

PERFORMING ARTS

Over 1.2 million people attended 1,661 performances this year, with audiences growing by 5%. Sydney Opera House programs and those of our four Resident Companies accounted for 77% of total performances, offering a wealth of choice - from impeccable international artistry, to new works and interpretations of each genre, and family entertainment that is accessible to all.



Artistic Excellence
Outstanding Live Performance
Accessible Programs

KEY OUTCOMES 2007/08

Sydney Opera House Presents offered audiences international brilliance, award-winning Australian talent, accessible entertainment and festival highlights from around the world. This year, our programs represented 44% of all performances, an increase of 4% (734 versus 703 in 2006/7).

Ensuring the community has access to great international artists from around the world,

our international programs included the sell-out success, *Sacred Monsters*, a collaboration between Sylvie Guillem and Akram Khan that attracted some 5,200 people to the Concert Hall. Our *Hemispheres* concert program played to an audience of 22,400 and showcased some of the world's most celebrated musicians from Brazil, Israel, Peru, Argentina, Cape Verde, Korea, Mali, Turkey, Lebanon, Russia and India.

Key to our programming was the presentation of home-grown artistry and a number of our presentations received recognition in the form of Helpmann, Green Room and Australian Dance Awards. Programs included the 2007 commission of *Honour Bound*, the children's production of *Hitler's Daughter* and the cabaret productions of *Meow Meow: Beyond Glamour* and *The Needle and the Damage Done*.

Family entertainment was offered in presentations such as *Le Grand Cirque*, the most attended Sydney Opera House presented production ever, which attracted 39,374 people over 21 performances and in the magical dance theatre production of *Edward Scissorhands*, which attracted an audience of 28,700 people over 22 performances. This production also toured in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, with the collaboration of other performing arts centres.

Some of the best theatrical experiences from around the globe were featured in the second year of our exciting *Adventures* program. This feast of International Festival Highlights included dance pieces such as *Future Tense* and theatre productions such as *Imagine Toi, C90* by Daniel Kitson and Sizwe *Banzi Is Dead*, a rare opportunity to witness the work of the legendary Peter Brook.

Creating a centre of excellence for young people's enjoyment of contemporary performing arts experiences through lively, varied and interactive education, our Young Audience program continued to record excellent results, A total of 285 performances attracted an audience of 53,726 that spanned toddlers to young adults.

Highlights included the House:Ed programs *Lifeboat*, *Dr Egg* and *The Girl Who Cried Wolf* and the Kids at the House programs of *Rabbit*, *The Drum* and *Goodbye Mr Muffin*. Our signature *Babies Proms* series continued to exceed attendance targets.

A commitment of Sydney Opera House is the creation of accessible programs and price points to offering the entire community the opportunity to attend events at our venues.

This year, we commenced a new Public Program stream which included Sydney Opera House Talks in the Opera Theatre with Tom Stoppard and Ian McEwan and 18 free public performances of *Strange Fruit* on the Forecourt during the school holidays, attracting an audience of 6,670.

An initiative specifically targeting disadvantaged communities, The Balnaves Foundation Open House Program was created in 2007. Subsidised \$5 tickets were offered to seven productions, including 1,000 tickets for the major dance spectacular *Edward Scissorhands*. Since April 2007, over 2,500 people have taken advantage of these subsidised tickets, most visiting Sydney Opera House for the first time. In a joint venture with the ABC, we presented the Helpmann Award-winning *The Choir of Hard Knocks* in two sell-out performances, donating all profits to the Choir.

The programs of our four Resident Companies were responsible for 54% of our total audience and 34% of all performances. Once again, they brought to the stages of Sydney Opera House great music, opera, theatre and dance in diverse programs and exciting new ways.

Celebrating its 75th anniversary season in 2007, Sydney Symphony presented 117 performances to an audience of 258,466, under the guidance of Maestro Gianluigi Gelmetti, who has led the Orchestra as Chief Conductor for the past five years.

Highlights of this season were its *Brahms and Beethoven Festivals* which celebrated the major orchestral works of these iconic composers, the visit of former Chief Conductor, Sir Charles Mackerras, release of two Sydney Symphony live label recordings and the web-streaming of ten performances.

Satisfying and extending the experience of the committed opera lover and actively encouraging and developing new audiences, Opera Australia presented 170 performances to an audience of 220,997.

In its hugely successful winter season, Opera Australia's programs encompassed three new productions, including the first foray into American opera with *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Other ground breaking offerings included a collaboration with Sydney Opera House and the Australian Film Commission, to present a free live telecast of *Carmen* to the Sydney Opera House Forecourt, Federation Square in Melbourne and to eight regional cinemas, across every State and Territory.

One of Australia's flagship arts companies, and one of the busiest ballet companies in the world, The Australian Ballet presented 98 performances to an audience of 127,206 in a dynamic program that spanned the classical and the contemporary.

Highlights of this season included the broadcasting of a live performance of *The Nutcracker* to the Forecourt and to eight locations around regional Australia, a world premiere work *Symphonie Fantastique* and a tribute to the world famous choreographer Jerome Robbins.

Committed to the engagement of the imagination of its artists and its audiences, Sydney Theatre Company presented 172 performances to an audience of 74,631.

Robyn Nevin ended her successful tenure of seven years as Artistic Director in December 2007. The Company presented four productions at Sydney Opera House, including two STC Actors Company programs, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* and *The Serpent's Teeth*. Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton commenced as joint Artistic Directors from January 2008 with their first program beginning in 2009.

The Year Ahead

- Growth of our Public Program, to include more free and low-cost programs and special events.
- Expansion of the Young Audience Program, to include even more international productions.
- Our Adventures Program to include fresh new music, dance and theatre works from across the globe.
- More outstanding international live performance, beginning with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in July 2008.
- Icon will meet Icon when *The Famous Spiegeltent* houses a festival of music, cabaret, comedy and children's performances on the Forecourt commencing October 2008.
- The Utzon Room Music Series will continue with a stellar line-up of international guests and the finest local talent.

10 YEAR PERFORMANCE TRENDS

Year	Performances	Audience	Average capacity
07/08	1,661	1,269,996	83%
06/07	1,595	1,212,270	85%
05/06	1,558	1,129,879	83%
04/05	1,543	1,134,881	81%
03/04	1,653	1,145,789	80%
02/03	1,730	1,252,846	81%
01/02	1,563	1,101,320	83%
00/01	1,434	1,124,976	83%
99/00	1,533	1,247,763	82%
98/99	1,339	1,169,978	77%
10 Year Average	1,521	1,178,970	81%

BOX OFFICE SALES

Year	Tickets	Turnover	Online
07/08	617,866	\$44,813,380	36%
06/07	612,366	\$40,130,170	31.7%
05/06	544,151	\$37,706,458	28.6%
04/05	533,661	\$36,057,649	27.0%
03/04	525,706	\$33,599,085	23.4%

MUSIC

In a full and diverse Music program that included world-renowned artists, the highlights were many and varied. Standing ovations greeted a jazz great and an outstanding new work for orchestra and didgeridoo; the expanded classical program in the uniquely intimate Utzon Room was enthusiastically embraced; and The Studio continued to build its reputation for leading-edge live music.



SYDNEY SYMPHONY

40 presentations, 117 performances, 258,446 audiences.

Two world premieres gave audiences two very different musical experiences.

The first was a new symphonic jazz composition by Lalo Schiffrin, who wrote the work to showcase the respective genius of trumpeter James Morrison and pianist Ambre Hammond. *The Double Concerto for Jazz Trumpet and Piano* was the jewel in the crown of the *Kaleidoscope* program. The second, *Headlong*, was a commission in celebration of its 75th anniversary. Part of Andrew Ford's *Near to Heaven: Elgar's First Symphony*, the seven-minute piece, conducted by Jeffrey Tate, showcased each section of the Orchestra through the ever-changing context of a single, harmonic line.

Dazzling audiences who did not want to leave, Nigel Kennedy's concert marking his return to the stage and to Australia, left both audience and orchestra alike wanting more. The abundant beauty of Mozart and the heroism of Beethoven in *Classical Kennedy*, provided the ideal showcase for Kennedy's genius with the violin, demonstrating poetry and steel in equal measure. Three performances attracted an audience of 8,074.

Generating a standing ovation, *Kalkadungu*, a new work by William Barton in collaboration with Australian composer, Matthew Hindson, saw SSO join forces with Barton, who played didgeridoo. The 23-minute piece, scored for orchestra, electric guitar, solo voice and didgeridoo, was based on the events and the ramifications of the long guerrilla warfare conducted by the Kalkadungu tribe against European settlers in Far North Queensland. With all three solo parts performed by Barton, this unique presentation attracted a total audience of 6,873 over three performances.

A Gala Performance opened the 2008 season and celebrated Maestro Gelmetti's final season with the Orchestra as Artistic Director. *Ravel's Romances*, a tribute to Ravel, one of the Maestro's favourite composers, provided a sensual and seductive showcase of romance, a perfect fit for its Valentine's Day presentation. In a triumphant finale, Orchestra and Conductor were joined on stage by the Cantillation Chorus for Ravel's voluptuous ballet score for *Daphnis and Chloe*. This one-off performance attracted an audience of 2,301.

One of the world's pre-eminent pianists returned to Sydney for the first time since 2002 in *Emanuel Ax Plays Mozart*. Performing with SSO and conducted by 24 year old English conductor, Robin Ticciati, Ax's overwhelming authority as musician and technician was displayed throughout this superlative presentation. Three performances attracted an audience of 5,528.

Maestro Vladimir Ashkenazy will take on the role of Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor to SSO for two years from 2009, succeeding Maestro Gelmetti, who has led the Orchestra for the past five years. Maestro Ashkenazy has worked with the Orchestra over many years, most recently conducting the Rachmaninov Festival in 2007.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

66 presentations, 240 performances, 122,126 audiences.

Our inaugural Hemispheres program drew on the artistic virtuosity of renowned performers from a broad range of countries and cultures inviting our diverse communities to come and share this most universal of art forms. The season encompassed 10 artists and attracted an audience of 22,477. Cesária Evora showcased her sublimely clean, unadorned voice in two performances of *Cesária Evora in Concert*, singing in the unique style that is Creole Portuguese. The seven musicians who make up Israel's *Idan Raichel Project*, drew from a bold and wide-ranging palette to create layers of sound in an artful combination of Ethiopian chants, Arabic poetry, Yemenite chants and rhythmic influences from the Caribbean and Africa.

Two jazz legends graced our shores for the first time, with their only Australian performances at Sydney Opera House. Archetypal saxophonist *Sonny Rollins* thrilled audiences with his deep, warm and richly textured sound that is both accessible and yet hard to define. This single performance from the energetic 77-year-old virtuoso attracted an audience of 2,272. Ornette Coleman, also now 77, is recognised as the last of the imposing jazz innovators of his generation and the *Ornette Coleman Quintet* received a standing ovation from the 2,148 audience, who thrilled to the music of this Pulitzer Prize-winning virtuoso.

Enthusiastically embraced by Sydney music lovers, our *Utzon Room Music Series*, curated by Marshall McGuire, was expanded for its second season and featured a stellar line-up of local and international musical talent. With a stunning view of the Harbour and just 200 seats, the Utzon Room offered audiences a rare opportunity to get up close and personal with exceptional musicians in an exceptional setting. Among the offerings this year were two performances on cello: *Pieter Wispelwey*, one of the world's leading cellists, performed a solo cello recital that included one of J S Bach's iconic Suites for Solo Cello; and young cellist Natalie Clein, recipient of the Young British Performer Classical Brit Award of 2005, performed some of the landmark cello works of J S Bach and Benjamin Britten in another exquisite solo performance. 10 performances attracted an audience of 1,895.

Building on its reputation as one of the top live music venues in the country, The Studio presented *Studio String Sessions*, showcasing some of the finest local and international guitarists. Included in the line-up were: great contemporary Brazilian guitar duo, *Sergio and Odair Assad*, who presented classical and folk gems from Latin America in their first show in Australia for over 20 years; American acoustic guitar virtuoso *Kaki King*, making her return to Australia after a sell-out season at the 2007 Sydney Festival; slide guitar legend *Jeff Lang* and renowned Sudanese oud master, *Asim Gorashi*, who took audiences on an Arabian musical safari. Seven performances attracted 1,363 people.

Other musical highlights in The Studio this year included: *Jake Shimabukuro*, a Hawaiian musician who has been dubbed the Jimi Hendrix of the ukelele, treated the audience to jazz, to bluegrass, to classical, to rock and everything in between. His two performances attracted 624 people. Camille returned in *Camille – Dark Angel*, to present a new season of songs from the likes of Nick Cave, Jacques Brel, Tom Waits and David Bowie, inhabiting a darkly humorous and different character with every song. 11 performances attracted a total audience of 3,092. With humour of a different kind, Berliner *Meret Becker* brought her internationally acclaimed 21st century version of cabaret to Australia for the first time and attracted an audience of 624 over two performances; and Australian phenomenon *The Necks* presented their entirely new and entirely now sonic experience. Having won two ARIAs, an APRA Award and two Best Jazz Group Awards, they delighted audiences over four concerts which attracted an audience of 846.

In a concert that reprised her unforgettable soundtrack to the 1960s, Dionne Warwick thrilled audiences in the Concert Hall with the songs and artistry that made her an international star and won her five Grammy Awards. This one-night-only performance attracted an audience of 2,459.

An exclusive and truly zany Christmas experience was the comic oratorio *Not the Messiah*, Eric Idle and John du Prez's festive musical madness, inspired by the Monty Python film classic, *Life of Brian*. In lunatic Python fashion, the evening encompassed pop, Welsh hymns, a Greek Chorus and a rousing sing-a-long version of 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life'. Two performances attracted an audience of 4,756.

Addressing some hard-hitting issues about her country, American Laurie Anderson and a trio of musicians performed her new work, *Homeland* in the Opera Theatre as part of the *Adventures* program. With a beautiful sound, created by a mixture of voice, electronics and strings and using her particular brand of humour to accompany the overtly political themes of her songs, Laurie captivated audiences in two performances that attracted an audience of 2,153.

THEATRE

Theatre at Sydney Opera House overflowed with verve and diversity, from the superlative to the off-beat and all points between. Audiences were presented award-winning interpretations of some classics, once-in-a-lifetime public talks by two world masters, spectacular and approachable family fare, world-renowned hip hop in circus guise and local and international contemporary writing with exceptional staging and direction.



SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

4 presentations, 172 performances,
74,631 audiences.

With Helpmann award nominations resulting for two of the cast, a revival of David Williamson's classic slice of election night satire was perfectly timed to coincide with the 2007 federal election. *Don's Party* featured a strong cast, including the award-winning performances of Travis McMahon and Alison Whyte, with 56 performances attracting an audience of 27,366.

A brilliant adaptation of a rarely performed 20th century classic, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* was presented in the Drama Theatre as the sixth and final production of the STC Actors Company 2007 season. Ödön von Horvath's play was adapted by STC Associate Director Tom Wright and directed by Jean-Pierre Mignon, with 37 performances attracting a total audience of 15,971.

An Australian premiere opened the STC 2008 season. David Hare's latest offering, *The Vertical Hour*, opened simultaneously at Sydney Opera House and the Royal Court in London. Directed in Sydney by Julian Meyrick and featuring a stellar cast including Ryan Hayward and Victoria Longley, 47 performances attracted a total audience of 21,368.

The world premiere of *The Serpent's Teeth* was performed in the Drama Theatre, marking a homecoming for the multi-award-winning playwright, Daniel Keene. One of the most performed Australian playwrights outside Australia, Keene's absorbing double-bill was directed by Pamela Rabe and Tim Maddock, with 32 performances attracting a total audience of 9,926.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

40 presentations, 429 performances,
137,167 audiences.

A family-focused feast of entertainment, *Le Grand Cirque* was presented in the Concert Hall. Seen by millions around the world, the cast of 40 hand-picked international virtuosos performed an astonishing array of spectacular feats in elaborate costumes and a vivid display of colour and light. This easy-to-digest visual fare attracted 39,374 people over 21 performances.

Exceptional theatrical experiences from around the world was the theme of our second *Adventures* program. *Imagine Toi* was performed in the Playhouse, featuring a modern Harlequin, an extraordinarily versatile actor, clown and mime artist who created an entire soundscape using only his voice. With great audience participation, this joyous production attracted 5,579 people over 20 performances. Directed by the legendary Peter Brook, one of the great figures of contemporary theatre, *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* was a pared-down production of an apartheid-era classic performed in the Playhouse in French with English surtitles. This tale of identity, humanity, truth and survival attracted 4,820 people over 22 performances.

Two international contemporary greats provided a stellar launch to our Public Program. *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* gave audiences a rare opportunity to witness one of the great masters of international theatre discuss aspects of his life, his work and his ideas with Andrew Upton, Co-Artistic Director of Sydney Theatre Company and Geoffrey Rush, one of the finest actors of his generation. *Ian McEwan in Conversation* was the Booker Prize-winning author's only Sydney appearance, a lively and probing exploration of the boundaries between truth and artifice, facilitated by Radio National's Ramona Koval. These priceless one-off opportunities to get up close and personal with two global leading lights attracted audiences of 1,456 and 1,438 respectively.

A high-powered fusion of Indigenous Australian and Indonesian culture translated into a seamless blend of physical theatre, music, song and dance. *Eyes of Marege* celebrated 400 years of trade and cultural exchange between two cultures through the story of a young Indonesian man's journey to Makassar at the turn of the 20th century. Presented in The Studio, three performances attracted an audience of 708.

Providing good, strong physical theatre for young adults, *Headlock* came to Sydney Opera House following great critical acclaim and numerous awards for its premiere season in Melbourne. Exploring the relationship between three brothers during the first 24 hours of a prison sentence for one of them, *Headlock* traversed a complex terrain of brute physicality and intense sensitivity of young masculinity. Director Kate Denborough and Gerard Van Dyck's visionary partnership Kage made its performance debut in 1997 propelling dance-theatre into fresh territory, claiming international awards, recognition and new audiences along the way. Their latest offering, written by David Denborough, did not disappoint, with six performances attracting an audience of 1,148.

Delighting audiences around the world for 20 years, Justin Bond and Kenny Mellman (aka Kiki and Herb) returned to The Studio with *Kiki & Herb: The Year of Magical Drinking Tour*, possibly their last dark-humoured cabaret show in this eccentric incarnation. Delighting, shocking and charming Studio audiences once again, 12 performances attracted 3,420 people.

Following huge international media acclaim and a season at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, *Tom Tom Club* returned to Australia and The Studio, with its high energy, high impact hip-hop entertainment. Representing the future of Australian circus entertainment, the show was jettisoned into cult status under the practised guidance of veteran festival musical director Ben Walsh and featured the amazing sounds of recently crowned international Beat Box Champion, Tom Thum. Loud, fun and engaging, *Tom Tom Club* attracted 1,158 people over six performances.

THE BELL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

4 presentations, 128 performances,
53,378 audiences.

Three productions of the Bard's most loved plays and one Russian classic were offered in Bell Shakespeare's season at Sydney Opera House. *As You Like It* was John Bell's bright, breezy take on this beloved comedy, attracting 13,362 people over 34 performances. Marion Potts' production of *Hamlet* was a contemporary, poignant interpretation of perhaps Shakespeare's finest tragedy, with Brendan Cowell bringing a brilliant intensity to the lead role in 27 performances, attracting an audience of 14,167. Having waited for the right indigenous actor to play the lead, Bell staged *Othello* for the first time ever, with Director Marion Potts accentuating our culture's own dark heart of racism. Wayne Blair gave a superbly poignant and accomplished performance as the esteemed, yet fragile black general in a white world of power and 31 performances attracted 13,337 people. Branching out to Russian classic comedy, John Bell united two of Australia's finest actors in a wonderful production of Gogol's *The Government Inspector*. Darren Gilshenan and William Zappa used their consummate skill to play all 19 of the roles in this sharp and hilarious satire on small-town politics, with 36 performances attracting 12,512 people.

OPERA

This year, the national opera company satisfied opera lovers with a new take on some beloved classics, with international luminaries and local burgeoning talent and with productions that ranged from the stark to the opulent. It also extended its reach to new audiences with a free live telecast around the country, presented a new production of a beloved stage musical and made its first foray into American opera.



OPERA AUSTRALIA

15 presentations, 167 performances, 215,680 audiences.

Heralded as a luscious opera experience, an enigmatic, opulent new production, *The Tales of Hoffman* was presented by a lustrous cast in one of opera's most melodic classics. This production had critics raving about Emma Mathews' superlative performance in bringing to life all four soprano roles. With sumptuous staging, reminiscent of the kind of European tableau not often seen on Australian stages, wonderful musical unity and a surround-sound ending, this production was a feast for all the senses, with 13 performances attracting an audience of 14,443.

Masterfully conducted by Richard Bonynge, a new Opera Conference production of Rossini's much-loved romantic comedy, *The Barber of Seville* treated audiences to a sparkling and beautifully styled presentation. Featuring Amelia Farrugia in her debut as Rosina, Henry Choo as her suitor, Almaviva and José Carbó as the smooth-talking Figaro, 17 performances attracted an audience of 20,837.

Marking the Company's first foray into American Opera, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, composed by Andre Previn and directed by Bruce Beresford, made its Australian premiere in the Opera Theatre. Starring Teddy Tahu Rhodes and Yvonne Kenny, it also featured a fresh performance of Stella by Antoinette Harlan. A revolving set, overlaid with projections from movies of the 1940s, evoked the classic age of American drama and a visual fidelity to the era of Williams. Eight performances attracted an audience of 11,265.

Taking a classic hot and sultry opera to a new and wide-ranging audience, *Opera on the Big Screen* was the result of three-way collaboration between Opera Australia, Sydney Opera House and the Australian Film Commission. A new production of Bizet's *Carmen* by Francesca Zambello was performed in the Opera Theatre and simultaneously telecast free onto big screens on the Forecourt, at Federation Square in Melbourne and at the eight regional cinemas that form the Australian Film Commission's Regional Digital Screen Network. 20 performances in the Opera Theatre attracted 29,521 people, with an additional audience of 2,570 on the Forecourt watching the free live telecast.

For the first time, Opera Australia presented a sumptuous new Richard Strauss work. A new production of the bitter-sweet romance of *Arabella* starred real-life partners Peter Coleman-Wright and Cheryl Barker, who made her debut in this lead role. Five performances attracted an audience of 7,346.

An exciting young tenor brought a new dimension to the acclaimed Simon Philips production of Puccini's *La bohème*, a production that brings bohemian Paris to the stage of the Opera Theatre. Opening the Company's Summer Season, this now much loved incarnation starred Hye Seoung Kwong as the tragic Mimi and Aldo di Toro in the role of Rodolfo. 20 performances attracted an audience of 27,416.

The Winter Season opened with another first for the Company, the presentation of the beloved Lerner and Loewe stage musical, *My Fair Lady*. From the same team that created *The Pirates of Penzance*, this sumptuous production, with extravagant sets and costumes, showcased the dazzling voice of young soprano, Taryn Fiebig, with Reg Livermore in the role of Henry Higgins and Nancye Hayes as Mrs Higgins. Four performances in June 2008 attracted a total audience of 5,838 (the season will continue for 10 performances in July and August 2008).

An operatic version of the world's favourite fairytale, Michael Hampe's production of *La Cenerentola*, was faithful to Rossini's creation, capturing all the magic of the original folk-tale, though a wise philosopher replaces the fairy godmother. The cast was made up of some of Australia's most exciting young voices including, in the lead role, Dominica Matthews, a member of the Moffat Oxenbold Young Artist Program, with bel canto specialist Brad Cohen conducting. 10 performances attracted an audience of 11,985.

With an ironic dead-pan take on Victorian pantomime and vivacious choreography by Elizabeth Hill, Stuart Maunder's production of *The Gondoliers* breathed sparkling new life into a perennial Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. With a stellar cast featuring Reg Livermore, Judi Connelli, John Bolton Wood, young soprano Taryn Fieberg and the animated dancing of the Pierrot and Columbine dancers, this was high comedy at its explosive best. 23 performances attracted an audience 29,555.

Offering audiences the opportunity to hear her in three leading roles in one night, Cheryl Barker rose to the challenge in *Il Trittico*, (The Triptych), Puccini's three one-act operas, premiered by the Company in a revival of the 1973 production by Moffat Oxenbould. In an evening made for voice addicts, 10 performances attracted an audience of 11,400.

Focusing on the serious dramatic opportunities that the music lends itself to, Opera Australia presented an original and powerful production of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, the setting relocated by Director Elke Neidhardt to the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s. Putting the tensions of the work into a real-world setting and presenting it in a stark and menacing stage design were designed to leverage the underlying power of what is acknowledged as one of Verdi's three greatest operatic achievements. With conductor Richard Armstrong leading an expressively sympathetic performance from the Opera and Ballet Orchestra, 10 performances attracted an audience of 10,555.

A bold production and a stellar international cast provided a perfect introduction to the Grand Opera of Wagner. Directed by Elke Neidhardt and conducted by the Company's Music Director, Richard Hickox, *Tannhäuser* starred Richard Berkeley-Steele in the title role and featured other opera luminaries such as Janice Watson, Daniel Sumegi and Jonathon Summers. Eight performances attracted an audience of 10,136.

Welcoming in the New Year with champagne, a medley of arias and beautiful music, a thrilling *New Year's Eve Gala Concert* was presented in the Concert Hall. This year hosted by the ABC's Virginia Trioli, on the bill were some of Australia's finest voices, including Jose Carbo, Emma Matthews, Rosario La Spina and Milijana Nikolic, with Giovanni Reggioli conducting the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. This one-night-only performance played to an audience of 2,558.

Providing secondary students with the opportunity to experience the art form from many perspectives, this year 470 people were given the opportunity to go behind the scenes, to learn about opera and to attend performances through the Company's Opera:Ed program. Four projects were made possible by Arts philanthropist, Mr Fred Street, AM, with another supported by NSW's ConnectEd Arts initiative.

DANCE

Dance this year encompassed tributes to choreographic genius, presentations of new work and globally heralded new productions of well-loved classics. Access to a sell-out season was made available to a broader audience through free live digital telecasting and through subsidised tickets to live performance. We continued to offer audiences the new and the edgy in dance theatre and access to superlative new contemporary Indigenous work.



THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

11 presentations, 98 performances,
127,206 audiences.

A world premiere and a first presentation combined to celebrate the genius of a ballet revolutionary.

The Company's double bill *Destiny* was a tribute to Leonide Massine, one of the first to choreograph ballet to symphonic music. *Les Pressages*, set to Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony* and written in 1933, was presented by The Australian Ballet for the first time. It was followed by the world premiere of a new work by Polish choreographer Krzysztof Pastor, who created his own ballet to Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, having never seen the work that Massine choreographed in 1936. The double bill of *Destiny* was the second in a series honouring the Ballet Russes in Australia and 22 performances attracted an audience of 27,209.

An Australian premiere resulted in a sell-out season for one of ballet's 'big three'.

Peter Wright's acclaimed production of *The Nutcracker*, created for the Royal Ballet in 1990, was the third in the Company's landmark series of classics, following on from *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. Masterfully combining past and present, the sumptuous costumes and sets by John McFarlane provided a fitting backdrop to the dance technique that received much critical acclaim. 24 performances attracted an audience of 34,573 in the Opera Theatre, with a further 1,300 enjoying a live telecast of the 7 December 2007 performance on a big screen in the Forecourt. Seven digital network cinemas around the country also presented the live telecast, in a groundbreaking collaboration between The Australian Ballet, Sydney Opera House and the Australian Film Commission. Designed to make live performance more accessible to all Australians, the free telecast was further enriched with a unique 'behind the scenes' view into rehearsal and warm-up areas via additional cameras.

After wowing audiences across the globe, a sell-out season greeted the much-anticipated return to Sydney Opera House of Graeme Murphy's powerful 2002 interpretation of *Swan Lake*. Once again, this gripping production was made accessible to a much broader audience with the live screening of a performance via satellite to eight regional cinema screens, to Federation Square in Melbourne and to a television audience on ABC2. 22 performances attracted an audience of 32,525 in the Opera Theatre, with many more around the country enjoying the free telecast.

Complementing global tributes to a choreographic genius, four of Jerome Robbins' best-loved ballets were staged to mark the 10th anniversary of his death. Bridging the worlds of ballet and Broadway, Robbins' work spanned both decades and art forms and The Australian Ballet's *Jerome Robbins – A Celebration* acknowledged his unmatched influence in their staging of a range of his work, including *Afternoon of a Faun*, *The Cage*, *The Concert* and one of his last-ever works, *A Suite of Dances*. Thrilling audiences, 22 performances attracted 26,390 people.

The Company expanded its well-loved education program at Sydney Opera House. This year, the perennial *Introduction to the Ballet*, for young people of 10 years and over, attracted 1,451 attendees who witnessed a short class, followed by a performance of *Jerome Robbins – A Celebration*. New additions to the program were *Fifteen Minutes of Fame*, in which 24 attendees were taught the dance that accompanies Chopin's *Raindrop Prelude* from *Jerome Robbins – A Celebration*, while *Chance to Dance* offered 16 participants a beginners' class, Australian Ballet style. *Saturdays at Five* continued the Company's tradition of inviting participants to experience all the nuances of a ballet season, with four programs that included *An Australian Classic*, *The Diversity of Dance*, *Massine's Musical Mission* and *Of Christmases Past and Present*. These free sessions attracted 1,213 people.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

6 presentations, 65 performances,
44,478 audiences.

A magical dance theatre production by Matthew Bourne was premiered in a three-week season of *Edward Scissorhands*, Bourne's follow-up to his global triumph of *Swan Lake*. This production translated the Tim Burton cult classic movie to the stage, capturing all the poignancy and gothic wittiness of the original film in spectacular dance theatre that required no dialogue. With staging made possible through the support of our Presenting Partner, NAB, this international theatrical phenomenon encompassed the captivating score of Terry Davies and exquisite sets by Lez Brotherston. 22 performances attracted an audience of 28,710. Included in this number were 1,000 people who attended as part of the Balnaves Foundation Open House Program, with subsidised \$5 tickets.

In a program suggested to us by Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Future Tense* presented a double bill of two compelling solos. Part of our second *Adventures* program, *Erection* was a 45 minute spell-binding offering from French dancer-choreographer, Pierre Rigal, whose performance tracked the evolution of man from primitive life to homo erectus. *CIP17* was the second solo work, created by one of Europe's hottest and most acclaimed choreographers, André Gringas, who mixes styles from capoeira to break dancing. Performed by Norwegian Kenneth Flak, this seminal work, in which man and machine collide, combined digital imagery with edgy and superlative physicality. 10 performances attracted an audience of 1,853.

Another International Festival Highlight in our Adventures series, *Sacred Monsters* was presented in the Concert Hall. It featured an extraordinary meeting of the minds and bodies of two great artists, Akram Khan and Sylvie Guillem, the former a dazzling exponent of Indian kathak, the latter a star of Western classical ballet. This was a performance that saw them create a supernova of dance from opposite corners of the world, before being stripped bare of the façade of celebrity, with the power of the work drawn from their respective vulnerabilities. Three performances attracted an audience of 5,458.

A first-time collaboration between a clever Sydney dance troupe and an award-winning British director, *The Fondue Set: No Success Like Failure* presented audiences with part talent quest, part educational forum and part cabaret. The Fondue Set's Jane McKernan, Elizabeth Ryan and Emma Saunders teamed with award-winning UK director, Wendy Houston, to create this exploration of loss, emptiness, giving up and letting go in an edgy and out-there dance experience. Pushing contemporary dance out of the academy and into popular culture. Five performances of this new work attracted 774 people.

A Tokyo Dance Company's first visit to Sydney challenged audience pre-conceptions of time, space and scale. The bizarre world of Tokyo's *Strange Kinoko* presented audiences with the unique style of dance founded by Artistic Director, Chie Ito in 1990, along with fellow graduates from Nihon University. *Strange Kinoko: Not Quite Right* encompassed a soundtrack of lounge, swing, Hollywood classics and Japanese pop along with original music by Ammaakasic Noka, in this production that was developed through the Australia-Japan Dance Exchange 2006. Five performances attracted 822 people.

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

1 presentation, 31 performances,
13,667 audiences.

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture blended with contemporary dance influences create a unique Australian dance language.

This year at Sydney Opera House, this exciting Australian Dance Company presented two new and very different productions.

From the desolate wastelands of Maralinga and the volcanic sands of the Torres Strait Islands, the brand new work *True Stories (X300 and Emeret Lu)* explored two aspects of Australia's Indigenous culture. The award-winning choreographer Frances Rings created the hard-hitting *X300*, the code name of the atomic test site set up on Tjarutja traditional lands in the 1950s for a series of atomic explosions. The work is a powerful exploration of a landscape deemed 'vacant', but which became a contaminated desert that poisoned the people who lived there. In complete contrast, *Emeret Lu* – meaning 'very old things' – presented an exploration of Indigenous people's love of the land, the sea and each other. This exuberant new work from choreographer, Elma Kris provided audiences with an uplifting production of lasting imagery delivered in the language of movement. 31 performances attracted 13,667 people.

YOUNG AUDIENCES AND EDUCATION

This year, we delivered on our commitment to actively engage young audiences in their own right. Our far-reaching House:Ed program of 89 performances celebrated the world of theatre; and we delivered a year-long festival of delights in over 200 performances for toddlers to teens in Kids at the House.



SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

In the most exciting House:ED program in five years, there were 89 performances designed to celebrate the world of theatre and to demonstrate to young audiences the vibrancy and relevance of the performing arts. Firmly established on the New South Wales schools' calendar, House:Ed this year enabled students to travel around the world and experience life from different perspectives through the medium of storytelling and the art of communication between performer and audience. Comprehensive Teachers' Notes facilitated discussion extending the impact beyond our stages.

After securing Australia's richest playwrighting prize, the Richard Wherrett Prize for Excellence, Angela Betzien's powerful drama *Hoods* returned to the Sydney Opera House, following its critically acclaimed regional tour. Co-commissioned by Sydney Opera House and premiered here in 2006, the play is an exploration of an untold Australian story inspired by incidents of children left in cars for hours at a time by their parents. Seven performances attracted an audience of 1,269.

An inspiring true-life portrait of survival and life-long friendship was presented in the musical theatre production of *Life Boat*, the story of two of the 11 children who survived the torpedoing of a ship that was attempting to escape war-torn Europe for the safety of Canada in 1940. A heart-warming and affectionate tale, 18 performances attracted an audience of 2,786.

From workshop to full performance in 12 months, the premiere of *The Girl Who Cried Wolf* was a production created specially for 8 to 12 year olds. It explored our culture's obsession with the media and celebrity through the story of an 11 year old schoolgirl who fakes her own abduction. Students had full access to stage direction and rehearsal rooms during the pre-production phase, before taking their creation to full stage performance in 2008. Nine performances attracted an audience of 732.

Facing contemporary moral and ethical dilemmas, such as those created by new bio-technology and genetic engineering, was the theme of the parable called *Dr Egg and the Man with No Ear*. Created for young people of 12 years and above, this program encompassed a professional workshop for teachers to help them create a visual narrative. This remarkable piece of theatre brought together a unique and exceptional group of Australian artists in the fields of animation, puppetry and physical performance, led by multi-award-winning performer, Annie Lee. Created by writer Catherine Fargher and brought to the stage by Director Jessica Wilson, this was theatre appealing to all the senses, with seven performances attracting an audience of 1,288.

Giving an old tale 21st century relevance, *A Sonatina* was an inventive re-working of the Brothers Grimm story of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Performed by award-winning Danish theatre company, Grupp 38, in a return to Sydney Opera House, the production had adults and children alike shrieking with laughter in 12 performances that attracted an audience of 1,319.

The return of an international film festival for children, *Little Big Shots* featured Australian and international short films, animations and documentaries about kids, shot by kids in stories for kids. This successful festival attracted 2,289 people over 14 performances, with another season planned for September 2008.

Tackling some controversial issues around growing up, *Australian Marriage Act* was designed for young people 14 years and over. A frank account of a young couple's fight for love, this riveting production addressed some hard-hitting and very real dilemmas. Eight performances attracted an audience of 1,319.

Our much-loved and critically acclaimed Kids at the House program for young audiences and their families this year encompassed a year-long festival of delights in over 200 performances.

Now an interactive cult classic for babies and toddlers, *The Green Sheep*, based on the book *Where is the Green Sheep?* by Mem Fox and Judy Horacek, was created specially for a 1 to 4 year old audience by Windmill Performing Arts, Australia's flagship performing arts company for children and family audiences. Captivating both toddlers and their parents, 39 performances attracted an audience of 4,932.

Using contemporary dance, theatre and comedy to capture the imagination of young children over four, *Rabbi T* was inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Vividly painted canvasses, an electronic landscape, cello and voice and a mixture of hip hop, acrobatics and contemporary dance combined to engage all the senses in a comedic celebration of creativity, adventure and curiosity. Adults and children alike were entranced over 20 performances attracting an audience of 6,861.

Playfully revealing how the reward of art lies in the joy of creation itself, the German production of *What Does Red Do On Thursdays?* offered children a rare insight into the artist's creative process. The living transformation of a painting that begins with a red dot and becomes a magical kingdom, was accompanied by the music of Ravel, Debussy and Shostakovich. Delighting audiences with the surprises that accompanied every brushstroke, 27 performances attracted 3,931 people.

The hottest toddlers' ticket in town was the return of *Dougal the Garbage Dump Bear*, following last year's sell-out season. Shortlisted for the 2005 Children's Council Book of the Year prize, the book was transformed into a touching and hilarious musical journey for very young children, with the underlying theme that, sometimes, bad luck can turn out to be your best friend. 30 performances attracted 7,162 people.

Introducing our youngest patrons to the delights of the Performing Arts, our Babies Proms series is one of our most important, longest running and most successful programs. Once again touring regionally to southern NSW, 84 performances over three programs attracted an audience of 19,259. *Pecorino's First Concert*, based on the popular picture book by Alan Madison and AnnaLaura Cantone, was performed by the renowned Babies Proms Orchestra and filled with whimsical word-play in its quest to impart a little about each instrument. Subsidised \$5 tickets through the Balnaves Open House Program helped broaden community access to our popular Christmas offering, *Santa's Babies*, while *The Drum* introduced our youngest audiences to an Indian folktale and the sounds of percussion and sitar. *Strings & Things*, a musical exploration of the string section of an orchestra, was once again with the support of Country Energy, bringing the Babies Proms Orchestra into the home territory of youngsters across Wagga Wagga, Cootamundra, Young, Yass and Crookwell, and lifting our total regional audience over three years to 20,000 children across 63 regional towns.