



CREATIVE TEAM

Composer	Ross Edwards
Libretto	Dorothy Hewett
Conductor	Warwick Stengårds
Director	Nicholas Cannon
Set Designer	Christina Logan Bell
Lighting/Sound Designer	Ben Flett
Repetiteur	Penelope Cashman
Assistant Director	Mark Oates
Stage Manager	Emily Barraclough

CAST

Young Christina/ The daughter	Charlotte Kelso
Middle Aged Christina Harry	Elizabeth Campbell Adam Goodburn
Tom, the lover/ The Son	Nick Jones
Dick, the Father/ The Husband	Joshua Rowe

ENSEMBLE

Violin	Joanna Lewis
Viola	Heidi von Bernowitz
Cello	Tom Marlin
Double Bass	Louis Cann
Trumpet	Martin Phillipson
Trombone	Ian Benbigh
Flute/Alto Flute/Picc	Geoffrey Collins
Oboe/Cor Anglais	Renae Stavely
Clarinet/Bass Clarinet	Mitch Berick
Bassoon	Kristy Philipson
Percussion	Sami Butler

Director's Note

“The painting is more a psychological landscape than a portrait, a portrayal of a state of mind rather than a place”. Laura Hoptman, past curator of the New York Museum of Modern Art referred to the painting *Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth.

Dorothy Hewitt and Ross Edwards' operatic interpretation of the art work has us dancing deep in the psychological aspects of the piece and the fascinating character of Christina. All three artists: Wyeth, Edwards and Hewitt all draw their inspiration from the natural environment and the elements.

We first meet Christina as an elderly lady with “a gnat in her brain”. I am keen to explore how she slips between memory, reality and the imaginary. Since childhood life she suffered from Charcot-Marie-Tooth Syndrome: A hereditary disorder that damages nerves to arms and legs making it difficult and painful to physically move around. Through her life, she would drag herself and with her sore failing limbs around the family farm. She is limited to life on the farm and the neighbouring sea so in this opera I find she creates her world in which reality and imagination can be blurred. She is curious to know what lies beyond her boundaries, what is beyond the Black Mountain, the thrill of a greater world of impending death.

We are taken back in time to 1940 where she first falls in love and she and her world loses its innocence. This is parallel with a time of world war with the drastic loss of innocence and a difficulty in finding hope. She fights hard to hold on to her memories

This Australian opera is so beautiful and unique. I am very excited and proud to be back at State Opera directing such a gem.

NICHOLAS CANNON
Director



A Chamber Opera In One Act

Dorothy Hewett has described Christina's World as "an allegory or fable about illusion and reality and the truth and lies of memory."

Christina, in middle age, is obsessed by a desire to return to the house of her childhood and the life of the imagination she created there – a kind of second Eden of lost childhood and the Pastoral Dream. She succeeds in conjuring her young self, a hesitant and idealistic dream figure who gradually takes on the characteristics of a 'real' Christina – a contradictory, perverse, tragi-comic adolescent with a fierce egocentric life of her own.

The idealised Eden reveals its sinister and terrifying aspects as the young Christina plays out the story of the house by the sea; Dick, her withdrawn father, widowed by the suicide of her mother, drowned by the sea; Harry, her schizophrenic uncle, subject to fits of melancholia and violence, who is nevertheless Christina's confidante and friend – her only

friend until she meets Tom, the boy from over the hill, a young farm labourer who becomes her dream lover.

After she has become pregnant, Tom deserts her. She retreats further into her fantasy life and when her baby is born she sets it on a raft and releases it out to sea. Later, Tom's body is found in a ditch. Has he been murdered by her father, her uncle or herself? Did he even exist? She is uncertain and so are we. But the house is peopled by malignant ghosts and terrible memories. In the end we are left with an enigma. Was there ever such a house? Was there a lover, a father, a mad uncle, a drowned child – or were they all nothing more than figments of the young Christina's distorted imagination? Was there ever such a place as Christina's World? The opera ends with the voice of the ageing Christina still telling her tragic story of lost love and perfect world.

ROSS EDWARDS
Composer



Composer **ROSS EDWARDS**

One of Australia's best known and most performed composers, Ross Edwards has created a distinctive sound world based on deep ecology and awareness of the need to reconnect music with elemental forces and restore its traditional association with ritual. His music, universal in that it is concerned with age-old mysteries surrounding humanity, is at the same time connected to its roots in Australia, whose cultural diversity it celebrates, and from whose natural environment it draws inspiration, especially birdsong and the mysterious patterns and drones of insects.

Ross Edwards has composed prolifically in most musical genres and is performed world-wide. His Dawn Mantras greeted the new millennium in a global telecast from the sails of the Sydney Opera House. His Dances of Life and Death for the Sydney Conservatorium Wind Symphony is currently touring in Europe as is Singing the Love, for The Choir of King's College Cambridge.

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Conductor **WARWICK STENGÅRDS**

Warwick Stengårds is an Australian/Swedish freelance conductor based in Vienna. In addition to an extensive symphonic canon, Stengårds has a music-theatre repertoire of well over 100 works performing with companies all over the world including West Australian Opera where, in 1991, he was appointed Music Director.

Stengårds is highly acclaimed for his interpretations of Mozart, Puccini and Verdi, in particular successful seasons of *The Magic Flute* and *Madama Butterfly*.

Productions for Opera Australia, Vienna State Opera and concerts with the Luxemburg Philharmonie, Klangforum Wien, *MUSIKFABRIK* and the Malta Philharmonic are among future projects



Director **NICHOLAS CANNON**

A versatile director, performer and teacher, Nicholas is a graduate of WAAPA in Music Theatre and has studied in Lecoq Technique in Barcelona and Paris.

He has directed for stage *A Little Night Music* for Watch This Company, *Dido and Aeneas* and *La Vida Breve* for State Opera South Australia and numerous productions for Co-Opera, Pacific Opera, and Lyric Opera of Melbourne. He is Artistic Director of Mopoke Theatre Productions directing *Tosca*, *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Old Maid and the Thief*.



Set Designer **CHRISTINA LOGAN-BELL**

Christina has designed for opera and musicals including *Roberto Devereux*, *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Der Freischütz* and *Così fan Tutte* for Melbourne Opera (greenroom nomination for best design in opera). Musicals include *A Little Night Music* (watch this), *Flowerchildren*, *The Hatpin*, *The Stephen Schwartz*, *Jerry Herman*, and *Stephen Sondheim Triptychs* (Magnormos).

Her credits for theatre include productions for National Theatre Drama School, White Whale Theatre, The Bettybooke, and Straight Jacket Productions. Christina has designed sets for Melbourne Opera, Stonnington Council's Opera in the Park 2015-17, Victorian College of the Arts, and Magnormos, and costumes for Melbourne Union Theatre, VCA, The Family Dog Circus, Weave Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Winterfall Theatre.



Lighting and Sound Design **BEN FLETT**

Ben Flett is a multi-skilled creative professional, having had his finger on the creative pulse of Adelaide's arts scene for decades. His initiation into the professional arts world was through a work-experience role at the 1992 WOMAD festival. This gave Ben a taste for the great and varied expanse of creative industries, strengthening his passion for production.

He has worked with many South Australian companies in varied roles including State Theatre Company as lighting Designer, Patch Theatre Company as Production Manager and now is an asset as Production Manager at State Opera South Australia, producing *Carmen* in The Square, *Cunning Little Vixen* and *Boojum!*

Cast



Young Christina/The daughter **CHARLOTTE KELSO**

Charlotte Kelso studied at the Elder Conservatorium, graduating with a Director's Award and the Rae Cocking Memorial Prize. Her past operatic roles include *Galatea Aci*, *Galatea e Polifemo*, Cherubino *The Marriage of Figaro*, Hänsel *Hänsel und Gretel*, Second Sprite *The Magic Flute*, and Second Witch *Dido and Aeneas*. Charlotte recently performed at the Coriole Music Festival and was soloist for the Australian premiere of Kim André Arnesen's *Magnificat*. Other recent concert engagements include Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Haydn's *Theresienmesse* and *Missa in Angustiis* (Nelson Mass), Mozart's *Missa Brevis K275*, Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and *Messiah*, and notably in Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream Suite* with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.



Middle Aged Christina **ELIZABETH CAMPBELL**

Elizabeth Campbell, one of Australia's most distinguished mezzo sopranos, has performed with all of the Australian opera companies, symphony orchestras and major concert organisations.

International performances include *Messiah* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Sydney Symphony Orchestra's USA tour and recitals at the Wigmore Hall, in Den Haag and Antwerp. Highlights include *Verdi Spectacular*, *Gianni Schicchi/La Vida Breve*, *Verdi's Requiem*, Herodias in *Salome*, Amneris in *Aida* (Winner 2011 Helpmann Award) for State Opera; Klytaemnestra in *Elektra* (Perth Festival); First Norn and Waltraute in *Ring Cycle* for Opera Australia.



Harry ADAM GOODBURN

Adam completed his Bachelor of Music degree for vocal performance at The Elder Conservatorium, Adelaide University in 2003. Adam's performing highlights have been performing the role of Nanki Poo *The Mikado* for Opera Australia; Goro *Madame Butterfly*, Pang *Turandot*, Don Basilio *The Marriage of Figaro*, the comic roles Nathanael/Cocheuille/Pittichinaccio/Franz *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Orpheus *Orpheus in the Underworld* for State Opera of South Australia and Giorgio *Ode to Nonsense* for Slingsby. Adam earned a Helpmann Award nomination for his portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi in Philip Glass' opera *Satyagraha* for State Opera in 2007 and recently appeared as Raoul St Briche in *The Merry Widow* for the company.



Tom, the lover/The Son NICHOLAS JONES

Tenor Nicholas Jones recently won the Green Room Award for his portrayal of David in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* for Opera Australia. Other roles for the national company have included: Remendado in *Carmen*, Marasquin in *Two Weddings, One Bride*, Albazar in *Il Turco in Italia*, several roles in Shostokovich's *The Nose* and Tamino and Almaviva in Opera Australia's touring productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.

In 2016, Nicholas created the role of Fish Lamb in the world premiere of Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet*.

He has appeared with Victorian Opera, Stefan Cassomenos, IOpera, ANAM and Sydney Philharmonia; Nick was also an original cast member of Deborah Cheetham's indigenous opera *Pecan Summer*.

2019 engagements include seasons for Pinchgut Opera, Gertrude Opera, and a return to Opera Australia.



Dick, the Father/The Husband JOSHUA ROWE

Josh Rowe has performed for opera companies around Australia; including Opera Queensland, Victorian Opera, State Opera of South Australia. His many awards include the 2007 Queensland Arts Council Performing Arts Scholarship and Runner Up in the Dame Joan Sutherland Awards.

Josh made his principal role debut in 2007 with Richard Mills' *The Love of the Nightingale* for Opera Queensland. Josh also performed the role of Bottom in Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2008 for which he won the Sir Mostyn Hanger Opera Award. Josh made his role debut for State Opera SA as Krishna in Philip Glass' *Satyagraha* in 2014 and has gone on to perform many roles for the company.

