

MEDIA RELEASE: MONDAY NOVEMBER 29 2021



# THEATRE ROYAL SYDNEY



**AUSTRALIA'S ICONIC THEATRE ROYAL SYDNEY OPENS TO THE PUBLIC  
AFTER A MULTI MILLION DOLLAR REFURBISHMENT**

**WHERE THE CITY MEETS THE STAGE**

**A NEW ERA DEFINED FOR THEATRE IN AUSTRALIA WITH THE BEST IN WORLD  
CLASS ENTERTAINMENT - LAUNCH SEASON CONFIRMED WITH CURRENT  
BROADWAY MUSICALS JAGGED LITTLE PILL, GIRL FROM THE NORTH  
COUNTRY AND AN AMERICAN IN PARIS**

**SYDNEY GETS IT FIRST**

**HOURI TAPIKI APPOINTED AS GENERAL MANAGER**

**[STUNNING NEW VENUE PHOTOS AND VIDEO AVAILABLE HERE](#)**

**Theatre Royal Sydney** is thrilled to be opening its doors to the public after a complete refurbishment that has transformed this iconic 1200 seat historical Australian theatre. The architectural masterpiece and centrepiece of theatre in Sydney's CBD will be re-opening its doors this Thursday December 2 with Broadway hit musical, *Jagged Little Pill*, bringing performance and creativity once again to the heart of Sydney whilst expanding international tour possibilities within Australia.

Delivering on the 'Sydney gets it first' promise to bring the very best of international theatre to this exciting new venue, two of the most exciting current new Broadway musicals will be kicking off the programming. Grammy and Tony Award winning Broadway musical **Jagged Little Pill** will be the first production to hit the stage December 2<sup>nd</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> followed in January by one of the most critically acclaimed multi award-winning productions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, **Girl from the North Country**. Four-time Tony Award winning Broadway musical **An American in Paris** will follow in April 2022, just a taste of what is to come for audiences.

One of Australia's oldest theatrical institutions, originating in 1832, the current **Theatre Royal Sydney** was built in 1976, designed by acclaimed architect Harry Seidler, offering a broad range of entertainment including dramas, comedy and musicals. Many leading Australian and international performers have graced the **Theatre Royal Sydney** stage. In 1980, Mel Gibson and Noni Hazlehurst took to the stage in "No Names...No Pack Drill". The rich performance history also includes an interval bomb scare at the Australian Premiere of CATS in 1985, with audience members including Prime Minister Bob Hawke, Treasurer Paul Keating, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Cameron Mackintosh and a three year season of *Phantom of the Opera* from 1993 seen by over one million people, the longest running musicals ever staged at **Theatre Royal Sydney**.

The leading international live entertainment company **Trafalgar Entertainment (TE)**, co-founded by Sir Howard Panter and Dame Rosemary Squire in 2017, are the new operators of **Theatre Royal Sydney**. Focused on new productions, the distribution of live- streaming innovative content and the provision of amazing spaces where people can come together to share in the experience of live entertainment, Trafalgar Entertainment is home to **Theatre Royal Sydney**, Trafalgar Theatre London, Olympia Theatre, London, Twelve regional UK Theatres, Trafalgar Theatre Productions, Trafalgar Releasing, Stagecoach Performing Arts, Helen O'Grady Drama Academy, London Theatre Direct, Luke Shires Marketing, Jonathan Church Theatre Productions and The Chiswick Cinema.

**Sir Howard Panter, Joint CEO of Trafalgar Entertainment Group** said *"When we set our eyes on Theatre Royal Sydney, a true Australian theatrical icon, we were committed to restoring it back to all its glory, and to sit once again in the heart of Sydney's CBD – where the city meets the stage. Sydney has always been a landmark destination globally, and now it has back in place a landmark to visit and see the best of world class theatre. Opening this venue with the first international production outside Broadway, Alanis Morissette's Jagged Little Pill, we begin with our long-term commitment to Sydney Getting It First."*

An important cultural asset for Sydney and New South Wales, **Theatre Royal Sydney** closed its doors in March 2016 ahead of the redevelopment of the MLC Centre. In the heart of Sydney's Central Business District, **Theatre Royal Sydney** is located within 25 Martin Place, an icon of the Sydney skyline for over 40 years and a centrepiece of Sydney, where visitors embrace fashion, dining, business and culture. An important step forward for Sydney's arts and cultural sector, **Theatre Royal Sydney** re-opening increases Sydney's capacity to host new productions and compete on the world-stage for more first-run international tours, ensuring high-quality productions in Sydney's city centre well into the future. It will also contribute to the vibrancy of Sydney's 24-hour economy and deliver significant economic benefits to NSW through employment, tourism, and hospitality sector – it is estimated that internationally renowned musicals deliver around \$25 million in visitor expenditure over a six-month run.

Create NSW has proudly facilitated the re-opening of the Theatre Royal in partnership with building owner Dexus and new operator Trafalgar Entertainment.

*"It's great to have the Theatre Royal back thanks to the leadership shown by the NSW State Government. Our partners Trafalgar Entertainment and Dexus have done great work getting it ready to open. This marks an important step forward for Sydney's theatre scene, and brings life back to the centre of the city after the challenges of the last few years," Minister for the Arts, Don Harwin said. "The redeveloped Theatre Royal increases Sydney's capacity to host new productions and compete on the world-stage for more first-run international shows, ensuring high-quality productions well into the future."*

**Theatre Royal Sydney** is proud to be a restored theatre fitted out in the highest quality material with Trafalgar and owners, Dexus and Dexus Wholesale Property Group, having all made investments to significantly upgrade the theatre. The new auditorium with new seating and staging has been designed to an international standard to house world class productions from Australia and around the world from major commercial musicals, plays, ballet & live music. Trafalgar's redesign of the theatre added one extra row of seats and increased the capacity to 1200.

Under the new two-tiered design, no seat within the auditorium is more than 23 metres from Theatre Royal's stage.

The new circular glass entrance drum seamlessly unifies the internal theatre foyer with King Street, the bustling heart of Sydney's Central Business District. The new floor to ceiling windows at the entrance of the theatre now enables people outside the theatre to view the gorgeous theatre foyer featuring the incredible ribbed ceiling designed by Italian structural engineer Pier Luigi Nervi and the stunning geometrically precise hanging *Mercator* sculpture by American sculptor Charles O. Perry. Commissioned in 1974 by architect Harry Seidler and installed the following year, the *Mercator* has been restored by Sydney-based contemporary sculptor Stephen Coburn having been taken down in the 1990s and will be a feature of the transformed **Theatre Royal Sydney**. The new Theatre Royal sign has been crafted and produced by Newcastle based Owen Signs.

**Dexus** is one of Australia's leading fully integrated real estate groups, managing a high-quality Australian property portfolio valued at \$42.5 billion. As one of the owners of 25 Martin Place, Dexus has a passion for placemaking and helping shape leading cities and is deeply committed to working with its customers to create places where people thrive.

**Dexus CEO Darren Steinberg says** *"It is with an immense sense of pride that Dexus has worked over the past four years to breathe new life into the MLC Centre site, relaunching it as 25 Martin Place, and with that, returning one of Australia's most important cultural institutions – The Theatre Royal Sydney – to its former glory. It now means Australia's biggest city has a refreshed world-class theatre that can host the globe's best blockbuster shows. Together with the premium bar and dining experience we've curated as part of the revitalised precinct, the entertainment can start long before the curtain rises and continue long after it falls."*

Harry Seidler's original design concepts have been honoured in the renewal of the Theatre Royal with the re-establishment of key architectural features including the *Mercator* sculpture and the thematic feature the colours of red and gold. As original architects of the **Theatre Royal Sydney** (1976) and 25 Martin Place, **Harry Seidler & Associates** were engaged together with Woods Bagot to complete designs as part of the Conservation Management Plan for Theatre Royal and 25 Martin Place. In collaboration with Woods Bagot, Harry Seidler & Associates have also delivered the architectural design for the retail podium, public spaces and the office tower lobby at 25 Martin Place.

**Penelope Seidler AM of Harry Seidler & Associates says** *"I have happy memories of the old 'Royal' where I attended many plays and operas: it was a Sydney icon. In 1976 I attended the opening of the new Theatre Royal designed by my husband. It had the beautiful *Mercator* and the grand winding staircase within the red and gold plush interior. I am so thrilled I will be at the opening of the Royal again in 2021 when Harry's original design is renewed and will now be visible from King Street for the first time; the *Mercator* is back, the red and gold is back. I have no doubt it will become a Sydney icon once again and am sure it will enhance the life of Sydney for many more generations."*

Staying true to the great modernist architect's 1970s design, Woods Bagot in collaboration with Harry Seidler & Associates seamlessly integrated the rich history of Seidler's original architectural and cultural narrative into a contemporary precinct of revitalised public spaces.

**Woods Bagot Director Domenic Alvaro** says the beautiful new transparent foyer beckons passers-by to step in from King Street. *"When the MLC Centre was unveiled in 1978, it was unlike anything Australia had ever seen. As the curtain rises on the new theatre foyer, once again Australia is seeing something new and exciting,"* says Alvaro. *"We replaced the solid façade with a 7m high floor-to-ceiling curved glazing which reveals the spectacular foyer and signature art pieces within. It's a major design gesture that blurs the traditional public/private line and renews connection to the city's urban sensibility."*

After assisting Trafalgar Entertainment by coordinating their successful bid for the operation of the **Theatre Royal Sydney**, **Scott Carver** were engaged to provide Interior Design Services for the refurbishment. The design paid homage to the rich past of Theatre Royal whilst meeting the patron and production expectations of modern theatres. Their scope of works included the refurbishment of patron experience areas encompassing the provision of three new bars, two VIP lounges, new seating and interior design to the auditorium, alongside compliance and technical upgrade coordination and the extension of the balcony to provide a new front row to the circle. The

Interior Design approach was to honour and enhance the modernist design of the auditorium, restoring the iconic ribbed ceiling structure, whilst modernising the lighting design, seating and proscenium. The series of hospitality offers integrated into the iconic multi-storied foyer, including bars, merchandise counters and VIP areas all addressed the evolution of hospitality in today's theatre experience whilst providing additional revenue streams.

**Scott Carver Senior Associate Interior Design, Tina Fox** said, *"It's been an honour to work on an icon of both Sydney theatrical history and also its outstanding architectural heritage. The legacy of Harry Seidler is felt around the theatre, and we ensured that the design tied the existing features with the requirements of a modern theatre and visionary new MLC Centre. We look forward to seeing the stage and auditorium come to life again and hearing chatter and joy in the foyers and new bars and lounges. We don't want to distract you from the show, but make sure you look up to see the restored heritage ceilings and new proscenium when you get a chance."*

Trafalgar Entertainment appointed **Buildcorp** to deliver the heritage refurbishment and fit-out of the Theatre Royal. The partnership started early in the design phase to explore and resolve the project scope across every area of the sizeable venue. Buildcorp worked with Scott Carver Architects and heritage consultants Urbis to source and prototype samples of heritage items, including the theatre's striking gold ceiling blades, to restore to their former glory. The box office, VIP lounges, bars and seating areas underwent a full upgrade and expansion, and significant refurbishment works to the back-of-house areas optimised the functionality of specialist technical spaces and facilities for theatrical cast and crew.

**Buildcorp Managing Director Tony Sukkar AM** said: *"Buildcorp was proud to partner with Tim McFarlane, Trafalgar Entertainment and Forge Venture Management to enable their vision and breathe life back into this important cultural asset. Restoring a heritage venue this special takes great skill and craftsmanship. We collaborated from early in the process with architects Scott Carver and other specialists in theatre design and heritage restoration to develop solutions to create a world class theatre experience, in both the back and front-of-house. Our team married the old with the new by restoring important features from Harry Seidler's original vision and significantly upgrading the theatre's services, seating and operational areas. We look forward to the rejuvenated Theatre Royal enlivening a new era of Australian theatre."*

**Theatre Royal Sydney** will deliver a world class customer experience by breaking away from the traditional commercial theatre ticketing and distribution model by implementing a world-class ticketing solution as the first Australian venue to use new inhouse ticketing platform NLive in partnership with TixTrack. **Theatre Royal Sydney** has also secured the first Australian Partnership with HubSpot to deliver a fully integrated market leading CRM (customer relationship management) solution.

With a commitment to recruit the very best of the Australian theatre industry in management and front of house, **Theatre Royal Sydney** has appointed **Houri Tapiki** as General Manager.

Says **Houri Tapiki**, *"I feel truly honoured to be appointed as General Manager of Theatre Royal Sydney during this exciting time for the venue. Theatre Royal Sydney is where my passion and love for theatre and the performing arts was ignited over 20 years ago when I began my career as a ticket seller. To now lead this iconic venue as we prepare to reopen after a significant refurbishment is a real privilege. We have built a team dedicated to providing exceptional customer experiences and we look forward to welcoming audiences back to enjoy our stunning theatre"*.

Houri Tapiki takes over from **Jono Perry** who has overseen the theatre's refurbishment.

**Perry** says, *"It has been an absolute privilege to work with Houri, Tim, Torben and the amazing team at Theatre Royal Sydney. The Royal is a cultural icon of Sydney and playing a small part in bringing this extraordinary theatre back to life has been an honour."*

**Theatre Royal Sydney** have secured a 3-year partnership with **Premier Partner RBC Capital Markets**, part of Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), its first arts and cultural partnership secured in Australia. RBC is a major supporter

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of the arts globally and has been Principal Partner of London's Old Vic theatre since 2015, enabling more artistic output and varied programming. The Trafalgar Entertainment Group/Theatre Royal Sydney Partnership will also support RBC's Women in Finance Scholarship with University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Business School. The purpose of the scholarship is to advance the progression of women in finance through rewarding talented female students.

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[www.theatreroyalsydney.com](http://www.theatreroyalsydney.com)

**@theatreroyalsyd**

**Media Enquiries:** Lucky Star Media

Vicky Iliopoulos [vicky@luckystarmedia.com.au](mailto:vicky@luckystarmedia.com.au) +61 410 551 388

Clea Woods [clea@luckystarmedia.com.au](mailto:clea@luckystarmedia.com.au) +61 417 392 622

**Theatre Royal Sydney respectfully acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as Traditional Custodians of this land, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.**

**At every stage was made possible with the support of the NSW Government**



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