

The Music Troupe presents

The Last Siren

- a rather tragic little opera based on the Greek myth of the Sirens
who appear in Homer's *Odyssey*

- St Nicholas' Church, Upper Chute, Wiltshire
Monday 28 August
- Lawrence Hall, University of West London
Wednesday 30 August
in association with Geller Institute of Ageing and Memory
- The Cockpit
Thursday 31 August
as part of Tête-à-Tête: The Opera Festival 2023

Words: **Norman Welch**

Music: **Edward Lambert**

Director: **Jenny Weston**

Dimitra, a siren, mezzo-soprano: **Arlene Belli**

Belinda, a novice, & Echo, soprano: **Louise Fuller**

Viola: **Dan Shilladay**

Cello: **Erlend Vestby**

Horns: **Henry Wright, Lucas Boardman**

Piano (28 Aug): **Elsbeth Wilkes**

The Music Troupe acknowledges the support of the churchwardens of St Nicholas' Church, Upper Chute, the faculty of the Geller Institute of Ageing and Memory at the University of West London, and Tête-à-Tête: The Opera Festival

Dimitra is a siren-courtesan working from her territory on Sirens' Rocks and is joined by a newcomer called Belinda, innocent and eager to succeed but at first unaware of her duties. Belinda performs her sparkling audition piece, failing to impress Dimitra, who then demonstrates the art of seduction by singing voluptuously to a passing ship; we subsequently hear the crashing of a vessel hitting the rocks. Then, brandishing a knife, she goes off to seduce and dismember her victim and returns triumphant a few moments later. Belinda is aghast that the gods have tasked her to carry out such dreadful deeds. Prompted by her Echo, she is inspired to sing a different song as a veiled warning to the next ship that approaches. However, she has such a beautiful voice that her singing has the opposite effect to that intended. Again, the ship crashes, Belinda falls into the captain's arms - and finds love. As Dimitra has already warned her, Fate now condemns her to a painful death: she is *The Doomed Siren*. But first, as Odysseus' ship is sighted, both girls vie with each other, Dimitra to entice the hero onto the island, Belinda to ward him off. When the contest gets violent, Belinda seizes Dimitra's knife and kills her. As Odysseus sails past, Belinda is left to perish alone.

Louise Fuller (soprano), graduate of TLCMD & RCM's International Opera School, is a Samling Artist, an alumnus of the Training Programme in Banff, Canada, British Youth Opera, The London Song Festival & an Alvarez Young Artist for Garsington Opera 2018, 2019 and 2021. She recently made her debut at Wigmore Hall, London. <https://www.louisefullersoprano.com>

Arlene Belli (mezzo-soprano), described as 'A true vocal personality' by Alberto Mattioli in Amadeus Magazine, is an alumna of the National Opera Studio in London and the Conservatorio Santa Cecilia in Rome. She is a recipient of the Sybil Tutton Opera Award and, after collaborating with WNO, ENO and Opera North, she has recently made her role and house debut as Polina in the 2023 Grange Festival's production of The Queen of Spades. <https://www.arlenebelli.com>

Dan Shilladay (viola) has worked with, among others, the Hanover Band (with whom he is co-principal viola) the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Britten Sinfonia and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. A keen chamber musician, he is a founder member of the Berkeley Ensemble specialising in twentieth and twenty-first century British music and is also in demand as a conductor and educator. <https://danshilladay.co.uk>

Erlend Vestby (cello) studied at the RCM where he explored early 20th century performance style, baroque performance and research, and has now dedicated himself to historically informed performances as well as educating others through lecture recitals. As a performer he is a sought-after chamber musician having performed with ensembles such as Gabrieli, Brandenburg Sinfonia and Baroque Soloists, Opera Holland Park, Ensemble OrQuesta, Piccadilly Sinfonia, Florilegium, OAE Experience 2022, Southbank Sinfonia, and he looks forward to performing with Gothic Opera in October. www.erlendvestby.no

Henry Wright (horn) studied at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire before graduating with a Masters in Performance and an Artist Diploma at the Royal College of Music in 2022. He has performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra, English

Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Royal Ballet Sinfonia, London Chamber Orchestra, Irish Chamber Orchestra and the Hanover Band among others and is a founding member of the Zenith Brass Quintet.

Lucas Boardman (horn) completed his undergraduate studies in the summer of this year from the Royal College of Music and will continue at the same institution working towards a post graduate degree. Lucas has toured Europe as the Principal Horn of the LSSO and now works mostly in England as a freelance player.

Jenny Weston (director) had a busy career as a dancer before choreographing operas and working as a movement director for Glyndebourne, Opera Holland Park, ENO and Diva Opera, among others. Projects abroad include Vienna, Syria and Long Beach, California. Contemporary projects include Nixon in China and The Passenger.

Norman Welch (words), originally from Missouri, has written four previous operas for Tête-à-Tête - All to Play For (2012), Flat Pack (2014), Ebb (2015), and Apollo's Mission (2019). The Invited was staged at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden and Grimeborn (2015). He has also written the lyrics to several choral works that have been published by Oxford University Press.

Edward Lambert (music) has written 18 chamber operas as well as stage works for schools and communities. With colleagues he founded **The Music Troupe** in 2014 to highlight the art of 'beautiful singing' in works in which the music and drama are tailored, rather than trimmed, to an intimate experience. Ten productions later, the group has given valuable opportunities to a wide range of over 70 performers and creatives. Our lockdown project was making a location movie of *Last Party on Earth* and we look forward to performances of *Masque of Vengeance* at The Cockpit later this year. Fundamental to the group's development have been our appearances at **Tête-à-Tête: The Opera Festival**

[MusicTroupe.co.uk](https://www.musictroupe.co.uk)

Next up: *Masque of Vengeance* at The Cockpit NW8 8EH
7 - 9 November 2023

The Duchess of Padua (after Oscar Wilde) at The Space, E14 3RS
20 - 25 February 2024