



# LEEDS OPERA FESTIVAL

300 YEARS OF OPERA IN LEEDS

28 AUGUST - 1 SEPTEMBER 2020

[NORTHERNOPERAGROUP.CO.UK](http://NORTHERNOPERAGROUP.CO.UK)

## Full Festival Programme

**Thank you for joining us – whether online or in person – for this year’s Leeds Opera Festival!**

It became apparent many months ago that we would not be able to present the programme we had originally intended for this year’s Festival.

What we were determined to do, however, was to bring a reimagined programme to life over the Summer, and start to bring live music and opera back into the lives of our audiences and artists.

This new-look 2020 Festival, therefore, is themed around our Leeds Opera Story project, unearthing 300 years of opera history in Leeds, and we’re delighted to be able to present a hybrid online and in person Festival for you this year.

All events are free to attend or watch online. If you would like to make a donation to support our work going forward, please text NOG to 70085 to donate £5, or [visit our website](#). Thank you for your support.

Do let us know what you think of the Festival (either through social media, or by emailing [info@northernoperagroup.co.uk](mailto:info@northernoperagroup.co.uk)) and we look forward to starting on the journey of the next 300 years of opera in Leeds!

**David Ward**  
Artistic Director

**Louise Garner**  
General Manager



## Leeds Opera Festival 2020 schedule

### Fri 28 August

Daily Singing 'Workout'

10am

YouTube

Leeds Opera Story concert

12.30pm

YouTube

### Sat 29 August

Daily Singing 'Workout'

10am

YouTube

Thomas and Sally

12.30pm

Merrion Street Garden

Urban Opera Festival

3pm

YouTube

### Sun 30 August

Daily Singing 'Workout'

10am

YouTube

Ballad Opera songs

2pm

Sunny Bank Mills

Operacast LIVE

3pm

YouTube

Ballad Opera songs

3.30pm

Northern Monk

### Mon 31 August

Daily Singing 'Workout'

10am

YouTube

Made with Music

11am

Facebook Live

Ballad Opera songs

1pm

HEART

Writing an Opera

3pm

YouTube

Ballad Opera songs

3pm

Seven Arts

### Tue 1 September

Daily Singing 'Workout'

10am

YouTube

David Greed: In Conversation

1pm

YouTube

Researching Opera

3pm

YouTube

2021 Festival announcement

6pm

YouTube

## Daily Singing 'Workout'

Fri 28 August – Tue 1 September, 10am

Watch on our YouTube channel

Vocal coach ... [Phil Wilcox](#)

Train those vocal cords with a daily singing 'workout' during the Festival!

Five bite-size top-tips to improve your technique. Suitable for all ages and abilities.

Either tune in live each day, or catch-up when suits you!

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## Leeds Opera Story concert

Friday 28 August, 12.30pm

Watch on our YouTube channel

Soprano ... [Louise Wayman](#)

Pianist ... [David Ward](#)

Visit [www.leedsoperastory.co.uk](http://www.leedsoperastory.co.uk) for more information on the history of opera in Leeds

### *The Beggar's Opera* (1728)

Music by Various

Libretto by John Gay

*'Come Sweet Lass'*

*'Our Polly is a Sad Slut'*

*'Thus When a Good Housewife'*

A smash-hit when it premiered in London in 1728, *The Beggar's Opera* was popular with audiences in Leeds and across the country for well over 100 years.

The first opera performed in Leeds was *The Beggar's Wedding* in 1729 – one of many homages / rip-offs (!) to emerge following *The Beggar's Opera's* success.

An antidote the growing popularity of Italian opera in London, *The Beggar's Opera* is the prime example of the bawdy English ballad

opera that dominated stages in Leeds until the mid 1800s.

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### *Acis and Galatea* (1718)

Music by George Frederic Handel

Libretto by John Gay

*'As When the Dove'*

Handel's operas were overlooked on the UK operatic stage for much of the 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Leeds was no exception.

During this time, however, his oratorios – notably performed by the many large choral societies building up in Leeds and surrounding towns – were hugely popular. Inspired by the great Crystal Palace Handel Festival, Leeds staged its own grand edition in 1859.

*Acis and Galatea* is the first Handel opera performed in Leeds we have on record. One performance was given at Albion Street Music Hall in 1858 in honour of the Princess Royal's marriage.

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### *Don Giovanni* (1787)

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

*'Deh Vieni'*

When Italian opera finally arrived in Leeds in the 1810s, two composers became firm favourites with audiences – Rossini and Mozart.

Whilst *The Barber of Seville* was the most performed Italian opera of the period, *Don Giovanni* is the first we have on record.

Italian operas were largely performed in translation, with this the predominant performance practice well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### *The Barber of Seville* (1816)

Music by Gioachino Rossini

Libretto by Cesare Sterbini

*'Una Voce Poco Fa'*

A frequent visitor to Leeds in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, *The Barber of Seville* holds the distinction of being the first opera performed in Leeds not in English that we have on record.

This marks an important turning point, with English language, and native opera, starting to slowly be usurped by opera from the continent.

*The Barber of Seville* has remained one of the most popular operas in the UK and beyond, with the Operabase website listing it as the 7<sup>th</sup> most performed opera worldwide last year.

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***Guy Mannering*** (1816)

Music by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop  
Libretto by Daniel Terry

*'Sir Guy Was a Bold'*

Though now largely forgotten, composers such as Henry Bishop, William Balfe, and William Wallace wrote many English-language hit operas during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Guy Mannering* is the most performed opera we have on record in Leeds during the 1800s, with the opera capitalising on the success of the novel by Sir Walter Scott.

Other popular English operas from the period include Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* and Wallace's *Maritana*.

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***Der Freischutz*** (1821)

Music by Carl Weber  
Libretto by Friedrich Kind

*'Kommt ein Schlanker'*

*Der Freischutz* took London by storm in the early 1820s, with multiple versions, in multiple languages, playing in the capital in 1824.

It was first performed in Leeds in 1825, and remained popular for a number of decades, before falling out of favour. It received somewhat of a mini-revival in the 1900s, with Sadler's Wells Opera, Opera North, and West Riding Opera all staging performances in Leeds between 1965 and 1981.

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***The Mikado*** (1885)

Music by Sir Arthur Sullivan  
Libretto by Sir William Gilbert

*'The Sun Whose Rays'*

The operas of Gilbert and Sullivan first reached Leeds in 1876, and the city has never looked back!

The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company (created to perform and promote the works of Gilbert and Sullivan) had multiple touring companies travelling across the UK every year, meaning that audiences couldn't only see the works in Leeds, but in Halifax, Dewsbury, and many other nearby towns and cities.

*The Mikado* is one of their most popular works, and it was chosen as the first work to be performed at the reopening of Leeds Grand Theatre in 1895.

Leeds is home to one of the first, and longest running, amateur operatic societies in the UK (Leeds Gilbert and Sullivan Society).

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***Die Fledermaus*** (1874)

Music by Johann Strauss  
Libretto by Karl Haffner and Richard Genée

*'Mein Herr Marquis'*

It wasn't just the light operas of Gilbert and Sullivan that entertained audiences in Leeds. Those by composers such as Offenbach and Strauss were also frequently seen at Leeds Grand Theatre, the Amphitheatre (now demolished), or the Coliseum (now the O2 Academy).

*Die Fledermaus* is another of the world's most popular operas, and Leeds in recent decades has seen performances by Opera North, Sadler's Wells Opera, Welsh National Opera, Leeds Youth Opera and Leeds College of Music.

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### ***Street Scene*** (1946)

Music by Kurt Weill

Libretto by Langston Hughes

*'What Good Would the Moon Be'*

Kurt Weill is one of the few composers whose works have been able to attract (and appease!) die-hard fans of both musical theatre and opera.

His works have become something of a favourite with artists and audiences at Opera North, with *Street Scene* appearing most recently in Leeds earlier this year

Opera North have embraced the performance of light opera and musical theatre, with other recent successes including Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* and Rodger's *Carousel*.

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## **Thomas and Sally**

Saturday 29 August, 12.30pm

Merrion Street Garden

Premiered 1760

Music by Thomas Arne

Libretto by Isaac Bickerstaff

Sally ... [Beth Moxon](#)

Dorcas ... [Naomi Rogers](#)

Thomas ... [Elgan Llyr Thomas](#)

Squire ... [Michael Vincent Jones](#)

Pianist ... Jenny Martins

Director ... Emma Black

Conductor ... [David Ward](#)

*Thomas and Sally* premiered at Covent Garden in 1760, and was perhaps the first British comic

opera to be all sung - before then, operas heavily relied on spoken text to progress the story.

Its composer, Thomas Arne, was one of the most popular composers of his day and was one of few composers to achieve success writing an English language opera in the Italian operatic style (*Artaxerxes*).

*Thomas and Sally* played an important role in the Leeds Opera Story.

Leeds lagged behind neighbouring towns and cities in building its first theatre; however in 1771 Tate Wilkinson opened 'The Theatre' south of the river on Hunslet Lane.

It offered a summer season of plays, operas, burlesques, and pantomimes, and stood as the only theatre in Leeds for many decades.

Operas were prominent in The Theatre for its near 100 year history, with each evening's entertainment consisting of at least two contrasting performances. With a limited local audience, The Theatre had a large rolling stock of different entertainments to keep audiences returning night after night.

*Thomas and Sally* was performed twice in The Theatre's opening season of 1771, and frequently returned. We also have record of the opera being performed at the New Concert Hall on Vicar Lane in 1767 (there are no records for the exact site of the concert hall, and it appears to have been demolished as early as 1781).

Conditions in The Theatre were shoddy, at best, as this account from 1810 demonstrates:

*"The house is about the size of Richmond [Theatre Royal] ... The theatre is miserable and cold, half the upper part of it admitting the wind and rain. The receipts are in general so bad that the manager does not think it worthwhile to repair it, and it is killing his wretched performers ... Tho' I have taken every precaution by clothing myself in flannel, and wearing a cloth dress up to my throat, yet I have suffered greatly from colds and their*

*pleasant consequences, but I must attribute it to the changes of free at the theatres, in dressing rooms running down with wet; at Leeds I was obliged to stand on my great coat to keep my feet from wet"*

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## The Urban Opera Festival

Saturday 29 August, 3pm

Watch on our YouTube channel

Join Artistic Director, David Ward, and an international panel to discuss how bringing the traditional opera festival into an urban environment presents new opportunities (and challenges!)

Featuring **David B. Devan** (General Director, [Opera Philadelphia](#)), **Amy Lane** (Artistic Director, [Copenhagen Opera Festival](#)), **Bill Bankes-Jones** (Artistic Director, [Tete a Tete](#), London)

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## Opera Ballads

Sunday 30 August

2pm, Sunny Bank Mills  
3.30pm, Northern Monk

Monday 31 August

1pm, HEART Headingley  
3pm, Seven Arts

Baritone ... [Neil Balfour](#)  
Violinist ... [Chloe Hayward](#)

We'll be touring Leeds bringing 18th century English ballad opera back to the venues where they were first performed in the city - pubs and public spaces!

In the early years of opera in Leeds, troupes of actors would pitch-up on city centre streets, or in large rooms in taverns, to bring audiences

the latest theatrical and operatic entertainment.

Songs featured:

### From *Love in a Village* (1763)

Music by Thomas Arne

'Still in Hope'  
'There was a Folly'  
'Let Gay Ones'  
'Oons Neighbour'  
'The World's'  
'If Ever I'm Caught'

### From *The Beggar's Opera* (1728)

Music by various

'Thro' all the employments'  
'My Heart was so free'

### From *The Duenna* (1775)

Music by Thomas Linley the Elder

'Tho cause'  
'If a daughter'

### From *Rosina* (1781)

Music by William Shield

'By Dawn'

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## Operacast LIVE #OperaFutures

Sunday 30 August, 3pm

Watch on our YouTube channel

In a special episode of our Operacast podcast, we'll be discussing YOUR ideas for the future of opera - send your ideas in advance, and join in with the conversation during the recording!

Featuring **David Ward** (Artistic Director, Northern Opera Group), **Olivia Clarke** (conductor), **Peter Brathwaite** (baritone), **Emma Black** (director)

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## Made with Music

Monday 31 August, 11am

Watch on our Facebook page

The award-winning Made with Music present a music making session for young people and families, based on our headline production of *Thomas and Sally*.

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## Writing an Opera Murphy & Attridge

Monday 31 August, 3pm

Watch on our YouTube channel

Composer **Lewis Murphy** and librettist **Laura Attridge** (otherwise known as [Murphy & Attridge](#)) discuss the process of writing an opera, and look forward to their latest project, *ARC23* (which will premiere in Leeds in July 2021, performed by Leeds Youth Opera).

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## In Conversation: David Greed

Tuesday 1 September, 1pm

Watch on our YouTube channel

We speak to the man who's led the orchestra of Opera North since it started in 1979 - **David Greed**.

We reflect on his time with the company, looking back on some of the highlights, and some of the times where things didn't quite go to plan!

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## Researching Opera

Tuesday 1 September, 3pm

Watch on our YouTube channel

We discuss how to go about unearthing opera's hidden history - whether you're planning your PhD, or looking for some new artistic inspiration!

Featuring [Sophie Horrocks](#) (PhD researcher, University of Durham), [Iain Fraser](#) (Opera Scotland)

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## 2021 Festival announcement

Tuesday 1 September, 6pm

Watch on our YouTube channel

Tune-in to find out what's in store for our 2021 Leeds Opera Festival ...