

A man and a woman are shown in a close, dramatic embrace. The man, in the foreground, has a serious, intense expression and is wearing a light-colored trench coat over a white shirt and a purple tie. The woman, behind him, has a somber look and is wearing a red top. The background is dark and textured, suggesting an indoor setting.

STOPERA presents the Australian premiere of

NIGREDO HOTEL

Music by Nic Gotham

Libretto by Ann-Marie MacDonald

The Street Theatre Canberra

14 - 23 September 2006

Stopera

presents the Australian premiere of

NIGREDO HOTEL

A CHAMBER OPERA IN ONE ACT

MUSIC BY NIC GOTHAM

LIBRETTO BY ANN-MARIE MACDONALD

Director
Musical director
Set & visual design
Lighting design

Caroline Stacey
Adam Laslett
Kaoru Alfonso
Nick Merrylees

CAST

Raymond
Sophie

David Pearson
Rebecca Collins

MUSICIANS

Clarinet & bass clarinet
Percussion
Piano
Double bass & electric
bass guitar

Nicole Canham
Gary France
Adam Laslett
Gareth Hill

14-23 SEPTEMBER 2006

THE STREET THEATRE CANBERRA



THE COMPANY

Kaoru Alfonso Set and visual designer

Kaoru Alfonso has produced work in lighting design, multi-media installations, soundscapes and site-specific design for a number of theatre, opera and dance companies, as well as working as a sculpture and installation artist. The companies, theatres, festivals and organisations he has worked with include: Ausdance, Culturally Innovative Arts (CIA), Australian Choreographic Centre, Festivals ACT, Festival of Sydney, Pacific Wave Festival, The Performance Space (Sydney) The Street Theatre, Jigsaw Theatre, Padma Menon Dance Theatre, Stopera, Splinters, Shadowhouse PITS, Mirramu Dance Company.

For Stopera he worked on two productions in 2001 as production manager and designer respectively: the double-bill of 1950's American operas, *The Pet Shop* (Rieti) and *The Medium* (Menotti), and the centenary tribute *Viva Verdi!* In 2002, he was designer for the Stopera production of *The Country Philosopher* (Galuppi), which toured to the Castlemaine State Festival in 2003.

In September 2003, he was also part of the design team and production manager for *cantata*, a Stopera production of French baroque opera devised and directed by Nigel Kellaway. In 2005 he was designer for Stopera's Australian premiere of *Jane Eyre* by Michael Berkeley and David Malouf, creating a stunning on-stage art installation, using video projections and materials from the burnt-out ruins of Mt Stromlo. Other opera design credits include the Australian premiere of Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land* for Operalive!, Melbourne, and *The Magic Flute* (Mozart) and *The Pearlfishers* (Bizet) for Melbourne Opera Company.

Recent theatre design work by Kaoru includes: dance works *Seen but not heard* (Janine Ayres), *Silk & Sun*; *Landscape*; and *Red Sun* (Mirramu Dance Company); *The*

Looking Glass (Vivienne Rogis & Australian Choreographic Centre); and theatre works: *Violine*; *The Maids*; *Speaking in Tongues*; and *Ivanov* (The Street Theatre). Most recently he worked with director Caroline Stacey on the design and visual projections for the play *QED* at The Street Theatre in July 2006.

Nicole Canham Clarinet/bass clarinet

Nicole Canham graduated from the Australian National University Institute of the Arts with a Bachelor of Music Degree in Performance. In 2000 and 2002, Nicole was the recipient of grants from artsACT and the Ian Potter Cultural Trust, and was the winner of the Australian Music Foundation's Young Australian Musician Award, enabling her to undertake further study with Philippe Cuper, one of the world's foremost clarinet soloists and pedagogues. She obtained her Prix de Perfectionnement from the Conservatoire Nationale de Region de Versailles in June 2003.

Nicole's professional experience is extensive and varied, including orchestral work with Opera Australia, Stopera, the Tasmanian and Canberra Symphony Orchestras and show work including seasons of *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. She is a founding member of the internationally successful quartet, Clarity, with whom she has performed throughout Australia in the Canberra region, Darwin, Brisbane, Melbourne and abroad in the UK, France and Belgium. Clarity has performed at Castlemaine State Festival, The Festival of Jazz and Roses, National Multicultural Festival, Darwin Youth Festival and at Adelaide Fringe Festival. Performances in 2006 include a concert series at BMW Edge, Melbourne, and tours throughout NSW.

In other chamber music combinations she has performed for ABC Classic fm's

Sunday Live program, the Canberra International Chamber Music Festival and the National Folk Festival. She has performed on recordings for The Anthology of Australian Music, ABC Classics and Tall Poppies and the Move label. Nicole is the Artistic Director of the Canberra International Chamber Music Festival.

Rebecca Collins Soprano (Sophie)

Rebecca Collins has performed major operatic roles with Opera Queensland, Opera Australia, and OzOpera, including *Marzelline* in *Fidelio*, *Tytania* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Peep-Bo* in *The Mikado*, and *Gilda* in *Rigoletto*. Other operatic roles include *Lydie* in *Fauré's Penelope* and *Lucy Lockitt* in *Britten's The Beggars Opera*.

A graduate of ANU and NSW Conservatorium of Music and a former member of Opera Queensland's Young Artist Development Program, her scholarships and awards include first prize in the National Aria Competition of the Australian National Eisteddfod. She has also pursued further vocal studies in Europe, funded by an Australia Council grant and a Goethe Institut scholarship. She made her US debut singing *Pat Nixon* in *John Adams' Nixon in China* for the Colorado Music Festival, and has also performed at the AIMS Festival in Graz, Austria.

Concert performances with symphony orchestras in Australia and overseas include soprano soloist in *St Luke's Passion* (Bach), *Messiah* (Handel), *Coronation Mass* (Mozart), *Nelson Mass* (Haydn), *A Child of our Time* (Tippett), *Choral Symphony No 9* (Beethoven), *Six Settings for Vespers* (Monteverdi), *The Creation* (Haydn) and *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* (Barber). With Stopera she has appeared in sold-out concerts for the National Gallery of Australia, the National Multicultural Festival and the Canberra International Chamber Music Festival, and also played two major roles in Stopera's 2003 French Baroque production, *cantata*. Rebecca starred as *Jane* in Stopera's

award-winning 2005 Australian premiere of the opera *Jane Eyre*, by British composer Michael Berkeley and Australian writer David Malouf, receiving national and international critical acclaim for her outstanding performance in this demanding role.

In May 2006, she gave the Australian premiere performance of Hans Werner Henze's cantata *Being Beauteous* in Stopera's concert for the Canberra International Chamber Music Festival. Recently she has also appeared in a number of oratorio concerts for the Canberra Choral Society and the Llewellyn Choir.

Gary France Percussion

Gary France loves to play music, all kinds! You will find him at home in the orchestra pit, a circus band, the concert stage, a jazz club, a Western Swing Band, folk festivals, Greek weddings, techno raves or in Canberra, Australia making music with his percussion students at the Australian National University. Past performances and teaching have taken him to India, Africa, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, New Zealand and all parts of North America.

Gary has been an ANU School of Music faculty member since 1998, and is director of the ANU ensemble DRUMatIX. Gary has performed with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, the Nova Ensemble, the West Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestras, the Dallas Brass, the Doddworth Saxhorn Ensemble, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Canberra Symphony.

Gary's leadership activities include former Head of the West Australian Conservatorium and the ANU School of Music, as well as Convener/Artistic Director of numerous major events such as Heartbeat International World Music Festival (1995), the Australian National Marimba Festival (2001) the Rhythms of Life Percussion Festival (2002), the Australian National Percussion Symposium (2003), and the Australian Music Educators National Conference

(2005). Gary is also the Lead Principal Investigator in the ANU New Media Laboratory (NML), a research team that explores the multifaceted relationships between acoustic instruments.

His most recent projects have included producing the sound design and music for the Australian premiere production by The Street Theatre of the play *QED* by Peter Parnell (West Wing); *Video Phase* by Steve Reich with performances at the Taiwan–Australia New Media Art Symposium (AUS) and KOSA International Percussion Festival (USA); collaborative composition and performance for the Southeast Asian segment of the Opening Ceremonies (15th Asian Games DOHA 2006); and the New Directions Music Festival (Singapore).

Gareth Hill Double bass/electric bass

Gareth Hill originally began his music studies as a violinist and changed to the double bass at the age of 15. Gareth has pursued professional tertiary studies at the ANU School of Music in both the classical and jazz areas, studying classical double bass with Max McBride and jazz bass with Eric Ajaye. He is currently in his Honours year. Gareth has played with the Australian Youth Orchestra on numerous occasions and is a member of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. Recently he was a guest player with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, as part of the Australian Youth Orchestra's career development program.

In addition to his classical orchestral experience, Gareth has shared the stage with many of Australia's leading jazz musicians, including Bob Bertles, Miroslav Bukovsky, Mike Price, John Mackey and Bernie McGann. He was also invited to play with American jazz pianist and educator Mark Levine. In 2005 Gareth travelled to New York to study with world-famous bassists Rufus Reid and John Patitucci. Gareth is a member of the Canberra jazz group, the Aron Lyon Trio, which performs regularly at many venues around Canberra and appears in the *Nigredo Hotel Jazz Lounge* concert series at The Street Theatre.

Adam Laslett Musical director/pianist

Adam Laslett completed his Master of Philosophy in piano performance in 2005 at the ANU School of Music, studying with Susanne Powell and Geoffrey Lancaster. His thesis investigated interpretation and the meaning and identification of creativity. He has been the recipient of awards including the 2003 Erika Haas award for Performance, and a 2002 ANU Honours Scholarship. He is Musical Director of the newly formed Canberra Handel Choir, and is also Musical Director of the ACT Singers. He accompanies regularly for the Canberra School of Music, including complete performances of *Die Schöne Müllerin* (Schubert), *Dichterliebe* (Schumann), *Songs of Emily Dickinson* (Copland), and many major instrumental works.

He is the principal accompanist for Blue Sky Singers, and for the Woden Valley Youth Choir, joining them on their 2006 US tour. He has been principal accompanist for the Canberra Choral Society and SCUNA, and plays with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and for the vocal division of the National Eisteddfod. He has also played for numerous local music theatre productions for companies such as Budget Opera, Canberra Philharmonic, Supa Productions, All That Jazz Theatre, Alpha Theatre, and Queanbeyan Players.

As a piano soloist he performed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1 with the National Capital Orchestra, and his recital repertoire includes works such as Liszt's Sonata in B minor. He also teaches piano and theory, works as a vocal coach, and performs regularly as an organist, harpsichordist, and tenor soloist, the latter most recently in a 2006 concert for Artsong Canberra that featured Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death*. Adam was chief repetiteur for Stopera's 2005 production of *Jane Eyre*.

Greg Marginson Company Manager, Stopera

Greg has been involved in the cutting edge of some important arts endeavours, including establishing the Community Arts Resource Centre for Arts Victoria, a period as an arts funding officer with Arts Victoria, Community Committees Coordinator for the Bicentenary, and the leadership and development of the Gasworks Artists Park in South Melbourne.

His career has spanned periods of involvement as an administrator in theatre, music, dance, community arts, writing, and visual arts and crafts. In the early 90's, he was the first Executive Director of Museums Australia, the national professional association for museums and their staff, a role that saw him oversee an organisation of over 3000 members nationally. Greg relocated to Canberra in 1995, and after running Canberra's Toy Library, he spent nearly four years as Director of Gorman House Arts Centre, also running the Festival of the Contemporary Arts in 1997 and 1999. In 2001 Greg was appointed Manager of Public Programs at the National Gallery of Australia, a role he continued until mid 2004. In 2002 he co-chaired the Australian Institute of Arts Management National Conference and he was recognised as a Fellow of the AIAM. Greg joined Stopera as Company Manager in 2002 and has worked on the productions of *A Country Philosopher*, *cantata*, *The Frog Prince*, *Tutto Italiano!* and *Jane Eyre*. In March/April 2005, Greg Marginson was General Manager of the Castlemaine State Festival, a 10-day festival involving over 65 arts events.

Also in 2005, Greg was Festival Co-ordinator of the inaugural Bloom Music Festival, held in Canberra from 16 September to 16 October. In 2006, Greg was significantly involved in the co-ordination, administration and/or management of three ACT and region festivals: Administrator of the 2006 Multicultural Fringe Festival, Festival Co-ordinator of the 2006 Weereewa – A Festival of Lake George, Administrator of

the 2006 Canberra International Chamber Music Festival. In June 2006, Greg was appointed CEO and General Manager for the 2007 Castlemaine State Festival, Australia's largest regional arts festival.

Nick Merrylees Lighting designer

Nick graduated from The University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Science in 1996 and from VCA with a Bachelor of Dramatic Art in 1999. Some of Nick's recent lighting designs have been *Inheritance* (Full Dress Productions), *Squizzy* (La Mama), *Ginger Mick* (Petty Traffikers), *Mrs Petrov's Shoe* (Theatre@risk), *Carrying Shoes – Into The Unknown* (La Mama), *Into The Woods* (Ballarat Arts Academy), *The Nero Conspiracy* (Trade's Hall), *Billy Malone* (Commonplace Productions), *La Clemenza di Tito* (VCA Opera Studio), *The Woman Before* (Theatre@risk) and *Women Beware Women* (VCA Drama).

Past career highlights include the lighting designs for *Madama Butterfly* (Melbourne Opera), *Polygraph* (Theatre@risk), *Uncle Bob* (Red Stitch), *The Ishmael Club* (Playbox), *Turandot* (The Puccini Festival), *Blue* (CIA), *Tosca* (Melbourne City Opera), *Caresses* (Vicious Fish), *The Tell Tale Heart* (Melbourne Opera/Castlemaine Festival), *The Idiot* (VCA) and *Corpus Christi* (Polemic Productions). Nick was lighting designer on *The Terms & Grammar of Creation* (Commonplace Productions) which won a Green Room Award for most outstanding fringe show in 1999.

David Pearson Baritone (Raymond)

Recently returning to Canberra after several years of study and performance in London, David's last appearance for Stopera was in the award-winning 2000 production *September Songs*, a Kurt Weill tribute that included the complete *Mahagonny Songspiel* and excerpts from Weill's German and American theatre works. David has performed for stage, musical theatre, chamber opera, cabaret, television and independent film. David