



MEDIA RELEASE

13 November 2023

**MAFIA MANIA, FRENCH FARCE, AND
PERIOD-PERFECT AUSTEN SET
TO ENCHANT AUDIENCES IN
NEW ZEALAND OPERA'S 2024 LINEUP**

A wealth of top-tier local and international talent are poised to take centre stage in works by Verdi, Rossini, and Dove, heralding a captivating new season of opera in Aotearoa

Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington, Ōtautahi, Christchurch – Following a triumphant 2023 that hit the headlines and opened doors to a fresh opera-loving audience, NZ Opera has unveiled an eclectic trio of productions for 2024 that embodies opera mō te katoa - opera for all. These diverse operatic gems traverse nearly two centuries of musical history, from classic bel canto to contemporary brilliance.

Under the leadership of incoming Tumu Whakarae General Director, **Brad Cohen**, NZ Opera is poised to kick off the 2024 season with the New Zealand premiere of ***Mansfield Park***, based on the beloved Jane Austen novel and set to music by 21st Century English composer Jonathan Dove. May and June will usher in a brand-new touring production of Rossini's uproarious comedy, ***Le comte Ory***, directed by leading Kiwi director Simon Phillips. The season's final offering is a bold and dramatic, mafia-inflected production of Verdi's ***Rigoletto***, featuring New Zealand superstar tenor, **Amitai Pati** (*Ihitai'Avei'a – Star Navigator, Die Zauberflöte, Sol3 Mio*), and renowned Australian baritone **James Clayton** (*Barber of Seville, Marriage of Figaro, Macbeth*).

Speaking about the season, Brad Cohen says, "Our program highlights the reality that opera isn't for just one type of audience. We're offering refreshed repertoire choices for New Zealand audiences to enjoy next year. The operas in our 2024 lineup are sung in three different languages and span genres; one is modern, one is a classic, and some unfold locally while others transport us abroad. All three productions offer multiple entry points for audiences to connect, engage with, and be captivated by the magic of opera.

"Our 2024 season heralds a bright future for NZ Opera as we continue to create inclusive opera that enriches our nation's cultural tapestry, provides growth and professional opportunities for our world-class singers, creatives, and technicians, and celebrates the dynamic art form we love with a distinctly Aotearoa New Zealand flair."

The season's opening act, ***Mansfield Park***, is a popular contemporary chamber opera (2011) based on Jane Austen's 1814 Regency-era novel. It brings Austen's world to vibrating life with charm and authenticity. The production, to be presented in historic venues in **Wellington** and **Auckland**, has garnered critical acclaim worldwide and promises to be a delight for Austen aficionados and music lovers alike.

At the helm is director **Rebecca Meltzer** of Waterperry Opera Festival (UK), who guides a cast of ten outstanding performers, led by Australian mezzo-soprano **Ashlyn Tymms** (*Carmen, Otello, Così fan tutte*) as the reserved heroine Fanny Price and seasoned New Zealand baritone **Robert Tucker** (*The Unruly Tourists, Eight Songs for a Mad King, Don Giovanni*) in the role of Sir Thomas Bertram. New Zealand favourites **Joanna Foote**, **Kristin Darragh** and **Joel Amosa** also star in this much loved study of manners, marriage and money.

Midway through the year, audiences in **Auckland**, **Wellington** and **Christchurch** can revel in a brand new production of the frothy, rollicking bel canto masterpiece, ***Le comte Ory***. Showcasing some of Rossini's most

exhilarating music with an all-star cast, including award-winning lyric tenor **Manase Latu** (*Hamlet, Don Giovanni, Idomeno*) in the titular role, sparkling soprano **Emma Pearson** (*Così fan tutte, Semele, Lucia di Lammermoor*) as Countess Adèle, and baritone **Moses Mackay** (*Lucia di Lammermoor, Cavalleria Rusticana, Soli Mio*) as the count's louché friend Raimbaud. **Auckland Philharmonia, Orchestra Wellington, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra** and the **New Zealand Opera Chorus** will perform in each centre, under the baton of esteemed conductor **Brad Cohen**.

Internationally acclaimed Kiwi director **Simon Phillips** (*North by Northwest, Priscilla Queen of the Desert, The Elixir of Love*) brings a local twist to this lively and risqué French comedy, offering a fresh take on its sublime silliness.

The season's final opera is Verdi's magnificent and enduring masterpiece **Rigoletto**, set to captivate audiences at Auckland's Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre in September. This dramatic tale of love, betrayal and revenge has rightfully held a place in the operatic canon since its 1851 premiere. An acclaimed Opera Australia production, originally created by director [Elijah Moshinsky](#) (1946-2021), *Rigoletto* will be conducted by renowned maestro **James Judd** leading the **Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra** and the **New Zealand Opera Chorus**.

Set in 1950s Italy, with glamorous La Dolce Vita-inspired sets and costumes, this is large-scale romantic opera at its grandest. "Moshinsky's vision weaves a tapestry of musical brilliance and visual splendour, and is both timeless and engaging" - *TheatreTravels, Sydney 2023*

With a stellar cast led by baritone **James Clayton** - one of Australia's most seasoned performers - and Kiwi-Samoan tenor **Amitai Pati** as the Duke, delivering opera's catchiest hit of all time "La donna è mobile", *Rigoletto* is an unmissable event in Aotearoa's 2024 cultural calendar.

In addition to the three productions unveiled, NZ Opera continues its strong participation, outreach and development programmes. These include a national **Opera in Schools** tour, which reaches over 10,000 tamariki annually. In 2024, the company will be taking Donizetti's sparkling **The Elixir of Love** on tour to schools across Aotearoa between February and April. For the first time, NZ Opera will also be partnering with the Auckland Philharmonia in their Summer School, leading to young musicians and singers performing [Red!](#), a children's opera by Lucy Mulgan, at the Auckland Town Hall in January.

NZ Opera's [Tū Tamariki](#) is a kaupapa which focuses on Māori-driven work. Following a Tāmaki Makaurau pilot season in November this year, a new bilingual opera for rangatahi - **Te Hui Paroro** by writer and director **Rutene Spooner** (Ngāti Porou, Ngāruahine) - will tour regionally in 2024.

The new year sees the continuation of free [Opera in the Park](#) events in association with Auckland Council Music in Parks series. [The Lullaby Project](#) in association with Carnegie Hall also continues, where multi-disciplinary practitioners **Moana Ete** (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Wheke, Rāpaki and Savai'i Samoa), **Awhimai Fraser** (Waikato, Ngāti Pūkenga, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri) and Kaiāwhina **Taylor Rogers** (Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Kurī, Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri and Ngāi Takato) work with Teen Parent Centres to compose lullabies and waiata for māmā and pēpē.

A one-night-only concert performance of Wagner's epic [Tristan und Isolde](#) in partnership with the Auckland Philharmonia, directed by **Frances Moore** (Rangitāne o Wairau) will be presented at the **Auckland Town Hall** in August, starring internationally celebrated Wagnerian singers tenor **Simon O'Neill** (*Die Walküre, Ring Cycle, Parsifal*), soprano **Manuela Uhl** (*Die tote Stadt, Ring Cycle, Die Frau ohne Schatten*), and **The New Zealand Opera Chorus**.

Building on the success of commissions in recent years including [The Unruly Tourists](#), [Ihitai'Avei'a – Star Navigator](#), and [The Strangest of Angels](#), New Zealand Opera remains dedicated to developing new works and building authentic partnerships. Commissioning new opera from Aotearoa composers and librettists is a key component of the company's strategy.

Brad Cohen notes, "The future of opera in Aotearoa relies on an ecosystem which we hold and sustain. In 2024, I'm delighted to launch our inaugural **New Opera Forum**, which will create a space for the conception of new opera from this land. This is a long game, and one we are firmly committed to."

With a programme designed to inspire both avid opera enthusiasts and newcomers to the art form, subscriptions to New Zealand Opera's new season are now on sale.

Tickets and subscriptions from www.nzopera.com or ph 0800 696 737, single tickets on sale from **27 November**.

Ends

MEDIA CONTACT:

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MEDIA IMAGES:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EM1cySs8TPjK04_LYvhotWRYifAqb1sj?usp=sharing

NEW ZEALAND OPERA 2024 SEASON AT A GLANCE

Jane Austen's [MANSFIELD PARK](#)

Music by [Jonathan Dove](#), libretto by Alasdair Middleton

A Waterperry Opera Festival production

A period-perfect chamber opera, sung in English

17 - 18 April 2024

Public Trust Hall, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

21 April 2024

Settlers Country Manor Waimauku, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Cast includes: Ashlyn Tymms, Robert Tucker, Kristin Darragh, Michaela Cadwgan, Joel Amosa, Andrea Creighton, Joanna Foote, Andrew Grenon

Director: Rebecca Meltzer

Props & Costume: Sophie Ham

Pianists: David Kelly and Soomin Kim

[LE COMTE ORY](#)

Music by Rossini, libretto by Scribe and Delestre-Poirson

Risque comic opera, sung in French with English surtitles

30 May - 1 June 2024

Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre

Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

With Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and The New Zealand Opera Chorus

13 - 15 June 2024

St James Theatre, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington St James,

With Orchestra Wellington and The New Zealand Opera Chorus

27 - 29 June 2024

Isaac Theatre Royal, Ōtautahi, Christchurch

With Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and The New Zealand Opera Chorus

Cast includes: Manase Latu, Emma Pearson, Moses Mackay, Wade Kernot, Andrea Creighton

Director: Simon Phillips

Conductor: Brad Cohen

Set & Costume Design: Tracy Grant Lord

RIGOLETTO

Music by Verdi, libretto by Piave

Dramatic classic opera, sung in Italian with English surtitles

An Opera Australia production

19, 21, 25 September 2024

Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre

Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

With Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and The New Zealand Opera Chorus

Cast Includes: James Clayton, Amitai Pati

Original Director: Elijah Moshinsky

Conductor: James Judd

Set & Costume Designer: Michael Yeargan

Lighting Designer: Robert Bryan

About New Zealand Opera

It's been over two decades, and New Zealand Opera hasn't wasted a second. As a national company, we've presented more than 500 stage, touring, festival and concert performances to a combined audience of more than 800,000 people.

We're reimagining opera, by singing the rich stories of Aotearoa and modelling a vibrant future for our artform.

NZ Opera is committed to operating as a sincere Te Tiriti Partner, adhering to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi whilst fostering a cultural shift within the organisation towards authentic engagement and partnership with Māori.

For more information visit www.nzopera.com

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