

Opera Australia releases 2019 Annual Report

In a sobering reminder of what pre-COVID life was like, Australia's largest performing arts company, Opera Australia (OA), today released its 2019 annual report, ending that year with an operating surplus of \$198,534 on a total revenue of \$130,653,756.

Providing a stark contrast to the current environment of instability and uncertainty amid a raft of cancellations and postponements, in 2019 OA presented an all-time record of 775 performances to more than 660,000 people, achieving box office revenue of \$73.6 million, representing 56 percent of OA's total income.

By comparison, in 2020 the Company has so far had to cancel or postpone more than 570 performances that represents lost potential ticket revenue of around \$75 million.

Strong ticket sales in 2019 plus a number of significant bequests to the organisation during the year saw OA post a consolidated profit for the year of \$6,313,226.

Opera Australia CEO Rory Jeffes said the hard work of the past two years following the closure of the Joan Sutherland Theatre for renovations in 2017 led to an outcome of which everyone at OA should be proud, yet also highlighted the enormous contrast with current circumstances.

"Certainly the 2019 results have given OA a solid foundation to take on the challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis. The Company's balanced financial outcomes over recent years have allowed us to continue supporting our employees to the extent that we have across this period with no performances possible. Whilst the JobKeeper program has been a valuable bridge, our high reliance on box office revenue in more normal times has greatly increased our exposure to the current crisis.

"However, we must take this opportunity to reflect on the success of last year's program, in both an artistic and commercial sense and pay tribute to all those involved.

"Under the exceptional leadership and vision of our Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini AM, the Company presented an extraordinary program brimming with outstanding and memorable performances. From William Kentridge's *Wozzeck* at the Opera House last summer, to the record-breaking season of *West Side Story* on the Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour stage, and the digital delights of the winter season with three new productions, *Anna Bolena*, *Madama Butterfly*, and the world premiere of *Whiteley*.

"And none of us will forget the triumph that was *Il Viaggio a Reims*. A truly unique production by Damiano Michieletto that garnered rave reviews in both Sydney and Melbourne.

"Overall it was a year of which everyone involved deserves to be incredibly proud, and one we will look back on fondly as we navigate the way forward through these incredibly trying times.

"The ongoing support from governments, our sponsors and our donors plays a vital role in the company's offering and our sincere thanks go to each and every one of them."

"I'd also like to pay special thanks the team of hard-working and dedicated individuals on and off the stage who are the backbone of the Company," said Mr Jeffes.

OA continued its winning formula of presenting musicals, with a production of *West Side Story* that toured both Australia and internationally, with a young and dynamic cast attracting rave reviews and the Melbourne season of *Evita* with Tina Arena continuing in the role of Eva Peron to great acclaim.

John Bell's production of *Madame Butterfly* continued on its national tour. Over the past two years it has visited every state and territory, performing to over 30,000 people.

The highly popular Schools Program continued in 2019, with 313 performances to more than 60,000 primary school children across New South Wales and Victoria.

The 2019 Opera Australia Annual Report and Financial Report are available here:

https://opera.org.au/aboutus/opera_australia/annual_reports

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