



BELLE LURETTE



Programme

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BELLE LURETTE

Opéra-Comique in three acts by
JACQUES OFFENBACH (1819-1880)

Libretto by Ernest Blum, Édouard Blau, Raoul Toché

New English version by Paul Featherstone

New orchestration by James Widden

First performance Théâtre de la Renaissance October 1880

First UK performance Gaiety Theatre (in French) July 1881

First performance of this production
Lewes Town Hall 10 November 2022

Then at The Old Market, Hove
Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne
Bloomsbury Theatre, London

Production supported by
The Behrens Foundation,
John Lewis and Partners
Lewes Town Council

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NSO 1978 – 2022

Fidelio
Venus and Adonis
Boris Godunov
The Fairy Queen
Peter Grimes
The Queen of Spades
The Threepenny Opera
Il tritico
Andrea Chénier
Benvenuto Cellini
Aida
A Masked Ball
The Flying Dutchman
Faust
Tannhäuser
* Lost in the Stars
The Rake's Progress
Count Ory
Euryanthe
* The Enchantress
* Danton's Death
Boris Godunov
Cav & Pag
L'elisir d'amore
Lucia di Lammermoor
Falstaff
Tobias and the Angel
Idomeneo
The Poisoned Kiss
* The Rhine Fairies
Hugh the Drover
Mireille
* Edgar (4 act version)
L'Étoile
The Beggar's Opera
Oberon
The Indian Queen
Mignon
King Arthur
A Village Romeo and Juliet
Orfeo ed Euridice
The Elixir of Love
The Travelling Companion
La traviata
La Belle Hélène
The Princess of Trébizonde
Acis and Galatea
Belle Lurette
(* UK première)

It is often said that buses come along in threes. In the same way, here is our third Offenbach in a row. We do not normally mount two consecutive main productions by the same composer, let alone three. But we so much enjoyed *La Belle Hélène* and then *La Princesse de Trébizonde* last year, and they were so well received by critics and audiences alike, that we have made an exception.

A further consideration is that these works lend themselves to relatively small scale productions in our small to medium sized venues - more intimate and more authentic than in large theatres or opera houses.

And of course given the current state of the world in general and of this country in particular, a few evenings of lighthearted fun are needed more than a tragic experience - by performers and audiences alike!

NSO is one of the few companies to concentrate on giving audiences the chance to discover neglected or lesser-known works, always with high musical standards and in imaginative but not bizarre productions. In the early years there was the memorable *Peter Grimes*, directed by the young Nicholas Hytner, and later an epic *Tannhäuser* directed by Keith Warner, plus UK premières of works by Weill, Tchaikovsky, von Einem, Offenbach (*The Rhine Fairies*) and Puccini.

The heart of this community-based company has always been its chorus and the expert (unpaid) administration and behind-the-scenes team. As well as an annual major production, we have productions billed as “**New Sussex Opera Chorus presents...**” smaller-scale productions, which give the chorus a

chance to take on some of the solo roles. These projects have included *The Indian Queen*, *King Arthur*, *Orfeo and Euridice*, *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Elixir of Love*, *La traviata* and *Trial by Jury*, the last in the ideal setting of Lewes Crown Court, and most recently *Acis and Galatea*, our first Handel, and first using period instruments.

Opera is the most expensive of art forms and for forty four years NSO has survived without subsidy. If you like what we do, and would like to see more of it, please help us to achieve even more. See the information about the Easyfundraising scheme on our website. We support some of our young singers as development artists and we have run educational workshops as part of our outreach.

We do need your help, and never more so than in the current financial and political climate. Of course one of the best ways to help is by spreading the word - encouraging family and friends to come to our performances, by word of mouth or via social media. To become a supporter, or to become actively involved, on stage, backstage or behind the scenes, please contact us.



Acis and Galatea 2022

Die schöne Lurette



Poster for the 1960 DEFA film “Die schöne Lurette.”

Amazingly, Offenbach wrote this work at the same time as he was writing *The Tales of Hoffmann*, as he was dying. The orchestration was completed by Delibes and it had its first performance a month after he died. A production soon followed in England, first in French and then in English. Since then - 140 years ago - it has not been performed here - until now! In Socialist postwar Germany this last Offenbach comic opera was celebrated as an example of working class people revolting against the aristocracy, in this case how the pretty laundress Lurette and her Parisian colleagues at the times of Louis XV refuse to play along when the king wishes to “use” women as he pleases, as if they weren't human beings with rights and feelings of their own.

Obviously, there are other working class operettas by Offenbach, e.g. *Mesdames de la Halle* (1858). But the cross-dressed market ladies in that early opérette-bouffe do not start a revolution, at least not against the aristocracy and the political regime itself. That's what sets this last Offenbach show apart.

As well as popular stage performances the work was adapted into a filmed musical in the DDR (using much of the original music). This DEFA production had more than 3 million visitors in East German cinemas, making it the most successful operetta film made in the DDR. Actually, it makes it one of the most successful DDR films, full stop.

In it, Malicorne is constantly observing and taking notes, claiming to do so for “statistical” purposes. In the DDR this could be seen as a reference to the notorious Stasi (the State Security) and their many “unofficial co-workers” who spied on everyone, even their own families and friends. In East Germany, audiences up until 1989 listened carefully for any critical subtext that referred to political realities that could not be discussed openly.

Season 2022 – 2023

Our next main production is still under wraps so it is too soon to announce it. As always it will be a lesser known work, as that is what we do. For the reasons mentioned above it is likely to be comic rather than tragic, light-hearted rather than serious. But always expect the unexpected. So do join our email list to get the latest updates, and keep an eye on our website and on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.

Our next production under the New Sussex Opera Chorus banner, as shown on the back cover of this programme, is Gounod's *Faust*. NSO has staged this work before - as part of the 1989 Brighton Festival. Justin Lavender sang the title role, with Cathryn Pope as Marguerite and Roger Bryson a memorable Mephistopheles. The Independent's verdict, “Faust runs with both the raunchy emphasis and the infectious buzz of musical theatre; a rattling good show.”

That production was staged in the Dome - a vastly bigger space than our touring venues - so our new production will be on a more intimate scale.



Roger Bryson (Mephistopheles and Cathryn Pope (Marguerite) in Faust 1989

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VIGNETTES

Man proposes and rehearsals indispose

When he opened rehearsals, Jacques often warned the company “My dear friends, before we start, I ask your forgiveness, *in advance*, for all the unpleasant things I shan’t fail to say in a moment.” And then they were away. Almost immediately his bad temper flared out. “That’s not it!” They started again. He beat time with his stick, croaked tunelessly with the singers, danced with the chorus, led the cancan, worked up the pace with increasing verve until everyone collapsed exhausted and he himself fell panting into a chair. His voice was gentle. “It was very good this time, girls and boys, in fact it was extremely good... BUT IT STILL ISN’T WHAT’S WANTED.”

Les vendredis de Jacques

Friday was a special day for Jacques – his favourite choice for opening nights, and the night for his favourite parties. Many musicians attended, including Bizet and the young Delibes, who was to complete the orchestration for *Belle Lurette*. On one uproarious Friday evening Delibes danced a polka with himself, the large black beard fluttering, his corpulent frame spinning round and round with unexpected agility. This was the star turn at a gala to celebrate “the approaching end of the world”.

The Society for Self-help against boredom.

Jacques founded it: Delibes was a prominent member. In a scratch *Farmyard Symphony* he gave a realistic impression of a dog whose paw had been trodden on. For a parody of *Il trovatore* Offenbach Italianised him into Leo Delibestino. Bizet became il maestro Bizetto while the host became Jacomo Offenbacchio.

“The spring of the mechanical doll gets out of order now at the slightest tiredness”

(writing to his daughter Pépita months before he died)...

“I have just one month to write the third act of *Belle Lurette*, orchestrate the three acts, write the finale and the whole fifth act of the *Contes d’Hoffmann* (I don’t even mention the orchestration which will come later) and do the one-acter for the Théâtre des Variétés. Shall I succeed? Let’s hope so.” (The one-acter was *Moucheron* (“gnat” in English) set in a girls’ boarding school – a setting popular with nineteenth century comic opera writers).



On the morning after he died...

When it was daylight, a quaint figure wearing a white tie and big dark glasses strolled along the Boulevard des Capucines. It was Léonce, the comedian who as Pluto in *Orphée* had made audiences sick with laughter at his clowning. He rang the bell at number 8. “Monsieur Offenbach is dead,” sighed the concierge. “He died very gently, without realising it.”

“Ah,” replied Léonce gravely. “How annoyed he’ll be when he finds out.”

Cartoon, published by the weekly journal “Der Floh” in 1871. It shows Jacques Offenbach and Johann Strauss II, both struggling about the audience.

MI-CARÊME

The Christian season of Lent (Carême in French) - the weeks from Ash Wednesday leading up to Holy Week and Easter, was originally when those wishing to become Christians prepared for baptism: a time for instruction and a period of penance, dietary restrictions, and prayers. Later those who were already baptised joined in as a sort of annual refresher course for their faith.

However, as the years went by and as a concession to human frailty the religious authorities granted a pause at the half way stage!



The custom of celebrating Mid-Lent (Mi-Carême) began in the in the Middle Ages, and was like mid Lent Sunday, known as Refreshment Sunday (and more recently Mothering Sunday, the secular Mothers' Day). The feast was a mini carnival of joy, laughter, and derision, to contrast with the period of austerity and penance of Lent.

An important feature was a parade of elaborate floats. "Holiday-makers disguised themselves for the occasion as clowns, bears, apes, and even as lions, playing all sorts of pranks. Many young people turned their jackets inside out and stuck on false noses. One tall youth, who stood well over six feet in his stockings, was



arrayed in a garment composed entirely of playing cards, and was the hero of the moment wherever he went."

Contemporary newspaper accounts



Char de la Musique



Election of the Queen

FEAST OF THE LAUNDRESSES

In France, the Mi-Carême was also the feast of laundresses, (and of charcoal dealers, and water carriers as well). Celebrated on a large scale in Paris, it disappeared from this city during the Second World War. It reappeared under the name of Carnival of Women in 2009 and this still continues.



Mi-Carême Queen 1908

Nineteen-century Paris was home to a boisterous and hard-working female corporation. Nearly one hundred thousand washerwomen worked either in the brick-and-mortar laundries across the city, or in the *bateaux-lavoirs* – wooden constructions floating on the river.



A laundry boat

They worked twelve to fifteen hours a day, six days a week, washing, bleaching, drying, starching, and ironing. They received no sick leave or paid holiday. However, on this one occasion in the year, Paris treated them like royalty.

During Mi-Carême, many of the streets of Paris were taken over for the carnival, with washerwomen as the leading actors. With great pomp the women of each *lavoir* elected a queen and the new sovereigns paraded with their escorts on



Chailley - char de la Reine des Reines

the boulevards in elaborate floats. Much drinking and merry-making accompanied the procession.

In the 1890's and into the twentieth century city authorities chose the Queen of Queens—the best of all the locally elected queens—to represent the spirit of the feast.

“The attributes and qualifications essential for the high position of queen are beauty and goodness, for it is said that purity of morals in as much a *sine qua non* as purity of linen in these lavoirs...

Unhappy is the one who attempts to captivate her judges by gaudy attire, for an overtrimmed hat even may disqualify her.” *Strand Magazine*

Besides the crown, the Queen also was given a magnificent robe, a sceptre, and a bracelet and ring of diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones. She was then seated on a flower-wreathed throne aboard a float.

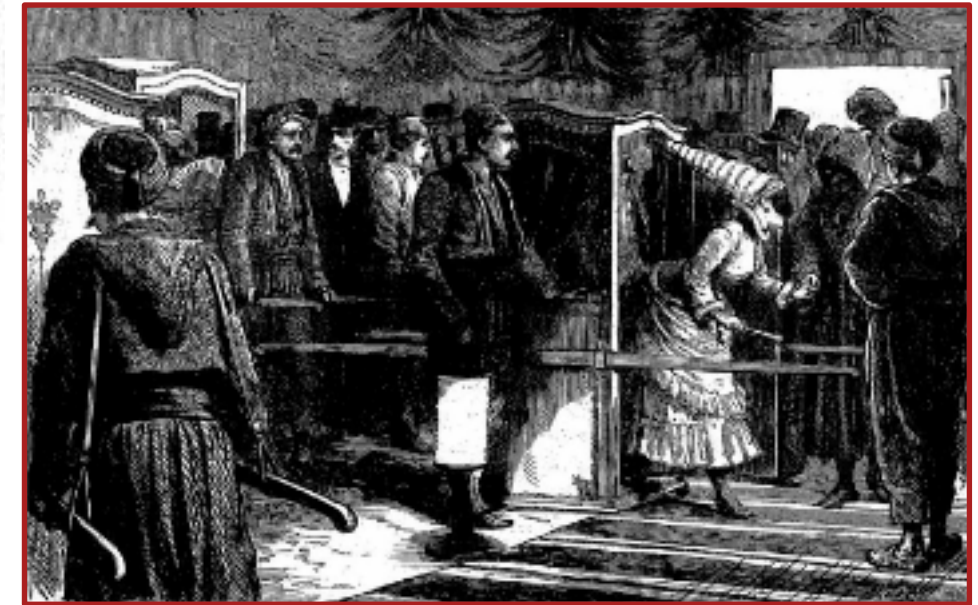


The procession wound through Parisian streets and offered “endless gaiety” and entertainment for the spectators who lined the avenues and boulevards in hopes of catching a glimpse of the new Queen:

“As queen of queens she was to conduct herself with the

greatest modesty and decorum, responding gracefully to the acclamation of the crowd with smiles and bows. On her head she wore a crown composed of ears of wheat in gilded metal, and beside her sat her consort clad in the black coat of ceremony, with a red scarf slung across the shoulders.”

Outside Paris, Mi-Carême was celebrated in over fifty towns and villages in France, and even beyond in Belgium, Tunis, Casablanca, Constantinople, Canada and Poland.



Arrival for the festival in Constantinople

SYNOPSIS

Act 1

Marceline’s Wash House, Paris

The laundresses are hard at work scrubbing shirts and blouses, but dream of being in the open air and bathing in the sweet waters at Meudon. They are interrupted by the arrival of Belhomme and his squad of soldiers who have come to flirt with the laundresses.

Marceline arrives and ushers the soldiers out. She then asks after Lurette, who hasn’t returned from her rounds collecting laundry. She worries about what might be delaying Lurette and tells the story of Innocente Suzanne who was seduced by a nobleman (or perhaps a servant) and then abandoned. She has made it her mission to find the unscrupulous gentleman and rushes off to follow up another clue. Campistrel, a singer, Merluchet, a poet, and Cigogne, a painter, enter, looking for Belle Lurette, whom they all love. When they are told she has not returned yet, Campistrel reminds them all of how caring Lurette is, and of how, when she discovered a plot to harm a young Duke, she managed to warn him anonymously. The three artistes agree to look after the shop while the laundresses go

off in search of the soldiers, wine and liqueur. Malicorne arrives at the shop and is surprised to find just the artistes there. He explains that he is conducting a study of laundries in Paris because he is obsessed with statistics and needs the prettiest laundress to assist him. The artistes quickly agree that it is Lurette he is looking for. Having discovered her name, Malicorne rushes off. Lurette returns from her rounds and the three artistes declare their love for her, but she is not interested. Just then the laundresses and soldiers return with a feast of food and drink. When a game of cards is suggested, Lurette asks if she can read some fortunes. The cards reveal that someone will propose to her that very afternoon and seconds later there is a knock on the door and Malicorne enters. He is the servant of a wealthy Duke, who is intent on marrying a lovely girl he spied, and has sent Malicorne to find her. The girl is, of course, Lurette. Trusting in her cards, Lurette agrees and everyone accompanies her to the Duke’s palace.

INTERVAL

Act 2

The Duc de Marly’s drawing room

The Duke and his friends are being entertained by some dancers from the Ballet to celebrate his engagement. The Duke confides that he hasn’t even set eyes on his bride yet. He is only marrying because, in order to receive his sizeable inheritance, his wealthy aunt has insisted he did so before his 21st birthday. After he marries he plans to pack his new wife off to his aunt in the country and go abroad. But before he leaves he must burn all his souvenirs of past love affairs. Malicorne enters and tells him that his bride has arrived. Malicorne is left alone, and sadly recalls how he had let another laundress down in the past. Just then Marceline enters and Malicorne realises that she was his other laundress. He pretends not to know her, adopting a strange accent, but Marceline has also recognised him as the man she has been looking for – the man who abandoned “Suzanne”. She plays along with his game and doesn’t reveal her true identity. However, Malicorne knows all too well who she is and quickly makes his escape.

Before Marceline can pursue him, Lurette is brought in by the three artistes and her friends acting as her maids of honour. The Duke suggests that he and Lurette should have some alone time before their nuptials begin. The Duke pretends he is ignorant to the art of wooing, and implores Lurette to tutor him. As she does, the Duke realises there is a real attraction here. They rush off to the chapel to get married. They return with all the other guests, and, as this is a laundresses’ wedding, Lurette sings the song of Colette, to the amusement of the Duke. The Duke has decided to stick with his original plan and now departs, leaving Malicorne the unpleasant task of telling Lurette she is to be sent off to his aunt’s. Lurette realises she has been duped and calls for help from her friends who tie up the confused Malicorne and warn him never to mess with the girls from the laundry.

Act 3

The village square at Bas-Meudon

The laundresses and soldiers are celebrating the Festival of Mi-Careme. Campistrel tells everyone that Lurette has abandoned her sham marriage and returned to the laundry and that they should crown her as the Queen of all laundresses. Everyone agrees. Malicorne is brought on dressed as a clown to the amusement of all. He persuades Belhomme to take a note to the Duke asking him to meet him there. Marceline arrives and reminds Malicorne of their previous encounter and the effect it had on her. He admits that he also has feelings for her, and she tricks him into proposing to her. Alarmed when she agrees to marriage, Malicorne runs off, pursued by Marceline. The laundresses and soldiers enter to welcome their Queen of the lavoir, Lurette. She arrives with the three artistes, all dressed as Commedia dell’arte characters. After mocking the nobility, they act out a short play in character. During their performance, the Duke enters in disguise. As Lurette takes a bow, he steps forward and applauds ironically...

Will the Duke see the error of his ways? Is Lurette better off as a laundress than a duchess? Will Malicorne escape the clutches of Marceline. All will be revealed in the exciting conclusion of *Belle Lurette*!

GLOSSARY



Jabot: neckware of lace or frills pinned at the throat -
Act 1 - “We’ve come to collect the jabot our colonel wore”

Il y a belle lurette:
a colloquial expression meaning “for ages” or “a long time ago”

Malicorne
Duc de Marly
Lurette
Marceline
Belhomme
Campistrel *a singer*
Merluchet *a poet*
Cigogne *a painter*
La Boiserie
Friquette
Rose
Toinette
Nicole
Manon
Colette
Lenoncourt

Conductor
Director
Designer
Lighting Designer
Choreographer

St Paul’s Sinfonia

Violin 1	James Widden	Flute	Ian Judson	French horn	Marc Woodhurst
Violin 2	Christian Halstead	Oboe	Alex Birchall	Trumpet	Laura Garwin
Viola	Toby Deller	Clarinet	Helen Pierce	Percussion	Jon French
Cello	Alison Holford				
Double bass	David Guy				

Cast

Paul Featherstone
Robin Bailey
Monica McGhee
Kristin Finnigan
Giles Davies
Michael Ferguson
Cameron Mitchell
Tristan Stocks
Giles Davies
Rebecca Hughes
Patricija Jurgaityte
Kiera Smitheram
Carole Britten
Rebekah Edwards
Mima Byrne
Richard Pulham

Toby Purser
David Foster
Victoria Gillians
Jason Ahn
Kitty Needham

NSO Chorus

Chorus Master: Nicholas Houghton

Sopranos
Harriet Anderson, Heather Bigg, Mima Byrne,
Pamela Cross, Rebekah Edwards, Lynnette Gottlieb,
Marie Goulding, Jackie Honey, Patricija Jurgaityte,
Kiera Smitheram, Katy Tutton

Altos
Carole Britten, Ruth Loughton, Helen Mitchell,
Fran Mortimer, Margaret Woskett

Tenors
Harry Heaven, John Newman, Ross Page,
Robert Slater, Jonathan Statter

Basses
Jeremy Adams, David James, Tim Locke,
Richard Pulham, Vincent Tacon

Production Team
Executive Producer: David James
Project Manager: Fran Mortimer
Repetiteur: Jeremy Cooke
Chorus Master: Nicholas Houghton
Orchestra Manager: James Widden
Stage Manager: Victoria Gillian
Assisted by Kate Minogue
Costumes: Monica Quinn
Assisted by Barbara Campbell, Pamela Cross, Ruth Loughton
Chorus Manager: Tim Locke
Carpenters: Vincent and Benji Tacon
Transport: Robert Slater
Publicity Manager: Ruth Loughton
Programme/Website: David James
Front of House: FOH team



About NSO Registered Charity No. 1185087

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Patrons: Stephen Cockburn, Sir Nicholas Hytner,
Neil Jenkins, Sir John Tomlinson CBE
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Artistic Director: David James
Music Director: Toby Purser
Secretary: Richard Pulham
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Committee: David Foster, Thalie Knights, Tim Locke,
Fran Mortimer, Kiera Smitheram, Margaret Woskett

Acknowledgements

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We are enormously grateful to Glyndebourne for the gift of a large number of their splendid costumes, to Richard Dunstan and Lewes Little Theatre for providing storage space for our costumes.
NSO also thanks those who have given donations: Simon Sargent, Valerie Rees, Sir John Tomlinson, anonymous donors and those whose donations were received after the programme went to press.
Thanks to all our venues and their staff, including our usual rehearsal venue in Lewes, St Pancras RC Primary School; Gladrags Community Costume Resource for costumes; Rose Bruford College for costumes and props; all who have lent props.
We also thank our advertisers for their support. Please mention NSO when using their services.

Biographies



Paul Featherstone - Malicorne

Paul worked as an actor before retraining as a singer at RSAMD, where he also taught drama. He has sung for Scottish Opera, The Opera Group, Châtelet (Paris), Liceu (Barcelona), Wexford Festival, Holland Park, Grange Park & Garsington amongst others and covered at the Royal Opera. Favourite roles include Rodolfo *La bohème*, Calaf, Canio *Pagliacci*, Gustavus *Ballo in maschera*, Ernani, Werther & Eisenstein. For NSO: Menelaus *La Belle Hélène* & Prince Casimir *The Princess of Trébizonde*. Other Offenbach roles performed with Opera della Luna: Hoffmann, Mercury/John Styx *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Rattlebone *Croquefer*, Cacatois XXII & Rhomboid *L’île de Tulipatan*, Giraffier *Les Deux Aveugles*. He sang Box in Sullivan’s *Cox & Box* and recently performed Sir Joseph Porter *HMS Pinafore* and Mr Goldbury *Utopia Limited* at the National Gilbert & Sullivan Festivals. As Associate Director of English Pocket Opera Company he has introduced opera to thousands of children with school workshops & performances all over the UK – for

EPOC, he wrote the shows *Opera Quest* and *The History of Western Classical Music (Part One)*.

Robin Bailey - Duc de Marly

Robin trained at the RAM and on the GSMD Opera Course. Operatic roles include Fox/Vixen (ENO/ Silent opera), *Candide* & Alfred *Die Fledermaus* (West Green House Opera), Fenton *Falstaff* & Alfred *Fledermaus* (Iford Opera), Gastone & cover Alfredo (Nevill Holt Opera), Bearded Wild Thing *Where the Wild Things are* (Shadwell Opera), Mayor/1st cover Anatoly *Chess* (ENO), Valjean *Les Misérables* & Tony *West Side Story* (Pimlico/Grange Park Opera). Robin’s solo oratorio work includes B Minor Mass/Bach, Mozart Requiem & La Grande Messe des Morts/Berlioz (Canterbury Cathedral), St. Matthew Passion/Bach (Bristol Beacon), The Bells/Rachmaninov (Winchester Cathedral), Israel in Egypt/Handel (Southwark Cathedral), Stainer The Crucifixion (St. Martin in the Fields). Robin has been awarded the 2nd prize in the International Lotte Lenya competition in New York, and the Young Artists’ Prize at the Les Azuriales competition in Nice.

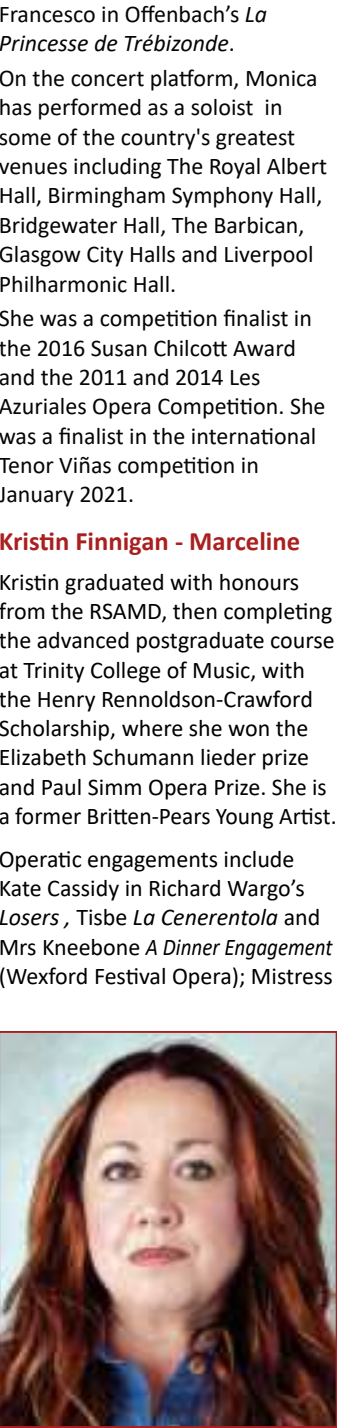


Recent performances include Henry Crawford in Jonathan Dove’s *Mansfield Park* (UK tour/ Waterperry Opera Festival) and the title role in Janáček’s *Diary of One who Disappeared* (Waterperry). He will also be one of Barbara Hannigan’s Equilibrium Young Artists for the 2023-2024 season, performing in *The Rake’s Progress* among other projects.



Monica McGhee – Lurette

Monica, who is Scottish, was a 20/21 Young Artist at the National Opera Studio and a graduate of the RSAMD (now RCS) and the RCM. Recent operatic appearances include the Scottish Opera Highlights Tour 2022, cover Blumenmädchen *Parsifal* (Opera North), Princess Zara *Utopia Limited* (National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company), Donna Anna *Don Giovanni* (Dorset Opera Festival), Leila *Les Pêcheurs des Perles* (Opera Bohemia), Mimi *La bohème* with (Kensington Symphony Orchestra and Opera D’Amore). Monica made her Opera Rara recording debut this season as



Francesco in Offenbach’s *La Princesse de Trébizonde*. On the concert platform, Monica has performed as a soloist in some of the country's greatest venues including The Royal Albert Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall, Bridgewater Hall, The Barbican, Glasgow City Halls and Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. She was a competition finalist in the 2016 Susan Chilcott Award and the 2011 and 2014 Les Azuriales Opera Competition. She was a finalist in the international Tenor Viñas competition in January 2021.

Kristin Finnigan - Marceline

Kristin graduated with honours from the RSAMD, then completing the advanced postgraduate course at Trinity College of Music, with the Henry Rennoldson-Crawford Scholarship, where she won the Elizabeth Schumann lieder prize and Paul Simm Opera Prize. She is a former Britten-Pears Young Artist.

Operatic engagements include Kate Cassidy in Richard Wargo’s *Losers*, Tisbe *La Cenerentola* and Mrs Kneebone *A Dinner Engagement* (Wexford Festival Opera); Mistress

Quickly *Falstaff* and Amastre *Xerxes* (Iford Arts); Widow Browe *Peter the Great* (Opera South); Third Lady *The Magic Flute*, Flora/ Annina *La traviata*, Jacqueline Sherwood *Kiss Me, Figaro!*, and Bacchis *Troy Boy* (Merry Opera); Duchess of Plaza Toro *The Gondoliers* (Opera della Luna); Fairy Queen *Iolanthe* and Ruth *Pirates of Penzance* (Charles Court Opera); Marcellina *Le nozze di Figaro* and Sorceress *Dido and Aeneas* (Musique Cordiale Opera); and Second Witch and Spirit *Dido and Aeneas* (Armonico Consort).

Other roles include Messaggiera in Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*, Symbolic Mother in the world première of Tunde Jegede’s *A Cry of Innocence*, Mrs Peacham *The Beggar’s Opera*, Cornelia *Giulio Cesare* and Madame de Croissy *Dialogues des Carmélites*. For Opera North she understudied Flosshilde in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

Concert performances include *Handel* Messiah in Monte-Carlo, Tippett *A Child of our Time* (at Trinity) and performances with various choral societies including Elgar *Sea Pictures* (Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society) and Rossini *Petite messe solennelle* (Northampton Philharmonic Choir and Harpenden Choral Society).

Whilst at the RSAMD she performed as a soloist with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Bartók’s *Three Village Scenes*. As a Britten-Pears Artists she worked with German baritone Christian Gerhaher and accompanist Gerold Huber and subsequently performed a concert series in Germany.



Giles Davies - Belhomme / La Boisene

Giles studied at the Purcell School and with Norman Bailey at the RCM, winning the Lieder Competition. Roles have included Figaro *Barber of Seville* (Scottish Opera/ European Chamber Opera, English Pocket Opera), Bartolo (Scherzo Ensemble) Dr Kolenaty *Makropoulos Case* (Scottish Opera), Schounard (Holland Park/ Castleward/ SO), Marcello (ECO) Masetto and Leporello (DGOS and ECO), Dandini *La Cenerentola* (EPOC), Figaro *Marriage of Figaro* (Holland Park), Guglielmo (London Opera Players) Bartolo (Beechwood, Papageno (EPOC/ Opera Brava), Lieut. Sir Richard Cholmondeley *Yeomen of the Guard*, Strephon *Iolanthe* and Major *Patience* (Carl Rosa), Col. Calverley *Patience* (King's Head), Strephon and Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe* (Buxton), Dr Falke (Chichester Festival Theatre and Carl Rosa), Schlendrian *Coffee Cantata* (Bach), Saul *David et Jonathas* (Charpentier) and Seneca *L’Incoronazione di Poppea* (Suffolk), Elviro and Ariodates in Handel's *Xerxes*, (NCO, Oxford and OTC, Ireland), *Pimpinone* by Telemann (British Embassy, Paris),

Besso in Cavalli's *Giasone*, (Athens), and Ferryman/ Ananias/ Father in Britten’s *Church Parables* (Opera du Rhin). For Music Theatre Wales at the Linbury he created the title role of Edgar Drake in *The Piano Tuner* by Nigel Osborne and Amanda Holden.

He was the singer John Goss in Anthony Britten's film 'Peter Warlock, some little joy', and his song album 'Gossiana', featured in the I-tunes chart in 2009.

He has toured the UK and America as Pish-Tush (Carl Rosa) and also for Raymond Gubbay at the Barbican, RFH, Symphony Hall and Bridgewater Hall. He sang for Surrey Opera in Bernstein’s *Candide*, and created the role of the Counsel for the Prosecution in the new opera *Madeleine* by David Hackbridge Johnson and Jonathan Butcher. Last year he sang Dr Elastoplast in NSO’s *The Princess of Trébizonde*.

In 2022, he returned to Surrey Opera for the revival of *Madeleine*, sang Leporello (Minack Theatre) and at the G and S Festival (Buxton/Harrogate) he sang Phantis *Utopia Limited* in Jeff Clarke's production.



Michael Ferguson - Campistrel

Michael is a baritone from Hamilton, Scotland. He is a recent graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama’s Artist Masters degree in vocal performance under the tutelage of Robert Dean and Marcus Van Den Akker. Prior to his studies at the GSMD he studied with Scott Johnson at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Whilst studying Michael’s operatic experience includes Schaunard *La bohème*, and in scenes as Sharpless *Madama Butterfly*, Zuniga *Carmen*, Marcello *La bohème*, Belcore *L’elisir d’amore*, Nireno *Giulio Cesare*, Sid *Albert Herring* and Figaro *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. He has performed in various opera choruses including *Cendrillon* (Viardot), *Street Scene* (Weill), *Owen Wingrave* (Britten), *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss) *The Fiery Angel* (Prokofiev) and *The Day After* (Dove).

Cameron Mitchell - Merluchet

Cameron comes from Carlisle. Having graduated from RAM, he is currently doing a Masters degree at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with tutor Iain Paton. Cameron was Head Chorister at Carlisle Cathedral, also touring to Budapest, Stavanger and Brittany. While at the RAM, Cameron went to New York and Leipzig under the direction of Masaaki Suzuki, performing Bach Cantatas with members of the Juilliard School of Music at the Alice Tully Hall (New York) and St Thomas Church (Leipzig). At Easter 2016 Cameron was the only under-graduate soloist in St Matthew Passion at St John’s Smith’s Square with the English Opera Chorus.



After graduating from the Academy, Cameron worked in Cumbria giving singing lessons, whilst also creating his own choir “Carlisle Sings”, which he directs and conducts. He also sang Turridu in Edinburgh Studio Opera’s *Cavalleria rusticana* in 2020.

Since studying at the Royal Conservatoire, Cameron has performed roles in scenes: Lenski, Werther and Don Ottavio. He also was involved in a recording of Britten’s Winter Words in partnership with Grange Park Opera. He has worked with Nicky Spence, John Graham-Hall and Kim Begley.

This year he has performed the role of Gerard in a filmed production of Philip Glass’ *Les Enfants terribles* while also working on roles in Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel* and Jonathan Dove’s *Flight*.

Tristan Stocks - Cigogne

Tristan trained at The GSMD and at Dennis O’Neill’s opera studio, The Wales International Academy of Voice. He has been awarded a Susan Chilcott Scholarship as well as a prize at the John Lill Awards. In 2010 he made his role debut and

understudied for Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

Tristan was a Britten-Pears Young Artist at Aldeburgh in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. He was awarded the Grange Park Opera Scholarship and subsequently sang the role of Landry in *Fortunio* for the Company. Other recent roles have included Ramiro *La Cenerentola*, Paris *La belle Hélène*, Tonio *La fille du régiment*, Nemorino *L’elisir d’amore*, Alfredo *La traviata*, Ernesto *Don Pasquale*, Tamino, Rinuccio *Gianni Schicchi*, Nanki-Poo *The Mikado*, Frederic *The Pirates of Penzance* and Orpheus *Orpheus in the Underworld*. In recital, he has appeared in venues including the Wigmore Hall, St John’s Smith Square, and Kings Place. Tristan has performed in Masterclasses with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Dennis O’Neill, Nelly Miricioiu, Elizabeth Connell, Della Jones and Brian Dickie.

Current performances include: Orpheus *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Tamino and the principal tenor roles in a continuing tour of: *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Mikado* and *The Pirates of Penzance*.



Rebecca Hughes – Friquette

Rebecca achieved a degree and postgraduate diploma in Vocal Performance and Opera at Birmingham Conservatoire. While there she won a Kathleen Ferrier Trust award and a Music Sound Fund award. She recently received a distinction for a Licentiate of Trinity College London Diploma.

Rebecca has performed with Grange Park Opera among other touring opera companies, playing roles such as Romeo from Bellini’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. As a soloist, she has performed works including Handel Messiah, Bach St John’s Passion, Mozart Requiem, Haydn Nelson Mass, Mendelssohn Elijah, Rossini Stabat Mater and Petite Messe Solennelle, with a number of choral societies. These include Seaford, Shrewsbury, Hailsham and Norwich, The Royal College of Organists, The Royal Free Singers, Derby Cathedral Choir and the Choir of St John’s. Recently she has performed with NSO in their production of *The Princess of Trébizonde* as a page and chorus and played the role of Mad Margaret in Eastbourne’s Gilbert and Sullivan society production of *Ruddygore* in May.

Rebecca spends most of her time singing, teaching and giving vocal workshops to choral societies in and around East Sussex.

Toby Purser – Conductor

Toby has been Musical Director of NSO since 2018, conducting *The Travelling Companion* (Stanford) - with a live recording released by SOMM, *La Belle Hélène* and *La Princesse de Trébizonde*.

He has had many guest invitations from ENO (where for two seasons he was ENO Mackerras Conducting Fellow), Grange Park Opera, Opéra National de Paris, St Petersburg Festival Orchestra and many British orchestras including the RPO and RLPO, which he conducted in Jesús León’s debut CD *Bel Canto for Opus Arte* CD, and Sinfonia Viva.

For ENO he has conducted *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *La traviata*. At Grange Park Opera he has conducted *Madama Butterfly*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Rigoletto* and *Fortunio*, (also at the Buxton Festival), and with Opera della Luna *The Daughter of the Regiment*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Tales of Offenbach* and UK premieres of Johann Strauss’s *Das Spitzentuch*



der Königin and Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers*. Other performances have included *La bohème* (Lyric Opera, Dublin), Bailey’s *The Black Monk* (Sirius Ensemble), Haydn’s *The Apothecary* and *La Canterina* (Bampton Classical Opera), *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for BYO and *Le Comte Ory* (Chelsea Opera Group). For Pimlico Opera, he has conducted productions in prisons, with inmates performing alongside professionals in *Carmen the Musical*, *Les Misérables*, *Sugar*, *Sister Act*, *Sweeney Todd* and *West Side Story*.

Since 2019, Toby has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Orion Orchestra, which he founded in 2005, a leading organisation for young musicians. Together they initiated the Alpha & Omega concert series, a Composers’ Prize, a Young Conductors’ Award and a Great Young Soloists series, and toured to Singapore.

Current engagements include a second CD with the RLPO and Jesús León; and a return to the East Anglia Chamber Orchestra in Cambridge. For Raymond Gubbay Ltd, he conducts Christmas at the Movies, The Music of the Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones and Beyond and Zimmer vs Williams at venues including the Barbican, Southbank Centre, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, the Bridgewater Hall, and in Dublin. At Royal Albert Hall he will conduct the Philharmonia Orchestra in Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 5 and Symphony No. 9. As Artistic Director of the Peace and Prosperity Trust, he furthers cultural collaboration between the UK and the Middle East with

concerts in Beirut and London, bringing together Western and Middle Eastern opera singers and taking music and musical instruments to Syrian children in refugee camps.

During the Covid pandemic he launched *Conductors in Isolation*, an online forum which now has over 1600 members worldwide. He is Head of Conducting at the RCM, is founding Musical Director of the Vienna Opera Festival and Academy, launched in Summer 2019 and also director of the Aberystwyth MusicFest Conductors Course.



David Foster - Director

David directed his first play at the age of 18, while at school in Hurstpierpoint – Arnold Ridley’s *The Ghost Train*. He has gone on to direct, sing and act in various operas, musicals and plays in the South East, working with a number of theatre groups.

He joined NSO in 2015 for their production of Purcell’s *The Indian Queen*. In 2016 he was Assistant Director on Purcell’s *King Arthur*, and directed *Trial by Jury* and *A Voyage Around G&S* later that year. In 2017 he directed Gluck’s

Orfeo, in 2018, Donizetti’s *The Elixir of Love* and earlier this year *Acis and Galatea*, NSO’s first Handel. In 2019 he directed *My Fair Lady* for Lewes-based LOS Musical Theatre, Shakespeare’s *Romeo & Juliet* for EODS in Eastbourne and Frank Wildhorn’s *Jekyll & Hyde – The Musical* for Rising Stars in East Grinstead.

During the Covid lockdown he turned his hand to writing and wrote a play, *Beauty*, loosely based on the novel Black Beauty, as well as a number of 30-minute radio plays. He also set up an online theatre company, The Sofa Players.

Victoria Gillians - Designer

Brighton-born, Victoria is currently in her final year studying design for theatre and performance at Rose Bruford. Prior to Rose Bruford, Victoria studied Fine Art at Goldsmiths where she developed her artistic style. Having a passion for opera she has started her design career with New Sussex Opera providing assistance for their production of *La Princesse de Trébizonde*.

Victoria has just finished design work for Trinity Laban’s donors



ball production of *Così fan tutte* 2022 and Rose Bruford’s production of *How He Lied To Her Husband*. She is currently designing for Prologue Opera’s *Becoming Carmen*. In 2023 she will be designing All Aboard Opera’s *Die Fledermaus*. As well as designing, Victoria is also acting as stage manager for this production of *Belle Lurette*.



Jason Ahn - Lighting Designer

Jason is a lighting designer with many years of professional experience in the entertainment industry and is currently studying MA Light in Performance at Rose Bruford College.

His lighting designs have a unique aesthetic based on a varied disciplinary background. His experiences as a musical director and guitarist provide special perspectives when lighting for a musical context. He has also participated in “Minuit Une 2nd IVL Remote Lighting Design Contest” serving on the jury. Earlier this year he was Lighting Designer for NSO’s *Acis and Galatea*.

Kitty Needham - Choreographer

Kitty's early experiences of ballet and street dance formed a love of movement, along with her later discovery of the physical theatre world of Jacques Lecoq and also her time at university in a West African music and dance ensemble under guidance of Guinean master musician, Idrissa Camara. An accomplished yogi, she has experience of aerial yoga and silks.

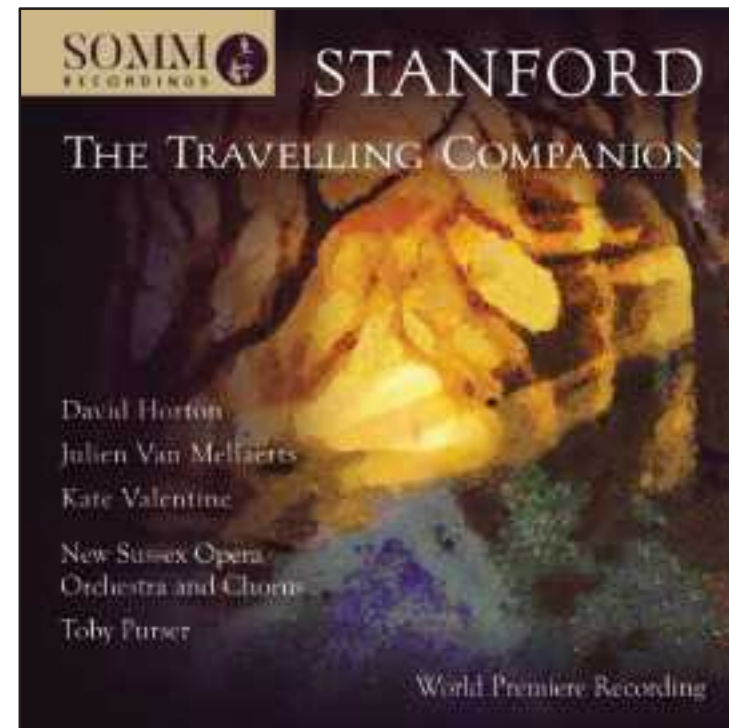
As a singer, Kitty is an alumna of Oxford International Summer School, singing in masterclasses with Dame Ann Murray and Robin Bowman, and has attended the National Opera Studio Introduction to Opera course, where she worked with Della Jones.

She studies privately with Veronica Veysey-Campbell and has appeared in Howard Moody's *Agreed* at Glyndebourne. She has worked regularly with New Sussex Opera, soloing in their 2019 production of *La traviata*. Earlier this year *Acis and Galatea* marked her choreography debut with the company.



Rehearsal photographs -
Colin Chapman / David James






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