

A maestro in the making

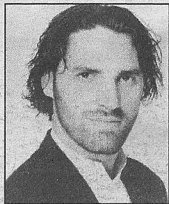
ADAM KAMIEN

BY his own admission, Russell Ger (pictured) is “a baby” in the conducting world. At 29, he is single-minded when it comes to music and, to this end, he recently completed his masters in orchestral conducting at the Boston Conservatory in the US.

The Sydneysider won a generous scholarship to the prestigious arts school following a “spate of auditions” in London and America.

“I liked the city and I liked the teacher,” Ger said of the Boston Conservatory.

“I’ve been there for two years and I’m headed back there for another year to try and cultivate the connections I’ve made into an assistantship or fellowship or something like that.”



Ger is back in Australia, albeit briefly, to conduct a Pacific Opera production of *Hansel and Gretel* at the Glen Street Theatre in Sydney, which starts on June 30.

“The magical and whimsical element of the storytelling, I find really charming and enchanting,” Ger said of the Engelbert Humperdink opera.

“The music is fantastic because it’s a melting pot of late 19th century German composers. I’m constantly amazed when I look at this piece how he only managed to write one opera that really became famous. There’s so much in it that’s absolute genius.”

But Ger’s *Hansel and Gretel* will take a different approach with the story, originally written by the Brothers Grimm, set in Sydney during the Great Depression.

Pacific Opera was conceived as a showcase for young Australian talent. The organisation’s instrumental ensemble boasts some of the country’s

best musicians, comprising casual players from the Australia Opera and Ballet orchestra.

“I came back specifically to work on this, because I’ve worked with Pacific Opera before and I love working with them. They’ve been around for about eight years and were designed to give performance opportunities at a very high level to young, budding professionals.”

Ger hopes to conduct one of the major orchestras in the US, but knows the road ahead will be long.

Following the opera’s week-long run, Ger will travel to Toronto, Canada, where he will conduct a shul choir for the High Holy Days, headed by renowned Australian cantor Alex Stein.

Hansel and Gretel runs from July 30 to August 7 at the Glen Street Theatre. For bookings call: (02) 9275 1455 or go to glenstreet.com.au



A scene from Pacific Opera's *Hansel and Gretel*.