



 HGO

La Traviata

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David & Nadia Conway

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From 1st June, David Conway will take over from Roger Sainsbury as chairman of HGO.

At the age of 14, David was given a ticket for Mussorgsky's Khovanshchina at Covent Garden. Despite not having a clue as to what was going on, he immediately fell in love with opera, a love which he shares with his wife Nadia. David graduated from Kings College, Cambridge with a degree in economics and psychology. His subsequent career has included stockbroking, manufacturing, local politics, consultancy and over twenty years in development aid project management across all countries of the former Soviet Union. He also studied part-time to obtain a PhD in music history from University College London, where he is an Honorary Research Fellow, and regularly publishes and lectures on music topics. His book *Jewry in Music* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2013. David is a committee member of the Alkan Society and of the International Centre for Suppressed Music. With Nadia he also runs an annual classical music festival in Levoča, Slovakia. He says that he plays the piano reasonably well, and the bassoon very badly. He can also nowadays give an acceptable resumé of the plot of Khovanshchina.

David kindly says that he is proud and honoured to succeed Alastair and me as leader of the HGO team, and looks forward to working with them and with HGO's Friends and supporters to continue to serve and develop HGO's twin objectives: to present first-class affordable opera performances for its audiences, and to seek out and support the next generation of opera stars.

ROGER SAINSBURY

Synopsis

Act 1

Socialite Violetta Valéry is hosting a party at her Parisian home to celebrate her return to full health after some months of being confined to her bed. High-profile guests include her current lover Barone Douphol, Flora Bervoix and her lover the Marchese d'Obigny, and various friends including her physician, Dottore Grenvil. Gastone arrives with his friend Alfredo who, it transpires, has fallen in love with Violetta from afar, enquiring daily about her health whilst she was unwell.

Violetta, however, is not yet fully recovered. Alfredo notices her suffering and finds himself declaring his love to this relative stranger. Initially wary of Alfredo's ardour, Violetta eventually succumbs to his wide-eyed innocence, falling for perhaps the first man to really see her for who she is.

Act 2 scene 1

Three months later, Alfredo and Violetta are living together in the countryside outside Paris. Having fallen in love with Alfredo, Violetta has abandoned her former life as a

party-girl, socialite and sometime-courtesan. Their maid, Annina, reveals to Alfredo that money is tight and that Violetta is selling everything she owns in order to maintain their lifestyle. Shocked at this discovery, Alfredo leaves for Paris to rectify the problem himself.

Violetta receives an invitation from Flora for a party in Paris before Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, a cabinet minister, arrives to persuade her to break off her relationship with his son for the sake of his family's reputation (or to help his own political future). After his pleading with her to consider his daughter's future, a distraught Violetta finally agrees to Germont's demands, resolving to break Alfredo's heart to prevent him from following her.

Alfredo's arrival back from Paris interrupts Violetta as she writes him a farewell letter. Through tears she tells him that she loves him, before leaving for Flora's party. Once she has left, Alfredo reads her letter and is comforted in his grief by his father who stays quiet about his own part in his son's heartbreak. Noticing Flora's party invitation, Alfredo suspects that Barone Duphol is the real reason behind Violetta's

abandonment of her life and love. Alfredo rushes out to follow her to Paris with Germont trying in vain to stop him.

INTERVAL

Act 2 scene 2

As Flora prepares for her party, the Marchese d'Obigny tells her - to everyone's surprise - that Violetta and Alfredo have separated. Gastone provides entertainment for the party before Alfredo arrives followed by Violetta and the Baron.

The Baron and Alfredo gamble at cards and Alfredo wins a significant amount of money. As the guests move in to have dinner, Violetta asks Alfredo to stay behind so they can talk. She warns him that she's worried the Baron will challenge him to a duel but Alfredo - perhaps wilfully - misinterprets her concern for his safety and demands her assurance that she really does love the Baron. In her distress, and with the intention of persuading Alfredo to return to his father, she lies and tells the man she loves that she would rather be with her former lover.

In a fit of rage, Alfredo calls the rest of the guests back into the room to witness what he believes to be Violetta's fickleness, shaming her by throwing his winnings at her feet. Giorgio Germont arrives at the party - having been searching for his son - and, along with the rest of the guests, condemns his son's behaviour as the Baron challenges Alfredo to a duel, just as Violetta predicted.

Act 3

Violetta's illness has worsened. Dottore Grenvil gives her hope but admits to Annina that his patient does not have long left to live. Alone in her room, Violetta re-reads a letter from Germont in which he explains that in his remorse he has told Alfredo the truth about why Violetta abandoned her. Alfredo, he says, is on his way to see Violetta and beg her forgiveness. Violetta knows it is too late but Annina announces Alfredo's arrival and he and Violetta embrace and sing of a future that they both know they will not see together. Germont finally arrives to express his regret but it is indeed too late and Violetta dies in Alfredo's arms.

From the Director

Sarah Gilpin

It is always a challenge to take on a story as well loved as La Traviata; many of you will have favourite productions or recordings, or you might have read the novel or seen the play. Perhaps you've seen films that were inspired by it such as Moulin Rouge or Pretty Woman? Each time the story is told, it is done so through a different lens; the characters live, love and (usually) die through circumstances they have authored themselves. Our challenge has been to find our own truth to this narrative and discover how to tell it with clarity.

For me, the gender politics of this piece are unavoidable. Violetta is one of opera's most dignified heroines, but one who has been defined by the company she keeps and the man whose arm she is currently on. We meet her in an environment founded on entitlement, privilege and hypocrisy where women are playthings to be used and thrown away. By setting this production in the Paris of the 1960s, we find ourselves stepping into a world of the early days of a sexual revolution that is beginning to challenge the traditional attitudes towards sexuality. With the arrival of the contraceptive pill - and therefore a dramatically reduced risk of unwanted pregnancies - pre-marital sexual relationships became simpler. In this production we find ourselves stuck in the middle of two opposing attitudes: sex as pleasure and sex as taboo. The women in our telling of this story do not need to be paid in cash for

sex, but rather have found themselves in a position where it is their lifestyles that are being sponsored by the highest bidder.

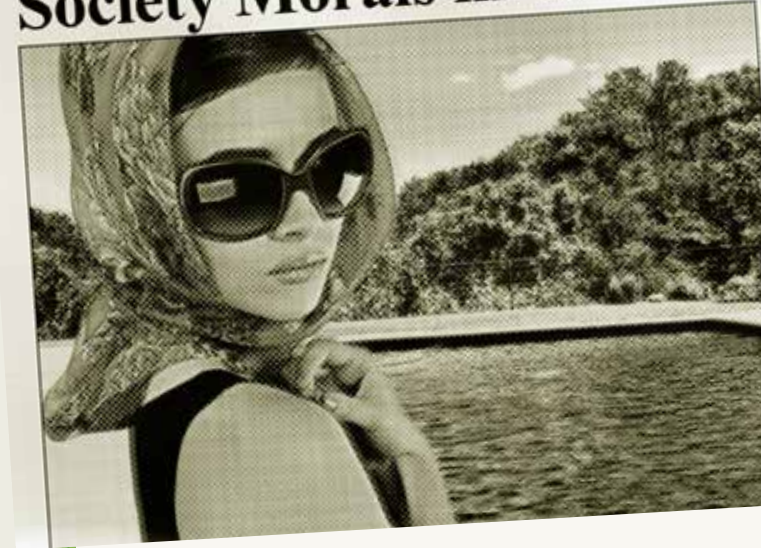
What makes this tragedy so... well, tragic... is that even after Violetta gives up her life of glamour and riches for the man she loves, she cannot truly escape her past. Even as she takes on the responsibilities of a traditionally male role in managing her and Alfredo's rapidly dwindling finances, society keeps her shackled to her former life as - in this production - a socialite and party girl.

There is a stark contrast between the men and the women at the parties in this opera; for the most part, the men are aristocracy whilst the women are not. This leads me to want to question the social makeup of the group. Are these men consciously and deliberately moving in circles where the women are there to be desired but have little of their own financial autonomy? If so, how complicit in this are the women? We can assume for now that in our '60s setting no one is being actively coerced into this world of excessive drinking and smoking and sexual liberation, but it begs the question: how much inti-



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The public persona of Giorgio Germont is one of charm, sophistication and integrity but the rumours surrounding his son Alfredo have plagued his political campaign. Earlier this week the politician insisted that there was "no impropriety" in Alfredo's relationship with a model after the opposition voiced concerns about national security implications. Alfredo met socialite and model Violetta Valéry, 23, at an exclusive 'pool party' attended by celebrities, politicians and artists. Violetta is regularly spotted on the arms of influential - and wealthy - men. A source close to the couple has confirmed that she arrived at the party with Baron Douphol but left with Alfredo. Originally from Provence, the young photographer has long been considered one of the most desirable

macy is lost when you have a different bedfellow every night, week, month...? And how often do these men spend a full night with their girlfriends before heading back to their wives? Those partygoers exude an easy confidence, perhaps attracting jealousy from those not invited. But is that life really all it's cracked up to be?

Integral to the heartbreak of this opera is understanding Germont's attitude towards Violetta. By invoking the political sex scandals of the 1960s and beyond we have been able to explore the damage that can be done to reputation and career with any suggestion of sexual impropriety. Taking inspiration from the Profumo Affair, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, and even the sensationalist rumours surrounding JFK and Marilyn Monroe, it's easy to see why - if he was a politician - Georgio Germont might want to prevent his son from maintaining a relationship with a woman who was not quite the right 'type'. Of

course his daughter's happiness is more important to him than that of a woman he doesn't know, but is this really what Germont wants or are his motives more self-interested?

It is, however, Germont's assumptions about her character - or lack thereof - that provide us with a clear view of Violetta's dignity, generosity and nobility. It is not until she is asked to make the ultimate sacrifice that we really see what it will cost her: knowing that she is dying, she chooses to give up the one person that is worth living for in the hope that it will protect his relationship with a family that she does not, and never will, have.

What she did have, however, was a man who saw her for who she was rather than as the eye-candy and good-time-girl that the rest of her 'friends' consider her to be. This is a love which, although only in its infancy, transcends propriety, wealth and class; a love which is enough, even at the very end.

When you really trust Verdi's dramatic instincts, and are faithful to the instructions in the score, then the genius of Verdi as musical dramatist is revealed.

Benjamin Britten said: "I am an arrogant and impatient listener, but in the case of a few composers, a very few, when I hear a work I do not like, I am convinced that it is my own fault. Verdi is one of those composers."

There was a time in the first half of the twentieth century when Verdi had fallen significantly out of fashion. Today, however, his music pervades our culture far beyond the opera house, through its use in film, television, advertisements etc. Most people could hum along to "La Donna e Mobile" from *Rigoletto*, or would recognise "Va Pensiero" (the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves) from "Nabucco". They might not be able to name the opera, or even the composer, but they would react to the emotion of the music. For Verdi is an intensely emotional composer, with a wonderful ability to find a way of expressing the human condition through music. If today Verdi's name is synonymous with "grand opera", he was also able to apply his talents to stories of every-day life. This approach was unusual at the time, and in 1853 (when *La Traviata* premiered), opera audiences were unused to being shown things on stage which related directly to their own time and place.

Verdi had wanted the first production in Venice to be contemporary. However,

the story of the Parisian courtesan and her social milieu was so close to the bone, that the censor insisted the opera be set around 1700, thereby placing in the past the perceived immorality of the story. Verdi's score transcends the chronological contexts however; his skill at capturing the essence of his characters, and the emotions which guide them, is timeless. HGO's production is performed in a theatre much smaller than *La Fenice* in Venice where it was premiered, and we are using a much smaller orchestra. This has enabled us to re-examine the score as a "musical drama" and to be as faithful as possible to what Verdi actually wrote. With a reduced orchestra, the singers can create a more intimate portrayal of the characters than might be possible in a large theatre with full-size orchestra. *La Traviata* has been standard operatic repertoire for over 150 years, during which time certain conventions have formed regarding how the music should be performed, which disregard what the composer wrote. One example of this is the liberty that performers are wont to take with the rhythms and tempi set down by Verdi. The experience of HGO's cast has been that when you really trust Verdi's dramatic instincts, and are faithful to the instructions in the score, then the genius of Verdi as musical dramatist is revealed.

La Traviata / The Fallen Woman

Giuseppe Verdi 1813 – 1901

Francesco Maria Piave 1810 – 1876

The opera is derived from the play, *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas fils. This drew from the liaison of Dumas with Marie Duplessis, a celebrated Paris courtesan. The play was first produced in 1852 and was seen by Verdi. Early in 1853, Verdi collaborated with Piave to create *La Traviata*. Although the opera is based quite closely upon the play, it would be wrong to think of Dumas as Verdi's sole source of inspiration. He was clearly interested in the concept of a father's interference to prevent the marriage of his son to a woman perceived as unworthy and threatening to be a blot on the family honour. This was the theme of *Luisa Miller*, written by Verdi in 1849, to a libretto by Salvatore Cammarano which was drawn from Schiller's play *Kabale und Liebe* (intrigue and love). In each case the girl is coerced into writing a 'Dear John' letter to her man. Though we may find *La Traviata* heartrending, this is gentle stuff compared with the unambiguous evil and savagery of the father and his agents against Luisa – and she was not a fallen woman, simply a poor one.

In *La Dame aux Camélias*, the young lovers are Marguerite Gautier and Armand Duval. For the opera, Piave changed the names to Violetta Valéry and Alfredo Germont. Though the

opera was to be sung in Italian, the Parisian setting of the play was retained. We see that the first names are now in singable Italian, but the second names are French – inter-European harmony before Italy had become a state, let alone joined the EU.

Dumas had set his play in contemporary times, a concept which Piave and Verdi retained in the first production – at *La Fenice* in Venice on 6 March 1853. This is said to have nonplussed an audience used to opera set in the past and 'in costume'. Some have held this to be the reason why the production was a failure, even something of a fiasco. More likely, this reflected the performance. Alfredo was in poor voice and the Violetta was, in the words of Kobbé, inordinately stout – such that the audience had difficulty in believing that she was wasting away with consumption. Verdi had confidence in his work and was angered by this reception. He put it on the shelf for a while, turning down a number of offers, seemingly wanting not redemption but revenge. This chance came when a Venetian friend, Antonio Gallo, offered to stage it at his Teatro San Benedetto. This time, with a few significant revisions, it was a triumph, and has since been one of the most performed and favourite of all operas.

This successful revival was set in the time and dress of Louis XIV. Verdi always had the censor breathing down his neck, preferring dodgy deeds and doubtful moral values to be portrayed in the past, rather than as a present threat to society. This pressure, as well as the poor reception for the original setting, might have led to the change. Be that as it may, this is an opera which can succeed when set in a wide range of different times. This is because it is a drama about real people and real emotions, with which an audience could and can identify. Until the time of Verdi, drama in opera had generally been drawn from historical or mythic figures.

Dumas first wrote *La Dame aux Camélias* as a novel. Both novel and play reflect the mores of Paris at the time. In many of his works, Dumas emphasises the importance of marriage and the moral purpose of literature, which should be socially committed. He was against adultery and prostitution, and the emancipation of women. A woman with a doubtful reputation is a threat to the bourgeois family and, like a deadly canker, must be rooted out. While Verdi was not so forthright, in the opera he follows Dumas and has Germont père adopting a preachy moral tone in his demands of Violetta. We have the hypocrisy of, "Do as I say, not as I do". Dumas had lived with the fallen woman, Marie Duplessis, and he seems to have been excited by the capacity of the top-class courtesan to

pass for an honourable woman. Verdi lived with Giuseppina Strepponi, who had lived the life of a free woman, taking lovers and bearing several illegitimate children.

Along with *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata* forms what has been termed Verdi's 'romantic trilogy', written in a white hot burst of creativity in the space of 26 months. The entire opera was written between 19 January and 20 February 1853 – while he was occupied with the première of *Il Trovatore*. What an astounding achievement!

Roger Sainsbury – drawing from an earlier note by Alastair Macgeorge.

Thank You to Our Sponsor

**This production of *La Traviata*
Is supported by an extremely
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The directors and committee of HGO
express their most grateful thanks.



La Traviata

18/20/23/25/26(7.30)

PERFORMANCES

19/22/24/26(2.30)/27

Eleanor Ross	VIOLETTA	Julia Bachmann
Alex Aldren	ALFREDO	Sergio Augusto
Lawrence Wallington	GERMONT PÈRE	Michael Birnbaum
Emma Muir-Smith	FLORA	Rachel Duckett
Carola Darwin	ANNINA	Carola Darwin
WeiHsi Hu	GASTONE	Harry Kersley
Jack Naismith	DUPHOL	Jack Naismith
David Booth	GRENVIL	David Booth
Aleksi Koponen	MARQUIS	Aleksi Koponen
Esme Bronwen Smith	CHORUS	Esme Bronwen Smith
Emma Charles	CHORUS	Emma Charles
Güler Özgencil	CHORUS	Güler Özgencil
Rachel Duckett	CHORUS	Emma Muir-Smith
Harry Kersley	CHORUS	WeiHsi Hu
Aleksi Koponen	CHORUS	Aleksi Koponen
David Booth	CHORUS	David Booth

DIRECTOR

Sophie Gilpin

DESIGNER

Anna Bonomelli

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Tom Turner

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Alice Weber

STAGE MANAGER

Jessica Dalton

ASM

Becky Thornton

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Sam Evans

ASS.MUSIC DIRECTOR

William Green

VIOLIN 1

Anna Caban

VIOLIN 2

Olivia Jarvis

VIOLA

Ruth Nelson

CELLO

Bethan Lloyd

DOUBLE BASS

Adam Churchyard

FLUTE

Michael Lui

OBOE

Katherine Bryer

CLARINET

Ross Montgomery

BASSOON

Dan-Andrei Bosinceanu

HORN

Matthew Horn

TIMPS & PERCUSSION

Dan Robinson

Orchestral reduction supplied by Pocket Publications



Sophie Gilpin
Director

Sophie is Artistic Director of HeadFirst Productions and Co-Founder of SWAP'ra: Supporting Women and Parents in Opera. She has directed productions for companies including Riverside Opera/Rose Theatre Kingston, Celebrate Voice, and Re:Sound Music Theatre/Oxford Lieder Festival, and has worked as an Assistant Director for companies including Opera North, OperaUpClose, and Iford Arts.

In 2017 Sophie established A Festival of Sex, Love and Death and directed Don Giovanni. Upcoming work includes directing the world premiere of Keith Bernstein's The Prometheus Revolution for Fulham Opera at the Arcola Theatre, Assistant Director for Idomeneo at Buxton Opera House, and co-producing/co-directing the inaugural SWAP'ra Gala at Opera Holland Park.

headfirstproductions.org | swap-ra.org



Anna Bonomelli
Designer

Anna trained with award-winning designer Paul Brown.

Forthcoming projects: revival designer Idomeneo, director Graham Vick (Lithuanian Opera Theatre) costume designer Vanara, director Jonathan O'Boyle, associate designer The Magic Flute, director Alessandro Talevi (Central City Opera, Colorado) Mamzer, new opera produced by ROH (Hackney Empire).

Credits as a designer: Don Giovanni Pleasance Theatre, Falstaff Les Azuriales Opera, Tallis and the Tides of Love Cutty Sark Museum, Love on the Dole Arts Space, King Lear Technis Theatre, La chiave dell'ascensore Teatro di Como.

www.annabonomelli.com

Sam Evans
Music Director

Sam is a professional baritone, conductor and singing teacher. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music International Opera School, graduating with the Tagore Gold Medal. A soloist at the BBC Proms, Opéra Comique, and Sydney Opera House, he was formerly Music Director of Riverside Opera, conducting Bizet's Carmen and Gounod's Romeo and Juliet.

He is Music Director of Battersea Choral Society, Teddington Choral Society and other London choirs. He has acted as Chorus Master for the BBC Singers, the Swedish Radio Choir and the Monteverdi Choir. He is Head of Vocal Studies at Highgate School.



William Green
Assistant Music Director

William Green is a pianist, conductor, and répétiteur. Born and bred in Yorkshire, he graduated with a First in Music from Christ Church, Oxford, in June 2013 and received his PhD in Music from the University of Liverpool in December 2017.

He has performed many concertos with amateur and semi-professional orchestras, including concertos by Mozart, Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Brahms, and Ravel.

He will be joining the National Opera Studio as a 2018/19 Young Artist in September.





Eleanor Ross

VIOLETTA

Eleanor trained at the RCM, Wales International Academy of Voice, & ENO OperaWorks. Recent/notable engagements include Shepherd Boy (Tosca) & Alona (Different, Llewelyn ap-Myrddin) with English Touring Opera & the Philharmonie Luxembourg; Handel's Messiah at St John's Smith Square, Cover Dalinda (Ariodante) at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, and Konstanze (Die Entführung) for Pop Up Opera. Eleanor is delighted to be joining HGO as Violetta this spring.



Alex Aldren

ALFREDO

After initially working as a doctor, Alex joined the Royal Academy of Music Opera School. He is now in his second year of study and plans a third working with Nuccia Focile, Ingrid Surgenor and Jonathan Papp. Roles so far include, Oronte (Alcina), Mercury (Orphée) and Bill (Flight). Alex is a Britten-Pears young artist and is sponsored by the Gregory-Carr and D'Oyly Carte trusts.



Lawrence Wallington

GERMONT PÈRE

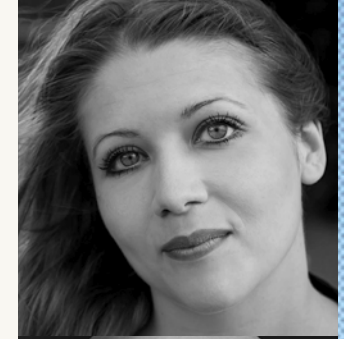
Lawrence studied languages at Magdalen, Oxford and voice at R.A.M. Highlights include Dido and Aeneas (Innsbruck), Donald (Billy Budd), Stabat Mater (Rossini), Recitals (Lisbon). Recordings: Castor et Pollux (Rameau), Dioclesian (Purcell), Five Mystical Songs (Vaughan Williams). A Westminster Abbey Lay Vicar, he also sings in The Monteverdi Choir, under Gardiner: Les Troyens, Carmen, Les Boréades, Gluck's Orphée (Covent Garden), and Monteverdi Trilogy.



Emma Muir-Smith

FLORA

Mezzo Soprano Emma Muir-Smith has performed in Australia and the UK following the completion of her studies at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. She was a Victorian Opera Developing Artist 2014-2015, where she performed and covered roles including Hansel (Hänsel und Gretel), Anna (Die Sieben Todsünden), Alice (Alice's Adventures in Operaland) and Flora (La Traviata). Emma is also a writer and commissioned librettist.



Julia Bachmann

VIOLETTA

Julia has been performing at various German opera houses and festivals and has just returned from her third China tour. She has been awarded prestigious competition prizes, awards and scholarships and has already participated in two operatic world premieres as a soloist.

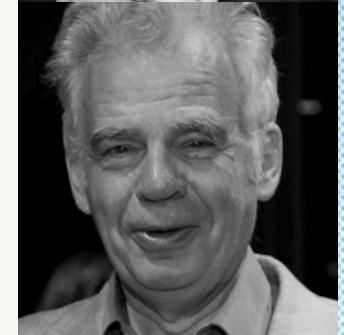
Before studying opera singing, she completed her degree in literature, art, and philosophy at the International Jacobs University Bremen at age 20.



Sergio Augusto

ALFREDO

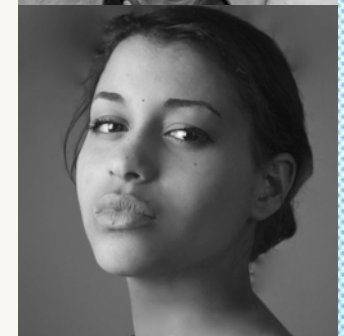
Mexican Tenor Sergio Augusto, Is delighted to be part of HGO's new interpretation of Verdi's timeless opera. Other engagements this year include Leicester in Pavilion Opera's closing production: Maria Stuarda. Sergio will also participate in the notable London Bel Canto Festival where he will work closely with world-renowned artists Bruce Ford and Aprile Millo. He maintains training with Bel Canto Specialist, Dominic Natoli.



Michael Birnbaum

GERMONT PÈRE

Michael Birnbaum has sung many leading roles for operatic societies in and around London including a number by Verdi (Amonasro, Macbeth, Germont Père and Don Carlo in Forza del Destino) and roles in verismo opera such as Barnaba, Alfio, Tonio, and Rodolfo in La Bohème by Leoncavallo.



Rachel Duckett

FLORA

Rachel graduated in music from Goldsmiths, in 2014, has completed the Morley Opera School program and is a member of the Philharmonia Chorus Student Scheme. She will sing two further roles this summer: Queen of the Night (Magic Flute) at Theatre Bouffon, Paris in June and Adele (Die Fledermaus) at Wiltons Music Hall in August and has previously covered Amor (Orpheus & Eurydice) Edinburgh Fringe.



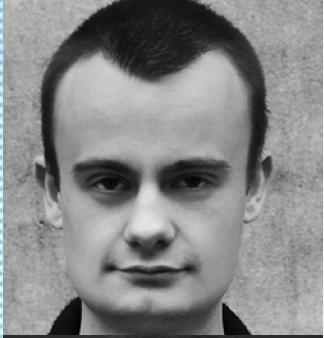
WeiHsi Hu
GASTONE

WeiHsi, a Canadian tenor, trained at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has performed with opera companies in Canada, UK, and Europe including ENO and Birmingham Opera. His credits are Tamino (Die Zauberflöte) Jimmy McIntyre (Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny), Quint (Turn of the Screw), Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni), Ferrando (Cosi fan tutte), Camille (Merry Widow), and Nathaniel (Tales of Hoffman).



Jack Naismith
DUPHOL

Since making his concert debut in June 2017, singing Schumann's Dichterliebe, Jack has secured concerts throughout South-East England. After a series of lieder concerts in February, Jack made his Operatic debut in April 2018 with Opera South East, performing as Zaretsky in Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin. Jack has been scheduled for a further concert series of Arias and Duets throughout June and July 2018.



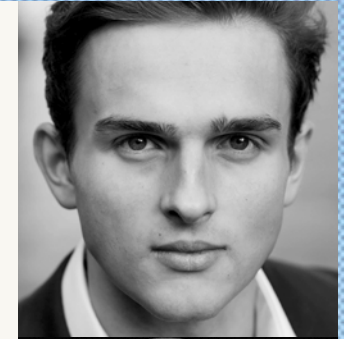
David Booth
GRENVIL

David trained at the Royal Academy of Music. Roles include Elder Ott (Susannah, Hampstead Garden Opera) Reb Nachum (Fiddler On The Roof, Grange Park Opera) Bandit (Don Quichotte, Grange Park Opera) Governor (Oliver! Grange Park Opera) Wedding Singer (Threepenny Opera, London Philharmonic) Ensemble (HMS Pinafore, Old Vic) Pistola (Falstaff, Black Cat Opera) Private Willis (Iolanthe, Charles Court Opera).



Esme Bronwen Smith
CHORUS

Esme Bronwen-Smith began her vocal studies being accepted into the junior department of GSMD and continued throughout her university degree at Royal Holloway. Her first major appearance was as the soprano soloist in the London Olympic Opening Ceremony in 2012 and she has continued to perform publicly in a range of roles such as Susanna (Le Nozze di Figaro) and Gretel (Hansel and Gretel).



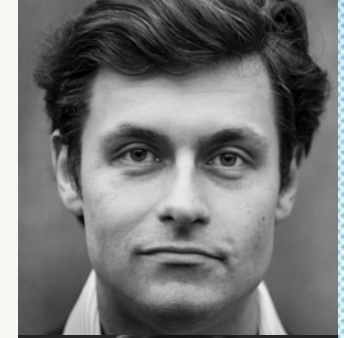
Harry Kersley
GASTONE

Harry is in his final year of undergraduate study at Trinity Laban and looking to further his training at Masters level under the tutelage of Dominic Natoli. A performance highlight was Prince Yamadori in Madame Butterfly at Cadogan Hall. Harry has sung at corporate and charity events at venues across the UK including The NED, Kensington Roof Gardens, 10 Downing Street and The Groucho.



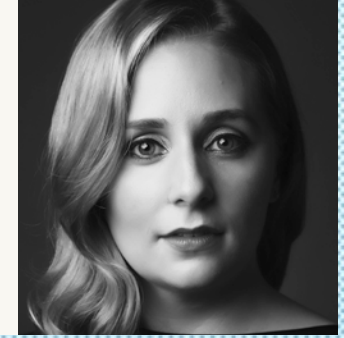
Carola Darwin
ANNINA

Carola combines her work as a singer with research and writing about music. Her research on Viennese composer Johanna Müller-Hermann is part of Radio 3's Five Women Composers project. Operatic roles include Countess (The Marriage of Figaro) Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni), Elettra (Idomeneo), Berta (The Barber of Seville) Fox (The Cunning Little Vixen), Governess (The Turn of the Screw) Pat Nixon (Nixon in China).



Aleksii Koponen
MARQUIS

Aleksii Koponen is a Finnish-born baritone who studied in Helsinki and London. His recent engagements include chorus (Lucia di Lammermoor and Otello, both Fulham Opera). When he's not singing he works as a literary translator and teaches writing in prisons.



Emma Charles
CHORUS

Emma Charles holds a BMus from UNSW and a MA from RWCMD, where she performed Bridesmaid (The Marriage of Figaro), Frog (The Cunning Little Vixen) and Fairy (Cendrillon). Emma participated in the Pacific Opera YAP. Opera credits include; Adina (L'elisir d'amore), Emmy (Albert Herring), Papagena (Die Zauberflöte), Doctor (Kommilitonen!). Emma is a member of the London Philharmonia Chorus and has toured with the Ten Sopranos.



Güler Özgencil

CHORUS

Cypriot mezzo-soprano Güler Özgencil's repertoire favours Rossini, Mozart and early composers. A recent graduate, she studied classical music whilst performing under Nan Christie at Goldsmith's College, London. Güler has performed for OperaGold in: Suor Angelica and Dido and Aeneas. She is currently working with Nan Christie to further her studies, whilst pursuing operatic opportunities. Upcoming performances include Dorabella (Cosi Fan Tutte) with Clyde Opera.



Tom Turner

Lighting Designer

Tom is a Lighting Designer and Associate from London. Design credits include: Gun (Waterloo East & Tour), 9 to 5 (Upstairs at the Gatehouse), North of the Sunset (Cockpit Theatre), Maria Stuarda & La Bohème (Edinburgh Studio Opera). As Associate/Assistant: Bat Out of Hell (Dominion Theatre), The Grinning Man (Trafalgar Studios), Messiah (Bristol Old Vic). 2017 tour with English Touring Opera as Production Relighter.



Alice Weber

Movement Director

Alice is a London-based dance artist, classically trained in her native Sydney, now working across choreography, performance and academia. Her work has been presented at Turner Contemporary, The Place, Chisenhale Dance, Emerge Dance Festival. Performance credits include: Tate Modern, Tate Exchange, Tanzcompagnie Gießen for TanzArt Ost-West, The Performance Studio, Hauser & Wirth. Upcoming performances at Dulwich Picture Gallery and APT Gallery.



Jessica Dalton

Stage Manager

Jessica is an award-winning theatre practitioner with a particular interest in widening participation and representation in the arts. She runs her own chamber opera company, The Willmore Singers, and works as a freelance producer, director and stage manager with professional and community groups nationwide. Full details: jessicadaltonsinger.weebly.com.



Becky Thornton

Assistant Stage Manager

Becky is a third year stage management student currently at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She specialises in stage and costume management in opera but is interested in all different kinds of theatre and is very excited to start work on La Traviata.



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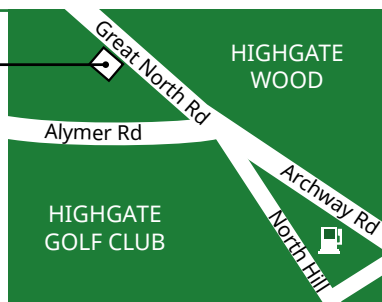
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Letter from our Chairman

Latest news from HGO - looking to the future, and David Conway's leadership.

We have been wonderfully fortunate to appoint David (see p.5). Though being chairman of HGO is a tremendously satisfying job, which I shall be sad to relinquish, it is also a demanding job. It is clear that David will give it that necessary commitment. Beyond that, he has some skills, knowledge and contacts which will help us in the important field of promoting the company to audiences and to the wider world. We have made some good progress in the last three and a half years, particularly in respect of strengthening our volunteer management team with some admirable people, but I think that this change of captain, at this time, is propitious.

I usually remind you of our two main objectives:

- To provide high quality opera at affordable prices to the people of north London, and to be a recognised part of communal life.
- To offer young singers the opportunity to experience the rehearsal process and to sing a role in a fully staged opera production, supported by a professional orchestra.

Our November opera was an evident challenge for singers and creative team in that *The Enchanted Pig* was new and different, but our audiences found it to be a wonderful experience. In offering you *La Traviata*, we face a different challenge: the memories of every production you have seen of this much loved work. I am confident that you will leave Jacksons Lane uplifted by the performance, and with a new understanding of how beautiful, and yet powerful, this opera can be when done to a smaller scale. I take this opportunity to thank Highgate School for provision of a rehearsal venue.

This production has been blessed by a wonderfully generous sponsorship from a great supporter. Our costs are edging up, but we don't want to have to raise the ticket prices. If only we could find a sponsor for each opera! We need to discover some more of these wonderful, wonderful people – able to give a substantial sum to support a production. If you, or somebody you know, might like to help us in this way, please contact David.

Best regards,
ROGER SAINSBURY

07767 20366
smerus@gmail.com



Join Us



Friends of HGO

OUR EXTREMELY GENEROUS SUPPORTERS ARE AT THE HEART OF HGO.

Helping us in two ways: large individual donations help substantially with specific productions, while ongoing annual donations from Friends ensure that we keep going in the long term.

We are most grateful to all those named and to our many anonymous supporters.

Trustees and Committee members not listed.

Heirarchs (£500 or more)

O & J Hill, H Payne.

Archangels (£200 or more)

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Angels (£100 or more)

J Barnett, A Burgess, R Bowden, D Conway, J Fabricius, L Gollancz, G Hall, R Hall, K & G Howles, R Johnson, H M Jones, T Katz & J Hulbert, N Kaye & T Nathan, D & V Lascelles, R & D Leigh, A & M Marmot, E Meek, A Moore, C Moore, F Munro, C Roberts, J & J Rothenberg, M Safranek, K Sennett-Rogers, P Sand, M Smits, R Solomon, E Sondheimer, J Sturmey, HTindale, E Webb, C Wells.

Seraphs (£50 or more)

G Baker, S Barker, I Bermingham, C Boucher, P Brunner, A Darwin, A Davies, M & J de Swiet, J Gordon, J Graham, P Hallgarten, D Keech, B Hammersley, P Ives, E & R Jacobs, E & E Korn, A Land, P Mackay, M Nield, D & V Preest, C & B Reece, G & S Rickard, M Sheppard, V Smith, A Stewart, M & J Stoll, D Tillett, G Walker, P Zentner.

Become a Friend

IF YOU SUPPORT OUR AIMS, YOU WILL WANT TO BECOME A FRIEND.

In keeping our prices down and our standards up, there is a deficit on each production. Without support from our FRIENDS and other generous donors, we could not keep going.

We could not bring high quality opera to the community of north London at reasonable ticket prices. We could not give experience and training to our wonderful young singers who need such opportunity to help them to build their careers.

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