

MEDIA RELEASE

Under embargo until Wednesday 24 March

OPERA QUEENSLAND SADDLES UP WITH BEEF AUSTRALIA TO HIT THE ROAD IN ITS BIGGEST REGIONAL TOUR TO DATE

Opera Queensland has partnered with Beef Australia to premiere its genre-crossing new production, *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, in close to 30 regional and remote Queensland communities through May and June.

The seven-week season traverses more than 7000km, making it the most significant regional tour in the company's history and a fitting centrepiece to Opera Queensland's 40th birthday celebrations.

Rockhampton will host the world premiere of the cabaret-style production that explores the extraordinary qualities and surprising similarities of Opera and Country music on **Tuesday 4 May** as part of [Beef Australia 2021](#), a triennial celebration of the nation's cattle industry.

Opera Queensland's Artistic Director & CEO, **Patrick Nolan**, said the launch of this state-wide tour in partnership with Beef Australia is a great way to celebrate Opera Queensland's deep commitment to regional audiences and the many artists from across the state that have been part of our music making over the past 40 years.

Are You Lonesome Tonight weaves a story about life on the road through arias by composers such as Puccini and Verdi and songs by Slim Dusty and Dolly Parton.

It bursts onto the Rockhampton Showgrounds stage backed by a 70-member Beef Australia Community Chorus comprising amateur singers from the Rockhampton region and a guest performance from country music superstar and 21-times Golden Guitar winner **Sara Storer**.

Under the partnership, Opera Queensland becomes Beef Australia 2021's artistic company-in-residence, entertaining visitors and delegates with a series of recitals, pop-up performances, community engagements and activations from **2 – 8 May**.

Opera Queensland Director of Learning, Regional and Community **Mark Taylor** said the company planned to celebrate its 40th birthday by engaging with audiences across Queensland and providing arts, culture and education opportunities to more people in more locations.

"Opera Queensland's partnership with Beef Australia sprang from our shared belief in the importance of delivering culture, entertainment and joy across regional Queensland, particularly following such a profound period of drought," Mr Taylor said.

"Pairing Opera and Country music is not a gimmick; the two genres have a great deal in common.

"Artists, composers and librettists across both artforms understand the power of storytelling sharing many common themes of profound love, heartache, and triumph in the face of adversity,

"It's said country music is about lovin', fightin', drinkin' and cussin' and aside from the cussin', that nicely sums up opera too."

Mr Taylor said Rockhampton residents who loved to sing were invited to join the Beef Australia Community Chorus and perform alongside Opera Queensland stars on opening night.

Beef Australia **Chair Bryce Camm** said the organisation was proud to partner with Opera Queensland for the unique opportunity to present the world premiere of *Are You Lonesome Tonight* at Beef Australia in May.

"A highlight of the Beef21 entertainment program, *Are You Lonesome Tonight* will feature a community chorus – starring some of our local beef producers," Mr Camm said.

"This exciting partnership celebrates the diversity which exists across our sector. We look forward to bringing some joy and entertainment to regional Queenslanders as the production hits the road for an impressive regional tour to almost 30 destinations."

Beef Australia **CEO Ian Mill** added: “Beef Australia has grown to be the largest event of its kind in the southern hemisphere, requiring an entertainment program to match”.

“Adding opera to the country music, kids activities and cooking demonstrations will help ensure our diverse audience members all have a memorable experience.”

Are You Lonesome Tonight will eschew traditional theatres and halls to perform in some of Queensland’s most iconic locations including the Roma Saleyards, the Australian Stockmans Hall of Fame in Longreach, Winton’s Waltzing Matilda Centre and from the try-line of Townsville’s new 25,000-capacity Queensland Country Bank Stadium.

“This show is designed to be experienced outdoors, whether that’s under stars in the state’s Central West, by the ocean on The Whitsundays coastline or in the wetlands of tropical North Queensland,” Mr Taylor said.

“Come in your jeans and boots or your tuxedos and ballgowns – this is opera at its most diverse, accessible and exciting.”

Are You Lonesome Tonight’s regional tour also includes a community engagement program with customised events and activities planned for each location.

Mr Taylor said these events allowed Opera Queensland to engage deeply with the communities it has such a strong connection with while also discovering new audiences.

Community engagement initiatives include school workshops, community choir events, recitals in aged care facilities and pop-up performances and activations in unexpected locations.

For performance dates, times and venue information and to purchase tickets, visit oq.com.au

To apply for the Beef Australia Community Chorus (Rockhampton performance only), visit oq.com.au/beef-australia-chorus

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***Are You Lonesome Tonight* Tour Dates**

Rockhampton	Tuesday 4 May
Bowen	Friday 7 May
Charters Towers	Saturday 8 May
Cairns	Tuesday 11 May
Innisfail	Wednesday 12 May
Ingham	Thursday 13 May
Townsville	Friday 14 May
Mount Isa	Tuesday 18 May
Winton	Thursday 20 May
Longreach	Sunday 23 May
Barcaldine	Monday 24 May
Blackall	Tuesday 25 May
Windorah	Thursday 27 May
Quilpie	Saturday 29 May
Charleville	Sunday 30 May
Cunnamulla	Monday 31 May
St George	Tuesday 1 June
Warwick	Friday 4 June
Stanthorpe	Saturday 5 June
Redlands	Sunday 6 June
Toowoomba	Wednesday 9 June
Beaudesert	Thursday 10 June



Caloundra
Maryborough
Bundaberg
Gold Coast
Redcliffe
Roma

Saturday 12 June
Wednesday 16 June
Thursday 17 June
Saturday 19 June
Wednesday 23 June
Friday 25 June