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## WA Opera's La Traviata at His Majesty's Theatre to star soprano Jessica Blunt in her role debut as Violetta

Tanya MacNaughton | The West Australian  
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WA Opera will present La Traviata at His Majesty's Theatre in March, starring soprano Jessica Blunt in her role debut as Violetta, pictured at Lawson Flats. Credit: Michael Wilson/The West Australian

 Soprano Jessica Blunt knows the rush of adrenaline that comes with ensuring the show must go on following the final performance of WA Opera's *Il Trovatore* last year.

 After securing a spot in the opera company's Wesfarmers Arts Young Artist Program in 2024, singing small roles in *Dido* and *Aeneas* that same year before the part of Inez in the 2025 *Il Trovatore* season, the 29-year-old stepped up to perform lead soprano character Leonora on closing night when Naomi Johns lost her voice due to illness.

"I had a call three hours before showtime, saying, 'How well do you know the role? How do you feel about singing it tonight?'" Blunt recounts.

"I said, 'How long do I have to decide?' and was told, 'Oh, about 45 minutes'. I went through the score, I checked it, and I said, 'Yep, I want to do this', because I knew that if I couldn't do it, then no one would get to go on stage that night.



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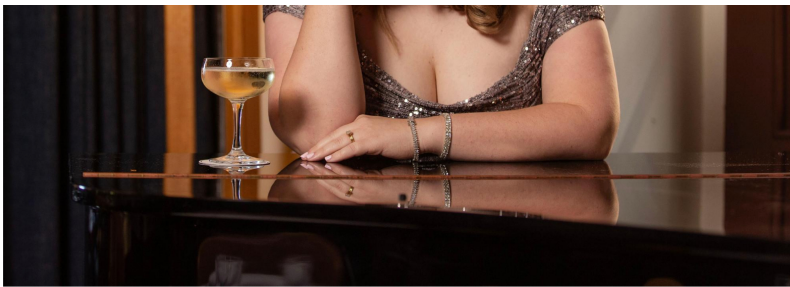
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📷 Jessica Blunt is making her role debut as Violetta in WA Opera's La Traviata. Credit: Michael Wilson/The West Australian

"I had sung the first aria in a coaching session in London once, and that's it. The rest I'd sort of heard in rehearsals, so I was familiar with it. Act four, my character (Inez) isn't in, so I'd never heard act four until that afternoon."

With everyone wishing her well from the wings, Blunt took the opera's score on stage and sight-read the role, greatly assisted by WA Symphony Orchestra conductor Asher Fisch as she sung in Italian while managing to look calm and composed.

Vastly more preparation has taken place for Blunt's next Giuseppe Verdi opera performance as she makes her role debut as Violetta in director Sarah Giles' critically acclaimed production of La Traviata.

Based on Alexandre Dumas' novel and play *The Lady Of The Camellias*, which also inspired Baz Luhrmann's film *Moulin Rouge!* and subsequent musical, *La Traviata* follows the love story of courtesan Violetta and aristocrat Alfredo who defy society to be together.

When Alfredo's father's disapproval becomes too much for Violetta, she returns to her party life in Paris, all while hiding the secret of her tuberculosis and impending tragedy.

"It's one of those operas that really reflects humanity and the issues of love and heartbreak and betrayal and trust and morbidity," Blunt says.

"Everything that these characters were going through back then, they're all things that we are still navigating as humans now. So that's what I think makes it so enduring, as well as the catchy tunes because he's a great composer."

What makes Giles' production stand out from others – last performed by WA Opera in 2022 with Samantha Clarke as Violetta, who is now the company's 2026 artist in residence – is the ownership the director gives to her leading lady.

"In the original book, *The Lady Of The Camellias*, it's written about Violetta, and her story is told by her lover to a male author," Blunt says.

"Her story has been framed by men the whole time. Sarah realised that Violetta has never had the chance to tell her story herself, so she's taken this real feminist perspective onto the story and showed what Violetta goes through as a real person. Someone who has these two sides to her as a public-facing party girl, and then a real woman who's suffering, who's sick and who just wants to be loved.



📷 Soprano Jessica Blunt at Lawson Flats ahead of WA Opera's La Traviata season. Credit: Michael Wilson/The West Australian



📷 Soprano Jessica Blunt. Credit: Michael Wilson/The West Australian

Having grown up in Lake Macquarie, Blunt is a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and London's Royal Academy of Music, moving to Perth from Austria at the start of 2023 after an eight-year long-distance relationship with her Perth-raised husband.

"It's very hard to make the leap from finishing your studies to actually being employed, so becoming a Wesfarmers Arts Young Artist meant that was the final leap and little tie between study and professional life for me," Bayswater-based Blunt shares.

"Being able to do it in Perth was awesome, because it meant that I could feel grounded at home with my husband, but it also meant that I was working in this amazing State opera company, who do all these really cool performances."

While Violetta is a part that every soprano dreams of one day singing, it has inspired Blunt even more

after seeing where the role has taken her predecessor, Clarke.

“I actually met with Samantha to talk about it,” Blunt says.

“It was just so great to meet as two sopranos, two women who feel incredibly passionate about this story, and get her ideas and her thoughts. I’ve always looked up to her as an artist, so to be taking on the torch is really exciting.”

**WA Opera’s La Traviata is at His Majesty’s Theatre, March 14 to 28. Tickets at [waopera.asn.au](http://waopera.asn.au).**



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