



## Eve's self guided Sydney Opera House Tour

### History

Planning for the Sydney Opera House started in the late 1940s, when Eugene Goossens (a musical conductor) wanted a place for large musical productions. Goossens got the agreement from the NSW Government and a competition was announced for people to design the Opera House. (The site where the Opera House stands is called – Bennelong Point-which used to be an old tram station.) Many people (233) sent entries for the competition but the winner was Jørn Utzon a Danish architect.

The building of the Opera House started in 1959 and was finally completed in 1973. It was meant to cost \$7 million, but cost \$102 million!!! (Paid off the debt, from Lotto – Australians love to gamble!!!)

The outside of the Opera House and the concrete inside is the design of Jørn Utzon but all of the wooden interiors are the design of an Australian architect – Peter Hall. The reason Utzon didn't complete the Opera House is because he had an argument with the NSW Government – they told Utzon he was spending too much money and that he was taking too long. Utzon got very upset and resigned, left Australia taking his designs with him and never returned to Australia – however in 1990 he began to design parts of the Opera House again so it has a happy ending ☺ Utzon died in 2008 and now his son helps with the designs for improvements to the Opera House.

### The roof

Very difficult to design – Utzon finally managed to design it thanks to the Spherical solution – (see the Brass design outside the Opera House at the top of the steps) The roof to many people looks like shells or the sails of a ship – Utzon wanted the roof to remind people of the harbour it faced. The tiles on the roof are from Sweden and are self cleaning when it rains (very clever!!) – there are 1,056,006 glossy and matte cream coloured tiles – have a go at counting them!! -

From a distance the Opera House looks white but when you go close up they are cream tiles – this is because white tiles would reflect the sun and we would be blinded by light if they were brilliant white.

### **The Concert Hall – 2,678 seats**

This is the largest room – for orchestras (funny as called the Opera House and yet Opera is shown in the smaller room!!) Look at the room – all Australian wood. Perfect acoustics. Look at the large organ at the back of the room – can you see where the organ player sits and his mirror to see the conductor?? The seats at the back are for the choir singers. Can you see the sound rings – these are also called donuts- this is for the sound to reflect to the Orchestra, so they can hear that they are playing in time. Interesting fact – Arnold Swartzenager won Mr. Universe in this room!!

### **The Opera Theatre – 1,507 seats**

The smaller of the two large rooms. The walls are black so that you concentrate on the stage – can you see the white strip above the stage – this is for the subtitles as the Operas are often sung in the original language and the English translations are put above. The Orchestra Pit is covered in netting – this is to protect the musicians – once some chickens fell off the stage onto the orchestra below and even a ballet dancer!! The Opera Theatre stores all its scenery below and lifts move it up and down onto the stage – this allows for the Opera House to be able to show different operas in a day – sometimes they may show La Boheme in the morning and La Traviata in the evening – very cool!! There is no space at the edge of the stage so if the Ballet perform in this theatre they have to have people at the sides to catch the ballet dancers if they do a big jump otherwise they will crash into the walls!!!

Look at the views from the **main foyers** – beautiful! You can see Kirribilli and Government House (where the Governor of NSW lives) and Kirribilli House (where the Prime Minister lives) – the castle on the water is Fort Denison. Look at the glass – this was made in France and is triple glazed – a pane of glass has never needed to be replaced ☺ Look at the carpet – in the purple foyer- famous tennis player Lleyton Hewitt got married here and also Pavarotti refused to perform there as he thought purple was bad luck!!

### **Hurricane Alley**

This is the area between the Opera Theatre and the Concert Hall – freezing cold in winter as the wind blows between the two buildings!!!

### **The Utzon Room**

Look at the view - the only room to have been totally designed by Utzon - 210 people can sit in this room – look at the wall – this is a tapestry – all the colours are from Australia – except for the gold wool – this is from Germany – Utzon designed the tapestry and he was such a perfectionist that he wanted the gold thread to be just perfect so he looked all over the world until he found the wool in Germany. The light bulbs above the window are my favourite – the wire is in the shape of the Opera House!! This room is used for the baby proms – 1-2 year olds come to listen to classical music – very sweet ☺

### **Outside the main foyers:**

#### **The Drama Theatre – 544 seats**

Used by Sydney Theatre Company and is good as it is usually cheaper to buy tickets for this theatre – many well known Australian actors have performed here.

#### **The Playhouse – 398 seats**

#### **The Studio – 400 seats**

This is the sexiest theatre all red – strange performances have been staged in this room, including a flea circus!!

This ends Eve's tour

Thanks

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