

Media Release
30 August 2024

Jo Davies steps down as Opera Australia Artistic Director

Opera Australia today announced that Jo Davies will step down from her position as Artistic Director of Australia's national opera company at the end of August.

The agreed decision follows differences of opinion about how Opera Australia should successfully balance artistic innovation, audience development and commercial imperatives moving forward.

In stepping down as Artistic Director Ms Davies said: "I have loved my time working with and for artists and audiences at Opera Australia, and I am thrilled with the critical success of the 2024 Sydney and Melbourne opera seasons.

"I am proud of the artistic excellence and success of the work we have been able to achieve in my tenure and enormously grateful to the amazing audiences, patrons, artists, and colleagues who have made my time as Artistic Director so rewarding. I look forward to building new creative relationships with audiences and artists here in Australia."

Ms Davies was engaged as artistic consultant to the company through 2023 working remotely part-time and commenced in the full-time role as Artistic Director last November.

Ms Davies was engaged to devise and deliver the company's artistic opera programming for Sydney and Melbourne from mid-2024 onwards following Creative Director Lindy Hume's 2024 successful Sydney Summer season.

Opera Australia Board of Directors Chair Rod Sims thanked Ms Davies for upholding OA's new strategic ambition as evidenced through her 2024 and 2025 programming.

"I thank Jo for her significant contribution to the artistic future of Opera Australia.

"The Sydney Winter productions including *Tosca*, *Watershed*, *Il Trittico* and *Hamlet* were all highly acclaimed. Jo's engagement of three young directors for the three short operas that comprise *Il Trittico* was a brilliant idea and demonstrated huge commitment to the next generation of Australian talent. Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves*, which Jo championed for Melbourne, was a powerful production that saw a strong cast of local Australian singers and many female creatives shaping the work.

"For our 2024 Melbourne season Jo also found a fantastic solution for us to present a large-scale opera in Melbourne while the State Theatre – our Melbourne home – is being revitalised. The resulting *Tosca* at Margaret Court Arena, while no mean feat to stage on a tennis court, was a milestone achievement for OA, and very well received by our younger audiences who are members of our Under 35s program."

Opera Australia's 2025 season will be announced next month. Four productions including Massenet's *Cinderella*, *La Traviata*, the Tony Award-winning *Hadestown* and *Guys & Dolls* have already been announced.

Opera Australia CEO Fiona Allan said Ms Davies' 2025 program sees some of the greatest operas ever written in productions with the best Australian creative talent, alongside a few highlights from international opera legends.

"We're very excited about Jo's 2025 season. It demonstrates Jo's unwavering commitment to ensuring the relevance of our artform for today's audiences. Jo's strength as an artistic voice and director are clear," Ms Allan said.

Since July, the company has been conducting an independent review of artistic management and planning processes which will inform decisions regarding future artistic management and roles. Announcements flowing from this review will be made in due course.

Meanwhile, recent appointments of Head of Education, Participation and Learning and the first Head of Young Artist Program continue the company's commitment to the next generation of Australian talent.

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