiary studies at the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music, his outstanding achievements speak for themselves.

His career expands internationally, having worked at New York's Metropolitan Opera and the Julliard School of Music. He has worked at the Rossini Festival in Italy, held the position of Artistic Director of Canterbury Opera in New Zealand and currently continues his long run association with Opera Australia.

His conducting experience – well over five hundred opera performances alone.

He was on the podium for Opera Australia's 40th Anniversary Gala and 60th Anniversary Gala, The Robert Allman Farewell Gala and conducted the Dame Joan Sutherland State Memorial Service – which was broadcast internationally on television and radio.

Well known as a Public Speaker and compère, he has made guest appearances at Corporate Dinners, various Opera Forums and presented over two dozen 'Opera in the Park' in Perth, Sydney and the Hunter Valley – amassing a large following of fans. His book "Losing the Plot in Opera" has been a Best Seller in Australia and the UK.

His recital and concert appearances have seen him as conductor and pianist for Kiri Te Kanawa, Sumi Jo, Frederica von Stade, Placido Domingo, José Carreras and Geraldine Turner. His recordings include *The Mikado* and *La Traviata* for ABC Classics, The Stephen Sondheim Songbook, *When We Met*, *Amoureuse*, *The Power of Love*, *Puccini Passion*, Geraldine Turner – The Stephen Sondheim Songbook Volume Two, *The Enchanted Hour*, the soundtrack to the American film *Harlem Aria*, the complete series on DVD of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour and produced ten volumes in the new series on Désirée Records – "Great Australian Voices".

Recent engagements include *La Bohème*, *The Mikado*, *Tosca*, *Carmen*, *Don Pasquale* and *La Traviata* for Opera Australia; seven consecutive seasons of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour (*La Traviata*, *Carmen* – twice, *Madama Butterfly*, *Aida & Turandot*), *Tosca*, *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni* for West Australian Opera and concerts with Kiri Te Kanawa, the 3 Chinese Tenors, Sumi Jo, Christmas at the Opera House, Opera in the Vineyards and the last six New Year's Eve Galas at the Sydney Opera House. 2017 saw him conducting *Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini) and *La Vida Breve* (da Falla) for South Opera South Australia, *Carmen* (Bizet) for Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, *Carmen* (Bizet) for Opera Australia in Melbourne and *Madama Butterfly* (Puccini) at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney – and in 2018, the New Year's Eve Gala at the Sydney Opera House, *La Bohème* on Sydney Harbour, Heggie's *To Hell and Back* along with *L'elisir d'amore* in Melbourne. In 2019 he conducted Sydney Festival's "Opera in the Domain", several concerts and *Madama Butterfly* for Opera Australia at the Sydney Opera House.

Brian became a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2017 Australia Day Honours List.



Catalin Ungureanu

A graduate of the George Enescu Conservatory, Romania, Catalin also studied in Germany and has toured Europe extensively with the Moldova Philharmonic Orchestra. Catalin was also 2nd prize winner in the Golden Lyra Award, Romania and in Usti nad Orlici, Czechoslovakia and was awarded the Special Prize for his performance in Subiaco, Italy. He has been a member of La Camerata Chamber Orchestra and since 2003, a full-time member of the Opera Australia Orchestra.



Petah Cavallaro

Recently returned from studying in New York, London, Denmark and Italy, Petah has worked with coaches from Opera di Firenze, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, The Metropolitan Opera and Operaen Denmark. While in Italy she performed as a soloist at Villa Miani, overlooking Vatican City in Rome. While she was there, she was chosen from thousands of applicants to perform in the finals of the Accademia del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

In 2019 she recoded her debut European album for Stradivarius Milano Dischi with Trio Cavallaro, which features arrangements of arias and songs by Handel, Weber and Strauss. She also performed with Sydney's Apollo Opera in their production of Radamisto.

In December 2018 she performed the role of Echo with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, conducted by Simone Young. As a soloist Petah has performed with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in the Music on Sundays concert series Mighty Imperial Russia and Music from Stage and Screen, and in Mozart's *Requiem*.

Petah has studied at the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School and holds a Bachelor of Music from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. Petah is a recipient of the Margareta Elkins award (Dame Joan Sutherland Vocal Competition).

As a Churchill Fellow, she travelled to Europe in 2022 to pursue excellence in opera performance and develop relationships with cultures in which opera thrives, working primarily with coaches and teachers at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as well as travelling through Europe to work with experts in other countries. Petah's Churchill Fellowship also focuses on bringing opera and classical music knowledge to Australians in regional and remote areas.

Q&A

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born in Tarsal, a small town in Far North Queensland.

Have you studied, performed, or lived overseas?

I have performed in Australia, Italy, Denmark, and China. I lived in Florence, Italy, and recently returned from a Churchill Fellowship, where I studied in Italy, the USA, London, and Denmark.

Do you speak any other languages?

Yes, I speak Italian, and sometimes Sicilian words find their way into my language.

What inspired you to become an opera singer?

At 16, I attended a regional concert in Cairns and was captivated by the emotional impact of opera singers without microphones. I wanted to communicate using language, and opera gave me that opportunity.

How old were you when you started singing?

I started singing before I could speak. However, I began training in classical singing and opera at the age of 20. Access to music education was challenging in regional Australia, so I had to move away from my family to study.

What does performing with Opera Australia mean to you?

Performing at the Sydney Opera House with Opera Australia is a dream come true. I feel like I am representing regional Australia and showing that anyone can pursue a career in classical music. Including all Australians in the creation of art and music enriches our cultural landscape.

What opportunities does opera open up for the next generation?

Opera is unique in that the singer generates vibrations that are transferred directly to the body of the listener in such a powerful way that emotions can almost be transferred from one body to another. Without amplification, it conveys emotions physically and intellectually. Opera connects and inspires with stories that, although some are more than 300 years old, are still relevant to the next generation; stories of love and loss, of victory and challenge, and of finding your inner strength.

What language do you most like to perform in?

I love performing in Italian because it carries the emotions I heard growing up. The words almost feel like their meanings. I also enjoy performing in French, German, Russian, and Czech.

Tell us about the first time you performed on stage at the Sydney Opera House.

In January 2021, I performed in Opera Australia's Great Opera Hits Concert series. Walking backstage and seeing my name on the dressing room door was a wonderful moment. It felt incredible to be on the other side of the curtain, recalling my first concert experience as a young girl.

If you could perform on any stage in the world, where would it be?

I would love to perform at La Scala in Milano. Although my grandparents have passed away, I know they would be proud and supportive in spirit.

How do you feel about HSBC working with Opera Australia to make opera more accessible to everyone?

Opera faces challenges, and companies need to be creative, resilient, and proactive in finding audiences. Investing in education and engaging with communities is vital. HSBC's efforts to make opera more accessible to everyone align with this vision, and I am thrilled to be a part of this concert.

What excites you about HSBC a world of opera?

This event brings together the best aspects of opera in an exciting afternoon of entertainment. I hope to see a wide range of ages in the audience, creating a vibrant atmosphere.



Rebecca Gulinello

Rebecca Gulinello is an Italian-Australian Soprano from Melbourne. She was a recipient of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust and went on to study in Italy in 2014 on scholarship with the Acclaim Awards and Rotary Clubs of Melbourne. In 2015 she was both a Finalist in the Herald Sun Aria Awards and IFAC Australian Singing competition.

Rebecca completed her Graduate Artist Diploma and Masters at the prestigious Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and her last role to perform was *Amelia, Un Ballo* in *Maschera*, before COVID cancellations. At AVA she sung leading roles such as Tamara in *The Demon*, and Anna, *Le Villi*.

In Philadelphia she won her first international competition at the Academy of Vocal Arts annual Giargiari Bel Canto Competition, singing at the Kimmel Centre. She was also a finalist of the Mario Lanza Competition, The Loren. L. Zachary Competition, and a Metropolitan Opera National Council District winner.

In 2022, Rebecca covered the roles of Mimì in *La Bohème* and Liù in *Turandot* at the Sydney Opera House and made her Opera Australia Debut as Micaëla, in *Carmen* on Cockatoo Island. In 2023 she made her Sydney Opera House debut in the role of Mimì, with four performances on the Dame Joan Sutherland Stage.

Q&A

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Melbourne, Victoria.

What inspired you to become an opera singer?

Opera singing sort of just fell into my lap. I grew up playing the piano, and then when I was 17 and began taking singing lessons. My singing teacher in high school at the time heard a potential in my voice to sing classically, so I followed that path from that moment on and grew to appreciate classical music more and more. The first opera I was a part of was *Carmen*, where I was in the chorus, and I just completely fell in love with the music and the dynamics on stage through telling a story. I was influenced and inspired by artists such as Callas because she was such a raw and visceral singer through her storytelling and deeply troubled life.

How old were you when you started singing?

I was singing from a very early age, but piano took the main stage for me until I was 17 when I finally decided to take singing seriously and to start displaying my voice publicly.

What does performing with Opera Australia mean to you?

It's a dream for any Australian singer or opera singer to sing in their homeland, on that nationally and internationally recognised stage and house! Not everyone gets that privilege and opportunity, which I am aware of, and no matter where I am in the world, I will always be so proud of it. We really do have a world-class opera company here in Australia, and I strongly believe our chorus is one of the most, if not the best, Opera chorus in the world.

Opera is a universal art form, performed all over the world, what opportunities does opera open up for the next generation?

Opera is such a unique and powerful form of storytelling – there is truly nothing like it. Its stories, many from hundreds and hundreds of years ago, composed by geniuses and set to stunning prose by poets, are then handed down to the interpretations of modern man to convey stories and emotions we all experience collectively as a human race. It is simply universal, the stories of love and of defeat and hardship and war, and the opportunity to continue to keep opera alive doesn't seem like a great feat as long as we keep enabling opportunities such as this between HSBC and Opera Australia to show the greater public how accessible and relatable this art form is.

Opera is performed in all different languages. What language do you most like to perform in?

I love to perform in all languages and don't really have a favourite. I'm very lucky that I am naturally very good at picking up different languages, and it's a great attribute to have when working as an opera singer! If I had to pick though, it would be Italian, because I love singing in my native language.

Tell us about the first time you performed on stage at the Sydney Opera House?

The first time I performed onstage at the Sydney Opera House was earlier this year, on the 1st of March 2023, in the role of Mimi in *La Bohème*. It was, all in all, the proudest moment and achievement in my career thus far. The moment I stepped into the first scene with my Rodolfo (sung by Atalla Ayan) was just magical, and I felt like I'd stepped into another space and time, my voice was like a vessel carrying me there.

If you could perform on any stage in the world, where would it be?

It would have to either be La Scala, in Italy or at the Bolshoi or Mariinsky – I'd love to sing in Russia one day.

How do you feel about HSBC working Opera Australia to make opera a more accessible to everyone?

It is such an incredible opportunity that HSBC and Opera Australia are pioneering an event that opens doors for future audiences and younger audiences to be introduced to opera and classical music in such an accessible way. Concerts and sponsorships like this actually make this job possible and relevant for us as artists, and it makes the public feel relevant too, when they understand fully that they are consuming, supporting, and engaging in an art form that is so vital to our existence as humans.

What excites you about this event?

To be able to sing with the orchestra again on the Dame Joan Sutherland stage and to be able to provide a wider audience a glimpse into the operatic world. I hope that it will inspire them to build a desire for classical music and for Opera.



Imogen-Faith Malfitano

Multi award-winning soprano Imogen-Faith Malfitano completed her Bachelor of Music (performance) and Masters in Music Studies (Opera Performance) at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. She was awarded multiple scholarships, including the prestigious ESTIVO program in Italy and an Internship with Opera Australia as well as Young Artist with Pacific Opera.

Her opera roles include: Adina, *L'elisir d'amore*, the title role in Floyd's *Susannah*; Titania in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*; Rosina in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*; Agatha the Cat, Queen of Hearts, Mary Contrary and The Spider in *By the Light of the Moon* for Opera Australia's Schools Tour, amongst others.

Q&A

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born and grew up in the south coast, Illawarra.

Have you studied, performed, or lived overseas?

I completed my undergraduate degree and Masters in Opera Performance at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. I have performed in Verona, Mantova, and Caltagirone as part of the Mediterranean Opera Studio in Sicily. Recently, I performed in Dortmund, Germany for the Hans Gabor Belvedere competition.

Do you speak any other languages?

No, but I am studying Italian and have a great love for the language and culture.

What inspired you to become an opera singer?

I come from a family of opera lovers, which sparked my deep passion for this cultural art form.

How old were you when you started singing?

I started my musical journey at the age of six with private singing lessons and classical training. I continued training through vocal exams, choir, vocal ensemble, and solo performances in eisteddfods.

What does performing with Opera Australia mean to you?

Performing with Opera Australia is an honour and privilege. Being a Young Artist has allowed me to work with prestigious musicians and industry specialists. Opera Australia has nurtured many world class performers and I am grateful to be a part of a company that is so supportive and inspiring.

What opportunities does opera open up for the next generation?

Through my work with Opera Australia's NSW schools touring company, I have performed extensively in front of diverse audiences, including disabled children. Music is a universal language, and opera has the power to inspire and enrich the hearts and minds of the next generation.

What language do you most like to perform in?

Performing in different languages is one of the joys of opera. As someone with an Italian background, I love performing in Italian. The expressive and melodious nature of the language makes it a pleasure to sing in.

Tell us about the first time you performed on stage at the Sydney Opera House.

I performed solo in Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* to commemorate the Sydney Conservatorium's centenary. It was a joyous experience, and to present it at the Sydney Opera House was a dream come true.



Sophie Salvesani

Sophie Salvesani is a young, upcoming Australian soprano who recently made her operatic and role debut as Violetta in *La Traviata* at the Sydney Opera House, performing four shows, including closing night, throughout July of 2022.

This follows both her professional and principal debut in 2019 as Maria in Opera Australia, GWB Entertainment and BB Group's touring production of *West Side Story*, Sophie received praise from critics for her ability to "easily navigate the demands of the score" while ensuring "Maria's journey from...dreamy lover to broken young woman is authentic as it is impactful" (Stage Whispers, Alex Armstrong 2019). This production saw her tour not only Australia, but New Zealand and Germany too, in which she debuted in some of Europe's most prestigious opera houses, Semperoper (Dresden) and Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Berlin).

Since then, she played the role of Rosina in Opera Australia's 2020 NSW School's Tour of *The Barber of Seville* and was also selected as the recipient of the 2020 Australian Opera Awards Committee Dame Joan Sutherland Award. Following this, Sophie became a Principal Young Artist with Opera Australia, covering lead roles in *The Merry Widow* and *La Juive*, as well as performing in their Great Opera Hits concert series and amongst the 'Field of Light' in Uluru.

With the announcement of Opera Australia's 2023 season, Sophie is thrilled to be making her role debut as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, as well as covering the roles of Gilda in *Rigoletto* and Olympia in *The Tales of Hoffmann*.

Q&A

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born in Ipswich, Queensland and grew up in Brisbane, Queensland.

What inspired you to become an opera singer?

Initially, I was not specifically inspired to become an opera singer. It was my singing teacher in Year 12 who believed that I had the potential to sing opera repertoire. I gave it a try and fell in love with the music. Later, I discovered that my grandfather (my father's father) had a great love for opera and had a beautiful voice. Knowing this family connection has been an inspiration for me to persevere in this challenging industry.

How old were you when you started singing?

I started taking singing lessons focusing on pop/modern singing when I was around 11 or 12 years old. Prior to that, I had sung in my primary school choir.

What does performing with Opera Australia mean to you?

Performing with Opera Australia is like a dream I never realised I had. I never thought I would be good enough to sing for Australia's national opera company until I started performing with them. It is an honour to share the stage with some of the best local and international talent.

What language do you most like to perform in?

It is a difficult choice, but my favourite language to perform in would have to be Italian. Singing in Italian brings me closer to my family roots and heritage.

Tell us about the first time you performed on stage at the Sydney Opera House.

The first time I performed on the Joan Sutherland Stage at the Sydney Opera House was in 2019 during the touring production of *West Side Story*, produced by Opera Australia, GWB Entertainment, and BB Group. It was both my professional and principal debut, portraying the role of Maria. It was an absolute thrill to be back in front of Australian audiences and in such an iconic venue. It never gets old, every day that I get to work at the Sydney Opera House is just as exciting as that very first day.

If you could perform on any stage in the world, where would it be?

If given the opportunity, I would love to perform at the Teatro alla Scala, one of the most renowned opera houses in the world. It holds a special place in the hearts of opera singers and is a symbol of artistic excellence.

How do you feel about HSBC working with Opera Australia to make opera more accessible to the everyone?

I feel that HSBC working with Opera Australia is a fantastic way of making opera more accessible to the everyone. It creates a very welcoming and easy-going environment which helps to break down some of those stigmas that can discourage people from attending. These sorts of partners are extremely important for the survival of this beautiful art form. I have never met someone who has attended the opera just once and never returned, they are usually pleasantly surprised by what they experience and always come back.

What excites you about this event?

Any opportunity to share my love of Opera with new audiences always excites me. When I was studying for my Bachelor of Education at university, I was invited to a school camp for a school I had taught at during my practical studies. My mentor and I decided to play a trick on the students during the talent quest, in which I surprised them by singing opera. To this day some of those students think I was lip syncing to the backing track. For the majority of those students, it was the first time they had heard opera, and I truly hope it was not the last. The look of excitement and amazement on their faces will forever be etched in my memories and serves as a reminder to keep on singing.



Danita Weatherstone

Danita Weatherstone is a rising lyric soprano who recently performed the roles of Mimi in *La Bohème* at the Sydney Opera House and Micaëla in *Carmen* on Cockatoo Island. She has won both the Deutsche Opera Award and the Mozarteum Award in which she completed post graduate studies in Salzburg and at the Vienna State Opera. For Opera Australia, Danita has also performed the roles of the Young Woman (*Ghost Sonata*), Annina (*La Traviata*), Barbarina (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) and the title role of *Madame Butterfly* (National Tour).

Q&A

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born and raised on the Central Coast, about 2 hours north of Sydney. It is a beautiful lifestyle here, and it's where I have remained and live with my hubby, two kids and our kelpie.

What inspired you to become an opera singer?

I was always yearning to be on the stage. Even as a small child, I would whip a concert up for whoever I could hold captive (or in failing that, there is evidence of performances for teddy bears).

My progression to singing started with ballet at three and drama at eight. Then in great part due to Celine Dion, I wanted to sing at the drama talent quest, being obsessed with the Titanic theme song. I will never let my mother forget her saying to me, "Don't be ridiculous; you can't sing! Why would you want to do that."

How old were you when you started singing?

From the talent quest, having totally rocked that out, my mother (now a believer that I could in fact sing) let me have singing lessons, and it was at the early age of 10 that I was introduced to opera. I already loved music theatre, so it really wasn't that much of a stretch. I probably loved that it involved really extreme emotions, voices that could give you a hug right at the back of the theatre, and it was unamplified! Sensational! How do they do this? So, therein lay a challenge I wanted to tackle.

What does performing with Opera Australia mean to you?

I saw my first Opera Australia production for my 11th birthday and wanted to be a part of that company from then. We loved Brian Castles-Onion and saw many performances with him as Maestro in the Hunter Valley vineyards, so he was a celebrity to us. I also idolised Emma Matthews (as did most young aspiring sopranos) and got to meet her and experience the company firsthand when I was on high school work experience. So, it has been 20 years of dreaming and working to be with this company, and I am so grateful that Lyndon Terracini gave me my first professional opportunity to perform in Opera Australia's school company.

Opera is a universal art form, performed all over the world, what opportunities does opera open up for the next generation?

As a supporter of opera, you receive something beautiful to carry with you throughout your lifetime and an emotional awareness of life around you that others have not been able to awaken. If you do any travelling overseas, you will also be "in the club" of young and old who attend operas on a regular basis. It is very much a part of the way of life and culture in Europe, especially.

Opera is performed in all different languages. What language do you most like to perform in?

For me, it is more about the music, the role, and the storyline than what language I am singing in. Of course, I must work harder when I'm not singing in my native tongue to have the same level of understanding as I would in English. For me, opera is more about conveying the meaning of the text. When I watch a great performer, I don't worry about reading the subtitles, I just absorb the artist's voice and expression.

Tell us about the first time you performed on stage at the Sydney Opera House?

My very first time performing at the Sydney Opera House was in school where I had a solo in the Concert Hall. This was very different to stepping out professionally in the Opera Theatre to sing out into the vast darkness and being blinded by the super trooper lights! Can you imagine your whole life of working has led up to that moment, putting one foot in front of the other and facing 1,500 strangers waiting in the darkness, just for you to make a sound. And would that sound be heard? Would your voice carry all that way? Terrifying! But also exhilarating! If you think opera is for nice, quiet, tame people, you are so wrong, we are all really adrenaline junkies! The first time I stepped out in the leading lady role was even more terrifying. I could literally feel my heart beating a million times per minute in my chest. But that is the beauty of the stage. Once you step out onto it, you leave yourself behind and you become Mimi or whatever character you are playing, channelling those nerves into energy.

If you could perform on any stage in the world, where would it be?

Being blessed to have had many performances on the Sydney Opera House stage (which one could argue is the most iconic and recognisable Opera House in the world), I would love to sing at the Vienna, London, Paris, and Berlin Opera Houses, just for starters.

How do you feel about HSBC working Opera Australia to make opera a more accessible to the everyone?

I feel great about this collaboration that will enable and encourage everyone and anyone to come and experience the world of opera! It is for everyone, as it was originally written and performed for all to attend.

What excites you about this event?.

It is an opportunity to perform with an orchestra on a fabulous stage for some newcomers to opera. And hopefully, you will leave wanting to come back and visit us again sometime.



Tomas Dalton

Tomas Dalton's casting reminded this reviewer of one of his earliest experiences of *La Traviata* by the Sutherland-Williamson Opera in 1965 when the already internationally acclaimed ex-pat Aussie Joan Sutherland brought an unknown Italian tenor to play Alfredo. His name – Luciano Pavarotti. Who knows what Tomas Dalton's future holds?" (Alan Slade, J-Wire 2022)

Tenor Tomas Dalton completed a Bachelor of Music in voice performance at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, and also holds an AMusA in piano. He subsequently undertook further study in Italy as the recipient of the Acclaim Awards Italian Opera Fellowship and the Johnson Bequest. Tomas also won the AOAC Opera Award in 2020.

For Opera Australia Tomas has sung the roles of: Alfredo Germont in Verdi's *La Traviata*, Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (Schools tour), an Apprentice in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, the Fourth Jew in Strauss's *Salome*, Bryan Robertson in the world premier of Elena Kats-Chernin's *Whiteley*, the Second Noble in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and the Officer in Halévy's *La Juive*, and covered the roles of Gastone in Verdi's *La Traviata*, Roderigo in Verdi's *Otello*, and Uldino in Verdi's *Attila*. In 2023 he sings Nathanaël in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, appears in Opera Up Late as part of Sydney World Pride, and covers Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème*, Pinkerton in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* on Sydney Harbour, Heinrich Der Schreiber in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, and the messenger in Verdi's *Aida*.

Other repertoire includes Tony Candolino in the Australian tour of Terrence McNally's *Master Class*, Ernest in the world premier of *Women In War* in Greece, Pinkerton in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* for The Stonnington Classics, and for Victorian Opera: The Witch in Humperdinck's *Hansel & Gretel*, The Villager in Respighi's *The Sleeping Beauty*, The Notary in Bellini's *La Sonnambula*.

Tomas's concert repertoire includes Mozart's Requiem, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, Handel's *Solomon*, Bach's *Magnificat*, Verdi's *Requiem*, and Hayden's *Paukenmesse*, and he has toured Australia, Germany, Denmark, and France as a soloist with the Australian Chamber Choir.

Q&A

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Melbourne.

Have you studied, performed, or lived overseas?

I've been fortunate enough to have several intensive periods of study in Italy. I've also toured Europe with a choir when I was at university and performed a new opera in several amphitheatres in Greece in 2015.

What inspired you to become an opera singer?

My grandfather was a great fan of Joan Sutherland, and his recordings of her were my introduction to opera.

How old were you when you started singing?

I think I was always singing around the house, and I sang in choirs from about 8, but I started having lessons when I was 17.

What does performing with Opera Australia mean to you?

It is an incredible privilege to sing regularly at the Sydney Opera House and other great theatres in Australia with a wonderful community of colleagues.

Opera is a universal art form, performed all over the world. What opportunities does opera open up for the next generation?

There really isn't anything quite like opera. It combines music, drama, the craft, and artistry of all the various design elements, and has the visceral, heart-rending immediacy of the unamplified human voice soaring over a full orchestra.

Opera is performed in all different languages. What language do you most like to perform in?

I would say I'm the most comfortable performing in Italian, but really whatever language the composer wrote in is my favourite. If you have a composer who really knows what they're doing, then the interplay between text and music is so carefully considered you wouldn't want it any other way.

Tell us about the first time you performed on stage at the Sydney Opera House.

The first time I performed at the Sydney Opera House was New Year's Eve 2018/19 in *La Bohème*. I had only just moved to Sydney, and we were able to watch the fireworks from the Opera House balcony at the interval and after the performance. It was absolutely amazing.

If you could perform on any stage in the world, where would it be?

I feel so fortunate that I've already ticked one of the great bucket list theatres of the world off in the Sydney Opera House, but any of the great "temples of opera": La Scala, Vienna, Paris, Covent Garden, or the Met would be incredible.

How do you feel about HSBC working Opera Australia to make opera a more accessible to everyone?

I'm passionate about making opera more accessible and allowing people to realise how much they can actually enjoy it. I've been able to introduce many friends to opera, and every single one of them has been blown away by the experience. This event is such a fantastic initiative.

What excites you about this event?

Singing some of the most beautiful music in the repertoire with great friends and colleagues for a fabulous audience.



Alexander Sefton

Alexander is a WAAPA graduate and current member of Opera Australia's Young Artist Program. For two years he was a member of the Opera Australia Schools Program, performing around New South Wales in productions of *The Magic Flute* and *The Barber of Seville*. He performed the roles of Marcello (*La Bohème*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Germont (*La Traviata*) and Olin Blich (*Susannah*) with Opera New England. With Opera Hunter Alexander played the title roles in their productions of *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro* for which he won a CONDA. With Central Coast Opera Alexander performed the roles of Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Marcello (*La Bohème*). He has also performed with the Opera Australia Chorus in their productions of *Carmen*, *Parsifal* and *The Nose*.

In 2021 Alexander made his Opera Australia main stage debut in the role of Baron Douphol in *La Traviata* on Sydney Harbour.

Q&A

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born in Melbourne but grew up mostly in Newcastle, NSW.

Have you studied, performed, or lived overseas?

I've been to Germany a couple of times to participate in summer schools, it was a great way to meet new people and be exposed to new ideas!

What inspired you to become an opera singer?

I always loved singing and acting as a kid but barely knew opera existed until a teacher introduced me to the art form, and I realised it was an amazing amalgamation of all the things I loved about both.

How old were you when you started singing?

I sang in choirs from a very early age but started singing lessons at 16.

What does performing with Opera Australia mean to you?

It's the pinnacle of opera in Australia and an international company in its own right. It means working with incredibly talented people in amazing costumes, on amazing sets, in an amazing venue. It means a lot.

Opera is performed in all different languages. What language do you most like to perform in?

There's something about German that resonates with me. I think it's all that wonderfully poetic angst and how, as in English, they really love big, expressive consonants.

Tell us about the first time you performed on stage at Sydney Opera House?

It was with the Opera Australia Chorus, and it was surreal and unbelievably exciting. That said, I still get excited every time I walk up to that building, knowing I'm heading for the stage, goosebumps!

If you could perform on any stage in the world, where would it be?

The Sydney Opera House is it! It's such an incredibly iconic building, as an Australian artist, you can't help but aspire to perform on that stage.

How do you feel about HSBC working Opera Australia to make opera a more accessible to the general public?

Opera is so powerfully moving and communicates what it means to be human in a way no other art form can. It's also seen as exclusive and mysterious by the general public, so any opportunity to dispel these myths and let a different audience see what it's all about is exactly what opera needs.

What excites you about this event?

Are you kidding? Singing with a wonderful orchestra on the Opera House stage for an audience who may never have had a true opera experience like this is going to be electric!