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## **PRESSRELEASEPRESSRELEASEPRESSRELEASE**

### **Co-Opera Appoints a New Musical Director**

**“We are delighted that distinguished South Australian, Dr Joshua van Konkelenberg has accepted appointment as Co-Opera’s Musical Director, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>,” Chair of the Board, Libby Ellis announced today. “It is exciting for Co-Opera that such a talented and widely lauded musician will steer the musical interests of our touring company of singers and instrumentalists. Joshua has a rich background in performance through his work with Opera Australia, as principal organist at St Peters Cathedral and through his deep involvement in Australia’s contemporary music scene both as a performer and a composer”, Libby said.**

**Whilst performing popular 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century operas will remain Co-Opera’s core business, Joshua hopes to make accessible pieces of contemporary music theatre more visible in the Company’s annual activity.**

**“Opera is about telling stories,” he said, “and the best of these are charged with deeply human, political, and social energy. Our repertoire tells stories that belong to everyone and need to be constantly retold in such a way that they touch people’s lives with a real force and immediacy. At the same time, there is the sheer joy and sensuous pleasure of music, so I’m really excited to**

open my time with Co-Opera conducting Rossini's hilarious and exhilarating *The Barber of Seville*.

Besides the operatic standards, there are also many stories that have yet to be told (or even written) that are fiercely alive with this energy, like Ralph Middenway's, *Barossa*, which is yet to receive a fully professional performance. When I read that after a performance at Adelaide University, an old woman said to the composer "That was nearly my story - don't change a thing!" I got really excited and we want to stage it for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Armistice Day when the opera is set.

My vision for Co-Opera is to kick-start a program parallel to our core-repertoire that shares contemporary works and concert music such as Händel's *Messiah* by using smaller chamber forces that will allow us to stage more flexibly and intersect with audiences more readily. One of the great privileges of my life has been to see first hand how a single performance can transform lives in an art-starved community, so I'm keen to get out there share the power and possibilities of music-making as widely as possible."

Co-Opera General Manager, Brian Chatterton, today said he was thrilled Joshua had accepted the position. "Joshua is one of the most talented artists in Australia today. His work with Opera Australia gives him ideal credentials and his deep involvement in church music gives him experience and understanding of effective community outreach which is at the heart of Co-Opera's *raison d'être*. It will be exciting to see the way in which Joshua's supreme artistry moulds a new artistic image for the Company," Brian said. "Joshua's recent solo recital for the inauguration of St Frances Xavier's magnificent Cassavant-Freres organ was one of the most technically astounding and spiritually uplifting musical experiences of my life. Co-Opera is indeed fortunate to have Josh join our music theatre family. We can't wait for him to get going," Brian said.

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