



MILLS/GOLDSWORTHY

# SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL

14-20 NOVEMBER | HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE



STATE OPERA  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



# Welcome



Good evening dear friends

I never thought I would say this, but what a joy to have to write a program note welcome message! We have finally come to the end of a year we could only have imagined taking place in a science fiction movie, and I for one am going to positively drink in every sweet sound from this production in an attempt to satisfy my ever-growing hunger for live opera.

The choice to present *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* to not only conclude 2020 but to jump-start 2021 was very deliberate. The prioritisation of Australian opera and on this occasion, to bring it to the mainstage, sets our Company apart for our steadfast belief in the quality and value of our Australian creative content and artists. Whenever and wherever we can, we want to shine a light on the very best of what makes us distinctive – our bold appetite for volume, our championship of Australians, our agility and creativity, and our thirst to present live performance. We are of course incredibly fortunate in all of this to have an indefatigable Artistic Director in Mr Stuart Maunder with a list of repertoire as long as my arm, and an ability to bring us voices and stories that will resonate for years to come.

You will hopefully have already heard about some of the brilliant works we are presenting next year (hurry before you miss out on *Carousel!*), and there is more to come so please do watch this space. Our desire to create, produce and present great shows in Adelaide has not been diminished at all by the events of this year, but rather the challenges have inspired us to consider alternate and interesting ways to exceed your expectations and ensure that you continue to enjoy our magnificent art form. Thank you to the State Opera Board of Directors for steering the ship so carefully, and thank you to all of our donors, corporate partners and Opera Club members for staying the course. And to you, our beloved audience, we are ever grateful for your warmth and support.

**YARMILA ALFONZETTI**  
Executive Director





STATE OPERA SOUTH AUSTRALIA

presents

# SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL

An opera in two acts by  
Richard Mills

Libretto by Peter Goldsworthy  
after the play by Ray Lawler

## CREATIVES

Conductor - Richard Mills  
Director - Joseph Mitchell  
Designer - Simone Romaniuk  
Lighting Designer - Trudy Dalglish  
Assistant Director - Clara Solly-Slade  
Musical Preparation - Anthony Hunt  
Repetiteur - Michael Ierace  
Movement Choreographer - Larissa McGowan

## CAST

Olive - Antoinette Halloran  
Pearl - Dimity Shepherd  
Emma - Elizabeth Campbell  
Roo - Joshua Rowe  
Barney - Bradley Daley  
Bubba - Desiree Frahn  
Johnny Dowd - Nicholas Cannon

14 - 20 NOVEMBER  
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE



ADELAIDE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR

SAY ARTS "TACKERS" ENSEMBLE



## Synopsis

In Melbourne's hot summer of 1953, cane-cutters Roo and Barney have come south from seven months up north in Queensland to live it up. Olive, Roo's barmaid girlfriend of sixteen summers, waits excitedly for him and his traditional gift of a kewpie doll.

But this summer is different, this summer of the seventeenth doll. It is full of tensions and the desperation to recreate lost youth. Roo arrives broke with his ego battered. He has been humiliated by a younger man, Johnnie Dowd, and with it his dreams of youth have faded and romantic illusions crumbled. Olive is threatened by the prospect of any lifestyle other than the one to which she is accustomed. Barney's girlfriend, has married someone else, but Pearl arrives on the scene with a husband firmly set within her sights. Ultimately Pearl's uptight indignation and refusal to accept the lifestyle she is being presented with as "proper" or "decent" causes her to move on as well. Bubba, the 22 year old next door neighbour, remains hopeful that all will be well, but Emma, Olive's wise and irritable mother, can see that things must change.

It is time to celebrate the *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll's* humanity, its emotional and dramatic power, its brilliant capture of Australia's heart and soul.







## A note from the Conductor/Composer

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Opera is a complex metaphor for life — not realistic but in that unrealistic frame essentially more real than real because of its capacity to explore states of being and feeling outside the framework of natural time. Time itself, in life as on the stage or in music, is a relative quantity. We can all remember situations about which we would say ‘I saw her for two minutes but it was worth it’ or ‘he spoke for a few minutes but it seemed endless’. Opera essentially deals with the landscape of emotions, the greater ‘reality’ behind any given set of plot circumstances — rather than with the mechanics of the circumstances themselves. That is why many opera plots are absurd, but equally, why many improbable and quite silly stories are frequently transformed by the transcendental power of music into believable and, sometimes, great art.

My problem in setting *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* was to find a way of distilling the important naturalistic essences — the careful plotting, the rich character, the abundant narrative detail — into forms which explore the realities of the characters’ implicit emotional states, not articulated but inferred from Lawler’s dramatic text. These forms allow a composer to render the joys and sorrows of the inarticulate hearts of these characters in music, without sacrificing the play’s most powerful attraction for me. The dramatic process is perfectly designed and shows the disintegration of the world of seventeen summers which is plotted like a master chess-game with an economy of purpose that recalls Greek tragedy.

As is the way with opera, the composer’s problems generally become the librettist’s problems and, thanks to the craft and inspiration of Peter Goldsworthy, all dilemmas were gradually solved by his skill as a poet. I’ll always remember that particular thrill of

recognition of something beautiful when reading Emma’s first monologue, Olive’s Act I aria and the New Year’s Eve quartet for the first time. I must also pay tribute to his constant goodwill in the rewrites and re-drafting that occurred over the time we worked together. I must also thank Ray Lawler —whose great wisdom has guided this enterprise — and Richard Wherrett, whose input has helped immeasurably in establishing the final form of the piece.

The music for *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* is on one hand much simpler than my orchestral music, but it is driven by omnipresent processes — both harmonic and melodic which form a language to tell the story and express the feelings of the characters. This language has its roots in the chord changes of popular songs of the ’30s, ’40s and ’50s, the music of Berg, Weil, Korngold, Richard Strauss, Broadway musicals and the great composers of Hollywood as well as in harmonic procedures that I suppose could be called Wagnerian. Every composer comes from somewhere: what finally matters is that the piece speaks to an audience and has its own interior structural integrity and sense of rightness of proportions. True originality is achieved by organic process — not self-conscious posture.

My goal as a composer has always been to write, firstly, for my fellow Australians; to entertain, to delight and to uplift their spirits; to be useful in making art which speaks directly and in which people may participate; and which is not bereft of





content or process because it is popular, comprehensible and communicative, while still striving to achieve something of the marvellous.

The opera is tinged with nostalgia for the '50s — my childhood years — my memories of my parents and their friends in their younger years, and the voice of Emma as an echo of my grandmother and of my mother, now in her eighties. It is nostalgic for what we now perceive as a simpler Australia more innocent, perhaps. The opera is also informed by my affection for Melbourne, which over the years (a bit like Roo and Barney) has become my home. The city, its musicians, artists and citizens have always been generous and welcoming — this piece is one way of saying thank you.

Although the opera was written fairly quickly (and orchestrated even more quickly!) it was under discussion for at least five years before it premiered in 1996 — in fact, when the idea was first put to me by Ken Mackenzie-Forbes, I rejected it.

The late Stuart Challender said to me, “Don’t be silly — you’ll never be able to make an opera out of that.” Well maybe just this once — he may have been wrong.

**RICHARD MILLS**

Conductor/Composer





## A note from the Director

Widely recognised as Australia's most well-known and loved play, Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* is quintessential Australian theatre. The Mills/Goldsworthy opera adaptation successfully retains the core story and character arcs from the original playscript in a paired back libretto, but at the same time builds upon the narrative with an evocative score and a distinct libretto which transports audiences back to Melbourne, 1953.

Having seen the theatrical version numerous times, I was drawn to the idea of directing the work as an opera, curious to explore new pathways to tell this iconic Australian story on the stage. Opera as a form lends itself to more heightened melodrama on both the comedic and tragic sides of story comparatively to the much more naturalistic form of a dramatic stage play. But in the case of this adaptation, the music and libretto opt to walk a fine line of balancing the realistic demands of the original playscript alongside a decidedly refreshing decision to carefully share the inner monologues of the main characters through stylistic passages. This approach ensures the work can be layered with the dynamic musical range required to elevate the story to operatic heights which interrogate the hopes, dreams, fantasies and fears of the characters as the narrative tilts towards its final tragic conclusion while also maintaining moments of lightness and comedic humour throughout. The result is an opera with its own unique and powerful identity, elevating it above the status of a straight forward adaptation of the original work and standing on its own as a great Australian opera.

Mills' music is rich in imagery as it seamlessly weaves its way through a narrative of longing, hope, romance, conflict and tragedy while still remaining grounded in the time and place required of the original work. Drawing upon

jazz and dance hall influences from the first half of the 20th Century, the opera immediately creates a clear sense of time and place. But as soon as this recognisable world is established musically, the score begins to layer in many complex motifs that shift tonally, introducing us to the inner-worlds of the main characters, providing a counter-balance between a surface layer of optimism, romance and hope alongside the anxiety, insecurity and fears deeply rooted in each of the characters.

To support the richness and complexity of the score, we have decided to stage this new production using a period accurate and realistic set design so that the visual and aural worlds sit harmoniously together. This also supports the libretto which has a stripped back narrative and chooses to delve much deeper into the inner worlds of the characters, with moving arias and powerful ensembles in stylised moments breaking away from the realism aurally but keeping the visual cues to evoke the rich and descriptive world of Lawler's original work

This new production of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* premiering for audiences in Adelaide features an incredible line up of Australia's best opera singers and a wonderful creative team behind the scenes. And finally, it has been an inspiration for everyone involved to have the composer of the work Richard Mills, return and conduct this production. He is undoubtedly one of Australia's greatest composers and conductors.

We have thoroughly enjoyed rehearsing and preparing this new work for Adelaide audiences and I hope that you enjoy this new production.

JOSEPH MITCHELL

Director



## A note from the Designer

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There is a significant history to *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, both in the memories of an Australian audience, but also in the story and lives of the characters themselves.

The naturalistic approach to the design of this opera aims to sketch in the detail of the previous sixteen years of their story.

A lively palette of 1950s colours, patterns and textures fills the space, brightening a somewhat shabby former boarding house.

Olive's life and Emma's before her have played out in this house. The layout is a typical Melbourne terrace; a small porch looks out onto the street, bedrooms upstairs with an old kitchen out the back. Bubba, growing up next door, skips in and out through the back door which is never locked.

With layers of personal history, the old terrace is filled with furniture collected over decades and overflows with ornaments and mementos of Olive's life. The kewpie dolls of sixteen summers adorn the walls.

When Roo and Barney arrive for their annual visit, the house glows in anticipation of the summer season. They drink and smoke, the party detritus is scattered around the house as ashtrays overflow and beer bottles collect around the pot plants.

Inevitably, the celebration fades, and the ordinary shabbiness is revealed with a sudden final realisation that all the brightness is just glitter and dust.

SIMONE ROMANIUK

Designer





## Creative Team



### CONDUCTOR RICHARD MILLS

Richard Mills AM is one of Australia's most prolific and internationally recognised composers. He pursues a diverse career as a composer, conductor and artistic director, and has an extensive discography of orchestral works including his own compositions.

He has held numerous prestigious posts, and received many scholarships, fellowships and awards including an AM, in 1999. He is currently Artistic Director of Victorian Opera, was Artistic Director of the West Australian Opera 1997 – 2012, Director of the Australian Music Project for the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra 2002 – 2008 and Musica Viva's Composer of the Year in 2008. Additionally, he works as a freelance conductor throughout Australia and overseas and in 2007/8 was awarded an Ian Potter Foundation Fellowship.

This year Richard's conducting engagements also include *Salome* (Strauss) and *Three Tales* (based on the writings of Gustave Flaubert) for Victorian Opera.



### DIRECTOR JOSEPH MITCHELL

For State Opera South Australia Joseph has directed *Boojum*. Other directing credits include *Waiting for Godot*, *Man Equals Man*, *Eating Ice Cream with Your Eyes Closed*, *The Exception* and *The Rule, Play / Not I / Act Without Words II*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Ruby Moon*, *Maxine Mellor's Mystery Project* and *A Property of the Clan* (Queensland Theatre Company); *Sweet Phoebe* and *Low Level Panic* (Performing Arts Newcastle); *Dirtgirlz* (Tantrum Theatre) and *Stone* (Victorian College of Arts).

Joseph was Artistic Director of Adelaide Festival Centre's OzAsia Festival (2015 – 2019) where he programmed over 300 events including 30 commissioned works and over 100 Australian premiere performances. In his final year, OzAsia Festival was awarded Best Major Event in South Australia at the 2019 South Australia Tourism Awards.

In film and television, Joseph was editor for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Asian Games in Qatar and highlights editor for Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. He has directed numerous music videos and short films. Awards include Best Film and Best Director at the Newcastle Film Festival and Best Film at the Shoot-Out Film Festival.

Previous roles include Executive Producer for Brisbane Festival, Senior Director and Producer for Luminato Festival (Canada), Resident Director/Youth & Education Manager for Queensland Theatre Company and Assistant Director for Melbourne Theatre Company. Joseph is a graduate of Victorian College of the Arts (Theatre Direction) and Newcastle University (Communications).





## DESIGNER

SIMONE ROMANIUK

Simone Romaniuk is a live performance designer who works across theatre, opera and festivals in Australia and the UK.

Opera design credits include: *The Mikado* and *Boojum!* (State Opera South Australia); *The Magic Flute*, *The Merry Widow*, *Space Encounters* (Opera Queensland); *La Sonnambula*, *Hansel and Gretel* (Pacific Opera); *Così fan tutte* (Sydney Conservatorium); *La Vie Parisienne* (RNCM, Manchester).

She has designed for numerous performing arts companies including Queensland Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, Unicorn Theatre London, Arcola Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Expressions Dance Company and Brisbane Festival. From 2015-2019 she was Creative Director of Adelaide Festival Centre's OzAsia Festival.

She has won four Matilda Awards for Queensland Theatre Company productions and was a finalist in the Manchester Theatre awards for design of *La Vie Parisienne*. She has been shortlisted twice for event design for OzAsia Festival 2015 and 2016 in the APDG Awards. OzAsia Festival was also winner of Best Major Event in the 2019 South Australian Tourism awards.

Simone was resident designer at Queensland Theatre Company in 2012, and prior to this was an affiliate artist with the company. She holds a Bachelor of 3D Design from QCA and a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (Design) from NIDA.

Simone's designs can be seen at [www.simoneromaniuk.com](http://www.simoneromaniuk.com)



## LIGHTING DESIGNER

TRUDY DALGLEISH

Trudy Dalglish is one of Australia's most sought-after lighting designers. She has received many prestigious awards including a Helpmann Award for *White Devil*, ENTECH Award (Best Lighting Designer Live Events), John Truscott Award (Design Excellence), and two Green Room Awards for *Eureka* and *Hairspray*.

Recent lighting designs include *A Little Night Music* (Victorian Opera), *Cunning Little Vixen* (Victorian Opera, West Australian Opera and State Opera South Australia), which Michael Shmith described in *The Age* as "...richly illuminated with the sense of the passing seasons by Trudy Dalglish's atmospheric lighting"; *Macbeth* (West Australian Opera), *Saturday Night Fever* (Gordon Frost Organisation), *In the Heights* at the Hayes Theatre and Sydney Opera House which was described in Kevin Jackson's *Theatre Diary* as "nuanced lighting design...that covers general atmospheric deliberation balanced with an intimacy of detail..."; Cat Stephens' *Cat in an Attic* in New Zealand and *Melba* at Hayes Theatre.







## MUSIC PREPARATION

ANTHONY HUNT

Pianist, organist and conductor Anthony Hunt was the Chorus Master at Opera Australia from 2013-2019. In 2020 returned to Adelaide with his family, commencing as Head of Music & Chorus Master at the State Opera South Australia, and as Director of Music at St Peter's Cathedral.

After completing an Honours degree in both piano and organ performance at the Elder Conservatorium, Anthony moved to London to study as a repetiteur on the Royal Academy of Music specialist opera course.

As Chorus Master at Opera Australia for over 60 operas, his work has been frequently broadcast on ABC Classic FM, and the many DVD releases and international cinema broadcasts include *La Traviata*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Carmen* and *La Boheme* for Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour.

Anthony has been a participant in the Symphony Australia Conductor Development Program, a guest chorus master for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and is an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.



## LIBRETTO

PETER GOLDSWORTHY

Peter Goldsworthy combines writing with the practice of medicine. He has won literary awards across a range of genres, including the Commonwealth Poetry Prize, the FAW Christina Stead Award for fiction, and, together with composer Richard Mills, the inaugural Helpmann Award for Best New Work for the opera *Batavia*.

Peter's most recent novel is *Minotaur*, published by Penguin Viking in 2019; his 1995 novel *Wish* has been reissued in the Text Classics series, his 1998 novel *Maestro* as an Angus & Robertson Australian Classic.

His novels have been widely translated, and adapted for the stage, most recently the novella *Jesus Wants Me for A Sunbeam* at Belvoir St in February this year. He has also written opera libretti for the composers Luke Styles and Graeme Koehne.

Online, his poetry can be read and heard at The Poetry Archive and read at The Australian Poetry Library and at The Poetry Foundation.





## ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CLARA SOLLY-SLADE

Clara Solly-Slade graduated from the acting stream of The Adelaide College of the Arts then studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, London, where she completed an international Acting Shakespeare course. She also completed La Mama Experimental Theatre Company's International Directors Symposium in Italy.

The Helpmann Academy's Neil Curnow Award funded her to travel to the USA, where she interned with The H.E.A.T Collective, Working Classroom and La Mama Experimental Theatre Company.

Clara has worked as an artist with Sport for Jove Theatre, Pinchgut Opera, Scottish Opera, Camp Quality as well as working as a facilitator and director with SAY ART's, Urban Myth Theatre of Youth, ACT NOW Theatre for Social Change, Australian Theatre for Young People as well as with Australian Refugee Volunteers and Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre through her own project Hinge Arts.

Clara is currently working with State Theatre Company of South Australia and State Opera South Australia as she undertakes an Emerging Director fellowship through the support of the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation and the Helpmann Academy.



## MOVEMENT CHOREOGRAPHER LARISSA MCGOWAN

Larissa McGowan graduated from the Victorian College of Arts and joined Australian Dance Theatre in 2000, touring extensively nationally and internationally with the company for eleven years. In 2008 McGowan was named the Australian Dance Theatre's Associate Choreographer. Following her 2003 Green Room Award for Best Female Dancer, McGowan won multiple prizes in 2004 at the Helpmann Awards and the Australian Dance Awards.

McGowan is a prolific creator and choreographer. Her work *Zero-sum* premiered at WOMADelaide in 2009, McGowan was a guest choreographer on *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Slack* was part of Sydney Opera House's New Breed season, which Link Dance Company then toured internationally. She created *Transducer* as part of Tasdance's 'Voltage' season, with *Co:3* performing it at the companies launch season 2015. *Fanatic* was choreographed at Sydney Dance Company for Spring Dance and De Novo.

McGowan's work *Skeleton* premiered in 2013 at the Adelaide Festival, Dance Massive and the Dublin Dance Festival. In 2016 she Co-Choreographed *Habitus* with Garry Stewart for ADT and independently created *Mortal Condition*. Her latest work, *Cher*, premiered at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival in June 2019.







## REPETITEUR

### MICHAEL IERACE

Cited as having ‘an exceptional gift’, Adelaide born Michael Ierace had much success in local and national competitions before receiving the prestigious Elder Overseas Scholarship, enabling him to move to London to study at the Royal College of Music. He was selected as an RCM Rising Star was later on staff as a Junior Fellow in Piano Accompaniment.

In the UK, he won several competitions including the Keyboard Prize and the Accompanist Prize in the Royal Overseas League Competition and regularly performed throughout London and the UK.

Since moving back to Australia, Michael has established himself as one of the most sort after associate artists for national and international guests. He is currently a staff pianist at the Elder Conservatorium.

Alongside his ‘classical’ duties, Michael is also the keyboard player for the Tributes in Concert Band, consistently praised as one of the best in the business after making their US debut in 2019.



## CAST



### OLIVE ANTOINETTE HALLORAN

A multi-Helpmann Award nominee, Antoinette Halloran's most recent engagements have included the title roles in *Tosca* for West Australian Opera and *The Merry Widow* for State Opera South Australia, The Fox in *The Cunning Little Vixen* in Melbourne and Adelaide and associate artist for José Carreras' National Tour.

Leading appearances for Opera Australia have included the title roles in *Madama Butterfly* and *Rusalka*, Mimi in *La bohème*, Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Green Room Award) and many others; for New Zealand Opera – Mimi, Cio-Cio-San and Mrs Lovett; for Victorian Opera – Fiordiligi in *Così fan Tutte*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* and Mrs Lovett (Helpmann Award nomination).

Antoinette also featured as a guest judge and panelist on the ABC television series *Operatunity Oz* and has appeared regularly on the hit show *Spicks and Specks*; she was a presenter for ABC's *Art Nation* – covering stories on opera and music theatre.



### PEARL DIMITY SHEPHERD

Dimity is a four time Green Room Award winner and multiple Helpmann Award Nominee.

Roles include Carmen (Opera Australia, Melbourne Opera), Rosina (Opera Australia), Cherubino (Opera Australia, Victorian Opera, Green Room Award), Emilia *Otello* (Melbourne Opera, Green Room Award), Orphee (Victorian Opera), Flora (Victorian Opera), Smeton (Melbourne Opera), Maddalena (Opera Qld), Stephano (Opera Qld), Thisbe (Opera Qld), Arsamene (Victorian Opera), Nireno (Victorian Opera), Mercurius (Victorian Opera), Secretary *Nixon in China* (Victorian Opera and Auckland Festival).

Crossover repertoire includes Kathchen *Black Rider* (Malthouse/Victorian Opera, Helpmann Nomination), Lucy (Threepenny Opera, Malthouse/Victorian Opera, Helpmann Nomination), and New Australian Works include *Lorelei* (Victorian Opera, Green Room Nomination), *Banquet of Secrets* (Victorian Opera, Brisbane Festival), *How to Kill Your Husband* (Victorian Opera), *The Ghost Wife Barbican* (Melbourne Festival, Sydney Festival, Adelaide Festival), *Love in the Age of Therapy* (OzOpera, Green Room Award), *The Riders* (Victorian Opera), *Crossing Live* (Chamber Made Opera), *The Children's Bach* (Chamber Made Opera), *Through the Looking Glass* (Victorian Opera).







**ROO**  
JOSHUA ROWE

Josh Rowe has performed for opera companies including Opera Queensland, Victorian Opera, State Opera South Australia. His many awards include the 2007 Queensland Arts Council Performing Arts Scholarship and Runner Up in the Dame Joan Sutherland Awards.

Josh has performed in many operas: including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Nabucco*, *Turandot*, *The Magic Flute*, *Otello* and *Tosca*. Josh made his principal role debut in 2007 with Richard Mills' *The Love of the Nightingale* for Opera Queensland.

Josh also performed the role of Bottom in Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2008 for which he won the Sir Mostyn Hanger Opera Award. Josh made his role debut for State Opera as Krishna in Philip Glass' *Satyagraha* in 2014.

Joshua has performed as part of all of State Opera's Lost Operas of Oz. Roles include Wal, the Bellman *Boojum!*, Dick Christina's *World*, Second Officer *Madeline Lee*. In 2019 he also appeared as the Imperial Commissioner *Madama Butterfly*.



**BARNEY**  
BRADLEY DALEY

Australian tenor, Bradley Daley has won critical and popular praise for some of opera's most expansive tenor roles.

Roles include; Opera Australia - Curley *Of Mice and Men*-Green Room Award, Don José *Carmen*, Siegmund *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*); Opera Queensland Florestan *Fidelio*/and Melbourne Opera, Rodolfo *La bohème*, Dick Johnson *La fanciulla del West*; State Opera South Australia – Otello, Narraboth *Salome*, Canio *Pagliacci*, Walther *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; Victorian Opera - Mao Tse-tung *Nixon in China* - Green Room Award, Erik *Der fliegende Holländer*; and Bob Boles *Peter Grimes* for the Brisbane Festival.

Internationally Bradley has sung the roles of Siegfried (*Der Ring des Nibelungen* and *Götterdämmerung*), Der Kaiser (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), and another complete Ring cycle for Opera Kiel. He has also sung with Opera North, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Holland Park Opera, Co-Opera Ireland and performed regularly with Muziektheatre Transparant in Belgium, Compagnia d'Opera Italiana di Milano, Opera Nomade in Paris.







## EMMA

ELIZABETH CAMPBELL

Elizabeth Campbell, one of Australia's most distinguished mezzo sopranos, has performed with all of the Australian opera companies, symphony orchestras and major concert organisations.

A graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Elizabeth won the Elly Ameling Lieder Prize in the 's-Hertogenbosch Singing Competition, represented Australia in the Singer of the World Competition, Cardiff and is the recipient of the Bayreuth Scholarship. International performances include Messiah at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Sydney Symphony Orchestra's USA tour and recitals at the Wigmore Hall, in Den Haag and Antwerp.

Recent highlights include Verdi Spectacular, *Gianni Schicchi*/*La Vida Breve*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Herodias in *Salome*, Amneris in *Aida* (for which she won a 2011 Helpmann Award) all for State Opera; Klytaemnestra in *Elektra* (Perth Festival); First Norn and Waltraute in *Ring Cycle* for Opera Australia.

Recordings include Koehne's *Three Poems of Byron*, Mahler's *2nd Symphony*, Beethoven's *9th Symphony* and Missa Solemnis, "Banquo's Buried", "Woman's Song" and Elgar's *Sea Pictures*.



## BUBBA

DESIREE FRAHN

South Australian Soprano Desiree Frahn is a principal artist with State Opera of South Australia and a graduate of the Elder Conservatorium and the James and Diana Ramsey Foundation Opera Program.

For the company she has performed *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Valencienne*, *Leïla*, *Lauretta*, *Rose Pickles*, *Pamina*, *Rosalinde*, *Bastienne*, and sung as a soloist in their regional tours, concerts, and radio broadcasts. Other notable performances include the role of Stephanie in the Australian premiere and return season of Jake Heggie's *To Hell and Back* with Gertrude Opera in Melbourne.

She has performed leading roles throughout South Australia and has been the soprano soloist in both new and established works with the Elder Conservatorium Orchestra, Victoria Chorale, and the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.





**JOHNNY DOWD**  
NICHOLAS CANNON

Nicholas is a versatile singer, actor and director. Nicholas has studied Lecoq Technique in Barcelona and Paris and holds a Music Theatre degree from WAAPA.

His roles have included Quick Lamb *Cloudstreet!*, Papageno *The Magic Flute* with State Opera South Australia, Kalif Der Barbier *Von Bagdad* and Graf Homonay *Der Zigeunerbaron* at Coburg Landestheater, Germany.

Soloist Singer in *Encore!* with Tokyo Disney Sea. The Cranky Bear with Patch Theatre Company. Tritone - Gavin Bryars' *Marylin Forever* in the Adelaide Festival of Arts. Eugene Onegin *Onegin*, Dr Falke *Die Fledermaus*, Figaro *The Marriage of Figaro*, Sharpless *Madama Butterfly*, Don Alfonso *Così fan tutte*, and Marcello *La Bohème* with Co-Opera. Michael *It's A Dad Thing* with Singular Productions. Chris Barnes *Metro Street* in the Adelaide Cabaret Festival. Soloist *Camelot* and Ralph in *Kiss Me Kate* with The Production Company, Melbourne. Lord Shakespeare's *As You Like It* with The Principal Theatre Company in London. Young Ray *Autumn Minds Alma* by The Think Collective at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London.





# Summer of the Seventeenth Draft

An essay by Peter Goldsworthy

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## Chapter 1

Our lives begin as opera. Our first memories, the indelible memories of early childhood, are operatic: overblown, deeply resonant, larger than life. Infancy is a kind of opera, and just as noisy: libretto by Freud, music for solo soprano or castrato. Our first emotions are big and simple, our responses out of all proportion to cause - essential ingredients for opera. La Scala hath no wailing prima donna as an infant ignored.

My own first memories are more specific - they are of actual opera or operetta, of huddling beneath a piano in a bush high school as my mother accompanied the school production of *The Gondoliers*, her feet pressing the squeaky pedals, rhythmically.

The town of Minlaton, population 500. Barley Capital of the World, Tidy Town Award winner, lies in the middle of the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia, about knee-height or Rome-height on that leg-shaped protrusion from the continent. The Yorke Peninsula even has its own Sicily to kick around: Kangaroo Island. The leg is shod in farm-boots, rather than the elegant stiletto of Puglia, and the Minlaton Town Hall in 1955 was no La Scala, but opera was the main cultural event for many miles.

My parents went on to produce a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta in every Tidy Town and world capital in Australia, it seemed. My mother was always down in the engine-room — her piano an orchestra of one, in a makeshift pit — while my father was up on the bridge, either singing or conducting. Slow ahead two thirds, dear. Another indelible memory, my shock at age twelve, as my dad, by now a respectable school Head, bounded onto the stage at the first dress rehearsal of *Trial by Jury* wearing a rakish straw

boater and striped blazer, with a pencil-thin cad's moustache.

I sang as a member of the jury for that school production. Later I played a pirate in *The Pirates of Penzance* and a marine in *HMS Pinafore* — but never managed to gain promotion beyond the chorus. Despite the limitations of my larynx, I still love that simple, stylised music, three-quarters self-parody.

## Chapter 2

The process of writing a libretto has taught me to appreciate another great virtue in Gilbert & Sullivan: theirs is the only such creative team in which the librettist receives top billing. This might well be because Gilbert was the producer as well as the writer of the Savoy operas, and could bill himself anywhere he liked, but his witty, clever libretti are surely the equal of the witty, clever music.

There are no da Ponte & Mozart societies, no Strauss & von Hofmannsthal revivals. The norm is this: the librettist is the hired help. Which seems fair: you hum the tunes on the way out, you don't murmur the words.

At our first meeting, the composer Richard Mills told the story of the diva Montserrat Caballe, amply proportioned, who was asked to sing while walking down a flight of steps in the role of Carmen.

'I don't do steps,' Miss Caballe told the director. 'I don't do opera,' I told Richard. Partly this was because the division of labour and credit deterred me. Who listens to the libretto? On the other hand, anonymity also offered a safety net. If my libretto was a fiasco, perhaps no-one would notice — except myself and Ray Lawler.







My deeper objections were more puritanical. Despite fond childhood memories, I'd come to think that opera was a ludicrous form, at least when taking itself seriously: a collection of good bits loosely sewn together with all kinds of artifice and tedious recitative — a bit like most novels I read, come to think of it.

Opera was a plum pudding, I primly decided, a few jewels set in ponderous, creaking plots. And with the form exaggerated out of all proportion to content. All style, no substance. It seemed, to flog my earlier analogy, infantile.

It was the possibility of working with the singing voice that tempted me back from this extreme puritanical view. Poetry is ultimately about voice; the biological origins of poetry are in singing and in breathing, just as the origins of music itself are in the biology of the human larynx, first and most natural of our musical instruments.

And still the most erotic. This, also, attracted me: that opera is the most erotic of the arts, especially, for me, the soprano or mezzo voice, in full moan. At close quarters especially, in the flesh, its power is simply thrilling.

### Chapter 3

In laconic Australian fashion the erotic in Ray Lawler's classic play, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, is never explicit, but one of the things that Roo and Barney's five-month lay-off from the cane fields is actually about is not a lay-off at all, but a lay-down, with a friend.

How to translate this into song? For song to have force it cannot be laconic or understated — at least as we understand the terms relative to other forms of expression. Music, even at its most subdued, is an emotional overstatement. It is the most purely emotional of the human languages.

This problem serves as a metaphor for the basic dislocation in turning the play, perhaps any play, into opera. *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* is probably the Great Australian Play or at least a GAP — and it's finally a tragedy, but it's a vernacular, often understated, tragedy.

How, then, to transform the vernacular dialogue of the Melbourne fifties into something that scans and can be sung, while attempting





to remain faithful to the spirit of the play? This was an imposing difficulty — and the extra challenge it offered finally overcame my puritanical objections to opera as a form.

Next problem: how to handle the comic elements of the play? *The Doll* is a tragedy, yes, but it expends a lot of laughter getting there. I wanted the libretto to remember that comedy, however, attenuated by the constraints of the new form.

I went back to the deft, irreverent humour of Gilbert's libretti for Sullivan — required reading for all poets and lyricists — wondering if I might find models there.

Philip Furia in his book 'The Poets of Tin Pan Alley' has pointed out the influence of Gilbert on the great song lyricists of America — Ira Gershwin, 'Yip' Harburg and so on. Echoes of Gilbertian rhymes such as 'cerebellum, too' with 'tell 'em, too' can be heard in such famous Ira Gershwin couplets as 'The things that you're liable / to read in the Bible...' or, my Jonah-and-the-whale favourite, 'He made his home in/ that fish's abdomen.'

Quoting such lines in a review, of Furia's book, the American poet Brad Leithauser traces this ancestry a step further, finding the source of Gilbert's own playful rhyme-schemes in the Byron of *Don Juan* ('battery' with 'satire, he'). Such couplets permeate light verse generally. Closer to home, thematically, does even Ogden Nash's 'Kangaroo' owe something to Byron?

O Kangaroo, O Kangaroo  
Be grateful that you're in a zoo  
And not transmuted by a boomerang  
Into zestful, tasty kangaroo meringue.

What has this got to do with writing a libretto for *The Doll*, and the Australia of Roo and Barney and Pearl and Olive in the fifties. Their music was 'Strangers in Paradise' and perhaps somewhere in there the sentimental stirrings of Rodgers and Hammerstein, and the uncomplicated rhymes of June/moon/spoon. It was into the playfulness of epigram rather than the playfulness of rhyme that I mostly attempted to steer the libretto, using existing lines from the play, or clichés, and trying to tease them a little further, giving them what I hoped might be extra legs.

Although a confession: some of the most playfully rhymed light-verse in the libretto, the verse that most approximates the Tin Pan Alley tradition, was tossed off by the composer, who seems to have a gift for it.

## Chapter 4

Perhaps the greatest challenge in converting the play into a libretto was the length. A librettist has only a fraction of the number of words to play with; what cannot be condensed in an adaptation must therefore be cut. Da Ponte managed to condense 'The Marriage of Figaro,' a play banned by Emperor Joseph II, from 230 pages into 51. He also dropped 5 characters.

'But I have written an opera, not a play,' he wrote to the Emperor. 'I have had to omit many scenes and shorten others, and I have omitted or shortened anything which might offend the delicacy and decency of a spectacle at which your Majesty would be present.'

There were no such censorship problems with *The Doll*. At the Melbourne premiere, the nearest thing to majesty, Premier Jeff Kennett, was impressed enough to remark that the opera was 'interesting'. Carlton and United Breweries, the Melbourne sponsors, and perhaps, therefore, the nearest thing to a royal patron did request that the brand of beer mentioned in the libretto be changed from Melbourne Bitter to Fosters' Lager, although both are CUB beers. Fine by me, I said, if it's okay with Ray Lawler.

There was still the problem of length. How to shrink-wrap Lawler's play around the bare bones of the musical structure that Richard and I spent an intense week sketching out? In adapting a classic, this involves considerable risk.

'Don't you dare leave out my favourite line,' the writer David Marr told me several years ago when discussing my commission. 'Emma's line about getting a sea-breeze off the gutter.'

I put the line back in. My first instinct had been to simplify too much. I had pruned the playback to what I thought was the bare minimum of the plot — and in so doing, threw out most of the babies with the bathwater. I also caused some anxiety to Ray Lawler. I thought I knew



everything about the play – in fact, I soon learnt that I knew very little. Ray would send me his notes after each draft, and the process of writing the libretto from then, became, to some extent, a tug of war between a poet's desire for simplicity and Ray's – and later Richard's, and the director Richard Wherrett's – lessons in drama.

Unlike da Ponte, I dropped no characters. There were only seven to begin with. Perhaps the major structural change was the enlarging of the role of Emma, at least in her Cassandra persona. This was partly to provide a musical balance: two insomniac nocturnes during which she would soliloquise, largo, over a pot of tea, singing of events past and future. This enlarged or altered character owes something to Sandy Stone, my favourite Barry Humphries creation. Stone, at any rate, is the most purely literary of Humphries' creations in the sense that I can imagine other, lesser actors reciting Sandy's monologues with success. With the Dame or Sir Les, the performance of Humphries himself provides much, perhaps most, of the power. Stone's monologues can also stand alone as text.

I published a small suite of Doll songs in a collection of poetry, titled *If, Then*. The Doll songs are probably the least interesting poems, qua poems, in the book. Partly I stuck them in the vain hope that people who would not normally buy poetry might buy poetry — the public profile of an opera being beyond the wildest dreams of a slim volume of verse. There might, I hoped, be a trickle-down effect, or coat-tail-riding effect. If any of these published songs can claim to stand apart as poetry, on a page, the Emma monologues might have a faint chance.

The full libretto plays deliberately with the banality of ordinary speech: it uses or paraphrases cliché extensively, as does the musical score itself, playfully using musical cliché, especially the sentimentality of the music of the era. Left high and dry by the withdrawal of music, the words of many operas can seem banal. Mine, no doubt, too.

Which leaves surtitles, where the words are left high and dry, beached momentarily on a screen, where? I hope it is not just self-interest that has led me the belief that





surtitles are essential for all operas, not just those written in languages we don't speak. It's hard now to imagine even a cleanly written Britten opera without subtitles. Gilbert and Sullivan, maybe. Jokes, also, seem to work best with the help of subtitles, even if there is an overlapping two-phase response: half the audience laughing at the written line; a moment later the other half laughing at the sung joke. Or the other way round. Opera has always been an intense multimedia experience - visual, aural, dramatic – and this has only been enhanced recent technologies such as video screens, hi-tech sets, lighting, and even 3-D .

Our brains seem to be developing capacities to process an increasing amount of simultaneous sensory input; text surely adds an extra layer to this.

What is sung is not the play, of course, and never can be, and does not aim to be. It is both something similar and something different - according to the constraints of a different medium. And if favourite lines from the play are missing, if I am not the very model of a modern opera librettist, the audience can ignore the words and hum the tunes on the way out.

Ira Gershwin wrote: 'Given a fondness for music, a feeling for rhyme, a sense of whimsy and humour, an eye for a balanced sentence, and the ability to imagine oneself a performer — given all this, I still say it takes four or five years collaborating with knowledgeable composers to become a well-rounded lyricist.'

I might not be able to do much about feeling, sense and eye —you either have them or you don't — but I have a knowledgeable composer, and a few years yet to work with him on more projects.

**PETER GOLDSWORTHY**

Librettist

*Adapted from Navel Gazing – a collection of essays Goldsworthy by Peter Goldsworthy. Penguin Books, 1998*



# Adelaide Symphony Orchestra



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Natsuko Yoshimoto\*\* (Concertmaster)  
Shirin Lim\*\* (Acting Associate Concertmaster)  
Michael Milton\* (Acting Principal 1st Violin)  
Lachlan Bramble\*\* (Acting Principal 2nd Violin)  
Emma Perkins~(Acting Associate Principal 2nd Violin)  
Minas Berberyan, Gillian Braithwaite, Hilary Bruer,  
Judith Coombe, Danielle Jaquillard, Alexis Milton,  
Jennifer Newman, Julie Newman, Kemeru Spurr

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Michael Robertson\*\* (Acting Principal)  
Rosi McGowran~ (Acting Associate)  
Martin Butler, Lesley Cockram, Cecily Satchell

## Cellos

Simon Coberoft\*\*  
David Sharp~ (Acting Associate)  
Gemma Phillips, Sherrilyn Handley

## Double Basses

David Schilling\*\*  
Jonathon Coco~

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Geoffrey Collins\*\*  
Julia Grenfell

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Julia Grenfell\*

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Joshua Oates\*\*

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Dean Newcomb\*\*  
Darren Skelton, Mitchell Berick

## E♭ Clarinet

Darren Skelton\*

## Bass Clarinet

Mitchell Berick\*

## Bassoon & Contra Bassoon

Jackie Newcomb\*

## Saxophone

Damien Hurn\* (Guest Principal)

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Adrian Uren\*\*  
Emma Gregan

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Martin Phillipson\*\* (Acting Principal)  
Gregory Frick, David Khafagi

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Colin Prichard\*\*  
Ian Denbigh

## Bass Trombone

Howard Parkinson\*

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**Stage Management Secondment** Jess Wolfendale  
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**Head of Lighting** Rick Worringham  
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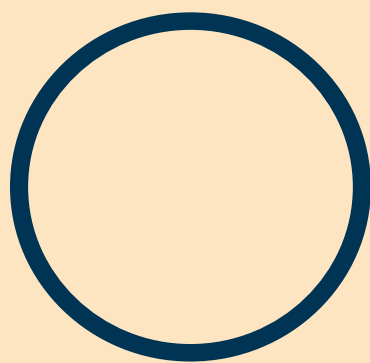
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