



TRANSGENDER COMEDY

Roxane performs at Playhouse



● Roxane Hislop

■ Roxane Hislop is one of Victoria's busiest opera singers this year, and the mezzo-soprano couldn't be happier. Roxane takes to the stage of the Victorian Arts Centre's Playhouse next week in Victorian Opera's first main stage opera of its 2012 season, *The Rake's Progress* by Igor Stravinsky, in the role of Baba the Turk.

Joining her is Dr Ben Namdarian as Tom Rakewell, the Rake of the title. In real life, he is a medical doctor as well as an opera singer.

Audience favourite soprano Tiffany Speight joins Ben as Anne Truelove, the love of Tom's life, in a production directed by John Bell of Bell Shakespeare fame. Victorian Opera Music director Richard Gill is conducting, with former Australian Ballet principal dancer Steven Heathcote as choreographer.

In any good opera plot there is always a 'baddie', and in the *Rake's Progress* it's the malevolent Nick Shadow, the devil in disguise, sung by Andrew Collis.

The Rake's Progress opens with a romantic duet between Tom and Anne, but their harmony is soon disrupted by the temptations of Nick Shadow, and Tom leaves behind true love for wealth and position.

A second marriage follows, to Baba the Turk, and cunning Nick comes into the picture again and convinces Tom to invest in a sham project, which ruins his life.

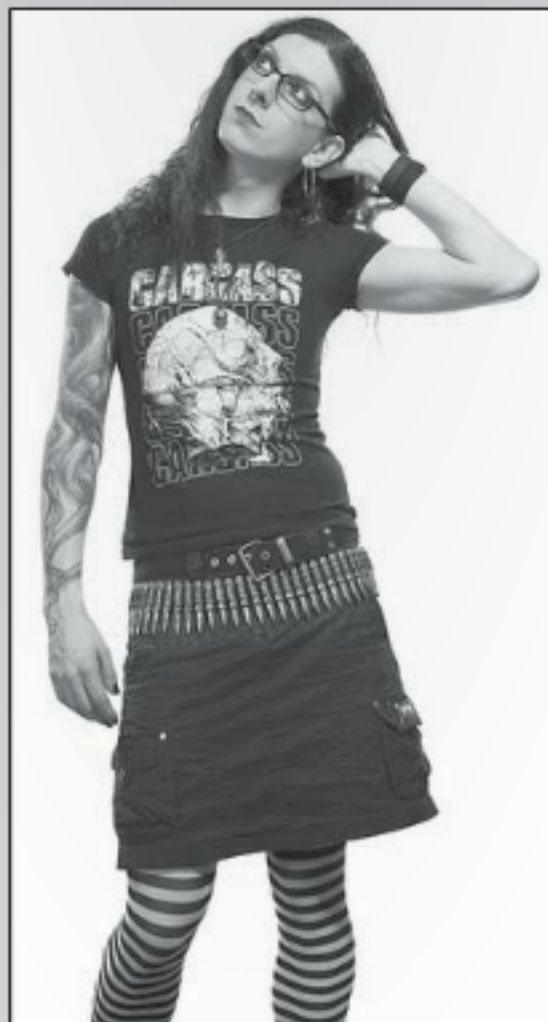
When he's not on stage, Ben Namdarian is a Urological Surgical Registrar at Box Hill Hospital, in the third year in a six-year training program to be a surgeon. How does the lifestyle of a busy doctor allow for professional opera?

"It's a significant challenge but I have been very fortunate to have wonderful support in both disciplines and from my wife - each year I use my annual leave from hospital to be in a production, while throughout the year I perform with various organizations," Ben explains.

Ben says that the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Urological Society supervisors have been supportive in accommodating his leave, and he thrives on the wonderful release he gets from performing opera.

He finds his character Tom incredible rewarding to portray, and he sees many parallels with today's fast-paced lifestyle.

Turn To Page 47



● Stand up comedian Andrew O'Neill is performing at Pony, March 29 to April 22 as part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival

■ 2012 sees the return of occult comedian Andrew O'Neill, who over the past few years has stormed the screens, including appearances on *Good News Week* and *Spicks and Specks*.

This year Andrew is bringing his brand new show *Alternative* to the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, as part of his Australian tour.

Facts that Andrew likes known about himself include that he is a heterosexual transvestite with an obsession for high heeled shoes and it was his Adelaide-born ex-girlfriend who encouraged him to try stand-up.

He is in a Victorian-themed punk band called *The Men That Will Not Be Blamed For Nothing*, is a vegan, but definitely not a goth.

He also filmed a stand-up set for the most recent series of Stewart Lee's TV show and appeared alongside Steve Coogan in the sitcom *Saxondale*.

Andrew's performances in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival will be from March 29 to April 22 (no shows Mondays and Tuesdays) at 7.30pm at Pony, 68 Little Collins St.

Tickets: www.ticketmaster.com.au or at the door.

More information about Andrew O'Neill can be found on www.andrewoneill.co.uk

- Cheryl Threadgold

George Negus loses job

■ TV reporter George Negus has lost a \$25,000 hosting job following his slur against Cpl Ben Roberts-Smith VC.

He was booked to emcee a private Telstra conference for senior management in Melbourne but has been informed his services were no longer required.

Vienese flautist performs here



● Viennese flautist Karin Leitner will perform in Concerts in Melbourne and Barwon Heads.

Photo: Johannes Tichy

■ Renowned Viennese flautist Karin Leitner arrives in Australia this month for recitals at selected venues.

Karin studied at the Academy of Music and Arts in Vienna and at the Academy of Music, Freiburg, Germany. She has won many competitions and performed solo concerts with various orchestras, including the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Vienna Mozart Orchestra, London Gala Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, Capella Istropolitana, Slovak Radio Orchestra and Bratislava Symphony Orchestra.

Chamber music recitals include in the main concert halls in Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, England (London Chamber Music Festival), Ireland, Iran, USA, South Africa, Holland, Switzerland, France and Italy.

She has also played in concerts on the Hapag Lloyd cruise yacht *MS Europa*, Nepal and India.

Karin has also tutored at the Sándor Vegh Symposium for woodwinds, and conducted chamber music workshops in Ireland, China, Iran and South Africa.

Karin has a contract for the stage orchestra in the Vienna State Opera and is also Artistic Director of the Vienna Film Orchestra.

Performances playing Principal Flute and Principal Piccolo include in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Irish Chamber Orchestra, London Gala Orchestra, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Misérables*.

Her recorded CDs can be found on Amazon and iTunes. In 2010 Karin was awarded a Composition Prize of the City of Vienna and has been appointed Artist and Composer in Residence in Tehran, Iran in 2012.

Victorian performances: Lunch Hour Concert with Karin Leitner (flute) and Jacinta Dennett (harp) Monday, March 26 at 1.10pm, Melba Hall, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Melbourne, Gate 12, Royal Pde., Parkville. Free Entry.

Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto - The Melbourne Musicians 38th Concert Season: Wednesday, March 28 at 8.00pm, Melba Hall, The University of Melbourne, Parkville.

Barwon Heads Fine Music Society Inc. Sunday, April 8 at 2.30pm Anglican Church, Hitchcock Ave., Barwon Heads www.karinleitner.com

- Cheryl Threadgold