



TÊTE À TÊTE: THE OPERA FESTIVAL 2011

'our most imaginative opera laboratory'

4 - 21 August 2011

FINAL PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED – FULL DETAILS AT

www.tete-a-tete.org.uk

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival announces the full programme for 2011; another creative laboratory for pioneering new work where anything might happen and everything does. From the beautiful to the abhorrent, tragic to hilarious *Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival* celebrates all that opera could and should be.

With **Lite Bites** out in the community, huge numbers of **performances** within Riverside's theatre spaces, a new programme of **free shows** around and outside the building and a brand new **website** hosting full length videos of over 70 previous festival productions, *Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival* offers the chance to experience new opera inside, outside and online.

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2011 sees artists joining ranks to use opera as a means of political, environmental and social commentary. Whilst the pop industry seems to lack the fire that forced previous generations' protest songs into being, this year's submissions featured a large number of provocative and engaging productions around very real issues including war, the environment, abortion, poverty, parenthood and government cuts in education.

Closing Schools for the Future originated out of a desire to make a presentation at an education conference much more than just a series of statistics. Composer **Gary Carpenter** and educationalist **Nick Owen** use interviews, statistics and official documents to bring to life the sense of loss within the community once a school closure is agreed.

Glyndebourne Youth Opera presents a double-bill of new commissions, both dealing with contemporary issues: *On Off* by **Orlando Gough** is a vocal piece that looks at our relationship with energy and the challenges of sustainable living; *When I am Old* - a new work by **Hannah Conway** with libretto by **Hazel Gould** - is inspired by the story of Rachel Corrie, the American peace activist killed in Gaza in 2003.

Italian born, raised in Brazil and now resident in London **Mario Ferraro** brings his multi-faceted production *The Moonflower* to *Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival*. Based on the lives of botanist Margaret Mee and the Amazonian environmental activist Chico Mendes (who died at the hands of those he was trying to stop), *The Moonflower* brings

together opera, theatre, dance and video art to carry the audience on a journey into the forest to search for this rare and beautiful species.

Conflict and war are explored both in relation to specific and current wars and in its generic impact on people and communities. In ***The City Weeps*** from **electric voice theatre** the devastating impact of invasion and conquest are told through the words of Bush and Blair. **Welsh National Youth Opera's *The Sleeper*** by **Stephen Deazley** and **Michael Symmons Roberts** conjures up a world in which terror and panic rule, where a group of young people have a secret to protect and the military are closing in.

A rich source of material for artists of all persuasions, the dark recesses of the mind, is explored by several of this year's performances. **Paul Evernden's *In Her Little Room*** uses solo violin, actor and electronics in a provocative piece of music theatre that sees a lone woman regressing to childhood and coming to terms with a difficult past. **Danny Saleeb's SoS Music Theatre** returns to explore Charlotte Perkins Gilman's claustrophobic world in ***Yellow***, while **Size Zero Opera's *Innocence in the Asylum*** brings you a double bill of chamber opera with premieres of works by two exciting female composers, **Diana Soh's** (Singapore) ***The Boy Who Lived Down The Lane*** and **Blair Foley's** (USA) ***We're All Mad Here***. Performed by some of the most talented young musicians and vocalists in the UK, ***Innocence in the Asylum*** is brave, innovative and pushes every existing chamber opera boundary to the limit and beyond.

Festival favourite **Errollyn Wallen**, meanwhile, in ***Telling the Stories of Our Time*** presents a retrospective of her 11 operas to date and explores how they have all confronted issues that arouse our passions, including a glimpse of the new opera she is currently writing with **Bonnie Greer, Yes**. Poverty through the centuries, meanwhile, is explored in an unusual musical way in **Caroline Heslop's *Voicing***.

All however is not weighed down with the problems of our times and **Tête à Tête's** own innate joie de vivre, as always, shines through. Alongside the dark, there is dazzling light, with productions that are funny, charming and off-the-wall popping up unabated by austerity measures and man's desire to kill his neighbours.

Fresh from his Royal Opera House smash, ***Anna Nicole*** and West End dance spectacular, ***Shoes***, **Richard Thomas** leads the charge against gloom and doom with ***Wrong Songs for Summer***, a rare live appearance just as he started out; a piano, some voices and a purile sense of humour. Who could ask for anything more?

A fascination with human development and intergenerational relationships runs through many productions. **Luke Styles** and **Peter Cant's** surreal and hilarious ***A Fetus in America*** takes the Tea Party activists at their word with **Ziggy** (Jessica Walker) - a talking, singing embryo - as the star of her own Petri dish. **Opera North's** critically acclaimed new production ***Life Cycle*** by **Emily Hall** and **Toby Litt**, features the wonderfully innocent voice of **Mara Carlyle** in a set of songs around the funny and sometimes traumatic story of new motherhood. Meanwhile in a laboratory elsewhere, mother Marie Curie, daughter and grand-daughter all connect in **Tête à Tête's** own Seedbed production of **Stephen McNeff's *Daughters of the Elements***.

Following its 2010 production ***BabyO***, **Scottish Opera** invite 18 – 36 month old toddlers and their parents to an interactive workshop for ***SensoryO***; a work they are currently developing for audiences of toddlers as an introduction to live performances, and during which the company will bravely be soliciting audience feedback from the unruly crowd. Written by **Ian MacMillan** with a score by **Ben Park, *Tales of Our Fathers***, for ages seven and over, explores the life of a son and father through puppeteer **Steve Tiplady** together with two singers and musicians. Also aimed at a younger audience is pianist and presenter **Dominic Harlan's** acclaimed introduction to lieder ***When Yesterday We Met ... A Family Recital*** about which Ian Bostridge effused "*I would never, ever have believed that hardcore song repertoire could be conveyed so powerfully and enjoyably to an audience of children. An unmitigated triumph of the imagination*".

Literary masters and masterpieces provide inspiration for several productions with the dramatic and tragic life of Russian poet Sergei Yesenin explored in the ongoing development of composer and Festival regular **Nigel Osborne** and dancer **Michael Popper's *Remembering... ...Forgetting*** which they are currently developing ready to tour village halls and community centres. Working on their first foray into opera, composer **Jenny Gould**, librettist **Rachel Barnett** and director **Joanna Turner** present their operatic adaptation of the eerie **Thomas Hardy** short story ***The Withered Arm*** and **Marcus Farnworth** (Turnage's *Greek*, Music Theatre Wales) stars as the bug-man in **Gavin**

Wayte's sung drama based on Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, which is preceded by our first festival sound installation, *Clearing* by Alexis Guneratne.

Greek myths provide rich material for both the ongoing development of **Tête à Tête's** production *Icarus* by **Michael Zev Gordon** and *Orpheus and Euridice* – the UK premiere of **Ricky Ian Gordon's** song cycle in two acts. Following the showcase of a short scene from *Icarus* at last year's festival, this year Tête à Tête will present the first act in which the master craftsman Daedalus teaches Icarus the art of the smithy.

Several regulars return to the Festival including the ever-inspiring **Streetwise Opera** whose work creating opera for and by the homeless was born out of working with Tête à Tête back in 2002. This year they bring *Fables – A Film Opera* to **Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival**, a group of short films created by leading composers and filmmakers and starring 125 performers who have experienced homelessness. Tête à Tête's ongoing instrumental collaborator, **Chroma** presents the premiere of *The North Wind was a Woman*, a new commission by regular Tête à Tête composer **David Bruce**, for soprano and ensemble. **Conor Mitchell** and **Mark Ravenhill** return to develop their trypitich *The Headless Soldier*, while **Tête à Tête** open the Festival with a Seedbed performance of **Robert Fokkens' Love Songs**; a meditation on the nature of love, a couple seek professional advice to help them navigate the choppy waters of marriage.

The maverick composer, electronic artist and VJ **Ergo Phizmiz** premières a new work based on Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* making use of animation and stagecraft to create a magical world involving bicycles, murder, atomic theory and sweets, while at the same time broadening the programme of the festival with the Festival's first exhibition, *Ergo's Staticopera*. Producer and Musical Director **James Young** presents his new collection of micro opera: *6 Word Operas* is a series of nano-productions created by various composers whose libretto was restricted to just six words.

Beyond the wealth of auditorium performances and impromptu scenes out on the high street is a major development for **Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival** in 2011, a formidable programme of free performances, in the corridors, cafes and foyers of Riverside Studios, both 'owning' the building and opening up more creative outlets for the overwhelming number of artists with new operas to explore. **Filament** - the joyous partnership of **Osnat Schmoor** and **Sabina Netherclift** - has grown along with the festival from *Drive, Ride, Walk* in 2007. This year they bring several ideas to the fringe events including *One Small Step*, an initial workshop exploration of a new show inspired by a child's first steps, while in *One Big Sing* where they plan to combine the Festival artists and the Filament choir to fill the building with music. **Ergo Phizmiz** creates the world's first mute, stationery opera, strewn in silence and stillness across the gallery walls for the duration of the Festival. Hardy reappears as Max Hoehn's Fuxebor Productions stage *Charlotte Bray's Midnight Closes*, settings of three Thomas Hardy poems for soprano, piano, clarinet and cello. At any time throughout the festival, you might find yourself in the middle of **Max Charles Davies' Brunch**, while **Catherine Kontz' Larvae** is a possibly unique chance to see musical hexaflexagons (which are two-dimensional but have three sides) in action.

2011 is the fifth **Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival** and has quickly established itself as a byword for original and groundbreaking work. From the country's major opera houses to individual artists. **Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival** has become the go-to platform for composers, performers, libretists and directors to create, develop and try out new works. **Bill Bankes-Jones'** hunch four years ago that such a platform was overdue has proved spot on.

Tête à Tête is passionate about making new opera enjoyable and available for everyone. **Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival** is no exception with its format of up to three shows a night revolving around the opportunity to relax by the river with a drink and bite to eat, chat with artists and discuss what you've seen, it really is a good night for *anyone*.

Please visit www.tete-a-tete.org.uk for more details.

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival. ALL PERFORMANCES TAKE PLACE AT: Riverside Studios, Crisp Road, London W6 9RL
Box office: 020 8237 1111
www.riversidestudios.co.uk

Tickets: £6/£4 (concessions) per show. The festival is programmed so that you can enjoy the delicious food of the Riverside Restaurant & Bar between performances, for a **10% discount** on your bill, just present your tickets when you order.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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About Tête à Tête

Tête à Tête has established a peerless reputation for bringing hugely innovative small-scale opera of outstanding quality to the widest possible audience. High quality intimate, uplifting and pioneering productions such as the world's first opera about giving birth (*PUSH!*), a collaboration with knitters and spinners from Shetland (*Odysseus Unwound*) and evenings of bite sized chamber operas with six librettists and composers (*Shorts, Six-Pack, Blind Date*) have received rave reviews and delighted audiences new and old. Tête à Tête also produced the recent smash hit *Salad Days* at the Riverside Studios