

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN OPERA
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CHARITY NO. 1092649

7:30PM, APR 8,9, 13-16
4:00PM, APR 10 & 17

HANDEL'S SEMELE

TEXT BY WILLIAM CONGREVE



Production Director: James Hurley
Designer: Rachel Szmukler
Lighting Designer: Ben Pickersgill
Music Director: Oliver-John Ruthven

UPSTAIRS AT THE GATEHOUSE

S O U V E N I R P R O G R A M M E

SEMELE

Music by George Frederic Handel (1685 - 1759)

Libretto by William Congreve (1670 - 1729)

The legend of Semele was common currency in ancient times, as part of the cult of Dionysus (Bacchus) which permeated the eastern Mediterranean. Semele (a mortal - probably a Thracian or Phrygian name) was the mother of Dionysus through her ill-fated liaison with Zeus (Jupiter). A common version of the story is that the jealous Hera (Juno) tricked the pregnant Semele into demanding to see Zeus in all his panoply. Semele failed to realise that you could not look on Zeus and live, and paid the inevitable price. Zeus rescued the foetus from the ashes and implanted it into his thigh, whence, at full term, the future Dionysus was born.

The story was told in both Greek and Roman literature (a lost play by Aeschylus and Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' or 'Transformations'). In 1704, the English dramatist William Congreve, perhaps looking for a subject suitable for a satire on the King and his mistresses - who were fair game at the time - used it as the basis of a libretto for an opera to be written by John Eccles. Eccles failed to deliver the score on time, and it was not until 1743 that it re-surfaced as the text (with additions from the pastoral poems of Alexander Pope, including the hit song 'Where'er you walk') for an 'oratorio' by Handel.

In the 1730s, Handel, realising that the demand for Italian 'opera seria' was drying up, rekindled his fans' appetite with oratorios - dramatic but unstaged narratives of biblical stories such as 'Samson' and 'Solomon', which could be performed during Lent. Within these great works, there is often the germ of an opera, as recent productions of 'Theodora' and even 'Messiah' have demonstrated. But 'Semele', one of the two new works Handel produced for the 1744 season, was not simply 'after the manner of an oratorio', as described in the London Daily Post: it was a full-blooded opera in disguise - and a 'bawdy' one at that, as Charles Jennens, the librettist for Messiah, was quick to notice. Thereafter it was not until 1959, 200 years after Handel's death, that 'Semele' was given a professional performance on the London stage, and began to achieve recognition as an operatic masterpiece.

GLOSSARY

SYNOPSIS

Jove	synonym for Jupiter
Fane	'from Juno's fane we fled' – fane = temple, shrine or holy place
Augurs	prophets or forecasters
Cithaeron	'Look where Cithaeron proudly stands, Boeotia parting from Cecropian lands'. Cithaeron is a mountain range in central Greece separating ancient Boeotia from Megaris to the south. 'Cecropian lands' refer to Attica, which was divided into twelve communities (including Megaris) by the legendary first king of Athens, Cecrops. Cithaeron was sacred to Dionysus and the Muses.
Maeotian Lake	'o'er Scythian hills to the Maeotian lake' – now called the Sea of Azov, on whose shores Scythian tribes lived in ancient times: a far cry even on eagles' wings from Boeotia.
Vulcan	Roman god of fire (Greek Hephaestus)
Zephyrs	Zephyrus was originally the West Wind, who (according to Homer) lived in a (draughty?) Thracian palace along with Boreas, the North Wind. In English poetic literature, zephyrs became a generic term for gentle breezes: Ino is borne aloft by a two-winged variety.
Arcadia	Arcadia is properly an ancient country in central Peloponnese, but in the 17th century became the metaphor for pastoral bliss.
Saturnia	'canst thou not hear Saturnia call?' Juno was supposedly the daughter of Saturn (the god of agriculture) – hence Congreve is using Saturnia as an unusual, possibly unique, synonym for Juno in this context.
Lethe	underworld river whose waters caused loss of memory in all who drank them.
Pasithea	Pasithea was one of the Graces or Charites – not one of the main three, but perhaps a younger model – who was given to Somnus (Greek Hypnos) as a bride for his services in war (Homer Iliad bk 16).
Morpheus	'to Morpheus then give order, thy various minister, that with a dream . . .'. Morpheus son of Somnus and Pasithea, was the god of dreams; as Somnus' 'various (= versatile) minister' he is able to summon up a transcendent vision of Semele to the sleeping Jupiter.
Stygian Lake	Semele calls on Jupiter to 'swear by the Stygian Lake' – a highly poetic phrase for an inviolable vow.

Act I

The story begins as Semele is about to be united with Athamas, who has been chosen as a suitable bridegroom by her well-to-do father, Cadmus. No-one realises that Semele has fallen in love with the highest power in the universe: the god Jupiter. Semele, torn between the conflicting imperatives of love and obedience, pleads to Jupiter for help. Athamas, misreading her signals, is impatient to put the ring on her finger. Her sister Ino is also in distress, as she is secretly in love with Athamas. In a brief, extraordinary quartet Handel reveals the whole human drama – Cadmus' anger, Athamas' frustration, Semele's confusion and Ino's pain. Jupiter steps in and abducts Semele. Athamas is left bereft and is consoled by Ino, who seizes the moment to confess her feelings. Suddenly, Cadmus brings the momentous news that Semele has been carried off by an eagle – Jupiter in one of his transformations, soaring off into the heights diffusing 'celestial odour and ambrosial dew'.

Act II

Juno – Jupiter's long-suffering wife – is livid. Her go-between Iris reports that the lovers are ensconced in a new, closely guarded palace invisible to mortals, where Semele 'lives in sweet retreat'. Juno, fired with fury, sends Iris to wake the god of sleep, Somnus, to invoke his help in getting past the palace guards. Meanwhile, Semele is fretting; she can't sleep, and she feels jealous and abandoned. Jupiter tries to soothe her and hastens to dispel her ennui by providing companionship in the shape of Ino, whom he wafts to Arcadia on Zephyrs' wings. Jupiter introduces Semele to the beauties of the land in the famous aria 'Where'er you walk'. Semele and Ino enjoy a sisterly chat. All seems well.

Act III

Juno and Iris are failing to arouse the grumpy Somnus, but Juno knows the way to his heart. She offers him his old flame, Pasithea, in exchange for two favours. First Somnus must fuel Jupiter's passion for Semele with a vision of such surpassing beauty that he can't refuse anything she demands. Second, he must lend Juno his sleep-inducing rod to overcome the palace guards. Then, in the disarming guise of Ino, she makes her way into Semele's bedchamber, and persuades Semele that she can achieve immortality by insisting that Jupiter appear to her in his godly form. Juno knows that if he does, Semele will be consumed by the fire of his brilliance. Semele withholds all favours in a crescendo of complaint, until Jupiter – much against his will – is forced to swear an inviolable oath accepting her demand. Too late, she realises the rashness of her demand, and – far from gaining immortality – is confronted by her own mortality. Back on earth, Ino reports a vision from Hermes that Jupiter has authorised her wedding to Athamas, much to his joy. All rejoice as Apollo brings the news that a god mightier than love (Bacchus) will arise from Semele's mortal remains.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR'S NOTE

REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF *SEMELE*

My initial approach to *Semele* was not as a conductor, but as a continuo player. I relish the challenge of creating harmony from a single bass line, and this was my starting point with the opera. Although this began as a personal exploration (I would work alone at the keyboard, painstakingly examining and realising harmonic figures beneath the line) it soon became a process of complete integration, combining my interpretation of the bass with each and every singer's respective interpretation of his or her melodic line or recitative passage. This creative dialogue or conversation is hugely rewarding as it allows me to be both conductor and accompanist. There is an ever-shifting sense of leading and following, both for me and for the singers.

In order to illustrate this process of combined interpretation which has so dominated our preparation of *Semele*, here is an example of a small passage of music from one of *Semele*'s arias, "I ever am granting". This aria comes during Act III and shows *Semele*'s frustration at Jupiter, her lover, who is reluctant to grant her wish of appearing to her in his immortal form. The music of this aria seemed to us to flit between several emotions; intense anger, deep sadness, irritation, and immense desire prompting flirtatious persuasion. The section below begins half way through the aria:

The first system of the musical score shows the vocal line (S.) and the continuo line (C.). The vocal line begins with the lyrics "I al-ways am wan-ting, yet ne-ver, yet ne-ver, yet ne-ver ob-tain, I al-ways am wan-ting, I al-ways am wan-ting, yet ne-ver ob-tain." The continuo line provides a harmonic accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4.

The section above represents the bare bones of the music, and a printed version of what Handel wrote, i.e. a vocal line with text and a figured bass. This is perhaps the most exciting thing about interpreting Handel; there are so few clues on the page as to how it should sound. Of course, this can be a daunting challenge too.

I always start by examining the text of an aria or a recitative. I have already mentioned the myriad emotions Handel presents in this aria, and this is helpful as a broad structure from which more detailed work can be done. You may notice, as I did, that Congreve's text for *Semele* is unusually brief. The composer responds to this paucity of words by the ingenious use of varied repetition. In an aria in Act II, for instance, Congreve gives Iris one couplet to sing – "there from mortal cares retiring she resides in sweet retreat". Handel turns it into a comic tour-de-force by making her repeat the final phrase no fewer than 20 times. (*Semele* is anything but in sweet retreat.) In the section above, what first struck me were the verbal repetitions. The first of these ("yet never, yet never, yet never obtain") is set by Handel to a rising melodic sequence involving emphatic falling shapes on the word "never", coupled with a rising harmonic sequence in the bass. This seems to me to increase the tension of these few bars, making the delayed arrival of the verb ("obtain") all the more dramatic. Elaine and Robyn, both singing *Semele*, exploit this tension yet further by singing almost through gritted teeth over these bars, making the frustration and bitterness of *Semele* even stronger. The second repetition ("I always am

wanting, I always am wanting") is a musical repetition as well. Handel uses the same set of four notes to set these eight words, but varies them rhythmically to suggest, first time, a smiling, chirpy flirtation by *Semele*, and second time, a smoother tone of seduction to win over Jupiter. The continuo bass line reinforces these subtle differences, lively first time, more static the second.

As with the detail of the inner parts, the dynamics are left to the performer – and so the music begins to take shape and to live. I added a crescendo to the held D in the vocal line in bar 2 of the above section as a way of emphasising *Semele*'s "want", and coupled this with faster notes in the right hand of the continuo to show pace and urgency. Below is the same section with the addition of some of these creative choices. A right hand has been added to the bass to give it harmonic colour, and keywords are used to illustrate changes of emotion or technique in the vocal line.

The second system of the musical score shows the vocal line (S.) and the continuo line (C.). The vocal line begins with the lyrics "I al-ways am wan-ting, I al-ways am wan-ting, yet ne-ver ob-tain, I al-ways am wan-ting, I al-ways am wan-ting, yet ne-ver ob-tain." The continuo line provides a harmonic accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes performance markings such as "bitter, frustrated", "angry, through gritted teeth", "smiling, chirpy", "legato flirtatious", and "angry".

This small example illustrates the number of decisions which can be made over a small handful of bars. This is truly what makes this music so exciting to hear and to perform. Handel gives us just enough help in making his music speak freely, without over-burdening us with too many strictures and limitations.

On a more general note, the fluidity of *Semele* as against some of her earlier Handelian relatives is largely to do with the relative paucity of da capo arias. Handel seems to have favoured through-composed music for the majority of his arias; the characters of *Semele* and Jupiter in particular are allowed to speak fluently and without recapitulation of the whole. Handel also seems to have developed a more mature composing style by the time he came to *Semele* in 1743. Instrumental music is kept to a minimum, and what little of it that there is shows the composer at his very best; the Overture is beautifully crafted and balanced in the French style of a slow stately opening, followed by a robust and vigorous fugue. Handel is prone to some awkward word setting, he never lost his thick German accent, but his recitatives are taut and to the point, making good use of string *accompagnato* to achieve dramatic effects.

It has been a great pleasure being able to delve into the intricacies of this wonderful music and share a few of them with you. I hope that you enjoy this evening's performance as much as we will enjoying performing it to you.

CAST

THE MORTALS

SEMELE Elaine Tate *
elder daughter of Cadmus
(April 8, 10 mat, 14, 16)
& Robyn Parton
(April 9, 13, 15, 17 mat)

CADMUS Dominic Kraemer *
a wealthy industrialist
(April 8, 10 mat, 14, 16)
& Samuel Pantcheff *
(April 9, 13, 15, 17 mat)

ATHAMAS John Lattimore *
Semele's fiance
(April 8, 10 mat, 14, 16)
& Tom Verney *
(April 9, 13, 15, 17 mat)

INO Melanie Sanders *
Cadmus' younger daughter
(April 8, 10 mat, 14, 16)
& Catherine Backhouse
(April 9, 13, 15, 17 mat)

HARMONIA Katy Powis
Cadmus' wife

CHORUS OF THE SPIRITS

HIGH PRIEST Martin Musgrave
spokesman for the Spirits

SPIRITS Hugh Benson, Ed Bonner, Jennifer Clark,
Fiona James, Eleanor Janes *,
Anna MacLachlan*, Martin Musgrave,
Katy Powis, Katie Slater *,
Masami Uehara *

PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR James Hurley

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER Rachel Szmukler

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR Matthew Eberhardt

LIGHTING DESIGNER Ben Pickersgill

STAGE MANAGER Rosellen Cassell

ASSISTANT COSTUME DESIGNER Olivia Negrean

MUSIC TEAM

MUSIC DIRECTOR/HARPSICHORD Oliver-John Ruthven

ASSISTANT MUSIC DIRECTOR Dorian Komanoff Bandy

RÉPÉTITEURS Suzy Ruffles & Eun Jung Lee

MUSICA POETICA LONDON

LEADER Dorian Komanoff Bandy VIOLA Helen Sanders Hewitt

VIOLIN II Claudia Norz CONTINUO Kate Conway

OBOE I Chris Hartland OBOE II Merlin Harrison

Performing edition by The Early Music Company

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* Debut with HGO

THE IMMORTALS

JUPITER/JOVE Edmund Hastings *
the Boss
(April 9, 14, 16, 17 mat)
& Zachary Devin
(April 8, 10 mat, 13, 15)

JUNO/SATURNIA Kathryn Walker *
his long-suffering wife
(April 8, 10 mat, 14, 16)
& Katie Grosset *
(April 9, 13, 15, 17 mat)

IRIS Daisy Brown *
the go-between
(April 8, 9, 16, 17 mat)
Rebecca Moon *
(April 13, 14, 15)
& Jennifer Clark (April 10 mat)

SOMNUS Andrew Tipple
God of Sleep
(April 8, 10 mat, 14, 16)
& Bartholomew Lawrence*
(April 9, 13, 15, 17 mat)

APOLLO Ed Bonner
the forecaster & Hugh Benson (April 17 mat)

ARTISTS

Catherine Backhouse (Ino) grew up in Edinburgh, graduated with an honours degree in music from Durham University, is studying full-time at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with John Evans and will be joining the Opera Studies course there from September. Last month she played Soeur Anne - Dialogues des Carmélites by Poulenc and Mabel/Nurse Wallace - Unknown Doors by Iain Burnside at Guildhall. Other roles include Sesto - La Clemenza di Tito for Hampstead Garden Opera and Flat Pack: An Opera in IKEA by Tom AZ Lane which was actually performed in an IKEA store during opening hours. Before focusing on opera she spent three years touring the world as part of a professional a cappella group. This summer she will be playing Rosswisse - Die Walküre at the St Endellion Festival and has strong sun-bathing ambitions.

Ed Bonner (Apollo/Chorus) read Music at Cambridge where he performed a number of inappropriate roles, including Polyphemus - Acis and Galatea and bass soloist in Mozart's Requiem. Now firmly a tenor, Ed sings for professional choirs and churches based in London and has appeared for Opera Holland Park Chorus. On stage he has performed the roles of the Count - Marriage of Figaro, Borsa - Rigoletto, 1st Armed Man/Priest - Die Zauberflöte and Florian - Princess Ida, as well as scenes at Trinity College of Music, where he is about to complete his MMus studying with Lynton Atkinson and Robert Aldwinckle. This is his second appearance for HGO, and he is very much looking forward to it.

Daisy Brown (Iris), after a First Class Honours Degree in Art History, two seasons as assistant to Anthony Minghella at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York and Postgraduate studies at the RSAMD, is now studying with Ameral Gunson at Trinity College of Music. Her recent roles include Belinda - Dido and Aeneas, Almirena - Rinaldo and the Fairy Godmother - Cendrillon. This autumn, Daisy will play Cis - Albert Herring in the Aldeburgh Music Festival and Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme. Daisy funds her studies working part time as a barmaid and underwater body double which leaves her very little time to indulge in all her favourite things: scary movies, sad books and shiny jewellery.

Rosellen Cassell (Stage Manager) has worked with HGO on the last three productions; Venus and Adonis/Dido and Aeneas, The Clemency of Tito and The Magic Flute. She was stage manager for Surrey Opera for their production of The Bartered Bride in 2010. She has also worked on shows in Massachusetts including a dance showcase and a production of Hedda Gabler. She is looking forward to working with Go Opera on a production of Verdi's La Traviata in June. In September, she hopes to study for a BA in Technical Theatre.

Jennifer Clark (Iris/Chorus) was a choral scholar at Cambridge University, where she read English. She currently studies with Philip Dohan, and in September begins a postgraduate course in vocal studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Jen is looking forward to singing with Hampstead Garden Opera for the second time, in the chorus and covering the role of Iris. Other opera engagements include Tytania - A Midsummer Night's Dream with Opera Links, First Boy - The Magic Flute with Hampstead Garden Opera, The Countess - Le Nozze di Figaro with Bacchanale Opera Company, and First Spirit - Rusalka, Fourth Maid - Elektra, Belinda - Dido & Aeneas and Osmina / Cercatrice - Suor Angelica with Morley College Opera School. Nicknamed Jen 'talks to the bats' Clark, she sings very high and usually gets asked to play boys (Magic Flute) or bitches (Lady Macbeth). In addition to her solo work Jen sings with consorts such as Tenebrae, the Solomon Choir and The Larks Ascending.

Zachary Devin (Jupiter) hails from a small town in the Midwestern United States where he grew up in a log cabin surrounded by corn fields (seriously). Since the nearest opera house or symphony was over five hours away, his first classical inspirations were courtesy of Bugs Bunny in such masterpieces as *The Rabbit of Seville* and *What's Opera Doc?* He received a Bachelors Degree in Vocal Studies from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois and a Masters Degree from the prestigious Rice University in Houston, Texas. Zachary is currently studying at the Royal Academy of Music under the guidance of Mr. Phillip Doghan. This is his first appearance as the King of the Gods; recent roles include, *Lucano - The Coronation of Poppea*, *Tamino - The Magic Flute*, *Ralph Rackstraw - HMS Pinafore*, *Don Ottavio - Don Giovanni*, and *Mr. Erlanson - A Little Night Music*.

Matthew Eberhardt (Movement Director) graduated from Cambridge University in 2009. Previous directing credits include *Three Tales* (Riverside Studios, Tête à Tête Opera Festival); *The Mikado* and *The Gondoliers* (both The Minack Theatre); *Baby* (Edinburgh Festival 2009); *Parade and Fame!* (both ADC Theatre, Cambridge); *Hero* (world premiere, Edinburgh Festival 2008); *The Maids* (Guildford Auditorium). As an assistant director, Matthew has worked in a number of venues, including *The Cock Tavern Theatre* (where he worked as assistant to the Artistic Director), *The Kings Head Theatre*, *The Harlequin Theatre* and the *Cambridge Arts Theatre*. Matthew is currently working at *English Touring Opera*, and is co-artistic director of contemporary music group *Ensemble BPM*.

Katie Grosset (Juno) has recently gained a Masters of Performance in Vocal Training with distinction at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she continues to work this year as a Fellow under the tutelage of Susan McCulloch. 2010/11 engagements have included an appearance on *Radio 3's 'In Tune'*, *Ma - Lads in their Hundreds*, *Ludlow English Song Festival*, alto solo in *Les Noces* touring across France, *Mrs Herring* (cover) - *Albert Herring* at GSMD. Katie looks forward to a season with *Garsington* this summer as a chorus member. *Hampstead Garden Opera* has provided Katie with a golden opportunity to perform one of her favourite roles! She has also acquired an addiction to sweet tea and chocolate digestives as a result of the well-stocked biscuit tin and free flow of hot beverage at rehearsals.

Edmund Hastings (Jupiter), having spent most of his time at King's College, Cambridge and New College, Oxford being told off for singing too loudly, can now fully let rip, studying at the Royal Academy of Music with Ryland Davies. He somehow manages to juggle this with a flourishing international career; in this last year he has performed all over the world, singing a variety of works including *Jephtha*, *St John Passion*, *Messiah*, *Tenor 1 - Le Vin Herbé* and *Lysander - Midsummer Night's Dream*. He also sang in opera choruses for the *Aix en Provence festival*, and for the first ever fully staged baroque opera in China, which was, incidentally, *Semele*.

James Hurley (Production Director) studied at Cambridge University, where he read English and completed an MPhil in American Literature, specializing in the drama of David Mamet. His productions include *Aida*, *The Elixir of Love* (Riverside Opera); *The Mikado* (Cambridge Arts Theatre); *The Bartered Bride*, *Madama Butterfly* (Surrey Opera); *The Magic Flute*, *Venus and Adonis / Dido and Aeneas* (Hampstead Garden Opera); *Suor Angelica* (Beethoven Ensemble); *Savitri / Vedic Hymns* (Cambridge Round Church); *Don Giovanni*, *Les Incas du Pérou* (West Road Concert Hall); *States of Shock* (ADC Theatre); *Tape* (Bateman Auditorium, Cambridge). He has been on the directing staff of *English National Opera*, *Opera North*, *English Touring Opera* and *Opera Holland Park*, working on productions by *Martin Duncan*, *Daniel Kramer*, *Catherine Malfitano*, *James Conway*, *Liam Steel*, and *Martin Lloyd-Evans*.

Fiona James (Chorus) is currently in her fourth and final year of study at Trinity College of Music, where she studies under *Sophie Grimmer* and *Helen Yorke*. Fiona joined *Southampton Operatic Society* at the age of 11 and *Southampton Youth Choir* at 16. More recently Fiona has become a member of *BBC Symphony Chorus* and *Trinity College Chamber Choir* with whom she has toured *Tenerife* and *Italy*. Fiona's recent operatic roles include; *Chorus - The Rake's Progress* (Trinity Opera), *Chorus - L'Elisir d'Amore* (Blackheath Halls Opera), *Chorus - Così Fan Tutte* (Vignette Productions), *The Sorceress - Dido and Aeneas* (Blackheath Halls Opera), *3rd Boy - The Magic Flute* (Hampstead Garden Opera) and *3rd Lady - The Magic Flute* (Puzzle Piece Opera).

Eleanor Janes (Chorus) is currently a postgraduate student at Trinity College of Music studying with *Laureen Livingstone*. She graduated from *The University of Manchester* in 2010. Recent engagements include *Dew Fairy - Hansel and Gretel* and soloist in *Vivaldi's Gloria* with 'The London Chorus'. Past opera scenes performances include *Marschallin - Der Rosenkavalier*, *First Lady - Die Zauberflöte*, *Countess - Il Nozze di Figaro* and *The Spirit in Opera Hesperia's Dido and Aeneas*. Also an active choral member, Eleanor currently sings with *London based chamber choir*, *Chantage*. A West Country girl at heart, Eleanor loves to go home to see her new baby niece and relax by the sea.

Dominic Kraemer (Cadmus) recently graduated from *St John's College Cambridge* where he was a choral scholar and read Music. Dominic caught the opera bug at the age of 7 when he performed the (mute) role of *Flavio*, in *Handel's Rodelinda*. Eventually, he was able to perform roles that were not mute, including: *Miles* in the *Siberian Premiere of Britten's Turn of the Screw*, *Charlie Bucket* in the *World Premiere of The Golden Ticket*, and *Third Boy* in *The Magic Flute* at *ENO*. Since graduating from Cambridge Dominic has continued performing in both concert and opera. In July 2009 he performed a joint recital with *Lesley Garrett CBE* for the opening night of the *Harrogate International Festival*. Dominic studies singing with *Joy Mammen* and will be commencing his vocal masters at the *Royal Academy of Music* this September. Dominic is very excited to be performing with *HGO*, especially as he lives only a few minutes walk away from the Gatehouse!

John Lattimore (Athamas) was educated at *Eton College*, before reading Music at *St. John's, Cambridge*, where he was a choral scholar under *David Hill*. He is currently a postgraduate Preparatory Opera student at the *Royal Academy of Music* and studies with *Elizabeth Ritchie*, *Iain Ledingham* and *Michael Chance*. John is also a gentleman of *The Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace*, replacing the recently-retired *James Bowman*. Recent engagements include a masterclass with *Dame Emma Kirkby* as part of the *London Handel Festival*, a concert of *Britten songs and canticles* and a masterclass with *Barbara Bonney* at the *Royal Academy*, a gala performance of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* for *The Institute of Contemporary Arts* in *London*, and *Avant Cabaret* by up-and-coming composer *Laura Bowler* for the contemporary *Tête-a-tête Opera Festival* in *Hammersmith*. When not performing or rehearsing, John likes to spend entire days in bed, watch bad reality TV and play *iPhone scrabble*.

Bartholomew Lawrence (Cadmus) began his musical career at an early age when he became a chorister at *Canterbury Cathedral* at the age of 9. Since the age of 16, Bart has been a member of the *National Youth Choir of Great Britain* and their chamber choir *Laudibus*. As an undergraduate Bart studied at the *Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama* where he took part in many performances and competitions. Bart graduated from the *RSAMD* in 2009 and is currently studying for a MA at the *Royal Academy of Music* in *London* studying with *Glenville Hargreaves*. In September *Bartholomew* will be taking up his place at the *Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama Opera school*. In preparing for the role of *Somnus*, Bart has been taking regular doses of *Night Nurse* to really take *Stanislavski's* approach towards method acting as seriously as he could. Many rehearsals were spent finding the optimum sleeping position and he would like the audience to know that much of *Act 1 & 2* will be spent drinking tea and eating *Kitkats*.

Eunjung Lee (Répétiteur) has appeared in music festivals such as *Centro Studi Lirica (Italy)*, *Mozarteum (Austria)*, and *Aspen Music Festival (US)*, where she had the privilege of working with singers from all around the world. She has participated in *BYO (Rake's Progress)* and worked on *Fidelio* at *Opera Holland Park (OHP)*. Born in *Seoul, Korea*, Eunjung received her BM from *Ewha Womans University*, and then MM in *Accompanying* at *Manhattan School of Music (MSM)*. She then completed a 'Specialist in Collaborative Pianist' program with *Martin Katz* at *University of Michigan*. Eunjung returned to *NY* and joined the music staff at *MSM* before moving to *London*. In 2009-10, she was *Guildhall Répétiteur Fellow*. Future engagements include *La Wally* at *OHP* and concerts in *NY* and *Washington DC*.

Anna MacLachlan (Chorus) is currently studying at Trinity College of Music under the tuition of Peter Knapp and Robert Aldwinckle. She graduated last year from Southampton University where she studied English and Music. She was a choral scholar with Cantores Michaelis, singing regularly in St Michael's Church, Southampton. She has sung frequently with Southampton University's Light Opera Society, playing flighty women, such as Jenny Diver - The Beggar's Opera and the title role in Iolanthe. Operatic roles include Dorabella - Così fan tutte in the Nuffield Theatre and most recently a Shepherd - L'enfant et les sortilèges and Chorus - Le nozze di Figaro for Trinity Opera Scenes. Anna is thrilled to be involved in her first HGO production!

Rebecca Moon (Iris) is a Cornish-bred soprano, raised on a diet of pasties and cream teas but still alive to tell the tale! Success came early to Rebecca, when she played a 'Babe' in Plymouth Theatre Royal's professional pantomime, ably supported by Bonnie Langford and Rolf Harris. Singing studies then commenced at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where her most acclaimed role was playing the title role in Dyfrig the Dragon to the amusement of primary school children in the Welsh valleys.. Rebecca has always been a keen dancer and was overjoyed to get her big break with Opera North following an audition in pointe shoes but was even happier when the girl she was covering decided that she didn't want to perform en pointe after all! It is with great relish that Rebecca takes on the role of Iris in her debut with Hampstead Garden Opera and she identifies particularly with the character's youthful exuberance!

Martin Musgrave (High Priest/Chorus) started singing with the New Zealand National Youth Choir at age 16 in 1988, and then went on to study singing at Victoria University of Wellington with Emily Mair. He then joined Wellington City Opera, in 1993, performing Un Ballo in Maschera, Peter Grimes, and Bitter Calm. He joined HGO in 2006, where he has sung in every opera apart from one, in the chorus and a variety of roles, primarily because he enjoys working with the talented, warm, and friendly people that HGO attracts. All this serves as a welcome distraction from his more mundane day job of selling telecoms in the City.

Olivia Negrean (Assistant Costume Designer) has a BA Degree in Fashion and a Masters in Design for Performance and Events. She was part of an amateur theatre group for a year at Kings Theatre Chatham with whom she attended the Edinburgh Fringe as part of the production team. She has recently completed a three month internship at the Cock Tavern Theatre London where she worked as assistant stage manager on Subs and assistant designer on Edward Bond's Olly's Prison.

Samuel Pantcheff (Cadmus) is currently studying for a Masters in vocal performance at The Royal Academy of Music with Glenville Hargreaves and Iain Ledingham, after having been awarded a major entrance scholarship for September 2010. In his first year of study at RAM, Samuel was awarded first prize in the Blythe-Buesst Opera Prize. He graduated from King's College, London in 2010, where he read Music. Operatic experience includes Purcell's Dido and Aeneas (King's College Opera 2009; ICL Opera, 2009), Britten's The Prodigal Son (Ryedale Festival Opera and Grimeborn Opera Festival 2010), and Marcello - La Boheme (Imperial College, London Sinfonietta; Daniel Capps). Samuel created the role of The Sunflower in The Poison Garden, an electronic opera commissioned for Grimeborn Opera Festival 2010. In RAM vocal faculty Opera Scenes Samuel performed the title-role in Mozart's Don Giovanni (January, 2010). Singing is Sam's favourite thing to do, but when he is not doing that, he loves eating copious amounts of food, playing golf and partying - although not all three in quick succession. That would be foolish.

Robyn Parton (Semele) read Music at Worcester College, Oxford followed by an apprenticeship with the Monteverdi Choir and ENO's Opera Works course. She is currently in her second year of postgraduate study at the RCM, learning with Sally Burgess and supported by the RCM, Josephine Baker Trust, Oxford Lieder Festival Scholarship, William Gibbs Trust and the prestigious intercollegiate Joaniha Trust Award. Roles include Susanna, Pamina, Queen of the Night (HGO), Gretel, Lauretta and Esmeralda cover - The Bartered Bride for the RCM Opera School. In demand as a concert artist, most notable upcoming performances include Mahler's Fourth Symphony in Oman, Bach's St Matthew Passion in Israel, Handel's Diana Cacciatrice for the London Handel Festival, Mendelssohn's Elijah and a song recital for the Royal Albert Hall Coffee Concerts Series.

Ben Pickersgill (Lighting Designer) Semele is Ben's first production with Hampstead Garden Opera. Recent lighting design credits include Company for Mountview Theatre Academy, A Christmas Carol at Trafalgar Studios, Kiss of the Spiderwoman and The Libertine at the Bridewell Theatre, and The Bartered Bride for Surrey Opera. Ben has also helped create the technical wizardry behind a number of West End shows, including The Wizard of Oz, Love Never Dies, Wicked, Les Misérables (London and Berlin) and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. This work has also taken him all over the world and included a year with Cirque du Soleil's The Beatles - Love at the Mirage, Las Vegas.

Katy Powis (Harmonia) grew up in Kent and studied the piano and flute at the Kent Centre for Young Instrumentalists. She began singing whilst reading History at Cambridge University as it looked like more fun than practising the flute. She holds a Certificate of Distinction in Recital Performance from Birkbeck (University of London) and has studied Opera Performance with Morley College and Drama with City Acting. Katy has previously performed as Amore - Orfeo ed Euridice with Scarlet Opera, Despina - Così fan tutte, Laoula - L'Etoile and First Niece - Peter Grimes with Morley Opera School and in Venus and Adonis, Dido and Aeneas, Susannah and Idomeneo with HGO. She has also sung across the UK and abroad with the BBC Symphny Chorus. Katy has a particular affection for HGO, as it was singing with them in 2008 that she met her fiancé.

Suzy Ruffles (Répétiteur) began studying the piano at the age of 4. She took a postgraduate diploma in piano accompaniment at Trinity College of Music, studying under Eugene Asti and completed the course in July 2007. In 2008 she formed the Britannic Ensemble, a wind and piano trio and in 2010 the ADASKA Ensemble comprising wind quintet and piano. Suzy plays at AIMS International Music School. She has worked as répétiteur for several London and European based operatic productions. Suzy works as a staff accompanist for Trinity College of Music and is the accompanist for the Greenwich University Choir under Nicholas Jenkins. Suzy is also a chartered accountant, reads wherever she travels, attempts to keep her tropical fish alive and is an avid supporter of Southampton FC. For more information please visit www.suzyruffles.co.uk.

Oliver-John Ruthven (Music Director) began his musical career as a chorister at Westminster Abbey. He graduated in 2006 with a first class honours degree in Music from the University of Manchester, and has been living and working in London since then as a conductor, continuo player and singer. He has been music director of Hampstead Garden Opera Company since September 2008. He was recently appointed as music director of Riverside Opera Company, for whom he has just conducted Aida (Verdi). He is looking forward to conducting Un ballo in maschera (Verdi) in March 2012. He is also assistant conductor to the Hastings Philharmonic Choir and will conduct the choir in performances in Dordrecht in May. Oliver-John is keyboards apprentice to the Monteverdi Choir under Sir John Elliot Gardiner. He recently played harpsichord and chamber organ with the English Baroque Soloists for performances of Monteverdi's Vespro della Beata Vergine, at the BBC Proms and across Europe. He directs the newly formed period ensemble, Rocco Consort, and is harpsichordist for Musica Poetica London. Oliver-John was cover conductor for the Royal Ballet in their production of The Dream at Covent Garden in June 2008. He is busy as a singer, working as a tenor lay clerk at St. Etheldreda's, Ely Place, as well as singing as a tenor deputy for Stile Antico.

Melanie Sanders (Ino) grew up in north London and read Philosophy & English at Sussex University before studying voice at Trinity College of Music and ENO Opera Works. Her competition successes include the Elisabeth Schumann Lieder Competition, 2nd Prize in the Thelma King Award, and the Paul Simm Opera Prize for Mère Marie - Dialogues des Carmélites. Other opera roles include Dummer - The Emperor of Atlantis, Ullman - Dioneo, Megabise - Artaserse, Hassé (Ensemble Serse), Annio - La Clemenza di Tito (Operatique), Mother Goose - The Rake's Progress (TCM), Dido - Dido and Aeneas (Brent Opera) and Mercedes - Carmen (MeanTime Opera). In 2010 Melanie sung 'Brian's Mum' and mezzo chorus in workshops for Two Boys, ENO/Metropolitan Opera. An experienced choral singer, Melanie is on the Philharmonia Chorus Professional Singers Scheme, and is a founder member of the Schoolhouse 6 Ensemble, created to perform Julian Marshall's cantata Out Of The Darkness which toured Britain and Germany in 2009-10. Having spent many of her teenage years in the pubs of Highgate and surrounding villages, Melanie is thrilled to now be singing Handel in one of them.

Katie Slater (Chorus) Katie is studying with Ameral Gunson and Alastair Young at Trinity College of Music. Roles include Hansel - Hansel and Gretel, Dorabella - Cosi Fan Tutte, Meg Page - Falstaff (TCM) and Olga in a forthcoming production of Eugene Onegin (Blackheath Halls Opera). Katie read English and French at the University of Nottingham, spending a year abroad in Paris studying music and eating lots of cheese. She recently performed in the chorus in La Forza del Destino and Francesca da Rimini with Opera Holland Park, and is delighted to be performing in the chorus with HGO for the first time.

Rachel Szmukler (Set & Costume Designer) recently completed the Motley Theatre Design Course in London. Beginning as an artist, she graduated from the Glasgow School of Art with 1st class honours in Fine Art in 2007; then worked as a practising artist in Glasgow, exhibiting her work widely throughout Scotland. Originally a painter, her work evolved into sculptural constructions and installations, leading to an interest in designing for performance. Productions include costumes for short film Strays (NFTS), set and costumes for Olly's Prison (Cock Tavern Theatre) and Winter Tales (Firstborn Theatre Company). Future projects include Noye's Fludde (Robert Bouffler Music Trust).

Elaine Tate (Semele) started 'singing' aged three, and hasn't shut up since. First appearing as Mme Thenardier, she was inspired (although seldom since has had to sing with as much deliberate tastelessness.) Her varied concert experience has this year included Mozart Mass in C Minor, Dvořák Stabat Mater, Bach Ach Gott, Im Himmel Sieh Darein, Handel Dixit Dominus, Haydn Nelson Mass, and Mendelssohn Lobgesang; and operatic roles include Manon - Manon, Serpetta - La Finta Giardiniera, Almirena - Rinaldo, and, appeasing her inner Madame Thenardier, Mrs Noye - Noye's Fludde. She graduated an English scholar in 2008, and is an MA finalist at the RAM, studying with Noelle Barker and Audrey Hyland. Elaine is delighted to be singing Semele for HGO.

Andrew Tipple (Somnus) began singing as a chorister at Lichfield cathedral, and gained a choral scholarship to King's College Cambridge in 2005, where he immersed himself in the university's musical life broadcasting and touring extensively with the Choir while studying history. Since leaving university in 2008, Andrew has performed a diverse repertoire spanning opera, oratorio and song. His oratorio work at numerous venues includes Bach's St Matthew Passion and St John Passion, Haydn's Die Seben letzten Worte, Purcell's King Arthur, Beethoven's Mass in C, Handel's Messiah and Requiems by Duruflé, Fauré and Mozart. In opera he has starred as Sarastro in The Magic Flute and as Il Commendatore in Cambridge University's highly acclaimed production of Don Giovanni. He has given many solo song recitals, notably at the Edinburgh Fringe and Shrewsbury Flower Festival. Andrew is currently studying at the Royal Academy, where he is taught by Mark Wildman and Dominic Wheeler, and is the holder of the Lord Kohn Scholarship. He has recently been offered a place at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama to continue his studies.

Masami Uehara (Chorus) studied at Trinity College of Music, where she gained a Postgraduate Diploma. Operatic roles include Pamina - The Magic Flute, Fiordiligi - Cosi Fan Tutte, Mrs. Ford - Falstaff, Nella - Gianni Schicchi and Fifth Maid - Elektra for Morley Opera School, and The Secretary - The "Shoreditch" Consul for The Wedding Collective. Masami coached The King's Singers for their recording of Landscape and Time in 2006. She currently studies privately with Ian Kennedy. In addition to singing, she loves cooking, cycling and watching Formula 1 during the season. Masami looks forward to playing the role of The Secretary again this summer.

Tom Verney (Athamas) is a postgraduate student at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he learns with Andrew Watts. He started singing as a treble in Kingston Parish Church, before deciding to mix his passion for music with his passion for sunshine, and spending a year as a lay clerk in Perth Cathedral, Western Australia. Tom then sang in the choir of St John's College Cambridge while doing a degree in philosophy - during which time he relieved himself from all the thinking by captaining the college football team, and relieved himself from any actual exercise by playing in goal. Tom has recently enjoyed a number of solo engagements - including Oberon in Britten's Midsummer Night's Dream with Shadwell Opera at the Edinburgh Festival, and Pergolesi's Stabat Mater at the Queen Elizabeth Hall with players from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment Youth Scheme. This is his first opera since returning to his hometown of London this year, and he will revisit the role of Britten's Oberon at the Barbican next year with the Guildhall Opera School.

Kathryn Walker (Juno) is a music graduate of the University of Birmingham, and is currently studying voice at the Royal Academy of Music. Opera roles include Tormentilla - The Poisoned Kiss, Prince Orlofsky - Die Fledermaus for University of Birmingham Summer Festival Opera and Hero - L'Egisto for RAM vocal faculty scenes. Kathryn has also appeared in the chorus for performances of Cosi fan tutte (RAO), Don Giovanni (UBSFO), Carmen and Verdi's Macbeth (Midland Opera). Concert performances include Vivaldi's Gloria and Beethoven's A Choral Fantasy as well as performances of songs by Jaques Blumenthal with Charles Brett at the Fitzwilliam museum, Cambridge and the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham.

Musica Poetica London was established in 2011 by harpsichordist Oliver-John Ruthven and violinist Dorian Komanoff Bandy. Although the ensemble was initially conceived to explore the rich but neglected 17th-century trio sonata repertoire, it has expanded rapidly and now performs in a variety of configurations, ranging from violin-harpsichord duo to chamber orchestra. Future plans include recitals throughout London featuring programmes of "Grotesque and Amorous Music from 17th-century Germany," Handel's Italian Cantatas, and the "Musical Spring-Fruits" of Dietrich Becker. For information on upcoming performances, please visit www.doriankomanoffbandy.com. Stop press news: the ensemble has just won its way to the final of the Early Music Competition at the Royal Academy, to be held in May.