



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **VALDA HAS AN OPERATIC DATE WITH PLACIDO**

Sydney Conservatorium opera graduate **Valda Wilson** has finished ahead of 760 other contenders to claim a place in the line-up for the prestigious *Operalia*, Placido Domingo's World Opera Competition in Budapest, Hungary in July.

Only 40 singers are selected for the competition, with the finalists earning a coaching stint with Domingo, and a singing role with the orchestra conducted by the pre-eminent Spanish tenor.

Wilson, from Castlecrag, has been in residence since last October at the London National Opera Studio, one of the world's leading opera schools, after winning the 2008 Opera Foundation Australia's Rockend NOS Scholarship worth \$82,000.

The finals for that scholarship were held over two days in Melbourne in May, involving an acting and characterisation workshop followed by a concert performance.

Wilson said: "To study at the Studio has been my dream for quite a few years now and to have it realised in such spectacular fashion is truly amazing.

"Only 40 singers are selected from some 800 entries for the *Operalia*, so I am absolutely stunned and stoked.

"It seems that we get the opportunity to coach with Domingo himself, and those who get through to the final round sing with an orchestra conducted by him. Amazing!"

Wilson said her course at the NOS had included performances directed by the inimitable John Copley, a concert of operatic excerpts with the Welsh National Opera's orchestra, some baroque scenes, and various concerts in venues such as the Barrandov Opera in Suffolk, Fulham Palace, and Harrogate.

"I've sung in masterclasses with Susan Bullock (who has recently been singing *Lady Macbeth* in Sydney) and Gerald Finley, and between now and June I have a performance of contemporary scenes, a concert with Australian tenor Brad Cooper, and a dinner concert performance with tenor Jonathan Stoughton.

"At our 'end-of-year' showcase at the Hackney Empire in East London I will be singing *Madam Silberklang (Der Schauspieldirektor)* and a bit of *Barbarina (Le nozze di Figaro)*."

"We sang together in my first opera – *The Mikado*, with Abe as Nanki-Poo and me as Pitti-Sing.

"After this period of study, I will audition for companies in both the UK and Europe."

Meanwhile, **Chris Berensen**, who recently completed his Masters at The Con, has been awarded a Swiss Government scholarship to pursue further studies.

Berensen, from Normanhurst, completed his MMus on harpsichord with Philip Swanton and submitted a thesis entitled "Figured-Bass Solo Traditions and J.S.Bach" under the supervision of Dr Alan Maddox.

He has performed with Salut! Baroque, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, La Folia, the New Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra of Cologne, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, and has toured nationally as the Principal Continuo player with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

As a Bach player, Berensen has performed in over 60 Bach cantatas. He also has a keen interest in jazz and contemporary popular music, and has regularly worked with the trio Lucid3 and the vibrant music ministry of St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Sydney playing the electric bass.

The Dean and Principal of The Con, Professor Kim Walker, congratulated Wilson and Berensen on "their inspiring success, which reflects their great application and talent as well as excellent mentoring from their teachers."

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