

Case Study

Marriage of Figaro

What:

In 2017, Opera Australia returned to Toowoomba with a favourite opera – *The Marriage of Figaro*. Part of the tour included an opportunity for young people to audition to be a part of the Regional Children's Chorus. Selected members would be taught the chorus music of the production by an industry professional and perform in costume onstage with professional artists from Opera Australia.

Local Chorus Master Cherie Vera was appointed to teach and guide the chorus through the music. Cherie also gained valuable experience through professional development with Opera Australia to help prepare her and the chorus for the performance ahead. Together with répétiteur Lorraine Fuller, the choir rehearsed over 8 weeks prior to the Opera's arrival in town.

Once the company arrived, the chorus was taken through the staging by the Opera Australia Chorus Master and fitted for their costumes. While in town, the company also conducted a free schools workshop with Centenary State High School music extension students and auditioned students for the Regional Student Scholarship. The scholarship provides an opportunity for 4 students from across the country to spend 2 weeks with Opera Australia in January 2018.

The performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* was presented on stage at the Empire Theatre on Tuesday 18 July at 7.30pm.



The Children's Chorus and OA Company on stage

When: Rehearsals - May-July 2017
 School Workshop – 18 July
 Performance – Tuesday 18 July, 7.30pm

Where: Rehearsals and Performance - Empire Theatre

Workshop – Centenary Heights State High School

Partners, Contributors and Sponsors:



The Regional Children's Chorus was assisted by funding from the Toowoomba Region's Cultural and Arts Support Fund.



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Outcomes:

Over 40 students auditioned to be a part of the chorus and 24 were successful in gaining the available places. Each student was able to learn about the music, techniques and the requirements of an operatic singer and get a real understanding of what it might be like to be a professional artist.

The families and schools of the choir really got behind their students and supported them by bringing large groups along to the performance.

4 students from around the region auditioned for the student scholarship. The results of these auditions will not be known until the whole regional tour is completed towards the end of the year.

30 Students were involved in the Centenary Heights workshop and were able to interact and be inspired by the industry professionals that came along and worked with their choir and instrumentalists.



Centenary Heights Students workshop with OA

This project also correlates with Community outcomes 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 in the TR 2014-2019 Corporate Plan.

Learnings and reflections:

Over the past 5 years we have seen a dramatic decrease in the ticket sales to operatic performance. As part of an audience development exercise, this year group ticket prices for school communities were reduced dramatically to encourage support of the work and this proved a successful strategy. We saw a 300% increase in attendance from the last Opera Australia offering in 2015. Over 700 patrons were able to access low cost tickets through their school.

It is important for the Empire Theatre to provide accessible opportunities for the community to engage with all artforms in order to sustain and build audiences moving forward.

This project directly correlates with five objectives in the Empire Theatres Projects Company Business Plan.

Strategy One	To be accessible and engaging.
1.1	Create and facilitate programs and projects that are mindful of the diversity and richness of all regional Australians inclusive of all ethnic and cultural origins and demographic and socio-economic circumstances
1.2	To address the issues of remoteness and accessibility to the arts in regional Australia through the provision of arts services locally including training and education resources delivery.
Strategy Three	Increase and deepen cultural consciousness and capacity in the region.
3.1	Develop audiences and increase engagement in creative activity throughout our community.
3.2	To develop and nurture a community of artists and arts workers in and around the Toowoomba region.
Strategy Four	Be a stable and reliable resource for the community.
4.1	To develop thriving arts business practices through strong partnerships, commercial income streams and alternative funding programs