



MEDIA RELEASE, Monday 16 April, 2012

Inaugural season of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour deemed a runaway success



Opera Australia's grand experiment to take opera beyond the theatre and weave it into the very fabric of the harbour city, has been declared a great success. Produced on a tailor-made stage built out over the water, **Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour: La Traviata** exceeded its sales target of \$6million, with over 50% of audiences new to opera, over its three-week season which closed last night, Sunday 15 April, 2012.

Around 40,000 people attended one of the eighteen performances, with audiences attending from across Sydney, from interstate Australia and from overseas. The project involved over 750 people, including 140 artists, 570 staff and crew (production, administration, construction, catering, cleaners, ushers and security) and 60 volunteers. Opera Australia worked in collaboration with Destination NSW and Tourism Australia to attract audiences and media from the widest possible global markets, and the event was reported on across the globe, with spectacular visions of the giant chandelier and fireworks creating unforgettable imagery.

NSW Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Arts, George Souris, has congratulated Opera Australia on what has been an absolute triumph. He said "Opera Australia's success in staging this ambitious and audacious production on the water with the city skyline, Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge as backdrop to a firework-laden opera has created memories that will last a lifetime. Opera Australia has a successful and entrepreneurial duo in Chief Executive Adrian Collette and Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini and their success is to be congratulated.

"I wish to thank all the artists, especially Emma Matthews, Rachele Durkin, Gianluca Terranova, Ji-Min Park, Jonathon Summers and Warwick Fyfe for their sensational performances. They were led admirably by New York Director Francesca Zambello and conductor Brian Castles-Onion. It is vital that Sydney continue to see world-class talents such as this showcased on a world stage, here in this city."

Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini, said "I knew we could do it! From the very beginning I believed in the talent and skill at Opera Australia and I am very proud of what we have achieved together. I pushed everyone to do a bit more than they are used to, and everyone rose to the occasion. I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank everyone for all their efforts, long hours and courage. This is a shared success"

Executive Producer Louisa Robertson said, "it's been a very new and exciting undertaking for an opera company to work with so many new stakeholders. Opera Australia has worked with companies including those in construction, engineering, town planning, archaeology, catering, security, water taxis and university departments. We're looking forward to starting planning for next year!"

Opera Australia's social media activity reflects a fast-moving awareness of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, and the popularity of images, video and commentary throughout the viral community. During the month of March, the Facebook page increased in reach from 2,000 to 275,000, an increase of 13,650%. Reach and virality of the page increased dramatically following the floating of the chandelier across the harbour and onto the stage. In one day, the weekly reach increased from 2,000 to 59,000, the next day to 150,000, and from there **increasing at a rate of about 25,000 - 30,000 people per day** until opening night.

Chief Executive Adrian Collette said "We have had wonderful reports from patrons and consider the event to have been a great success. Once we have had time to analyse our sales and media results, we look forward to sharing the details of this success with the public on a wider scale. We thank the people of Sydney and beyond for sharing in this magical experiment with us!"

Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour will be staged again in 2013, featuring Bizet's great opera *Carmen*. It will be directed by Gale Edwards, whose highly successful production of 'La boheme' for Opera Australia last year, was one of the Company's most successful seasons of the past few years. Gale Edwards will work with designer Brian Thomson who returns after this year's event, to again design an unforgettable and spectacular stage for the next event.

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HANDA OPERA ON SYDNEY HARBOUR - *La Traviata*
PRESENTED BY OPERA AUSTRALIA

NSW government through Destination NSW is the foundation partner in this spectacular new global event for Sydney

