

### **KANCHANA JAISHANKAR - SINGER**

Kanchana Jaishankar is a contralto and actor from New Delhi, India, currently studying under Hilary Summers and a recent graduate from Royal Northern College of Music. In the 2022-23 season, she covered roles in Welsh National Opera's "Cherry Town" and North Wales Opera Studio's "Madama Butterfly." Her 2023-24 roles included Olga in Preston Opera's "Eugene Onegin" and Mother Spring in RNCM's "Snow Maiden." Kanchana was selected for the National Opera Studio's Diverse Voices Program and has appeared on BBC Radio Manchester and Lancashire. She is also a music theatre singer and actor being mentored by Wendy Gadian

In Christmas 2022, she performed "Walking in The Air" with violinist Esther Abrami for ITV's "Christmas Carols." Besides singing, Kanchana is the Head of the Manchester Indian Film Festival. She holds a BA in History and Sociology from Hindu College, University of Delhi. Previously, she had a successful career as a fashion model, working with Vogue India, Bazaar India and Turkey, Elle India and UK, Dior Beauty, and Swarovski. At the RNCM, Kanchana received the Annie Ridyrd Award and the British Council GREAT Scholarship.

### **JONATHAN DRUMMOND - RÉPÉTITEUR**

Born and raised in New Zealand, Jonathan is an accompanist and répétiteur who has called the UK home for the past ten years. He has been an accompanist at Northern Ballet since 2017 and has played for countless education projects for Opera North since 2016.

Jonathan was the répétiteur for *The Dictator* (2022) and *Maria de Buenos Aires* (2023) for Northern Opera Group and was Assistant Music Director and Repetiteur for Leeds Youth Opera from 2015-2022.

Jonathan has worked as an accompanist at Leeds Conservatoire and has performed in concerts with singers and instrumentalists across the UK and New Zealand.

### **MILANA SARUKHANYAN - SINGER**

Milana is a Bradford-based, Ukrainian soprano, improviser and vocal coach.

Milana began singing as a young child in the Ukraine. She studied at the Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatoire in St. Petersburg, Russia, and the Royal Academy of Music, London, graduating with first-class honours in 2018 and a Master of Arts Diploma in 2020.

Her career highlights include appearances on BBC Radio 3 (London) and BBC Radio Leeds, Royal Festival Hall (London), Café OTO (London), ONDER STROOM (Antwerp), Knuttel House (Tokyo), Teatro del'Opera di Roma (Rome), Palau de la Música Catalana (Barcelona), Santander Festival Hall (Santander), and Glazunov Concert Hall (St. Petersburg) and as Bertha in Ian McMillan's new adaptation of *The Barber of Seville* for Bradford Opera Festival.

Milana is also a passionate advocate of free improvisation and experimental staging. In 2022, Milana and Christopher Götzen staged an experimental improvisation, 'The Artist is Present 2.0: Musical Response', which has been performed numerous times across Lithuania, Germany and the UK.

This year Milana, together with John Bisset, released her first improv album, 'Verbo I Voda', which is hugely inspired by Ukrainian folklore and its context related to our times.

You can learn more about Milana and her work at [msoprano.com](https://msoprano.com).

### **OWLY BEATS – MUSIC PRODUCER**

Standing at the forefront of UK underground grime producers, over the years Owly Beats has put together a string of exciting releases within the UK grime scene.

Active since the early 2000s, recent years have seen instrumental releases on the legendary Slimzos Recordings label, headed up by the grime godfather DJ Slimzee. The album Nocturnal arrived in 2021, featuring collaborations with grime royalty and some of the best and brightest upcoming talent the UK has to offer.

Owly was also the electronic music producer for Chip Shop: The Musical and The Shakespeare Project – both for Emma Hill, Writes - and worked previously as a drummer, touring the world and later teaching drumming in his spare time.

### **EMMA HILL - DIRECTOR**

This year's Guest Artistic Director of Leeds Opera Festival, Emma is a director, writer and producer working across art forms and platforms.

Some of Emma's projects include Chip Shop: The Musical (Emma Hill, Writes), The Shakespeare Project (Emma Hill, Writes), Baby Girl (novel), After Words (for Nesta), 12901211: Leeds Opera Story (for Leeds Opera Festival); Where the Music Takes You (for Made by Mortals); After The DG/The Worst Witch Digital/The Birth of Venus/Gone and more (for BBC).

Awards and nominations: Northern Writers' Award winner; Broadcast Digital Award-winning content; BBC Performing Arts Fund Fellowship; IVCA Clarion Gold Award; Grand Words Playwriting Competition Highly Commended; Faber & Faber FAB Prize Commended; BAFTA Nominated; Royal Television Society Award nominated: Alternarratives Prize shortlisted; Jhalak Prize longlisted; Si Leeds Literary Prize longlisted; Bruntwood Prize longlisted.

You can learn more about Emma and her work at [emmahillwrites.com](https://emmahillwrites.com).