

Opera *in collaboration with* The Orchestra Project *present*
the AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE of the operatic sensation of the 1920s

Jonny spielt auf (1926)

Jonny Strikes Up!

an opera by **Ernst Krenek**

English version by **Jeremy Sams**

staged concert performance

conducted by Peter Tregear

Athenaeum Theatre

Friday 4 October 8:00 pm

tickets from **Ticketek**

tel: (03) 9650 1500

<https://premier.ticketek.com.au>

ernst krenek
institut

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OPERA



A history-making 1920s 'jazz opera' inspired by an Australian gets its long-awaited Australian premiere

Innovative local opera company IOpera joins forces with The Orchestra Project, and the Richard Divall Young Artists Program of Melbourne Opera to present the Australian premiere performance of *Jonny Strikes Up!* ('Jonny spielt auf') in a semi-staging in English for one night only at the Athenaeum Theatre, Collins Street.

Composed by the then 26-year-old Ernst Krenek (1900–1991) *Jonny* blends sumptuous opera with riotous jazz and dance music to create a genre-defying, epoch-defining, comedy-drama, that for the first time put the sounds and sensibilities of the modern city onto the operatic stage.

Within months of its premiere in Leipzig in 1927 *Jonny* was to be found striking up in over 42 opera houses, becoming arguably the *most successful opera premiere* ever. Its run of performances only came to an end when the Third Reich, offended by its forward-thinking take on contemporary sexual, racial, and musical norms of the day banned the work as 'degenerate' and forced its composer to flee his native Austria in fear of his life.

The opera tells the story of Max, an introspective composer who finds his otherworldly sensibilities challenged by a free-spirited opera singer, Anita, with whom he falls in love.

The composer later revealed that Anita was based on his recollections of a passionate affair he had had in 1925 with the distinguished Australian violin virtuoso Alma Moodie (1898–1943). Through Anita, Max learns to reconcile himself to the pace and confusion of city life and take control of his own future.

Max's personal transformation is mirrored in a sub-plot in which Jonny, an African-American jazz musician, steals a valuable violin from the self-regarding virtuoso Daniello, with the help of his girlfriend, Yvonne. The opera concludes with Max departing for America to the exuberant sounds of Jonny's music 'striking up'.

The exceptional cast includes internationally renowned Australian tenor **Alexander Lewis** as Max, Sun Aria winners **Lee Abrahmsen** as Anita and **Rebecca Rashleigh** as Yvonne, Melbourne baritones **Shoumendu Schornikow** as Jonny, **Raphael Wong** as Daniello, and **Roger Howell** as Anita's agent. Supporting roles include **Darcy Carroll**, **Louis Hurley**, and **Cameron Sibly**.

The production has been made possible through the generous support of donors including The Cybec Foundation and Henkell Brothers Australia Pty Ltd.

Performance details

Where: The Athenaeum Theatre, Collins Street, Melbourne

When: 8:00 pm, Friday 4 October 2019 Tickets: \$25–\$70

Tickets available from Ticketek: <https://premier.ticketek.com.au/> or ☎ 13 28 29

