



Programme

La Belle Hélène



**Opéra-bouffe in three acts by
Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880)
Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy
English translation by Jeff Clarke**

**First performance
17 December 1864, Théâtre des Variétés, Paris**

**First performance of this production
13 November 2019, Lewes Town Hall**

**then at
Congress Theatre, Eastbourne,
Chequer Mead, East Grinstead,
The Old Market, Hove,
The Bloomsbury Theatre, London,
The Roxburgh Theatre, Stowe.**

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

**a collaboration with
OPERA DELLA LUNA**

www.NewSussexOpera.org

NSO 1978—2019

Fidelio
Venus and Adonis
Boris Godunov
The Fairy Queen
Peter Grimes
The Queen of Spades
The Threepenny Opera
Il trittico
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
(* UK première)

“New Sussex Opera continues to set the pace in terms of unfamiliar operas, imaginatively staged.” *Classical Source*

New Sussex Opera's fortieth anniversary year ended with a bang - the highly acclaimed production of the long-neglected *The Travelling Companion*, by Charles Villiers Stanford. This was nominated in the Rediscovered Works category of this year's **International Opera Awards**. October saw the release of the live recording of the final performance at Saffron Hall on the SOMM label. This is the **first recording** of any of Stanford's nine operas, and also a first for New Sussex Opera. It has already had glowing reviews.

Amongst those of our soloists who have gone on to great acclaim, **Katie Bray** represented England in the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition this summer and won the Dame Joan Sutherland Audience Prize, while **Julien Van Mellaerts** represented New Zealand: Katie sang Lazuli in our production of Chabrier's *L'Étoile* in 2013 and Julien sang the title role in *The Travelling Companion*.

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*, plus UK premières of works by Weill, Tchaikovsky, von Einem, Offenbach and Puccini.

The heart of this community-based company has always been its chorus and the expert but unpaid administration and behind-the-scenes team. In recent years, in parallel with an annual major production, we have launched “**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* and *King Arthur*, *Orfeo and Euridice*, *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Elixir of Love*, *La traviata* and *Trial by Jury*, the last of these in the ideal setting of Lewes Crown Court. Watch our website for news, follow us on social media, and please sign up to receive news by email. This is especially important as we use a variety of venues and we would like to keep in touch and send you our latest news.

Opera is the most expensive of art forms and for over forty 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 the next page. We have a **bursary scheme** to support young singers and musicians, and we run **educational workshops**.

We do need your help, and never more so than in the current financial and political climate. To become a supporter, or to become actively involved, on stage, backstage or behind the scenes, please contact us.



Katie Bray as Lazuli 2013



Julien Van Mellaerts as The Travelling Companion 2018



Jana Holesworth and Oswaldo Iraheta in La traviata 2019

Season 2019 - 2020

NSO has chosen to mark the **two hundredth anniversary** of Offenbach's birth with a production of one of his favourite works. Just ten years ago we mounted the UK premiere of another of his operas - *Die Rheinnixen* (*The Rhine Fairies*), coincidentally written in the same year, 1864.

This is the first time NSO has collaborated with another company on a production, and we are delighted to be working with **Opera della Luna** on this project. This is Jeff Clarke's version of the work, arranged and translated by him and now expanded to include full chorus. The NSO Chorus will also be joining ODL for an encore performance at The Roxburgh Theatre, Stowe on January 26.

During the tour we make a return visit (after twenty years) to The Old Market in Hove, and a first visit to the Bloomsbury Theatre after nine years of using Cadogan Hall as our London venue.

Our next major production has not been announced yet - as always with NSO, expect the unexpected - but our next smaller-scale production is Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. This will be our first production of an opera by Handel, and also our first using period instruments. Apart from some of our usual venues, the tour will visit Forest Row and Petworth.

NSO Outreach: Schools' Opera Project

New Sussex Opera is eager to inspire children to sing and explore the world of opera. With our Schools' Opera Project we aim to take opera into local primary schools and run fun, interactive workshops there.

We are delighted that the D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust is generously supporting our Schools' Opera Project in the school year 2019-20.

You can find photos and more information on the Outreach page of our website. If you are interested in this project or connected with a school and would like us to hold a workshop please contact us via the Contact page on our website. We would like to hear from you.



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OPERA DELLA LUNA

This year is Opera della Luna's 25th anniversary. Over the last two decades the company has risen in popularity and profile to become one of the country's most respected and admired touring companies, and has been described as fast approaching national treasure status.

We remain the country's only full-time comic opera company, and our repertoire includes most of the G&S canon, as well as operettas and comic operas by Lehar, Strauss, and many works by Offenbach. Led by artistic director Jeff Clarke, the company takes its name from Haydn's operatic setting of Goldoni's farce *Il Mondo della Luna*. Our policy is to create new and innovative productions of musical theatre, comic opera and operetta, and to tour them to mid-scale venues all over the UK.

The company has won considerable acclaim for its highly entertaining and inventive performing style, and for the last two years has been featured at the Buxton International Festival. Our production of *The Daughter of the Regiment* in 2018 won unanimous 5 and 4 star reviews, and this year's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, seen in Buxton and at London's Bloomsbury Theatre won similar acclaim. The company also regularly appears at Wilton's Music Hall in London.

AN ANTIDOTE TO BOREDOM

"My dream was always to found a mutual insurance society for the combating of boredom." This, so the history books tell us, was Offenbach's oft-repeated cry, and it was out of this dream that he created operetta.

Opera della Luna's first production in 1994 was Offenbach's opera *Robinson*



Crusoe. I have always had a fascination for the work of a creative genius who I still feel is poorly understood - certainly in this country, and who is rarely represented in a way that does him true credit. He was an innovator, a satirist, an inspirational artist with boundless energy a free spirit, an indefatigable opponent of pomposity, a fierce critic of the establishment and above everything else, a true man of the theatre. A god for Opera della Luna.

So how to do such a man service in attempting to recreate his work? By literal translation? Surely not. Faithful yes, literal no. By producing a gentle cosy romp through pantomime Greece, devoid of contemporary satire, reference and "edge"? Faced with the same challenge would such a man do such a thing? Would he ****. He was a risk-taker; not afraid to cause a rumpus by pricking the self-satisfied smugness of the established arts in his country, and not afraid to shake his audience up and away from the familiar. Offence was acceptable, boredom was not.

Within the intoxicating joy of *La Belle Hélène* is a picture of a society on the edge of collapse. Offenbach saw in the hedonistic cavortings of pre-Trojan-war Greece a parallel with his own world, the glittering Paris of the Second Empire. And he foresaw the quick and momentous end to that world.

If we describe a world where government is inherently weak, where the collapse of "official" religion has been replaced largely by a cult of sexual "freedom" (or is it really addiction?), where the obsession with sex pervades all walks of life, where scant provision is made for the future, and where the threat of war is growing ever stronger and more dangerous - which world are we speaking of? If we were of a mind to make such comparisons, we might be tempted to even look at our own, but of course we are far too busy enjoying ourselves to think about things like that.

JEFF CLARKE
Director



JACQUES OFFENBACH

Jacques Offenbach was born Jacob Eberst in 1819, but his father changed the family name to Offenbach after he had left his hometown Offenbach-am-Main and settled in Cologne, and it was there, while earning a living from composition, music teaching and book binding that he became known to his colleagues as 'Der Offenbacher'.

The tale is told of how, as a boy of six, little Jacques studied the violin but was discouraged from learning the cello. However he wanted to play the cello so much he would secretly practise on his father's instrument. At eight, he wrote little songs. When he was nine, Offenbach switched from the violin to the cello after his parents decided that the violin was too strenuous for a boy of delicate health and at the age of only ten, Offenbach amazed his relatives and friends when he volunteered to substitute for an absent instrumentalist in a performance of a Haydn quartet.

In 1833 he was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire where he found academic studies little to his liking.

To earn his keep he played cello with the orchestra of the Opéra Comique, but his constant pranks got him into trouble. As a member of the orchestra at the Opéra Comique he was certainly exposed to the tuneful operas of Donizetti and Nicolai from the orchestra pit.

He began to compose dance music and songs and made a reputation as an eccentric cello virtuoso, eventually visiting London in 1844 in that role. During this period he married and fathered a family of five children. But his success as a performer contrasted with his lack of success as a composer.

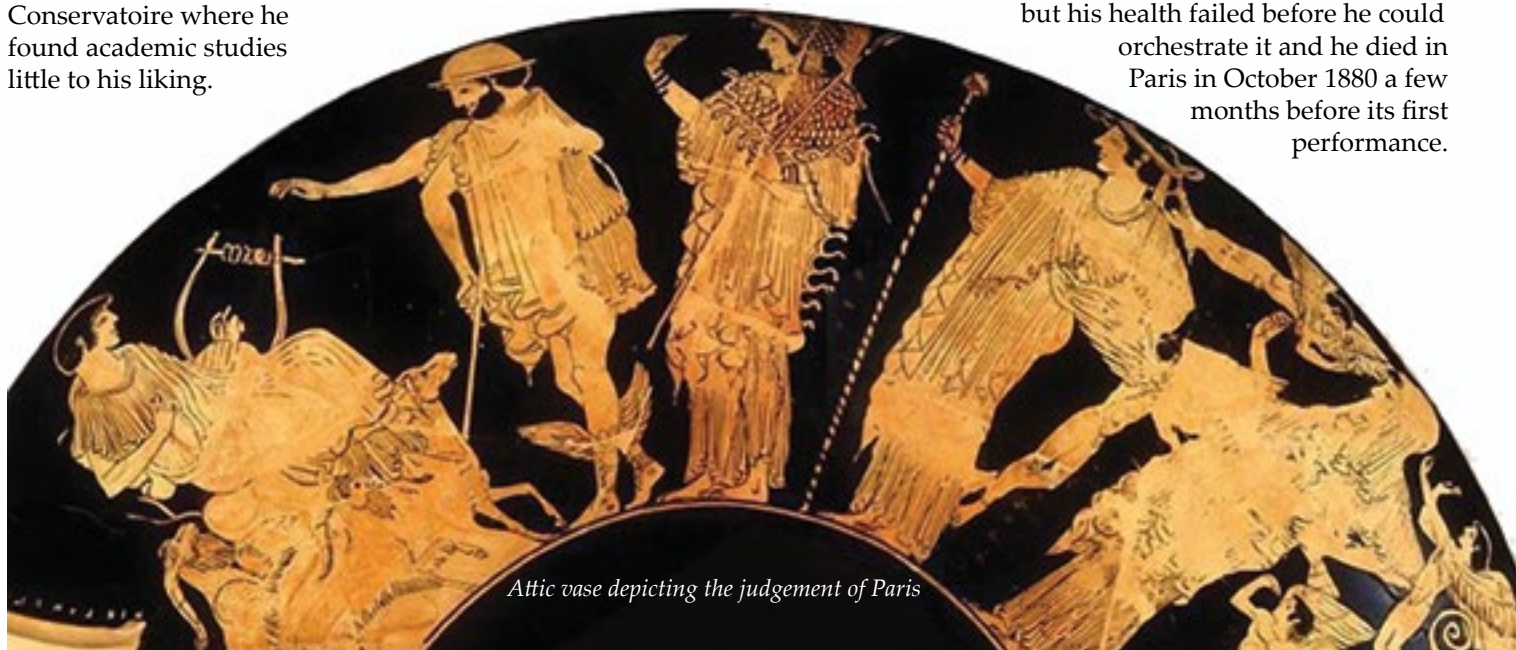
The sometimes pointed songs and music that he wrote were not viewed well by the Parisian musical theatre establishment.

However from 1849 his professional music career began to develop and in 1850 he became a conductor at Théâtre français, and eventually he founded his

own company, Les Bouffes-Parisiens in 1855. He delighted and scandalised Paris in 1858 with his scintillating and shockingly satirical *Orpheus in the Underworld*, and thereafter produced a constant stream of lively, witty and melodious operettas which became the vogue of the major capitals of the world. (*La Belle Hélène* was first staged in 1864.)

He managed the company for many years producing over ninety operettas in his lifetime. He visited the USA in 1876 but it seems the audiences there were a little disappointed to find that the man who had scandalized the musical world with his *Orpheus* was really quite a mild and likeable fellow.

His last ambition was to compose a great work that he might be remembered by. So much of his earlier music had been of a light and frivolous nature and he was aware that it might not stand the test of time. From this desire *The Tales of Hoffman* was born but his health failed before he could orchestrate it and he died in Paris in October 1880 a few months before its first performance.



Attic vase depicting the judgement of Paris

THE FIRST NIGHT

At the dress rehearsal the censor had objected to the portrayal of the character Calchas, on the ground that it was calculated to lower the prestige of the clergy, and insisted on the deletion of several sentences, on the grounds that they undermined the authority of the state. The first night audience was perplexed, and most of the critics horrified by the alleged desecration of Antiquity. One critic referred to "wretched" Offenbach.

"We were wrong to attend the première," Prince Metternich said to his wife on leaving the Variétés. "Our name will be in all the papers, and it is wrong for a woman to attend a performance like that, to a certain extent officially". The Prince saw plainly that it was not remote Antiquity but the very living present that the operetta was aimed at.

The mirror was held up to the contemporary regime in *La Belle Hélène* more unmercifully than ever. In fact, it was shown up so pitilessly that its early end was made to look inevitable. *La Belle Hélène* was a prophecy of doom.

Offenbach's Helen is a fashionable woman who is bored with life and longing for change. She would need but little encouragement to lead the life of a courtesan. At that time, when the intoxication of the Second Empire was beginning to wear off, society, in the face of the reality that was remorselessly rising up to meet it, was becoming increasingly filled with a sense of the vanity and futility of things. That is Helen's situation entirely. She would like nothing better than to fall in love. So she falls an easy prey to the handsome and experienced seducer Paris.

The other characters are shown in anything but a flattering light. The Greek kings are contemptible figures, and the sooth-sayer Calchas represents a priesthood that does not think it worthwhile to keep up even a pretence of piety.

Everyone is aware of inexorable fate approaching. The word "fate" is constantly on Helen's lips. All the characters are perfectly aware that a catastrophe is inevitable and the whole thing ends with the proclamation of the Trojan War. The frivolously ambiguous libretto enabled the music to be at once humorous and lyric revealing the underlying seriousness of Offenbach's satire and parody; he destroyed only to make room for natural, unfeigned humanity.

Success came to *La Belle Hélène* just as it had come to *Orpheus*. After ten to fifteen performances the box-office receipts started increasing. Gradually *La Belle Hélène* became the rage. It allowed the accent to be put on eroticism and the gospel of pleasure.

Hortense Schneider [as Helen] was a brilliant success. Her singing was a delight to the ear. Even more marvellous than her singing was the skill with which she managed to say the most daring things and yet get away with them. What could not be said she suggested by innuendo and effortless nuance. *La Belle Hélène* appeared in Vienna and Berlin during the same year. Europe was at Offenbach's feet.



Contemporary drawing of the first production
by Octave-Édouard-Jean Jahyer and Henri-Alfred Darjou - Bibliothèque Nationale

THE HIGHEST POINT OF HIS CAREER

The music was played everywhere, in restaurants, taverns, dance halls and at military parades where ranks of soldiers marched to the jaunty strains of the chorus introducing the kings of Greece: *'Ces rois remplis de vaillance, plis de vaillance, plis de vaillance,'* while in ball-rooms throughout Paris, and then throughout France, the languorous sweep of Helen's waltz could be heard.

La Belle Hélène put into circulation a flood of new slang words and catch-phrases. *'Bu qui s'avance, bu qui s'avance,'* laughed those who liked to think they were up to date. They were met with knowing laughter from others who prided themselves on being up to date with the latest fashion.

Life was a great big joke, announced *La Belle Hélène*. The most important thing was to enjoy yourself. Pleasure represented the supreme purpose of life. *'Je suis gai, soyez gai, il le faut, je le veux,'* Paris commands the people of Greece. Orestes spends all the family money on women, but what does it matter? The country will pay.

To a certain extent the operetta reflected a social mood which regarded pleasure and the pursuit of a good time as the only worthwhile aim. Yet an ominous undercurrent flows beneath the frenzied merriment. There are hints that disaster may not be far off. 'You know,' says Agamemnon, 'it can't last much longer.'



L'ENLÈVEMENT D'HÉLÈNE
Lithographie von Daumier, 1842
Bibliothèque Nationale

SINGERS' FEUDS

Hortense Schneider realised that she was all-powerful, that Offenbach and his colleagues wanted no one else. She gave full rein to her every whim, she argues every trifle, she questioned every line of every song. The men in the cast, anxious for a quiet life, easily gave way.

Her most redoubtable enemy was a woman, the inaptly named (to English ears) Léa Silly who acted the part of Orestes. She was tough and beautiful with a reputation gained in *pièces à femmes*, plays which relied on the physical attractions of the women rather than on acting ability. As Orestes in *La Belle Hélène* she made a very graceful boy, alert, witty, impudent. Schneider loathed her, not only for the publicity she engineered – it was her custom to promenade the boulevard dressed as a man – but for



Léa Silly - the first Orestes



Hortense Schneider - the first Héléne

her luxurious carriage, her dazzling turn-out, her 100,000 francs' worth of jewellery.

They quarrelled interminably. They upstaged each other. They waged a permanent and ruthless battle. La Silly won on points. She caught the interest of a very rich pasha who came to know her well. One day, as she was enjoying the hospitality of his mansion, a butler presented a visiting-card. She took it from the silver salver, noted the name, and remarked blandly: 'Tell Mademoiselle Schneider that we are not at home.'

Rehearsals went on in the usual atmosphere of uproar and disorder against a background of vicious interplay between Schneider and Silly. Offenbach contended with them dauntlessly, as he did with an inferior orchestra, dull-witted stage-hands and interruptions by the censor. Wrapped in a

fur coat that he never left off, clutching in rheumatic agony at his music stand, his flying hair shiny with sweat, he kept his humour and his good spirits. He would limp onto the stage and hobble among the cast beating time with his stick, directing the chorus, manoeuvring the principal players into new positions, tapping out the rhythms with his feet. Then he would sink exhausted into a chair, a scarcely concealed flicker of pain on his visage.

He watched intently. The scene went on too long. 'Une bedide goupurel'. The red pencil slashed out whole pages. Or the scene didn't work. He rewrote it completely there and then, doing in an hour or so what would have taken another composer a week. The players started again. The familiar refrain arose. 'Very good, my dears! Charming!' Pause. 'But do it once more – that's not what's wanted at all!'

from Jacques Offenbach, a Biography -
James Harding, 1980



Caricature of the feud by André Gill, (1840–1885) - La Lune



The "rival queens"

Feuds between divas were not new of course. A famous showdown of two "rival queens" took place at the King's Theatre, Haymarket in June 1727. The soprano Francesca Cuzzoni and mezzo Faustina Bordoni are said to have battled during a performance of Bononcini's *Astianatte*.

Fans bellowed approval or outrage as the two tore off each other's wigs and screamed insults. Although both singers were Italian, nationalism coloured the way the brawl was described. Pamphleteers mocked them, likening them to sellers of mackerel near London Bridge and "nymphs that vend live mutton about Fleet Street".

But maybe this 18th-century squabble was largely manufactured by the marketing department of the day to whip up some publicity for the performances? We know that Cuzzoni and Bordoni continued to work together after the famous battle!

ZOLA AND THE "BLONDE VENUS"

In his novel "Nana", Emile Zola describes a "Belle Hélène" performance that is only slightly veiled as "The Blonde Venus". Zola makes it very clear why the original diva attracted such attention, and caused such a sensation.

STRAUSS AND HELEN

For *Die Ägyptische Helena* Richard Strauss challenged Hoffmannsthal "to find a definite moral solution" to the problem of Helen's infidelity. He did so by splitting his Helen in half: a sorceress saves her from the wrath of her husband Menelaus by persuading him that the gods kept the real Helen safe in Egypt, while Paris abducted and enjoyed a phantom; Helen, assuming responsibility for her guilt, rejects the deceit and is accepted by Menelaus in all her ambiguity, as loyal wife and as fickle adulteress.

This solution works "in terms of music" as Strauss said, because music is moodily unstable, allowing its characters to be many different people at once. Menelaus must learn to accept that Helen is composed of opposites, which are twined together in her like the dissonant chords and unresolved tonalities of the Wagnerian or Straussian orchestra.

*from A Song of Love and Death -
Peter Conrad 1987*



Édouard Manet, *Nana*, 1877 - Bridgeman Art Library



SIMPLY SPARTAN TOURS



Today's activities

9am: Bus leaves the hotel for a guided tour of the ancient temple of Jupiter. This is believed to be the site where Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta first met Paris, son of King Priam. Her abduction by Paris started the Trojan War in the 12th century BC. Please bring beach gear and sunscreen (we shall stop on the way) and also a packed lunch.

Be aware that there will be other tours visiting the ancient site, so be sure to stick with your own tour guide.

Weather: showers are forecast later, so it might be wise to bring some wet weather protection.

6pm: A pre-dinner drinks event at the Venus Champagne Bar on the beach. Beach robes are acceptable.

SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

It is the feast of Adonis and in the main square in Sparta Queen Helen arrives to join the worshippers presenting offerings at the temple of Jupiter. Calchas the High Priest tells her of recent events on Mount Ida. Paris, the son of King Priam of Troy, had been appointed adjudicator of a beauty contest between Juno, Minerva and Venus. He awards the prize to Venus and in return the goddess has promised him the favours of the most beautiful woman on Earth. This can be none other than Helen herself.

Very soon Paris arrives in Sparta, disguised as a shepherd, to take part in the national competition of wit and intellect. Calchas arranges a meeting with Helen for him, and the two are instantly attracted to each other.

The Kings of Greece appear but in the competition of wit none of them can hold a candle to the shepherd boy. When he is crowned victor, the boy reveals himself as Paris. He receives his prize from Helen, but is aware that her husband Menelaus is a little too close at hand.

There is a roll of arranged thunder and Calchas declares that Jupiter has commanded Menelaus to return to the mountains of Crete for a month. Loudly protesting, Menelaus sets off to Crete, leaving no obstacle between Helen and Paris.

ACT 2

In her bedchamber Helen is having an attack of conscience about her attraction to Paris, and decides that she must at least make an attempt at fidelity. Her servant Bacchis reminds her that she has invited Calchas and the Kings of Greece to supper to play the game of Goose. In the game which follows Calchas wins large sums of money before being exposed as a cheat.

So far Paris has had little success in winning Helen and he has now solicited the help of Calchas. Later that night Calchas returns to Helen's chamber and at her request sends her a dream in which Paris shall appear. No sooner is she asleep than Paris slips into her room. Their passionate "dream" is interrupted when Menelaus returns early from Crete.

His rage summons the rest of the court who denounce Paris and drive him from the palace.

ACT 3

Some months later the whole court is enjoying a break at the seaside. Menelaus is still reprimanding Helen for her behaviour and apparently the incident has sparked off an epidemic of divorce and infidelity amongst the court. Calchas declares that Venus is to blame, but Menelaus has apparently already requested that Venus sends her own High Priest to Sparta to sort things out, No sooner has he spoken than the High Priest is seen in the distance.

The High Priest addresses the court and declares that Helen herself must return with him to Cythera to sacrifice one hundred heifers to the Goddess, after which all will be restored to order

Helen is reluctant to go but a word in her ear persuades her. She embarks for Cythera with the priest who, just as they are leaving, throws off his disguise - it is of course Paris.

And the rest is history... #trojanwar

INTERVAL

CAST

Helen	Hannah Pedley
Paris	Anthony Flaum
Menelaus	Paul Featherstone
Agamemnon	Charles Johnston
Calchas	Robert Gildon
Bacchis	Jennifer Clark / Georgina Stalbow (26/01/20)
Orestes	Catherine Backhouse
Jeunes filles	Becky Anstey, Poppy Damazar, Patricija Jurgaityte, Kitty Needham, Kiera Smitheram
Priests	Alison Read, Margaret Woskett
Orestes' friends	Carole Britten, Julie Griffiths, Harry Heaven, Ross Page

Conductor	Toby Purser
Director	Jeff Clarke
Designer	Gabriella Csanyi-Wills
Lighting Designer	Matthew Cater
Choreographers	Caitlin Fretwell-Walsh, Daniel Gee

St Paul's Sinfonia

Violin 1	James Widden	Flute	Ian Judson	French horn	Jamie Thomas
Violin 2	Christian Halstead	Oboe	Alex Birchall	Trumpet	Laura Garwin
Viola	Toby Deller	Clarinet	Helen Pierce	Percussion	Stephen Burke
Cello	Alison Holford	Bassoon	Molly Nielsen		
Double Bass	David Guy				

NSO Chorus

Sopranos

Harriet Anderson, Liz Archer, Poppy Damazar, Tanya Frisby, Marie Goulding, Julie Griffiths, Jackie Honey, Patricija Jurgaityte, Fran Mortimer, Grainne Murphy, Kitty Needham, Angela Rae, Kiera Smitheram, Sarah Soutar, Jo Watsham

Altos

Becky Anstey, Carole Britten, Jo Doezema, Anne Locke, Ruth Loughton, Alison Read, Katy Tutton, Margaret Woskett

Tenors

Harry Heaven, David James, Ross Page, Alan Soutar, Jonathan Statter, François Steiner

Basses

Jeremy Adams, Tim Locke, Richard Pulham
Chorus Master: Nicholas Houghton

Production Team

Executive Producer: David James
Production Manager: Fran Mortimer
Repetiteur: Erika Gundesen
Chorus Repetiteurs: Susan Bain, Nicholas Houghton
Orchestra Manager: James Widden
Stage Manager: Alice Leverton
Assistant Directors: Cate Couch, David Foster
Costumes: Kirsty Rowe
Chorus Costumes: Monica Quinn, Barbara Campbell, Sue Adams
Chorus Manager: Alison Read
Transport: Alison Read, Elizabeth Archer
Publicity Manager: Tim Locke
Publicity Assistant: Sabreen Qureshi-Hitchens
Programme/Website: David James
Front of House Coordinators: Richard Pulham, Margaret Woskett

About NSO Registered Charity No. 1185087

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BIOGRAPHIES



Hannah Pedley Helen studied at the RNCM supported by the Peter Moores Foundation.

Her international début was at Wexford as Maddalena and Delia in Rossini's *Viaggio a Reims*, returning the following year for Mélantho in Faure's *Pénélope*. Other roles have included Carmen and Mercédès, Olga *Eugene Onegin*, Cherubino, Lola *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Il Musico *Manon Lescaut*, and Rita the Rat *Fantastic Mr Fox* (all Opera Holland Park); Ottavia in Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea* and Medea in Cavalli's *Jason* (ETO); Romeo *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Grange Park); Mastrilla *La Perichole* and Nanette *Der Wildschütz* (Buxton); Metella *La Vie Parisienne* (Iford Arts); and Dritte Dame *Die Zauberflöte* (ROH insight evening). Subsequent roles include Orlofsky, Smeton *Anna Bolena*, Nancy *Albert Herring*, and Hansel *Hansel & Gretel*.

With a keen interest in contemporary music, Hannah has worked closely with the dynamic Second Movement Opera in roles including Dinah *Trouble in Tahiti*, Madam Flora *The Medium*, Ruth *The Impressario*, Matka *The Knife's Tears*, Marfa *Rothschild's Violin*, Sally *A Hand of Bridge*, and the mezzo soloist in the world première of *Fade* by Stefan Weisman.

Other recent highlights include Blossom cover *Anna Nicole* (ROH), Helga *Twitterdammerung* (ROH), Bridget *Moon on a Stick* (ROH Linbury Theatre), Princess Death *Cocteau in the Underworld* (Linbury Theatre & Brighton Festival), the Duck and Policeman *Wind in the Willows* (Linbury Theatre), and roles in several new commissions for *Exposure* (Linbury); *The Witch* by Andrew M Wilson (Tavistock); BB McKing *Hollow Hill* by Ian McQueen (Buxton); Phoebe in Jools Scott's *Demon Lover* (Grimeborn); Matka *The Knife's Tears* (Opera Diversa Prague).

Current and future engagements see her return to the ROH for the title role in a reduced version of *Carmen* (Linbury); mezzo soloist in Great Operatic Queens of History (Dublin and Belfast Opera House); Carmen (Blackheath Halls Opera); and her US début in Boston as the mezzo soloist in Mozart Requiem conducted by Harry Christophers.

Anthony Flaum Paris is a graduate of the RAM and National Opera Studio. His studies were generously supported by English National Opera and the John Wates Foundation.

Recent highlights include his main stage debut at ENO as Borsa in Jonathan Miller's production



of *Rigoletto*; Pinkerton and Rodolfo *La bohème* (Iford Arts); Gonzalve *L'heure espagnol* (Mid Wales Opera); Turiddù (Portsmouth Choral Society); and Don José (Tonbridge Philharmonic Society).

Operatic roles include Tybalt *Roméo et Juliette*, Motel *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tchekalinsky and Lensky (Grange Park Opera); Macduff *Macbeth* (Scottish Opera); Nemorino *L'elisir d'amore* (Nevill Holt Opera and Northern Ireland Opera); and the title role in UC Opera's production of *Aroldo*. For OperaUpClose he was the first Rodolfo in their critically acclaimed production of *La bohème*, with subsequent roles including Lensky, Don José and Don Ottavio *Don Giovanni*. He has also understudied a number of roles for English National Opera and Scottish Opera.

Anthony has sung with various orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC Concert Orchestra at Proms and galas concerts, most notably in *Fiddler on the Roof* at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

In the current season Anthony understudies Orpheus *Orpheus in the Underworld* for ENO and performs Paxton *Pandora's Box* for The Opera Story.

Paul Featherstone Menelaus

As an actor, Paul worked at the Glasgow Citizens, Edinburgh Royal Lyceum & Dundee Rep 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 House.

Favourite roles sung include Rodolfo, Calaf, Canio, Gustavus *Un ballo in maschera*, Alfredo, Ernani, Macduff, Werther & Eisenstein.

He is Associate Director of English Pocket Opera Company - introducing opera to thousands of schoolchildren with workshops & performances all over from the Albert Hall to Accrington, and Bognor to Bosnia with upcoming projects in Barnet, Cambridge & Mostar.

For Opera della Luna: title role *Tales of Hoffmann*, Mercury/John Styx *Orpheus In The Underworld*. Rattlebone/Cacatois XXII *Tales of Offenbach*, Vanderdendur *Candide*.



Charles Johnston Agamemnon made his ENO debut in 1992 in David Freeman's production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. Recent engagements include *Scarpia & Germont* (RTÉ Concert Orchestra; Lyric Opera Dublin & in Greece); Roderick/Sam in Hindemith's *The long Christmas dinner* (Les Jardins Musicaux festival, Switzerland); and Benoît/Alcindoro (Dorset Opera).



Previous highlights include Sir John Falstaff (Mid Wales Opera), the title role in *Rigoletto*, Giorgio Germont & Marquis d'Obigny, Montano *Otello*, Narumov *The Queen of Spades* Dr Kolenaty *The Makropulos Case*, Nikitich *Boris Godunov*, The Cardinal *The Duchess of Malfi*, Marquis d'Obigny, First SS Officer *The Passenger*, The Guide *Death in Venice* (English National Opera); The Guide *Death in Venice* (La Scala, Milan; La Monnaie; De Nederlandse Opera; Concertgebouw, Amsterdam); Mr Gedge *Albert Herring*, Forester *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Garibaldo *Rodelinda*, Talbot *Maria Stuarda*, and *Scarpia* (ETO); Don Alfonso *Così fan tutte*, Eisenstein, Marco *Gianni Schicchi*, Il Pedone *La Wally*, and Michonnet *Adriana Lecouvreur* (Opera Holland Park); Giorgio Germont (Welsh National Opera); the title role *Gianni Schicchi* (Haddo House); the King *Eight songs for a mad King* (Electrostatic Festival); and the Father/Sir Lancelot in Lynne Plowman's *Gwyneth and the Green Night* (Music Theatre Wales/Royal Opera House).

Further afield Charles has performed Golaud *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Almaviva (l'Opéra de Chambre de Paris), Garibaldo *Rodelinda* (BAM, New York); the title role in Verdi's *Macbeth* (Singapore); Choregos in Harrison Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy*, and Smirnov in Walton's *The Bear* (Les Jardins Musicaux festival, Switzerland). Roles in operas by Benjamin Britten have included Balstrode and Ned Keene *Peter Grimes*, Demetrius and Theseus *A Midsummer Night Dream*, Mr Noye Noye's *Fludde*, Ananias *The Burning Fiery Furnace*, and the Father *The Prodigal Son*.

Robert Gildon Calchas

Robert studied singing at Manhattan School of Music, New York, the Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Music Festival and the Britten Pears School. Recent work includes Frank *Die Fledermaus* (Iford), Billy Budd *Billy Budd Reimagined* (ROH), Hortensius *La fille du régiment* (Opera della luna at Buxton), *The Fairy Queen Project* (Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment), *Like Unlike and Time Capsule Projects* (Grange Festival), Belcore and Manz *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (New Sussex Opera), *Beautiful World Opera* and *Water in the*

Desert (Abu Dhabi), Villon in Ezra Pound's *Le Testament de Villon* (London Contemporary Music Festival) Wigmaster *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Starvelling *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Garsington)

He has also performed roles for Opera North, The Opera Group, London Symphony Orchestra, Grange Park Opera, The Opera Project, Cambridge Handel Opera, Bampton Classical Opera and Pimlico Opera's Prison Project. Upcoming work includes projects with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Snape Maltings. He lives in Suffolk with 4 dogs, 7 goats, 5 peacocks, chickens, ducks, bees and a tortoise



Jennifer Clark - Bacchis

Jennifer is a graduate of Cambridge University and RWCM's MA Opera Performance course, where she was a Leverhulme scholar and winner of the Jo and Martin Furber Prize for Opera.

As a principal or cover artist she has sung for WNO (First Boy *The Magic Flute*), Bury Court (Flora *The Turn of the Screw*), The Grange Festival (covering both Blondchen *Seraglio* and Emmie *Albert Herring*), Merry Opera (Soprano *Messiah*), Opéra de Baugé (cover Adele

Die Fledermaus), New Sussex Opera (Cupid and Venus *King Arthur*) and Opera'r Ddraig (Gretel *Hansel and Gretel* and Galatea *Acis and Galatea*) among others.

Plans for the 2019/20 season include Flora *The Turn of the Screw* and Anne Egerman *A Little Night Music* (both for Opera North) and an exciting residency at Snape Maltings working on a new opera with composer Diana Soh and librettist Richard Dubelski.

Jennifer's 2018/19 season saw her join The Grange Festival for their critically acclaimed production of *Belshazzar*, and sing the roles of Mabel *The Pirates of Penzance*, Josephine *HMS Pinafore* and Patience *Patience* for Opera Anywhere's ongoing UK Gilbert and Sullivan tour.

On the concert platform she has appeared with The Sixteen, Tenebrae, Southwell Festival Voices and Britten Sinfonia Voices.

Recordings include *11 - 11: Memories Retold* (Abbey Road, 2018); *Dreams of Christmas* (Pinewood Studios, 2017); *The Mummy* (Abbey Road, 2017); *Macbeth* (ENO Chandos, 2013.)



Catherine Backhouse *Orestes* grew up in Edinburgh and began singing as a chorister in St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral. She graduated with an honors degree in music from The University of Durham and completed the Opera Studies and Artist Diploma at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with distinction.

Catherine was a 2014 Britten-Pears Young Artist and played the role of Kate Julian in a new production of Britten's *Owen Wingrave* at the Aldeburgh and Edinburgh Festivals to critical acclaim. In the 2017/18 season she joined Scottish Opera as an Emerging Artist and performed roles including Annina *La traviata*.

Other operatic highlights include Suzuki *Madama Butterfly* (West Green House), Concepcion *L'heure espagnole* and Third Lady *Die Zauberflöte* (Mid Wales Opera), Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* (Clonter), the title role in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Barbican) and Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Ryedale Festival), Rossweisse *Die Walküre* (St Endellion Festival), Ino in Handel's *Semele* and Sesto *La clemenza di Tito* (Hampstead Garden Opera), Donizetti's *La favorite*, Philomen Gluck *Philemon and Baucis* (UK première) and Pallas in Arne *The Judgement of Paris* (Bampton Classical Opera), Dryad *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Opera Project at West Green House) and Solo Fairy in Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Garsington).

Performances in 2019 include cover Daughter of Akhnaten *Akhnaten* ENO) and Isabella *L'italiana in Algeri* and Mother *Madama Butterfly* (Diva Opera).

Toby Purser *Conductor*

Appointed Musical Director of New Sussex Opera, Toby Purser conducts the recently released CD from last year's production of Stanford's *The Travelling Companion*, now available on SOMM Recordings.

Founder and Principal Conductor of the ground-breaking Orion Orchestra, of which he remains Principal Guest Conductor, his unique combination of passion and intellect led to an invitation to join English National Opera for two seasons as ENO Mackerras Conducting Fellow, conducting productions of *The Turn of the Screw* and *La traviata*. He is also founding Musical Director of the Vienna Opera Festival and Academy, launched in 2019, and with which he will conduct *Don Giovanni* in 2020.

Other companies with which he has worked include Bampton Classical Opera, Chelsea Opera Group, Grange Park Opera, Opera della Luna and Pimlico Opera. Orchestral engagements have included performances with the St Petersburg Festival Orchestra and many



leading British orchestras including Sinfonia Viva, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, which he conducted in Jesús León's debut CD *Bel Canto* for Opus Arte.

Toby conducts regularly for Raymond Gubbay Ltd, and current highlights include a return to Lyric Opera, Dublin, for *Fidelio* at the National Concert Hall and *Night Under the Stars: The Magic of Italian Opera* with Joyce El-Khoury and Michael Fabiano at London's Southbank Centre.

As Artistic Director of the Peace and Prosperity Trust, he has been furthering 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 the refugee camps on the Lebanese/Syrian border.

Jeff Clarke, director

Jeff Clarke has been Artistic Director of Opera della Luna since its inception in 1994. He has worked for the Royal Opera House (Covent Garden), Sydney Opera House, Scottish Opera, Lyric Opera of Queensland, and the State Opera of South Australia.

This year as well as *La Belle Hélène*, he has directed *Orpheus in the Underworld* for the Buxton International Festival, *The Parson's Pirates*, and *HMS Pinafore* for Wilton's Music Hall. Other recent shows have included *The Daughter of the Regiment*, Buxton and London and Bernstein's *Candide* for the Iford, Cheltenham and Stowe festivals.

His many productions include *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Rusalka*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il Mondo della Luna*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *La Vie Parisienne*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Brussels) and *Pagliacci* (Hanoi Opera House, Vietnam). His new version and translation of *The Tales of Hoffmann* was performed by English Touring Opera, and with Opera della Luna he recently staged the British première of Johann Strauss's operetta, *The Queen's Lace Handkerchief*.



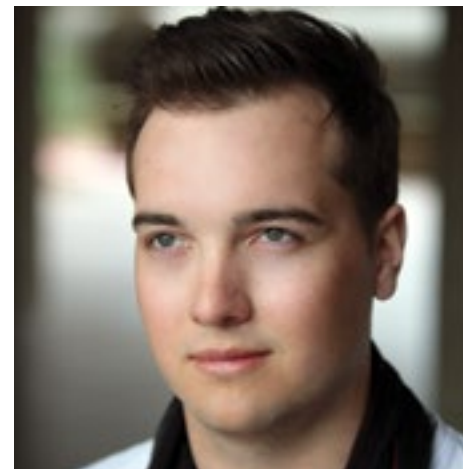
Gabriella Csanyi-Wills, designer, is Hungarian by parentage, British by birth and French by education. She has a degree in 'Humanities' from the Open University and a degree in Theatre Studies from the Central School of Speech & Drama. Since graduating in 1996, she has worked consistently in theatre, opera, dance, and film, as well as more recently showing art works in several exhibitions and fairs.

She has always drawn or painted on whatever surface was to hand - but more recently mostly on large canvasses. She likes the medium of acrylic for the speed and energy it requires. However there is now a new strand to her art in mixed media: playing with found objects and/



or clothing mixed with concrete. Her canvasses show a fluid combining of colour to create depths into which the onlooker is drawn. She is inspired by a variety of sources: travel (mostly enjoyed in a vintage car), cosmology and music.

She is also keen on re-interpretation, whether in theatre work or art work, each individual bringing their unique emotional and cerebral reaction to the work engendering new insights and discussion, which in turn is inspirational.



Matt Cater Lighting Designer

Lighting Design credits Include: *Tales of the Turntable* (ZooNation, Southbank Centre) *Snow Queen* (Playbox), *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* (Park Theatre), *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Longborough), *Partenope / Candide* (Iford Arts), *Un ballo in maschera / Il trovatore* (Winslow Hall Opera), *The Wreckers* (Arcadian Opera) *A Christmas Carol* (Windsor Castle), *People Who Need People* (Vault Festival).

Also *Beast on the Moon/Into the Numbers / The Busy World is Hushed* (Finborough Theatre) *Macbeth / Pericles* (LAMDA), *This is not Culturally Significant* (Gilded Balloon-Edinburgh, The Bunker, Vault Festival, Denmark), *One Last Thing-for now* (Old Red Lion), *Girl from nowhere* (St James' studio) *Verge of Strife* (Assembly-Edinburgh), *Othello / Measure for Measure / The Island / Prince of Homburg/ Mydidae / Romeo and Juliet / Julius Caesar / Copenhagen / Boom / Lift Off* (LAMDA Linbury Studio), *As You Like It / Mary Shelly* (Pleasance Theatre).

Caitlin Fretwell Walsh *choreographer*

Caitlin is a movement director, performer and is a visiting Movement teacher at Guildhall School, Royal Academy of Music and Royal College of Music for their under graduate, post graduate and Opera Course programmes. Caitlin is currently performing in Robert Carsen's *Rinaldo* for the Glyndebourne Tour.

Her Movement Director and Associate MvD credits include *La Cenerentola*, *Don Giovanni* (BYO), *A Different Story* (ROH Youth Chorus), *L'arlesiana*, *Don Giovanni* (OHP), *Cendrillon* (Glyndebourne, revival), *Agreed* (Glyndebourne Education), *Così fan tutte* (GSMD), *Der Rosenkavalier* (Glyndebourne, revival), *Don Giovanni* (RAM), *The Enchanted Pig*, *Poppea* (HGO), *Hänsel und Gretel* (Pop Up Opera), *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, *8 Songs for a Mad King* (Shadwell Opera).

As assistant director Caitlin has worked at the Royal Opera House on David McVicar's *Salome* revival and Richard Gerard Jones for his Jette Parker Summer Performance, and on Max Webster's *Owen Wingrave* for British Youth Opera.

She has performed Rapunzel in Antony McDonald's *Hänsel und Gretel*, choreographed by Lucy Burge (ROH) and has appeared in *Der Rosenkavalier* (ROH), *Der Rosenkavalier* and *The Rape of Lucretia* at Glyndebourne and *Rusalka* at Scottish Opera.



*Rehearsal
photographs*

