



Operatic butterflies

THE last opera

I attended involved Hungarian lyrics and some kind of murderous wood cutter, so Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour's Madama Butterfly looks to be an entirely different, and possibly less confusing, experience.

Held on Fleet Steps, Mrs Macquarie's Point on a purpose built 1276 sqm stage, the show opens this Friday, set against an (opposite) back drop of the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge.

Featuring Hiromi Omura and Hyeseoung Kwon as the eponymous Madama Butterfly, Puccini's classic features 626 cast, crew, musicians and production staff, as well as a giant sun and moon rising from the Harbour.

To up the experience, the waterfront site will be decked out as a Japanese garden with a range of Japanese-themed dining options and bars - you may find me sipping an Asahi beneath the stars during intermission.

Puccini under the constellations and beside the sea - what more could you want? Alex (standing in for Jill while she's away)



Wolgan's MICE moves

WOLGAN Valley Resort & Spa is looking to the business events market to boost mid-week occupancy.

Operated by Emirates, the Blue Mountains resort had cornered the leisure market, seeing full occupancy on weekends and holidays, but had gaps mid-week, general manager Joost Heymeijer said.

The resort was looking to invest in transport options, such as buying larger 4WD vehicles to carry up to 60 people to various parts of the 4000 acre property,

as well as upgrading roads and building new decks in one area, overlooking the wetland and lake, seating up to 100 people.

These investments would be looked at from the start of the financial year, 01 Apr, and if the resort got all its ducks in a row, it could be "ready to roll" by summer, Heymeijer said.

"When we're ready, we'll definitely make it worth while for the MICE market to come visit us," he told **BEN**.

Wolgan had appointed a specialised MICE sales manager targeted to drive mid-week occupancy, in Karla Yum, previously of Voyages Indigenous Tourism.

It would be good to see PCOs and business events bodies focusing more on regional NSW and thinking outside the box in terms of venues, he said.

Sheraton's event

SHERATON Melbourne Hotel held its first event on 16 Mar.

Due to officially open on 31 Mar, the Hotel hosted the function as part of the Starwood Preferred Guest Moments program.



The members bid for the opportunity to join Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One Team driver Lewis Hamilton (pictured right with Sheraton Melbourne gm Hal Philp) at a cocktail reception and Q&A session, with 10 guests also bidding on the chance to have a one on one with the 2008 world champion.

Lowe for Accor SOP

ACCOR Sydney Olympic Park hotels have appointed David Lowe as the new director of communications and public relations.

Lowe is well known to the industry, with more than 15 years' experience in the hospitality industry, most recently as dsm for the Sebel Pier One Sydney, which joined the Marriott Autograph Collection in February (**BEN** 05 Feb).

Lowe will oversee communications for the Pullman, Novotel and Ibis hotels in Sydney Olympic Park.

He said he looked forward to giving as much exposure as possible to the hotels.

"It's going to be an exciting year ahead."



Four pages today

BEN has three pages of editorial plus a full page from: (click)

- Tangalooma Island Resort

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MEA Academy funding

THE Australian Events Academy has received funding from the NSW Government.

The training arm of the Meetings & Events Australia (MEA) has received the funds following lobbying from MEA, which was concerned about the industry facing a skills shortage.

It provides education and training for events industry students.

MEA ceo Linda Gaunt said the funding was "sizeable" but did not give an actual figure.

It would be used for the training program and to subsidize fees, attracting more people to the academy and helping employees in numerous regions in NSW undertake education, MEA said.

It would be used for education for existing workers in the industry, Gaunt said.

"Participants will be able to undertake full qualifications for a minimal fee as the majority of the qualification attracts funding.



"Such assistance will provide a fabulous opportunity for the industry to go forward and compete in the world market."

Gaunt said the events industry needed to train more people to improve its overall competitiveness, both domestically and internationally.

As an industry body and registered training organisation, MEA valued the ongoing commitment of industry supporters, Gaunt said.

"We are pleased to be able to repay them with the opportunity for invaluable education."

New Shanghai hotels

SHANGHAI has Sofitel and Hyatt Regency hotels set to come online next month.

The Sofitel Shanghai Jing'an Huamin is due to open in April with more than 500 rooms including 72 suites and within walking distance of the Shanghai Exhibition Centre.



The hotel will have 1800 sqm of conference and banqueting facilities available.

The Hyatt Regency Shanghai, Chongming, is also set to open next month, with 235 rooms, as well as 16 conference rooms, including the Regency Ballroom accommodating up to 300.

Bangkok SoE lifted

THE State of Emergency in Bangkok has been lifted.

It would be downgraded to the Internal Security Act which was needed to maintain law and order during the senate election on 30 Mar, Destination Asia said.

The Lumpini (Silom) and Pan Fah Bridge protest sites remained active but were expected to remain peaceful, it said.



HOW far would you go in the line of duty for your job - stay up all night, organise a shark versus octopus wrestling match for a conference client, or do as one man did in Florida, and eat a sheet of paper?

Crimestoppers boss Richard Masten is facing a possible two weeks in jail for contempt of court when he ate an anonymous tip about a cocaine possession case, rather than hand it over to the judge, *NCE Miami* reported.

Masten said informants were promised complete anonymity which he would not compromise, the publication reported - so it was bon appetit!

Carlson Rezidor pres

CARLSON Rezidor Hotel Group has appointed Thorsten Kirschke as Asia Pacific president.

The Americas president for the past four years, Kirschke will replace Simon Barlow, who resigned to pursue other opportunities, the Group said.

The appointment is effective immediately, with Carlson Rezidor saying the region was a key growth market.

THE ULURU MEETING PLACE

JETSTAR TO LAUNCH MELBOURNE TO ULURU SERVICE

Jetstar announced this week it will commence a four times weekly return service between Melbourne and Ayers Rock Airport (Uluru) from 29 June 2014 and increase its Sydney route to a daily return service.

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business events news

19th March 2014

Desiring the Biennale



THE 19th Biennale of Sydney is set to sparkle with The Events Authority and the Australian Technology Park (ATP) together launching the opening night.

More than 2000 people in the art industry are expected to attend the event, held on 20 Mar.

The Biennale, titled 'You Imagine What You Desire', features works from local and international artists displayed at Sydney landmarks and galleries, including Cockatoo Island.

Talks, tours, film screenings, performances and forums are also part of the Biennale, held

over a 12 week period.

The opening night party will be the work of The Events Authority, who will be working alongside partners including caterers Gastronomy and Valiant Hire, with Yering Station, Asahi and Santa Vittoria beverages served.

The Events Authority general manager Shelly Page said tickets were capped this year and in high demand.

Photo credit: Broersen & Lukács *Mastering Bambi*, 2010 (video still), HD video, 12:30 mins.

Courtesy the artists and AKINCI, Amsterdam.



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CONTACT US:

Publisher Editor Contributor/Coordinator
Bruce Piper Jill Varley Alex Walls

For advertising enquiries email Christie-Lee:
advertising@businesseventsnews.com.au

P: 1300 799 220 F: 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010 Epping, NSW, 1710

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Dubai Centre launch

THE Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) and the Dubai World Trade Centre (DTWC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to launch the Dubai Association Centre (DAC).

The Centre will offer assistance for the establishment of international non-profit, professional associations and trade bodies in the emirate, the DTCM said.

Platinum networking

THERE are still spaces available for next week's Platinum Networking Night at the Sydney Sofitel Wentworth Hotel.

Targeting senior executives from across the hospitality, events and tourism industry, the event will also help raise funds for an autism school in Forestville - RSVP to nathan@tmsap.com.

Port Douglas comp

TOURISM Port Douglas has launched an online competition to celebrate the redesign of its website.

The redesigned website comes as Port Douglas prepares for one of its busiest years on record, with Port Douglas Incentives chair Natalie Johnson saying in Feb that more than 1400 delegates from the US were expected over the next six months.

Entrants can win a six night Port Douglas holiday for two, to experience the region as a delegate would.

To enter, **CLICK HERE**.

EEAA Leaders Forum

THE Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia's (EEAA) Leaders Forum registrations are now open.

The forum, which engages leaders, including organisers and venues, will be held from 08 to 09 Apr at Lilianfels Blue Mountains.



New Galaxy S5 is all 'heart'

SAMSUNG has unveiled a new smartphone with a built-in heart rate monitor to complement three upcoming fitness devices, as the Korean company tries to turn its technological wizardry into lifestyle products that matter.

The new Galaxy S5 phone has a slightly larger screen than its predecessor, at 5.1 inches (12.95 cm) diagonally instead of 5 inches in the S4. The screen itself adapts to changing external conditions and gives you an option to dim it when you don't want to disturb others near you.

The phone has a 16 megapixel camera, sharper than the 13 megapixels in its predecessor. It promises faster auto focus. The device itself is also water resistant.

Samsung has also unveiled a fitness band, Gear Fit, to complement two new computerised watches announced earlier this month.

The company's Galaxy S series has emerged as one of the strongest challengers to Apple's iPhones and has helped the

Korean company surpass Apple as the world's largest smartphone maker.

According to Gartner, Samsung's smartphones had a worldwide market share of 31 percent last year, compared with 16 percent for Apple's iPhones.

One of the main appeals is the phone's screen size. It has steadily increased since the 4 inches on the original S from 2010. The iPhone's screen has stayed at 4 inches since 2012. Colours on Samsung screens also appear richer because it uses organic light-emitting diodes, rather than a standard LCD found elsewhere.

Article adapted from a story in India Today.

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