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Opera



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Jessica Pratt in 'Lucia di Lammermoor' © Marcello Orselli

Introduction

Lucia di Lammermoor is one of the most significant operas of the Italian bel canto tradition and is held by many to be Donizetti's best work. It was written in 1835 when Donizetti was at the height of his success, with the libretto by Salvatore Cammarano. *Lucia di Lammermoor* is based on the Sir Walter Scott novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and is set in Scotland in the 1700s. The original opera was written in Italian and is being performed by Victorian Opera in Italian. The production was also revised by Donizetti to French in 1838 for a French opera house.

There are a number of pieces in the work that have made *Lucia di Lammermoor* so hugely popular. The sextet and the 'mad scene' are the most renowned sections from this opera. Donizetti was a master of creating and building the dramatic journey of the characters through the structure, music and words of his operas. The end of Act II and Act III is where all the drama of the story of *Lucia di Lammermoor* truly unfolds and where both of these musical examples reside.

In the mid-1900s the opera was revived around the world, in part due to the role of Lucia being played by both Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland.

Jessica Pratt, who stars as Lucia in Victorian Opera's production, is the third Australian to sing the role at La Scala in Milan, after Dames Melba and Sutherland. Although she has sung the role in 16 productions around the world, this will be her first time performing the role in Australia.

Note from Richard Mills

Richard Mills, conductor for *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Artistic Director of Victorian Opera, writes –

This is an opera where the music and text are completely at one with poetic intention. This is not 'realistic' drama but rather a story which reveals the inner lives of the characters – how they feel – the language of the hearts – manifested through great music and great singing in the Italian tradition. The most lasting memories are based on how we feel – not the facts of what we did in any situation – thus it is with bel canto opera. In the modern world, we often hide our emotions and much popular culture is based on action, violence and spectacle, not on poetry and refinement. This work is profoundly human in so far as it reaches into the core of our human suffering and raises it to the level of tragic dignity through the enduring language of music and poetry. The experience of this art helps us discover our feelings and express them in the deepest sense, it makes us more civilised as a community.

Cast & Creative Team

Conductor – Richard Mills

Director – Cameron Menzies

Design – a remount of the original Henry Bardon design

Lighting Design – Donn Byrnes

Cast	Character	Singer	Voice Type
Lucia	Enrico's sister	Jessica Pratt	Soprano
Enrico	Lord Ashton of Lammermoor	José Carbó	Baritone
Edgardo	Master of Ravenswood	Carlos E. Bárcenas	Tenor
Arturo	Lord Bucklaw	Michael Petruccelli	Tenor
Raimondo	Chaplain at Lammermoor	Jud Arthur	Bass
Alisa	Maid to Lucia	Shakira Tsindos	Mezzo-soprano
Normanno	Supporter of Ashton	Michael Lapina	Tenor

Synopsis

Act 1 – The guards of Lammermoor castle are sent to search for a suspected intruder on the property of Enrico Ashton. Enrico is concerned. His family's fortunes are in danger and the only solution is to marry his sister to Lord Arturo. The chaplain Raimondo reminds him that his sister Lucia is still in mourning for the death of her mother. But Enrico learns from his captain of the guard, Normanno, that his sister is in love with his despised enemy and neighbour Edgardo Ravenswood. When Enrico discovers the intruder was in fact Edgardo, he is even angrier.

Lucia and her nurse Alisa are waiting at the fountain where Lucia is to meet Edgardo. She reveals to Alisa that she has seen the ghost of the ancestress that was murdered by a Ravenswood. Alisa tries to get her to leave Edgardo but Lucia believes love will conquer all. Edgardo arrives and Alisa is sent to be on guard. Edgardo tells Lucia that he must go to France to fight and declares that he wants to make peace with Enrico before he goes, but Lucia is too afraid of her brother's temper. They promise their love with an exchange of rings.

Act 2 – *Some months later on the day Lucia is set to marry Arturo.*

Enrico and Normanno have intercepted all the letters from Edgardo and forged a letter which 'proves' his infidelity. Lucia still resists the marriage but Enrico shows her the forged letter and pleads his desperate political position, which will only be able to be resolved if she marries Arturo. This distresses Lucia but the forged letter and encouragement from the chaplain Raimondo weaken her resolve. The wedding takes place and Lucia with great reluctance signs the contract just as Edgardo arrives unexpectedly to claim her. They are all in shock. When Enrico shows the wedding contract Edgardo curses Lucia and leaves in a fit of rage.

Act 3 – Enrico goes to Edgardo's ruined home and a duel is agreed for the next day. Meanwhile the wedding festivities are interrupted by Raimondo's disclosure that Lucia has murdered her husband Arturo. She appears, clearly having lost her mind believing she is to marry Edgardo and jumps between terror, joy and tenderness. Enrico returns and is enraged but realises Lucia's mental state. Finally, Lucia collapses. Edgardo is distraught at Lucia's 'betrayal' and contemplates killing himself if he can't have her. Learning of her death, he stabs himself to join her in heaven.

Background

Donizetti



Portrait of Gaetano Donizetti by [Giuseppe Rilloso](#)

Gaetano Donizetti was born on 29 November 1797 and died on April 8, 1848.

Donizetti started his musical training as a choirboy under the tutelage of Giovanni Mayr, from where he entered the Liceo Filarmonico in Bologna studying fugue and counterpoint from one of Rossini's teachers. He composed his first successful opera, *Enrico di Borgogna* in 1818 and went on to write a further 31 whilst in Naples. He moved to Paris in the late 1830s and continued to write operas for the French market. Bellini, one of the other renowned bel canto opera composers had recently died, leaving room for Donizetti to flourish. He wrote a total of 70 operas but only a few have survived into contemporary repertoire.

Donizetti's operas are renowned for the level of musicianship he employed in the creation of each of his operas. He was particularly skilled at following the successful formulas of the day and for bringing a new level of balance to all the theatrical and musical elements of his operas. Donizetti was very attentive to his singers and to the responses of his audience. During the 1830s the art form of opera was about to launch into a new stage of development. Donizetti worked out during this time that the three types of music available for singers in opera (recitative, aria and arioso) needed development. He added more arioso into his operas – melodic music similar to a recitative in role but less formal than an aria - knowing that this would make the music of the opera flow more and this would help improve dramatic staging. He became a master of structuring operas to build the dramatic tension, through the music and by supervising the libretti.

[Listen to Musicologist Stephen Bonfield](#) talk about Donizetti and *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Lucia di Lammermoor

By the time Donizetti wrote *Lucia di Lammermoor*, three other libretti were already in existence. This was evidence of European interest in Scottish stories at the time. Sir Walter Scott's novel was partly based on a true story of Janet Dalrymple.

After Donizetti's success with his Tudor inspired opera *Anna Bolena*, he was contracted to compose three operas for the Royal Theatres of Naples. It only took him six weeks to write *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Unfortunately the actual performance was delayed as a result of the financial difficulties of the theatre, and it only went on after King Ferdinand II stepped in and resolved the issue.

It was a success from the point of view of both critics and audiences.

What is *bel canto*?

Bel canto in English is literally translated to 'beautiful singing'. It is the expressive fusion of text and music.

Dating back to the 1630s in Venetian Opera and polyphonic works, this style of performance is best known in the Italian operatic repertoire in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, however Italian Madrigal was the beginning of *bel canto*. Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti are most noted for their *bel canto* works.

Bel canto is best described as a control in intensity and agile flexibility of the voice. A *bel canto* performer must have the ability to maintain long legato phrases within a great dynamic range whilst producing clear and articulate pitches and text. The term *bel canto* became loosely and widely used in the vocabulary of Italian singing to describe the art of beautiful singing with a pure sound, agility and expressiveness.

During this time students from the ages of twelve were expected to undergo specific disciplines to achieve the developmental understanding of *bel canto*. The voice was treated as an instrument. These were disciplines which included years and years of vocal training and exercises before the student was allowed to sing the delicate repertoire. Only after a level of stylistic understanding was acquired by the student would they be allowed the chance to explore the *bel canto* repertoire, this was done by listening to great singers and imitating them.

Rossini reportedly discussed after a dinner at his Paris residence in 1858 the decline in traditional *bel canto* training and that its true understanding has been lost since the 'golden age'.

It is suggested that without this in-depth training *bel canto* cannot be feasibly obtained by singers of this generation.

There was a revival of *bel canto* works in the twentieth century with singers like Joan Sutherland and Beverly Sills, which continues to this day.

The songs

Act 1

Preludio
Percorrete le spiagge vicine
Tu sei turbato!
Cruda, funesta smania (Enrico)
La pietade in suo favore (Enrico)
Ancor non giunse! (Lucia)
Regnava nel silenzio (Lucia)
Quando rapito in estasi (Lucia)
Egli s'avanza (Alisa, Edgardo,
Lucia)
Sulla tomba che rinserra (Edgardo,
Lucia)
Qui di sposa eterna...Ah!
Verranno a te sull'aure (Edgardo,
Lucia)

Act 2

Lucia, fra poco a te verrà
Appressati, Lucia
Il pallor funesto, orrendo
Soffriva nel pianto
Che fia
Se tradirmi tu potrai
Ebben? – Di tua speranza
Ah! cedi, cedi (Raimondo)
Al ben de' tuoi qual vittima
(Raimondo)
Per te d'immenso giubilo
Dov'è Lucia?
Chi mi frena in tal momento
(Sextet)
T'allontana sciagurato

Act 3

D'immenso giubilo
Ah! cessate quel contento
Oh! qual funesto avvenimento!
Oh, giusto cielo!...Il dolce suono
(Lucia, "Mad Scene")
Ohimè! sorge il tremendo
fantasma
S'avanza Enrico
Spargi d'amaro pianto
Si tragga altrove
Tombe degli avi miei (Edgardo)
Fra poco a me ricovero
Oh meschina!
Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali
(Edgardo)

The Instrumentation

The orchestration is written for:

- Strings: harp, violin I, violin II, viola, cello, double bass
- Woodwind: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons
- Brass: 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones
- Percussion: timpani, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, tubular bells, glass harmonica

Donizetti mostly used the common orchestration of the time with a couple of notable additions for *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He scored the harp and the glass harmonica in his original score, however he wrote the glass harmonica out of the score and replaced it with two flutes at the behest of his producers.

Glass Harmonica

The glass harmonica was invented by Benjamin Franklin in 1761, and constitutes a spindle holding glass bowls that are played with fingers moistened by water as the bowls spin around.



Repetiteur Phillipa Safey plays the glass harmonica while Richard Mills looks on ©Charlie Kinross

- Listen to a snippet of it [here](#) in rehearsal for Lucia.
- An introduction to the instrument and examples including a segment from Lucia is [here](#).

In conversation with Jessica Pratt and Carlos E. Bárcenas

Interviews by Education Officer, Deborah Vanderwerp

Deb: Jessica, I believe you have been very supportive of Carlos as a singer.

Jessica Carlos has an amazing voice and is a lovely person, and when I heard him singing in *La Traviata* about three years ago now, I was really impressed. He was covering the role of Alfredo, and I asked if he could sing bel canto things and he sang some really impressive high notes and I was like 'wow' we don't really get people with natural voices like that anymore. He understudied in *I Puritani* and he was really good, when I heard him sing that, I was really keen on him doing a role here. This is a perfect environment for someone debuting a role, especially as Carlos has such a good relationship with everyone here and it's a very safe environment. I was very keen on him doing that and he came to Italy to work on his Italian and to check through things. I've sung the role 16 or 17 times and so I know it quite well and so we worked through it together.

Carlos: For me it's been an amazing experience because first of all I didn't know what type of tenor I was. I knew I was a tenor, but there's always been this kind of idea here in Australia that I was a big tenor for Puccini or stuff like that, but I always had that little thing in my head that I didn't feel 100% that kind of tenor. And meeting Jess and talking about things and getting to sing, she kind of opened my eyes to that.

I had been exposed to bel canto repertoire before I came to Australia but not that I could sing it as I can now, but my old teacher had the idea that I was that kind of tenor. And then things change and suddenly you are in a whirl and you are learning but you don't really know and Jess...

Jessica: ...I'm pretty stubborn...

Carlos: ...also she's been extremely generous with her knowledge and her help, she's been a really good friend. With her work on detail I have made a lot of changes because of that, she has opened a whole new way of singing for me. I feel it. It's still in construction. To fix it is never ending but it's like the first time you open a door and you see something good but it's just a crack and hopefully I will get to open the whole door.

Jessica: Carlos has been really good. He's been open to trying new things, which is really hard. When you learn a certain way of singing and you have a certain technique, to change that or to try new things puts you in a very vulnerable place. He's been really great because he's been really trusting and tried things and he's also changed really quickly, like he's taken a lot of stuff on board really quickly, which is fantastic.

Carlos: I still have to work on my Italian to really get the flow of the language, some technical stuff, but I think I'm heading in the right direction. I'm feeling more confident. I was really nervous on the first day of music rehearsals but apparently what we've been doing has been responding and that has given me more confidence. It's a really good feeling for a singer to have confidence that what you are doing is working. It makes life easier and when you don't have confidence in what you are doing it is really tiring and can be really draining.

Deb What does Carlos bring to this part that your other Edgardos might not have?

Jessica The fantastic thing about working with another singer, like working with Carlos, is that I'm re-learning the role myself, I'm looking at the things I'm telling him to do and I'm realising that I've got a bit lazy and that I might not be doing them so it actually makes me work on myself a lot more. I am more aware of technical things and language things. I'm saying them every day to Carlos and I'm thinking I'm doing that too so I'd better fix that. It is very healthy I think. It provides a new energy a new impetus. And with Carlos, he's really tall. I said to him on the very first day we did the scene, I don't know what to do. I'm used to having to sing the role kneeling down because most of the tenors are a bit shorter than me. So it's the first time I actually sing with a tenor that's so tall.

Deb And does it change the way that you sing?

Jessica You get used to doing things, it gets to be a bit like a routine so having something so physically different makes me rethink everything and obviously the character becomes a bit more vulnerable, because she's smaller. Sometimes I feel



Jessica Pratt in La Scala's 2014 production of Lucia © Brescia/Amisano Teatro alla Scala

like I'm more mothering than lover to some tenors simply because of physical aspects. So that's interesting for me. And also the rest of the cast. It's a very good production in that everything's new and everything feels different and we are exploring new ideas and it's very refreshing for me to suddenly be able to start from scratch. I like that. Every production you do, you make mistakes, you learn bad habits and if you don't clean them off they get worse and worse, so this is a good opportunity to start again.

Deb: How does it feel knowing you are going to be doing this for Australian audiences for the first time?

Jessica It's very exciting. I always wanted to sing Lucia in Australia, it's the role I sing the most in the rest of the world. I've sung it at La Scala, I've sung it at the Met in New York. I've sung it in Zürich, in Amsterdam, all over Italy. It's one of the most important things to be able to sing my repertoire here. It was very exciting to sing I Puritani in concert here last year but to be able to do Lucia on stage and on such a beautiful set as well. It's really an incredible production and my mum can come, and she can bring her friends and my niece is going to see me for the first time – she does a really good impression of an opera singer, 'they go la, la, la and then they die'. I'm excited about showing her a rehearsal or something like that.

Deb: Carlos, This is a really important role for you, how are you feeling about it?

Carlos I think what helps is to be in the work every day and believe that things will work. I think that's the only way to approach it. The nerves will kick in when I go on stage but hopefully with all the work I have done it will work, and I can't wait. It's such beautiful music. Since I've been exposed to opera I have always had a sense that I have a romantic feel for bel canto. It's not that I don't like Puccini or Wagner, but there is something about it, I think it's the melodies, the way it's composed, it feels really truthful when you hear the melodies. It really touches me. It's something about how Donizetti and Bellini use melody.

Jessica They tend to develop emotions in a slower way and it's often a more profound way. Whereas Verdi will throw you a new emotion every ten seconds. You might take twenty minutes to develop an emotion in a bel canto opera and it feels more honest in a lot of cases.

Deb **How does the fact that this is a reimagining affect your preparation?**

Jessica We are very free in this production; we have the basic staging and the set of course but we are working together and the really good thing is that we seem to be a group that trusts each other. We are collaborating with each other, we are very open to say 'I feel this way' and someone else can say 'I see it this way' and someone else can say 'I see it that way'. And then we find a way together that we all feel right about it and that doesn't necessarily happen often. Sometimes you get people who are really closed and don't really trust the situation for whatever reason and they can't change things and they can be quite rigid whereas in this case we have a very intelligent, open and emotionally confident cast and so it's very exciting.

Carlos I also think it is a really beautiful production. It is kind of exciting to think that we are going to be on that set.

Jessica We are doing a 'proper' Lucia.

Carlos We are doing it with a fountain of water. We are in something solid. We are in this castle.

Jessica There's a real place to evoke the situation. That helps a lot.

Carlos I think the audience will enjoy something like that, it will transport you back to...

Jessica ...a different time.

Deb **What is it about Donizetti's music that you enjoy?**

Jessica I think it's very challenging, which I enjoy, the coloratura, the pizzicati, the technical things. But it also has a really good emotional aspect to it as well. You've got nice legato lines, there are very dramatic scenes in this opera. The sextet is one of the best things ever written.

Carlos I think also, talking from the perspective of the singer, I believe if you learn to sing this repertoire pretty well, it opens your whole world. You will be a healthier singer if you sing it well.

Jessica It's hard for the singer because there is little orchestration underneath so you are really exposed. You have to have good tuning and you have to keep the voice high. You have to sing well otherwise it's really obvious you aren't singing well. So if you can get through one of these operas with dignity, then other things are a lot easier.

Carlos It's the melodies, the use of text, the characters...

Jessica ...the characters are well developed in this opera which is something that with bel canto doesn't necessarily happen. In this opera they are all very well written. They all have a complexity about them.

Carlos The music is beautiful. Parts can be long but everyone has a nice aria to sing, the ensemble has really nice parts to do. I think the audience will enjoy it because the ride is really solid.

Jessica There's nothing in Lucia that I'd throw away, it's all really good.

Deb What does bel canto mean for you?

Carlos It means beautiful singing. It means good breath. Control of the breath is important. It means long phrases, so you have to be able to maintain phrases with intention. One of the things we have been working on is that you cannot control your voice, you have to be able to let go. It's one of the difficult things you have to learn. It's like climbing a high hill. You can do it but you don't know how many times you can.



(L to R) Carlos Barcenas, Jud Arthur, Jose Carbo and Michael Petruccelli rehearse their swordplay © Charlie Kinross

Jessica We have a tendency now-a-days to really muscle our throats, to sort of force the sound out, which happened in the early to mid-1900s. The technique changed to be able to sing Wagner and Puccini and things like that but if you sing bel canto like that it's very difficult and you suffer. Nellie Melba used to say, it's really hard to sing badly and really easy to sing well. Meaning that you have to make a lot of effort to sing badly, because you squish the sound and push it around, bully it around basically and to sing well you have to look for ease and freedom and space. But it's a very difficult task mentally to understand, to let go of control and trust that the high position and the breath will keep it there. It doesn't mean it's not easy, it's actually exhausting on the breath. At the end of the night your stomach and back are really painful and tired, but your throat's fine.

I drink like three litres of water in a show and I sweat it all out.

Carlos And also the mental concentration it requires makes you tired. There are a lot of things to be working on. At this point for instance, where are the consonants, what are you saying? I'm thinking about the breath, keeping relaxed, keeping on top of it, not falling into the dramatic idea of it. Be dramatic with the body and tie everything up but find the drama of it without getting tense.

Jessica This gets easier with time, because at this stage Carlos is just starting to grasp all of these concepts. In a year or two, those will become natural things, and you will be thinking about character with only a tiny bit of your mind on the technique.

Carlos It changes depending on the level of the singer. I think when an audience goes to see an opera that is bel canto they should be able to sit and then just enjoy the beauty and the ease of what the singer is doing on the stage.

Jessica They shouldn't be thinking is he going to make it or is he not going to make it.

Carlos It's an experience of beauty.

Jessica It's a celebration of all of the possibilities of the voice because you use everything.

Carlos I think Jessica is one of the only one of the Lucias I have seen or heard, who sings this way. Her contrast of colours and dynamics, everything is so warm and so beautiful and so detailed that it brings bel canto to another level that has been lost in the last 30 years.

Jessica We're not giving a lot of attention to singing piano (soft) these days. I think a lot are just singing loud all the time and that gets boring really quickly, especially in this music. The magic is what the singers can do with the music, like how they can express it in a detailed way, keeping it like a web of sound so you work with that web all night and don't break it with an ugly sound. You have to keep the beauty of the sound, not like Verdi, where you are permitted to scream or you make an awful sound that is frightening as an effect. It's not appropriate in this repertoire.

There's a way of singing piano on the voice that travels and it will sometimes travel more than a forte. I've noticed when I put a recorder at the back of the auditorium sometimes the piano sounds louder than the mezzo forte because when you are singing piano right, you have absolutely no tension in your body so the bones ring more. Our instrument is our skeleton and so when the bones ring more it actually travels more around the room, it's quite creepy. There are choirs that sing with harmonics so they actually sound like they're singing behind you and then like they are singing next to you. We as human beings can actually do this with our voices and that is what opera singers should do. You can do this when you sing quietly and you point the voice in the right place and it's supported with the breath, it travels. But you have to trust it because it doesn't feel like it will.

Deb **There are an extraordinary range of emotions that you will have to go through each night. What's the preparation you do?**

Jessica It's all about the emotion in the music. One of the good things about opera is that we actually get help. I tend to listen to the music in the character so I just become that character and often I come off stage and I have cuts and bruises that I didn't realise happened during the show because I am so far into the moment that I didn't feel it.

Deb **So what do you do to prepare yourself for that, what do you do to debrief from that?**

Jessica Debriefing is the hard thing. Usually after certain roles like Lucia, it takes a lot out of me. Where the female characters are basically beaten on mentally all night tends to kill me and the next day I can't leave the house, or I'd faint. I'm not really in a good way the day after a show. It takes the day and then I'm alright, but everything hurts. You have adrenaline that has gone through your body and has left all that acid in your body and your muscles.

Carlos It is going to be my first experience in a role of this size so I don't yet know how it is going to go.

Jessica It kind of happens when you go into the complete runs of the opera. It kind of builds through the run, then you feel the connection. It connects the dots basically. Now we are just rehearsing in sections.

Carlos So I haven't yet been on stage and done the journey. It's one thing singing it in sections but it's only when you are on stage...

Jessica ...that you get caught up in the moment.

Carlos We'll see how it goes, I'll let you know.

Deb **Anything else?**

Jessica Yes, in the early stages of singing Lucia, in the sextet, when she's really in trouble, I would get these massive stomach cramps, like really painful, and the first time I thought I was really sick and then the next time it happened at exactly the same point and then I thought wait a minute this is my fault, because I was so tense inside. This still occasionally happens, if there is something happening in my life that's stressful when I do this production then I get the cramps in the sextet, it's really annoying. I'm getting used to it now, and I think I'm just going to breathe and take a second out.

Carlos It is also part of the job of the singer, to learn to step out, when to take a second. Not that you disconnect from the thing but you need to step out and need to breathe and need to keep singing.

Jessica Otherwise your voice is going to go all weird. You need to be the puppet master and not the puppet.

Carlos The chance to do this work, to do this opera feels like a validation. I never thought I would be doing this. I started late, it's been a long journey without a musical background. So everything I've done has been a new experience. But for me standing and doing this feels like... it brings me joy. This happiness that I get to be doing something that I never expected to be doing. I don't know what will happen after this, hopefully it will keep going well, but just having this moment is just priceless. It's all happened because of Jessica and Victorian Opera, it's all these things that happened for me.

Deb But I also know how hard you've worked.

Carlos You need to work hard and if you are interested in singing, just work. Nothing happens just because you have a good voice. It will take you somewhere, but how far?

Deb Thanks very much for your insights and time.

In conversation with Director Cameron Menzies

Deb What is your particular connection to Lucia di Lammermoor?

Cam I am the director so everything you see on stage in terms of movement and how people move is the director's job.



This is the second production of Lucia that I have directed, the first was in London. This one is slightly bigger in terms of size and set and a much earlier period. The director also looks at the period in which to set it. My first was set in the late Victorian Period, this one is set much, much earlier, probably around the time it was actually written for. My first involvement is when the company asks you to direct and you don't necessarily get a choice as to what the piece is but I guess the company tries to pair up the director with a production that suit each other.

(L to R) Jud Arthur and Director Cameron Menzies in rehearsal © Charlie Kinross

Deb Why did you decide to do this production?

Cam The reason I took it is because I love the piece. I think it is one of the most perfect operas ever written, especially in the bel canto period. Narratively it completely makes sense. There are some other operas in the bel canto period where the narrative is insane and no one can make sense of it, this isn't one of those. Working with Victorian Opera you get a

chance to fully realise a whole production, which in this country is getting rarer and rarer. I took it, one - because I love working, two - because I love the piece and also the cast. I knew the cast that they were initially putting together. That was a great interest, to work with someone like Jessica and all the cast. To work with someone who knows the role intimately, has performed it all over the world was of great interest to me.

Deb How is that going?

Cam Really well. We are really lucky, we came together and were very much on the same page. We both see Lucia as a very vibrant, independent and strong willed young woman who through the expectations and pressures of society is broken beyond repair and she descends into this kind of madness. But we both feel that a lot of people focus on the madness and not enough on the vibrancy of this young woman. You've got to see how Edgardo and she can fall in love otherwise there is no journey for us. We can all relate to that vibrancy, not that we've all gone mad, but we all understand some sort of downfall in our lives.

Deb What are you doing to make this work yours?

Cam That's the tricky thing. I feel like if a director does their job really well they don't exist but if they do their job poorly they are everywhere. So I try to make myself vanish. But I feel that the big thing I try and strive for is that it's real. Even if the vocal writing is virtuosic, you still have to impinge on the other person. So that's kind of a style that I take across no matter what the work is, I guess I try and shape it and make all the transitions as believable and as smooth as I can make them and really have that balance between light and dark. That's as much as I can bring into it.

It is an existing design. It's not my initial concept however it is a concept that is easily workable, I have had room to move within that design slightly. It's the definition of the characters and how they all slot together and how they all affect each other. At the end of it everyone's life is ruined, not just this poor girl's. We are all full of contradictions and flaws, and these people are written exactly like that. So I guess it's to highlight that and not to gloss over that stuff but to really make them three dimensional, so that as an audience we can really connect with these people. Even if we have never heard an opera in our lives these people are recognisable, and even if the set and costume is from a couple of hundred years ago, they are still just people. That's my goal for the piece.

Deb With this being a 'remount', how has that affected your directorial choices?

Cam It's not necessarily a remount, it's a reimagining. I've not had to stick to any original blocking. Obviously the costumes and set come as is, but this combination of actors have never been together before so it's my job to tailor the roles to these people and also to bring out the moments of each of these actors to actually make these characters live. Jessica brings an idea of a Lucia to the room as Jose brings his idea of Enrico, as they all do. It's to put this combination of actors together, that is what is exciting, to tailor it to the actors that I have in the room, the characters that they bring, which I feel is a remount in some respects, but not really. Jessica's done 17 productions of Lucia but she's still in the room trying to find new discoveries with me and with her other co-workers and she's trying to find her Lucia against Carlos' Edgardo and all that sort of stuff. I feel as a director that that's what reimagining is about.

Deb You are working with very experienced singers, most of whom know the work well, what are the particular quirks of this for you?

Cam Everyone comes understanding their piece knowing what the language means and so you can jump off straight away and just start working. You don't have to worry that someone doesn't understand what is being said or what is being said to them or around them. And also there is an understanding of style, this is a very stylised world, the bel canto period as well and is very much about the music.

Lucia has its own psychology and does have a very strong narrative. I feel like we all instantly locked into that. The sense of being able to work quickly is a nice quirk. We've been able to roughly block it in a week, without the chorus, because I haven't had any chorus rehearsals yet. That doesn't mean it's ready or polished but we can move it very quickly because everyone knows what the scene entails. It's not about finding what happens in a scene, it's about recreating those moments. That's a great shorthand to have. Everyone has wanted to look at the contradictions and the flaws so that's been interesting. We now have the rest of the rehearsal period to keep honing in and discovering and finding things and not nailing everything down in the last minute and so we can play and talk about the meaning of different things and actually get into the subtext of what the opera is saying – not just the literal.

Deb What are the essential differences between grand opera and other opera?

Cam A lot of it is purely budget. I know people mean grand opera in that it's a full chorus and orchestra and it's a fully realised production. I feel like grand opera is a design concept as well, in that in theatre you are able to suggest things design wise but in grand opera, in some terms everything has to be realised. When you come and see this production you will see that nothing is suggested, it is really built. There's a staircase in the middle of the room and there are columns that go into the middle of nowhere. There is nothing that is suggested. Grand opera probably has some kind of definition in terms of the epic nature of the stories, where everything is heightened. I am not sure if there is a huge difference between opera and grand opera because we are already heightened. I look at *The Grumpiest Boy in The World*, that I did last year, which is still grand opera in some form, there were around 50 kids on stage, that's grand on its own scale. This production is kind of the last of those 19th Century huge built and designed pieces and it's great to be able to put it together again and make its nod to that old world charm.

Education Activities - Music

Pre-Visit Exploration

Research

- Look up other productions or compositions that use the glass harmonica. Why do you think it has been used in these contexts? Why would you use it in a composition?
- Discover which other operas were composed around this time in Italy and who they were composed by. Were they similar in style and content?
- What were some of the key differences between operas written in England, France, Italy and Germany at that time?

Listen

- Watch the two examples below of the 'mad scene'.
- What are the similarities and differences in interpretation that you can identify?
 - [An excerpt](#) of Australian soprano Emma Matthews performing 'The Mad Scene' from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Showing in Sydney and Melbourne in 2012 by Opera Australia.
 - [The mad scene](#) Performed by IU Opera Theater, February 13, 2010, in the Musical Arts Center with the Philharmonic Orchestra.
- Bel canto singing is a lyrical and virtuosic style of operatic singing from the 18th and 19th centuries. Listen to [this](#) love scene between Lucia (Joan Sutherland) and Edgardo (Luciano Pavarotti) and describe the features of the music and their singing voices.
- Watch the two versions of the sextet from the end of Act II below. What do you notice about the differences in interpretation of the singing, characterisation and staging?

[Metropolitan Opera](#)

[Seoul Art Centre Opera](#)

- Listen to one of these versions of the duet, *Suffriva nel pianto* from the beginning of Act II.

[Version 1](#)

[Version 2](#)

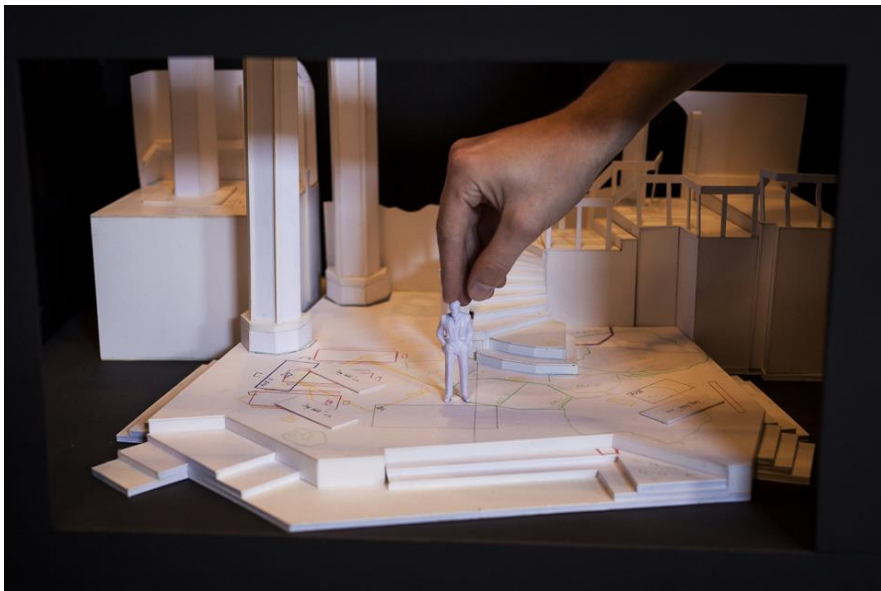
- In this scene Enrico is lying to Lucia to get her to agree to marry Arturo.
 - What is happening in the music to reflect the characterisation and emotional content of this scene? Describe how the music works to enhance the story and the different character's journeys.

Discuss

[This recording](#) is of the Opera Australia 1986 production of Lucia, with Dame Joan Sutherland playing Lucia. This is the version being reimaged by Victorian Opera with Jessica Pratt as Lucia. The set and costumes are the same ones that VO will be using for this production, but the staging/direction is new.

Discuss the following questions with your classmates.

- Do you revisit movies, television series or go and see shows more than once? Why do you do that?
- Why do you think VO has decided to do a version of this particular production?
- Do you think there is a responsibility of opera companies to recreate work for audiences, in the same way that we have retrospectives of visual artists or re-releases of classics in literature or have revivals of musical theatre productions?
 - Why do you think that?
 - What purpose does this serve?



A set model for Victorian Opera's Lucia di Lammermoor © Charlie Kinross

Learn

Look at the following excerpt of the music from the chorus in Act II.

Try to play or sing the soprano line. It will give you a sense of the beautiful melodies that Donizetti composes.

114

Soprani

O
E
C

Tenori

Bassi

Per te d'immen - so giu - bi - lo

Per te d'immen - so giu - bi - lo

Per te d'immen - so giu - bi - lo

32

p *f*

tut - to s'avvi - vain - tor - - no, per te veggiam ri -

tut - to s'avvi - vain - tor - - no, per te veggiam ri -

tut - to s'avvi - vain - tor - - no, per te veggiam ri -

- na - sce - re del - la speran - za il gior - - no,

- na - sce - re del - la speran - za il gior - - no,

- na - sce - re del - la speran - za il gior - - no,

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qui l'a - mi - stà ti gui - - da, qui ti condu - ce a -
 qui l'a - mi - stà ti gui - - da, qui ti condu - ce a -
 qui l'a - mi - stà ti gui - - da, qui ti condu - ce a -

The first system of the musical score consists of three vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in a soprano clef, and the piano part is in a bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "qui l'a - mi - stà ti gui - - da, qui ti condu - ce a -". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex bass line in the left hand.

- mo - - re, tut - to s'avvi - vain - tor - - no,
 - mo - - re, tut - to s'avvi - vain - tor - - no,
 - mo - - re, tut - to s'avvi - vain - tor - - no,

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are: "- mo - - re, tut - to s'avvi - vain - tor - - no,". The piano accompaniment continues with its characteristic eighth-note pattern and bass line.

qui ti con - du - ce a - mor, qual
 qui ti con - du - ce a - mor, qual
 qui ti con - du - ce a - mor, qual

The third system of the musical score concludes the vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are: "qui ti con - du - ce a - mor, qual". The piano accompaniment features triplets in the right hand and continues with its bass line. The system ends with a fermata over the final notes.

a - stro in not - te in - fi - da, qual ri - so nel do -

a - stro in not - te in - fi - da, qual ri - so nel do -

a - stro in not - te in - fi - da, qual ri - so nel do -

- lor; qual a - stro in not - te in - fi - da, qual

- lor; qual a - stro in not - te in - fi - da, qual

- lor; qual a - stro in not - te in - fi - da, qual

ARTURO *Poco meno* *p*

Per

ri - so nel do - lor.

ri - so nel do - lor.

ri - so nel do - lor.

33 *Poco meno* *p*

Analyse

Below is the Harp cadenza. What do you learn about the instrument and the music from this excerpt?

Harp cadenza (1 bar before fig 23, p34 pv score)

Harp

ff

E: F# G: A:
D# C# B#

p

2

Harp

più lento

pp

3

Harp

cresc poco a poco

4

Harp

meno mosso

rit e poco a poco dim

ff D: B: *pp* G#

5

Harp

p dolce

G#

etc.

During Your Visit

- Observe the theatre and the patrons. What observations do you make about the style of Her Majesty's Theatre? What do you notice about the patrons of Grand Opera in Melbourne? How did they respond to the opera?
- Observe the stagecraft elements of the production. Knowing that the set and costumes are from a previous production, what do you notice about them? What work do you think has been done on these elements to prepare them for this production? What did you notice about the lighting design?



Costumes on racks for Victorian Opera's Lucia di Lammermoor

- How well did the orchestra balance with the singers? What affect did the instrumentation have on you and your reaction/connection with the story?
- What did you enjoy about the entire experience?
- How did the surtitles affect your experience?

Post Show Reflection

- What did the critics say? Look up reviews of the opera and see how they compare with your interpretation. Write a review of the opera for your school newsletter.
- Did you enjoy the opera? What appealed to you?
- Which character(s) impacted on you most? What was it about this (these) character(s) that connected with you?
- What was it about the set/costumes/lighting that enhanced your experience/enjoyment of the opera?
- Go to the Victorian Opera [youtube channel](#) and website for further information about the opera.

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