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Geelong Lyric's *Mamma Mia!* Breaks Records Before Opening Night

The Geelong Lyric Theatre Society is set to dazzle audiences this October with the worldwide smash hit *Mamma Mia!* at the Geelong Arts Centre, The Story House. The excitement has already reached fever pitch, with the production becoming Lyric's **fastest-selling show in more than 50 years**. Opening night sold out in record time, with other performances close behind.

For director **James Lee**, the show is especially meaningful:

"I first heard whispers of Mamma Mia! back in 1995 while rehearsing the original Australian production of Miss Saigon. Martin Koch, the worldwide music supervisor, was by day guiding Saigon and by night buried in ABBA tracks, painstakingly breaking down harmonies that had never been notated in the '70s. He told us it was for a new, untitled ABBA musical — the one we now know as Mamma Mia! The rest is musical history."

With more than 35 years of professional theatre experience, James has appeared in some of Australia's biggest productions including *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Miss Saigon* and *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*. Having recently returned to Geelong, Lyric is thrilled to have someone of his calibre leading this production — a true gift for the local theatre community.

Fresh from his 2024 Theatre Guild Award, **Damian Caruso** collaborates with cousin **Conique Pirrottina**, an accomplished Brent Street graduate, to deliver choreography alive with fun, flair, and the spirit of ABBA.

"Mamma Mia! is such an upbeat, energetic, and vibrant musical, so we wanted the choreography to reflect that. Every move is high-energy and purposeful, while also reflecting the sense of community — like you're right there on the island, living it with us."

The production's music will be led by **Brad Treloar**, award-winning musical director and accomplished music educator.

"ABBA's catalogue is a dream for any Musical Director. The harmonies, driving rhythms, and emotional depth in these songs make them just as exciting to perform as they are to hear. With Mamma Mia! we get to explore the full spectrum of ABBA's music — from infectious disco grooves to heartfelt ballads — all woven into a story that makes the songs shine in new ways. It's an absolute thrill to bring this score to life with our cast and orchestra."

Taking the lead as Donna Sheridan is **Ruth McGurk**, last seen with Lyric in *Into the Woods* (2024). A WAAPA alum, award-winning cabaret performer, and children's book author, Ruth has starred at Adelaide Fringe, Perth Fringe World and the Melbourne Cabaret Festival, where her debut solo show won Best Cabaret. *"Another cast member said 'Working with Ruth is like watching a masterclass in acting. I couldn't agree more.'", says director James Lee.*

Playing her daughter Sophie is rising star **Katie Loxston**, a Queensland Conservatorium graduate and true triple threat. Katie has wowed audiences in roles such as Cinderella and Patty Simcox, earning multiple Theatre Guild of Victoria nominations. *"Born to play this role, Katie brought Sophie's optimism and emotional depth into the rehearsal room from day one.", says James.*

Opening night will hold extra excitement with **Silvie Paladino** in the audience. Silvia toured nationally and internationally as Donna in the professional Australian and Asia tour in 2004. Their attendance will be a proud moment for the cast and a special connection to the show's professional legacy.

Completing Sophie's fatherly puzzle are **Duncan Esler** (Sam Carmichael), **Shane Lee** (Bill Austin), and **David Senfleben** (Harry Bright), each bringing warmth and humour to their roles.

Adding to the fun are Donna's Dynamo sidekicks: **Cara Oliver** as the glamorous Tanya, and **Shayne Lowe** as the irrepressible Rosie — together bringing wit, warmth and spark to the trio's unforgettable numbers. Sophie's fiancé **Sky** will be played by **Thomas Membrey**, whose charm and vocal power make him a perfect match for the role. And surrounding the principals are outstanding featured and ensemble performers, whose energy and talent transform every number into a celebration.

Audiences can also make their night at the theatre a full experience thanks to local partnerships. **Novotel Geelong** is offering strictly limited *Mamma Mia!* Accommodation Packages — just **five per performance** — which include:

- 2 tickets to *Mamma Mia!*
- A complimentary show program
- One night's stay at Novotel Geelong in a Standard King Room with balcony
- Buffet breakfast for two
- A themed *Mamma Mia!* welcome drink at Tempo Geelong

All for just **\$399**.

If you miss out on a package, ticket holders can still enjoy special offers: book your stay at Novotel Geelong and receive **15% off accommodation**, or head to **Mavs Greek Restaurant** for lunch or dinner and enjoy a **complimentary drink** when you show your ticket for that day.

For a fully immersive pre-show dining experience, **Tutti Café at the Geelong Arts Centre** will be serving up a Greek feast with live in-house entertainment that builds to a spectacular finale guaranteed to have everyone on their feet.

Packed with ABBA classics including *Dancing Queen*, *Voulez-Vous* and *Take a Chance on Me*, dazzling costumes, and a live orchestra, *Mamma Mia!* promises to be the ultimate feel-good night out.

Performance Details:

Dates: 3 – 19 October 2025

- Fri, 03 Oct at 7:30pm. **Sold Out**
- Sat, 04 Oct at 1:30pm
- Sat, 04 Oct at 7:30pm
- Sun, 05 Oct at 01:30pm
- Thu, 09 Oct at 7:30pm
- Fri, 10 Oct at 7:30pm
- Sat, 11 Oct at 1:30pm
- Sat, 11 Oct at 7:30pm
- Sun, 12 Oct at 1:30pm
- Thu, 16 Oct at 7:30pm
- Fri, 17 Oct at 7:30pm
- Sat, 18 Oct at 1:30pm
- Sat, 18 Oct at 7:30pm
- Sun, 19 Oct at 1:30pm

Location: Geelong Arts Centre – The Story House, 50 Little Malop Street

Tickets:

Book Tickets: geelongartscentre.org.au

Book Tickets Direct link: <https://geelongartscentre.org.au/whats-on/all-events/mamma-mia/>

Ticket Prices:

- Full Price: \$58.90
- Concession: \$54.90
- Student: \$54.90
- Child under 12: \$49.90
- Group 10+: \$53
- Companion Card: \$0

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