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Opera Australia & John Frost's THE KING AND I Opens 19 April at QPAC

by BWV News Desk Apr. 15, 2014



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It will be a right royal Easter and beyond in Brisbane as The King and I presented by Opera Australia and **John Frost** opens as a glittering national premiere at the Queensland Performing Arts Center (QPAC) on Saturday 19 April 2014.

Final tickets have just been released for the Australian premiere season of the Rodgers and Hammerstein masterpiece, The King and I which will play for strictly limited seven week season in QPAC's Lyric Theatre until Sunday 1 June 2014.

Australia's favourite leading lady and four-time Gold Logie winner **Lisa McCune** plays English governess **Anna Leonowens** opposite internationally acclaimed baritone Teddy Tahu Rhodes as the King in the Brisbane and Sydney seasons, hot from their success performing together in the national tour of South Pacific, also presented by Opera Australia and **John Frost**.

In the roles of British Diplomat Sir Edward Ramsey and Captain Orton is John Adam (The School For Wives) while The Kralahome is played by **Marty Rhone** (The King and I - West End, Godspell). Lady Thiang will be played by Chinese-born Australian opera singer Shu-Cheen Yu (The King and I - 1991 Australian tour) and in the roles of the Burmese young lovers Lun Tha and Tuptim are Adrian Li Donni and Jenny Liu.

The ensemble performers are Bianca Baykara, Novy Bereber, Iggy Cabral, William Centurion, Leo Cornelius, Jade Coutts, Teresa Duddy, Vivien Emsworth, Elle Evangelista, **Carolyn Ferrie**, Chris Fung, Kiana Gallop-Angeles, Erin James, Ella Jarman, Patrick Jeremy, Leah Lim, Anna Magrath, Seann Matthew Moore, Matthew Nguyen, Alexis Pedraza-Sampang, Hayanah Pickering, Marcus Rivera, Michelle Rozario, Ariya Sawadivong, Victor Siharath, Nicholas Sopelario and Yong Ying Woo.

The Brisbane production also stars 27 Queensland children aged 5 to 13, many making their stage debut in The King and I.

The principal role of Prince Chululongkorn will be shared by Timothy Ho and Sebastian Li, and principal role of **Louis Leonowens** will be shared by Riley Brooker and Bailey Kelleher. Jayden McGinlay will understudy the roles of both Louis and Prince Chululongkorn.

The 22 children who will play the young princes and princesses of Siam are Hannah Bahr, Leilani Joy Burke-Court, Mia Byrne, Katitlin Cheung, Lucy Chin, Oliver Chin, Izellah Connelly, Chloe De Los Santos, Rocco Frediani, Jai Godbold, Jessica Kim, Kai Koinuma, Chloe Liew, Cameron McDonald, Lachlan McDonald, Siaa Panapa, Rhetta Pulou, Charlotte Rubendra, Jayden Siemon, Laila Mia Steele, Zayden Stevens and Shivani Whala.

The King and I was Rodgers and Hammerstein's fifth musical together and is considered one of the jewels in their crown. It was based on **Margaret Landon's** 1944 novel Anna and the King of Siam, which took its inspiration from the memoirs of **Anna Leonowens**, a British governess to the children of King Mongkut of Siam (now Thailand) in the early 1860s.

The beautiful score includes the songs "I Whistle a Happy Tune", "Getting to Know You", "Shall We Dance?" and "Hello, Young Lovers".

A hit on Broadway in 1951, where it starred **Gertrude Lawrence** (who died during the season) and **Yul Brynner**, the show ran for three years before touring. The first London production opened in 1953, enjoying similar success. In 1956 it became a famous film starring **Deborah Kerr** and **Yul Brynner** who won an Academy Award for his performance.

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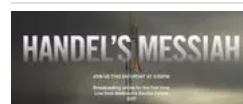
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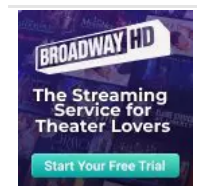
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John Frost's now legendary Australian production premiered at the Adelaide Festival Theatre in 1991. Directed by West End director **Christopher Renshaw** and starring **Hayley Mills** as Anna, it played to sell out houses around the country. In 1996, the production went on to win four Tony Awards on Broadway: Best Revival of a Musical, Best Performance by an Actress in a Musical (**Donna Murphy**), Best Scenic Design (**Brian Thomson**) and Best Costume Design (**Roger Kirk**). The Broadway season was followed by a US tour. In 2000, the production opened at the London Palladium with **Elaine Paige** as Anna where it played for nearly two years before embarking on a UK tour.

Christopher Renshaw has returned to Australia to revive the production, with its stunning Thai-inspired set design by **Brian Thomson**, sumptuous costumes by **Roger Kirk**, lighting by **Nigel Levings**, sound design by **Michael Waters** and musical direction by **Peter Casey**. **Susan Kikuchi** has recreated the original **Jerome Robbins** choreography as well as the choreography of her mother Yuriko who appeared in the 1951 Broadway production and the 1956 film.

Final seats are now on sale for the Brisbane season. To book go to www.qpac.com.au or phone 136 246.

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