



Michael Saunders Bass/Bass Baritone

Il Trovatore – West Australian Opera

“...Michael Saunders did wonders as Ferrando – vocally, he was a standout for consistent beauty of tone, security of line and musicianly phrasing.”
The West Australian May 2002

Michael Saunders came late to opera, after a successful career in engineering. He was, however, a principal for Opera Hunter in Newcastle from its inception in 1988. His roles for that company include Sarastro (*Magic Flute*), Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Peter (*Hansel and Gretel*), Colas (*Bastien and Bastienne*), Figaro (*Marriage of Figaro*), Melchior (*Amahl and the Night Visitor*), Mr. Gobineau (*The Medium*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Don Quixote (*Masters Peter's Puppet Show*) and The Bonze (*Madama Butterfly*). Other roles he has performed are Chubukov (*The Proposal*), David (*A Hand of Bridge*), Marchese (*La traviata*), Menelaus (*La Belle Helene*), Henry Higgins (*My Fair Lady*), Black Bob (*The Little Sweep*), Absolom (*Fiery Tales* by Larry Sitsky), General Groves (*Foxy* by Martin Friedel), Emil de Becque (*South Pacific*) for which he received a Conda Best Actor Award, Fernando Villa Bella (*La Gazza Ladra*) and Guadenzio Strappapupupule (*Il Sr. Bruschino*).

His substantial concert work includes Brahms's *Requiem* and Handel's *Samson* for Newcastle City Choir, Bruckner's *Te Deum* for Sydney Uniting Churches at the Opera House, Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Schwanengesang* for Lake Macquarie Music Society, a selection of Gilbert and Sullivan, for both Hunter Orchestra and Opera Hunter, Musorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* for Kuring-gai Virtuosi, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* for Willoughby Symphony Orchestra and Choir and Sydney University Music Society, Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* and Ravel's *Four Songs for Don Quichotte* for Newcastle University Conservatorium, Opera in the Park for Hunter Orchestra and Mozart's *Requiem*, *Messiah*, Verdi *Requiem*, *The Creation* and *Mount of Olives* (Beethoven) for Newcastle University Choir. More recent concert work includes Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with Melbourne Chorale.

For Opera Australia Michael has sung Zuniga (*Carmen*), Betto di Signa (*Gianni Schicchi*), Melisso (*Alcina*), Swallow (*Peter Grimes*), The Bonze (*Madama Butterfly*), Harasta (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Marchese di Calatrava (*La Forza del Destino*), Biterolf (*Tannhäuser*), the Mayor (*Jenufa*) and Mephistopheles (*Faust*).

Operatic engagements for other companies include Seneca (*The Coronation of Poppea*) for Newcastle University Conservatorium; Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*) for Canterbury Opera; Nourabad (*The Pearl Fishers*), Bass Knight and covering Klingsor and Titurel (*Parsifal*) and Ferrando (*Il trovatore*) for State Opera of South Australia; Bouncer (*Cox and Box*) for Sound Construction Company, a Fyodor Chaliapin project with the University of Newcastle, the Tutor (*Elektra*) for Sydney Festival 2000, Basilio (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) and Ferrando (*Il trovatore*) for Opera Queensland and Ferrando (*Il trovatore*) for West Australian Opera.

In 2003 for Opera Australia, Michael's roles included Sparafucile and Monterone in *Rigoletto*, Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*, Hans Foltz in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Nourabad in *The Pearlfishers*. His roles in 2004 for the company included Dottore Grenville in *La Traviata*, Nourabad in Seven's Opera in the Domain, Harasta in *Cunning Little Vixen*, Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* and the title role in *The Mikado*.

In 2005 engagements included Fifth Jew and Second Soldier in *Salome* in concert conducted by Edo de Waart for Hong Kong Philharmonic, Commendatore in West Australian Opera's *Don Giovanni*, Verdi *Requiem* for Willoughby Symphony and Montano and Ludovico in *Otello* in concert as well as Mephistophele's *Song of the Flea* by Beethoven (orchestrated by Shostakovich) as part of a Shostakovich celebration concert, both under the baton of Oleg Caetani for Melbourne Symphony.

Michael's more recent engagements include Dvorák *Stabat Mater* for Royal Melbourne Philharmonic and The Bonze in *Madama Butterfly* for Hong Kong Philharmonic.