



TUCKER FRESH

5% SENIORS DISCOUNT
MONDAY - FRIDAY
12 GROCERY STORES ACROSS PERTH

Home > Entertainment > From fish and chip shop to centre stage

Entertainment

From fish and chip shop to centre stage

By Jens Kirsch - 10/03/2026



Paul O'Neill outside his Fish and Chips shop in Coobellup

Four o'clock sharp in Coobellup, the sign goes out the front. Inside High C's Fish and Chips, the oil is hot, regulars drift in, and Paul O'Neill greets customers by name. One insists on "just a touch of vinegar". Families swing by for dinner, and the counter fills with small talk as orders are wrapped and handed over.

In a few weeks' time, this same man will step onto the stage of His Majesty's Theatre and sing one of opera's great romantic roles.

Paul O'Neill is returning as Alfredo Germont in Verdi's *La Traviata* for West Australian Opera, playing at His Majesty's Theatre from March 14 to 28.

For Paul, this isn't simply another season. It's a return to a role he first performed in 2022, and one that now lands differently.

He has five children at home. with another baby on the way. The shop has become a gathering place.

Featured Articles



A career dedicated to helping people make sense of their world
10/03/2026



Fab Four sing Ovation
06/03/2026



Sculpture by the Sea is back!
06/02/2026



MAFS is back!
29/01/2026

Load more >

Latest News

The days are fuller, the nights shorter, the responsibilities heavier.

"When you're younger, you sing him with a lot of fire," Paul reflects. "He's passionate, impulsive. He believes love will solve everything. But when you've lived a bit more life, you start to see his blind spots. You understand the cost of those impulsive decisions."

A love story with consequences

La Traviata follows Violetta Valéry, a glamorous courtesan who falls in love with Alfredo and dares to imagine a different life. But love collides with reputation. Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, pressures Violetta to leave to protect the family's honour. She agrees, quietly, completely and Alfredo, unaware of the reason, humiliates her in public. By the time he learns the truth, it's too late.

It's a story about love, pride, misunderstanding and regret.

"It's incredibly human," Paul says. "That's why it still works. We've all said something too quickly. We've all made a decision without knowing the full story. And sometimes we realise too late."

"A lot of people think opera isn't for them," he says. "But when they come, they recognise themselves in it. It's not about fancy costumes. It's about people making choices under pressure."

Two stages, one life

Running a small business is not a hobby. The shop opens five days a week. During rehearsals, Paul moves from the fryer to the practice room and back again.

"I love the connection," he says. "If I wasn't singing, I'd probably still be doing something with food. I enjoy creating something special and handing it to someone. But what I love most are the conversations."

Those conversations are rarely about opera.

"They tell you everything," he laughs. "Health. Work. Kids leaving home. You're just wrapping up their fish and chips and suddenly you're part of someone's life story."

On stage, applause can be immediate. In a takeaway shop, satisfaction is quieter: regulars returning, someone saying the chips were spot on.

Paul is clear that one life informs the other.

"When you stand on stage, you're not floating above the world," he says. "You bring your whole life with you. Being a dad, running a business, listening to people every day, it all shapes how you tell a story."

Fatherhood, in particular, has changed his relationship with Alfredo.

"As a dad, you see things differently. You think about consequences. You think about responsibility. Alfredo doesn't always think about that. He reacts. And that's his tragedy."

The discipline behind the romance

Alfredo is a demanding role: warm, flexible, emotionally exposed. Rehearsals are long. Performances are intense. The discipline is practical, sleep, energy, hydration, voice care, and the ability to switch on emotionally, night after night.

"There's a discipline to it," Paul explains. "You have to look after your voice, your sleep, your energy. But you also have to live. That's the balance. And I like to be busy."

At home, music is normal. Paul's wife, Aleisha, is a piano teacher, and one of their sons has already shared the stage with Paul. The children understand that when Dad is quiet, he may be saving his voice.

"They see both sides," he says. "They see the hard work behind it. That's important to me. I want them to know that nothing just happens by magic."

First opera?

Here's the good news

If you've never been to an opera, *La Traviata* is a friendly place to start. It's a big, clear story, told through famous melodies and you don't need any special knowledge to enjoy it. It's sung in Italian, with English surtitles so you can follow every twist of the plot.

"If someone comes in here and says they've never been to the opera, I tell them: just give it a go," Paul says. "It's a story. It's music. It's emotion. You don't need to know anything else."

As opening night approaches, the shop sign will still go out. The conversations will continue. Orders will be wrapped in paper.

Then, a short drive away, the lights will dim at His Majesty's Theatre. The orchestra will begin. Alfredo will step forward once more.

This time, he'll carry not only youthful passion, but the steady weight of lived experience.

Do one thing now: pick a date, book a seat, and bring someone who's never been before, "let's give it a go!".

La Traviata plays at His Majesty's Theatre (West Australian Opera) from March 14 – 28

Tickets: Adult pricing ranges from \$49 to \$189 (concessions available in several sections, including Seniors Card holders).

Accessibility: audio-de scribed performance with tactile tour, Thursday March 19 (tactile tour starts 6pm; request when booking).

Bookings / Box Office: His Majesty's Theatre 6212 9292 or www.waopera.asn.au.

TAGS Entertainment Opera WA Opera



Previous article

Ubud Food Festival 2026 honours farmers and icons

Next article

Heart in the handmade: Start making or mending again



Jens Kirsch

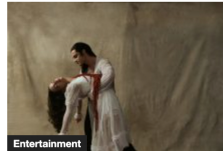
<http://>

RELATED ARTICLES

MORE FROM AUTHOR



Author makes Perth the star of his new crime series



Dracula returns: WA Ballet revives award-winning hit



Italian folk meets Fremantle charm



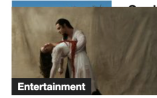
Featured Articles



A career dedicated to helping people make sense of their world
10/03/2026



Fab Four sing Ovation
06/03/2026



Dracula returns: WA Ballet revives award-winning hit



New EU border rules could mean longer airport queues



Have a Go News provides mature Western Australians with quality lifestyle information for them to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

Contact us: info@haveagonews.com.au



Contact

- About
- Contact
- Distribution
- Code of Conduct

