



# AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PRETORIA

## MEDIA RELEASE

19 March 2013

### **Groundbreaking international production of Verdi's *Otello* premieres in Cape Town**

*"The blazing Pleiades sinks beneath the waves," sings Otello to his beloved Desdemona, in the ravishing duet of Verdi's final and greatest tragedy.*

In a new collaboration of unprecedented scope, six southern hemisphere opera companies including Cape Town Opera, West Australian Opera, Victorian Opera, State Opera of South Australia, New Zealand Opera, and Opera Queensland have come together to create a new production of Verdi's *Otello*. The production premieres in Cape Town, South Africa, on 6 April 2013. Following two weeks of performances in South Africa, the production will then be staged in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, Wellington and Auckland.

"The Australian High Commission is delighted to be supporting this fantastic co-production through our Public Diplomacy program. These types of collaborative exchanges are significant for not only the individual artists involved but also for the important institutional linkages they create. The people-to-people links that will be driven by the *Otello* collaboration can only further strengthen the Australia-South Africa bilateral relationship", said the Australian High Commissioner to South Africa, HE Mr Graeme Wilson.

Cape Town Opera's Managing Director, Michael Williams said, "we are thrilled to be a part of this innovative new partnership. For such an ambitious collaboration, we felt it was only right to begin with an ambitious opera. With the extraordinary demands it makes on the lead tenor, chorus and orchestra, it's a daunting undertaking for any opera house. This co-production will allow us to share strengths between the participating companies. It's the perfect choice to launch this partnership with a bang."

These sentiments have been echoed by the managers of the participating Australian opera houses. At the media launch of the initiative in Cape Town, Ms Carolyn Chard, General Manager of West Australian Opera, said that the project built upon the strong partnership that had existed for many years between Australian state opera companies. For the first time, it also offered the opportunity to work with colleagues in New Zealand and South Africa. Mr Tim Sexton, CEO and Artistic Director of State Opera of South Australia, said he was delighted to be involved in such an exciting collaboration that reinforced the fact that the opera family was a global one. Ms Lucy Shorrocks, Managing Director of Victorian Opera, said that "truly creative collaborations like this enable us all to be greater than the sum of our parts - to benefit artists, audiences and our own cities – in three different nations."

Australian High Commissioner Graeme Wilson said it was an important and rewarding part of the High Commission's role to promote cultural exchange between Australian and South African artistic communities. In this respect, the High Commission was very pleased to be able to support the team of creative artists from Australia who are directing, lighting and designing the South African tour of *Otello*. Australian director Simon Phillips is well known for directing the musical *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, as well as the Australasian version of Lloyd-Webber's *Love Never Dies*, and operas including *La Bohème*, *Falstaff*, *L'elisir d'amore* and *Lulu* in Australia, *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni* in New Zealand, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Billy Budd* in Germany.

Otello performance details – Cape Town

**April 6, 9, 11, 13** in the Opera House at Artscape

Tickets available through Computicket

<http://online.computicket.com/web/event/otello/706060168/0/52641706>



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