

Leeds Opera Festival 2019



northern
opera
group

23-27 August

Welcome to our third Festival, but our first under the new name of the Leeds Opera Festival!

This change marks our group's commitment to bringing opera to many communities across the city – making it a Festival not just for the city centre, but for people and venues throughout Leeds.

This year we're celebrating Opera and Shakespeare. At the latest count there are over 300 operas adapted from the Bard's plays, and we should be covering about ten of them just this August!

Stanford's 'Much Ado About Nothing' takes centre stage at Morley Town Hall. We workshopped the opera in 2016 and I'm delighted that we've been able to stage the full work this year. It's a truly terrific hidden gem that I hope we might be able to encourage more companies to mount in the future.

Elizabeth Freestone and Helen Harrison have put together a fascinating new production called 'Musical Confusion'. We wanted to explore how the plays and operas work together – where are the similarities and where are the differences; how do Shakespeare and composers achieve similar emotional reactions, but often in very different ways. We hope the

production entertains, but that it also provokes, and perhaps raises more questions than it answers!

In Headingley we're Feasting on Falstaff with food, opera and film, and we're hosting our first ever live Operacast episode at our podcast home, Chapel FM.

This is our biggest Festival to date, and we hope it will only get bigger as we bring rare and wonderful operas to more venues and communities across the city in 2020 and beyond...

A huge 'thank you' to our artists, partners and venues, and of course to our funders, without whose generous support the Festival wouldn't be possible.

Do let us know – in person or online – what you think of the Festival, and do make sure to join our mailing list or follow us on social media to keep up to date with our plans for the future. Next up – 'The Christmas Elf' at Northern Ballet this December!

DAVID WARD
Artistic Director

LOUISE GARNER
Producer



With thanks

MARK SKIPPER
RACHEL BAMFORTH
SARAH CALVERT
LORNA JAMES
SALLY STEPHENS
EMILY SIMPSON
PELLY&ME
PHOTOGRAPHY
PAUL GARNER

LOUISE GIBBS
MORLEY ARTS
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NORTHERN BALLE
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
LEEDS ARTS
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AND THE ROYAL
COLLEGE OF MUSIC
STANFORD SOCIETY
BENJAMIN HAMILTON
MARTIN PICKARD

Your 2019 Festival Schedule

FRI 23 AUGUST

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

7:30pm, £20/£15/£10

Morley Town Hall

SUN 25 AUGUST

A FEAST OF FALSTAFF

6:30pm start, £30

HEART Headingley

SAT 24 AUGUST

IN DISCUSSION: DR JEREMY DIBBLE AND DAVID WARD

6:30pm start

FREE (suggested donation £5)

Morley Town Hall

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

7:30pm, £20/£15/£10

Morley Town Hall

MON 26 AUGUST

OPERACAST LIVE

2pm, FREE

Chapel FM

TUES 27 AUGUST

HENRY ROWLEY BISHOP CONCERT

7pm

FREE (suggested donation £5)

Leeds Town Hall

MUSICAL CONFUSION

8pm start

£15/£10

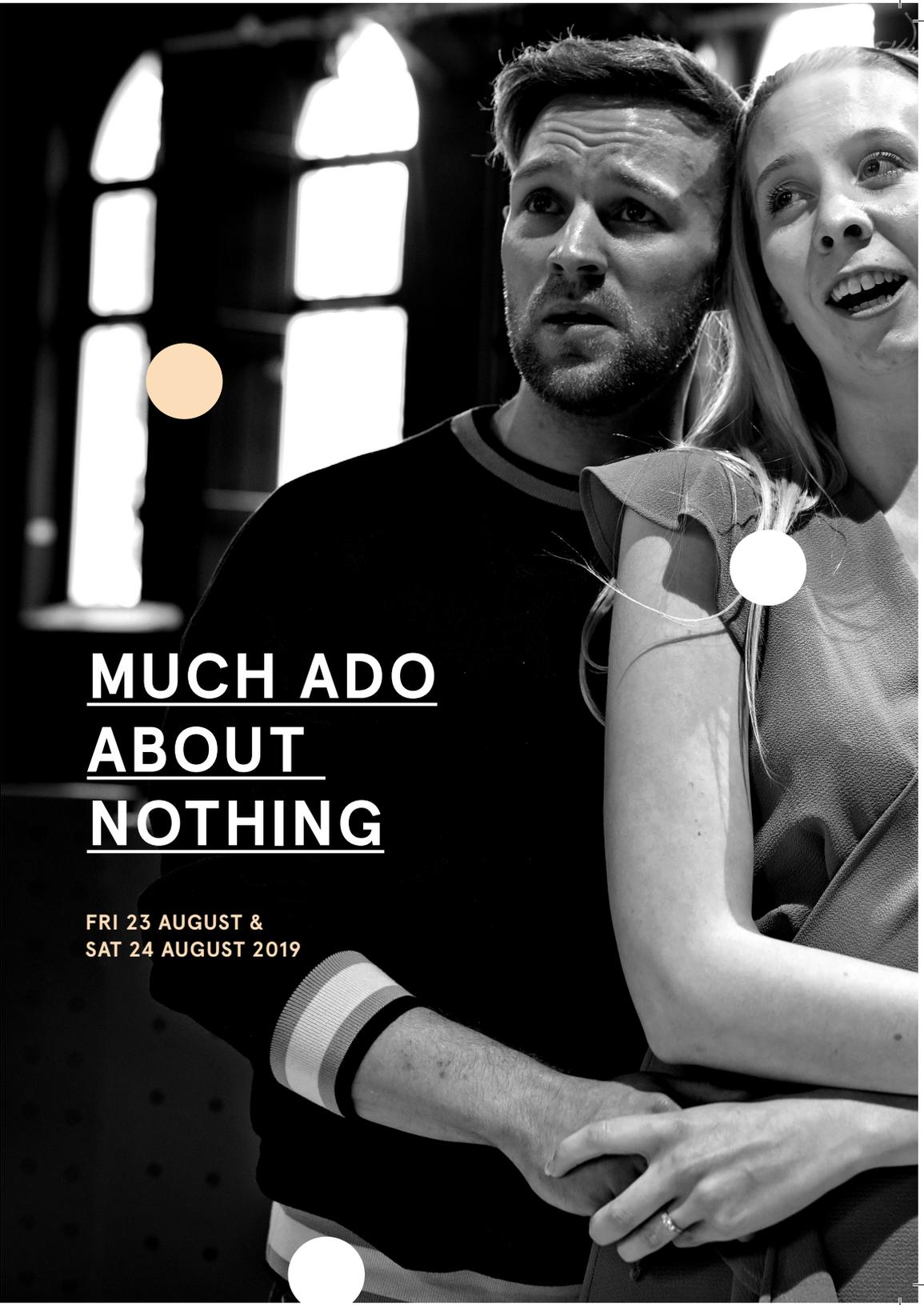
Leeds Town Hall

SUN 25 AUGUST

COME AND SING

2pm-4pm, £5

HEART Headingley



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

**FRI 23 AUGUST &
SAT 24 AUGUST 2019**

Cast and Crew

BENEDICK

Phil Wilcox

CLAUDIO

Roger Paterson

BEATRICE

Catrin Woodruff

HERO

Charlotte Hoather

DON PEDRO

Edward Robinson

BORACHIO

William Branston

DON JOHN

Thomas D Hopkinson

LEONATO

Jake Muffett

DOGBERRY

Louis Hurst

FRIAR

Blaise Malaba

SEACOLE

Grace Watkins

CONDUCTOR

Christopher Pelly

DIRECTOR

David Ward

DESIGNER

Tiffany Dawson

PRODUCER

Louise Garner

MUSIC by

Charles Villers Stanford

LIBRETTO

Julian Sturgis
(after the play
by Shakespeare)

Orchestra

LEADER

Chris Hodges

FIRST VIOLIN

Alison Major
Liz Lister
Della Hickey

SECOND VIOLIN

Lucy Shepherd
Lynne Wadsworth
Martin Stuart

VIOLA

Karen Griebing
Seishi Shimizu

VIOLONCELLO

Florence Fawcett
Rose Gallaway

DOUBLE BASS

Jennifer Nicks

FLUTE

Elizabeth Wells
Jo Lewis

OBOE

Freya Bailes
Fran Guy

COR ANGLAIS

Fran Guy

CLARINET

Benjamin Palmer
Rachael Gibbon

BASSOON

David Baker
Tim Whittick

HORN

Valerie Stygall
Paul Kampen

TRUMPET

Alex Browne
Sean Gleeson

PERCUSSION

Tenley Martin

HARP

Alice Kirwan



The Road to Much Ado

With the Shakespeare 400 celebrations in 2016 I was looking for a suitable opera for us to perform as part of the nationwide festivities.

As we were still only a few months old as a company, we knew that we wouldn't have neither the time nor the resources to carry out a large-scale production, so we decided on either performing a short work, or bringing audiences scenes from something more ambitious.

When I discovered Stanford's 'Much Ado About Nothing' I was instantly convinced that this was something we needed to stage. From the terrific opening badinage between Benedick, Claudio and Don Pedro, to the triumphant full company close, it is a work that splendidly lifts off the page. What struck me most was Stanford's vocal writing, which is tremendously characterful. Each member of the colourful cast is brilliantly characterised, whether it be in the longer lyrical sections, or the fast-paced arioso exchanges.

Sadly there was no way in 2016 that we could stage the whole work with full cast, chorus, orchestra, etc.! Instead we took five singers and worked with them over a few days to stage five scenes; providing the audience with an overview of what the opera offered. Being able

to get the opera on its feet proved that this was a work that certainly deserved a full production in the future. The main question for us was not 'if', but 'when'!

In 2017 we launched our first Opera Festival, which has enabled us to grow our audiences, reputation and funding, and when it came to finding a theme and headline production for 2019, I knew that it was time for Shakespeare and 'Much Ado' to take centre stage!

We've assembled a terrific cast for the production which we're updating to 1950's small town USA, post-Korean War. It's a time of great social change where the pillars of the community (the mayor, priest, Chief of Police) still reign supreme, but in Beatrice we see the beginnings of a cultural revolution emerging. We've been able to bring back our original Beatrice (Catrin Woodruff) and conductor (Chris Pelly), but otherwise it's a completely new cast and team this time around.

DAVID WARD

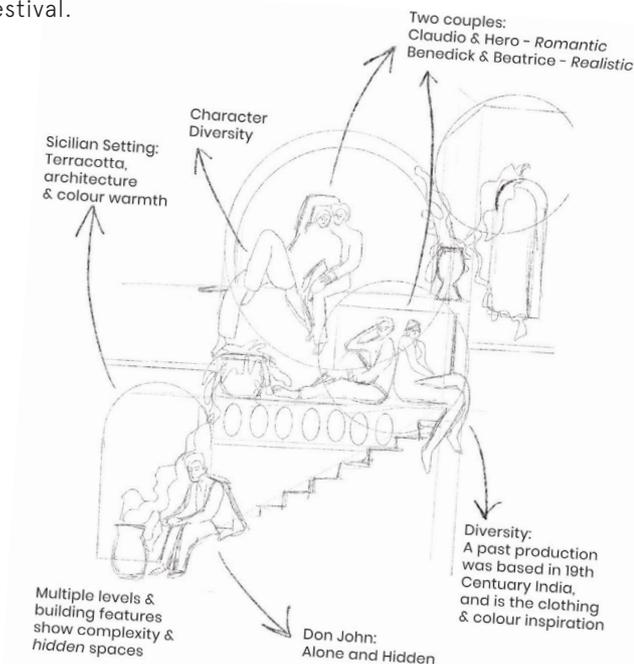
Artistic Director,
Northern Opera Group
Director, Much Ado
About Nothing

Design Competition

Northern Opera Group is proud to be based in Leeds and to work with artists, organisations and institutions from all over the city.

Earlier this year we held a design competition with students from the University of Leeds and Leeds Arts University to create the imagery for our 2019 Festival.

Some of the terrific entries are on display during the Festival, however the University of Leeds student Polly Rockman's designs were the unanimous choice of the Northern Opera Group board.



COVER DESIGNER

Polly Rockman

Studying at the University of Leeds, Polly will graduate this summer with a degree in Graphic & Communication Design. With a broad range of skills including branding, copywriting and packaging design, Polly enjoys distilling clients' ideas into fresh visuals, allowing them to engage with their audiences. All her projects begin with an in-depth research process which helps to add unique details and personality to each and every piece of work.

Cast and Crew



BENEDICK

Phil Wilcox

Phil has sung as a principal soloist for Buxton Festival Opera, Retrospect Opera, Merry Opera Company, XOGA, Proper Opera, Opera on Location and Young Opera Venture. Notably, in April 2018 he sang in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of King Lear at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York.



CLAUDIO

Roger Paterson

Roger trained at the Junior Academy of Music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) and University of Glasgow. He has performed with Opera Brava, Kentish Opera, at Longborough Festival Opera, and in OFFIE-winning 'Tosca' and Olivier-nominated 'La Bohème' in a number of London theatres.



BEATRICE

Catrin Woodruff

Samling Artist Catrin has performed at Brighton Early Music Festival, and in projects with Bergen Nasjonale Opera, Northern Opera Group, Pop-up Opera and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). She was a grateful recipient of funding from the RCS Trust and also the Sir James Caird Travelling Scholarship Trust.



HERO

Charlotte Hoather

Charlotte has sung with Scottish Opera, Metropolitan Opera (New York), Surrey Opera, Radius Opera and at the Waterperry Opera Festival. She picked up first prize in the Pendine International Voice of the Future at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod in July 2018. This year, she will tour with Tim Benjamin's new opera.



DON PEDRO

Edward Robinson

Edward has performed with Dorset Opera, Clonter Opera and sung at Birmingham Symphony Hall, Paris' Opéra Comique and The Sage, in Gateshead. Edward was Young Artist at The Buxton International Festival 2018 and 2019, and even premiered pieces of solo work at the Leeds Lieder Festival 2017.



BORACHIO

William Branston

William has performed with a number of opera companies, including Paisley Opera, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Opera Holloway, Hampstead Garden Opera, and Trinity Laban Opera. William is thrilled to be working with Northern Opera Group again after playing Corin in their 'Alfred', 2017.



DON JOHN

Thomas D Hopkinson

Thomas has sung with RNCM Opera, The Hallé, Opera North, Grange Park Opera and Garsington Opera. His performances have been worldwide, seeing him sing everywhere from the Wexford Festival Opera to the Al Bustan Festival, in Lebanon. He was the recipient of The Wexford Festival Opera's Aria Friends Bursary.



LEONATO

Jake Muffett

Jake's most recent roles have seen him perform with Glyndebourne Opera Festival, British Opera Festival and Opéra de Baugé. In 2019, Jake completed the young artist programme at the National Opera Studio. Jake's experience also stretches to musical theatre, most recently for Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte.



DOGBERRY

Louis Hurst

Louis has performed with Scottish Opera, Opera North, English National, Grange Park Opera, the Mastersingers and at the Aix-en-Provence and Grimeborn Festivals. At the RNCM, he was supported by Michael Oglesby, the Drapers Guild and the Musicians & Benevolent Fund. He also participated in the ENO Opera Works Programme.



FRIAR

Blaise Malaba

Recent engagements have seen Blaise make his upcoming performances at Opera North. In 2015, he was finalist in the BBC Cardiff Singer of World competition and won the first prize in the Impreza International Vocal Competition. Blaise joins the Royal Opera House from June 2020 as a Link Artist.



SEACOLE

Grace Watkins

Grace has sung with Leeds University Opera Society, Leeds Camerata and the Ilkley and Otley Choral Society. In her first year at University, she represented Leeds College of Music at the Leeds Lieder Festival, singing in a masterclass and a recital. Grace is also due to sing with The Verismo Voices later this year.



CONDUCTOR

Christopher Pelly

Christopher is the artistic director of the Leeds Haydn Players, the musical director of Otley Chamber Orchestra and a frequent guest conductor for West Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra. He has also conducted two musicals at the Alhambra Theatre in Bradford: Made in Dagenham, 2019, and Hello Dolly, in 2018.

For full biographies please visit NORTHERNOPERAGROUP.CO.UK

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REPETITEUR
Jenny Martins

Previously the repetiteur for Opera North Education, Jenny has since returned to Opera North for projects such as 'Intro to Opera'. She has worked with Hallé ensembles, playing regularly with the Hallé Youth Choir, Hallé Training Choir and Hallé Children's Choir. She also teaches students at the University of Leeds.



DESIGNER
Tiffany Dawson

A costume and set designer, Tiffany has previously worked with Northern Opera Group at Left Bank Opera Festival, Manchester International Festival, and in the Andrew Lloyd Webber Theatre, Plymouth's Barbican and a number of other theatres countrywide. Tiffany helped tour The Wandering Scholar with NOG in 2018.



PRODUCER
Louise Garner

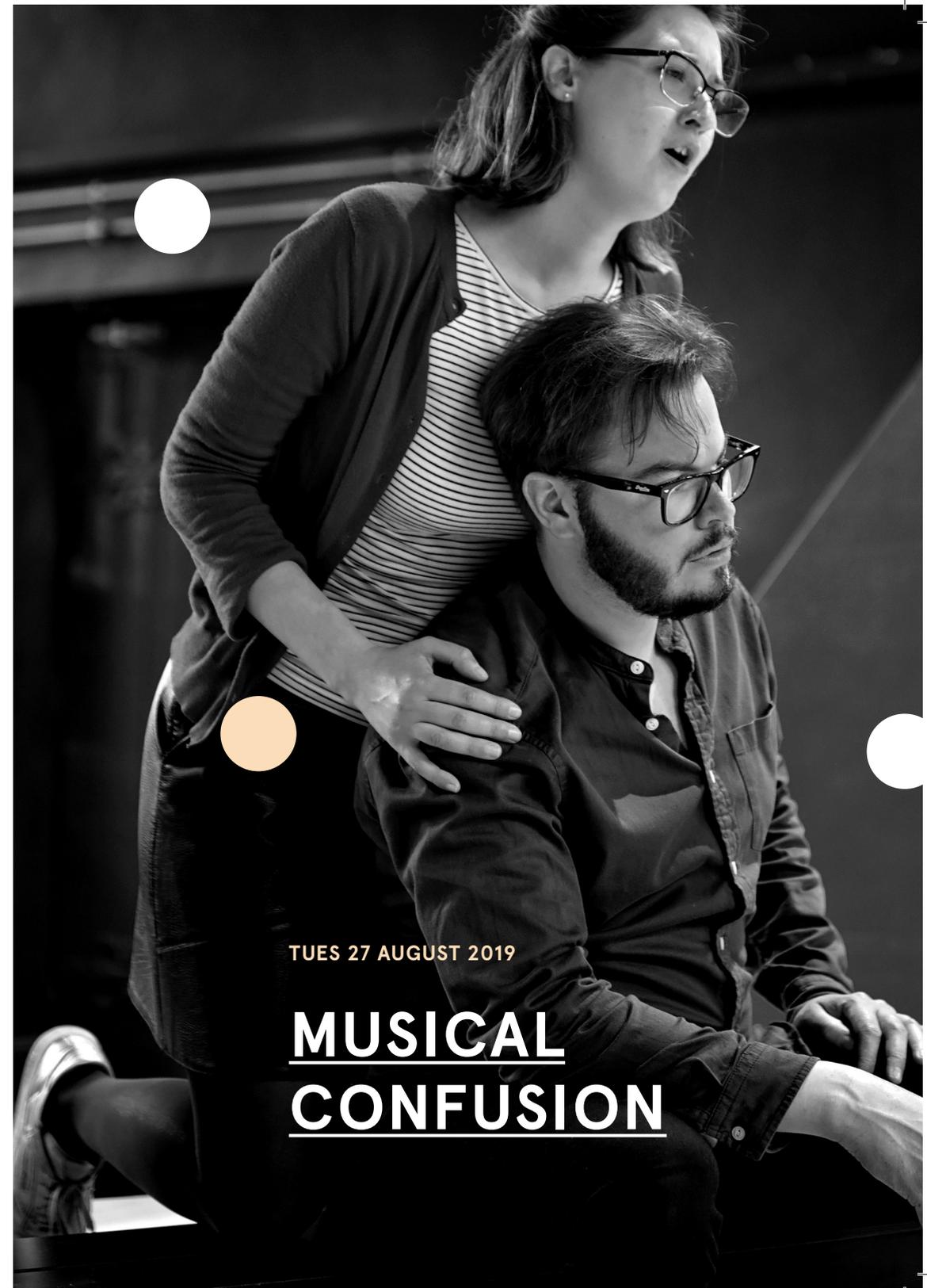
Louise has performed with St Peter's Singers, Leeds Philharmonic Choir and the choruses of Opera Soc and Northern Opera Group. Leeds University Opera Soc has played a huge part in her love of the art form, however she's been a singer since the age of 7 when she joined her Church choir back in East Sussex.



DIRECTOR
David Ward

David has previously worked for Opera North, Royal Northern College of Music, Northern Ballet, and Leeds International Piano Competition. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts Fellow, a Trustee of the Opera and Music Theatre Forum, and Leeds Youth Opera. He hosts our monthly podcast, Operacast.

For full biographies please visit NORTHERNOPERAGROUP.CO.UK



TUES 27 AUGUST 2019

MUSICAL CONFUSION



From the very early beginnings of opera, Shakespeare's plays have been adapted for the musical stage by composers across the world.

But how does opera evolve from the plays? Where are the similarities, and

where are the stark differences? Our performance of 'Musical Confusion' brings together Shakespeare's plays, with the operas inspired by them, to explore the 400 year history of the Bard on the musical stage...



DIRECTOR

Elizabeth Freestone

From 2012-17, Elizabeth was the Artistic Director of Pentabus Theatre Company, a new writing company touring nationwide, where she directed world premieres. Her credits include international tours, a Shakespeare's Globe European tour, and a number of performances for RSC and Greenwich Theatre.



CONDUCTOR

Helen Harrison

Helen is the Music Director and Conductor for Preston Opera, Blackpool Symphony, Lytham St. Annes Choral Society, Lancashire Youth Symphony Orchestra and the founder of the Helios Symphony Orchestra. Helen works regularly with ensembles across the north, including Leeds College of Music Chamber Orchestra.

For full biographies please visit NORTHERNOPERAGROUP.CO.UK



ACTOR

Ben Addis

Ben's credits span theatre, film, television and radio. His television performances include well-known Vera (ITV), Lewis (ITV) and even BBC's Doctor Who. Ben has also been seen on stage at a number of notable locations, including RSC, Young Vic, National Theatre, Sheffield Crucible and the West Yorkshire Playhouse.



TENOR

Michael Vincent Jones

Michael has performed with the National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company for three seasons, and is a 2016 Iford Arts New Generation Artist and member of the Opera North Shadowing scheme, which saw him shadow a role in Don Giovanni, 2018. He has also performed with Victorian Opera and Radius Opera.



SOPRANO

Juliet Montgomery

Juliet's operatic credits include working with the National G&S Opera Company, Preston Opera, RCNM, Scottish Opera, Opera North and Opera on Location. She has performed internationally, on radio and on television, and even at Edinburgh Festival. Juliet was a Young Artist in Buxton Opera's 'MacBeth', 2017.



ACTRESS

Rachel Leskovic

Rachel has had a successful career across theatre and TV, with her performance as Viv in 'Spend Spend Spend' at the Piccadilly Theatre seeing her nominated for an Olivier Award as Best Actress in a Musical. Her extensive TV career includes 'Happy Valley', 'Last Tango in Halifax', 'Hollyoaks' and 'Coronation Street'.

For full biographies please visit NORTHERNOPERAGROUP.CO.UK



THE CHRISTMAS ELF

The Christmas Elf

Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre, Northern Ballet Leeds,

LS2 7PA

Saturday 21 December 2019 2pm & 7pm

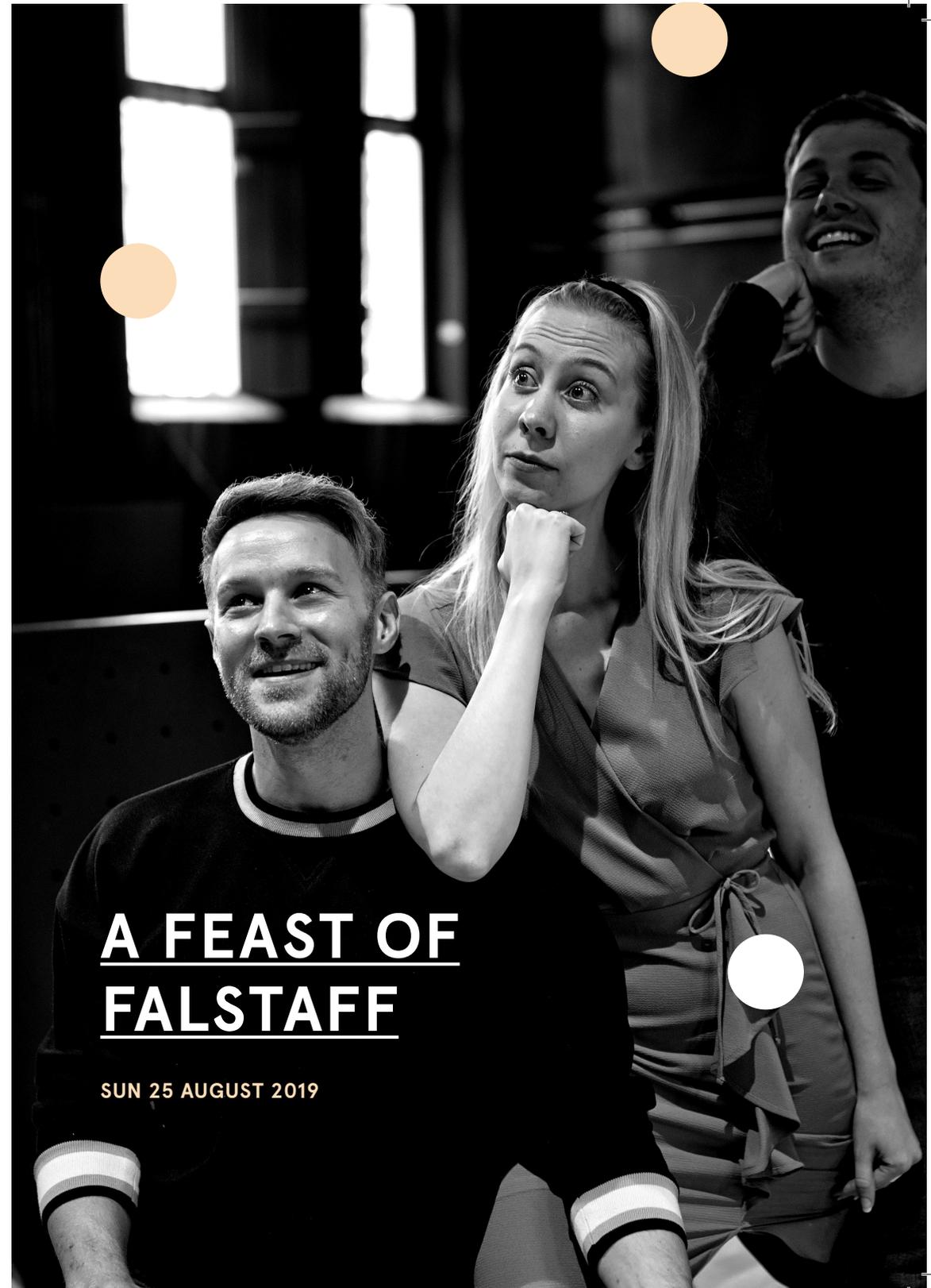
Christmas Eve, and all in the village are getting ready for the big day ...In the nearby forest, a young elf is learning what Christmas is all about from the wise old Fir Tree ...In one magical night, two worlds collide, and Christmas will never be the same again ...Join Northern Opera Group this Christmas for this rare opportunity to experience the most wonderful and festive of operas! Featuring animations from illustrator Sophia Watts.

Take Part!

Come and take part in The Christmas Elf, no need to audition and no previous experience is necessary. You'll be able to perform in our chorus for the production alongside a leading cast of professional soloists. Further details will be released in Autumn 2019 so sign-up to our mailing list to be the first to hear about rehearsals, or email louise@northernoperagroup.co.uk for more information.



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A FEAST OF FALSTAFF

SUN 25 AUGUST 2019

A Feast of Falstaff: Sir John in Opera

There's no other character from Shakespeare who has charmed the imaginations of operacomposers and librettists than Sir John Falstaff.

There are two core pieces of opera repertoire that feature Falstaff – Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and Verdi's *Falstaff* – alongside operas by the likes of Antonio Salieri (Mozart's arch-nemesis, should the movie be believed!), the Irish composer Michael Balfe, and British heavyweights Ralph Vaughan-Williams and Gustav Holst.

Why is it that Sir John has proven so popular over 200 hundred odd years of opera history?

Arguably the main reason is that Falstaff fits the bill of one of the most beloved stock opera characters – that of the Basso Buffo ('funny bass'). A character that truly came to the fore towards the end of the 18th century, sometimes they are a slightly malevolent but pathetic character, and at others the slightly hapless foil to the main protagonist. Very rarely the hero, the Buffo is still often the most interesting and entertaining character – think Bartolo in *Barber of Seville*, Dulcamara in *Elixir of Love*, or Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier*. It's easy to see how Falstaff – whether as a direct Buffo or a near cousin – was

an obvious choice for librettists and composers looking for new inspiration.

Although Falstaff appears in three plays – a fact made full use of by Orson Welles in extraordinary film *Chimes at Midnight* – opera largely sticks to *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Indeed for all of the hundreds of Shakespeare operas hardly any are based on the history plays.

After much thinking about why this is the case I'd be pleased to hear opinions on the issue! I wonder if the topic of (sometimes fairly obscure) English history was too removed for continental librettists and composers. It's notable how few historic English figures and stories are represented in opera – Elizabeth I is the most popular monarch on the opera stage, but even she features in such few works, and the only major composer to pay much attention to English history was Gaetano Donizetti, with his set of Tudor operas.

The lack of development of English language opera between 1700 and 1900 (a slight generalisation, but not by much) has a great part to play in this. I'm sure had England churned out popular opera composers in the same rate as Italy, Germany or even France, we would



be talking about a Henry V opera, or Richard III, for instance (though it still seems baffling that there's no notable Richard III opera – what a central character to set to music!).

Of the six Falstaff operas mentioned earlier, it is only Holst's *At the Boar's Head* that focuses on the events of the Henry IV's. Both Holst and Vaughan-Williams were important players in the resurrection of traditional English music in the early 20th century (as notable British classical composers began to emerge, so too did their desire to promote the largely ignored or forgotten English music of previous centuries) and both composers relied heavily on traditional English melodies for their Falstaff operas.

The entirety of *At the Boar's Head* takes place in the eponymous tavern, as Falstaff and Hal prop up the bar, and allow various characters to come in and out – it is, and certainly feels, episodic. Though not as obviously entertaining as the *Merry Wives* operas, what we do get is the relationship between Hal and Falstaff – surely one of the most fascinating in all of Shakespeare. Wouldn't it be great to have a trilogy of Henry operas, to see this relationship develop dramatically and musically? Maybe one day...

DAVID WARD

Artistic Director,
Northern Opera Group



Northern Opera Group perform rare and wonderful operas in imaginative ways.

Formed in 2015 by Artistic Director, David Ward, and Producer, Louise Garner, the company produce both professional and community productions of works outside of the core repertoire - enabling artists and audiences to enjoy operas and composers that they would otherwise never likely have opportunity to experience.

Previous productions include Amahl and the Night Visitors (Menotti),

Cinderella (Viardot), The Wandering Scholar (Holst), and Alfred (Arne). Future plans include works by Pfitzner and Delius, as well as regular concert programme.

We are always pleased to hear from potential partners and collaborators for future productions - please contact David in the first instance.

DAVID WARD
david@northernoperagroup.co.uk

ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE
LONDON SW1P 3HA
7.00 PM TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER



STEPHEN STORACE
BRIDE & GLOOM
GLI SPOSI MALCONTENTI (1785)

a comic opera
in two acts,
sung in English



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Support

Northern Opera Group is a registered charity (no. 1167501) and relies on the generosity of our supporters to carry out our work.

Alongside our annual Festival, we enable everyone to take part in opera, for free, with our regular community productions, and we have big plans for the future.

We need help from you to make them a reality!

You can donate by completing our donation form, or by visiting **northernoperagroup.co.uk/support** to donate by card or Direct Debit.

Thank you for your support.



2019 Festival supporters



Annual funders



Support Form

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Thank you.

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I would like to make a donation of £ _____
(minimum donation of £50 to become a Friend)

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- by making a one-off donation at **northernoperagroup.co.uk/support**
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