

IL TABARRO

Sydney
Festival
2024



IL TABARRO

By Giacomo Puccini

Victorian Opera

AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVE

Australian National Maritime Museum

9 - 13 January

60 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Simon Bruckard

Director Constantine Costi

Set & Costume Designer Sabina Myers

Lighting Designer Matthew Marshall

Sound Designer Tony David Cray

Movement Director & Assistant Director

Shannon Burns

CAST

Michele Simon Meadows

Luigi James Egglestone

Giorgetta Olivia Cranwell

Talpa Stephen Marsh

Frugola Syrah Torii

Tinca Joshua Morton-Galea

With Victorian Opera Chamber Orchestra

ABOUT THE SHOW

A nautical noir opera under the stars and on the harbour.

Il Tabarro will be staged aboard The Carpentaria, a historic lightship built in 1917 - the same year Puccini finished work on the composition. Innovative director Constantine Costi and his team are taking this brooding opera to an updated setting inspired by 1930s Depression-era Sydney. Conductor Simon Bruckard leads a cast of exceptional Australian talent and a live orchestra for an unmissable night.

A MESSAGE FROM CONSTANTINE COSTI

Il Tabarro is the first of three short operas that make up Puccini's *Il Trittico*.

The composer initially wanted to set Dante's *Divine Comedy* to the operatic stage - an idea he would abandon and eventually transform into his triptych comprised of *Il Tabarro*, *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. The strongest echoes of Dante remain in *Gianni Schicchi*, a character featuring in Canto 30 of the poet's Middle Ages masterwork. In essence however, it is the desperate and despairing spirit of *The Inferno* that is felt most strongly in *Il Tabarro*.

The opera tells the story of dock workers fallen victim to an oppressive life caged upon a barge on the banks of the River Seine. Puccini and librettist Giuseppe Adami adapted Didier Gold's play *La Houppelande*, which Puccini had seen in Paris, where it caused a sensation across the city. The play premiered at the scandalous Grand Guignol Theatre. A theatre known for shocking horror productions - something equivalent to modern day splatter films. But it was Puccini's genius to see a story and world of immense richness and heart for these dock workers. The composer imagined beyond the schlocky vaudeville of the original play and wrote an opera brimming with passion, longing and moments of fledgling hope.

It's also interesting to hear the influence of the French composer Debussy in this work.

One only has to listen to Debussy's *La Cathédrale Engloutie* or *The Sunken Cathedral* alongside the opening of *Il Tabarro* to hear Debussy's poetic impact on the Italian composer. Puccini wrote of Debussy in 1918, the year of the opera's debut, that "Debussy had the soul of an artist, and most subtle perceptivity." Artistic soul and subtleness are profound characteristics of *Il Tabarro*. Puccini wrote an impressionistic soundscape with characters that reverberate with relatability, flaw and heart.

Puccini was particularly concerned with capturing the

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sea-soaked setting aboard a barge on the water. The composer explained, “Lady Seine should be the true protagonist of the drama.” So, we are absolutely delighted to be staging tonight’s opera on the waters by the Australian National Maritime Museum.

VICTORIAN OPERA

Victorian Opera is the state opera company of Victoria. We make creative, accessible and relevant work for everyone while acknowledging the traditions and evolving our art form.

Recognised for our unique contribution to the country’s operatic landscape, Victorian Opera joined the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework in 2021.

Alongside other companies, Victorian Opera holds its rightful position in the national performing arts arena.

Commitment to the development and presentation of new Australian opera and musical theatre is forefront to our mission. We identify relative and topical material, commission and workshop new scores and librettos, and ultimately produce new productions. Victorian Opera premieres at least one new Australian opera or music theatre work each year, and have commissioned 36 new works since the company’s formation.

The next generation of talent is developed from the ground up through our Emerging Artists Programs – The Victorian Opera Youth Chorus Ensemble (VOYCE), our VO Emerges project and our Emerging Artists Opera Prize scholarship. Creating future pathways for artists, artisans and technicians has become a driving focus for our organisation.

We employ hundreds of people across the creative industries, recruit some of the finest local and national singers, and collaborate with Australia’s leading companies, venues and learning institutions.

We embrace the new normal and continue to perform in exceptional theatres and concert halls to give you the best and safest experience. Join us to experience the human voice, the indefinable power of music and storytelling at its finest.

And please, come as you are.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Presenting Partner

Victorian Opera

Presented as a part of Sydney Festival.

Sydney Festival sincerely thanks Andrew Cameron AM and Cathy Cameron, The Hon. Ashley Dawson-Damer AM, Robyn Martin-Weber, Suzanne and Anthony Maple-Brown, Victoria Taylor and all our private donors whose generosity and support make projects like this possible.

Sydney Festival would also like to thank the Australian National Maritime Museum.

This performance takes place on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded – this land is stolen land. We pay respects to Eora Elders, past and present.

GOVERNMENT PARTNER

