



OPERATIF biography

“When an audience gives a standing ovation, someone is doing something right!” Patricia Kelly, Courier Mail - Madam Butterfly

OPERATIF! began, almost by accident in 1994, when soprano Jennifer Parish and baritone Stewart Cameron, teamed with talented colleagues to give a concert at Brisbane’s Old Government House. This was no ordinary concert, but perhaps with an eye to the future, OPERATIF!’s first performance was more an event. The heritage venue was a perfect setting for artists donned in beautiful gowns and formal tails. The sumptuous champagne interval offered a chance for the audience to socialise and the occasion was met at its conclusion with a rousing standing ovation and calls for more such events.



With audience enthusiasm for the concert so strong, it was clear that there was demand for high-standard, yet warmly presented performances of this nature and many more followed. In turn there came acclaimed seasons of opera A cleverly devised, small-scale production of Puccini’s Madam Butterfly was presented in English, allowing audiences to feel acutely the raw emotion of this famous tragic piece. Another masterpiece, Giancarlo Menotti’s ‘The Consul’ with its subject of persecuted and displaced people trying to deal with bureaucracies made a stunning statement as opera’s contribution to the inaugural Brisbane Festival. A third production, Opera a Passionate Affair, demonstrated a different genre, with as a compilation of carefully chosen arias and ensembles, interwoven into the memoirs of an elderly English gent. The resulted was a theatrical/operatic production which was quite original, instantly engaging and enthusiastically received. With each of OPERATIF!’s productions, critics and audiences alike applauded the new-comer to the field of opera production in Queensland.

Opera productions saw the need to draw on much energy and creativity as many enthusiastic and very talented performers, both singers and instrumentalists, were brought together into opera ensembles and specially assembled orchestras... Yet, despite consistently glowing reviews, enthusiastic audiences and a vision to take their compact opera productions all over the state and beyond, OPERATIF! was denied the Arts funding vital to continuing. Queensland Arts funding bodies turned their back on the bright young company and the tide of enthusiasm following them. The clear message was that there would never be a second, small company receiving funding assistance in Queensland.



Thus it was that the dream of this bright, energetic company to provide low-cost opera productions for everyone to enjoy and performance opportunities for talented local artists ended. Heartbreaking though it was to be forced to give up the dream, it was impossible to continue to meet the costs of even modest productions.

Thus it was that OPERATIF! turned their energies back to concerts, performing not only Opera but bringing to the fore again our vast heritage of song. From Viennese Operetta, to Songs from the Shows...they celebrated great vocal composers like Lehár, Romberg, Novello and even Noel Coward. They gave voice again to so many of the marvellous ballads and songs of the War Years upon which so many early Australians and New Zealanders were raised, sowing the seeds of a love of the voice and singing as families and friends gathered about the piano to make music in the home.

Outdoor performances began and attracted hundreds, many hearing Opera for the first time. Glorious voices and melodies were heard from stages in all sorts of atmospheric settings....in the outback, in rainforests, by the sea, by lakes...and among other special events, continuing today is OPERATIF!'s annual 'Opera in the Amphitheatre' on the shores of Lake Macdonald in Noosa Botanic Gardens.

Stylish Dinner Shows have proven very popular too, each with a catchy theme...'Dinner at Maxims'... a night of French song, 'Viva Italia'...a menu of pasta and Italian opera or 'A Night in Vienna' with operetta and Strauss string waltzes entertaining elegant diners. So creative and enjoyable were these events that the corporate sector soon sought the services of OPERATIF! to create the focal point for their own events... launches, celebrations, incentive nights, client hosting and special events.



As concerts and special event engagements kept OPERATIF! busy, they also presented the first Opera performance on tiny Norfolk Island, with music-loving holiday makers flying in to enjoy concerts of opera and classics. Yet another success story ensued and the 'Opera in Paradise' Festival, now a week-long event, celebrates its 10th Anniversary in 2014.

Whilst many would be content with these achievements, there was another idea to be explored, that of creating opportunities for lovers of music to enjoy their passion whilst travelling with like-minded others. Thus Music- Lovers Tours was conceived and Jennifer and Stewart now create and host their own wonderful tours, each featuring musical highlights. Lovers of music and travel can indulge their passion with high quality, boutique tours offering exciting performances in a variety of hand-picked destinations.

in providing work to talented colleagues and presenting countless wonderful experiences of Opera and Song to appreciative audiences in all sorts of settings. The work has been hard, all encompassing but deeply satisfying. Perhaps the love and thrill of the melodies they sing is the key to boundless energy as Jennifer and Stewart look forward to many more years and many new ventures. They hope you'll join them!



"A company of this standard and inventiveness deserves to continue" The Australian

"Some of the finest operatic singing offered in Brisbane this year."

The Review

"I must agree with the advertising... 'wonderful program, warm personalities and glorious voices.'

We experienced all that and more and the audience was full of praise." Program Manager QPAC

'We write to express our gratitude for your most valued contribution to the Formal Dinner in the presence of the Minister for the Arts.' Arts Council of Australia - National Conference

'The performances by OPERATIF! were thoroughly entertaining and contributed greatly to our successful event'. Queensland Govt – Queensland Day Celebrations

'Without exception, the Australian Tourist Commission overseas managers declared OPERATIF!'s dinner performance the 'icing on the cake.' Assn of Australian Convention Bureaux

"It was great to enjoy the talents of OPERATIF! once again and I look forward to extolling your many virtues during future media visits and promotional exercises. Queensland Tourist Corporation



"As we entered the carpark outrageously singing snippets from the finale, we heard the same tunes springing forth from cars and people all around us... 'a sure sign of reaching your audience!"

The Sunday Mail