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MEDIA RELEASE
Friday 27 February 2015

ACCESS ALL AREAS

NSW Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka, MLC last night unveiled the Sydney Opera House's 2015 program of accessible performances and experiences for people with disabilities.

Since launching its first Accessibility Strategy in 2006, the Sydney Opera House has established itself as a leader in the field in the Australian performing arts.

Accessibility takes many forms at the Opera House, including Auslan-interpretation, audio-description and live-captioning of theatre, opera and concerts, pre-show sensory touch tours and excursions to familiarise children with sensory disabilities with the venue before they see a show.

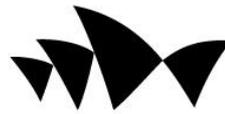
The 2015 program continues to expand the possibilities of access, combining important new milestones with continuing successes, including:

- A new collaboration with the Art Gallery of NSW, *Starting with Art at the House*, which combines tours of the two Sydney cultural landmarks with art-making workshops. This program will be offered free to students from Kindergarten to Year 12 and is tailored to the needs of each class;
- The sensory-theatre production *Odyssey*, a multi-sensory performance for children with special needs created by Sensorium Theatre, a company dedicated to the transformative power of live performance for children with disabilities, and a first for an Australian performing arts centre;
- The first full year of The Balnaves Foundation Open House Program, which provides \$5 tickets to people who face barriers to accessing live performance at the House due to social and financial disadvantage;
- Accessible *Babies Proms*, in partnership with Lifestart, offering play-based activities alongside performances to engage children aged 2-5 in live music;
- An ongoing partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art to introduce students to visual and performing arts through a joint excursion to both venues;
- Accessible performances by Opera House resident companies and artistic partners Opera Australia, Bell Shakespeare, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Theatre Company and Sydney Philharmonia Choirs;
- Audio-described tours for vision-impaired patrons during the VIVID festival.

NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts Troy Grant said: "As Australia's most iconic building, the Opera House should be accessible and available to everyone. Accessibility extends beyond making the building more convenient, it's about ensuring the visitor experience is world class and inclusive for all."

Mr Ajaka said: "It is wonderful to have two of NSW's greatest arts organisations, the Opera House and the Art Gallery of NSW, working together in a unique program for children with disabilities. *Starting with Art at the House* will expand the imaginations of the young participants and give them a chance to become familiar with two of our most beautiful and important buildings."

Sydney Opera House CEO Louise Herron AM said: "Our vision for the House is of a space open to all and enjoyed by all. During the past decade we greatly improved access to the building and to the performances beneath its sails. In the next decade – our decade of renewal – access will be an even stronger focus. With the beautiful example of *Odyssey* as a starting point, we also look forward to offering more immersive creative opportunities."



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The Access program launch featured accessible performances by Bell Shakespeare, Australian Chamber Orchestra and cabaret chanteuse Ali McGregor. The launch was attended by representatives from the fields of education, disability organisations, performing arts companies and Access audience members.

For more details, visit sydneyoperahouse.com/accessibility.

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