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Yallingup-raised opera singer Jake Bigwood takes centre stage in West Australian Opera's Romeo et Juliette

**Madelin Hayes** | South Western Times
Wed, 7 October 2026 11:20AM

Madelin Hayes



Jake Bigwood will star as the Duke of Verona in the West Australian Opera's Romeo et Juliette. Credit: Supplied



A Yallingup-raised opera singer will star in the West Australian Opera's latest production of Romeo et Juliette.

Jake Bigwood will perform as the Duke of Verona in the Shakespeare tragedy at His Majesty's Theatre from October 15-24.

The bass-baritone has performed across Australia and overseas and trained at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and London's Royal Academy of Music.

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Now based in Sydney, Bigwood said performing in WA always felt like coming home.

"I'm always excited to come back to WA and perform," he said.

Raised in Yallingup, Bigwood attended Dunsborough Primary School and Busselton Senior High School, growing up surrounded by music.

"My mum, Karen Bigwood, was a music teacher for 30 years at Vasse Primary School and my nanna, Deirdre Russell, was a music teacher in Perth," he said.

"So you know, I never really had a choice, it was always in the family.

"I had wanted to go into the air force, but unfortunately I grew too tall to be a fighter pilot."

Opera itself wasn't always part of the plan, but Bigwood said he stumbled into it as a genre.

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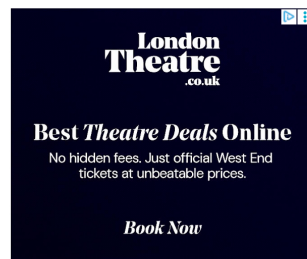
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“We didn’t grow up listening to it, when we’d go around to nanna’s place, she would have Classic FM playing in the background,” he said.



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“I decided to try out for the Gondwana Choir.

“That was sort of what led me down the path of getting some singing lessons, and eventually, my teacher said it might be worth giving opera a go.

“I knew nothing about opera and that style of singing, let alone having to sing in foreign languages and understanding the stories.”

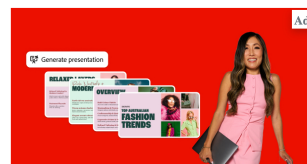
He later auditioned for WAAPA alongside his grandmother, who he credits for helping him get through the door.

“I walked in with her on my arm, and I still think she’s the reason I got in because I won all of the brownie points that day,” he said.

“I started my bachelor’s degree and just progressively fell more and more in love with classical singing and in particular opera.”

His latest role will see him play the character in Romeo et Juliette seeking to stop the violence between the warring Montagues and Capulets.

“The Duke is the one character in the opera who doesn’t want the Montagues and the Capulets to fight,” he said.



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“My character is the first one to sort of hold anyone to account and to really show that integrity, and he even accuses Lord Capulet saying, ‘am I going to be the only one left to deal with all of this bloodshed?’”

Bigwood said the role was a change of pace, with bass-baritones often cast as villains.

“It’s a nice change for me, I usually play the bad guy so it’s quite nice to actually be on the right side of the fight for a change,” he said.

He said the performance also had a special meaning to him.

“It’s a very special thing for me coming home because my nanna who I had done the WAAPA audition with was always an opera lover and unfortunately, we only lost her about a month ago, so a lot of this performance will be a bit of a dedication to her,” he said.

Romeo et Juliette is showing at His Majesty’s Theatre from October 15-24 with tickets available through www.waopera.asn.au/book/whats-on/romeo-et-juliette.

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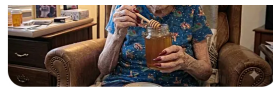


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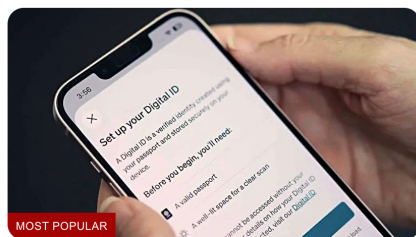
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