

TRISTAN &ISOLDE

NORTHCOTE TOWN HALL ARTS CENTRE
7:30 PM 29 & 31 OCT

BK Opera presents

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

CAST

TRISTAN **James Egglestone**
ISOLDE **Lee Abrahmsen**
KING MARKE **Warwick Fyfe***
BRANGÄNE **Belinda Dalton / Piri Jakab (cover)**
KURWENAL **Henry Shaw**
MELOT **Daniel Sziesong Todd**
STEERSMAN **James Penn**

CREATIVES

COMPOSER & LIBRETTIST **Richard Wagner**
DIRECTION **Kate Millett**
CONDUCTOR **Kelly Lovelady**
PIANISTS **Konrad Olszewski & Shauna Beesley**
SET **Ishan Vivekanantham**
LIGHTING & VIDEO **Gabriel Bethune**
COSTUME **Oliver Hall**
SOUND **Jack Burmeister**
STAGE MANAGER **Jazmine Golding**
PRODUCTION MANAGER **Ella Campbell**
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR **Kat Yates**
INTIMACY COORDINATOR **Cohan**
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER **Ricardo Magno**

ENSEMBLE

Andrew Barrow, Archie Rumsam, Benjamin Moore, Beth Paterson, Beth Potter, Bradley Storer, Caitlin Rowe, Danielle Vita, Douglas McQueen-Thomson, Imala Konyn, Joelle Kross, Johanna Tan, Kaitlin Brown, Patrick Heddles, Piri Jakab, Robin Czuchnowski

SUNG IN GERMAN WITH ENGLISH SURTITLES

Age Suitability: 15 and over
Content Warnings: Adult themes, Smoke and Haze, loud noises
Duration: Approximately 3 hours, with interval

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Victorian Opera; Lyster Opera; Wagner Society of NSW; Henkell Brothers Investment Managers; Henkell Wines; Em Jevons; Tiernan Maclaren

** Appearance sponsored by the Wagner Society of NSW*



SYNOPSIS

Tristan is escorting Isolde across the sea to marry his uncle, King Marke. Between them lies a history of violence, obligation, and something neither has been able to name or act upon. As the voyage ends, Isolde, furious and humiliated, orders a death potion for them both. Her attendant Brangäne substitutes a love potion. But in this production, the distinction barely matters.

From the moment they drink, the world outside ceases to exist. They meet in secret, consumed by a force that is less love than infection: an all-annihilating limerence that feeds on itself, destroying everything around them in pursuit of a state that can never quite be reached in life.

They are discovered. Tristan, faced with the consequences of a world he has abandoned, chooses to end it. He falls on Melot's sword, dying as Isolde arrives. She reaches him too late. Or perhaps exactly on time. She follows him into death, not in grief but as completion - the only place the love potion was ever truly taking them.

King Marke arrives to forgive two people who are already gone.





IN REHEARSAL

***TRISTAN UND ISOLDE* IN REHEARSAL**

Photogtaphy by Nicholas Dallas















KATE MILLETT / DIRECTOR

Described by the Herald Sun as “reinforcing opera with an edge,” Kate Millett (she/her) is an Australian opera director whose work gets under the skin.

Abandoning her studies in aerospace engineering to focus on opera, Millett founded BK Opera in 2016, building from scratch a company that has spent a decade making opera that refuses to be comfortable. Her productions are dark, intimate, and psychologically unsparing, placing audiences close enough to feel the danger of what they are watching. She has been awarded Best Director at the OperaChaser Critics’ Choice Awards, holds an Ian Potter Cultural Trust Emerging Artist Grant, and has received Green Room Award nominations across four consecutive years.

Millett has directed over 25 productions across a wide repertoire and has worked as director and assistant director with Victorian Opera, Opera Australia, Melbourne Opera, Pinchgut Opera, WA Opera, and Canberra Opera. In 2026 she observed at Finnish National Opera, Oper Wuppertal, the Royal Swedish Opera, and the Royal Opera House.



KELLY LOVELADY / CONDUCTOR

Kelly Lovelady is an Australian conductor-curator and cultural activist driven by her combined passions for experimental programming, concert dramaturgy and composer advocacy. She's the founding Artistic Director of Ruthless Jabiru: a UK-based chamber orchestra of Australasian musicians exploring humanitarian and social justice stories through new music. Lovelady has devised, self-produced and conducted massed musical and cross-artform projects for festivals worldwide and is in demand internationally as a Musical Director and Guest Conductor specialising in contemporary repertoire and composer collaboration

Adventures so far have included conducted projects with Ensemble intercontemporain and London Symphony Orchestra; returning Musical Director for Gothic Opera's acclaimed <Der Vampyr> revival; Assistant Conductor for George Benjamin & Martin Crimp's <Written on Skin> at Theater Sankt Gallen; Assistant Conductor for the world premiere production of Michael Hersch & Stephanie Fleischmann's <Poppaea> for Wien Modern and Zeiträume Basel; and a joyous 2026 Brisbane Festival debut with the Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra and soloist Lior.



ISHAN VIVEKANANTHAM / SET

Ishan Vivekanantham is a multidisciplinary artist specialising in set and costume design for live performance. A graduate of the Master of Production Design at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), his work spans theatre, cabaret, musical, opera, and dance. His recent credits include Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (Theatreworks); The Seagull (Ravens Theatre Company); Cut Chilli (Darebin Arts Speakeasy); I Love You, Faustus (Unspooled Theatre Collective); Twelfth Night, As You Like It (Melbourne Shakespeare Company); The Lyrebird's Voice, Boojum! (Victorian Opera); and Storytime: Cinderella (The Australian Ballet). Ishan's craft and passion for scenography have been recognised with the Cassidy Bequest – Production Scholarship (2022) and the Trina Parker Scholarship (2023). In 2025, he joined Melbourne Theatre Company's Future Creatives program and was the inaugural recipient of the Truscott Prize, awarded in recognition of his artistic vision and commitment to the future of theatrical design.



OLIVER HALL / COSTUMES

Oliver Hall is a Melbourne-based designer and costumier working across stage and screen. His practice is rooted in costume-making, with a particular interest in the relationship between the performer, the body, and the world of the stage.

Drawing on his background in historical costuming, Oliver approaches established narratives through contemporary visual languages. Oliver holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the National Institute of Dramatic Art and a Master of Production Design from the Victorian College of the Arts.

Recent costume design credits include 'Mary Motorhead / Trade' (Australian Contemporary Opera Company, 2026), 'Macbeth' and 'Fat Pig: The Opera' (BK Opera, 2025), 'Hänsel und Gretel' (Melbourne Conservatorium, 2024), and 'Don Giovanni' (BK Opera, 2024).

His work has been recognised internationally as a Featured Graduate Designer in UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television's 2025 Design Showcase West (United States of America), and he received the 2025 Dionysus Award for Excellence in Costume Design for 'Don Giovanni'.







GABRIEL BETHUNE / LIGHTING & VIDEO

Gabriel Bethune is an artist trained in Theatrical Design. With years of experience in lighting, sound, and video, he narrows his focus on the strange and arcane. Designing non-traditional solutions to non-traditional performances and works.

Gabriel's designs take him on a broad spectrum of performance traditions. From Musical Theatre (The Beep Test, Stranger Sings) to Opera (The Lighthouse, Don Giovanni) Absurdity (The Crocodile) new Australian works (girl at the bottom of a well) as well as Visual Arts (Forests of Ash.)

His practice, despite its broad applications and the many media it inhabits, stems in large part from his love of nature, technology, and the commitment to sharing information and knowledge.

Outside of performance design and his formal arts practice, Gabriel spends his time taking photographs, making music, as well as 3D animation and vibe curation.



JACK BURMEISTER / SOUND

Jack Burmeister is a Melbourne-based Sound Designer and Composer whose work sits at the intersection of theatre, film, and audio storytelling. His practice utilises cinematic, synthesised, and choral textures, alongside environmental sound design, to create rich and detailed sonic worlds that integrate seamlessly into each production.

Jack’s work has been recognised nationally and internationally. He received a Green Room Award nomination for Outstanding Sound Design for The Roof is Caving In, and won Best Score at the Geelong Independent Film Festival for With Everything I Am, which also received Best Student Film at the New York International Film Awards.

Selected recent theatre credits include Lord of the Flies (dir. Steven Mitchel Wright), Red Sky Morning (dir. Lyall Brooks), The Effect (dir. Alonso Pineda), Othello (Melbourne Shakespeare Company), The Wolves (dir. Belle Hansen), TARZAN (dir. Alister Smith), and Thirty-Six (dir. Kitan Petkovski).



JAZMIN GOLDING / STAGE MANAGER

Jazmin Golding developed a love for theatre whilst participating in musicals and studying Theatre Studies at Sandringham College. In 2025, Jaz completed a Diploma of Live Production and Technical Services at Melbourne Polytechnic, where she gained lots of experience and knowledge in theatre technology. Additionally, in 2025, Jaz was Assistant Stage Manager for Theatrical's Legally Blonde (National Theatre), Melbourne Shakespeare Company's As You Like It (St Kilda Botanical Gardens) and Cover Assistant Stage Manager for DV Live's Cruel Intentions: The 90s Musical Party (Alex Theatre). This year so far, Jaz was Assistant Stage Manager on AG Theatre's Mamma Mia (National Theatre), Stage Manager on Theatrical Symphony (National Theatre), Lightning Designer for Melbourne Fringe's Mass Hysteria and Midsumma Festival's Peter Pan: A Twinkle In Time and Lighting Assistant on Melbourne Shakespeare Company's Eurydice (Forty Five Downstairs). Jaz is very excited to be making her opera debut with BK Opera.



KAT YATES / ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Kat Yates (she/her) is an internationally award-winning Naarm -based director, dramaturg and intimacy coordinator.

Her directing credits include the Scotsman Fringe First Award winner NIUSIA (2025) Binge Fringe's Queer Performer's Award winner ALTAR (2025) Melbourne Fringe Access and Inclusion Award winner What If Island (2024), Cult (Melbourne Fringe 2023 & Midsumma, 2023), and Green Room nominated Memoir of a Tired Carer (Melbourne Fringe, 2022), Still Buried (VCA Masters Showcase 2022), Legends or the god killers Dirty Pennies Theatre Project (Zoom Development 2020).

Kat holds a Bachelor of Performing Arts from Monash University and graduated with a Master of Directing for Performance from the VCA, University of Melbourne. She is a recipient of the Keith and Elisabeth Murdoch Travelling Fellowship for 2025. This year she travelled to the Schaubühne, Berlin with the support of Ian Potter Cultural Trust Emerging Artist Grant to undertake a directorial observation with Katie Mitchell.



ABOUT BK OPERA—CELEBRATING A DECADE OF DIRTY SEXY OPERA

BK Opera was founded in Melbourne in 2016 by Kate Millett and James Penn from a simple conviction: that opera could be darker, more intimate, and more dangerous than what was on offer in Australia. In the decade since, it has grown into one of Australia's most distinctive independent opera companies: award-winning, critically acclaimed, and consistently pushing the boundaries of what the artform can be while remaining deeply respectful of the music at its core.

Over ten years and more than 25 productions, BK Opera has built a reputation for bold, visceral, psychologically intense work that treats both its artists and its audiences as intelligent adults, championing repertoire from Bartók and Maxwell Davies to Verdi, Mozart, and Poulenc, and creating opportunities for singers to expand into challenging and rewarding territory. In 2023, the company co-produced the world premiere of The Sea with Forest Collective, nominated for Best New Australian Opera at the Green Room Awards.

The company has been recognised with multiple OperaChaser Critics' Choice Awards, including Best Director 2024, and has received Green Room Award nominations across four consecutive years. Kate Millett holds an Ian Potter Cultural Trust Emerging Artist Grant and a Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation Performing Arts Grant. Her production of Macbeth was described by Classic Melbourne as "one of the outstanding operatic productions of the year" and by Limelight as delivering "vividly visceral staging."

Operating entirely independently, without ongoing government subsidy or institutional infrastructure, BK Opera has the freedom to programme adventurously and take risks that larger companies cannot. This has allowed the company to build an audience genuinely new to opera: people who come curious and uncertain, and come back transformed.



LEE ABRAHMSEN / ISOLDE

Lee Abrahmsen is an acclaimed Australian soprano and one of the leading younger Wagnerian interpreters of her generation. Her Brünnhilde in Siegfried was hailed by Opera Magazine as “a Valkyrie to the hilt,” and Isolde in Tristan und Isolde was described by The Age as “a revelation,” earning Opera Chaser’s Outstanding Performer Award. In addition, she has starred as Senta, Elisabeth, Eva, Freia, and Sieglinde - all for Melbourne Opera.

Abrahmsen has performed with major companies across Australia and internationally, including Opera Australia, Opera Queensland, Victorian Opera, Melbourne Opera, MSO, SSO, QSO, Corpus Medicorum, Omega Ensemble, and at the Edinburgh Festival, St Martin in the Fields, and concerts in China and Japan singing principal roles such as the Marschallin, Leonora (Fidelio), Tosca, Konstanze, Marguerite, Violetta, Amelia (Ballo), Mimi, Michäela, amongst others. A Herald Sun Aria winner, she is also a teacher, AMEB examiner, adjudicator, and founder of Italian Vocal Technique (IVT) studio in North Melbourne.



JAMES EGGLESTONE / TRISTAN

Australian tenor James Egglestone is a two-time Helpmann Award winner and three-time Green Room Award recipient, celebrated for his versatility across a wide operatic repertoire.

His roles span Mozart, bel canto, Wagner and 20th-century masterpieces. A longstanding collaborator with Opera Australia, highlights include Pinkerton (Madama Butterfly), Lensky (Eugene Onegin), Cassio (Otello) and Edrisi (Król Roger). In 2026, he stars in the world premiere of George Palmer’s The Drover’s Wife.

With Victorian Opera, James has performed Aegisth (Elektra), Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni) and Peter Quint (The Turn of the Screw). His State Opera South Australia credits include Rodolfo (La bohème), Don José (Carmen) and Laurie in Mark Adamo’s Little Women, earning him a Helpmann Award. He received a second Helpmann for Richard Mills’s The Love of the Nightingale.

Equally active in concert and oratorio, James has performed with leading Australian and international orchestras, including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Vladimir Ashkenazy.



WARWICK FYFE / KING MARKE

Warwick has been a professional singer for 35 years. He is particularly associated with the Wagnerian repertoire. He has performed Wotan/Wanderer, Hans Sachs, the Dutchman, Wolfram and many other Wagner roles. He won a Helpmann Award for his Alberich and a Green Room Award for his Heerrufer in Lohengrin. In 2023 he achieved the remarkable feat of singing a compete Wotan/Wanderer and a compete Alberich in the same calendar year (for Melbourne Opera and Opera Australia respectively). Beyond Wagner, he has sung many lead roles such as Rigoletto and Falstaff. Warwick's career has taken him to Europe, the UK and Asia. He was awarded a Churchill Fellowship and a Bayreuth Scholarship.



HENRY SHAW / KURWENAL

Henry Shaw, the 2025 OperaChaser Emerging Artist of the Year and a 2024 Herald Sun Aria prize winner, is a singer and director, who also holds a Masters in Writing for Performance from NIDA. As a performer, Henry is highly lauded in Melbourne's opera and musical communities, with a critically acclaimed performance as Leporello in Melbourne Opera's 2026 season of Don Giovanni and notable roles in Meistersinger and Cosi Fan Tutti as the Nightwatchman and Don Alfsonso. He has performed as Figaro (Marriage of Figaro) and received a Green Room nomination for his performance in The Forest Collective's 2023 premiere of The Sea. Other roles include Captain Phillip Thicknesse (English Eccentrics), Arthur (The Lighthouse), La Podestat (Le docteur Miracle), Colline (Boheme), Director/Jitter (Musical of Musicals: The Musical), Director/Superintendent (The Drowsy Chaperone) and an award-winning performance as Caiaphas in CLOC's 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. Recently he has covered the roles of Ferrando (Il Trovatores), Cecil (Maria Stuarda), Abimalech (Samson & Delilah), and Raimondo (Lucia di Lammermoor) with Melbourne Opera and Sweeney Todd/ Judge Turpin (Sweeney Todd) as well as Mr Cave (Eucalyptus) with Victorian Opera. In 2024 he took his podcast "We'll Get There Together - A Neighbours Retrospective" to the Melbourne International Comedy Festival to sell out audiences.



BELINDA DALTON / BRANGÄNE

Soprano Belinda Dalton hails from the small town of Berry on the South Coast of NSW, and holds a BMus Hons (2011) and a Masters (2013) in classical voice performance from the University of Melbourne.

Belinda is known for having, as one reviewer put it, “a powerful voice that is a weapon of mass impression”, and for making her own ballgowns. She has performed principal roles with a variety of companies from Opera Australia to indie companies including our own BK Opera. Recent roles include Mimi, Donna Elvira and Frau Fluth, as well as a number of roles in modern operas. Following a short hiatus in the early pandemic years, during which she earned a degree in Psychology, Belinda returned to win the 2024 BlueScope WIN Wollongong Aria, was a semi-finalist in the 2023 Herald Sun Aria, and a finalist in the 2025 RMP Aria.



DANIEL SZESIONG TODD / MELOT

Daniel Szesiong Todd (鄭時雄) is a Chinese-Australian tenor, actor and writer, who has performed throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas. Beginning his career in Melbourne as a developing artist with Victoria Opera, Daniel then joined the Hamburg State Opera in Germany, where he sang over 30 roles. Later, Daniel moved to Suzhou, China, where he taught music, performed with Suzhou Symphony, and toured with the iSing Opera Festival. In recent years, Daniel has appeared regularly with Opera Australia, Sydney Chamber Opera, Opera Queensland, BK Opera and Forest Collective, as well as touring internationally with The Ten Tenors. Daniel’s poetry, translations and libretti have been performed at Opera Austin (USA), Locke Stock (China), and Midsumma (Australia). His opera Labyrinth (2024), written with composer Evan Lawson, was a finalist for the APRA-AMCOS Art Music Awards, and won the Green Room Award for best new Australian opera.



JAMES PENN / STEERSMAN

James Penn is an emerging tenor and conductor, who began his musical training as a boy chorister at All Saints church, St Kilda East. He holds a Bachelor of Music Performance from the Victorian College of the Arts, and a Graduate Diploma in Music from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. In 2016 he co-founded BK opera.

His roles include Turiddu (Cavalleria Rusticana), Camille de Rossillon (The Merry Widow), Lucentio (The taming of the shrew), Frederic (the Pirates of Penzance), Ralph Rackstraw (HMS Pinafore), Rodolfo (La Bohème), Pollione (Norma), Beadle Bamford (Sweeney Todd), Don Curzio (Marriage of Figaro), and the title role in Werther. He was a member of the Richard Divall developing artist program with Melbourne opera from 2023-2026.



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