

Family Matters



Evaluation

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1. Introduction

Family Matters is an opera commissioned by Tête à Tête from one librettist and six composers retelling the story of the third play of Beaumarchais' *Figaro* trilogy, *La Mère Coupable* in a contemporary context. The opera was developed through a series of public workshops at BAC in the summer of 2003, the subject of its own evaluation report, (appendix J.) The final version was then Premiered and given 11 performances in London, and a further 10 performances on tour throughout the UK in the early spring of 2004, playing to a total audience of 2003. The whole project was supported by outreach workshops for the homeless in London, and schools-based educational workshops on tour.

2. Aims

The aims of the project were

A: ARTISTIC:

- a. to make work of the highest possible quality;
- b. take Tête à Tête's proven formula of single productions written by a wide range of composers, and yet draw the performance and writing into a tighter scheme, where the benefit of this variety of tone is more than surprising, but also enhances the narrative and schematic structure of the whole; we saw this as a natural development of our multi-composer commissions *Shorts (1999-2001)* and *Six-Pack (2002,)* where each composer was given free reign to create a short free-standing work as part of a whole evening;

B: ARTISTS:

- c. offer a number of highly gifted composers and other artists the chance to discover what it means to create genuinely popular challenging work, in a positive non-competitive environment, and then to experience sharing this work with wide-ranging audiences through the highest number of performances possible;
- d. introduce a whole new batch of composers to writing opera professionally: Five were doing so for the first time, the other wrote his first professionally produced opera for Tête à Tête as part of *Six-Pack*.
- e. widen the pool of composers introduced to the writing of opera: for the first time, half of these composers are drawn from outside the traditional classical music hothouse.

C: ART-FORM AND AUDIENCES

- f. move towards making opera an integral part of the theatregoing public's diet by delivering this work across the UK, presenting it in key small- to middle- scale venues as part of their regular programmes;
- g. break down the elitism and exclusivity that surrounds all opera, and particularly contemporary opera, creating new audiences for opera of all kinds;
- h. give opera a valid place in the lives of a broad cross-section of today's society;
- i. prove that contemporary opera can survive on equal terms alongside the competition - the many regularly funded theatre and dance companies, commercial tours and self-generated performances that populate these venues;

D: COMPANY DEVELOPMENT:

- j. develop the company artistically, enhancing our proven formula of multi-composer performances by driving a stronger dramatic unity and thematic thrust through a single narrative.
- k. lay the groundwork for future planned activity (particularly our 2006 Julian Grant Commission)

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- l. deepen our existing relationships with venues and audiences (Bridewell, Bury St Edmunds, Nottingham, Leicester and Canterbury.)
- m. build new relationships with venues in order to extend our audience (Totnes, Brighton, Edinburgh.)
- n. Strengthen and develop our outreach and educational work with an extended and better-planned series of workshops.

3. Plans for evaluation

Our original plans state that: “Many of these objectives will be evaluated through our audience feedback surveys, press reports, venue and artist feedback. Others can only be assessed subjectively, by the feel of a performance and audience, and what will transpire afterwards. Though verifiable in this way, the achievement of some of these objectives is simply not quantifiable.”

Great pains were taken to document all aspects of the production, as demonstrated in the many appendices to this report.

4. Evaluation through the project

a: Audience (appendix B.)

After the very high return rate of our audience surveys for *Six-Pack*, we included a feedback form in the back of the programme for the show. In order to target our entire audience, and not just those who bought programmes, we also circulated more detailed photocopied feedback forms around the audience at all performances. The return rate for feedback forms from programmes was disappointing compared to *Six-Pack*. There was a very marked decline in the return of these, principally, we think, because volunteer Caroline Steane attended most London performances and toured with the company for *Six-Pack*, and made it a major part of her job to encourage the return of these forms. We had no dedicated volunteer this time round. Unfortunately, this impacts heavily on the amount and quality of information we have about our audience for *Family Matters*, and offers useful lessons for future practice.

b: press

The company engaged press rep Maija Handover specifically to handle this side of the project. She managed to secure listings in all national and local papers, a number of features, and for the first time for the company, a review in every single national paper as well as many locals. (appendix C.)

c: venues

Regular contact was maintained with venues throughout the project, regular statements of box-office returns recorded almost daily for the Bridewell and weekly for all tour venues, (appendix F.) Venue feedback forms were circulated and returned at the end of the project (appendix D.)

d: company

With the Artistic Director on tour with the company, and therefore in constant touch with company feeling, the Board of Directors decided that no further evaluation of company response was necessary. A handful of unprompted responses from members of the company are included (appendix E.)

e: education

Streetwise opera wrote their own report on the homeless workshops, and results were discussed with all Homeless Centre managers. (Appendix H.)

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Regular contact was again maintained with all participating schools, and feedback forms circulated, though disappointingly none were returned. Anecdotally, however, we certainly had warm feedback from all workshop promoters. (appendix I.)

5. Results

A: ARTISTIC AIMS

i to make work of the highest possible quality;

The great volume of praise for the production (appendices B, C, D, E) certainly testifies to its quality. A handful of critics may have had doubts about the end-product, but the quality of delivery was beyond dispute.

ii To take Tête à Tête's proven formula of single productions written by a wide range of composers, and yet draw the performance and writing into a tighter scheme, where the benefit of this variety of tone is more than surprising, but also enhances the narrative and schematic structure of the whole; we saw this as a natural development of our multi-composer commissions *Shorts (1999-2001)* and *Six-Pack (2002)*, where each composer was given free reign to create a short free-standing work as part of a whole evening;

It's very interesting now to look back on this aim and compare it to the actual results. Though by the standards of any other UK Opera Company *Family Matters* was certainly successful overall, it certainly didn't bring us the chorus of unqualified acclaim we had for *Shorts* and *Six-Pack*, and this in turn was reflected in audience figures.

Acclaim isn't everything, of course, and sometimes it's tough to lead the field. Many of our most regular attenders felt this was the best thing we had ever done. It was certainly the most substantial and challenging, which maybe mitigated against popularity. In the end, the tone was maybe not as various as we had anticipated, both choice of composers and workshop process drawing the six individual voices together. But this in itself was a remarkable technical achievement.

B: ARTISTS:

i. To offer a number of highly gifted composers and other artists the chance to discover what it means to create genuinely popular challenging work, in a positive non-competitive environment, and then to experience sharing this work with wide-ranging audiences through the highest number of performances possible;

We certainly achieved this aim. Though the production was not as popular as we had hoped, it still gave a lot of pleasure, food for thought and entertainment to a great many people at all levels of experience of opera-going. The company was remarkably happy (appendix E,) and certainly much happier than on the *Six-Pack* tour where our board of directors themselves undertook an evaluation of company feeling. For such a work, 21 performances was certainly the highest number possible, and it seems that we were the only company in the whole of 2004 to have operas by composers new to the form widely reviewed.

ii. To introduce a whole new batch of composers to writing opera professionally: Five are doing so for the first time, the other wrote his first professionally produced opera for Tête à Tête as part of *Six-Pack*.

This was one of the most successfully achieved aims of the project. The composers were indeed as described, and it seems that we were the only company in the whole of 2004 to première operas by composers new to the form and have them widely reviewed.

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One of the most gratifying unexpected outcomes was how the structure of the piece necessitated all the composers to immerse themselves in the structure of the evening as a whole, taking an interest in each others' work, considering carefully issues of pacing through the evening. From the point of view of training up composers to write operas, *Family Matters* was vastly more successful than *Shorts* and *Six-Pack*, both in terms of the level of experience of participating composers, and of their learning curve about making a whole evening of opera.

- iii. **To widen the pool of composers introduced to the writing of opera: for the first time, half of these composers are drawn from outside the traditional classical music hothouse.**

Again, our "intake" of composers certainly met this aim – composers Pete Flood, Helen Chadwick and Mike Henry each moving into the field of classical composition from very different areas. To widen the pool of opera composers in general is a very long-term strategy, and it's too early yet to gauge how successful we have been. It's certainly the case that most of these composers are looking to write more, and glancing back at previous company alumni (for example David Bruce, now a finalist in the Genesis Opera Project,) the prognosis is good.

C: ART-FORM AND AUDIENCES

The smaller than anticipated audiences was the most disappointing aspect of the project. Based on the Six-Pack figures for a similar sized tour (3,222 attending 24 performances) we had hoped with a hugely improved workshop programme to reach 4,500. In the end, the final figures were 2295, made up of audience (capacity 4311) plus 292 workshop participants. With hindsight, this was certainly an over-ambitious target (set before the tour, and therefore venue capacity was fully booked,) and the lower audience attendance a healthy reminder of the very great risks of putting on a show. *Six-Pack* audiences were certainly boosted by an even more favourable press, almost certainly by the support of ENO as co-producers, and very probably by the lightness of our marketing and the content of the show altogether.

In terms of detailed aims in this area:

- i. **move towards making opera an integral part of the theatregoing public's diet by delivering this work across the UK, presenting it in key small- to middle- scale venues as part of their regular programmes;**

We certainly presented *Family Matters* in the kind of venues described. To make our work an integral part of the theatregoing public's diet, we would certainly need to perform this kind of work more regularly in the same places, build up the trust and loyalty nationally that we feel in London. This is a situation very much engendered by our lack of core funding, the necessity to constantly re-invent ourselves according to current climates and artistic impulses.

- ii. **break down the elitism and exclusivity that surrounds all opera, and particularly contemporary opera, creating new audiences for opera of all kinds;**
- iii. **give opera a valid place in the lives of a broad cross-section of today's society;**

That we achieved these two aims is certainly underscored again and again in our audience feedback (appendix B.) We were also very pleased to note that 11% of our audience overall were totally new to opera, though unfortunately we don't have comparative information for London and the tour. This is slightly down on *Six-Pack* (10% London, 20% tour) but taking workshop participants and the diminished audience overall into account, we are very happy with this result. Even more satisfying, *Family Matters* was the first new opera seen by an amazing 32% of our audience. With 34% under 44 years old, we were also very happy with the relative youth for an opera-going audience.

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- iv. **prove that contemporary opera can survive on equal terms alongside the competition - the many regularly funded theatre and dance companies, commercial tours and self-generated performances that populate these venues;**

In terms of attendance, our audiences may have been disappointing, but were by no means shameful. Nevertheless, the audience “shortfall” for *Family Matters*, spliced with the fairly late reduction of our grant from Arts Council England from what we applied for, has made a really significant dent in the company’s reserves, and shows that the challenge of meeting this objective is really one now for our funders, rather than ourselves, that until the funding playing-field is levelled by supporting our work and other work in the field of small-scale opera to the same degree as our competitors, we can’t hope to meet this objective.

D: COMPANY DEVELOPMENT:

- i. **to develop the company artistically, enhancing our proven formula of multi-composer performances by driving a stronger dramatic unity and thematic thrust through a single narrative.**

Though with hindsight, the multi-composer/single story evening is unlikely to be a form we shall continue to pursue with vigour, it was very important to make the experiment: that the results of an experiment may not be 100% positive, that by no means signifies that the experiment in itself was unsuccessful. Moment by moment, the whole company learnt enormously artistically, and we’re certainly more mature in our artistic and managerial planning. An important lesson to learn from the project is that we have just about peaked (and at Totnes surpassed) in terms of the technical ambition of our stagings set against the capabilities of our venues. An important lesson to keep in mind.

- ii. **To lay the groundwork for future planned activity (particularly our 2006 Julian Grant Commission);**

Julian Grant’s involvement in *Family Matters* was maybe the greatest help in preparing himself and the company for his full-length opera in 2006, familiarising himself yet deeper with how we work, and ourselves yet deeper with him, allowing us together to learn the lessons from the good and bad bits of this project. Especially given the likely boost our probable collaboration with the Genesis Opera Project, we are very confident that with two “sexier” productions, moving up a scale in terms of venues will assist each project symbiotically, address the technical challenges we posed ourselves with this tour, and curiously, help us achieve far better audience figures.

- iii. **To deepen our existing relationships with venues and audiences (Bridewell, Bury St Edmunds, Nottingham, Leicester and Canterbury.)**

This certainly took place, (Appendix D) though with the demise of the Bridewell and the scaling up of the company generally, is of limited future use. The promoters were by and large highly involved in the project, and very sanguine about the lower attendance figures across the board, seeing our work as a vital part of their programming. The Gulbenkian Theatre in Canterbury was booking us for the first time outside the Canterbury Festival, and the figures there clearly suffered from that lack of support.

- iv. **To build new relationships with venues in order to extend our audience (Totnes, Hereford, Edinburgh.)**

Totnes in particular was a very satisfying date. Gill Bird, music teacher at the school first saw our work taking a school party to a performance of *Shorts* in Bath, had been trying to book us ever since, and finally scraped the money together for this visit. We were thrilled with a very successful series of workshops, and tremendous warmth from the audience, which included many pupils who partly thanks to an early exposure to our work are planning to make their careers in the fields of opera and music. The performance itself was hampered by the technical restrictions of the venue, but no less enjoyed for that.

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Edinburgh was again a long sought-after booking, particularly useful, given the Shetland base of the Julian Grant Commission, in giving us a foothold in Scotland. Definitely, as their feedback says, the start of what we all hope to be a long working relationship.

Hereford again we had wanted to visit for a long time, and were very happy to be performing in a venue which makes a particular effort in the field of music theatre.

v. To Strengthen and develop our outreach and educational work with an extended and better-planned series of workshops.

This was an enormous step forward for the company, both in London and on Tour.

The homeless workshop programme (appendix H) was seriously jeopardised by their exclusion them from the Arts Council, England funding package at a very late stage (October 2003, prior to workshops in February 2004,) but thankfully the Paul Hamlyn Foundation came rapidly to the rescue. This allowed us to reach a whole new area of under-served audience, and also to maintain a working relationship with former co-producers Streetwise Opera. With hindsight, the workshops would have been much improved with a greater involvement of singers, and we should certainly look at that another time round.

Meanwhile the schools workshops alongside the tour were an enormous success with participants, schools, and in terms of building audience for the show. They were a tremendous labour to plan and manage, the brunt of which was born by Natalie Steed Productions rather than included in the planning from the outset. Nevertheless, these workshops paid huge dividends in terms of the strengthening of the project, and we should certainly look at incorporating similar work in our planning of similar tours in the future. A very useful unexpected outcome was the formulation of a proper child protection policy for the company (appendix liv.)

E Financial and managerial.

The financial aims of the project were set out from the early stages of the project in the budget.

Administration (including overheads) cost a total of 13,000, 8% of the overall spend of 160,000, – remarkably good value.

Despite first presenting the project to Arts Council, England in December 2002, we ended up making separate applications for the workshop and main phases, and weren't awarded a grant some £6,000 less than we had requested until the end of October 2003, a very late stage for a project starting rehearsals the first week of the following January. In the end, the first instalment of this very vital payment wasn't released until an extremely late stage, seriously hampering the cash-flow of the project.

This situation was in part engendered by an ACE restructuring of funding systems in the lead-up to the project, and partly by an extremely complex exchange of intricately detailed questions and answers about the project, both before and after the award of our grant. While relationships with all our many other funders were very cordial and positive, it made things very difficult to secure the support of by far our biggest partner, ACE, at such a late stage, and certainly had an effect on the options for casting, planning, staffing and so on. In the event, we had no alternative but to cover this 6,000 shortfall by upping our targets for London Box-Office on the basis of the enormous success of *Six-Pack*. We fell way short of these targets and more. Thanks to some very tight financial management by Natalie Steed we managed to emerge from the project sustaining a loss of only 6,500 (pretty much exactly the shortfall in

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funding from ACE,) which we have had to meet from company reserves. This has been very destabilising for the company, combining with a year of very low activity (2004-5) to more or less wipe out all reserves.

With the support of the ACE so vital to our operations, and ourselves of such strategic importance to them, it does seem imperative that we should work closer together both to agree project funding at an earlier stage for each project, and also aiming to move towards regular funding which would ease this difficulty enormously.

Though they are largely in the end a matter of luck, the *Six-Pack* and *Canticles* comparisons show how hugely beneficial the involvement of a co-producer can be.

6. Conclusion

As an experiment, *Family Matters* was an enormous success. In terms of artist and company development, it was of key importance. Some of the unexpected outcomes, such as the depth of involvement of the composers in the evening as a whole and the striking success of the educational side, were quite remarkable. Artistically, in terms of both artist involvement (a company of 6 singers as against 4, and composers creating far more music, far more interlinked,) and also in terms of throwing the workshop stage open to the public, the project was very much bigger than *Six-Pack*.

Though all this is mitigated by the number of people the project actually reached as audience members being very much less than we had hoped, the project was overall extremely successful in meeting its aims.

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Appendix A: Summary of performance and workshop attendance

- Bridwell Theatre, London: 6-22 Feb
11 performances
1022 audience
(Workshops with homeless organizations- 32 attenders)

- Lakeside Arts Centre 1 & 2 March
2 public performances. 1 schools focused
163 audience (82 students)
Workshop with three schools: Brunts School All Saints School Redhill School (60 students)

- Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. 5&6 March
2 performances: 132 audience

- Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds 13 March
1 public performance: 171 audience

- King Edward VI Community College 17 March
1 performance: 119
3 workshops: 20 pupils

- Phoenix Arts Centre 24 March
1 performance: 95
2 workshops: Gateway College, Guthlaxton School (50 students)

- Courtyard Hereford 28 March
1 performance: 132 audience
1 workshop: Queen Elizabeth High School (20 students)

- Gulbenkian Canterbury 30 March
1 performance: 83 audience
3 workshops at St. Edmunds School (75 students)

Appendix B: Audience Feedback Surveys

i: from the programme:

FEEDBACK MATTERS

We'd really like to hear from you about what you thought of the show –
please tell us here...

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THE FUTURE

If you would like to be informed of future activity please give us your details

Please contact me by

- post only email only either post or email

Name:

Address:

.....
.....
.....
.....

email:

Age Category:

- Under 12 25 - 45 12 - 19
 45 - 64 20 - 24 65 and over

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

- Tête à Tête may use your details to send information about future productions.

Please tick the box if you do not wish to receive such communications.

When you have completed this feedback form please hand it in at the box office or, alternatively, seal it and post it to us.

Please affix
stamp here

Family Matters Feedback
32 Lilyville Road, London SW6 5DW

ii: photocopied sheet.

FEEDBACK MATTERS

We'd really like to hear from you about what you thought of the show – please tell us here...

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I have seen an opera

- in the last 3 months in the last 6 months in the last year
- in the last 10 years I have never seen an opera

I have seen a new opera

- in the last 3 months in the last 6 months in the last year
- in the last 10 years I have never seen a new opera

I have seen a show by Tête à Tête

- in the last 3 months in the last 6 months in the last year
- in the last 10 years I have never seen a show by Tête à Tête

How did you hear about the show (please tick any that apply)

- Read about it in the venue brochure
- I'm on the Tete a Tete mailing list
- I received a leaflet in the post but I'm not on the Tete a Tete mailing list
- I picked up a leaflet
- I read about it in a newspaper
- I received an email about the show
- Somebody told me about it
- Somebody else booked the ticket

Age category:

- Under 12 12 – 19 20 – 24
- 25 – 45 45 – 64 65 and over

THE FUTURE

If you would like to be informed of future activity please give us your details

Please contact me by

- post only email only either post or email

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Tel:

email:

Age category:

- Under 12 12 – 19 20 – 24
- 25 – 45 45 – 64 65 and over

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

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Tête à Tête may use your details to send information about future productions. Please tick the box if you do not wish to receive such communications.

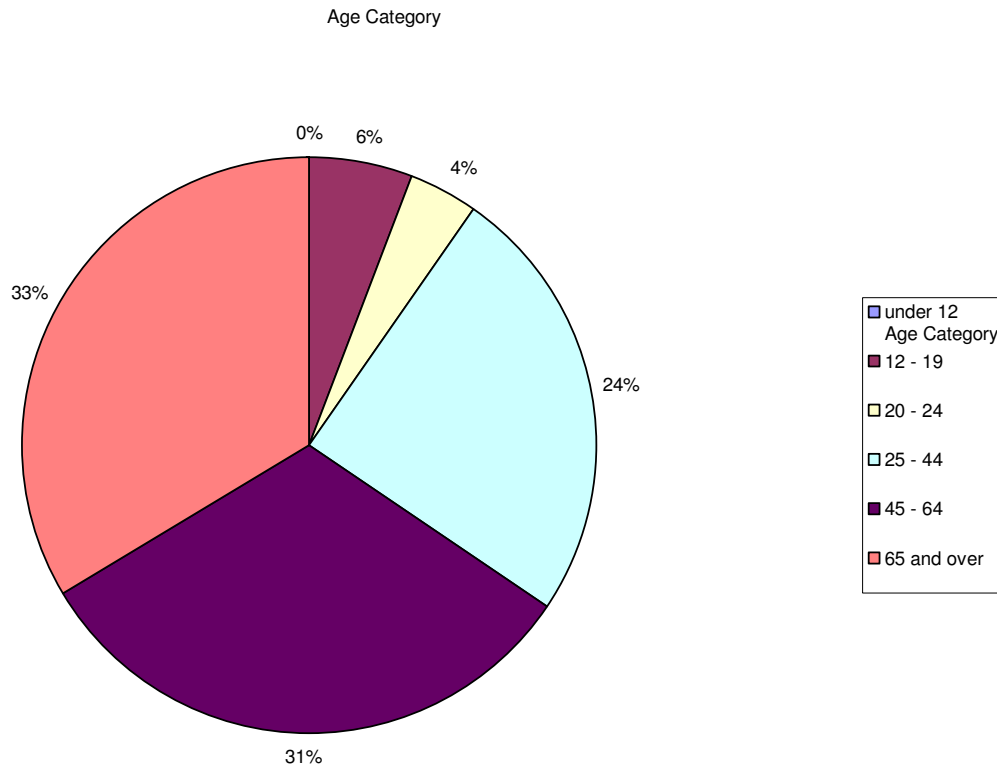
When you have completed this feedback form please hand it to a member of the theatre staff or, alternatively, seal it, affix a stamp and post it to us at **32 Lilyville Road, London, SW6 5DW**

Tête à Tête are a registered charity (1069055). We rely heavily on donations if you would like to help please enclose a cheque made payable to Tête à Tête Productions Ltd.

iii responses

We have 124 completed feedback forms on file, a sample of 16% of our audience of 2003, containing the following data:

Age Category							
under 12	12 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65 and over	Not completed	Totals
0	7	5	30	39	41		124
0%	6%	4%	24%	31%	33%	2%	100%



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I have seen an opera in the last				
3 months	6 months	year	10 years	never
53	20	20	17	14
43%	16%	16%	14%	11%

I have seen a new opera in the last				
3 months	6 months	year	10 years	never
13	9	25	31	40
10%	7%	20%	25%	32%

I have seen a show by Tête à Tête in the last				
3 months	6 months	year	10 years	never
5	0	11	17	90
4%	0%	9%	14%	73%

How did you hear about the show?							
Venue brochure	Tête à Tête Mailing List	Leaflet in the post (not Tête à Tête)	picked up a leaflet	read about it in a paper / heard about it on the radio	email	somebody told me about it	somebody else booked the ticket
30	11	12	3	16	3	41	15
24%	9%	10%	2%	13%	2%	33%	12%

	Comments
1	The show was excellent. Great voices and music. I liked the set and modern lyrics too. My children were captivated too.
2	Surprisingly good fun
3	Excellent - really innovative and exciting - beautifully exciting
4	Wonderful idea + execution too
5	I loved it! The transition between composers was as seamless as I'm convinced it could/should be and I think its great to use musicians on stage, so integrated into the show. Set great (particularly the hat box!). By turns it was funny, moving, intriguing and bizarre - everything you want in an opera!
6	Great to hear living composers who are not embarrassed to write tonal music. Was apprehensive about hearing a through composed piece with 6 writers but it really worked. The performers had an astonishingly high level in song, acting and movement
7	fabulous - really enjoyed it
8	Fantastic! A wonderful artistic creative collaboration. Wonderful to see such a finely tuned performance at this scale - loved the way the set worked and the musicians were amazing
9	Very enjoyable and unusual - fantastic mix
10	
11	Fantastic - engaging, committed - comic humour - lyrical
12	
13	I didn't understand
14	I think its very good and I've never seen an opera
15	Absolutely excellent. All the classical innuendo, recitative, clever libretto - marvellous orchestration, use of the spiffy sets to move the narrative along - 10 out of 10. I haven't seen an opera in some time but it does not reflect a lack of interest
16	I thought it wouldn't be as powerful. Its very good, but you have to concentrate a lot to understand it
17	FANTASTIC! Very lively, beautifully paced, great mix of comic moments and lyricism, exciting music and orchestration

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18	Good story, interesting music, more blended than I anticipated. Well sung and played - but orchestra too loud, often drowning the crucial words in a line. It does not have to be so loud.
19	Exciting, creative, singing +++, instrumentalists +++ esp cellist
20	Wonderful and exciting! I hope many more are to come - new opera with humour, drama and a lack of banal stiffness - Bravo!
21	Involving, moving and entertaining. I would welcome more about the composer's roles in the collaboration
22	Very well performed, but the second half lost its way. Musically not very memorable, too generalised.
23	Very well done - fun, brilliant music and musicians, effects - including smells really good
24	Brilliant entertainment - still thinking is it great opera? How does 21st C find its musical voice?
25	Very good – thank you for an entertaining afternoon
26	Excellent - a brilliantly witty production
27	I loved it. I used to go to the opera a lot but haven't been for many years. It made me want to start going again. The singing was wonderful, and I loved the way the story unfolded. I especially loved Helen Chadwick's pieces, but it was all excellent.
28	Great fun!
29	
30	Excellent tight production - 1st class musicians, composers mixed - Pete Flood best, James Olsen next
31	Lovely and original
32	An exciting addition to Mozart and Rossini
33	Really entertaining and it had a certain edge
34	
35	As someone who has never been to the opera I found it quite overwhelming. I found it hard to focus sometimes, BUT I loved the oranges, nudge nudge wink wink - Great fun
36	Its only the interval but I'm having a great time
37	Recommendatious. It was superb - I was moved, I laughed, I was really focussed, I enjoyed it.
38	Worth seeing, good tension, some lovely singing
39	
40	First half brilliant and continually absorbing - v clever
41	Brilliant! Very good acting, fantastic set and inventive music. Very involving and fun
42	NO weak link. Brilliant composition. I liked the playful side of the show which I suppose means the whole show. Didn't know what to expect next. Nice one Bill.
43	The players were wonderful and the actor (singers) as well. The play was brilliant, very lively and funny. Very original and easy to see.
44	Excellent! The set was amazing. The singing and acting very good. The music was variable and the whole thing very worth doing.
45	Great idea and works well. Excellent staging some of the best acting I've seen at the opera (tho' half the time at ENO I'm too far away to see if they're acting) Some of the changes of pace and mood (especially in the 2nd half were a bit abrupt and the baroque surrealist interludes, though exhilarating, seemed out of place, a great evening thanks
46	Excellent singing and acting. Great diction and a lot of emotion - accessible score
47	We enjoyed it Good atmosphere . Comfy seats
48	Great sense of pace. Clever, engaging - not too long - well done.
49	Refreshing and fun
50	Enjoyed it
51	Absolutely terrific - highly original. Marvellous performances from singers and musicians
52	VERY GOOD, WELL BALANCED. Would prefer more songs / melody
53	Loved it - inventive witty and in the end very moving
54	An excellent interesting production. Both singing and acting outstanding. Musicians first rate in difficult score
55	Imaginative production, excellent performers, musically variable, witty lyrics, helps to have background knowledge. Very good value.
56	Excellent show, very well performed, very good music
57	V Cool - awesome music and tomes - loved the oranges

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58	Crazy but VERY VERY cool!
59	Its always good to hear ORIGINAL music - especailly performed so very well. My contemporaries shudder (I'm 78) but I do like to give my ears something new to get their teeth into (incidentally shades of Ben Britten in Family Matters - apart from the name FLORA being the same as in "the Turn of The Screw" - also two innocent children being manipulated. but the MUSICAL similarity is the stillness at the heart of the music.)
60	Enjoyed it a lot
61	
62	I thoroughly enjoyed myself throughout the performance, congratulations everyone
63	The musicians and singers get you drawn right into whats happening - dramatic one moment and funny the next, there's a whole gamut of emotions going on. I loved every minute of it. My first opera and hopefully now the first of many - thank you to Bill and Kate
64	Enjoyed it very much
65	Really, really enjoyed it - mixture of pain and joy came across well. Found almost every word was understandable apart from the times the orchestra played just that little bit too loudly - will see you again.
66	Congratulations to all concerned for an absolutely splendid performance of Family Matters at the Djanogly Theatre the other night. We were thoroughly captivated by the music, singing set design, costumes and lovely jokey bits (especailly the one about the gardner jumping from the window). In fact we enjoyed it so much that we are going to see it again at the Phoenix Theatre in Leicester, later in March. We particularly appreciated the wonderful diction of the singers - so many performances, even in English are difficult to follow. All power to your collective elbows. We look forward to your next venture. If and when the libretto becomes available we would love a copy.
67	as above
68	Very professionally produced - easy to listen to. The best bits involved more than 1 singer at a time - too much simple line singing can be monotonous - very enjoyable evening
69	
70	A most enjoyable evening although not my favourite music. I thought the staging was excellent interesting and inventive (biased). Having the musicians on the stage worked well. For music and singing, I prefered the second act. The singers were very clear and easy to understand.
71	Set design a delight! Constant visual surprises, like the inclusion of the musicians on stage. Vocal lines all well sung. Enjoyed the whole piece, witty and colourful.
72	I Loved it! The singers were fantastic with powerful voices and also so convincing in their roles. I was moved to tears in the scene with Rosa and the candle and next minute laughing at the slapstick type scenes: the directing, scenes, storyline, it was a really enjoyable night. The enthusiasm of all involved was tangible.
73	Musically difficult to get attuned to but once I found "my ear" I enjoyed it tremendously. I loved the furniture in boxes very humourous too. Brillinat second half. I also loved the colour co-ordination. I especially loved the humour of the 3 oranges and also the candlelit scene with Rosa. Both scenes memorable in their own way - enjoyed the evening - well done!
74	Excellent show! Loved everything! Set in the first half was brilliant - very engaging theatre deeply moving but loved the touches of farce and comedy also. Cast were excellent especially enjoyed Mr F's performance. And the oranges were a nice touch ...
75	I though the concept of the using a tightly written play as the basis was sensible. It meant you had a safely structured plot which menat that the project was not a risk on all artistic fronts. I agree with the crit praising you for using several composers and think that this challenged each of them to produce their best in a small timescale. The limitation of just 4 instruments was pratical, very effective and different colours and each really stretched. Rupert Christiansen is a non-creative twat and So wrong about the importance of the workshops.
76	
77	Stimulating, innovative talented opera constatntly needs to renew and its combination of art forms makes it a daunting but challenging opportunity for new ideas the show was sometimes moving and telling, occassionally funny, sometimes silly but beautifully sung and presented, ever thought of the Buxton Festival platform?
78	Really impressive production and performances - best composers Olsen and Flood
79	Very enjoyable - witty and musically delightful. Opening ensemble hard going to un-tuned ears! Kepp going!
80	Brilliant, amusing and very interesting. The set is imaginative and the singers wonderful I found the

Family Matters Evaluation

	acting very impressive. Enjoyed the show immensely
81	Well sung, excellently produced. Box office very unclear about plans of reserved or unreserved seating. Entertaining mixed music. Excellent instructions about leaving Blackfriars tube by exit number 8
82	Really enjoyed it, especially Act 2. Timing excellent. Conductor excellent. All cast fab. Very convincing. Held my attention all the way through
83	Loved it. Was expecting to hate it. Don't usually like opera. Loved the vitality, enjoyed the mixture of styles. Not enough to get bored. Liked the gags, enjoyed the musicians versatility. Well done. The ice-cream was too minty and not enough chocolate chips.
84	Really enjoyed the opera - found it easy to hear the sung words at the Bridewell. Thought some of the music a bit too dissonant - but liked the references in much of it. Though the performances were outstanding.
85	Saw Sunday matinee (15/02/04) at the Bridewell - impressed on all counts, particularly the integration of music from 6 sources, witty performances - the cellist and given the extreme predictability of the plot developments, the degree to which dramatic tension was maintained. After enjoying 6-Pack rather less than Shorts I felt you were back on top form.
86	All 4 people enjoyed it very much. Excellent production, firstclass performances by singers and muscians of existing material. Witty humourous and well done! Oh and those designs were the best - inspired!
87	Fun and fast moving
88	Really enjoyed it especially having Figaro in his costume and the others contemporary - liked the mixture of continuity and variety in the music and great performances as usual (also came to 6-Pack) look forward to next production. Expecially liked the flamenco dancing.
89	Excellent, an opera that works in English
90	It made opera more accesible and relevant to younger people, especially liked the duet between Rosa and "Charlie". The set with the boxes is BRILLIANT! I don't understand why Figaro's name and costume is not modern. The oranges were a nice touch! YOU SHOULD ALL BE VERY PROUD!
91	
92	Interesting new experience for me as someone who enjoys and works in the arts but has never seen an opera before. Really enjoyed the show and would definitely now go to more opera performances. An eye opener!
93	
94	
95	Enjoyable, easy to follow, liked the set - good fun interesting modern music - not t too way out. Good expressive singing and acting.
96	
97	After the first half I was really gripped - very "strong" - wonderful clarity and characterisation - and very funny (also sad) Set good - I liked the boxes! (With composers names attached)
98	Good use of scenery and props. Clever concept for an opera liked the use of humour but felt it could have been developed more so and with more emphasis on character depcition through better charcterisation. Enjoyed the experience.
99	Left us feeling who belonged to who. Wasn't clear. Enjoyed the performances of actors and muscians alike.
100	
101	
102	Innovative and amusing
103	Very absorbing. I particularly liked Helen Chadwick's sections of composition.
104	Enjoyed the second half more than the 1st - maybe just getting used to the music and language or maybe I was just initially not in the mood. VERY good acting!!!
105	Great
106	Fantastic! Really committed performance and fascinating music. Great!
107	Excellent!
108	Very imaginative, fun and entertaining
109	Well Done!
110	Firstly, great admiration for the performers. I enjoyed watching the "complete" performance unveiled in the theatre space - the scene changing, ingenious props, unusual lighting (eg in the descending

Family Matters Evaluation

	crate), interaction of musicians and singers etc etc. I was pleased to be able to hear every word sung. I found this musical style, which I am less unfamiliar with, hard going in the first half, but was so absorbed in the story and singers by the second half as to feel more at home with it. I wouldn't listen to it at home without the live visual aspects too because I haven't enough musical knowledge to be able to understand the forms of a modern piece such as this. I couldn't pick out themes, shapes or repetitions, so much of it sounded random to my ear so I couldn't take part in it mentally. A bit like reading a book with lots of words I don't understand but with good pictures. However, just because I don't fully understand things doesn't mean I don't enjoy it less. It usually gives me a thirst for greater under
111	Less of a success than 6-Pack. The concept of a series of composers is interesting and the set imaginative but the drama missing. The music was a bit retro: like listening to Alban Berg
112	I was really impressed - it was funny. Moving engaging, witty, and the singing was superb. Lovely original composition and staging, thank you
113	Great entertainment! Particularly liked the direction and the humorous touches. Only just caught up with the company - maybe you'll put on a major retrospective just for us!
114	As I am blind with a hearing loss I was unfortunately unable to appreciate the production as fully as it deserved but I enjoyed the music and the singing and was very impressed by what my friend told me about the staging
115	Simply - enjoyed it so much
116	I admired the performance in Hereford and applaud the quality of the singing, the imaginative direction and the dedication of the company in arranging such a complex performance for just one night. Unfortunately I was no wiser at the end about the plot and who was the mother and father of who which rather spoiled the object of the evening. Why not include a synopsis in the programme?
117	Family Matters - really well presented in every way - interesting, original, professional some good music
118	Entertaining and humorous
119	A very witty libretto - fine music - excellent performances. Adey Grummet was particularly moving. This was the first time I thought opera might really have something to offer me.
120	
121	Splendid seamless telling of the story impeccably performed. Especially interesting for those who know the other Beaumarchais plays/opera. Pity there is no part for Susanna (or is she Barbara?) How about doing Giles Swayse Marriage of Cherubino now?
122	Excellent in every way. Fascinating effects achieved with comparatively few members in the orchestra
123	Family Matters moved me to tears, the story is both cutting edge and universal every nuance of strength and foible instantly recognisable the battles of the sexes perfectly choreographed. While it could only have been written by a woman I felt Figaro was the steel wire in the spine and was most beautifully and sympathetically drawn. I could go on.
124	We Had organised a party of 6 opera fanatics all of whom enjoyed the performance immensely. 4 of the singers had sung with us (Mid Wales Opera) which added to our interest. The whole company gave a totally committed performance of a fascinating work. Congratulations!

***Family Matters* Evaluation**

Appendix C: Press Reviews

By no means complete, here is a sample of what the press had to say about *Family Matters*:

EVENING STANDARD

Tuesday 10 February 2004

Barry Millington

Young composers find Mozart a hard act to follow

Have you ever wondered what happened to Count Almaviva, the Countess, Cherubino and the rest after the curtain falls on Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*? If so, you can find out, because Beaumarchais wrote a third play in the series, *La Mère Coupable* (the Guilty Mother), which was used as the starting-point for Amanda Holden's libretto for *Family Matters*.

This latest venture from Tête à Tête, the enterprising company that brought us *Shorts* and *Six-Pack*, is unusual in that the librettist has worked on a single, full-length opera with six young composers. Their collaborative effort have been thoroughly workshopped, with professionals and public alike offering their advice.

The biggest surprise is that the six composers – Jhn Webb, Cheryl Francis-Hoad, Helen Chadwick, Pete Flood, Mike Henry and James Olsen – merge stylistically so readily. Historical precedents can be adduced for this – Mozart worked with four fellow-composers on *The Philosopher's Stone*, a dry run for *The Magic Flute* – and, of course, a degree of stylistic co-ordination is necessary in such an enterprise. At the same time, the lack of any really individual voices among this group of new-generation composers is alarming.

Holden's libretto, which plotwise is well-constructed and paced, relocates the story in the 1990's. Her lines are conversational in tone ("You want to see me – it must be important"), with a tendency towards the demotic ("not bloody likely!"). Taking their cue from this, the composers tell the story of the Countess's subsequent infidelity, and all the heartache that ensues from it, in an engaging manner, sometimes touching, sometimes humorous.

There's scarcely a Thomas Adès among them, and certainly not a Mozart, but there is a decent level of competence and their work is realised by an admirable team of performers. Omar Ebrahim is a commanding Mr Fitzroy, Adey Grummet his wife Rosa, Sarah Jillian Cox and Darren Abrahams their children, and Aris Nadirian and Robert Burt their employees.

Stuart Stratford conducts a small ensemble, seated on the stage, and Bill Bankes-Jones directs an inventive production. *Family Matters* opens officially tonight for nine performances in February before going on national tour.

– *At Bridewell Theatre until 22 February. Information 020 7936 3456.*

Telegraph

What Figaro did next

(Filed: 11/02/2004)

Rupert Christiansen reviews *Family Matters*, touring

Family Matters Evaluation

Tête à Tête is a useful small-scale opera company, dedicated to breaking the rules and exploring the fringes. We need more of such spirit in today's cautious cultural atmosphere, and it's encouraging to know that Tête à Tête has consolidated some funding and a regular audience.



Family Matters: written by six different composers

Its latest project, *Family Matters*, has been gestating for more than two years. Last September, I attended its singularly pointless "workshop" showing at Battersea Arts Centre, at which observers were required to blow bubbles on to the stage whenever they liked a specific passage. Nobody blew anything.

The end result is an adaptation of Beaumarchais's little-known play, *La Mère coupable*, a sequel to *Le Mariage de Figaro*.

Accompanied by their faithful Figaro (no sign of Susanna), the Almavivas have moved to London, accompanied by two children, one of them born out of wedlock. Here they fall prey to the machinations of Begéarss, a dastardly Tartuffe-like hypocrite whose attempts at blackmail and fraud are ultimately foiled. It's not a very striking or gripping tale, although the librettist Amanda Holden has made a fair job of updating it to the 1990s, leaving only Figaro in 18th-century dress. What makes *Family Matters* more worthy of note is that it has been written by six different composers, each of them responsible for one seven-minute scene in Act 1, and one seven-minute scene and one two-minute scene in Act 2.

I am not sure what the aim of this exercise was. Why not employ six different librettists or six different casts, too? It might have been intriguing to juxtapose six radically different styles, from neo-classical to minimalist, but the idioms of the six young composers (James Olsen, Cheryl Francis Hoad, Helen Chadwick, Pete Flood, Mike Henry and James Olsen) appear fairly homogeneous, moving along an axis that leads from Weill to Sondheim.

Such thoughts aside, the score emerges as coherent and fluent, with a firm dramatic pace. None of the six composers stood out as particularly gifted, though I felt that Helen Chadwick proved the most sympathetic writer for the voice.

As new operas go, *Family Matters* is lively and entertaining, done proud by a hard-working cast and firm conducting by Stuart Stratford.

The inventive production by Tête à Tête's artistic director, Bill Bankes-Jones, was marred only by the ineffectual operations of an electric paper-shredder crucial to the convolutions of the plot.

Family Matters Evaluation

· Touring until March 30. Information: 020 7736 3564

THE TIMES First Night reviews

February 11, 2004

Family Matters

BY ROBERT THICKNESSE

Opera

Bridewell, EC4

★★★★☆

IT HAS happened before, of course: in 1792 Covent Garden staged a production of *Orpheus and Eurydice* with “Music by Gluck, Handel, Bach, Sacchini and Weisel with additional new Music by William Reeve”.

Tête-à-Tête, our most enterprising provider of new opera, revive the idea with this free adaptation of the third Figaro play by Beaumarchais, *La mère coupable*, with a libretto by Amanda Holden and music by six different composers.

Not just different, but from separate musical worlds: Pete Flood is a percussionist with a free-jazz band; Helen Chadwick an actor and performer who composes for the theatre; Mike Henry and the improbably young James Olsen, 21, and Cheryl Frances-Hoad, 23, from the academic-music mainstream; and John Webb composed a piece for this company’s last project, *Six-Pack*.

The dangers of moving from a set of short operas to one long collaboration (nearly two hours) are obvious. The styles would be wildly eclectic, the structure bitty, there would be no dramatic impetus. Actually it isn’t so: these composers have become so immersed in each other’s idioms they are almost indistinguishable. Which is not necessarily a good thing: they favour an undemanding, catch-all modernism based on free arioso which embraces lyricism without really allowing itself the luxury of melody. This is mixed with pastiche from flamenco to Jerry Springer to the King’s Singers to jazz (with some nice mazy writing for voice and clarinet by Frances-Hoad and Webb).

Holden’s updating and Bill Bankes-Jones’s staging are full of in-jokes — Figaro with a tape measure, “Charlie” doing a reprise of Cherubino’s *Voi che sapete* — if not hugely witty. Some violence is done to Beaumarchais in the transition: Susanna sacrificed, Figaro’s layered relationship with the Count (“Mr Fitzroy”) reduced to a cipher, the whole household moved to some unclassifiable social milieu in 1992. This might be fine if the characters were reinvented, but we get a woozy mix of operatic memories and sitcom stereotypes: Burgess, the family’s “old friend” who machinates to destroy their happiness and nick the estate, is transparent to anyone versed in the subtleties of Eighties telly.

It would be silly to think of this in the same bubble as Rossini or Mozart.

But it is an entertaining evening, with a decently told story, an extraordinary musical performance from six singers and four players, and one of Bankes-Jones’s inventive-minimalist stagings. It is workshopy, unthreatening stuff. Forget music theatre: Tête-à-Tête is one of the best contemporary theatre groups of any kind. And with a top price of £15, they knock the socks off most of the mainstream too.

Box office: 020-7936 3456. Until Feb 22, then on tour

Family Matters Evaluation

Financial Times

Music: Family Matters

By Andrew Clark

Published: February 12 2004 18:25 | Last Updated: February 12 2004 18:25

★★★★☆ Unlike last summer's Genesis Project, Tête à Tête nurtures young opera composers in an unpretentious, organic way.

There is no nannying, no prescription to "revitalise" opera. Everything is work-in-progress. The aim is to get composers to understand the elements of drama in music, try out ideas in bite-size chunks and learn from mistakes.

Its latest project is a collaborative opera based on *La Mère coupable*, the last of Beaumarchais's Figaro trilogy.

The Count has sold his estates, moved his household to the city, and befriended an odious bourgeois manipulator, who exposes family secrets and ends up uniting everyone against him. Amanda Holden is the experienced librettist, updating the plot to the 1990s and dividing it into a compact, well-contrasted succession of ensembles, trios, duets and solos. These are shared out among six composers, who workshopped their ideas last year.

With a cast of six, supported by four instrumentalists (cello, clarinet, percussion and amplified piano) and a set of pop-open boxes, composers and audience have every incentive to use their imagination. The format can't avoid lurches of style and quality, but the surprise of this experiment was how integrated it felt - aided, no doubt, by Bill Bankes-Jones's fluent staging.

Helen Chadwick, the most experienced of the composers, was easily the most successful: her wistful act one solo scena was like a mini-opera, using minimal resources to maximum expressive effect. Her act two duet made much of a choral refrain, while the ensuing ensemble was quick-witted. The other composers ranged across shapeless pastiche, derivative froth and a tendency to write busy accompaniments that counteracted the vocal lines. Tel 020 7936 3456 *Until February 22, then on tour.*

The Guardian

Family Matters

★★★☆☆ Bridewell Theatre, London

Tom Service

Thursday February 12, 2004

[The Guardian](#)

Family Matters Evaluation

Opera is a fraught collective process at the best of times, but Tête à Tête's new show, *Family Matters*, adds another layer to the communal experience of opera production. Or rather, it adds six new layers, since Amanda Holden's libretto, a reworking of Beaumarchais's play *La Mère Coupable* (the last of the Figaro trilogy), is set by six young composers. Each is given three short scenes, split across the show's two acts.

Knitted together by Bill Bankes-Jones's direction, and a four-piece ensemble conducted by Stuart Stratford, the idea must have been to create a fizzing diversity of musical styles to match the ebullient pace of the story. However, the effect of the continual lurching from one composer's music to another is to deaden the drama.

Updated to the early 1990s, *Family Matters* sees Aris Nadirian's Figaro in the service of Fitzroy and his wife Rosa, sung by Omar Ebrahim and Adey Grummet, who have just moved to town. Composer John Webb's Sondheim-esque vamping sets the metropolitan scene for the convoluted paternity problems that ensue, as the children, Flora and Leo, discover their true parentage thanks to the machinations of Robert Burt's Burgess.

The problem is that the disjunction between Cheryl Francis-Hoad's urbane, jazz-inspired harmonies and Helen Chadwick's nostalgic melodies is not only a contrast of styles but also between two kinds of drama. Fitzroy is a noble, tortured soul in the soliloquy that James Olsen composes for him, but a slapstick anti-hero in Francis-Hoad's music. More gratingly, Pete Flood's ham-fisted tango pastiche for Flora and Leo segues into a solemn and sentimental scene for Rosa, composed by Chadwick. The effect of all of these juxtapositions is to neuter the expressive potential of individual scenes, and to create a rudderless, confused drama. Only at the very end of the piece, in Olsen's duet for Figaro and Fitzroy, does *Family Matters* finally matter emotionally.

• Until February 22. Box office: 020-7936 3456. Then touring.

Metro

Opera Review *Family Matters*



Family Matters is an operatic collaboration between one librettist and six composers loosely based on the third Figaro play by Beaumarchais. (The first two are *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*). Great material for an opera, you might think. Well, yes and no.

Amanda Holden's libretto updates the action to 1992, but confusingly retains certain anachronisms; the villain believes he can become rich by marrying the pretty young heiress-to-be who finds him repulsive, for example. Characterisation anyone?

And the dramaturgy is not always sharp: there's a big 'revelation' scene, but since the characters and the audience already know the secret to be revealed, it hardly packs a great dramatic punch.

The word-heavy libretto often doesn't leave much room for the music, but several composers come up with intriguing responses nonetheless: Helen Chadwick's two sections are striking for their warmth of sound and feeling and John Webb certainly knows how to construct a good ensemble. Tim Meacock's designs help everything along beautifully, and the performers all do an excellent job. Raw and fascinating.

Warwick Thompson

Family Matters Evaluation

Until Nov 22, The Bridewell, Bride Lane EC4, Mon to Sat 7.30pm, Sun 3.30pm £15, £10 concs.

Tel: 020 7936 3456

Tube: Blackfriars/St. Paul's

THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

OPERA

Michael Kennedy

The Tempest

Family Matters

At the Bridewell Theatre off Fleet Street on Monday, the Tête à Tête company had its own world premiere of *Family Matters*, an updated adaptation by Amanda Holden of the third Beaumarchais Figaro play, *La Mère Coupable*. This enterprising small company has had much acclaim for its commissioned short operas by young composers. Like them, this more ambitious venture will go on a national tour. *Family Matters* is by six composers, Cheryl Francis-Hoad, Helen Chadwick, John Webb, Pete Flood, Mike Henry and James Olsen, contributing several short scenes apiece with accompaniment for piano, clarinet, cello and percussion.

It was entertaining, but because the general vocal style was an amiable *sprechgesang* the overall effect was of corporate competence, and only in aspects of the instrumental writing was there any detectable individualistic difference between contributions. Webb, for instance, conveyed the bustling atmosphere of removal into a new house and Olsen displayed an ability to create a sinister mood. I thought the best vocal writing was by Helen Chadwick in arias for Mrs Rosa Fitzroy (aka Countess Rosina Almaviva).

The libretto was brilliantly devised (and, to the credit of the cast, every word was audible). Omar Ebrahim was excellent as Fitzroy (the Count), Adey Grummet a sympathetic Rosa, and Robert Burt a smarmily sinister Burgess (Bégearss, who attempts to gain control of the Almaviva estate). Sarah Jillian Cox and Darren Abrahams sang strongly as the Fitzroys' illegitimate children (the boy being the son of Charlie, as Cherubino has become here), but Aris Nadirian sounded ill at ease as Figaro, and I didn't see the point of his wearing 18th-century costume (has he ditched Susanna, by the way?). Stuart Stratford conducted and Bill Bankes-Jones was the ingenious producer.

THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

The Tempest, Royal Opera House, London

Family Matters, Bridewell Theatre, London

It'll be good when it's ready

By Anna Picard

Published : 15 February 2004

...Less glitzy but no less eagerly anticipated was Family Matters: the latest project from Tête à Tête and something of a surprise from a company celebrated for their portmanteau productions of operatic miniatures. Like the fabulous Shorts and Six-Pack, Family Matters uses six composers. But here they have collaborated on a single libretto - neatly adapted by Amanda Holden from the third of Beaumarchais's Figaro trilogy - and have turned out a lethargic composite in the style of Sondheim. Notwithstanding vivacious performances from Adey Grummet, Robert Burt and Sarah Jillian Cox, Tim Meacock's superb stage designs, the dancing oranges, and the ever-excellent musical and theatrical direction of Stuart Stratford and Bill Bankes-Jones, translating the Almavivas of Seville into the Fitzroys of SW1 has made what was previously a relishably urban, hip take on contemporary opera into something rather dull and bourgeois. With Shorts and Six-Pack, Tête à Tête had a uniquely appealing formula.

Family Matters Evaluation

And if it ain't broke, why fix it?

a.picard@independent.co.uk

'The Tempest': Royal Opera House, London WC2 (020 7304 4000), to Friday. 'Family Matters': Bridewell, London EC4 (020 7936 3456), to 22 Feb, then touring

Time Out February 18-25 2004

Family Matters

Bridewell Theatre, Fringe

Tête a Tête is a small but mobile company that's taking opera out of its formalwear pigeonhole. And, in this six-composer story, it has come up with something smart, but casual enough to whet the whistle of the uninitiated. I speak from personal inexperience. Though its melodies won't set the charts on fire, 'Family Matters' has enough musical and dramatic presence to let one succumb to the beauty of the operatic voice.

The story rattles along. It's based on Beaumarchais's 'La Mere Coupable'- the final part of the Figaro trilogy, whose first two instalments became 'The Barber of Seville' and 'The Marriage of Figaro'. Librettist Amanda Holden updates it to a colloquial present day, as the Fitzroy family move to London after the death of a son. Happily for us, they all have deep dark secrets that get unpacked over the show's two hours- this show is treacle-rich with forbidden love and confused parentage. The villain is the family's financial adviser, who wears-the delicate must avert their eyes here- white socks with sandals. Can family retainer Figaro keep the Fitzroys safe from this bourgeois boulder?

It's staged with humour and clarity by Bill Bankes-Jones. There's a sense of self-mockery-a blast of 'Careless Whisper'; the cast snatching at the score to see what happens next-that sits well with the relaxed-yet-heightened theatricality. It's more witty than stirring, but the six strong cast perform it with gusto. The score will be too abstruse for some tastes. But this is a satisfying theatrical experience that may change people's minds about contemporary opera. Well, okay, it changed mine, anyway.

Dominic Maxwell


THE SCOTSMAN

Mon 8 Mar 2004

Family Matters

OPERA REVIEW

JOYCE McMILLAN

TRAVERSE THEATRE, EDINBURGH

Family Matters Evaluation

ITS STAY at the Traverse may have been brief, but this latest show from the London-based Tête à Tête opera company proved a brisk and vibrant theatre experience.

Commissioned from a group of six contemporary composers, Family Matters offers a 1990s version of Beaumarchais' 1792 play *La Mère Coupable*, a 20-years-on sequel to the famous tale of *The Marriage of Figaro*. It's a story about doubtful parentage, family secrets and a conman intent on cornering the family fortune, that transfers perfectly to the sexually uncertain and financially rapacious atmosphere of the 1990s.

Tête à Tête's two-hour opera, directed by Bill Bankes-Jones and Stuart Stratford, achieves a fine consistency of style, alternating between a rich post-modern lyricism, and a startling sense of comic melodrama. There's a clever buff-and-purple set by Tim Meacock, based on the packing-case imagery of a home in transition; and an passionate set of performances from a six-strong cast led by Omar Ebrahim and Adey Grummet, with Sarah Jillian Cox and Darren Abrahams in heart-stopping form as their children, paying a heavy price for the sins of their father and of their guilty mother.

Spectator 13th April 2005

Updating Figaro
Michael Tanner

Family Matters The Bridewell

Tête à Tête is a small company, founded in 1997, which commissions very short opera's, on the sensible grounds that a beginning opera composer might do better than try his hand at an evening-length piece- if this view were more widely shared, think of the agonies of tedium and pretentiousness that we might have been spared. The two previous shows that I have seen consisted of brief unconnected pieces, but now we have a full-length work with six composers contributing.

Family Matters is an adaptation by Amanda Holden of the third of the Figaro trilogy of Beaumarchais. She has done a skilful job, updating the action to 1992, the chief villain Begearss becoming the loath-some financial adviser Burgess. Sad that Susanna has been dropped, and a bit odd that Figaro retains his 18th-century garb, though it works. *La mere coupable* is a less brilliant play than its predecessors, and its mood is more sombre. The Almoviva (here the Fitzroys) household is now middle-aged, undergoing various degrees of disillusionment and trying to keep its skeletons in the cupboard, from which they insist on obtruding. The two young people in the opera are beguiling female ward, and the second so, loathed by his father because the elder son was killed.

There isn't much comedy, and that may be all to the good, since it seems much harder to bring off. In Act I there are six scenes, each written by a different composer, whose name is indicated; things get more complicated in Act II. What is remarkable is that though there are acute changes of style and idiom they are not disconcerting. I wasn't able to be present at the public workshops last September so I don't have any idea how the collaboration proceeded, but it is a success, and without foreknowledge one might not guess that the work was polyauthored.

The production, by Bill Bankes-Jones, the founder of the company, is masterly, with quite complex sets, including a gold course, moving swiftly into position, the décor setting a strong atmosphere. The singers, too, are an incredibly accomplished group of singing actors. I saw the second preview, and Rosa (Rosina), Adey Grummet, was unable to sing, but she acted very movingly indeed, her role being sung on the side with great virtuosity. Leo, the fraught son, is taken by Darren Abrahams, a performer of unusual intensity and with a ringing tenor voice, for whom Jonathan Dove has written an opera. Space precludes mentioning all the singers,

Family Matters Evaluation

or the composers, but they would all merit separate praise. There are four versatile instrumentalists, and the ensemble is conducted by Stuart Stratford.

My feeling was that, as so often, it had proved hard to decide how to end the piece, and there seems to be a short succession of endings, of which my preferred one was a Design for Living- style threesome rocked with helpless laughter. But the actual ending is brooding and indecisive. The work is involving long enough for one to long for, and be deeply gratified by, the Financial Adviser's discomfiture. After a run at the appealing Bridewell Theatre the show is going on tour nationwide, and I can only urge people who normally don't go to opera, as well as people who normally do, to see it.

Culture Wars 13th April 2005

Family Matters

Bridewell Theatre, London

Amy Matthews

It would be against everything I stand for not to adore a production in which a couple's romantic reverie about a utopian future (inevitably reminiscent of West Side Story's 'Somewhere') is interrupted by the entrance of three men dressed as enormous oranges. Yes, fully fantastical fancy-dress fruits, roughly four feet in diameter, complete with shiny green leggings, castanets and a Mariachi-esque explosion of musical accompaniment.

Due adoration therefore goes to *Family Matters*, an opera penned by six different composers around a libretto written by the Olivier Award-winning Amanda Holden (Thankfully not the one who was married to Les Dennis and is currently failing to stun in the West End's *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.) Developed and workshopped at BAC in September 2003, it is now a fully cohesive show with an involving, moving and entertaining plot centred around the secrets and deceptions of the Fitzroy family, combining elements of French farce (the inspiration was the third of Beaumarchais' 'Figaro' trilogy of plays) with more serious moral and social themes.

The use of six separate composers creates a rapidly changing pace which serves to maintain a constant interest, even for those like myself with a positively childlike attention span. The resulting variations in style and approach are obvious, though all are absorbed into an overall musical consistency, while occasional vignettes allow the composers to explore more fully influences normally outside the world of opera, such as musical theatre (as in the upbeat opening number), and close-harmony singing.

The latter surprisingly provides one of the most moving sections of the opera, in which Rosa, the mother, confesses her matrimonial sins and begs forgiveness for her son. The religious imagery is upheld by a chorus of veiled onlookers, very much in the Greek model, who provide the sole musical accompaniment for her lament.

(On this note, why has no-one ever written an entirely *a cappella* opera? Rather than just a dramatised oratorio, why not a real opera, 'traditional' in all senses of the form, apart from a lack of instruments? Judging by how successful the chunks of music written in this form were as part of *Family Matters*, surely a skillful chorus and cast of lead characters could combine to form each other's accompaniment in a full-length production.

Actually, I was once in an *a cappella* musical called *Inflatable Bliss* but, perhaps as the name suggests, it didn't really go all out to scale the artistic heights of this unexplored genre, utterly hilarious though it was.)

Much of the writing lies between the definitions of tonal and atonal music, with enough harmonic resolution to please less experienced ears, but enough genuinely innovative material to make this an importantly original project. As if to aid an audience faced by a lack of surtitles or familiarity with a well-known story, the music pays consistent attention to the rhetoric and expression of the libretto, gently nursing and drawing out the humour, pathos, passion and tragedy of the script. All the parts are well sung, and with sufficiently clear annunciation that only the occasional phrase is lost.

My only real criticisms of the production lie in some of the seemingly extraneous detail, for example, the decision to set the opera very specifically in 1992 without paying any real attention to fitting the costumes or some of the set to that date. Or the DNA double-helix designs on the headscarves of the hooded chorus which

Family Matters Evaluation

are a clever touch, but only visible to the first few rows, as the scene is performed in near darkness. The performances equally have just a few unsuccessful moments - there are occasions when a degree of commitment to acting is sacrificed for the sake of the singing, and the movement could at times be slicker, but overall, the singers range from solid to superb.

To talk of the accessibility or elitism of *Family Matters* would be to do an injustice to the spirit behind the production. It simply transcends any preconceived definitions of contemporary opera, and I can only quote the director, Bill Bankes-Jones, in saying that it provides 'a great night out at the theatre for anyone'.

Appendix D: venue Feedback

i: venue feedback form

This feedback form was circulated to all venues.

The information requested in this form is required for reports to our funders as well as to allow us to improve our practice - please do call Natalie Steed on 020 7228 6010 if you would like to discuss any issues raised further. Many thanks

Company		Show	Name of person completing form	
Tête à Tête		Family Matters		
Venue	Venue Address	Performance Date/s	Performance Time/s	
Venue Capacity	Sales	Comps	Cash Capacity	Box Office Income
Please comment on sales and audience figures - were you pleased, disappointed, satisfied				
Did you get any feedback from audiences? If so please comment here				
Please comment on marketing materials and support provided by the company and on your own marketing strategy for the event. Was there anything we could have done, that we didn't?				

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-

what activity did you undertake to sell the show?

-
Please comment on the show itself - were you happy with the performance, was it what you expected?

-

Did you make use of the workshop that was offered with the tour?

Please comment on the workshop - in your opinion how successful was the workshop, did participants attend the performance, if not why not? What can we do to improve our workshops?

Please comment on any other aspects of the event not covered here - eg technical, administration etc

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Do you usually programme this kind of work?
Anything else?

ii venue feedback: results

Feedback forms were returned by: Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham, Traverse, Edinburgh, King Edward VI College, Totnes, Phoenix Arts, Leicester, Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury. We have no forms from the Bridewell Theatre, or Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds. Statistical results are elsewhere in this report (appendix a b c); anecdotal responses below.

Please comment on sales and audience figures - were you pleased, disappointed, satisfied:

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

“I was particularly pleased with the take up for the workshop sessions and performances. I would like to have sustained the same audience for 6 Pack in autumn 2003 which reached over 100.”

Traverse, Edinburgh:

“Whilst figures weren't great its important to see this is as quite different to usual Traverse programming and it brought a new audience to the building.”

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

“Actual sales were low but this was a new type of event for the venue and area. We scheduled the event knowing that we had funding for it in advance. It was a strategic piece of planning partly to see if we could put

Family Matters Evaluation

on this type of event in a relatively small, under resourced venue. We are looking at opera as a key educational initiative over the next 5 years. The large number of comps reflects some student participation and invitations that were given to key groups in the area.”

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

“Satisfied - disappointed didn't do as well as Six-Pack. Would have been very difficult without all your help and support including the subsidised ticket scheme.”

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no response.

Did you get any feedback from audiences? If so please comment here:

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

“no.”

Traverse, Edinburgh:

“Anecdotal feedback in the theatre and bar café seemed excellent.”

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

“Feedback fell into two distinct types: there were a small number of people (perhaps half a dozen) who found the show extremely difficult and didn't enjoy the show. A much bigger group were very positive and this was very pleasing as many had never been to this type of avant garde opera before.”

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

“Was positive.”

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no response.

Please comment on marketing materials and support provided by the company and on your own marketing strategy for the event. Was there anything we could have done, that we didn't?:

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

“The print was excellent appealing to a wide audience (though not, perhaps, men). The marketing pack was helpful, particularly the audiences section and the Box Office information sheet which was very well received and provided both answers to possible questions and angles on which to sell the show over the phone. It gave a thorough overview of the company and an in-depth description of the show. Although we didn't really use the detailed performer's biogs, they were useful to have as reference. It was helpful to have all the information easily accessible and the pack was utilised alongside our own strategy. Our strategy was very much aiming to develop a youth audience for the show - making opera accessible to those who don't normally

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attend such events. The company were in touch throughout the season and were incredibly supportive and enthusiastic.”

Traverse, Edinburgh:

“Very good. A difficult medium to market and the company provided good materials to support marketing and box office staff.”

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

“The support materials were excellent and fulfilled all the expectations we had of a visiting company.”

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

“We thought you were fantastic. Subject matter and print (bored housewife etc!) made it a wee more difficult to sell. Error was unfortunate! (ie incorrect box office telephone number - proofed by Phoenix)”

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no reply.

What activity did you undertake to sell the show?

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

“There were 3 distinct paths: 1. Targeting seasoned opera goers. Direct mail went to our opera previous attendees (approx 400). Opera societies in the area were sent a letter and print as were Am Dram groups. Exit flyering at 2 opera events in the city at our other venues and at a Gilbert and Sullivan production at Lakeside. 2. Direct mail went to contemporary theatre, music attendees (350 people), email on Broadway (Independent cinema mailing list) 3. Letters went out to schools/drama colleges university's performing arts/drama/dance course leaders, plus print. College Street Youth Arts were contacted and print distributed there. The event was publicised in the Hands On autumn leaflet and highlighted in the brochure. Season brochure mailed to 10,000 with a further 20,000 distributed in the region

Traverse, Edinburgh:

“Season brochure (35k), website, print distribution, direct mail, season press release.”

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

“We included the event in our brochure. We contacted special interest groups such as dance groups and local schools and colleges and we placed adverts and articles in the local press.”

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

“Mail out to 500 attenders including 120 comntemp opera attenders (De Mont Hall) 180 (Phoenix) and 200 (Haymarket); extensive distribution of print throughout Leices. Got rid of all print.; FOH board, 2 x snippets in Leic Mercury; regional listings; inclusion in the brochure and website, obviously!”

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Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no reply.

Please comment on the show itself - were you happy with the performance, was it what you expected?

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

"I thought the standard of the performance was high and that the range of different compositional styles was handled fluently by the direction and the cast. The musicians and the cast were excellent (particularly Adey Grummet and Omar Ebrahim). The production values were high and much slicker than previous Tete a Tete shows I have seen at the Bridewell and BAC which I enjoyed. I particularly enjoyed the set design which I thought was ingenious (although it did dwarf the stage during the first half)."

.Traverse, Edinburgh:

"Very good - enjoyed by the audience."

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

"The show was fantastic. However we were surprised at its scale and technical complexity. The person who originally organised the event has seen Tête à Tête's earlier work which she felt we could cope with without too much trouble. In the event tanks, to superb technical assistance, the set-up was achieved and manageable."

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

"Yes - looked great, sounded great (mostly!). Perhaps a wee bit too long for first time attenders of opera. Students who came to the performance enjoyed it - liked the set, the humorous bits etc, liked the band being on stage and being included. Students would never have gone to this without the workshop connection. (this feedback from Jo Marlow at Gateway College)"

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no reply.

Did you make use of the workshop that was offered with the tour?

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

"Yes, we did."

.Traverse, Edinburgh:

"No - we have an education officer in post now, so this may be an option for the future."

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

"Yes we did."

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Phoenix arts, Leicester:

"Yes - really enjoyed the "constructing a scene" bit."

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

No response

Please comment on the workshop - in your opinion how successful was the workshop, did participants attend the performance, if not why not? What can we do to improve our workshops?

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

No response

.Traverse, Edinburgh:

"n/a."

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

"The workshop involved about 20 specially gifted students. The feedback from the students and staff involved was truly inspirational and some of the most interesting work students had undertaken., We cannot praise the workshop team highly enough."

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

"Hard work! Apologies for our lighting desk."

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no reply.

Please comment on any other aspects of the event not covered here - eg technical, administration etc

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

"The admin support from the workshops was uneven as most of the contact came early on - too early in my planning - and not enough nearer the actual date of the workshops but I believe this was because of a change in personnel. It would have been better to book more get-in time once the booking had been confirmed, whether or not it was then needed and I will ensure this happens in future. Form a technical point of view I felt there was a lot to do in a limited time. Much time is lost in having to break the fit-up overnight - restarting loses momentum. Also having a night and day off after the first performance before the second show rather than putting both shows on the same day or reversing performance would have made better use of time."

.Traverse, Edinburgh:

no response

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King Edward VI College, Totnes:

“Technical backup was superb and the special effects and general staging was highly imaginative and much appreciated especially considering the constraints on the venue.”

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

No response

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no response

Do you usually programme this kind of work?

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

“Yes. I am keen to programme small-scale music theatre at Lakeside Arts Centre. However the type and style of productions we can take is limited because we have no orchestral pit. However Tête à Tête's shows are perfect for the venue in this respect because fortuitously they also use the musicians on the stage..”

.Traverse, Edinburgh:

“We were thrilled the company could come to the Traverse. It's a different kind of work but an area we wish to explore more.”

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

“We programme a wide range of arts events, this was our first ever opera.”

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

Occasionally throughout the year.

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

no response

Anything else?

Djanogly Theatre, Nottingham:

“Letter from Helen Bishop-Stevens 11 March 2004: Dear Natalie, Please pass on my thanks to Bill and the cast for a fantastic performance of Family Matters at Lakeside last week. There were some really engaging performances and I loved the dancing oranges! I was also really impressed by the quality of Adey's educational work. The Tête à Tête workshops have enabled us to make good contacts with schools in the Nottinghamshire County.”

.Traverse, Edinburgh:

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No response.

King Edward VI College, Totnes:

“We would certainly look to seek funding to develop this type of programming. The educational element is vital for this will be the focus of our fundraising.”

Phoenix arts, Leicester:

No response.

Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury:

No response

Appendix E: Artist Feedback

Family matters: artist feedback

Composers:

- “Thank you once again for your tremendous support and for giving me such an opportunity
- let's hope we get to play again somehow.”
- “big thanks for involving me in this project. i have loved it and learnt SO much!
- many congratulations for putting such a great team and a great show together”
- “As the run of Family Matters is coming to a close, I thought I'd just email to say thank you again - I was so thrilled to be a part of this project, have enjoyed it enormously, and have also learnt a huge amount. It was wonderful to see what you'd done with the piece in the final production; I thought it was really impressive”

Company members:

- “Great fun and more to get those pieces up and running again”
- “It seems such a shame to consign such a strong piece of work to the bin. I, for one, would be more than happy to be involved in any form of revival.”
- “Its great to hear so much positivity and enthusiasm for a new piece and to hear that people are finding opera relevant. I had a great time doing the show and look back on it with very fond memories.”
- “Many congratulations on the success of *Family Matters*. Many, many thanks again for the chance to work with you and Tete a Tete. I have thoroughly enjoyed the project. Do think of me again - I would be quite delighted to be involved.”

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Appendix F: Ticket sales

i box-office figures

w/b	VENUE NAME	PERFS	VENUE CAPACITY	NUMBER ATTENDING	BOX OFFICE POTENTIAL	BOX OFFICE TAKE-ACTUAL	% CAPACITY	% CASH
02.02.04	BRIDEWELL London	12	1669	1022	20,955	9,523.44	62	45
	<i>(Six-Pack at the bridewell)</i>	(13)	(1872)	(1756)			(94%)	
01.03.04	LAKESIDE ARTS Nottingham	2	502	163	3,133	747	32	24
	<i>(Six-Pack at Lakeside)</i>	(1)	(251)	(137)			(55%)	
01.03.04	TRAVERSE Edinburgh	2	432	132	4,320	984	31	23
08.03.04	THEATRE ROYAL Bury St Edmunds	1	356	171	4426	2191.50	48	50
	<i>(Six-Pack at Bury)</i>	(1)	(350)	(183)			(52%)	
15.03.04	ARIEL CENTRE Totnes	1	325	205	2600	486	63	19
22.03.04	PHOENIX ARTS Leicester	1	266	95	2394	712.50	36	30
	<i>(Six-Pack at Leicester)</i>	(1)	(266)	(116)			(44%)	
22.03.04	COURTYARD Hereford	1	418	132	3900	1,002.40	32	26
29.03.04	GULBENKIAN Canterbury	1	343	83	4116	724	24	18
	<i>(Six-Pack at Canterbury)</i>	(2)	(680)	(248)			(37%)	
TOTALS/ Averages		21	4311	2003	45,844	16,370.84	47	36

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ii Monitoring box-office through the project

Ticket sales for the bridewell were faxed to the project office on a daily basis and logged increasingly frequently as the project progressed:

BRIDEWELL	22-Jan			
	sold	reserved *	total tickets	cash (inc res)
Preview 6th Feb	29	1	30	205
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	23	4	27	205.5
9th Feb	22	15	37	350
10th Feb	20	13	33	310.5
12th Feb	16	1	17	235
13th Feb	5	1	6	45.5
15th Feb	13	3	16	185.5
16th Feb	17	11	28	205
18th Feb - Gala	0	104	104	0
19th Feb	13	1	14	185
21st Feb	10	1	11	125
22nd Feb	5	1	6	60
Total	173	156	329	2112
revised target				16528
	27-Jan			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	36	1	37	245
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	30	2	32	255.5
9th Feb	22	15	37	350
10th Feb	23	13	36	340.5
12th Feb	20	1	21	290
13th Feb	5	1	6	45.5
15th Feb	19	3	22	355.5
16th Feb	19	11	30	235
19th Feb - Gala	0	104	104	0
19th Feb	14	3	17	200
21st Feb	10	1	11	125
22nd Feb	6	1	7	75
Total	204	156	360	2517
revised target				16123
	28-Jan			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	48	1	49	345
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	32	2	34	279.5
9th Feb	22	15	37	350
10th Feb	31	13	44	455.5
12th Feb	22	1	23	320
13th Feb	5	1	6	45.5
15th Feb	27	3	30	355.5

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16th Feb	19	11	30	235
20th Feb - Gala	0	104	104	0
19th Feb	14	3	17	200
21st Feb	12	1	13	125
22nd Feb	8	1	9	95
Total	240	156	396	2806
revised target				15834
	02-Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	74	0	74	468
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	50	0	50	359.5
9th Feb	28	0	28	380
10th Feb	39		39	545
12th Feb	23	0	23	320
13th Feb	8	0	8	75.5
15th Feb	31		31	385.5
16th Feb	19		19	235
21st Feb - Gala	0		0	0
19th Feb	18		18	260
21st Feb	18		18	230
22nd Feb	8		8	95
Total	316	0	316	3353.5
revised target				15286.5
	03/02/2004 (end of day)			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	76	15	91	518
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	54	18	72	399.5
9th Feb	88	43	131	402.5
10th Feb	42	23	65	590.5
12th Feb	27	11	38	360
13th Feb	10	13	23	135.5
15th Feb	38	13	51	495.5
16th Feb	19	21	40	235
22nd Feb - Gala			0	
19th Feb	18	13	31	260
21st Feb	18	11	29	230
22nd Feb	8	11	19	95
Total	398	192	590	3721.5
revised target				14918.5
	5th Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	84	15	99	542.5
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	58	18	76	409.5
9th Feb	88	43	131	402.5
10th Feb	42	23	65	599.5
12th Feb	29	11	40	399
13th Feb	17	16	33	190.5
15th Feb	38	13	51	475.5
16th Feb	21	21	42	265
23rd Feb - Gala	0	0	0	
19th Feb	21	13	34	290

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21st Feb	18	11	29	230
22nd Feb	8	11	19	95
Total	424	195	619	3899
revised target				14741
	6th Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	93	0	93	592.5
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	62	8	70	469.5
9th Feb	90	43	133	432.5
10th Feb	48	23	71	660.5
12th Feb	37	11	48	500
13th Feb	21	16	37	315.5
15th Feb	40	13	53	525.5
16th Feb	21	21	42	265
24th Feb - Gala	0	0	0	
19th Feb	21	13	34	290
21st Feb	18	11	29	230
22nd Feb	8	11	19	95
Total	459	170	629	4376
revised target				14264
	9th Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	120	0	120	757.63
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	125	0	125	944.31
9th Feb	143	0	143	432.5
10th Feb	49	27	76	700.5
12th Feb	40	14	54	575
13th Feb	25	16	41	365.5
15th Feb	40	13	53	525.5
16th Feb	21	21	42	265
25th Feb - Gala	0	0	0	0
19th Feb	23	13	36	320
21st Feb	20	19	39	260
22nd Feb	10	11	21	125
Total	616	134	750	5270.94
revised target			895	13369.06
	10th Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	120	0	120	757.63
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	125	0	125	794.31
9th Feb	137	0	137	572.5
10th Feb	55	25	80	755.5
12th Feb	40	14	54	580
13th Feb	31	16	47	425
15th Feb	42	3	45	555.5
16th Feb	25	21	46	315
26th Feb - Gala	0	0	0	0
19th Feb	26	13	39	365
21st Feb	20	19	39	260
22nd Feb	10	11	21	125
Total	631	122	753	5505.44

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revised target				13134.56
	11th Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	120	0	120	757.63
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	125	0	125	794.31
9th Feb	137	0	137	572.5
10th Feb	75	0	75	955.5
12th Feb	54	14	68	760
13th Feb	37	13	50	470.5
15th Feb	46	15	61	645.5
16th Feb	30	21	51	385
27th Feb - Gala	5	0	5	65
19th Feb	29	13	42	400
21st Feb	28	11	39	260
22nd Feb	27	11	38	145
Total	713	98	811	6210.94
revised target				12429.06
	13th Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	120	0	120	757.63
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	125	0	125	794.31
9th Feb	137	0	137	572.5
10th Feb	75	0	75	955.5
12th Feb	54	14	68	760
13th Feb	40	15	55	575.5
15th Feb	54	15	69	740.5
16th Feb	33	0	33	415
28th Feb - Gala	5	0	5	65
19th Feb	46	15	61	652.5
21st Feb	28	0	28	365
22nd Feb	14	0	14	165
Total	731	59	790	6818.44
revised target				11821.56
	17th Feb			
	sold	reserved	total tickets	cash
Preview 6th Feb	120	0	120	757.63
Preview 7th Feb (Pay what you can)	125	0	125	794.31
9th Feb	137	0	137	572.5
10th Feb	75	0	75	955.5
12th Feb	69	0	69	885
13th Feb	61	0	61	650.5
15th Feb	81	0	81	975.5
16th Feb	59	15	74	665
29th Feb - Gala	5	134	139	65
19th Feb	48	14	62	672
21st Feb	38	10	48	385
22nd Feb	33	11	44	225
Total	851	184	1035	7602.94
revised target				11037.06
*Please note this includes the 150 reserved for Gala Night				

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Budget target = 20800 (inc vat)				
Gala has "bought" one night at a cost of 144 * 15 = 2160 (36 gala tickets)				
Target = 20800 - 2160 = 18640				

Ticket sales for the tour were logged weekly:

		Tour Venues								
		Notts 01.03	Notts 02.03	Ed 05.03	Ed 06.03	B.S.E 13.03	Totnes 17.03	Leic 24.03	Here 28.03	Cant 30.03
19/01/2004	sold	0	13	0	0	81	0	1	12	10
	reserved	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
26/01/2004	sold	0	15	0	0	81	0	1	12	10
	Reserved	101	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	7
02/2/2004	sold	0	15	2	12	94	0	1	12	10
	Reserved	110	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	7
09/2/2004	sold	0	22	7	12	100	0	1	12	10
	Reserved	90	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7
16/02/2004	sold	50	31	14	16	120	Half Term	11	19	11
	Reserved	60	0	0	0	2		2	0	7
23/02/2004	sold	50	41	16	20	129		14	21	35
	reserved	90	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	7
01/3/2004	sold	90	50	24	32	148	7	14	25	35
	reserved	0	2	4	4	0	0	2	30	7
08/03/2004	sold									
	reserved									
15/3/2004	sold							67		
	reserved							7		
22/3/2004	sold							90		52
	reserved							2		10
29/3/2004	sold									
	reserved									

Appendix G: Finance: budget vs actuals

INCOME					
Earned income	Original	Revised	Actual	Difference	Notes
Box Office Income	20,204.00	20,358.80	8,878.00	-11,480.80	A
Co-production	20,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Workshop fees	1,000.00	1,130.00	617.00	-513.00	B
Programme and other sales	2,200.00	2,200.00	1,004.00	-1,196.00	
Touring Fees	13,500.00	12,400.00	12,298.00	-102.00	

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Subtotal	56,904.00	36,088.80	22,797.00	-13,291.80	
Other public funding					
A4A South West			1,055.00	1,055.00	
A4A West Midlands			955.00	955.00	
A4A East Midlands			1,350.00	1,350.00	
Sub Total			3,360.00	3,360.00	C
Private income					
Private donors	10,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	0.00	
Trusts and Foundations	12,500.00	37,500.00	39,177.00	1,677.00	
Subtotal	22,500.00	43,500.00	45,177.00	1,677.00	
Arts Council	87,581.36	81,000.00	81,000.00	0.00	
Total income	166,985.36	160,588.80	152,334.00	-8,254.80	
EXPENDITURE					
Artistic expenditure					
Artistic Director	6,600.00	6,600.00	6,600.00	0.00	
Origination Fees					
composers	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	0.00	
designer	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	0.00	
librettist	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	0.00	
lighting designer	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	0.00	
music director	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	0.00	
Production Manager	2,800.00	2,800.00	2,800.00	0.00	
Production Costs					
Costume	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,807.74	807.74	
Printing and binding scores	750.00	750.00	483.84	-266.16	
Props	1,000.00	1,000.00	867.47	-132.53	
Set	8,000.00	8,000.00	7,895.00	-105.00	
Other	0.00	0.00	2,816.44	2,816.44	D
Recovered	0.00	0.00	-445.00	-445.00	E
Rehearsal Fees & Costs					
ASM	1,280.00	1,280.00	1,280.00	0.00	
Instrumentalists	1,920.00	1,920.00	2,030.00	110.00	
Porterage	500.00	500.00	0.00	-500.00	F
Repetiteur	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,060.00	60.00	
Singers	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00	0.00	
Stage Manager	1,400.00	1,400.00	1,400.00	0.00	
Wardrobe	1,200.00	1,200.00	0.00	-1,200.00	G
Rehearsal Expenses	500.00	200.00	195.20	-4.80	

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Rehearsal Room	2,000.00	1,800.00	1,946.00	146.00	
<i>Performance and Touring Costs</i>					
Hires	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,084.29	84.29	
Production Manager	1,200.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	
Running Costs	1,600.00	420.00	132.52	-287.48	
ASM	2,240.00	2,666.67	2,667.00	0.33	
Conductor	2,800.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	0.00	
Instrumentalists	8,400.00	8,400.00	8,400.00	0.00	
Relights	1,900.00	1,750.00	2,100.00	350.00	
Singers	18,000.00	18,000.00	18,248.60	248.60	H
Stage Manager	2,450.00	2,916.67	2,917.00	0.33	
Touring Allowance	6,964.00	6,286.50	6,023.12	-263.38	
Porterage	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,237.10	237.10	
Transport	3,500.00	3,500.00	4,922.50	1,422.50	I
Travel	6,400.00	3,920.00	5,119.32	1,199.32	J
Venue hire	9,000.00	9,000.00	9,300.00	300.00	
Venue recharges	1,075.00	500.00	983.27	483.27	
Workshops	2,040.00	2,583.50	4,177.06	1,593.56	K
Subtotal	131,619.00	127,493.33	134,148.47	6,655.14	
Marketing					
Promotions to homeless shelters	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Distribution	1,000.00	800.00	1,197.53	397.53	
Mailings	2,500.00	2,000.00	1,493.93	-506.07	
Photography	1,250.00	1,250.00	1,185.34	-64.66	
Photo dupes	400.00	200.00		-200.00	
Press Rep	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	0.00	
Print and Design	5,000.00	5,000.00	3,880.85	-1,119.15	
Other			75.53	75.53	
Subtotal	13,650.00	11,750.00	10,333.18	-1,416.82	
Overheads					
Insurance	700.00	700.00	998.03	298.03	
Photocopying	669.00	669.00	327.09	-341.91	
Postage	477.00	477.00	160.25	-316.75	
Stationery	477.00	477.00	30.44	-446.56	
Telephone email and fax	1,150.00	350.00	143.08	-206.92	
Subtotal	3,473.00	2,673.00	1,658.89	-1,014.11	
Capital expenditure					
N/A					

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Value of support in kind					
N/A					
Other expenditure					
Contingency	4,800.00	5,431.09	0.00	-5,431.09	L
Programme design and print	1,500.00	1,200.00	1,375.00	175.00	
NI	943.00	1,057.71	0.00	-1,057.71	
Project and Marketing fee	11,000.00	11,000.00	11,000.00	0.00	
Professional fees (examiners report)			300.00		
Subtotal	18,243.00	18,688.80	12,675.00	-6,013.80	
Total expenditure	166,985.00	160,605.13	158,815.54	-1,789.59	
Total Income	166,985.36	160,588.80	152,335.61	-8,253.19	
Shortfall			-6,479.93		M

Notes to budget					
A The box office income is very much reduced because of lower than expected sales at the Bridewell and on tour although we were able to fund free tickets to schools participants via additional grants					
B Workshop fees are lower than anticipated because we were able to secure additional funding which meant that we did not need to charge schools					
C Additional funding was secured relating specifically to the outreach activity in schools. With this additional income we were able to provide extra workshops, free tickets to workshop participants and free programmes					
D Extra get-in costs associated with additional hire costs, technician costs as well as purchase of electronic keyboard					
E We were able to recover some production costs by selling on some costumes and other equipment					
F Is combined with touring portage costs					
G We decided not employ a wardrobe assistant					
H We needed to hire a singer to cover for a couple of performances where one of our performers was too ill to sing					
I Transport was more expensive than anticipated					
J Travel was more expensive than anticipated					
K We delivered more workshops than originally planned and secured additional income to pay for this activity					
L Unanticipated spend is allocated to appropriate budget line rather than to contingency					
M Shortfall will be covered by reserves					

Family Matters Evaluation

Appendix H: Education - Homeless workshops report

Report to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation on workshops and theatre visits with homeless clients

Introduction

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation generously gave us a grant of £1180.00 towards a small programme of workshops and theatre visits for clients of four homeless shelters at the end of February 2004. This was a reprise of the process which launched our co-production with *Streetwise Opera* and 5 different homeless shelters of Britten's *Canticles* in Westminster Abbey, 2002. The *Canticles* project began with a similar series of workshops and visits based around our 2002 production, *Six-Pack*.

'I enjoyed the performance enormously' – a participant from the Passage

Centre by Centre

Connection: *drop-in centre for clients aged 16-24, London WC1*

WORKSHOP: 12th February 14.00-1600

The workshop was led by Bill Bankes-Jones (Tête à Tête) and Siobhain O'Higgins (Streetwise.)

Siobhain O'Higgins has been running weekly one to one singing sessions for Streetwise at the Connection since the Canticles Project, assembling a workshop group was a challenge for the centre.

The workshop began with some rhythmic physical and vocal warm-up exercises leading into teaching the participants a simple musical canon, and then singing it in canon, and then singing it with separate groups separated around a large room. This was a very successful introduction to some of the musicological and practical aspects of *Family Matters*, no mean feat for a group of homeless clients.

After a short break, we then divided the group into two, and spent the rest of the session reading a short but critical section of the libretto, then staging it (directed by the clients) ending with a performance of each for the other group, again a successful introduction to the plot and aspects of the drama of the production.

"It was enjoyed by all" Siobhain O'Higgins, Streetwise workshop leader, Connection

Workshop Attendance:

CLIENTS: Wayne, Carl, Jamie, Mary, Wear, Jose, Ahmet

STAFF & VOLUNTEERS: Wyn, Tiago, Clara, Normalene, Malcolm

PERFORMANCE:

A group then came to a performance of *Family Matters* on Saturday 9th February:

CLIENTS: Mary, Jose, Ahmet

STAFF: Wyn, Clara, Tony +1

STREETWISE: Siobhain O'Higgins

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Crisis Skylight: *activity-based drop-in centre open to all homeless, London E1*

WORKSHOP: 13th February 18.00-19.30

The workshop was led by Bill Bankes-Jones (Tête à Tête) and Rowan Fenner (Streetwise.)

Streetwise has been building up a small group in this exceptionally active centre, concentrating on singing. This short workshop therefore began straightaway with some vehement vocal warm-ups, followed again by the group learning a canon, and then singing it in canon, and then again around the space and even moving, much like the Connection.

We then again circulated the same section of libretto and separated into two groups. This time, much to my amazement, these two groups improvised their own sung version of this section of the opera. Definitely a good introduction to the show!

Workshop Attendance:

CLIENTS: Patrick, Derek [also attended Passage workshop below,] Ruben, Carlos, Blue

PERFORMANCE:

There was no formal group outing, Crisis Skylight operating rather differently from the other centres. Instead, clients came under their own steam on different evenings. This certainly, I think, had some impact on attendance.

CLIENTS: Patrick [TWICE!] Ruben. [Derek attended with the group from the Passage.]

'If there's another show, count me in! It was great' – a participant from Crisis

'It was great fun to see the show' – a participant from Crisis

The Passage: *mixed daycentre for the over 25's, London SW1*

WORKSHOP: 17th February, 14.00-16.00

The workshop was led by Bill Bankes-Jones (Tête à Tête) and Dominic Harlan (Streetwise.)

This turned out to be an exceptionally large workshop, even for Streetwise, and despite being a little daunting at the beginning, was very successful. The workshop began straight away with some vigorous singing, the "Passage blues" in which each person attending had a solo verse supported by group refrains. We then taught the group a canon, and then the very challenging canon from *Family Matters* itself, with great success.

Again, we then circulated the same section of libretto, and divided the group into two. One group devised a country and western adaptation accompanied by a client on his guitar, while the other staged a more conventional but more thorough operatic adaptation. Certainly a great introduction to the show, a shame, though not a huge surprise, that more didn't make it to a performance.

Workshop Attendance:

CLIENTS: Duncan, Joseph, Havroy, Neil, Peter, Derek (see Skylight) Terence, Sam, Ed, Graham, Jim, Joseph and four more, names forgotten!

STAFF: Chris

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PERFORMANCE:

CLIENTS: Thursday 19th Feb Neil, Sunday 22nd Feb Derek (see Crisis Skylight) Tutu, Robert, Peter

STAFF: Pam, Chris (Sunday 22nd)

STREETWISE: Dominic

“I thoroughly enjoyed myself throughout the performance. Congratulations everyone.” Peter, The Passage

Queen Mary Hostel: *residential shelter for women aged over 18, London SW1*

WORKSHOP: 17th February 16.30-17.30

The workshop was led by Bill Bankes-Jones and Adey Grummet (Tête à Tête) and Dominic Harlan (Streetwise.)

For this rather less able group, it was a great help to have a singer from the show. Adey Grummet performed her final aria a couple of times, and we discussed the subject matter at length, before devising our own brief improvisations as a group based around family life.

Workshop Attendance:

CLIENTS: Anne, Audrey, Doreen, Theresa

PERFORMANCE:

CLIENTS: Anne, Audrey, Theresa, Caroline, Jacqui, Margaret, Valda

STREETWISE: Rowan

‘I loved the story’ – a participant from Queen Mary

Figures:

Shelter		Projected	Actual
Passage	workshop		
	clients	15	16
	keyworkers	2	1
	streetwise workshop leader	1	1
	Tête a Tête workshop leader	1	
Queen Mary	workshop		
	clients	10	4
	keyworkers	2	2
	streetwise	1	1
	theatre visit		
Connection	workshop		
	clients	10	7
	keyworker	1	0
	streetwise	1	1
	theatre visit		

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	streetwise workshop leader	1	1
	Tête a Tête workshop leader	1	1
	theatre visit		
	clients	5	3
	keyworkers	1	4
	streetwise	1	1
skylight	workshop		
	clients	10	5
	keyworker	1	0
	streetwise workshop leader	1	1
	Tête a Tête workshop leader	1	1
	theatre visit		
	clients	5	3
	keyworkers	1	0
	streetwise	1	0
TOTALS:	Homeless workshop participants	45	32
	Homeless performance attendance	25	17

Stated Aims and Objectives:

We certainly succeeded in our specific aims to hold all these workshops and visits. Clients were over and over again extremely appreciative and enthusiastic. More importantly, they enthusiastically devoured both workshops and performances, verbally delivering all kinds of sophisticated responses. This was certainly very effective both in helping them for a while as function as valued citizens, and in providing momentary respite from the many terrible problems they were confronting in their lives. With careful and sensitive planning, the process also seemed to sit very well within Streetwise's ongoing work in each of these homeless centres, strengthening these workshop programmes by providing refreshing variation.

There's no doubt that the process also accomplished each of its objectives:

- to help broaden the horizons of the homeless clients, improve their self-worth and profile, as part of Streetwise Opera's ongoing work
- to help Tête à Tête to continue to bring opera productions of the highest quality to the widest possible audiences, and to find new ways of working
- to continue the relationship between the two companies that has grown out of *The Canticles*
- to reinvigorate the artists and homeless keyworkers taking part in the way that invariably accompanies this kind of work.

Anticipated problems

Happily, there were no real discipline problems at all, other than one or two participants quite understandably falling asleep at the passage workshop (understandable because of their street-sleeping lifestyle, rather than the content of the workshop!)

Overall, attendance was below Streetwise's projections, which we had anticipated in the original proposal. This is inevitable, really working with such a volatile client-base. There were also pleasant surprises, though, the Passage workshop and the Queen Mary outing to the show both exceeding expectations.

"Streetwise Opera would very much like to be involved in future collaborations with Tête à Tête – theatre visits of this calibre are enormously enjoyable and stimulating for our participants. The workshops before hand are a

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vital tool in the process and we would recommend that the workshops in future include more input from musicians in the production.” Matthew Peacock, Executive Director, Streetwise Opera

Conclusion

Most importantly, every single workshop and theatre visit proved to be most worthwhile, and a significant number of homeless, as well as the artists and keyworkers involved, the two opera companies and four homeless centres all benefited from a small but invigorating project. We can't thank the Paul Hamlyn Foundation enough for making this possible.

“The musicians and singers really gell and you get drawn right into what is happening, dramatic one moment and funny the next Theres a whole gamut of emotions going on. I loved very minute of it. My first opera and hopefully now the first of many.” Neil, the Passage

Appendix I: Education - Schools workshops

i schedule of workshops & attendance figures

Where	When	Venue	Specific workshop	Number attending
Nottingham	24/02/2004	Brunt School	Performance x 2	40
		Redhill School	Performance	22
Totnes	16/03/2004	King Edward VI	2 Performance	20
			1 Composition	20
			Collaboration	20
Leicester	23/03/04	Gateway College	Performance	20
		Guthlaxton College	Performance	15
Hereford	26/03/200	Queen Elizabeth High School	Composition	15
Canterbury	29/03/2004	St. Edmunds School	Composition	20
			Technical	20
	30/03/2004		School Choir	35
TOTAL			14	247

ii Letter to schools outlining workshop programme

(including descriptions of each type of workshop.)

Dear *Head of Music or Drama*

“Probably the best purveyors of contemporary opera in the country, certainly the most hip” Anna Picard on Six-Pack, Independent on Sunday March 2002

Tête à Tête has in a very short time become the country's leading experimental opera company, working hard to develop both the form and audiences for this work with huge success. Our primary aims are to create new

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work, developing the repertoire through the commissioning of new operas, translations and orchestrations, and to deliver it to people and places that would usually not have access to it.

Tête à Tête offer stimulating educational workshops in connection to each performance project, exploring many elements involved in an opera, including singing, composition, drama, technical production and design. These workshops help to break down barriers of perceived “poshness” and “it’s just not for me”-ness amongst young people as well as helping them to develop musical skills and confidence and raise their own levels of ambition to new heights.

Coming to Hereford’s The Courtyard Theatre in March is our latest production, Family Matters, an intriguing web of family secrets to rival those from the deepest darkest closet. The drama unfolds to brilliant new music and text, written by 6 talented British composers and award winning librettist, Amanda Holden.

As part of the project we are offering workshops to schools in Hereford which can be booked by calling us. Workshop leaders are qualified and versatile and workshops can be tailored to suit requirements. Workshops for Family Matters are led by experienced composers and singers from the project. The following page holds a sample of workshop focus areas which can be adapted to suit individual school requirements.

To book a workshop with **Tête à Tête** or to find out more about the performance please call The Courtyard Theatre or **Tête à Tête** on 0207 228 6001

Yours sincerely

- A) Workshop #1 – FOCUS: STORYTELLING and COMPOSITION – explore the power of words and the impact that setting them to music has on communicating meaning, characterisation and emotion(either enhancing or reducing). Using words from the opera, participants will be involved in activities that explore different ways(conventional and non-conventional) that words can be interpreted, used, and set to music. The workshop will allow students to be involved in the creative process themselves under the guidance of some of the Tête à Tête professionals.

- B) Workshop #2 - FOCUS: SINGING and PERFORMANCE - There are opera singers notorious for producing lovely sounds whilst falling foul of making words and meaning unintelligible. Distorted vowel sounds, dropped consonants, altered rhythms all contribute to frustration of an audience who cannot understand the text and hence miss many nuances of the story. Avoid the pitfalls of dramatically "boring" singing and learn how to be an effective communicator when performing. Explore how to use your voice and body in different ways to maximise your vocal and dramatic impact on stage. The voice is an instrument of infinite potential! Learn ways of making the most of the text. Get into the character and keep your audience enthralled.

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C) Workshop #3 - FOCUS: PRODUCTION and DESIGN - Working with production manager and /or lighting designer, learn how to stage an interesting and stimulating performance for all. Topics to include how to best work within the given performance space, use of props, lighting techniques etc.

iii schools workshops education pack

Tête a Tête

Family Matters

Education Pack

Introduction

This pack is prepared for use by teachers and students to further explore the opera Family Matters.

The pack contains sections on:

Tête à Tête, the company
The workshop process- Putting together an opera
Characters
Synopsis
Beaumarchais: The original play
Themes
Music and composition
Production & Design
Press & Marketing

Each section contains activity suggestions for further exploration, and teachers are encouraged to select from and/or adapt the material according to their needs. Some suggestions are dependant on students having seen the show and should be deemed as post-show activities. However it may be beneficial to discuss Tête à Tête's initial workshop process to allow students an understanding of how the show has been made prior to the performance.

Family Matters is a combination of many inter-related art forms. Students should be made aware of the benefits of exploring individual aspects separately but the need to watch and hear them as a whole in order to gain a true operatic experience!

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We hope you enjoy the workshops and show!

Tête à Tête: The Company

Tête à Tête has in a very short time become the country's leading experimental opera company, working hard to develop both the form and audiences for this work with huge success.

Mission statement:

Tête à Tête's mission is to bring uplifting, surprising, daring and intimate opera productions of the highest quality to the widest possible public.

Aims:

Tête à Tête aims to achieve this by:

- Presenting opera in unusual, innovative and imaginative ways to the best possible standard.
- Widening access to opera through both participation and through the development of new audiences, performing in English, using unusual venues and formats.
- Developing the repertoire through the commissioning of new operas, translators and orchestrations.
- Contributing to the personal development of authors, performers, artistic personnel and all other staff while creating the best possible working conditions.
- Operating efficiently, creatively, generously, and professionally

Our primary aims are to create new work and to deliver it to people and places that would usually not have access to it.

Family Matters has grown out of more than two years of development and discussion about how to further develop Tête à Tête's work carving out a future for challenging and accessible new opera.

It leads on from our early experimentation in commissioning, *Shorts* (1999 – 2000) and *Six-Pack* (2002). Family Matters continues to use more than one composer, but is a very significant step forward for Tête à Tête artistically by using one libretto to create a full length opera (rather than presenting an evening of short operas).

The Libretto has been written by Amanda Holden and set by 6 composers, Cheryl Francis-Hoad, John Webb, James Olsen, Mike Henry, Helen Chadwick and Pete Flood, all bar one writing opera for the first time. The libretto is divided into at least two sections for each composer and the ending has been written collectively.

Tête à Tête Productions to date:

1998-2000 - *The Flying Fox* (*Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss, arranged Jopling, translated Bankes-Jones)

1999-2001 - *Shorts* (an evening of five commissioned operas and entr'actes)

2000 - *Orlando Plays Mad* (*Orlando Finto Pazzo* by Antonio Vivaldi)

2002 - *Six-Pack* (a co-production with the ENO Studio of six commissioned operas)

2002 - *The Canticles* (a co-production with Streetwise opera)

2003 - *Family Matters* (work in progress) 4 weeks of workshops with 13 presentations to the public to develop Family Matters.

2004- *Family Matters*

“Forget music theatre: Tête-à-Tête is one of the best contemporary theatre groups of any kind.”

ROBERT THICKNESSE, THE TIMES

Family Matters Evaluation

Family Matters Phase 1: Workshops

Family Matters has come out of a four week workshop process during the autumn of 2003. Working with singers, composers, a librettist, a whole artistic team and an audience of over 400 we aimed at developing the piece through re-writes and experimentation for a full production in Spring 2004. The workshops were designed to integrate both company members and audiences in the creative process.

The aims of the workshops were:

- To offer a number of highly gifted composers and other artists the chance to discover what it means to create genuinely popular challenging work, in a positive non-competitive environment.
- To allow the audience an involvement in this creative process
- To re-define the parameters of how opera can be created.
- To contribute to the future development of Tête a Tête work.

In order to achieve the stated aims of the workshop process a Feedback “Zone” was constructed at the Battersea Arts Centre in London, with notice boards for comments, washing lines for information normally included in a programme and a sofa and table for people to write comments, allowing the audience to be fully involved.

Feedback “Packs” were given to the audience on workshop nights which included all or some of the following:

- A form to gather statistical and marketing information about the audience
- Pen
- Paper (Notebooks, post-it notes, old diaries) on which to make comments
- Torches
- Bubbles
- Tissues
- List of Questions
- “Shopping lists”

The feedback and activities helped to maximise the audience participation in the show, making the process informal and friendly.

For example:

1. Each workshop focused on two of the composers and their scenes. The scenes were run several times and at each run the audience were asked to participate in various ways:

* To blow bubbles at moments they most enjoyed or when they felt moved or it was the most exciting.

* To use their torch to highlight the character they thought was most interesting during that scene.

* To wave at a specific volunteer if they could not hear any of the words and this was recorded onto the libretto.

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2. They were asked their opinions on each of the characters in the show. E.g: What animal or fruit you thought represented them best. The results of this were used to create collages for the audiences to see. It also helped the performers to further develop their characters. E.g:

2. Family Matters is set in 1992. The audiences were asked to write down memories about that year to help gain characterisation and an atmosphere for the final piece:

E.g. On one night the recollections were the following:

Mary Luckhurst was throwing fruit at my telly during coverage of the general election.
Mrs Thatcher. Selfishness.
John Major on his soapbox.
Last season of old Glyndebourne Opera. Filming Queen of Spades as building was demolished.
Started to fall in love with horses.
Graham Taylor. (Going to a new school). Election. Olympics.
High diving at Barcelona Olympics.
Acquired a river boat. Sons aged 5 + 2. Recession ended.
Speaking Welsh. 2nd year of high school. Being a horrendous swot.
Coping with alcoholic stepmother.
Recession. Redundancy. Fear.
Elections and crisis.
The one and only time I have wittingly tuned a radio to Classic FM

It is in these ways that the final piece has been made, through a creative collaboration between the performers, artistic team and audience

Characters

A wealthy married (for 25 years) couple:

ROSA Mrs. Fitzroy (45)
MR FITZROY her husband (54)

Their servants/friends/accomplices:

FIGARO Mr. Fitzroy's PA (59)
BURGESS Mr. Fitzroy's business advisor (47)

Their children:

FLORA Mr. Fitzroy's ward (16)
LEO Their second son (21)

The action, a day in their lives, takes place in the Fitzroy's' town house. They are moving in today, leaving behind the country house where they have lived for the past twenty-five years. The time is recent, c.1992

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Synopsis

Mr. and Mrs. Fitzroy each have a secret love child. Flora's mother was Barbara, who worked for the family when their two sons were small children. The father of their second son, Leo, was Charlie (a family friend)

Act I

(Scene 1, JW) Following the death in an accident of his elder son, Mr. Fitzroy is attempting to make a new start by moving his household (wife, son, Flora and Figaro) into a new home. The move inevitably prompts thoughts about the past, present and future for them all. Burgess arrives, invited by Mr. Fitzroy to give him financial advice.

(Scene 2, CFH) Mr. and Mrs. Fitzroy talk.

(Scene 3, HC) Rosa remembers her past joys and sorrows.

(Scene 4, PF) Flora and Leo look at family photos with Figaro, they confide in each other.

(Scene 5, MH) Mr. Fitzroy has always suspected that Leo is not his child; he wants to leave everything to Flora. Burgess, who has his sights set on Mr. Fitzroy's fortune, offers himself as trustee; he then enables Mr. Fitzroy to find the letter Rosa wrote to Charlie after Leo was born (which Burgess himself secretly delivered back to Rosa with Charlie's reply);

(Scene 6, JO) Mr. Fitzroy reads the letter; it vindicates his suspicion about his wife's infidelity.

Act II

(Prelude, JO) Figaro distrusts Burgess and resolves to watch him.

(Scene 1, MH) Burgess tells Flora and Leo, separately and 'secretly', that Mr. Fitzroy is Flora's father.

(Scene 2, JW) He tells Rosa too and forces her to destroy all her letters to and from Charlie. (Interlude, JO) Burgess looks forward to getting rid of Rosa, Leo and Figaro; Figaro know he must expose him.

(Scene 3, PF) Leo and Flora, amazed and excited to be brother and sister, think of leaving together; Leo asks to his mother to talk to her husband for him.

(Scene 4, HC) Rosa duly confronts Mr. Fitzroy, who retaliates furiously and quotes the letter to her; this is overheard by Leo, who discovers the truth of who he is.

(Scene 5, CFH) Figaro helps the family to understand that Burgess has tried to use them all for his own evil purpose.

(Final Scene, six mini-codas) The family is together at last. When Burgess returns with the solicitor's papers, Figaro reveals the extent of Burgess's deception and Mr. Fitzroy throws him out of the house. But, as Leo points out, Burgess has forced them all to confront the truth. He and Flora leave. Rosa speaks to her husband and follows them. Figaro decides to stay with his boss... Mr. Fitzroy goes to the door...

Activities

1. Are there any characters that are mentioned in the piece but not seen? Who are they? How are they important to the story?
2. During the show Flora, Leo and Figaro look through some old photographs of their families. What do you think is happening in each photo? Which characters are involved? Choose one photograph and improvise the scene that it shows- How does the photograph relate to Flora, Leo or Figaro?
3. You have just met your new neighbours the Fitzroy family. What are your first impressions of their relationship with one another?

Family Matters Evaluation

4. Write or improvise a scene between the Fitzroy family which takes place after the final scene of the opera. What do you think happens next?
5. Family Matters is set in 1992. Think about the things that define your life now. Make a list of what is important about being your age in 2004. What songs are in the charts at the moment? What clothes do you wear? What films have just come out? What news is current? Then do some research: for every thing that you have listed, find out what the equivalent was in 1992.

pic

The Original Play

Beaumarchais

Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais was a prominent 18th-century French playwright, who was best known for the bourgeois comic trilogy *The Barber of Seville*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *A Guilty Mother*. The use of reoccurring characters was unique in French literature and the character Figaro became Beaumarchais's spokesman for freedom and morality, using the three plays to comment on the social and political criticism of pre-Revolutionary France. Due to this, Figaro was seen as a threat to the Royal Family and Louis XIV banned *The Marriage of Figaro*. Louis XIV only relented this decision after Beaumarchais's involvement in the American Revolution as arms supplier, creating the subsequent embarrassment to England at the hand of the French government. The play premiered in 1784 it was an immediate, if not controversial, success

The Barber of Seville (1772)

The Barber of Seville was famously written into an opera by Gioachino Rossini in 1816. *IL barbiere di Siviglia*, focuses on the impending wedding of Rosina, which creates chaos in the hearts of her suitors. Figaro works tirelessly to help the love-struck Count rescue Rosina from her marriage to Dr. Bartolo. The characters disguise and transform themselves, confusing each other until mayhem erupts, heralded by Figaro's famous aria "Largo al factotum." In the end, this musical comedy finds a marriage of the young lovers and the recognition that human life must be conducted with love and faithfulness.

The Marriage of Figaro (1778)

After *The Abduction from the Seraglio* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wanted to branch into Italian opera and was attracted to the notoriety of *The Marriage of Figaro*. While some of the characters remain from the first play, *The Marriage of Figaro* is set in the castle of Count Almaviva, and has an added list of characters. Of central importance to the work is the highly debated "droit de seigneur," a feudal lord's right to enjoy the affections of a bride on her wedding night before her husband, were she a member of his court.

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The Guilty Mother (1792)

Family Matters is loosely based on Beaumarchais's *La mère coupable: The Guilty Mother*. It is the third play in the Figaro trilogy with *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Written nearly fifteen years later, Beaumarchais completes the transition of his surviving characters into a remorselessly dark world where the idyllic romance has decayed into hidden secrets and painful deception. Unlike its predecessors it has not been made into a full length opera.

Themes

When exploring a play, book, film or opera it is important to try and identify what you believe are the main themes of the piece, i.e. what is the main subject of the show. In this way you as a reader or audience member are able to gain a greater understanding of the performance and production elements and their significance and relationship within the piece.

Listed below are several themes that are prominent in Family Matters and a dictionary definition of it.

- **Identity**

Dictionary Definition:

Identity (noun)

"who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group which make them different from others."

As Family Matters develops, the characters are forced to explore their own identity. Past choices, current situations and new revelations make them question who they are. This is demonstrated through Leo and Flora's gradual discovery of their real father and Mr. Fitzroy's inability to accept Leo as his son.

- **Family**

Dictionary Definition:

Family (noun) -BIOLOGICAL GROUP: "a large group of related types of animal or plant."

Family (group noun) -SOCIAL GROUP: "a group of people who are related to each other, such as a mother, a father, and their children."

The show explores this theme by questioning the definition of a family purely by being blood related. Both Leo and Flora investigate their concept of 'family' and question where they feel they belong. The Fitzroy family could be called unconventional in that it includes Flora- their ward and Figaro, their servant.

- **Infidelity**

Dictionary Definition:

Infidelity (noun)

"(an act of) having sex with someone who is not your husband, wife or regular sexual partner, or (an example of) not being loyal or [faithful](#)."

Family Matters Evaluation

Both Rosa and Mr. Fitzroy have been unfaithful to each other in the past and Family Matters explores the effect this has on each of the characters. This is seen through Mr. Fitzroy's resentment of Rosa for keeping her affair with Charlie a secret and Rosa's subsequent guilt. The piece also explores Leo and Flora's relationship as a result of their parent's infidelity, linking strongly with the theme of **identity**.

- **Deception**

Dictionary Definition: **Deception (noun)**

"when people hide the truth, especially to get an advantage."

In Family Matters Burgess deceives all the other characters through manipulation of their secrets in order to gain Mr. Fitzroy's inheritance and become Flora's guardian.

- **Relationships**

Dictionary Definition:

Relationship (noun)

1 "the way in which two things are connected:

*Scientists have established the relationship **between** lung cancer **and** smoking."*

2 "the way in which two or more people feel and behave towards each other:

*He has a very good relationship **with** his uncle."*

3 "the family connection between people:

The judge asked the witness what the relationship was between her and the victim, and she replied, "He's my son."

There are many varied and complicated relationships throughout the show, including characters that do not appear in person but have a significant effect on the story.

Father/ Son: Leo and Mr. Fitzroy

Mr. Fitzroy and his dead son

Mother/Son: Rosa and Leo

Brother/Brother: Leo and his elder brother

Father/ Daughter: Mr. Fitzroy and Flora

Mother/Daughter: Barbara and Flora

Brother/Sister: Leo and Flora

Family Matters Evaluation

Activities

1. The theme of identity is very strong in Family Matters as Flora and Leo gradually discover their true parentage. Try exploring your own identity. Write down a list of words that best describe you. Are they physical things? Are they based on your personality? Or are they related to your hobbies and interests? Choose three words from your list and swap with the other people in your group. Try to guess whose list is whose. Why are some easier to guess than others?
2. Why do think the show is called Family Matters?
3. The relationship between the characters during the show becomes increasingly complicated. Write down the connections between them in the form of a family tree. Make your own family tree by tracing back your relatives. Try to include photographs of each person to look at like Flora and Leo do in the show.
4. During the show the events of the past are gradually discovered through Rosa's letters from Charlie.
 - Write a letter from Leo and Flora to Rosa about their adventures in Spain.
 - Write a letter from Burgess to Mr. Fitzroy explaining his actions
 - Write a letter from Mr. Fitzroy to Rosa after the ending scene. What would he say? What would her response be?
 - Write a letter as if you were Figaro explaining the situation to a close friend. What elements are most important? How does Figaro feel about the various characters now?
5. The opera explores the changing ideas of what constitutes 'Family'. Look at the dictionary definitions for the themes above. Do you agree with them? If not how would you describe each of the themes? Why is it difficult to have a definitive meaning?

Music & Composition

What is Opera?

Opera is a stage drama which is sung and performed to music. They are different to musicals in that the music is not incidental, i.e. it is not just an accompaniment to the drama, it is important in its own right to the development of the story and is not dependant on the dialogue. Opera has a great appreciation because of its combination of music, drama and design which gives the audience a simultaneous feast of emotions and action.

Opera's history:

Opera emerged from Florence in Italy in the late 16th century, with the first piece labelled as 'opera' being Jacopo Peri's *Dafine* (1594-98). However it was Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) who developed individual characterisation within opera, which became the accepted way of working.

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Opera's structure:

A traditional opera opens with an overture, a section of music which introduces the themes which will be continued throughout the piece. Opera contains solo arias (songs) for individuals, duets for two people and so on to trios, quartets and quintets, including a chorus- a group who interact with the main characters, often adding commentary to the action.

Important operatic composers to research:

17th Century: Cavalli, Monteverdi, Scarlatti, Lully, Rameau

18th Century: Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart

19th Century: Weber, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Berlioz, Wagner, Verdi, Massenet, Gounod, Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Glinka, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Smetana, Dvorak, Richard Strauss, Puccini, Mascagni, Leoncavallo.

20th Century: Berg, Schoenberg, Pfitzer, Schreker, Korngold, Orff, Stockhausen, Henze, Debussy, Ravel, Janacek, Britten, Tippett, Walton, Maxwell Davies, Britwistle, Menotti, Barber, Argento, Glass, Adams.

21st Century: Adès, Turnage, Dove

Operatic Singing Voices:

There are six different voice types which are defined by their upper and lower pitch extremities and can be dependant on their dramatical roles:

Soprano

Mezzo-Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Baritone

Bass

Musical Activities

1. In Family Matters the instrumentalists have been purposefully placed on stage with the performers. What effect did this have on the performance? In what ways have the instrumentalists been included in the staging?
2. The music in Family Matters has been written for a cello, clarinet, percussion and piano as well as voice. Listen to some sections of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*- what other instruments can you hear in Mozart's full orchestra? Do you feel the Family Matters instrumentation reflects a contemporary outlook on opera compared to Mozart's orchestra? Was Mozart reflecting 'the contemporary outlook' of his day?

The Family Matters score was written by six different composers with various trained backgrounds.

3. In a production how would you choose to represent the six different musical interpretations unified by one libretto?
4. What are your views on the idea of a 'multi-composed' work? Is it a radical idea for the 21st century? Research into the origins of this idea.

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Composition Activities

1. Choose an extract of dialogue from your favorite play. In a group of 3-6 people, take one or two lines of text and compose some accompanying music. Put all the sections together. How effective is this? What would you change about it? How could you make the piece work more successfully?
2. Bearing in mind that Family Matters has been written by six different composers, think about the end of the show. In small groups compose one minutes' worth of music based on what you think happens next. Perform the different groups' music one after the other.
 - What effect does this have? Does it work as a whole piece of music? If so, how? If not what would you have to do to make it flow more easily?
3. Choose one of the scenarios below:
 - The Fitzroy's arrive at their new home in London
 - Leo and Flora plan a new future
 - Burgess is found out!

With a group (of mixed instrumentalists of no more than five people) compose a short piece of music to enhance the mood of the action on stage.

Now repeat this exercise with a group of actors improvising the chosen scene. How does this change the effect of the music on the scene?
4. Write some words for an aria sung between Leo and Flora when they have just found out about their true relationship. As a composer, what instruments would you choose to reflect the mood of the song? Does adding instruments enhance this mood?

The Production+Design

Set:

The opera is based in 1992, which imposes specifics on the set and costumes. In order to help clarify the aesthetics of the piece, our set designer Tim Meacock asked questions such as:

What the characters said about themselves and each other

Where each scene happened

What the characters were doing when not on stage

Where they had come from

What the house was like etc

The original play was written in 1790's, a time with a completely different theatrical style and it was felt that Family Matters as an update did not easily lend itself to modern naturalism. The set designer and director visited the Drottningholm Theatre in Sweden, an 18th century theatre with all working scenery and it was felt that the show could work well on this type of stage.

Act 1 was the most naturalist in tone. Our set designer wanted to use aspects of design to enhance the changes in musical styles and in composers.

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The play begins with the Fitzroy's moving into their new house in London. Each of the subsequent scenes introduces a new packing case; a box which opens to reveal the set and props. One of the main aims of the set design was to break the audience's expectations so that every time a case was opened they would be constantly surprised by its contents. By the end of the Act each case has been opened and everything is revealed. The mess on stage is also a metaphor for the family's now complicated situation.

Act II is very theatrical in style with the inclusion of a musical prelude and interlude; therefore we wanted to shatter the audience's expectations again by changing the set design. The set became static throughout with a backdrop of a DNA print, echoing the themes of **identity** and **family**. The prints' colours of purple and white subsequently dictated the colour scheme for the act, broken only by sections of green and orange during the "Spanish" scene.

DNA Finger Print Backdrop

Costumes:

During the workshop process the singers were dressed in clothes typical of 1992. However it was felt that their clothes did not match their status in society, therefore their costumes were updated to modern day. The clothes were bought by the actors and our designer from different shops depending on their status, for example Mr. Fitzroy shopped in Selfridges where as Flora bought clothes from high street stores.

Figaro as the link to the past and original play is dressed in the cut away coat of the 18th Century but given modern day props.

Activities

1. Family Matters has a different set design in Act I to Act II. Are there any similarities between the two? Research the set design for other modern operas. Is it common to change the set? What effect does this have on the performance?
2. How are the themes of the show demonstrated through the set design? Do you think that this is important for the audience's understanding of the story? Design a set for one of the other rooms in the Fitzroy's house- Which character visits there most often? How would you demonstrate the themes of the play in this room?
3. Family Matters is set in 1992 however Figaro is dressed in traditional 18th Century costume. What effect does this have on you as an audience member? Research and design a costume for Figaro in 1992. Do you think this would change the relationship between the characters?
4. How is the set design for Family Matters as an example of contemporary opera, different to that of a traditional opera such as Madame Butterfly? Look at some pictures of another opera and discuss the effect production elements (set, lighting, and costume) have on a production as a whole.
5. Consider the planning process of a production. Who is involved? What are their roles and responsibilities? What are the relationships between these different people?

Press + Marketing

In the 21st century marketing has become an increasingly important aspect of a production. In a society where people's time is precious, the arts and therefore opera, must compete with other past times and marketing has become the most effective way of reaching those audiences. When Tête à Tête approach marketing we aim to reach as wide an audience as possible, and try to target those who have never previously seen opera.

There are many different marketing tools which we use to achieve this:

1. Print

(Posters, flyers) is the core way a company can advertise their show. The company must decide on an image and, taking into consideration their target audience, design their print to appeal to these people. This is then distributed in many ways:

Through distribution companies

Mailing lists (through own company plus other venue marketing departments)

Sending flyers to cultural events

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Sending information to local schools, amateur and community groups who you feel may be interested in the project.

2. Word of mouth

Tête à Tête have a core audience who support us by recommending our work to their friends and family, helping to set up a wide network. Audiences at each show are also encouraged to add their email addresses to our mailings lists and spread their recommendations.

3. Website

The Tête à Tête website is currently being reconstructed. It is normally found at www.tete-a-tete.co.uk or Natalisteedproductions.co.uk. Websites are an increasingly popular way of gathering information about the company or details of the show.

4. Press

Marketing is used in conjunction with press to help gain as wide an audience as possible. Press can be newspapers, magazines, journals and are normally seen as an advertisement or a review. (See below)

5. Research

In order to achieve Tête à Têtes' aim of encouraging people who do not normally attend the opera, feedback forms an important part of the marketing process. A feedback form is included in every Family Matters programme. We ask questions such as :

How did you hear about the show?

What opera's have you seen?

What new opera have you seen?

What other Tête à Tête productions have you seen?

Age category

Ethnic Origin

Through this research we are able to identify our core audience, where we are most successful in recruiting new audiences and help to focus on what areas need improvement.

The reviews below are for Family Matters written by different critics for the same performance.

"These composers have become so immersed in each other's idioms they are almost indistinguishable. Which is not necessarily a good thing: they favour an undemanding, catch-all modernism based on free arioso which embraces lyricism without really allowing itself the luxury of melody"-Robert Thicknesse - The Times

"The problem is that the disjunction between Cheryl Francis-Hoad's urbane, jazz-inspired harmonies and Helen Chadwick's nostalgic melodies is not only a contrast of styles but also between two kinds of drama. The effect of all of these juxtapositions is to neuter the expressive potential of individual scenes and to create a rudderless, confused drama"-Tom Service - The Guardian

"What is remarkable is that though there are acute changes of style and idiom they are not disconcerting. I wasn't able to be present at the public workshops last September so I don't have any idea how the

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collaboration proceeded, but it is a success, and without foreknowledge one might not guess that the work was polyauthored.”-Michael Tanner - Spectator

“Composers and audience have every incentive to use their imagination. The format can't avoid lurches of style and quality, but the surprise of this experiment was how integrated it felt - aided, no doubt, by Bill Bankes-Jones's fluent staging”. Andrew Clark - Financial Times

Activities

1. Compare and contrast the reviews of Family Matters. Why do you think the critics have such different views? Consider which newspaper they write for. What kind of readership do they have? Do you think that reviews have a powerful effect on potential audiences?
2. Having seen the show write your own review of Family Matters. Which elements did you like the best? What do you think is important to mention? Who are you writing for?
3. Attached is the flyer that is used to advertise the show. How effective do you think this is? How does it relate to the themes of the piece? Who does it appeal to? Design your own flyer for Family Matters. What information do you need to put on it?
4. One of the main aims of Tête a Tête is to make opera accessible to everyone and encourage those who do not normally attend. How important do you believe marketing is to achieving this aim? What things could you do to encourage people to come?
5. If you have access to the internet, research some opera companies' websites. What image have they created for themselves? What information is on the website? Think about how you would design your own website for an opera company. How would you make it accessible for users? Who do you think would use the website?
6. The planning and marketing for Family Matters took place over seven months. Develop your own marketing plan for Family Matters or a play of your choice. What jobs does it involve? Break it down into targets for each month. Think about who you want to appeal to. What groups or individuals would be most interested in seeing the show? What jobs can you do immediately? What needs to be done nearer the time of the production?

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iv schools workshop feedback forms

Feedback Form

Thank you very much for your help and support for Family Matters. It is important for us to get feedback from the schools that we work with to help us improve and further develop as a company. If you could help by answering the questions below We would be very grateful. Please be as honest and detailed as you can.

Venue attended/School:

Date of performance/workshop:

1. In general were you pleased / disappointed with the Tête à Tête experience - please comment:

2. Did you find the education materials and support provided helpful? Is there anything more we could have done that you feel would have made a difference?

3. Did you feel you gained a good understanding of the show?

4. Did you participate in a workshop? What did you think about it?

5. What else would you have like to have seen in the workshop?

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6. Did you see the show? What did you think about it?

7. Would you attend another production by the company?

8. If not, why?

9. If you attended both a workshop and a performance, please give us some feedback on how you felt it worked with the show.

10. Do you usually attend this kind of work?

11. Anything else??

Thank you very much for your time.

Unfortunately, none of these feedback forms were returned, though verbal feedback from all workshop promoters was universally positive and encouraging at the time, and certain venue feedback forms (appendix D section i) have some relevant content.

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V Tête à Tête's child protection policy

Tête à Tête Child Protection Policy

The Tête à Tête Child Protection policy has been drawn up in order to protect both the participants and facilitators of an educational workshop.

This policy has been drawn up with Matthew Hart, educational psychologist.

Tête à Tête will be re-viewing its Child Protection Policy on 01.03.05

Policy:

This is a general policy for anyone who is involved in educational workshops.

- Tête à Tête and its members therein adhere to the Arts Council guidelines for the protection of children, and vulnerable adults.
- Tête à Tête adopt a code of conduct/ good practice
- All Tête à Tête company members undertaking educational workshops must sign a declaration stating that they understand and agree with the Tête à Tête child protection policy.
- All schools hosting an educational workshop must sign a declaration stating that they understand and agree with Tête à Tate's child protection policy.
- All schools hosting an educational workshop must provide a designated responsible adult for each workshop undertaken and provide these details to the workshop leaders through Tête à Tête management prior to the workshop.

Code of Conduct/ Good Practice:

Tête à Tête company members must observe the following:

- To always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets.)
- To treat all young people/vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- To maintain a safe and appropriate distance with participants.
- When working with children to always have another adult present and never find themselves alone with a child/children.

Reporting an incident:

In the event of an incident occurring during the educational workshop the company member must fill in the incident report form and report to:

On the day:

- The designated responsible adult from the school.
- The child protection officer of the school

After the workshop:

- Tête à Tête Management

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What is an incident?

This could be:

- A child disclosing that someone has abused/ mistreated/ neglected them outside of school and unrelated to the workshop
- A child disclosing that someone has abused/ mistreated/ neglected them during the workshop
- Noticing bumps/bruises/injuries
- Inappropriate behaviour (e.g. sexual behaviour) on behalf of the child.

If the workshop is extra-curricular:

- Parental permission must have been given to take part
- Tête à Tête will only be responsible for children for the duration of the workshop; not after or on the way home.

Tête à Tête Education workshops

Workshop Name.....
School.....
Schools child protection officer.....
Tel.....
Date.....

Workshop Facilitators Names:

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Designated Responsible Person for workshop.

Name	Tel No.	Status (i.e. Teacher/Learning support/parent)
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I understand and agree with the Tête à Tête Child Protection policy and adhere to its contents.

Name

.....

Signed

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Date.....

Tête à Tête Reporting Form

Name of workshop facilitator

.....

Name of Designated Responsible Adult

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Who was present?

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Account of Incident (Include When & Where)

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What was said?

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Actions taken

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Copies of this form must be given to:

- The schools child protection officer
- The designated responsible adult
- Tête à Tête Management

Any enquiries call Tête à Tête Management: 020 72286001

Appendix J: Developmental Workshop report Aug/Sept 2003

1. Introduction

Family Matters is a new opera commissioned by Tête à Tête from librettist Amanda Holden and composers Helen Chadwick, Pete Flood, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Mike Henry, James Olsen and John Webb. It is the third commission by Tête à Tête weaving the work of many composers into one evening.

Family Matters is an updated version of Beaumarchais' third Figaro play, the Guilty Mother, sequel to the Barber of Seville and Marriage of Figaro. It is structured so that the composers each write one large scene in both acts, then co-write the final scene of the evening.

The cornerstone of the development of *Family Matters* was a four week workshop process, 2 weeks c/o the ENO Studio at the ENO works (18th – 30th August 2003) and a 2 week residency at BAC (1st – 13th September.) During this time we worked with the composers, librettist, music director Stuart Stratford, assistant MD Toby Purser, pianist Richard Ormerod, director Bill Bankes-Jones, Designer Tim Meacock, Assistant Designer Lucy Osborne, Lighting Designer Mark Doubleday, Choreographer Quinny Sacks, company of 6 singers: Darren Abrahams, Rob Burt, Adam Green, Andee-Louise Hypolite, Rebecca von Lipinski, Keel Watson, Producer Natalie Steed, Assistant Kate Wyatt, Administrator Caroline Steane, 5 student volunteers, and a wide ranging audience over the whole event of over 400 through 9 public workshops. The company's associate composer, Julian Grant, also contributed to the process on a consultative basis.

The purpose of this project was to develop the piece for rewrites and full production Spring 2004, drawing not only company members but also both loyal and new audience members into the creative process.

2 The Workshop Process

ENO Works - Week 1 & 2

We focused on fixing the text, both vocal and musical, to accommodate changes in response to what we heard, how it felt for the singers, in conjunction with the librettist and relevant composers. We also

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concentrated on helping the singers memorise the music. During this period, the composers each also wrote their own short section of the final scene. For the second week, we continued this honing and memorising process, and also began to experiment with rudimentary stagings. At the same time, we prepared both set and lighting designs for the workshops, and plans for ways in which we could maximise audience feedback and involvement.

The outcome of these plans was a radical new design for Studio 1 at BAC, where we managed to build a basic set placing the audience entirely in the round, every single person on the front row.

For the second week, we continued to rehearse the pieces in the space, both musically and dramatically.

BAC, weeks 3 & 4

By and large, after getting in and preparing the space, we concentrated on preparing for each evening's workshops on the day. A useful and focussing structure and discipline for the company, if a little hairy.

We also constructed a carefully considered feedback "zone," taking over a large area of the BAC foyer with props drawn from family life – noticeboards for comments, washing lines for all the information normally included in programmes, a kitchen table from which to serve free wine and beer, (thanks to generous sponsorship) and a sofa and table on which to write further comments, thus creating a whole area where the company and public could mingle, consider responses to the show.

We also made feedback "packs" which on different nights contained some or all of the following:

- A form to gather statistical and marketing information about the audience
- Pen
- Paper of all kinds (notebooks, post-it notes, old diaries) on which to answer questions and write any comments
- Torches
- Bubbles
- Tissues
- List of questions
- "shopping lists"

A great deal of thought went into how to maximise audience input, in original as well as orthodox ways, how to relax the audience and performers, make the whole process as informal and friendly as possible, and to make it continuously clear that this was an experimental rehearsal, not a finished performance.

Throughout the workshops, we regularly asked some specific questions. Each night the audience was invited to fill in a "shopping list" – if you could buy each character at a greengrocer, what fruit or vegetable would you buy, for example. Each shopping list was then added to a large graph in the foyer. We also asked the audience at the beginning of every interval what they remembered most about 1992. Every night, we also took a vote on the best "strap-line" for the marketing of the show, based on the suggestions from the previous night's audience. We also included a rolling set of questions, added to each night by the audience, either in the packs or on the walls of the theatre.

We also then asked all kinds of different questions as the workshops proceeded, some recorded in written answers at the end, some logged but more useful in the flesh than on paper, making the audience actual contributors to the event. So the audience were asked to blow bubbles into the space when they felt it was appropriate, maybe giving them pleasure. On other occasions, they were invited to throw tissues into the

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space if they'd felt at all weepy. Fairly frequently, we asked the audience to flash their torches at a volunteer with giant ears if they couldn't hear any text, all the flashes then recorded on a libretto. On the last workshop, where we held a full run-through, we asked the audience to write down exactly when they looked at their watches.

For the first week, we concentrated on the work of individual composers. In many ways these were the most exciting and creative workshops for the audience, allowing the time to experiment in public, both with the piece itself and with new techniques of feeding back. We were able to perform a scene in two different ways, show the rehearsal device that led to the current staging, address particular problems where we sensed them, (like clarity of text or comprehension – for one very difficult section, we held a “pub quiz” after the performance.) For one of the workshops, the audience was invited to light the performance themselves with their torches, showing us who the most important character was.

For the final workshop of week 1, we'd planned something called “the trouble with endings” on the assumption that writing the final scene as part of the workshop process would yield plenty of material to present to the public. In fact, this worked so remarkably well, that we simply presented the ending, backwards, component by component, then adjusted the space during the interval so we could ask the audience whether they preferred it in the round or end-on.

For week two, we spent the first few days preparing to run the opera in sequence. For the last three evenings, we first ran each act twice, in two different manners (for example without lights, costumes, and then with them) and then finally the entire opera, still with interactive feedback (tissues, bubbles etc,) as well as the usual plethora of questions.

3. The Feedback

A copy of much of the written feedback from the audience is attached at the end of this document, and really speaks for itself.

During a workshop process, there are a whole string of very important questions one doesn't need an audience to answer – “can you hear the words?” “does this bit work?” “is the plot clear here?” “is this as a whole properly paced?”

To understand a piece properly, and for a company to have a strong vivid imaginative collective understanding, there is of course an infinity of other, more oblique questions, which are really the key to making a vivid, three-dimensional performance – “if he was a vegetable...” “what ought he to be wearing...”

It's with the questions of the latter category that the audience were really of immeasurable help, assisting us in getting to know the piece we were creating.

There's a third issue, of course, which is simply unquantifiable, and why we do live performance rather than watch everything on telly – the buzz you feel, the tense silences, the laughter, the tears, the longeurs, the chat during the interval. In many ways, for such a dramaturgically bold enterprise, the chance to sense this with an audience was the most important factor of all in these workshops. I'm happy to say the experiment seems to have worked – whatever the public consensus, *Family Matters* certainly seems to engage with an audience and provoke all kinds of discussion.

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4. Stated aims

- a. **To offer a number of highly gifted composers and other artists the chance to discover what it means to create genuinely popular challenging work, in a positive non-competitive environment.**

Of the very many new opera commissions I've been involved with, *Family Matters* provoked the strongest, richest, most collaborative engagement of composers with each other I've ever seen. Because they were together telling the same story, each had a stake in everyone else's scene, and *had* to pay great attention to each other's writing, really try to understand what everyone else was doing, how well they were pulling it off. With a group of exceptionally young composers, where all but one are making their professional opera debut, this immersion in the form of opera as a whole seemed critically important. For that alone, the workshops were a REALLY remarkable event.

It was also a great learning experience for all the artists involved, and low-pressure chance to experiment, for all of us. The experimentation was certainly greatest on the theatrical and dramaturgical side – it was a little disappointing not to see so much musical experimentation, but then this is really inevitable if you expect a company to be memorising work.

The ethos was entirely collaborative, entirely non-competitive. The work also transpired to be clearly highly challenging, and certainly genuinely popular. With the refinements we can expect, it stands us in very good stead for the full production.

- b. **To allow the audience an involvement in this creative process.**

The volume of feedback attached speaks volumes itself as to how engaged and involved the audience became. They were absolutely invaluable as adjudicators for creative disagreements, and this feedback will certainly affect and shape the rewriting and full production of the work.

- c. **To redefine the parameters of how opera can be created.**

Family Matters itself is by its very structure a whole new way of writing opera. Famously, the great Russian composers of the time experimented on *Mlada*, an opera-ballet by Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Mussorgsky etc. They never in fact got to the point of being able to perform it. There were, of course, all kinds of collaborative borrowings in the *pasticcios* of baroque opera, though this is more about theiving magpies than composers collaborating. So by definition, *Family Matters* redefines how opera can be created.

The huge amount of work we put into experimenting with the feedback process itself also does this. Satisfyingly, Tom Morris, Director of BAC, home of the "scratch performance" circulated an email saying "...meanwhile, in studio 1, Tête à Tête are redefining the notion of scratch." Also very satisfyingly, this was made tangible when BAC took over the feedback washing-lines and noticeboards for their Octoberfest.

- d. **To contribute to the future development of Tête à Tête's work**

Every project contributes to the future development of a project-based company's work. The *Family Matters* workshops have

- Introduced a whole new batch of artists – composers, librettist, singers, musicians, designer – to the company's stable
- Deepened more than ever before our close relationship with our core audience
- Extended that audience (below)

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- Added to and enriched the creative experience of company members
- Crucially honed and developed this particularly risky project
- Taught us more about how to deploy new creative processes

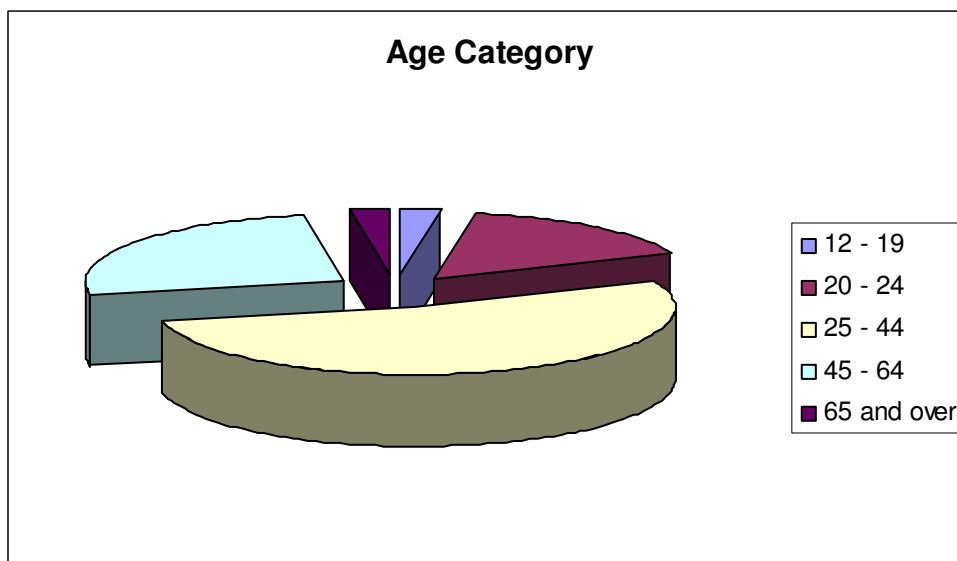
5. Stated Benefits

a. Audiences and people taking part

We reached around 402 people as audience members and 29 as company members. We expect to reach a further 4,500 as audience members and workshop participants with the finished version of the production.

It's a tribute to the marketing of Kate Wyatt, Natalie Steed and the whole company that the audience was so diverse, so young and so broadly based – and of course that practically every workshop was sold out well in advance. The policy of “pay what you can” meant that no-one who wanted to come was excluded.

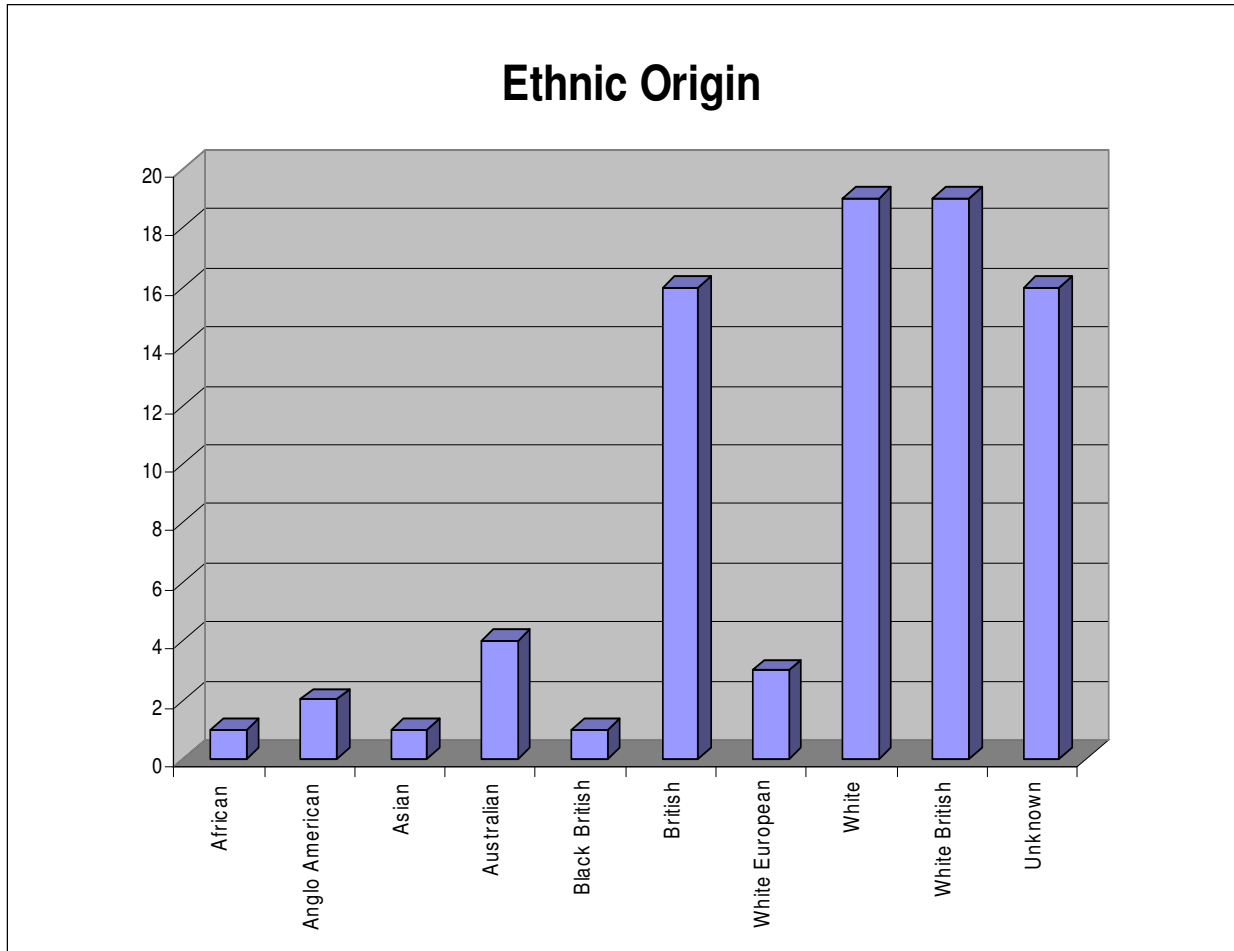
Of the audience surveys we circulated, 82 were returned. Below is a profile of the age range, showing that the vast majority were under 44 – very much the audience of the future, rather than the traditional ageing opera audience.



As far as our ongoing aim of bringing opera to new audiences goes, sadly, we didn't survey this. One can extrapolate striking proof of this side of the profile of our audience from the fact that the majority of people who answered below said they didn't know either the *barber of Seville* or *the marriage of Figaro*, two of the most performed operas of the repertoire. Certainly, we had many anecdotal responses of fresh enthusiastic newcomers.

As far as ethnic breakdown goes, the returned surveys look a little deceptive – certainly then and there, it felt more like 10% than the >2% shown from ethnic minorities. As far as the company went, we certainly managed to reflect on stage and among the composers the broad ethnic breakdown we aspire to in our audiences.

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A further aspect of the audience worth noting is the number of seriously expert and eminent opera professionals who were hugely generous with their feedback: critic Rodney Milnes, conductors Paul Daniel and David Parry, our consultant Sarah Playfair (who attended every single workshop) etc etc.

Also strongly present were the company's loyal core audience, many of whom attended several workshops, some the entire run.

6. Conclusion

Though there were of course weaknesses in the *Family Matters* workshops, (principally, I think, the pressure put on the singers by the standard of musical performance they aimed for) I've no doubt that they will not only prove to be an invaluable tool towards the artistic and public success of the finished opera, but that as demonstrated above, they also amply fulfil the company's mission, to bring uplifting, surprising, daring and intimate opera productions of the highest quality to the widest possible audience.

Bill Bankes-Jones

December 2003

Appendix: Audience Feedback responses

What do you remember from 1992?

Thursday 04

Mary Luckhurst was throwing fruit at my telly during coverage of the general election.

Mrs Thatcher. Selfishness.

John Major on his soapbox.

Last season of old Glyndebourne. Filming Queen of Spades as building was demolished.

Started to fall in love with horses.

Graham Taylor. (Going to a new school). Election. Olympics.

High diving at Barcelona Olympics.

Acquired a river boat. Sons aged 5 + 2. Recession ended.

Speaking Welsh. 2nd year of high school. Being a horrendous swot.

Coping with alcoholic stepmother.

Recession. Redundancy. Fear.

Elections and crisis.

The one and only time I have wittingly tuned a radio to Classic FM

Recession. Unemployment. Uncertainty.

Buying a cabin cruiser.

Paris Gauloise Café au Lait. The Bastille. Baby, wedding, white suit, journalism school, financial mayhem.

I was working and travelling around Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Thailand.

My football team win the third division championship.

Olympics in Barcelona.

A sense of government sleaze.

You still got the student grants, John Major.

Channel Tunnel.

Olympics: Chris Boardman (British gold medallist cyclist)

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A holiday romance skiing.

The Olympics/getting drunk

Victor Gollancz sold to Cassell and end of opera party moving out of Henrietta Street offices

No 4 nephew born

Major hangs on

Nick Hornby first book published

Friday 05

In 1992 I was wearing skull traction and then a body brace. That was the year I broke my neck.

The decline of shellsuits.

Paul Weller, school, teenage crushes.

John Major PM

Freelancing at the foreign office having left the city in 1009/91

Saturday 06

Crossing the Western Desert (Egypt/Libya) to Sliva – remote oasis – crossing point of ancient trading routes visited by conquerors Napoleon, Alexander, Rommel... Also demolishing one opera house and building another.

Neil Kinnock

I was care-free figure skating at Granby Halls with my bovers. Wearing Global Hypercolour.

I was 11 and was wearing Global Hypercolour t-shirts and nike air jordans and I think I liked Paula Abdul and Tina Turner. Also I had a wicked BMX bike.

1st year of university studying performance art at Middlesex – Devon dumpling hits the big smoke!

I was 15, listened to go go gorilla

Sunday 07

Manchester music/Brit Pop was becoming big

Opera Factory's production of *The Coronation of Poppea* (Nigel Robson superb as Nero, Seneca dying in his bath, Amor supplying the obligatory bit of total nudity); Birtwistle *Yan Tan Tethera* (Opera Factory) I've forgotten the lessons in breed recognition; Finchley Children's Music Group at the QEH – a timewarp experience hearing pieces I'd sung when they were new 25 years before and not heard since; John Buller's *Bakkham* (the most tedious evening ever spent in the theatre, an opera where the composer wants the audience not to understand the text); Platform 2 marathon (flunking swimming at 11.30pm); City of London Sinfonia 20th Anniversary concerts; a Vic Hoyland / Judith Weir double bill in the Purcell Room of which I recall nothing other than its' happening; Hilliard Ensemble in Westminster Abbey: sitting in the choir stalls behind the other side of the screen from the performers, maximum

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splendour of surroundings, but semi-detached from performance. Failed again to understand that attraction of Perotin

Thursday 11

In 1992, I was a junior doctor and a young mum.

I was having wild Brazilian affairs followed by inner angst.

I was sixteen and spent the summer in Paris. Apart from that, I remember very little! Bros seemed to be popular at the time.

I lived in N London (Harringay) and worked with young people 16-19 and adult unemployed; I loved my work, hated my house and loved my climbing!

Like the Fitzroy's, 1992 was a life passage

This was a transitional year for me. I left college. Started my first job. Moved towns. Got my first mortgage.

I remember everyone wondering what was going on. The 80s were over, Thatcher finished. What do we do now? A bit grey and confused.

HRH Princess Alice turned 91 in 1992.

'We're all right!' Neil Kinnock, Sheffield 1992.

The ABBA revival began in 1992

Friday 12

1992 – Broken Hearted

meeting my husband

from 1992? I remember being 13 and going through puberty, my first pubic hair. And staying off school cause I'd started my period...and squeezing spots.

I was 26, living in Englefield Green. Going out with Fred

What were you wearing in 1992?

Thursday 04

Some clothes.

Black leggings. Short skirts.

I was a two year old.

'studenty' clothes

this suit.

Second hand clothes

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Double breasted pinstripe suit.

Jeans. enormous t-shirts!!

(Post-box) Red v. neck jumper to school. Blue shade doc martens. Leggings and big knitted jumpers

doc-martens

pinstripe suits

as now

nothing

army boots!

stone washed jeans

much the same as now!

sensible shoes

Bright green silk with huge shoulder pads. Fantastic!

?

shorts

black

DMs

Wide trousers and sometimes barefoot

DMs, monkey boots

White suit

Wearing black

Friday 05

I was wearing a lot of stern black trouser suits

Tamed punk hair, blue and black clothes, leggings (urggh!), long big dangly earrings (QS)

Hyperglo colour-change t-shirts

Leggings and big jumpers

Rainbow dungarees and cherry red DMs

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Saturday 06

In 1992 I turned 5. I didn't like wearing shoes. When I had to I wore patent leather shoes with sparkly butterflies. I wore a tartan pinafore with a blue polo neck. My swimming costume had a pink hippo on it. Classy.

Cut off jeans with cowboy shoes
Wore snowdogs, 501 levis jeans, t shirts

Monkey and biker boots with 501's (jeans) and the same t-shirts I still wear now!

DM's leggings

Hyperglo colour change t-shirts. Culottes for girls. Plastic dummies on a black string (as a necklace). Cycling shorts when not even cycling. Leggings. Bodies (legless romper suits for girls – like leotards)

Sunday 07

I was wearing jeans and men's work shirts to work

Indie T-shirts/ long sleeve band shirts ripped jeans Dr Martin boots Curtain style hair cuts

Coloured jeans. Platform shoes, Trainers, Indie/grunge

We were mostly wearing waistcoats long skirts with D.M boots. Shirts open with t-shirts under them. Stone-washed or coloured jeans – tapered. White trainers.

Rainbow dungarees and cherry red DM's

Levi 501's and Doc Martens

Thursday 11

Wearing jeans – black, straight.

I threw out a lot of my old clothes and bought p[in-stripe hot pants with matching waistcoat. Opaque black tights. Baggy jeans with wide belts pulled in tightly.

I wore suits to work but jeans and t-shirts any other time

Wore lime green trousers and gold costume jewellery

Clothes were

a) Indie (Doc Martens, green German army jackets with T-shirts from e.g. Ride, The Cure, The Levellers)

b) House – shaven head, baggy jeans, big white Nike Air

or

Acid Jazz – Adidas Campers etc and silly Jamiroquai hats.

I was wearing bold liberty print shirts or butterfly Levis and toning plain t-shirts.

My husband was ordained in St Paul's Cathedral. I wore apple green linen and a hat with veiling

Friday 12

I was wearing stripy jeans and a naff co. 54 t-shirt.

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Hippy shirts and tartan trousers

Long wool multi-coloured cardigan

Suits for work. Jeans and bright coloured tops

Do you know the other operas in the trilogy? If yes did it help?

Thursday 04

No

not yet 1st night...

yes. probably.

no

I don't know. I was confused anyway.

no

yes (a bit) and no.

no, and I was a bit confused as to what was going on, possibly due to Bill's explanation!

No. yes.

Yes, liked Figaro with his measuring tape.

Yes it did help.

Moderately well. Only when I realised the connection.

Yes, yes

No no

No no

Yes yes

Didn't seem to be a problem

Saturday 06

Didn't think lack of knowledge of Figaro trilogy is a problem.

Sunday 07

Marriage of Figaro was written by Mozart

Nope

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Didn't know marriage of Figaro/Barber of Seville

No

Don't know the other operas

Don't think lack of knowledge of Fitzroy trilogy is a problem.

Thursday 11

I do know Marriage of Figaro – I don't think it matters, but I enjoyed the moments that reminded me of it.

Friday 12

Yes I do know the marriage of Figaro and the barber of Seville and it doesn't matter AT ALL!

What did you like about the performance?

Thursday 04

All.

The intensity.

The intimacy in the space.

Hearing about its development

Extremely emotional

The voyeurism

Music. Performances.

Clarity of characters and music.

Music. Performances. Informality.

Hands on

Interaction with the audience

The singing!

I really liked the 'sub' characters Figaro and Burgess – I think they work really well and play off each other

Mrs F's voice was absolutely stunning

Friday 05

Figaro vs. Burgess

I love seeing Rob Burt as a baddie

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Mr F was really impressive

Clever mirror for cues

Moments of chamber piece intimacy

When the music changes tone

I like the rapport between the characters

The music is great!

The individual characters were really coming through

Saturday 06

I loved the modernity of the piece and the visual aesthetic. I very much liked the design e.g. the empty slides – the empty frames mean we can fill in the pictures ourselves. I liked the lighting very much especially the ‘attic’ atmosphere in the pictures scene. I found it very moving and full of potential.

Mr F’s solo scene with the letter – made me feel quite differently about him (though I wondered how genuine he was: if I read the libretto only I think it would be Mr F convincing himself that is how he might feel and how Rosa should be as a wife.

Seeing the work develop

Sunday 07

It was true and very powerful

Varied styles of words

Simplicity and openness

End was more effective when Mr. F stayed in the space.

Mrs F’s voice was absolutely stunning; the individual characters were really coming through

The mix of composers works very well

Thursday 11

Loved the backing vocals in the last scene and the beginning of Rosa’s reminiscence scene

Friday 12

Enjoyed the unaccompanied parts very much and beautifully sung. All singers excellent.

I liked Figaro’s voice.

Liked the duet middle Figaro/ Leo

Great singers

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Great diction

Saturday 13

Really liked the diversity of drama, different dynamic levels etc. It's brave to try in a small space but really works. It's quite TV/film intimate in nature

Liked the duet between Figaro and Leo

I loved how flora and Leo could be affectionate even in a weird family situation – this is also how life is

Rosa and Fitzroy in the denouncement! Great performances from both of them

What would you like to change? How would you like to see it changed?

Thursday 04

Diction needs improving please. Too early...

Stuart is unclear. Had they another son who has just been killed?
More clarity.

Less middle-class. Different carpet.

More sex and violence and passion. i.e. more physicality

I wasn't sure about Mr F's clipboard

What is Mr F doing with the clipboard? Is it business, is it moving related? Not sure I like it

I like the lighting idea, but I don't think the torches 'worked' effectively

Generations should be clear

Bigger space

More input from audience

Friday 05

When the opera began I was quite pissed off with the tired old 'not my son' theme. During my sexually active years I have met a lot of men willing to leave their sperm lying around without an iota of care about its future. However I have too often heard of the supposed trauma when / if a child they had previously believed to be from their sperm is discovered not to be. The opera plot developed into quite an intricate and interesting intrigue. I found I was able to let go of my initial feeling of 'how tiresome!' and enjoy the storyline.

Saturday 06

Didn't understand why having started with a blast, the cd player went off (spontaneously?) for the photograph session and then spontaneously came on again for the last bit of the scene.

Pianist drowns singers in opening duet of 1iii; background CD noise is not a good idea, it distracts, and the piano is lovely there

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In scene 4 background CD music doesn't work – it's just a noise which distracts

Didn't like the screechy bits or the comedy injections

Churchy music on revelation of Leo etc?? Stops fusion. I don't know would have to be very stylised.

Movement and body language between Mr and Mrs F needs to be clearer.

Sunday 07

Nothing really it flows. Start from the beginning and finish at the end.

Burgess's final reaction + exit is the one bit that really doesn't work for me – neither full melodrama villain, nor 'Yah boo suck didn't want to play any way'. In particular falsetto weak + out of place.

Nothing

Unsure of relationship between Leo and Flora

Burgess scene + exit of mother

Movement and body language between Mr and Mrs Fitzroy needs to be clearer.

Piano somewhat overpowered Leo and Rosa on occasion

Thursday 11

At top of show, relationship between Mr and Mrs wasn't clear. I felt a bit wobbly. Just a few moments.

Don't use shredded paper in the boxes – makes you wonder why letters aren't shredded?

Scene 5 – Pianist drowns singers in opening duet (Leo and Flora) then background CD noise not a good idea – it distracts – and the piano is lovely there.

Leo should be listening to Take That, not drum 'n bass, which wasn't around in 1992.

Leo should be wearing very *tight* denim cut-offs.

Rosa should be wearing a wedding-ring.

In order to look older, maybe Rosa should put her hair up (in a 'French pleat' – very '90s).

Scene 5 – less piano, more voice.

Rewrite scenes 2, 3 and 6 – all pretty dire. (others are excellent).

Where has Mr F's romantic impetuous past gone?? He used to go to the theatre....

Barbara raising Flora on her own – very sentimental "she worked so hard... the mental task" etc etc. – all sentimental claptrap!

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Why is Mr F so quick to renounce his second son only on a suspicion? We don't understand exactly why he hates Leo SO much. Also, where does the suspicion come from? Has he suspected for 21 years and hated Leo from the beginning? If that's the case Leo would have SERIOUS emotional difficulties not just a bit of teenage angst!

"yes sir no sir three bags full sir" – AARGGHHH!!! Shut up!!

That 'best man' business, what's going on there!?

How does Burgess know where the letters are?

Leo should pubesce a bit more.

In Scene 4, background music doesn't work – just a noise which distracts.

Could Mr Burgess be more obviously evil? E.g., sly looks/ sneaky glances aside?

I think the lighting designer should appear in speedos (tight ones).

Less sure about Charlie's voice – apart from anything else she'd be remembering him from 1969 yes? (if Leo's 22 now) and he sounded more 70's especially the nudge nudge Eric Idle style

Friday 12

More Figaro music to lighten Act 1

The stress on 'temper' was always on the second syllable – it should be on the first

Rosa – 1. why aren't you wearing a wedding ring? 2. Why do you look so young – not old enough to be Leo's mother. Do something with make-up/ clothes. 3. Why don't you react more when you are told Mr F is Flora's father? NOTHING HAPPENS!!

Mr Fitzroy – Sorry but your jacket was a bit small. Didn't get when you got hold of the crucial letters.

Figaro – 1. Why are you wearing a silly hat? 2. Why are you calling Mr Fitzroy 'sir'? Come to think of it, don't have servants.

Flora – Don't quite get all your words.

Felt the ending was weak. Generally, down with bubble and hankies (I never felt dabby). Annoying! Distracting! Pointless! Didn't get the family relationships. Need a family tree.

Leo is too young – to 'teenagery'

We question the benefit of the audience participation which seemed to trivialise the serious subject matter and intrude on the emotional experience of both audience and performers. BUT torch idea very good

Flora – sorry but I really don't get your words quite often.

Interesting plot but confusing at times; do the singers 'fit' their characters?

What was the relationship between Flora and Leo?

Most crucial part of 1st scene is overlaps re. Leo (my dead brother) and Flora (I am so lucky) – can't hear

Meaninglessly busy

"How dare you" in scene 1ii doesn't quite work – why does Mr F get annoyed?

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Saturday 13

Purely a personal taste thing – hate the boys singing in the box through rosa’s scene; reduces the impact of her dramatic tension somehow (like a mobile phone ringing)

Felt the ending was weak

I would like to change the music! It may be the acoustics or where I am sitting BUT it is too much at times it overbears the otherwise touching libretto. At times of discord it fits but..... nuff said!

If Burgess wants Flora why does he not try harder to get her rather than cock it up with mischievous ineptness that actually brings Flora and Leo closer together?

At the top of the show the relationship between Mr and Mrs wasn’t clear, I felt a bit wobbly – what is happening? Only for a few moments

It was very good, although I was occasionally muddled as to who Charlie was – a family tree is necessary

1ii. What plans for Flora? Why does Figaro leave? He has asserted his authority and then still has to go – this must be a very hierarchical family, very archaic, not 1992 at all

I would wish to hear the words better, especially Mr F’s

Could Mr Burgess be more obviously evil? E.g. Sly looks / sneaky glances aside

How does Rosa think Burgess is helping when he shreds the letters? She says that she knows that Mr F is worried about Leo and Flora’s relationship and wants to send Leo away – why then does she shred the letters, thereby compounding the problem (i.e. she destroys the very evidence that could secure Leo and Flora’s happiness – is she a selfish sadistic cow!?)

Describe one person that you would like to come and see the performance? Why?

Thursday 04

A friend who is fanatical about opera but dismisses anything post-Strauss to show her what she’s missing.

My children as always.

I would like to send a person who is very much into classical opera and knows Figaro by heart.

Too early to tell – Tony Blair? Real world still exists!

A colleague who loves dance and thinks he hates opera!

Young aspiring singers so must see the work involved

Friday 05

I would like my friend Del to see this as he thinks opera is for the elite.

I would like my friend Tom to see the performance – he loves music he’s a composer and he always speaks his mind and says what he’s thinking.

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Sunday 07

Bill Clinton - he might keep his DNA to himself then.

What was your strongest memory of the performance? Why?

Thursday 04

Mrs F's feet.

Great singers

The looks

The naked actors

Watching the audience reacting to the individual performances

Facial expressions and tension

Scene with Mr and Mrs F

The expose scene + Stuart's foot tapping

Mr F singing the word 'mean'

The shredder scene

The shredding scene

"Leave me alone"

"I want you to love me"

Friday 05

Figaro – his language is alive and human

Strongest memory is of how slimy Mr Burgess is

The duet between Figaro and Burgess

Really good, particularly the duet at very end. But who is Fairfax?

Mr F's sol scene with the letter – made me feel quite differently about him (though I subsequently wondered how genuine he was: if I read the libretto only, I think it could be Mr F convincing himself that is how he'd like to feel, and how Rosa should be as a wife)

I loved the music in the last scene tonight – very clever!

Sunday 07

Figaro arriving back from the Solicitor.

Photo albums

Family Matters - Evaluation

Music

Thursday 11

Rosa remembers.

Friday 12

Some beautiful lyrical sections

Saturday 13

Rosa – wonderful voice, moving acting; Figaro – powerful voice; Flora – fluid natural performance

A capella in second half with Figaro, Flora and Burgess in masks – excellent!!

Mrs F's voice

I loved the harmony with the piano when Rosa was reminiscing about when she was in love – it was beautiful

What should we see in the boxes?

Thursday 04

Out of date shoes. Home gym equipment. Magazine collection. Soldiers.

Polystyrene packaging in different colours.

The boxes are annoying because they are too light and fall over easily

Stuff. Teddy bears.

What Mr F considered was Mrs F's rubbish

Pictures, clothes, kitchen stuff

Mr and Mrs F's pasts

Clothes, plates, pots

Lost dreams

Teddy bears, photos, clue to dodgy parentage

Things that can smash

A rotten peach

Friday 05

I would like to change the contents of the boxes for a) double helix of DNA b) photographs in frames c) military memorabilia

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A plastic skeleton

Teddy bear

Family pictures, CDs, photos, paintings, personal objects

Saturday 06

I like the idea of the boxes containing secrets slowly being unpacked.

Nothing they should be black – everything hidden.

Sunday 07

Books, crockery, clothes, toys (if they have children)

Photographs newspaper cuttings and other memories

Irrelevant

One box ought to contain a Havishamesque wedding dress; possibly some military memorabilia as well.

Friday 12

There should be underwear, CDs, cutlery, books, Rosa's shoes, cuddly toys.

Saturday 13

The boxes should remain translucent and largely empty – they are our memories and our baggage

References to 1992? Records? Collections of sentimental things

Do you have a good question we should ask tomorrow's audience?

Thursday 04

Describe the Characters as Colours

Did you find watching the 'process' interesting or is it more important to just focus on the 'product'?

7/9/03 watching the 'process' was different / enjoyable.

Are you really sure about the plot? Does the Director know the story?

7/9/03 Don't really know the plot that well.

I think you are asking the audience to do too much especially on first viewing – second bite of the cherry its ok

What becomes of the relationship between a) Mr and Mrs F

b) Flora and Leo

*7/9/03 They go to Spain and live happily ever after
they should have lots of babies.....*

Family tree would be good

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Would you like the performers to extend their movement/make it bigger/explore it more?

7/9/03 No

The first three words that they think describe each character

Will it be best performed in the round or not?

7/9/03 – In the round for an intimate space the singers need the room

7/9/03 – it worked better in “theatre” style than “in the round” more compact better drama

7/9/03 – I actually liked the second style (end on) better but then ‘d had a beer and knew the story more. Was more involved first time around (in the round)

7/9/03 – In-the-round is more intimate but easier to grasp dramatic effect other way. In-t-r is uncomfortable and being so close means you watch the technique of singers rather than really engaging with the opera.

7/9/03 Much preferred seating around the edge – you couldn’t see when the seats were on the floor

12/9/03 – the performance in the round is a good idea

best performed on stage

Friday 05

If Figaro has been the ‘fixer’, what is his role now Burgess has arrived?

7/9/03 Couldn’t work out what Figaro was up to.

7/9/03 Figaro is the fixer (fixing is part of a minders job)

What proof do you have that the man you call ‘father’ is the DNA donor?

7/9/03 It’s a wise man who knows his father.

What dish on a menu would each character be?

Why is Mrs F still with Mr F?

Mr & Mrs. F are in love (still) – maybe only saw last act.

Convenience

She didn’t have a good enough reason to go

Because she still loves him, partly, and also because she is a bit weak; it’s only during the opera that she gets up enough strength

Saturday 06

What is the age difference between Charlie and Rosa?

7/9/03 Rosa is 20 years older than her godson.

Sunday 07

If you had a secret love child would you keep it a secret from your spouse if you found out about your other half’s child?

How did Burgess find out in the first place?

What does Mr F think of the kid’s relationship as he knows who the father is?

Did you believe musical + emotional arc?

How does Flora resolve her journey? With only the information from Leo “Your father is not my father”.

Why does Rosa leave her husband? They’ve both had affairs doesn’t this put them now on an equal ground.

Family Matters - Evaluation

Thursday 11

How old is everyone?

Why is Leo bitter?

How old are all the people?

What proof do you have that the man you call 'father' is the DNA donor?

11/9/03 – None

If Figaro has been the 'fixer', what is his role now Burgess has arrived?

11/9/03 – Reconciliation.

Will it be best performed in the round or not?

11/9/03 – yes

Are you really sure about the plot? Does the director know the story?

11/9/03 – Does not matter.

Did you find watching the 'process' interesting, or is it more important to focus on the product?

11/9/03 – very exciting

If you had a secret love child would you keep it a secret from your spouse if you found out about your other half's child?

11/9/03 – No

I'll never reveal my love child!

What becomes of the relationship between Flora and Leo?

11/9/03 - Falls apart after first infatuation.

They spend a happy 6 months together, but split up because of the memories...

What is the age difference between Rosa and her Godson?

11/9/03 – 10 years.

Why is Mrs F still with Mr F?

11/9/03 – Because she still loves him, partly, also because she is a bit weak. It's only during the opera that she gains any strength.

Friday 12

What star sign would each character be?

12/09/03 – Leo: Sagittarius, Rosa: Cancer, Figaro: Taurus, Mr F: Scorpio, Flora: Leo, Burgess: Gemini

Why does Mrs F stay with Mr F?

Convenience.

If Figaro has been the fixer, what is his role now Burgess has arrived?

Slight-comedy character? But mainly he is the one who helps everyone find out the truth about Burgess.

What is the age difference between Rosa and her godson?

She is fifteen years older than him.

What proof do you have that the man you call 'father' is the DNA donor?

Family Matters - Evaluation

I have no proof my Dad is the DNA donor. Would be good if he wasn't!

Should it be performed in the round?

It should be performed in the round, although sometimes it's difficult to hear the words when singers have their backs to you.

Saturday 13

What wedding gift would each character be?

Other

Sunday 07

Does an audience really have to respond physically (e.g. Blowing bubbles, hand clapping) to register its' fascination and appreciation of the performance?

I didn't understand what was being said in the immediately preceding scene to tonight's when it was played on Thursday. Will I understand it better next week? To cope with the quick-fire coda the audience needs to have caught up totally with the developments to date.

Are you intending to keep the washing-line image for the poster? The girle is so not Rosa (camisole maybe?) I'd suggest a 'family group' like Thurs/Friday introduction would work well instead.

Your shopping list questions invite ill-considered snap judgements! I hate them!! The ending has to be ambiguous. When Mr F. sat in chair it was all wrong. The fact that Leo and Flora say 'Don't be bitter, don't be sad' says - ??? a reconciliation between the parents – at least a VERY AMBIGUOUS ending. Your Sheet of feedback questions require several hours to answer, lots of paper + and a very thin pencil. And why Cheerio, when Figaro has just said he is not leaving ??? says it for Cheers any more! But I loved it, found whole thing v. moving + the music blended seamlessly, how astonishing!

The ending with Mr F staying in the chair worked better

The different composers merge together surprisingly seamlessly

Thursday 11

Thank-you for the show – and for asking for the feedback. Such a fascinating and amazing project. Go for it!

Geneticists say that non-paternity runs at a consistent 10% in different social groups and parts of the country

Generally down with 1) bubbles 2) hankies – annoying, distracting, and pointless!!

Suggestion: when the characters are reminiscing they should look at a fixed point (e.g. An audience member) instead of gazing into the middle distance – it might increase the intensity?

I only came because my friend invited me and I wanted to support her. However, it was much easier to listen to than I'd expected and I enjoyed it. The lyrics were amusing which really helped.

Think maybe if it's two old army friends then they might not put hands on knees when they say 'I understand'. Stiff upper lip. James Hewitt etc. Passive aggressive too.

The bubbles and hankies get in the audience's way. It isn't a kid's show (thank god).

Family Matters - Evaluation

If Figaro was so 'here and there' why is he so redundant now? What does Figaro actually DO?

What is Fitzroy thinking when Flora leaves? Should he just sit there? Perhaps he could half follow Rosa out, Rosa going too quickly and cross with Figaro coming in – which would allow Figaro and Rosa to exchange glances and would explain why Fitzroy does not run after Rosa.

The final scene worked much better first time round – lighting 2nd time obscured Mr F's expressions entirely when he was reading the letters and seems his reactions were important. In the rest of the scene, having him in the dark orifices of the space was hopeless.

Friday 12

Overall impression - When Flora is told the truth by Burgess, which is the first of the revelations, the moment passes much too quickly and the music is too dense – both singers together obscure the words and it is VITAL to hear them at this point. For such an important moment it passes too quickly. In the final scene, the denouement with Burgess is much too trite and there is not enough extended development within the music to convey his change of mood from self satisfaction to realisation that his plans are rumbled to anger. This should be a truly dramatic moment but it flashes by and falls flat. Then the tension drops and the end reveals nothing. No air of exhaustion or calm after storm or solid bonding of master and servant. I had not seen the first act where apparently the remaining letter is made much of, so that it's reappearance with Mr F makes sense. Not knowing this, this episode was of course incomprehensible. Enjoyed the unaccompanied parts very much and beautifully sung. All singers excellent. Libretto disappointingly bland. Would have enjoyed more spaces of music development without voices.

A conventional Catholic marriage does not break apart.

Leo – Why are you being sent away? Never quite got that.

How does Rosa think Burgess is helping when he shreds the letters? She says that she 'knows that Mr F is worried about Leo and Flora's relationship and therefore wants to send Leo away – WHY THEN does she shred the letters, thereby compounding the problem (i.e. she destroys the very evidence that could secure L and F's happiness). IS SHE A SELFISH SADISTIC COW?

What is word at end?

When they sang 'piano' they were all plausible and lyrical – and listenable but we lost a lot of comprehension

Keep the washing line. But are Flora's knickers a bit too provocative, and Leo's a bit too juvenile?

The various musical styles need to be brought together with more coherent, elegant integrity and a driving purpose. The lyrical bits were solid but some of the atonal music was more like a film score and less like a musical theatre piece

The manner of Mr Fitzroy is too emotional – as an officer he would have been 'cooler' (and then his aggression would be stronger)

The fact that Mr F and Burgess are good friends but haven't seen each other for 20 years NEEDS to be reflected – is MR F that desperate for a friend?

Saturday 13

Fitzroy OK; Flora and Leo excellent; Burgess good dramatically but ugly at times; Rosa poor, no texture and not moving; Figaro good but lines are weak (PS. What do I know?! I am an engineer!)

Family Matters - Evaluation

As I get older it seems less and less likely that my father and I are related. However, I don't think either of us care much

1ii improved but still not moving; 1iii a mess and tedious and annoying; 1v should be Act 1 finale; 1vi weak; 2i excellent; 2ii and iii rushed and a mess; Burgess swan song rather badly sung; too much drama by screaming in general (PS. What do I know?! I am an engineer!)

I wish Flora had been sung by a lyric or preferably non-operatic singer – would have reflected youth better and have matched Leo

Fatherhood doesn't matter, it's being a dad that counts – Mr F didn't think that way

"I can't believe it" – wasn't Victor Meldrew around in 1992? Is "I don't believe it" no good?

"how strange is that" – a locution which only came into common usage in the late 1990's and early years of this century; before 1996 the character would have said / sung "how strange that is"

Maybe something stronger than the washing line for publicity, or different things on the line?

Slogans

Family matters: no matter who's/whose family.

Memories can send you mad.

Families – Is there another way?

Secret Children

Family Matters: Accept no Substitute

Blood is deadlier than water

Sons and Daughters

A Matter of dishonour

Keeping up appearances

Home Falsehoods

Falling apart together

Take a closer look

It's a family affair

This is not a family I wish to be part of.

Stick it in your family...

Keeping up appearances.

Home Falsehoods.

Falling apart together.

Take a closer look.

It's a family affair.

Skeletons in the cupboard.

Family Matters: New Kids on the Block

Spot the Bastard

So many parents don't explain

Mum's the word

I'll never reveal my love child!

A wise child knows its father

The family that never was

Family Matters – sorting out a few home truths