

MEDIA RELEASE
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The giant, glittering *La Traviata* chandelier floats across Sydney Harbour and onto the stage!



HANDA OPERA ON SYDNEY HARBOUR

LA TRAVIATA

From 24 March, 2012

A giant 9m x 9m glittering chandelier made of Swarovski Elements crystals, floats across Sydney Harbour today by barge and onto the purpose-built 25-metre stage at the Royal Botanic Gardens, for **HANDA Opera on Sydney Harbour – *La Traviata***, which opens next Saturday 24 March for an exclusive three-week season.

Rehearsals move to the site this weekend, and will be underway on the purpose-built 25-metre stage and the 9 metre chandelier ahead of Opening Night. Starring in this production are sopranos **Emma Matthews** and **Rachelle Durkin** who will alternate in the role of Violetta, international tenors **Gianluca Terranova** and **Ji-Min Park** who alternate in the role of Alfredo as well as opera favourites, **Jonathan Summers** and **Warwick Fyfe**.

Internationally-acclaimed director **Francesca Zambello** has been appointed Stage Director of this production. Her career has spanned theatre, music theatre, film and opera and has ranged from *Aladdin* at Disneyland and *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway, to *War and Peace* for Paris Opera and *Carmen* for Opera Australia. She is a multi-award winner with three Olivier Awards, two Evening Standard Awards, two French Grand Prix des Critiques, and a Helpmann.

Audiences will watch **HANDA Opera on Sydney Harbour – *La Traviata*** from a luxurious 3,000 seat grandstand erected in the Royal Botanic Gardens, on the water's edge. The seating grandstand will have large and expansive hospitality areas at either end. The northern end being three-tiered with catering outlets on each level; the southern end two tiered with the top deck nestling beneath a canopy of trees.

Australia's most accomplished and daring Set Designer **Brian Thomson** is busy supervising constructing of the set. His previous projects include *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert*, Opera Australia's 2011 hit *La Boheme*, the Sydney Olympic and Melbourne Commonwealth Games ceremonies and New Year's Eve events. Under his watchful eye, the pylons on which the set rests, have been sunk into the harbour bed and the massive stage structure has been built atop this, by ESS Australia.

Thomson's minimal but striking stage design will be dominated by the giant chandelier measuring 9-metres x 9-metres, that will sparkle with 10,000 Swarovski Elements crystals symbolizing the world of Verdi's much-loved opera with its glittering Parisian salons. This giant crystal-adorned ***La Traviata*** Chandelier was made in Melbourne with finishing touches done in a warehouse on the water's edge in Sydney, and floated by barge under the Sydney Harbour Bridge, past the Sydney Opera House, and onto the site at the Royal Botanic Gardens!

It weighs 3.5tonnes and measures 9metres in height and 9metres in width. The **La Traviata** Chandelier made with Swarovski Elements took 720 man hours to manufacture and 240 man hours to assemble. Along with the beautiful 10,000 Swarovski Elements crystals the **La Traviata** Chandelier contains 1,025 crystal shapes, 23,104 facets, 24 moving lights and 3,000 LED lights.

The chandelier will be suspended from a 26-metre crane, blackened out so that it is invisible against the night sky. At the end of *La Traviata's* Act I, Violetta, after singing the famous aria *Sempre Libera*, will ascend with the chandelier in a capsule as fireworks explode all around.

Tess Schofield has designed the 1950's inspired costumes, including Mardi-Gras themed outfits for the masked ball in Act II, which will see guests arriving by motorboat. The set design is complemented by a sophisticated **lighting design** by **John Rayment** which will create the atmosphere of changing scenes through colour, dazzling light displays and fireworks. The **choreographer** for this unique production, will be esteemed Melbourne choreographer **Stephen Baynes**.

The site has been designed by **Ross Wallace** to include five distinct dining experiences, with catering at each level delivered by fresh CATERING. Options range from individual hampers (including a glass of sparkling wine) through to fine dining in The Platinum Lounge.

The Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra will be **conducted** by Opera Australia favourite, **Brian Castles-Onion** from a water-tight sound studio built beneath the stage.

Lyndon Terracini, Artistic Director of Opera Australia said in a recent interview *"Everyone loves to look at the outside of the Sydney Opera House, so why not have that as the backdrop of a wonderful production? It is one of the most beautiful views in the world."*

Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour – La Traviata is Opera Australia's most ambitious project to date. The NSW Government through Destination NSW is a foundation partner in this spectacular new global event for Sydney.

**Book at ticketmaster.com.au or call 1300 723 038
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