

AS PART OF

Télé Île de France

**THE OPERA
FESTIVAL**

THE MONK OF THE RIVER

江
流
兒

Opera in Three Acts



Interactive Broadcast

20:45-22:15, Thursday 5th August 2021

Online

There is also a live performance of this show at
The Cockpit at 19:30-20:30, Tuesday 3rd August 2021.

MUSIC: Anna Vienna Ho
WORDS: Roxanne Korda

Tickets: £1, plus optional donation.



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Programme

Prologue - "Buddha and the Monkey King" (2020)

Composer: Anna Vienna Ho

Librettist: Michael CT Lam

Musical director: Anna Vienna Ho

Director: Michael CT Lam

"The Monk of the River" (World Premiere)

Composer: Anna Vienna Ho

Librettist: Roxanne Korda

Musical director: Anna Vienna Ho

Director: Michael CT Lam

Q&A

with the cast and creative team



Prologue

Buddha & The Monkey King 如來與大聖

an opera in one act by Anna Vienna Ho

set to an English libretto by Michael CT Lam

based on the Chinese novel "Journey to the West" by Wu Cheng'en

Synopsis

Place: Outside the Celestial Palace

Time: 500 years ago before "Journey to the West(Tang dynasty)"

Sun Wukong, a monkey born from a magical stone on the Mountain of Flower and Fruit, is a powerful creature who mastered the skill to become immortal. In order to progress beyond the horizons and become the king of Heaven, he single-handedly defeated the Army of Heaven's 100,000 celestial warriors, all 28 constellations, four heavenly kings, and many other Gods. After his rebellion against Heaven, the Buddha comes and talks with him. After conversation and bargain, the Buddha traps the Monkey King under a mountain by his power.

Cast

Sun Wukong, *the Monkey King* 「齊天大聖」孫悟空 – Lixin Liu

Sakyamunī, *the Buddha* 如來佛 – Michael CT Lam

Piano – Lingling Yu

Zhongruan – Michael CT Lam

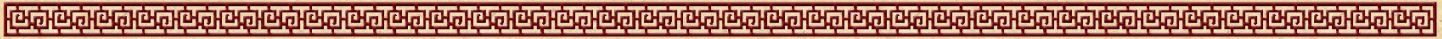
Musical director/Wooden fish – Anna Vienna Ho

The Monk of the River 江流兒

an opera in three acts by Anna Vienna Ho

set to an English libretto by Roxanne Korda

based on the Chinese novel "Journey to the West" by Wu Cheng'en



Synopsis

Place: China

Time: Tang dynasty

Act I

Scene 1: Outside the house of Madame Zhang

A young man, Chen Guangrui, arrives in his hometown with his newlywed wife, Yin Wenjiao, the daughter of the chief minister, and meets his mother, Madame Zhang. He tells his mother that he was placed first, as "zhuangyuan", in the examinations and was appointed the governor of Jiangzhou by the Emperor. Madame Zhang congratulates to her son for his achievements. He, then, tells her that he wants to take her to Jiangzhou. Madame Zhang is overjoyed, and she packs her luggage and travels with them.

Scene 2: Outside the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn, near the Hong River

Madame Zhang is suddenly taken ill during the journey and stays in an inn. This morning, Guangrui sees a man selling a golden-coloured carp in front of the inn and buys it from him, intending to have it lightly fried for his mother. Then, he notices it is blinking its eyes vigorously and realizes it may not be an ordinary creature. Therefore, he asks the fisherman to release the fish into the Hong River, where the fisherman has caught it.

Madame Zhang appears from the inn and tells Guangrui that she wants to stay in the inn for a bit longer as she is still ill. She asks him to take a couple of rooms for her and leave her some money so that he and his wife can go on ahead to the post. Guangrui and Wenjiao promise Madame Zhang that they will come back to fetch her in the autumn when it's cooler.

Scene 3: The crossing of the Hong River

After a hard journey, Guangrui and Wenjiao come to the crossing of the Hong River, where two boatmen, Liu Hong and Li Biao, take them into their boat. After ordering the servant to put the luggage on the boat, Guangrui and his wife are about to embark when Liu Hong notices the beauty of Wenjiao. Evil thoughts surge up in them, they kill the servant and Guangrui. Liu Hong takes Guangrui's credentials, and forces Wenjiao to come with him to take up his post in Jiangzhou.

Scene 4: In the Dragon Water Crystal Palace

A yakṣa tells the Dragon King that a scholar has been beaten to death at the mouth of the Hong River by some unknown person, and his body is now lying at the bottom of the water. The soldiers of the Dragon King bring in the corpse. The Dragon King takes a careful look at it and realizes he is the man who saved his life. He immediately commands a yakṣa to deliver an official dispatch to the municipal deity and local spirit of Hongzhou to ask for the soul of the scholar.

Then, he shares a story about he transformed into a golden-coloured carp and was saved by a man.

Act II

Scene 1: In the Jinshan Temple

An eighteen-year-old monk, Xuanzang, runs into the temple and kneels before Monk Faming, his teacher and the abbot of the temple, with tears streaming from his eyes. He tells Faming that a feckless monk insulted him earlier today as Xuanzang has no parents. Xuanzang begs over and over again to know his parents' names.

Faming then shows him a letter written in blood. Xuanzang reads the letter and realizes that he is the son of Guangrui and Wenjiao. Learning about the wrongs they had suffered, he falls weeping to the floor and decides to avenge for his parents. Faming allows him to go and find his mother, as a mendicant monk. Xuanzang thanks his teacher and starts the journey to the private residence of the governor of Jiangzhou.

Scene 2: In the private residence of the governor of Jiangzhou

Liu Hong is not in the house. Wenjiao suddenly hears someone reciting the scriptures outside her residence and crying repeatedly, "Alms! Alms!" She invites him into the mansion and serves him some vegetables and rice. Watching him closely, she notices that in speech and manner he bears a remarkable resemblance to her husband. After sending out her maid away, she asks Xuanzang about his background. Xuanzang tells her everything and shows her the letter written in blood. Wenjiao finally trusts him that he is her son. They embrace each other and weep. Wenjiao gives an incense ring to Xuanzang and asks him to go to find his grandma, Madame Zhang, in the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn in Hongzhou. She also asks him to take a letter to the Golden Palace, the house of Chief Minister Yin, her father.

Scene 3: In a dilapidated potter's kiln near the Southern Gate

Xuanzang went to the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn but the innkeeper, Liu, told him that Madame Zhang went blind, and had been kicked out for years as she didn't have money to pay the rent. Xuanzang finds her in a dilapidated potter's kiln near the Southern Gate. She is now a beggar. Madame Zhang realizes Xuanzang's voice sounds very much like that of her son Guangrui. Xuanzang lets her read the letter from his mother and the incense ring. Madame Zhang weeps without restraint. Xuanzang kneels down and prays to Heaven. Then, he kisses his grandma's eyes. In a moment, Madame Zhang can see things. Realizing Xuanzang looks like Guangrui, she feels both happy and sad. Xuanzang gives her some money and asks her to go back to the Ten Thousand Flowers Inn and rent a room to stay in. He promises her that he will be back a little more than a month's time.

Scene 4: In the house of the chief minister Yin

A porter reports to the chief minister that a little monk, who claims to be kin of the chief minister, has come to visit him. The chief minister wants to reject the meeting as he is not related to any monk, but his wife says she has dreamed last night that her daughter came home. So the chief minister lets the monk come in. When Xuanzang sees the chief minister and his wife, he falls weeping to the floor. He hands over the letter to the chief minister. The chief minister reads it from beginning to end and weeps inconsolably. He tells his wife that Xuanzang is their grandson and lets her know all the things that happened to his family. His wife falls weeping to the floor. The chief minister swears that he shall lead the troops to avenge their son-in-law.

Act III

Scene 1: In the private residence of the governor of Jiangzhou

The sounds of cannon and the beating of drums and gongs wake Liu Hong from his dreams. The minister, his soldiers and Xuanzang rush to his residence and capture him. After ordering soldiers to take Liu Hong to the execution ground, he asks his daughter to come out and see him.

However, Wenjiao is on the point of hanging herself in her room as she felt too ashamed to face her father. Xuanzang senses it and goes as fast as he can to save her. Xuanzang and the minister comfort her and ask her not to kill herself. Father and daughter then embrace each other and weep, while Xuanzang sobs too.

Scene 2: The crossing of the Hong River

Liu Hong was taken to the crossing of the Hong River where he had murdered Guangrui. The minister, his daughter, Xuanzang and Madam Zhang are both there. The other pirate, Li Biao, has also been arrested by the soldiers of the minister. The minister orders his soldiers to slice Li Biao into a thousand pieces and expose it on a pole for all to see. Then, they cut out Liu Hong's heart and liver to sacrifice to Guangrui.

Just at this tense moment, they see a corpse floating towards the bank. Wenjiao recognizes it as that of her husband. Everyone else comes up to look. Suddenly, Guangrui sits up and opens his eyes. Everyone is shocked. They share each other's stories and embrace each other with tears.

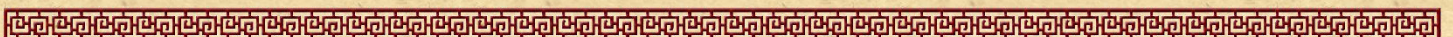
Scene 3: Room of Wenjiao

After the "happy ending", Wenjiao calmly commits suicide because she feels too ashamed to face her husband, father and son.

Epilogue: Five Phases Mountain

Xuanzang became the stepbrother of the emperor and set off for the Thunder Monastery in the land of India in the West to get the Tripitaka, the "Three Stores (San Zang)" of scriptures, for China. He has been given a courtesy name as "Sanzang (Tripitaka)" by the emperor.

The journey is hard, and he is very tired and hungry. And he meets the Monkey King.



Cast

Xuanzang 玄奘(江流) - Michael TK Lam

Wenjiao 殷溫嬌 - Valerie Wong

Guangrui 陳光蕊 - James Gribble

The Dragon King 洪江龍王/Kaishan 殷開山丞相 - Franco Kong

Madame Zhang 張氏 - Deirdre McCabe

Liu Hong 劉洪 - HoWang Yuen

Li Biao 李彪 - Patricia Yates

Monk Faming 法明和尚 - Edwin Dizer

Madame Hu 丞相夫人 - Roxanne Korda

Chunmei 丫鬟春梅/Hua 何花/Fish Soldier 魚兵/Monkey King 孫悟空 - Lixin Liu

Yaksa 海夜叉/Xue 馮雪/Qiuju 丫鬟秋菊 - Kaiying Wang

Hua An 家僮華安/Feng 王風/Crab General 蟹將 - Matthew Secombe

Fisherman 漁夫/Yue 趙月/Turtle Minister 龜丞相 - Alexander Pratley

Sakyamuni, *the Buddha* 如來佛 – Michael CT Lam

Flute/Dizi: Ruth Wang

Clarinet: Kaethe Uken

Violin: Adrian Yuzhe Wang

Violin: Henji Fan

Viola: Yujie Wang

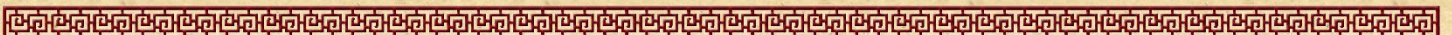
Cello: Molly Welling

Piano: Sim Cheng Chen

Zhongruan: Michael CT Lam

Erhu: Ling Peng

Musical director/Conductor – Anna Vienna Ho



Biography

Anna Vienna Ho – Composer/Musical Director/Conductor

The Hong Kong pianist, **Anna Vienna Ho**, received an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma and her Master of Music in Piano Performance with distinction from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where she was a recipient of numerous awards and scholarships. Anna was the winner of numerous international competitions, including International Robert Schumann Klavier Welttbert, Concours International Leopold Bellan, Rome International Music Competition, International Music Competition “Таланты XXI века”, International Moscow Music Competition, 5th Propiano International Competition, Quebec International Music Competition, Montpellier Arts Center Classical Recital Competition, London Grand Prize Virtuoso International Music Competition, Internationaler Deutscher Irmner-Klavierwettbewerb and IYMC Classical Music International Competition, among others.



As a pianist, Anna has given solo recitals and performed in many concert venue in Asia and Europe, including Royal Albert Hall, Birmingham Town Hall, Parco della Musica and Hong Kong City Hall. She has participated and performed in many festivals including the CBSO Debussy Festival, Festival Parisien, Chopin Festival, Rugby Festival of Culture and more. Besides performing as a soloist, Anna is also an experienced collaborative pianist who has performed in various chamber recitals and collaborated with many choirs and orchestras. She has also worked as a répétiteur for opera companies. Her recent engagements include Opera Novella production of Donizetti's Don Pasquale.

Anna has also performed actively as a vocalist. Passionate about opera, Anna has sung the role of **The Third Apparition** in *Macbeth*(Opera In A Box) and **Gherardino** in *Gianni Schicchi*(London Gay Symphony Orchestra); *Norma*, *La Traviata*, *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*(Midland Opera); *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*(Musica Viva); *Suor Angelica*(Random Opera); *Don Pasquale*(Opera Novella). She was the prize winner of several music festivals, including Holmfirth Musical Festival, Newcastle-U-Lyme Festival of Music, Leamington Spa Competitive Festival, Hounslow Festival of Music, Bristol Music Festival, Longwell Green & Kingswood Performing Arts Festival, Coulsdon and Purley Festival, Basingstoke Music Festival among others.

Anna has started her interest in composition since she studied in secondary school. Her compositions include instrumental, vocal, electroacoustic, multi-media and operatic works, which were premiered around the world by various musicians. She has collaborated and was commissioned by many organizations, include the New Generation 2014("The Forester", for String Quartet), London Oriana Choir("The Infinite Shining Heavens" for SATB choir), Birmingham Opera Company("It Gets Lighter From Here" digital project), Animal Hope Varna(promotion videos collaborated with Bulgarian Artist Tatiana Arsova), David Bohn's Twenty Seconds of 2020 project("Chase", for solo Clavietta), Fifteen Minutes of Fame project("Fedora", for solo bass flute), among others. Her solo piano piece "Images" and a piece for solo piano and tape "Medusa" are included in the RMN Classical albums "Modern Music for Piano" and "In Focus4" respectively and distributed in stores and digital platforms. Her opera "Buddha and the Monkey King" has been premiered at the Tête à Tête Opera Festival in 2020. Recently, she has been selected as an artist of the Du Vert a L'infini festival, France and premiered her composition "Sea Creatures in our Minds and Hearts" at the Château du Fresne-Saint-Mamès.

Michael CT Lam as The Buddha/Ruanist/Librettist/Director

Praised for a voice of "deliciously deep and rich," (Birmingham Post), Hong Kong baritone Michael Chun Ting Lam was a winner of multiple international singing competitions, including Hong Kong International Music Festival, Grand Prize Virtuoso, Philip Bates Trust Ashleyan Opera Prize, The North International Music Competition, "Таланты XXI века", Quebec International Music Competition, and IYMC Classical Music International Competition, just to name a few. He trained the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Hungary, as a recipient of the Joseph Weingarten Scholarship. He received his Master of Music in Vocal Performance from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where he was awarded the St Clare Barfield Memorial Bowl for Operatic Distinction and was supported by Opera Hong Kong K Wah International Vocal Scholarship, Foundation for the Arts and Music in Asia Limited (FAMA) Vocal Scholarships and Birmingham Conservatoire Scholarship Fund. Prior to that, he gained his Bachelor of Music from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, where he received a number of scholarships, including Welsh Male Choir Scholarship, the Bernard van Zuiden Music Fund, Mr Ng Fung Chow Memorial Scholarships, The Hong Kong Children's Choir Chan Ho Choi Memorial Scholarship and Michael Rippon Memorial Scholarship.



Passionate about opera, Michael has sung more than 30 operatic roles and performed for opera companies in Asia and Europe in many major theatres and festivals, including Opera Hong Kong, Musica Viva, Winslow Hall Opera, OperaUpClose, Passaggio Oper, Opéra de Bauge and more. His operatic roles include **Macbeth**(*Macbeth*), **Tonio**(*Pagliacci*), **Renato & Silvano**(*Un Ballo in Maschera*), **Rigoletto & Count Ceprano**(*Rigoletto*), **Escamillo**(*Carmen*), **The Four Villains, Hermann & Peter Schlemiel**(*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), **Colline**(*La Bohème*), **Count Almaviva**(*Le Nozze di Figaro*), **Figaro & Don Basilio** (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), **Don Pasquale**(*Don Pasquale*), **Giorgio Germont & Baron Douphol**(*La Traviata*), **Forester**(*The Cunning Little Vixen*), **Bottom**(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), **Sharpless & Bonze**(*Madama Butterfly*), **Don Alfonso**(*Così Fan Tutte*), **Don Magnifico**(*La Cenerentola*), **Ferrando**(*Il Trovatore*), **Death**(*Sāvitrī*), **Le Fauteuil**(*L'enfant et les sortilèges*), **Marco**(*Gianni Schicchi*), **Dr Blind**(*Die Fledermaus*), and **David**(*The Hand of Bridge*), among many others. He has been given the Gil Rodriguez Scholarship Award from Opéra de Bauge for his outstanding contribution to the 2019 Operatic Season.

Besides performing as a singer, Michael frequently appears as a Zhongruanist. He started learning Zhongruan at the age of twelve and obtained the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Grade 8 Certificate in Zhongruan performance within a short space of time. He has studied Ruan, Liuqin, Sanxian and Pipa with Chu Man Kuen, Kwan Hau Man, David Chan and Kitty Lee. He was the leader and the principal Zhongruanist of Ng Wah Chinese Orchestra and, a Ruanist of Hong Kong City Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Bright East Chinese Orchestra and Sonata Elite Chamber Orchestra. In addition to participating in large-scale concerts held in concert halls, such as "A Concert of Popular Chinese Music" and "A Concert of Guided History", Michael has also actively participated in Chamber performances in various community events, dinners, and cocktail parties. In 2020, he has been involved in the project "It Gets Lighter From Here", organized by Birmingham Opera Company and Culture Central. He was the first-prizewinner of the International Art Festival & Contest "Talents of Europe" 2021.

Lixin Liu as The Monkey King/ Chunmei/ Hua/ Fish Soldier

"Lixin Liu's Queen of the Night was simply stellar, coloratura bubbling, her soarings into the stratosphere fearless and imperious, matching her stage persona."

(Christopher Morley Midlands music reviews, March 2019)

Lixin started her Classical music training at the Royal Northern College of Music where she was generously supported by James and Mary Glass Scholarship. She finished Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Performance (post-Master Level 8) at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in 2019, it was supported by RBC Tuition Scholarship. During her studies, Lixin has been awarded The St Claire Barfield Memorial Bowl for Operatic Distinction, she won 1st Prizes in both The Edwards Brooks Lieder Prize and Cecil Drew Oratorio Prize respectively in 2019 and 2018. She also received The Claire Croiza Prize for French song and she was one of the finalists for the Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for the Singing of Strauss in 2017.



Lixin will start working with English National Opera for the 2021/2022 season, she has created the role of **Monkey King** in the world's premiere of *Buddha & the Monkey King* as part of the Tête à Tête Opera Festival in 2020. Lixin performed the full role of **Königin der Nacht** (*Die Zauberflöte*) at Crescent Theatre in Birmingham, 2019. She also played the role of **Controller** (*Flight*), **Sprite** (*Cendrillon*), **Nanetta** (*Falstaff*), **Frasquita** (*Carmen*), **Sophie** (*Werther*), Constance (*Dialogues de Carmelites*), Clara (*La Vie Parisienne*), Laurette (*Le Docteur Miracle*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Gretel (*Hansel und Gretel*), Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*) and Fox Cubs (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) as part of Opera Scenes. Her solo experiences include singing at Cadogan Hall, the O2 Arena, the Bridgewater Hall, Newcastle and Leeds Town Halls.

James Gribble as Guangrui

James is a baritone from Berkshire and is a graduate of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. He has extensive and varied performance experience in opera, oratorio, musical theatre, song and film. Pre-pandemic James was a young artist at Longborough Festival Opera, playing the role of **Pane** in their acclaimed production of *La Calisto* as well as joining the chorus of *Anna Bolena*. He also played **Mercutio** in Arcadian Opera's *Roméo et Juliette*. James looks forward to singing **Figaro** in HGO's production of *Le nozze di Figaro* in November, and is currently touring a production of *Pirates of Penzance* with Opera Anywhere. Other recent performances include: **Amantio** in a number of productions of *Gianni Schicchi*, singing in a new work for the Royal Albert Hall and performances with the National G&S Opera Company. Operatic roles whilst studying include: **Bobinet** in *La vie parisienne*, **Captain Macheath** in *The Beggars Opera*, **Antonio** & cover **Figaro** in *Le nozze di Figaro* and **L'horloge comtoise** in *L'enfant et les sortilèges*.



Valerie Wong as Wenjiao

Valerie Wong, Hong Kong-born Soprano took part in multiple opera productions including *L'elisir d'amore* by Donizetti as **Gianetta**, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* by Offenbach as **La Voix**, *Suor Angelica & Gianni Schicchi* by Giacomo Puccini as **La Badessa** and **La Ciesca**, *Semele* by Handel as **Ino**, *Così fan tutte* and *Le Nozze Di Figaro* by Mozart, *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss II, *La Cenerentola* by Rossini, *Don Giovanni* by Mozart, *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini, *Otello* by Giuseppe Verdi.

Wong graduated with a Master of Performance at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under John Evans. She also obtained the Bachelor of Music (Honours) under renowned soprano Nancy Yuen and Diploma of Music of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in 2015. Wong was a recipient of the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir Scholarship, Michael Rippon Memorial Scholarship, and the Guildhall Financial Award.



Michael TK Lam as Xuanzang

Chinese-American Tenor Michael TK Lam is currently pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), under the tutelage of Dr. Alfonse Anderson.

Originally from Hong Kong, Michael graduated from University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) with a BA in Sociology, Minors in German Studies and Music; and University College London (UCL) with a MA in Music Education. Inspired by his mentor, Isabel Bayrakdarian, Michael decided to pursue a career in classical voice and he graduated from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC) with a Master's in Music (MMus).



Michael has had the honour to perform under the baton of Paul Wingfield, Jeffrey Stewart, Marzio Conti, Charles Peebles, Christian Schulz and Jonathan Lo; under the direction of Michael Barry and Thomas Guthrie; at masterclasses hosted by Roderick Williams OBE, Helene Schneiderman, Luis Ledesma; as well as coaching sessions with Daniel Sarge, Danielle Orlando and Stephen Barlow.

Recent engagements include Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, **Des Grieux** in Massenet's *Manon*, **Neptune** in Sams' *The Enchanted Island* with RBC Opera, American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) 2019/20, **Don Ottavio** in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Modern Opera Studio in Italy, **Tamino** in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with Vienna Summer Music Festival and RBC, **Sándor Barinkay** in Strauss' *Gypsy Baron* with King's Opera in London, **Sextus** in the British premiere of Gounod's *Polyeucte* with University College Opera, tenor soloist in Bruckner's Mass in F Minor Beethoven's 9th Symphony, as well as Mozart and Donizetti roles at Amalfi Coast Music Festival and Arezzo Opera Festival in Italy. Michael has also won first place in the New England Music Festival and 3rd place in the graduate division of NATS in Las Vegas.

Franco Kong as The Dragon King/Kaishan

Franco Kong was born of a musical family in China. He studied at the Xinghai Conservatoire, where he was conferred a bachelor's Degree. After graduation, he was awarded the Norman Gristwood scholarship to study a postgraduate certificate course at Trinity College of Music London. Franco is an accomplished opera, oratorio and recital artist. While his stage performances, working with Wexford Festival Opera, Dublin Grand Opera, Birmingham Opera Co, Chelsea Opera Group, English Touring Opera, Coro Lirico Sandonatese Italy, Ahmadi Music Group, English Festival Opera, Almeida Opera, Garsington Opera, New Sussex Opera etc. He is the first Chinese opera singer invited to perform in Kuwait where he consecutively performed four seasons already. His many recitals and oratorio performances have taken him to Ireland, Italy, France, Spain, Kuwait & China. Franco is an "ex-performer turned teacher." He currently teaching singing in The Windsor Music school & The Master Music School(London).



Deirdre McCabe as Madame Zhang

Deirdre McCabe has performed throughout Ireland and the UK on the concert platform as a guest soloist with choral societies and orchestras. She holds a BA and first class honours in music from National University Ireland, Maynooth. Deirdre secured a scholarship to attend The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire as a postgraduate student. During her time in Birmingham, competition prizes included: The Cecil Drew Oratorio Prize, The Ashleyan Opera Prize and second prize in the Edward Brooks English Song competition. Deirdre is the 2021 winner of the Dame Felicity Lott recital award and looks forward to working with Dame Felicity later this month. After completing her studies in Birmingham, Deirdre was invited to join Glyndebourne Opera as chorus for their 2017 festival and tour. Her operatic roles to date include: **Pamina** *Die Zauberflöte*, Lyric Opera, Weimar. **Cathleen** *Riders to the Sea*, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, **Adina** (Cover) *The Elixir of Love*, New Sussex Opera and **Flora** *La Traviata* also for New Sussex Opera which toured for performances in Lewes, East Grinstead and Brighton last June and **Zerlina**, *Don Giovanni*, Rogue Opera which premiered at the Wandsworth Arts Fringe 2019. Deirdre is delighted to perform the role of **Madame Zhang**, *The Monk of the River* as part of the Tête à Tête Opera Festival.



HoWang Yuen as Liu Hong

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Baritone HoWang Michael Yuen has been a musician all his life. He started singing in adolescence as a chorister then obtained a Bachelor of Music at the Hong Kong Academy for Performance. He then arrived in the United Kingdom to pursue study at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where he received partial scholarship for his Masters in Vocal Performance. He has studied singing under the tutelage of Gwion Thomas, David Quah, Isabel Gentile, Roberto Abbondanza and coaches Robin Bowman and Hsu Wei-en.

HoWang is very keen to performing opera. He sang the roles of **Lysander** in *The Enchanted Island*, **Luther/Crespel** (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*) and **Spinelloccio/Pinellino** (*Gianni Schicchi*). In various opera scenes productions, he also performed the roles of **Sid** (*Albert Herring*), **Pélleas** (*Pélleas et Mélisande*), **Belcore** (*L'elisir d'amore*), **Guglielmo** (*Così fan tutte*), and **Don Giovanni**. Recent engagements including singing the role of **Malatesta** in *Don Pasquale* for Opera Novella.

Since moving to the UK, HoWang has further expanded his song and oratorio repertoires. Notable song cycles he has sung include *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* by Ravel, *Calligrammes* by Poulenc, *Let us Garlands Bring* by Finzi and *Songs of Travel* by Vaughan Williams. During his studies, he has also performed excerpts of oratorios by Handel, Bach, Haydn and Mendelssohn.



Edwin Dizer as Monk Faming

Edwin has enjoyed singing for as long as he can remember (and probably longer!). He studied at the Royal College of Music's junior department for six years, but only decided to pursue operatic singing after playing the curmudgeonly **Bartolo** (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) and the psychopathic **Mikado** (*The Mikado*) while studying Music at the University of Manchester. After, he privately studied operatic singing with Timothy Dawkins and then Colin Baldy. Since then, he has sung many oratorios and roles with several respected companies, including: **Guglielmo** (Rose Opera), **Papageno** (Flat Pack Music), **Dandini** (Red Earth Opera), **Belcore** (New Sussex Opera), **Robert** (from Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*, Rose Opera), **The Earl of Dunmow** (from Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement*, with New London Opera Group), **Dr Falke** (Kensington Opera), **Simone** (*Gianni Schicchi*, with Hand Made Opera), **Masetto** (Rogue Opera), **Alcindoro** and **Benoit** (*La Bohème*, Flat Pack Music), and premieres of new operas. He also works as a composer of music for media and a private music teacher.



Roxanne Korda as Madame Hu/Librettist

Roxanne is an opera singer, librettist and science disseminator. She likes to explore; presenting new opera, on esoteric subject matter, in unique spaces, to different audiences. She co-founded the company Infinite Opera (with composer Daniel Blanco Albert) in order to combine her love of science, philosophy and music. Through this company she has successfully received ACE and Hinrichsen Foundation funding on several occasions.

She is currently enrolled on the PhD Midland4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership with BCU, exploring how to use science in creating new opera. She has a MMus in Vocal Performance (Distinction) from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and previously studied Physics and Philosophy BSc.



Her performed repertoire includes: **Norina** (*Don Pasquale*, Donizetti), **Rosalinda** (*Die Fledermaus*, J. Strauss), **Lucy Lockitt** (*The Beggar's Opera*, Gay arr. Britten), **Nora** (*Riders to the Sea*, V. Williams), **Fiordiligi** (*Così fan tutte*, Mozart), **Besse** (*Besse: Water, Rye and Hops*, Daniel Blanco) and **Baron Entropy** (*Entanglement! An Entropic Tale*, Blanco).

Roxanne also works in outreach and is an Opera Animateur and performer on WNO's Engage the Black Country and PMLD program. For this she works with young people to develop new works performed by the students. To find out more about her recent and upcoming works visit www.roxannekorda.com.

Alexander Pratley as Fisherman/Yue/Turtle Minister

Bass-baritone Alex Pratley currently studies at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where he is undertaking an MMus in Vocal Performance. Prior to this, he was a Lay Clerk at Guildford Cathedral from 2018 to 2021 and he graduated with BA Hons in English Literature from King's College London in 2017. During his time at KCL, he was a choral scholar in the chapel choir under David Trendell, Gareth Wilson, and Joseph Fort, and sang in the Old Royal Naval Chapel choir under Ralph Allwood from 2014 to 2015.

Alex is an alumnus of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, serving from 2009 to 2017. Personal highlights include the 2013 tour of Great Britain and Ireland, singing Beethoven's 9th Symphony in both 2012 and 2013 at the BBC Proms and, in the 2017 Prom series, singing Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* alongside the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.



A versatile singer, Alex is also a member of several vocal ensembles based around the country, including Icosa, Horizon Voices, I Dodici, and Cantates Sancti. His solo credits include **Voltaire/Dr. Pangloss** in Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*, Ralph Vaughan Williams's Five Mystical Songs and Fantasia on a Christmas Carol, **Curio** in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, and **Seymour Krelborn** in Alan Menken's *Little Shop of Horrors*. Most recently, he was **Ghost Child 3** in the 2021 RBC production of Mark Antony-Turnage's *Coraline*.

Patricia Yates as Li Biao

Patricia Yates is a tenor from West Yorkshire. She recently graduated from the University of Leeds with a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Performance, with 1st class honours. She also received the Lord Snowden Prize, awarded to the Music student who is judged to have produced the most notable and consistent achievement and contribution during their programme of study. Patricia now continues her studies privately with tenor Austin Gunn. In 2020, Patricia completed an Erasmus Exchange Year at ArteZ Conservatorium in Zwolle, The Netherlands, studying under soprano Marjan Kuiper.

Operatic experience includes **Alfred** *Die Fledermaus*, **Macduff** *Macbeth*, **Nanki-Poo** *The Mikado*, **Richard Dauntless** *Ruddigore*, **Frederick** *The Pirates of Penzance*, and **Marcello** *La Bohème*. Oratorio experience includes Handel Messiah, Mozart Mass in C minor, Franck Messe in A, Haydn Missa in tempore belli, Stainer The Crucifixion and Dvořák Stabat Mater. Upcoming roles include **Tamina** in *Die Zauberflöte* (Leeds Youth Opera), and **Kornélis** in *La Princesse Jaune* (Berwick Festival Opera, postponed until post-COVID).



Patricia has sung in masterclasses with industry professionals such as director Martin Constantine (ROH, ENO, WNO, Grange Park Opera), conductor Peter Ford (Rocket Opera, Black Cat Opera), soprano Lisette Oropesa and tenors Charles Castronovo and Lawrence Brownlee. She has had coaching from Nicholas Powell, Steven Faber and Martin Pickard.

In recent years, Patricia has sung with companies Leeds Youth Opera, Opera North and De Nederlandse Reisopera, and in the Opera Forward Festival with Dutch National Opera. She enjoyed a season singing in projects with Dutch choirs Consensus Vocalis and the Gelders Bach Collegium. In the UK, she has given solo recitals at Ripon and Wakefield Cathedrals and venues across Leeds. Other musical pursuits include a budding vocal teaching career and experience with choral conducting, having conducted choirs such as Halifax Young Singers and the Yorkshire Youth Choir, with whom she appears regularly as an assistant tutor. Outside of music, her passions include LGBTQ+ and queer culture, fashion and makeup.

Matthew Secombe as Hua An/Feng/Crab General

Matthew Secombe is experienced as an opera and oratorio soloist and as a recitalist. 2019-20 engagements included Handel's Messiah solos at Truro Cathedral, solos for the East Cornwall Bach Choir's performance of Mozart's C Minor Mass, and playing the **Errand boy** in Lunchbreak Opera's production of Berkeley's 'A Dinner Engagement'. As a member of a voice-violoncello-piano trio, he has recently given recitals at the Royal College of Music and St Margaret's Church, Putney. Matthew holds a scholarship with the Esterhazy Singers of London, and is a regular soloist for their concerts. He graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 2020 and currently studies privately with John Evans.



Kaiying Wang as *Yaksa/Xue/Qiuju*

Chinese soprano Kaiying Wang gained her bachelor's degree from Xiamen University, one of the "Project 211" and "Project 985" universities in China. Later she received a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, under the guidance of Rita Cullis. She is currently pursuing her Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Performance at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire under the tutelage of Yvonne Sandison.

Kaiying is an experienced concert soloist. During her undergraduate, one of her performance highlights was being the only person chosen on behalf of Xiamen University, to record the "Flowers in May" Spring Festival Gala on CCTV. Whilst at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, she participated in several concerts and projects, such as West Meets East Vocal Concert and Voxbox.



On the opera stage, Kaiying has performed the roles of **Giulietta** in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, **Sophie** in *Der Rosenkavalier* by Strauss, **Morgana** in Handel's *Alcina*, **Maid** in Dove's *Mansfield Park* in opera scenes productions. Additionally, Kaiying was in the chorus for *The Enchanted Island*, *Eugene Onegin*, and *Sweeney Todd*.

Due to her outstanding performance, Kaiying has been awarded several scholarships throughout her music career, including the 'first-class scholarship', 'National Scholarship' and 'Ella Cheshire scholarship'. She won the first prize in the 'Best Grieg Performance' international competition and got the second place in the 'Edward Brookes Lieder Prize'.

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