

MELBOURNE
FESTIVAL

08—25
OCTOBER
2015

MEDIA
RELEASE



“A triumphant adaptation of a deeply tragic story.”
– *The Guardian*, Australia

“A genre-hopping triumph.” – *The Australian*

Arts Centre Melbourne
Playhouse

Friday 09 – Tuesday 13 October

Fri — Tue at 7pm

Sat & Sun also at 2pm

1 hr, no interval

A Reserve \$69 / \$49 / \$169 (Family)

B Reserve \$49 / \$39

C Reserve \$39 / \$29 Restricted View

Students \$25

Transaction fees may apply

www.festival.melbourne

Arts Centre Melbourne 1300 182 183

#melbfest

AUSTRALIA // Music+Theatre+Family

Melbourne Festival and Arts Centre Melbourne present
An Opera Australian and Barking Gecko Theatre Company Co-
Production in Association with West Australian Opera,
commissioned by Melbourne Festival and Perth International Arts
Festival

THE RABBITS

Based on the book written by John Marsden and illustrated by
Shaun Tan

Composer and performer Kate Miller-Heidke

Libretto Lally Katz

Director John Sheedy

Musical Director Iain Grandage

As part of a world premiere season, indie-pop singer **Kate Miller-Heidke** brings to life **John Marsden** and **Shaun Tan**'s compelling picture-book ***The Rabbits*** in a new work of operatic theatre for adults and children alike.

Conceived by an extraordinary Australian creative team of award-winning artists, this is a story all too familiar: a story of hope in the face of colonisation, civilisation and progress, and one of displacement, destruction and culture clash that boils down to the essence of our humanity.

Gabriela Tylesova's kooky sets and costumes realise Tan's pictures in all of their mystical wonder, while **Lally Katz** has turned Marsden's spare poetry into an enchanting libretto.

Kate Miller Heidke - the butterfly-voiced, classically-trained indie-pop singer who is just as at home in the charts as she is performing at the Met - has written a beautiful score embracing the influences of opera, musical theatre and popular music. She performs onstage as a bird and witness to the unfolding tragedy.

Directed by **John Sheedy**, the elaborate staging features a spiral pyramid that acts as a dominating centrepiece transitioning between Tan's original illustrations and 3D effect.

The Rabbits picked up awards for Best New Australian Work, Original Score, Costume Design and Presentation for Children at the 2015 Helpmann Awards. ***The Rabbits*** picked up awards for Best New Australian Work, Original Score, Costume Design and Presentation for Children.

MEDIA CONTACT

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Melbourne Festival Artistic Director, Josephine Ridge: “I am tremendously proud that Melbourne Festival has had a part to play in bringing this wonderful book to life on stage. The creative team are nothing short of inspiring, the performers bring their vision to life and we the audience are the beneficiaries. *The Rabbits* can be understood, appreciated and enjoyed on so many levels which all lead to one conclusion: this is an important new Australian work.”

The Rabbits is one of four co-commissions by Melbourne Festival under the Australian Government’s Major Festivals’ Initiative managed by the the Australia Council included in the 2015 program. Importantly three of these commissioned works are for children and families ensuring that the next generation of live arts enthusiasts are well catered for. The four works are: *The Rabbits*, *Masquerade*, *Monkey Journey to the West* and *The Experiment*.

Connected Events:

Artists in Conversation: John Marsden & Shaun Tan - Sun 11 Oct at 11am

Clemenger Auditorium, NGV // FREE

Reading: The Rabbits - Sun 11 Oct at 1pm

MPavilion // FREE

It’s Alive: putting books on stage – Sat 24 Oct at 10am

University of Melbourne // FREE

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