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MEDIA RELEASE
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Thousands to sing along to international smash hit
The Merry Widow at iconic outback opera event during Queensland Music Festival

Queensland Music Festival (QMF) and Opera Queensland (OperaQ) have partnered up once again to entertain thousands on Saturday 22 July at one of the state's most popular free outdoor events, *Opera at Jimbour*, held in the picturesque grounds of heritage-listed Jimbour House in the Western Downs.

For the 2017 *Opera at Jimbour*, QMF and OperaQ will present a semi-staged concert version of Franz Lehár's world famous *The Merry Widow*, in a new version directed by OperaQ's Jason Barry-Smith, featuring elaborate costumes, soaring melodies and a star-studded cast featuring much-loved tenor David Hobson.

The popular operetta is full of romance and well-known music such as the great 'Vilia', 'You'll Find Me at Maxim's' and the haunting 'Merry Widow Waltz'. It tells the story of Hannah Glawari, a former commoner who has been left a fortune by an aristocratic husband. When back in her impoverished home country she finds herself the centre of attention, surrounded by dozens of potential suitors, but not the one she truly desires, her bad-boy ex Count Danilo.

The program will be sung by some of Australia's leading opera performers with popular soprano Emily Burke as the Merry Widow and nationally treasured tenor David Hobson as Count Danilo, alongside Hayley Sugars and Virgilio Marino as secret lovers Valenciennes and Camille. This star line-up will be supported by OperaQ's Toowoomba Community Chorus, while premier Australian conductor Roland Peelman will lead the Queensland Conservatorium Orchestra.

To help warm up all the would-be sopranos, tenors and baritones, this year's event will offer pre-show singing lessons so audiences can join in the 'Vilia' chorus.

QMF Artistic Director Katie Noonan said *Opera at Jimbour* is one of Queensland's truly iconic musical performances and is a hotly anticipated event on the state's cultural calendar.

"QMF and OperaQ have been presenting *Opera at Jimbour* together since 2013, in which time it has grown to be a festival favourite, attracting more than 7,500 music lovers," Ms Noonan said.

"I want everyone, young and old, to hear and be heard through this year's festival. What better way to do so than to sing in a mass chorus alongside opera superstars as well as your family and friends."

OperaQ Artistic Director Lindy Hume said *Opera at Jimbour* is a chance for people to experience world-class opera in a unique outback setting.

"*The Merry Widow* has such familiar music, and in this outdoor theatre you don't have to hold back. In fact, we encourage audiences to sing along, the louder the better," Ms Hume said.

“*Opera at Jimbour* is a magical few hours of live performance for the whole family – there really is nothing quite like it.”

While patrons are welcome to bring their own picnic treats to the licensed event, local market stalls will be open from 10am to 4pm offering a wide array of local produce and beverages to purchase. Onsite parking will be available, ranging from \$10 for cars to \$50 for buses.

Western Downs Regional Council Mayor, Councillor Paul McVeigh, is excited to welcome thousands of people to the Western Downs for the event.

“I extend a warm welcome to everyone to come along and enjoy a day out on the Western Downs at this truly unique event,” Councillor McVeigh said.

“*Opera at Jimbour* showcases what is so special about our region, combining beautiful landscapes, rich history and our relaxed country lifestyle. Stay a little longer and experience what the Western Downs has to offer.”

Opera at Jimbour is presented by Queensland Music Festival, Western Downs Regional Council, Opera Queensland and Russell Pastoral Company, and supported by AGL Energy, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, Tourism & Events Queensland and ABC Southern Queensland.

For more information visit qmf.org.au.

EVENT DETAILS

EVENT: *Opera at Jimbour*

DATE: Saturday 22 July 2017

TIME: 2pm to 4pm

VENUE: Jimbour House Amphitheatre, Jimbour Station

TICKETS: Free

ENDS

Queensland Music Festival is an initiative of the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, part of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Queensland Music Festival is a state-wide celebration of music with a vision to transform lives and communities through music.

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Queensland Music Festival is an initiative of the Queensland Government