

RIVERSIDE THEATRE PRESENTS BLUSH OPERA'S

CHOP CHEF

A NEW OPERA BY JULIE KOH AND PAUL SMITH



22 – 24 APRIL



RIVERSIDE

RIVERSIDE THEATRES PRESENTS BLUSH OPERA'S

CHOP CHEF

CONCEPT AND STORY BY PAUL SMITH AND JULIE KOH

Librettist

Julie Koh

Composer

Paul Smith

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director

Kenneth Moraleda

Stage Manager

Hannah Crane

Director

Nicole Pingo

Deputy Stage Manager

Christopher

Conductor

Luke Spicer

Starnawski

Set and Costume

Keerthi

Creative Consultant

Courtney Stewart

Designer

Subramanyam

Guest Conductor

Harrison Collins

Lighting Designer

Kate Baldwin

Associate Video

Daniel Herten

Video Designer

Susie Henderson

Designer

Production Manager

Tyler Fitzpatrick

Surtitle Operator

Kirsten Jones



Image credit: Georgina Koureas

CAST



Andy
Gavin Brown



Kale
Nick Geddes



Kitty
Jermaine Chau



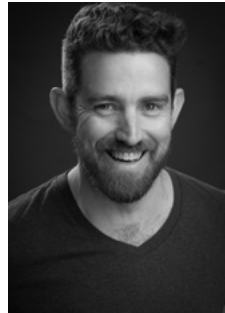
Renée
Lisa Cooper



Tom
Benjamin Caulkwell



Victoria
Ayako Ohtake



**Judges (Austin,
Benoit, Cosimo)**
David Hidden

ENSEMBLE

Flute
Clarinet

Melissa Coleman
Alisha Coward

Cello
Piano

Liam Meany
Claire Race

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Riverside Theatres acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, the Darug people.

Blush Opera pays respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledges the rich tradition of music and art that continues to be connected to Country.



RIVERSIDE



A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER AND LIBRETTIST

Paul Smith and Julie Koh

With *Chop Chef*, we wanted to create a dark, absurdist satire that depicts reality TV taken to its extreme. The show examines narratives of success and failure, as well as the false promises of fame. As the opera unfolds, we witness how each contestant has a different approach to surviving or resisting the late-capitalist system within which they must compete.

We enjoyed using *Chop Chef* to respond to, and parody, traditional operatic tropes. These include orientalism, the misogynistic representation of women, and the use of a lot of death arias and mad scenes. We also nod to classic arias just for fun – for instance, *Lakmé*'s 'Flower Duet' has become our 'Flour Duet'.

We began working on *Chop Chef* in 2017 and wrote it through a series of development sessions. Each session allowed us to build the universe of *Chop Chef* and the relationships between the characters. To get the process started, we watched memorable reality TV scenes on YouTube and imagined how moments like those could be realised through opera. In our view, one of the funniest things about the show is the clash of a highbrow form with lowbrow reality TV tropes and everyday language. We hope you enjoy the show.

Julie's libretto is in memory of Lim Kim Seng.



A NOTE FROM THE CONDUCTOR

Luke Spicer

The process of rehearsing and conducting a contemporary opera is generally no different from preparing an opera from the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. As it is primarily a work of drama that has been set to music, it is important for the conductor to begin by understanding the story and the narrative arc of the show. This will inform almost all of the conductor's musical choices: tempo, articulation, timbre, rubato. There must also be a sense of trust between the composer and conductor when premiering a new work. Without it, second-guessing each other's artistic choices could potentially contaminate the entire process and lead to conflicting interpretations. In our case, Paul and I have worked together on his compositions several times in the past and our relationship has matured to a point where I am secure in trusting his music and knowing how to present this to an audience.



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTORS

Kenneth Moraleda (He/Him) and Nicole Pingon (She/Her)

How do you succeed in a system that is not made to serve you? Can you break out, or only choose to work within it?

The premise of *Chop Chef* was immediately attractive to us—*Iron Chef* slash *Battle Royale*—the cream of their respective genres. We delved into these and its many duplicates to stage this exciting new Australian opera. We embraced fun hallmarks of reality TV, as well as the machinery of production, including the recycling of content, tropes, archetypes and appropriations. This led us to investigations of the camera's point of view – what is broadcasted to the public and what is hidden from the frame? Julie and Paul brilliantly embrace and subvert the operatic form, and take us to daring places. The libretto is full of searing truths about our everyday lives and has been a joy to explore.

Getting new work up presents its own set of challenges. 2020 gave us obstacles that echo the twists and turns of reality TV shows but our team of dedicated collaborators took on the challenges like top contestants. The members of our design team—Keerthi, Kate and Susie—under the early guidance of our Creative Consultant, Courtney, have been champions in creating the world of *Chop Chef*. The wondrous performers have brought the characters to life, actively interrogating the piece with us with their sharp minds and bold hearts. Tyler, Hannah and Chris' logistical prowess glued the show together with the help of generous individuals who assisted us in making the set a reality.

We are incredibly proud and excited to be part of the team that is bringing this work to you for its world premiere. It's been a joyous process and a reminder of why new work is vital. Welcome to the world of *Chop Chef*!



SPECIAL THANKS

Shopfront Arts Co-op

Inner West Council

Omega Ensemble

Nick Atkins

Nicholas Christo

Lliane Clarke

Alistair Davies

Thomas Doyle

Stephanie Dunlop

Robert Field

Joanne Kee

Chop Chef was originally developed with the support of the Southlands Breakthrough Award, a Penrith Performing & Visual Arts program.

Lin Jie Kong

Angus Konsti

Georgina Koureas

Richard Lee

Rose Lennon

Patrick Lenton

Liam Pieper

Daniel Potter

Natalie Rose

Ian Sykes

Chop Chef satirises racist and cultural attitudes and tropes, and therefore contains material that may be confronting to some audience members. This production includes strong language, adult themes, misogyny, sexual references, suicide and death.



Image credit: Georgina Koureas

RIVERSIDE THEATRES

DIRECTOR

ROBERT LOVE AM

OPERATIONS MANAGER

MIKE BREW

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, NATIONAL THEATRE OF PARRAMATTA

JOANNE KEE

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

HENRI MARRON

COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS CONSULTANT

CRAIG MCMASTER

PROGRAM MANAGER

CATHERINE SWALLOW



RIVERSIDE