



State Memorial Service



Dame Joan Sutherland CM AC DBE

1926 - 2010

*Concert Hall
Sydney Opera House
Tuesday 9 November 2010*



Lucia di Lammermoor

State Memorial Service

Prelude from *La traviata* - Giuseppe Verdi
Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra
Conducted by Brian Castles-Onion

Welcome
Adrian Collette AM
Chief Executive, Opera Australia

Australian National Anthem

'Bell Song' from *Lakmé* - Léo Delibes
Joan Sutherland

The Honourable Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister of Australia

'Parigi, o cara' from *La traviata* - Giuseppe Verdi
Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti

Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO
Governor of New South Wales

Mad Scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor* - Gaetano Donizetti
Joan Sutherland

Mr Moffatt Oxenbould AM

'Era desso il figlio mio' from *Lucrezia Borgia* - Gaetano Donizetti
Joan Sutherland

Mr Adam Bonyngé

'Va, pensiero' from *Nabucco* - Giuseppe Verdi
Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, Opera Australia Chorus
Conducted by Brian Castles-Onion

Home Sweet Home
Joan Sutherland

'Casta Diva' from *Norma* - Vincenzo Bellini
Joan Sutherland



Lucrezia Borgia

Joan Sutherland is certainly the greatest voice of the century.

The late Luciano Pavarotti, tenor

Dame Joan's unique God-given gift has been an inspiration for me throughout my career and thanks to her recordings, will be inspiring many singers for years to come. She is greatly missed, but her voice lives on.

Cheryl Barker, soprano

Whenever Joan sang, there was always an incredible awareness amongst all those present, that we were hearing something very special and magical, especially in her dazzling displays of coloratura. I am extremely fortunate to have been part of this wonderful experience.

Clifford Grant OAM, bass

Dame Joan Sutherland was not only one of the greatest singers ever but a true artist in every sense. Her dedication to her art was exemplary and the legacy of La Stupenda will be with us always.

Peter Coleman-Wright, baritone

I remember standing on stage near Joan each night during the Bell Song in Lakmé, thinking that I must never become blasé about being so close to such supreme art. My good fortune in being her colleague was sweetened all the more by her endearing warmth, wit and friendliness. For me, an honour and a pleasure.

John Pringle AM, baritone

It is an honour for Opera Australia to arrange the program for Dame Joan's State Memorial Service. Her stellar talent, and the time she and her husband Richard Bonyngé invested in Australia, inspired both a great audience for opera and the development of so many fine Australian artists. We would not have a modern company of such depth and significance without her example.

Adrian Collette AM, Chief Executive, Opera Australia

Her voice and career have been like a beacon for all of us. I can't imagine that anyone in the history of all singing was ever better. Thank you for all you gave to us, and to me especially.

Marilyn Horne, mezzo-soprano

Dame Joan Sutherland inspired not only with her voice, but with her love and appreciation of all who worked with her. She gave us such joy. Her voice could melt the coldest of hearts. Her bel canto heroines set a bench mark for all who will follow. Thank you Dame Joan for all you taught me, for making me laugh and for making me cry. Rest in Peace, La Stupenda.

Emma Matthews, soprano

Mimi

Shut the doors,
Turn out the lights,
Pull the curtain to a close.

Put away your tickets,
Pack up the chairs,
Silence those who shout 'the show must go on'.

Quieten the piano,
Hush violins,
Soften your voices and let the mourners in.

Today we remember.

Not the diva, La Stupenda, the soprano, the dame.
But our grandmother, our mother, our one true love, our family, our friend.

She was our morning sun, our evening star.
She was more than a voice, she was our song.

So;

Shut the doors,
Turn out the lights,
Pull the curtain to a close.

And remember.

Peace be with you my darling grandmother.
You will be in our hearts until the end of days.

Natasha Bonyngé



Norma

When I arrived in London in 1966 to study at the London Opera Centre, I knew almost nobody. A short time later, I was told to be at a master class conducted by Richard Bonyngne - which made me somewhat nervous - and even more so when I discovered the great Joan Sutherland was to be there as well.

But the two people could not have been more friendly and encouraging. The advice they gave me at that very first meeting changed the direction of my career and gave me both inspiration and confidence.

Three years later, when I finished my course at the Opera Centre, I was offered the chance to be a supporting soloist at the Royal Festival Hall, and for the first time I stood on stage with Dame Joan for a concert performance of Alcina - which for a young recent student was an awe-inspiring experience. But that great lady was totally supportive - and remained so for all four decades that I came to know her.

There can be no doubt that hers was a unique voice - the greatest of its time. But her audiences didn't necessarily know the great lady behind that voice. She was friendly, approachable, honest, generous with her time and supportive to younger colleagues. Joan's focus was only on presenting the finest quality of music, and her wonderful offstage personality was a bonus.

As a singer she had no rivals. When she sang, it was the sound of heaven.

As a person, she brought pleasure just by being in the room. It will be a very long time before we hear such a voice again.

And as well as that we are also saying goodbye to a marvellous woman.

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa ONZ, DBE, AC, soprano

Joan's supreme artistry has given incalculable pleasure to countless thousands around the world. Nobody lucky enough to have heard her in the flesh will ever forget the sheer visceral thrill of her performances. We, along with those who didn't hear her live, have been hugely enriched by her astonishing legacy of great recordings. The magnificent and timeless Sutherland voice now lives on, unforgotten, in the grateful memory of so many. Wherever she is now, we hope Joan is singing away, doing those breathtaking vocal leaps and trills that we will never forget, running around performing mad scenes, and, of course, nailing those high E-flats every time.

Anthony Freud, General Director and CEO;
Patrick Summers, Music Director
Houston Grand Opera

Treasured memories come to mind about performing with Joan - to be standing next to her on stage was truly amazing, as the magnificence of her voice resonated throughout her whole body and its energy radiated to her fellow artists, inspiring our own performances. Joan possessed a wicked sense of humour, was always down to earth and loyal and supportive to her colleagues. Not only the greatest voice of the 20th Century but Joan was a wonderful human being and I was privileged to have known and worked with her for many years.

Jennifer Bermingham OAM, mezzo-soprano

Joan Sutherland had no qualms about singing anything. With a superb technique built in a lifetime of dedication to her art, she was an inspiration to work with. To sing with Dame Joan Sutherland lifted one's own performance to another level, and I will never forget the honour and privilege of working with her. Thank you Joan.

Lauris Elms AM, OBE, mezzo-soprano

Simply put, Dame Joan was Australia's greatest opera singer. She was hailed around the world as La Stupenda, was a fine ambassador for Australia and made an extraordinary contribution to opera both here in Australia and internationally.

Lyndon Terracini, Artistic Director, Opera Australia

I asked her in the second act of Die Fledermaus to dance part of the czardas. She said, "Are you crazy? Dancing it and singing it at the same time? You must be joking." Then she'd go ahead and do it. She was very game.

Lotfi Mansouri, director

What can one say? Joan Sutherland not only possessed the greatest voice of the 20th century she was also brilliant, clever, witty and the most professional colleague with whom I ever worked. What a privilege it has been for me to sing in eleven different operas over the years with our wonderful Dame Joan! A singer of her stature with the ability to create great characters on stage is a rarity.

Robert Allman AM, OBE, baritone

A wonderful colleague, a very funny and lovely lady. It was the thrill of a lifetime to have known her and to have sung with her. Thank you, Joan, for filling my life with such a wealth of wonderful memories and pleasures.

Robert Gard OBE, tenor

"School's never out," she always said. I consider myself fortunate to have known Joan Sutherland as a colleague and friend. All those happy memories of wonderful performances. Sharing the thrill and beauty of her extraordinary vocal art. Her masterly technique, a lesson to us all. A light has been extinguished. I will miss you, dearest Joan.

Graeme Ewer AM, tenor

Joan

A career that spanned more than forty years is surely something of a phenomenon in the operatic world. Joan herself tended to belittle her achievements – she was given a voice by God, she worked hard, learned to sing properly and kept on singing.

But how many voices throughout history have been able to encompass a wide and amazingly diverse repertoire – sing constantly for forty years in the great opera houses of the world and survive?

In her sixties she was still singing Norma, Lucrezia Borgia and Lucia in huge theatres. Her long career encompassed the baroque operas of Handel, Haydn and Mozart – the nineteenth-century Italian and French operas ranging from the romantic to the verismo – Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini and Cilea in the Italian school; Weber and Wagner in the German school; Gounod, Delibes and Massenet in the French; with a few forays into operetta and a big recital repertoire. She sang much modern music, both in the theatre and concert hall, by Britten, Tippett, Walton, Honneger, Frank Martin and Poulenc, not to forget in excess of forty complete opera recordings and countless discs of arias and songs. Many of the operas which she sang had not been heard in the twentieth century or certainly not for fifty years.

Why did this voice survive when so many careers today are so short, and survive singing such diverse roles – Aida and Olympia, Turandot and Lucia, Eva and Norma?

I can only imagine that it was because her technique of singing was begun and nurtured in the school of bel canto. And what, we are constantly asked, is bel canto? So many books have been written about it, but it almost belies description. It unites the three natural registers of the voice – the chest, middle and head – into one. It demands a seamless legato, a coloratura technique and absolute control of dynamics. It requires a beautiful sound. The size of the voice has nothing to do with it – all categories of voice are improved with training and Joan was fortunate that her mother had studied with Burns Walker, a pupil of Marchesi, herself a pupil of Manuel Garcia who was Rossini's first Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*. From an early age she was exposed to the right method. But method is not enough. One must be born with an instinct for singing and this can rarely be taught – only developed. Although there are hundreds of books on the subject, I defy anyone to conquer this art by reading them. Joan conquered this art because of an inner strength, a tenacity of purpose, an enormous self-discipline and a great heart.

She learned, she sang and she endured. She was a strong lady who realised her potential and in the entire world she was probably the one least conscious of it.

Richard Bonyng AO, CBE

Edited with permission, from an article written in Sydney in 1989 and originally published in *Joan Sutherland – A Tribute*, published by Honeysett Publications in 1989



Lakmé

Dame Joan herself is held in the highest esteem and affection in my family. I grieve over the loss of this great diva, especially from the professional and private sphere of my own interaction with her. This began long ago, almost fifty years, in 1961, when I was a secretary at Decca Records, London. Decca gave me the special treat of attending Joan's recording of Handel's Alcina with a stellar cast conducted by Richard, in that year. Thus I first met Joan after that recording as we travelled in the lift together. Even though she must have been tired, she was so friendly and interested in my own study and experience. This meant all the more to me when eventually I sang the title role in Alcina for Opera Australia, conducted by Richard. The following year Dame Joan was the next Alcina. With the far too early demise of Dame Joan it seems we come to the end of a very special operatic era.

Joan Carden AO, OBE, soprano

To be on the stage with Joan was to know that you were in the presence of greatness and I count myself fortunate that I am able to say that "I worked with Joan Sutherland". It was an association and connection to be proud of, but at the same time to enjoy, for she simply enjoyed her friends and colleagues as much as we enjoyed and valued her presence in our working lives. I still miss the 10 years of shows we did together and I shall miss even more the kindness, modesty and above all humour which she showed towards us lesser mortals, her fellow singers.

Richard Greager, tenor

What can I say about Joan Sutherland? A megastar, an icon, La Stupenda. She was all those and more. But to me she was a real person and talked to me especially when I performed in Il trovatore with her. I really got to know her. She became a real friend and helped me enormously. I shall never forget her kindness and words of support when I first sang for the Company in 1983.

Kenneth Collins, tenor

To have shared the operatic stage with Dame Joan was a rare and treasured privilege. My memories of her years with the Company will always be associated with the unfailing beauty and sheen of her voice; of professionalism and dedication; of her relaxed demeanor, even in the most trying circumstances; and finally of a warm, generous colleague.

Anson Austin OAM, tenor

My first association with Joan was back in 1965 when I was a very young Baron Duphol to her Violetta in La traviata in the Sutherland-Williamson Grand Opera Company. I was very much in awe of her amazing voice and presence, and then later in my career I was privileged to work with her in Lucia di Lammermoor, Il trovatore, Norma, I puritani and Hamlet, where I always found her to be a colleague with great understanding, mateship and professionalism. She was a truly amazing person.

Donald Shanks AO, OBE, bass

Joan Sutherland

Joan Sutherland's first performance of Lucia di Lammermoor, in London on 17 February 1959, signalled to the world that an admired company artist had just been elevated to the status of international superstar. On that evening, Sutherland was accorded a position in the operatic firmament that would be enhanced over the years by a series of exceptional interpretations in the greatest opera houses, concert halls and recording studios of the globe. At her final operatic performance in Sydney in 1990 and her Gala Farewell at Covent Garden on the very last night of the same year, audiences showered her with gratitude and affection for the quality of her work throughout an honourable career that spanned four decades.

Lucia in 1959 not only showcased Sutherland's impeccable bel canto technique, but also a dynamic stage director, Franco Zeffirelli, and one of the most revered and expert Italian conductors of the 20th century, Tullio Serafin. Importantly it was the culmination of years of hard work in which Joan's quite modest operatic aspirations were reviewed, questioned and extended by the dedication and faith of several who recognised and believed in her ability. Most notable among them was her husband, conductor Richard Bonyngne, who, as well as realising the heights she could attain, was able to give her the practical and emotional assurance that she needed to follow her remarkable vocal instincts.

Sutherland rose to the top of her profession with natural humility and strong professional discipline, nurtured in the ensemble at Covent Garden since joining the company in 1952. She knew that to be a prima donna was as much a responsibility as a privilege. As her fame grew and as new audiences came to hear her live performances with the sound of her dazzling recordings ringing in their ears, she was aware of just how much was expected of her and how much of each performance's success was in her hands. She had an ability to bring out the best in those around her, onstage and off, and was an example and inspiration to younger colleagues, filled with hope and ambition. At the same time she was a glorious affirmation to experienced artists of just how close to vocal perfection an individual could come.

Her return to Australia – to head the Sutherland-Williamson Grand Opera Company in 1965, and then her second homecoming in 1974 to begin a 16-year association with The Australian Opera – were landmarks in our country's musical history. Audience expectations were high, but the reality of her performances exceeded them all. Not just the phenomenal voice, but her charm and sincerity as a performer and colleague endeared her to all who heard and worked with her. Her legendary status derives not only from one of the longest and most distinguished careers in operatic history, but from the fact that her beautiful and unique voice could engage, involve and emotionally transport the listener. When listening to Joan Sutherland sing, one knows with absolute certainty that one is in the presence of greatness. Fortunately her recorded legacy still reminds us of just how blessed we are to have been touched and enriched by her artistry.

Moffatt Oxenbould AM

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Thank you
The Bonyng Family
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Sydney Opera House





