



# Media Release

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 12PM (AEST) FRIDAY 14 FEBRUARY**

14 February 2014

## **World-first opera project comes to Mackay**

Opera Queensland today announced Mackay would be one of eight regional communities involved in a world-first project that will give nearly 400 everyday people the opportunity to perform in the chorus of a brand new production of *La bohème*.

'Project Puccini' is a hugely ambitious \$2 million initiative, which will train 48 Queenslanders in each participating region to sing and act alongside OperaQ's principal artists and Queensland Symphony Orchestra musicians in a professionally staged opera.

Auditions for Mackay adults and children to become a part of the 'Mackay Chorus' will be held from 13 to 15 March 2014. Successful chorus members will then take part in a 10-week development program before performing in *La bohème* at Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre on 27 August.

OperaQ will employ a local chorus master and rehearsal coordinator, and work with Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre, Mackay Regional Council and local sponsors to ensure the highest standard of performance and personal development opportunities for budding local artists.

Project Puccini aims to equip participants with improved music and drama skills, new social and creative networks, and an increased sense of community and wellbeing.

Arts Minister Ian Walker said the Queensland Government supported Project Puccini and the *La bohème* regional tour with funding of \$399,954 through Arts Queensland's Playing Queensland Fund.

"Project Puccini offers a unique opportunity for everyday Queenslanders to perform in a professional production," he said.

"This is an excellent example of our *Arts for all Queenslanders* commitment in action, delivering more great arts and culture for more Queenslanders."

Project Puccini is also proudly supported by the Graeme Wood Foundation and, in Mackay, the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). The RADF is a Queensland Government and Mackay Regional Council partnership to support local arts and culture.

OperaQ Artistic Director Lindy Hume said Project Puccini was the first major undertaking in the company's Open Stage program, which aimed to build creative skills and maintain strong, meaningful relationships with communities across Queensland.

"I am particularly passionate about encouraging excellence in regional arts and we want to seek out and nurture outstanding talent across Queensland," Ms Hume said.

"We hope our professionally trained Mackay Chorus will go on to perform in other cultural events, and inter-regional relationships will develop to build artistic collaboration and improve the return on government and private investment in the arts.

"This brand new production of *La bohème* demonstrates the company's commitment to excellence in regional Queensland," Ms Hume said.

Known as the most romantic opera of all time, *La bohème* appeals to devotees and newcomers alike. Beginning on a snowy Christmas Eve in Paris, it tells the tale of Mimi's love affair with the poet Rodolfo and their group of rent-dodging flatmates living and loving precariously on the edge of society.



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Puccini's beloved opera will be brought to life by award-winning theatre director Craig Ilott and internationally acclaimed designer Penny Challen.

In addition to Mackay, communities on the Gold Coast and Fraser Coast (Maryborough), and in Toowoomba, Ipswich, Rockhampton, Townsville and Mount Isa will take part in Project Puccini.

All Project Puccini participants and supporters can connect online to share their experiences, stories, video and images.

## For all media enquiries contact Agency North:

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## About the production

Australian premiere  
A new OperaQ production  
Sung in Italian with projected English translations.

## Cast and crew:

Director: Craig Ilott	Mimi: Hyeseoung Kwon/Emily Burke
Designer: Penny Challen	Musetta: Emily Burke/Annie Lower
Lighting Designer: David Walters	Rodolfo: Bradley Daley/Virgilio Marino
Chorus Master: Narelle French	Marcello: Shaun Brown/Guy Booth
Assistant Director: Jason Barry-Smith	Schaunard: Guy Booth/Sam Hartley
	Colline: Andrew Collis
	Alcindoro: Sam Hartley
	Benoît: Bernard Wheaton

Musicians from the Queensland  
Symphony Orchestra

## Touring Dates

- Tuesday 15 July – Saturday 2 August 2014, Conservatorium Theatre, Griffith University, Brisbane (Opera Queensland Chorus)
- Saturday 9 August 2014, The Arts Centre, Gold Coast (Gold Coast Regional Chorus)
- Tuesday 12 August 2014, Ipswich Civic Centre, Ipswich (Ipswich Regional Chorus)
- Friday 15 August 2014, Empire Theatre, Toowoomba (Toowoomba Regional Chorus)
- Wednesday 20 August 2014, Brolga Theatre, Fraser Coast (Fraser Coast Regional Chorus)
- Saturday 23 August 2014, Pilbeam Theatre, Rockhampton (Rockhampton Regional Chorus)
- Wednesday 27 August 2014, Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre (Mackay Regional Chorus)
- Saturday 30 August 2014, Townsville Civic Theatre (Townsville Regional Chorus)
- Thursday 4 September 2014, Mount Isa Civic Theatre (Mount Isa Regional Chorus)

N.B. The Ipswich Civic Centre performance will be in concert mode.