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**For immediate release**

### **Darling Downs locals wanted to sing with the stars**

Opera Queensland (OperaQ) is giving Darling Downs locals the opportunity to lift up their voices alongside professional singers and musicians in this year's hotly anticipated Queensland Music Festival (QMF) fan favourite, **Opera at Jimbour**, on 22 July.

OperaQ is on the hunt for up to 46 talented local singers to join Emily Burke, David Hobson, Virgilio Marino, and a host of other stars in a semi-staged concert version of Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, one of the world's most popular operettas. Full of romance and well-known melodies, it tells the story of Hannah Glawari, a former commoner who has been left a fortune by an aristocratic husband. Now back in her home country she finds herself the centre of attention, surrounded by dozens of potential suitors.

Auditions will be held at the Empire Theatre on 17 and 18 February, and auditionees will need to perform one song or aria. Successful auditionees will form the Opera Queensland Toowoomba Community Chorus for *The Merry Widow*, and sing audience favourites including 'The Pontevedrian Chorus', 'Vilia' and 'Women, women, women'. They will be accompanied by the Queensland Conservatorium Orchestra under the baton of accomplished conductor, Roland Peelman.

With heritage-listed Jimbour House as the backdrop, thousands of locals from the Darling Downs will flock to Opera at Jimbour to enjoy a music-filled afternoon and picnic. The event forms part of the 2017 Queensland Music Festival, a state-wide celebration of music running from 7-30 July this year.

The audience will be invited to sing along during the performance by learning the words and music to the 'Vilia' chorus during a special pre-show rehearsal. The less vocally ambitious audience members will be invited to put on their dancing shoes and take part in a mass waltz.

OperaQ has made community involvement part of their DNA in recent years, sharing the stage with hundreds of Queenslanders who have developed their singing skills through major initiatives like Project Puccini and Project Rossini, and countless community workshops.

OperaQ Artistic Director, Lindy Hume said the aim was to get everyone in Queensland singing.

"The chorus members for Opera at Jimbour will have the fantastic opportunity of working alongside some of the best musicians and performers, growing their skills and performing to their friends and family," Ms Hume said.

Local Toowoomba singer Calista Walters has been in the Toowoomba Community Chorus since 2014, performing in OperaQ's Project Puccini and Project Rossini, as well as Opera at Jimbour in 2015.

The opportunity to perform in a full-length opera was very appealing to the classically-trained Calista.

"Most of the performances in our area are shortened pieces or musicals, so the prospect of performing in a full-length opera was a big reason for my auditioning for OperaQ's community chorus," she said.

"For anyone thinking of auditioning for this year's Opera at Jimbour, you should just do it, it's a great experience.

"The beautiful grounds of Jimbour House, the sheer volume of people in attendance, and performing with some of OperaQ's biggest stars is a truly amazing experience not to be missed."

**-ENDS-**

Opera at Jimbour is presented by Queensland Music Festival, Western Downs Regional Council, Opera Queensland and Russell Pastoral.



### **AUDITION DETAILS**

**Where:** Empire Church Theatre, 56 Neil St, Toowoomba

**When:** Friday 17 February, 6.30pm – 9.30pm and Saturday 18 February, 10.30am – 1.30pm

**Details:** Auditionees are required to perform one aria or song. They may sing with an accompaniment or unaccompanied.

**Registration:** Please click [here](#) and follow the prompts to register to audition.

**More info:** If unable to attend auditions please submit a video to [jeanette@empiretheatre.com.au](mailto:jeanette@empiretheatre.com.au) by 5.00pm on Friday 17 February 2017

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

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