



## Pirates invade the stage

By ALANA SCOTT

OPERA starlet Suzanne Johnston says she and Australian music legend Anthony Warlow are like brother and sister.

"We are far too silly together," she says.

This sense of energy and enthusiasm they share will no doubt transcend to the stage when the pair team up for Opera Australia's Brisbane season of the Gilbert and Sullivan classic *Pirates of Penzance* at QPAC from November 23-December 9.

It has been almost 20 years since the company

has played in Brisbane and as part of its 50th birthday celebrations it will also take the show to Canberra.

Sydney-based Warlow, who debuted with the company at the tender age of 19 and has since enjoyed a flourishing freelance career many artists in the country only dream of, said he felt he had grown with the company and felt the pangs of his OA colleagues over the years.

"I was very privileged to be around during the golden era with some of the great, great singers like John Shaw and Dame Joan (Sutherland)," he says.

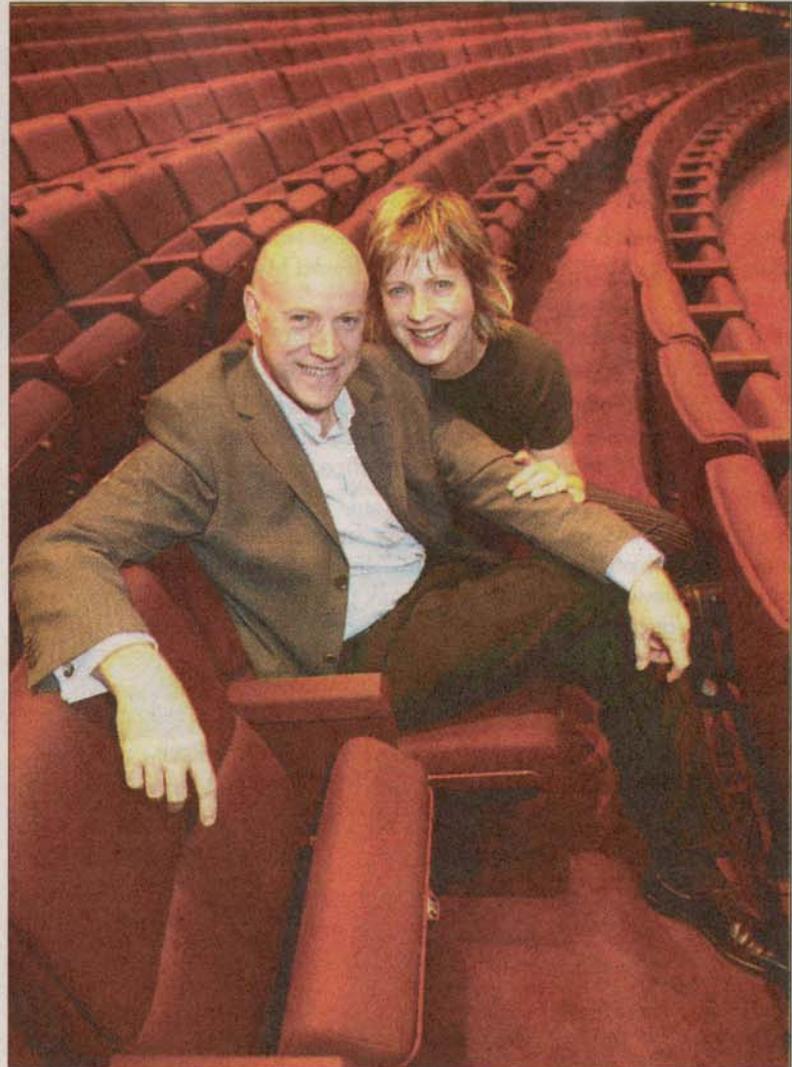
"Opera Australia and the opera house are a living museum."

The Sydney Season of *Pirates* has already begun, with Warlow playing the part of the The Pirate King, a role he says has "a lot of Johnny Depp" in tune with the popularity of *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

"It's a pastiche of all the pirate things in movies," he says.

"It also pays homage to Robert Newton who was in the Disney *Treasure Island* films and Hans Conried, the original Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*."

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■ Left:  
Pirates stars  
Anthony  
Warlow and  
Suzanne  
Johnston.  
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# Theatre greats will delight their fans

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MELBOURNE-BASED Johnston says she was unsure at first when offered the role of Ruth, the nurse who wrongly matches the young Frederic as an apprentice pirate instead of a pilot.

"I thought I was too young for the role," she says.

"But there was this line 'My love unabating has been accumulating 47 years' and so I decided to do it.

"I've tried to make the role work for me so rather than her being a fat, old, withered creature she gets an extreme makeover," she says.

Johnston says she and Warlow first performed together in the Victorian State Opera's *My Fair Lady* and since then have been great friends.

Warlow says he worked closely with director Stuart Maunder during the pre-rehearsal period to be a part of the creative process.



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■ Warlow and Johnston

"I am privileged to be in the position of picking and choosing work," he says.

"Now I'm more comfortable in my skin as an artist and so am able to take risks."

Warlow's career has taken him all over the world performing in various opera and music theatre productions including *Les Miserables*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Annie* and *The Secret Garden* but he is probably best known for what most believe to be his

unmatched portrayal in the *Phantom of the Opera*.

He said while Phantom put him on the map and allowed him to achieve a lot in terms of being sympathetic to the possible two-dimensional character, his favourite role had been Archibald Craven in *The Secret Garden*.

"I was doing it when my daughter was turning one," he says. "It was such a wonderful story about the magic qualities of children."

The importance of the magical things in life was reinforced for Warlow when he was diagnosed with non-hodgkins lymphoma in 1992.

"Even though the cancer had nothing to do with my throat, I lost my voice due to lack of energy – it was devastating in that regard."

Suzanne Johnston and Anthony Warlow star in Opera Australia's *Pirates of Penzance* at the Lyric Theatre, QPAC from November 23 to December 9. Phone Qtix on 136 246 or visit [www.qtx.com.au](http://www.qtx.com.au)