

WildKat^{PR}
**Tête à Tête:
The Opera
Festival 2023
Final Report**





Press quotes

One of the best London in August events on the calendar... Culturally-rich stories told in a stunning way.

London x London

The home of new opera.

International Arts Manager

If you ever wonder about the future of opera – and many of us do – there are glimpses of what it might be at the annual Tête à Tête festival.

Camden New Journal

Summary



35

Pieces of Coverage

Total number of online, offline and social clips in this book



1.01M

Estimated Views

Prediction of lifetime views of coverage, based on audience reach & engagement rate on social

Coverage

35 pieces



International Arts Manager

Produced monthly, International Arts Manager is the most inclusive magazine for the performing arts...

40

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428

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June 21, 2023 • ONLINE

Industry Insight - June 2023

internationalartsmanager.com/shop/singl...



Editorial



With summer in full bloom there seems to be a renewed energy to address the challenges that face our sector with positivity and vigour. It was encouraging to hear industry experts temper their concerns about the state of contemporary classical music with innovative ideas about how new funding mechanisms and emerging technologies could be utilised in this issue's roundtable discussion. Meanwhile, ISPA's mid-year congress in Manchester this month will offer another opportunity for the sector to explore its future, and its programme promises to stimulate conversations about true collaboration in the arts.

Front page photo credits

Yayoi Kusama, *The Hope of the Polka Dots Buried in Infinity will Eternally Cover the Universe*, 2019. Installation view, Fosun Foundation, Shanghai. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro
© Yayoi Kusama

June also sees celebrations of Pride across the world, an occasion which has been met with much excitement by industry leaders. In this issue we speak with Tête à Tête's Bill Bankes-Jones about his plans for this year's truly inclusive opera festival which he hopes will challenge outdated character stereotypes and attract new audiences. In London, Pride's programme of events will include a welcome new addition, with Barbican Hall hosting

Europe's first classical concert dedicated to LGBTQ+ composers and artists.

It is heartening to see the embrace of inclusivity extend to audiences themselves, with the Philharmonie de Paris announcing the launch of various innovative schemes to open the world of classical music to deaf and hard of hearing listeners. Such schemes offer a reminder that true diversity in the performing arts is not merely about highly visible artists but the whole ecosystem.

IAM is proud to highlight the numerous initiatives that promote inclusivity across the sector in every issue, but this month offers a particular moment for reflection on how far we've come.

Juliette

PS: If you would like to see anything new in IAM, we would love to hear from you:
editor@internationalartsmanager.com
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Expanding the
dialogue

Boys of Paradise © Claire Showton

Founded in 1997, Tête à Tête has established itself as the home of new opera. Juliette Barber catches up with its Director, Bill Bankes-Jones, to hear about his plans including a strong LGBTQIA+ theme at this year's opera festival



What inspired you to set up Tête à Tête?

In my early career I was fortunate to work with many wonderful companies, including National Theatre, ENO, ROH and with the ITV Regional Theatre Young Director's Scheme, Thorndike Theatre Leatherhead and Redgrave Theatre Farnham. Although this experience built an amazing foundation, I always felt a desire to forge my own path and create something truly unique. This moment of inspiration coincided with a period of work with Declan Donnellan, the co-founder of Cheek by Jowl, who has built an inclusive theatre company with his partner, the designer Nick Omerod. It was these experiences that planted the seeds for Tête à Tête.

There were other reasons too: I kept witnessing composers in their 50s writing their first opera purely because they had a knighthood, having written lots of symphonies, but absolutely nothing for the stage. I felt there was a very strong need for a fringe in opera and wanted to make a company that allows people to try out a new work without feeling overly exposed and where you don't have to be a "Sir".

Tête à Tête is renowned for its wide-ranging themes. Is this something that was important from the start?

From the beginning I was keen to ensure our operas told the stories of those we wanted to attract, rather than merely churning out the standard repertoire. It's horrifying how pretty much every mainstream opera is about abusing a woman. I really am very uncomfortable with that, and at Tête à Tête we don't regurgitate these themes. Instead, we see ourselves as part of what has become a worldwide movement to make operas people care about, including a move away from misogynistic tropes to portraying kickass women being brilliant.

As a result, our operas have traversed a range of subject matters, ranging from stories of dung beetles, spiders and caterpillars to one about someone being abducted by aliens and

a flatshare break up. I think that this kind of commissioning has set a new bar for those that have followed in our footsteps and hopefully this contributes to a more fundamental shift in the sector.

When did you introduce Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival and what was behind your decision?

We created Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival in 2007. It was a way of giving back what other organisations [BAC Opera, Bridewell Theatre, ENO Studio] had given me in the early days of Tête à Tête – the space, money, time and support to make new work and build my own company. When we started in 1999, nobody was making small scale new opera. By 2007 I felt that our experience as a producing organisation put us in a strong position to help artists by giving them a platform to realise their dreams. We hire the theatre, help them with the lighting design, video all their shows and host them online, and do some overall admin, marketing and PR. All they have to do is supply the show, as in the creative team and artists and so on.

While artists maybe receive more support now, as funders such as the Performing Rights Society Foundation have chosen to fund them rather than the organisations, it's also a shame because it means each artist has to be a businessman too; skills must now include filling out forms as well as creating inspiring works. I like to think of us as a glorious aquarium of art where those who deserve to can float to the top without that pressure in the way.

What makes an opera successful and what are you looking for in an opera at your festival?

The creative drive behind the opera needs to come from the heart, rather than simply being a building block in someone's career. Although our artists are quite young, probably younger than the mainstream, it's important to give everyone a chance to make opera, even if they're in their 80s. Having said that, we are giving quite strong steers now as I think that people need to consider their work very carefully in light of the climate emergency and spend what resources they have on telling stories simply and economically, rather than burning up the planet. The work must also be as inclusive as possible and welcome underrepresented groups.

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival is known for its inclusivity. How would you define this?

Firstly, it is done entirely without measurement, though definitely with success.

In the 2020 festival, one of the lead artists said, "Oh, look, two thirds of the lead artists are women, let's organise a zoom panel discussion just to talk about that." Although that was incredibly pleasing, it makes me feel like there is a sort of frightening immaturity elsewhere in the industry now, maybe in the whole world, where everybody feels you have to segregate

— Tête à Tête —

everybody and measure them. Because of this I tend to shy away from the term "diversity" and prefer "inclusion"; diversity is about splitting people up and inclusion is about removing barriers. The latter is definitely what we have worked hard to do at Tête à Tête.

By being inclusive, we have had some really outstanding works. Vahan Salorian's *Boys of Paradise* (2016), an immersive opera about the highs and lows of gay clubbing with words by Dominic Kimberlin, was really outstanding. We were better funded then and ended up co-producing a longer run of it in the venue, Egg London nightclub.

What does a Tête à Tête audience look like?

Our audience is conspicuously younger than if you were sitting in the stalls at the Royal Opera, but it varies enormously from show to show, depending on the subject matter and the venue.

For the first year or two, at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, I was programming the festival quite carefully to encourage people to come for a whole evening's entertainment. They could enjoy fantastic food at the venue and then you might have three different shows called something like "Starters", "Mains" and "Afters": the seed of a project; completed works; and then a bit of fun with some people jamming.

Now we're at the Cockpit in Marylebone, which is much smaller, and although it's a great venue, it has a cap on the number of people in the building as a whole. This means you have to leave quite a long gap between shows, so it becomes less of a full evening and more about one-off events.

Can you share how you're supporting LGBTQIA+ works at this year's festival?

This year we've programmed a great many LGBTQIA+ themed shows; *Plastic Bodies* tackles the commodification of the physicality of women in opera, ie a group of queer (and humorous) opera makers fed up with the unrealistic expectations of body obsession in opera today, while *Fierce Love* remembers love in the shadow of AIDS in the early '90s.

Bermondsey 1983 tells the story of the infamous Bermondsey

by-election and gay Labour candidate Peter Tatchell, an event I remember well and which is now a piece of history. It was supposed to happen as a community opera in 2020, which I think was a very brave choice, but will instead be presented professionally at this year's festival.

Another show, *1944: Home Fires* is an excerpt from a 24-hour opera called *A Gay Century* by an awesome group of pioneering gay elders who are determined to tell the story from the point of view of being gay in the last century.

Other operas include *Songs of Descent*, a queer take on the myth of Persephone; *The Trans Lady Sings: When the Sky Cracks Open*, an opera inspired by a master and slave discovered embalmed by the ashes of Pompeii; *Displaced!* and *A Woolwich Arsenal Opera*, which focuses on a same-sex couple with a child living in Woolwich at the time Arsenal FC was displaced to North London.

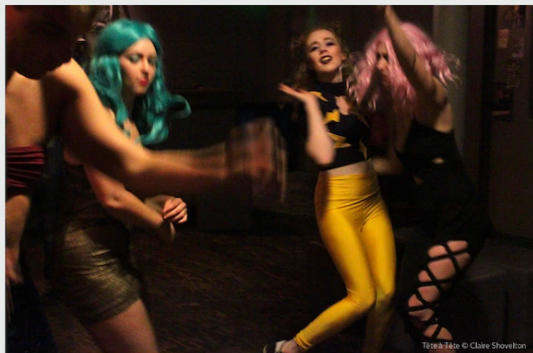
Finally, what are your plans for the future?

We're continuing with the festival in London, with the intention of adding venues in Newcastle (where Timothy Burke, our Music Director lives) and Cornwall, where I live, though that is proving quite tricky as yet.

We're aiming to build on our large-scale community project in Newcastle with an opera gala next spring. We're going to start a community choir with the idea of building a large community opera, once everyone's ready. We might do that in Cornwall too.

Next year we're doing another project with the Royal College of Music and looking at producing Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Lighthouse* with the Minack Theatre – that's enough I think!

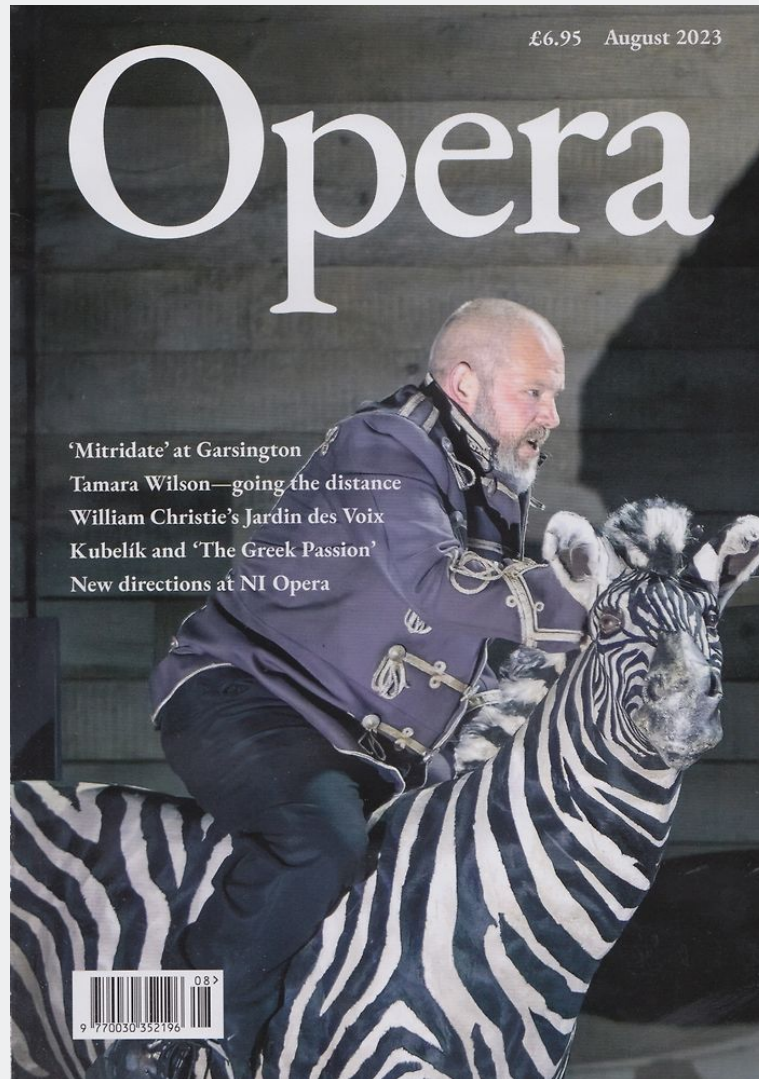
Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival, the UK's largest festival of new opera, will run from 27 August to 13 September 2023 in venues across London. With a mission to reach new audiences, support artists' development and to extend the boundaries of traditional opera, the festival offers audiences the chance to experience a myriad of opera. The full programme will be revealed in July 2023. To discover more about Tête à Tête visit tete-a-tete.org.uk/



Championing new works on YouTube

MyNewOpera is a YouTube channel set up by Tête à Tête. It gives artists and companies a platform to showcase their new operas and provides an open source where visitors can search by composers, themes, artists and synopsis.

To find out more, visit youtube.com/@mynewopera6743/about



August 2023 Events Calendar

Loschky (March 24); *L'italiana in Londra* (Cimarosa), c. Julia Jones, d. R.B. Schlather (March 30); *Tannhäuser* (np), c. Thomas Guggeis, d. Matthew Wild (April 28); *Elektra*, c. Thomas Guggeis, d. Claus Guth (May 9); *Otello* (Rossini), c. Sesto Quatrini, d. Damiano Michieletto

(May 17); *La Juive* (np), c. Henrik Nánasi, d. Tatjana Gürbaca (June 16); *Otello* (Verdi), c. Sesto Quatrini, d. Johannes Erath (June 22); *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, c. Giedrė Šlekytė, d. Christof Loy (June 29)
www.oper-frankfurt.de

OPERA CALENDAR HOME

August

These listings were believed to be correct at the time of going to press, but are subject to changes and cancellations

BAMPTON CLASSICAL OPERA
Westonbirt School
28 La fiera de Venezia (Salieri)
(Tel: 01993 851142)
www.bamptonopera.org

BBC PROMS
Royal Albert Hall, London
19 The Makropoulos Case
www.bbc.co.uk/proms

BUXTON INTERNATIONAL G&S FESTIVAL

1m Sorcerer
1 Gondoliers
2m&e Pirates of Penzance
3m Gondoliers
3 Cox and Box/Trial By Jury/The Zoo
4m Grand Duke
4 Best of G&S
5m Pirates
5m&e Yeomen of the Guard
6m Trial By Jury
6m&e Mikado
7m Mikado
7, 8m HMS Pinafore
8 Iolanthe
9m Mikado
9 Yeomen of the Guard
10m Utopia, Limited
10 Ruddigore
11m Pirates
11 Mikado
12m Yeomen of the Guard
12 Pirates
www.gsfestivals.org

CHARLES COURT OPERA
Wilton's Music Hall, London
15, 16 Express G&S
17, 18 Express G&S
charlescourtopera.com

CUMBRIA OPERA FESTIVAL
Penrith Playhouse
26, 27 Voix humaine/
Frauenliebe und
-leben

Grange-Over-Sands, Victoria Hall
30, 31 Don Giovanni

Opera Highlights
27m Dalton-in-Furness
28 Appleby
29 Carlisle
www.cumbrioperagroup.com

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
12 Zauberflöte (concert)
18, 19 Dreigroschenoper
20 Dreigroschenoper
23, 24 Bluebeard's Castle
25 Tannhäuser (concert)
25, 26 Bluebeard's Castle
27 Bluebeard's Castle
(Tel: 0131 473 2099)
www.eif.co.uk/

EDINBURGH FRINGE
Surgeons Hall, Edinburgh
14-19 My Life Online
21-26 (Eyerly)**
tickets.edfringe.com

GLYNDEBOURNE
1, 3 Semele
4 The Rake's Progress
5 A Midsummer
Night's Dream
6 Semele
8 A Midsummer
Night's Dream
9 Semele
10 The Rake's Progress
11 Semele
12 The Rake's Progress
13 A Midsummer
Night's Dream
15 The Rake's Progress
16 Semele
17 A Midsummer
Night's Dream
18 The Rake's Progress
19 Semele
20 The Rake's Progress
21 Semele
22 A Midsummer
Night's Dream
24 Semele
25 The Rake's Progress
26 Semele
27 The Rake's Progress
(Tel: 01273 812321)
www.glyndebourne.com

GRIMEBORN
Arcola Theatre, London
1-5 Cenerentola
9-12 Trouble in Tahiti

11, 12 Loyola (Zipoli)*
15-19 A&E (Muelas
+Ward)**
22-26 Le Portrait de
Manon/L'Heure
espagnole
arcolatheatre.com

IF OPERA
Belcombe Court, Bradford on Avon
24, 26 Fedora
27 Alice's Adventures in
Wonderland (Todd)
29, 30 The Mikado
31 Fedora
www.ifopera.com

LEEDS OPERA FESTIVAL
Leeds School of Arts
29 Frida (Rodriguez)*
30 María de Buenos Aires
31 Frida
www.northernoperagroup.co.uk

LONGBOROUGH FESTIVAL OPERA
1, 3 The Fairy Queen
(Tel: 01451 830292)
www.lfo.org.uk

OPERA HOLLAND PARK
1 La Bohème
2 Itch (Dove)
3 La Bohème
4 Itch
5 La Bohème
9, 10 Ruddigore
11, 12 Ruddigore
12 Ruddigore
(Tel: 020 7361 3570)
www.operahollandpark.com/

ST ENDELLION FESTIVAL
Collegiate Church of St Endellion
4, 8 Traviata
11 Traviata
endellionfestivals.org.uk

TÊTE À TÊTE: THE OPERA FESTIVAL 2023
Cockpit Theatre, London
27-31 Various new works
(festival runs until
September 12)
www.tete-a-tete.org.uk

WATERPERRY OPERA FESTIVAL
Waterperry House, Oxford
11m Mansfield Park (Dove)
11 Carmen
12m Mansfield Park
12 King Harald's Saga
(Weir)
12 Carmen
13m Mansfield Park
13m King Harald's Saga
15m Mansfield Park
15 Carmen
16m Mansfield Park
16 Acis and Galatea/
Dido and Aeneas
17 Carmen
18 Acis/Dido
19 Carmen
20 Acis/Dido
waterperryoperafestival.co.uk

OPERA ANYWHERE
6 Mikado,
Sunningwell
12 Pirates of Penzance,
Sutton Courtenay
13m Mikado, Cheltenham
18 Mikado, Shipston-on-
Stour
20 Magic Flute,
Southwold
23 Pirates, Salisbury
24 Iolanthe, Dorchester
26 Mikado, Langport
27 Mikado, Henley-on-
Thames
www.operanywhere.com

OPERA BOHEMIA
Madama Butterfly
1 Giffnock
2 Glasgow
4 Edinburgh
6 Ullapool
8 Stormway
9 Tarbert
11 Lossiemouth
13 Inverness
14 Boat of Garten
16 Galashiels
18 Greenock
19 Dundee
www.operaboemia.co.uk

OPERA BRAVA
6 Barbieri, Regent's
Park, London
18, 19 Traviata, East Cowes
operabrava.com

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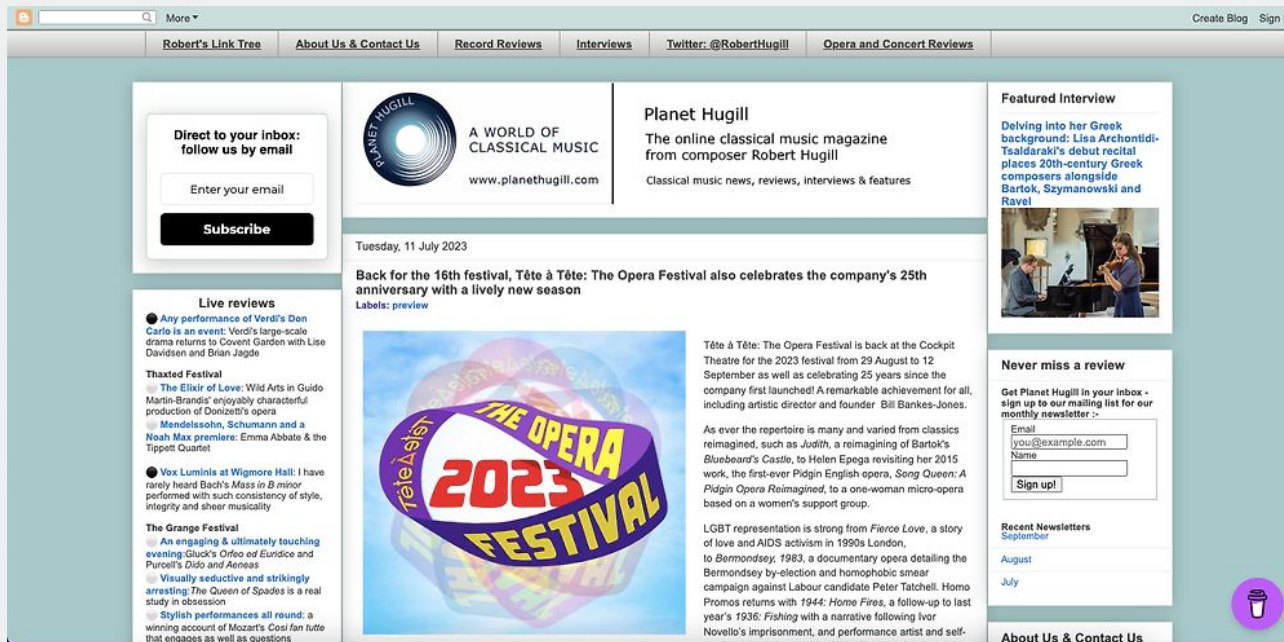
13.2K

Unique Visits

July 11, 2023 •  ONLINE

Back for the 16th festival, Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival...

planetugill.com/2023/07/back-for-16th-f...



The screenshot shows the Planet Hugill website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Robert's Link Tree', 'About Us & Contact Us', 'Record Reviews', 'Interviews', 'Twitter: @RobertHugill', and 'Opera and Concert Reviews'. The main content area features a large article titled 'Back for the 16th festival, Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival also celebrates the company's 25th anniversary with a lively new season'. The article includes a colorful graphic for 'THE OPERA FESTIVAL 2023' and text describing the festival's return to the Cockpit Theatre. On the left, there are sections for 'Live reviews' and 'Direct to your inbox: follow us by email'. On the right, there's a 'Featured Interview' section and a 'Never miss a review' sign-up form.

Estimated Views

1.23K 

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

2 

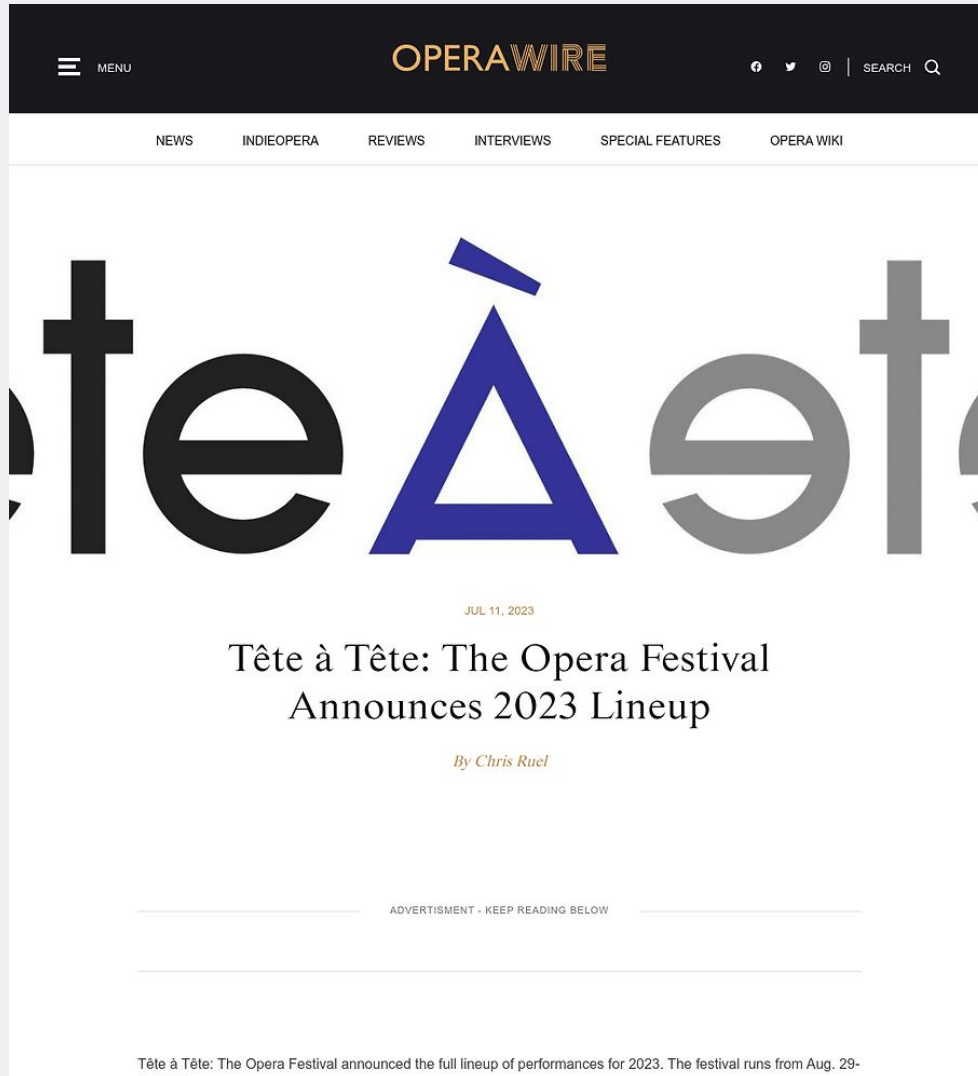
Total number of social engagements



Opera Wire
Magdalena

56
Domain
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156K
Unique
Visits



July 11, 2023 • ONLINE

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival Announces 2023...

operawire.com/tete-a-tete-the-opera-festi...

Estimated Views

2K

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Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements



Classical Music Magazine

Industry insight for music professionals since 1976

36

Domain Authority

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8.05K

Unique Visits



News / Tête à Tête Opera Festival launches 2023 programme

TÊTE À TÊTE OPERA FESTIVAL LAUNCHES 2023 PROGRAMME

Florence Lockheart
THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2023

The festival, which this year celebrates its 25th anniversary, will run from 29 August to 12 September

The 2023 programme will include 1944: Home Fires, a follow-up to 1936: Fishing (pictured) which featured in last year's festival @Claire Sholveton

The 2023 programme will include 1944: Home Fires, a follow-up to 1936: Fishing (pictured) which featured in last year's festival @Claire Sholveton

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival has launched its 2023 programme, celebrating the charity's 25th birthday. This year's festival will embrace a broad range of subject matter from ancient myths to a Ming Dynasty fantasy novel to a displaced football team.

Running from 29 August to 12 September at The Cockpit in Marylebone and composed entirely of new works, the festival will touch on several themes including the experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community, the impact of trauma and the healing power of music.

Artistic director Bill Banks-Jones (pictured below) said: 'This year marks our sixteenth Festival and a mind-boggling 25 years since we opened our own first Tête à Tête production, *The Flying Fox*. One pleasing feature is much delving into the past to make striking discoveries that resonate strongly in the present and, indeed, propel us into a better understood future - a happy way to celebrate our longevity and determination to keep looking forward.'



July 13, 2023 • ONLINE

Tête à Tête Opera Festival launches 2023 programme

classical-music.uk/news/article/tete-a-tete...

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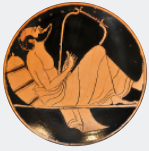
752

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and social...

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements



Thursday, July 13, 2023

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Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2023

Ballets Russes at the Aix Festival

A magnificent Philip II rescues Covent Garden's revival of *Don Carlo*

L'Opéra de Quat'Sous at the Aix Festival

Rolling River from Clare College, Cambridge

PRESS RELEASE

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2023

16 mins ago Claire Seymour

From a sonic walk to a football-inspired opera, works based on ancient classics to murder mysteries, Tête à Tête continues to hold a safe space for artists to boldly tell their stories and bring new audiences together in opera.

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2023 has announced its full line-up and tickets are now on sale.

Running from 29 August to 12 September, and featuring extramusical events such as an LGBTQIA+ artist panel and a producer's forum, this year celebrates the resilience and community spirit of its artists and the safe space they have created together.



July 13, 2023 • ONLINE

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2023

operatoday.com/2023/07/tete-a-tete-the-...

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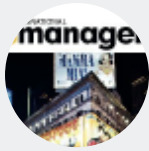
148

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and social media activity.

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements.



International Arts Manager

Produced monthly, International Arts Manager is the most inclusive magazine for the performing arts...

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Unique Visits

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77° CONOURS DE GENÈVE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITION 24 OCT - 5 NOV 2023 Flute & String Quartet CONOURSGENEVE.CH

Expanding the dialogue – Tête à Tête

July 17, 2023 | Arts, Blog, News

Founded in 1997, Tête à Tête has established itself as the home of new opera. Juliette Barber catches up with its Director, Bill Bankes-Jones, to hear about his plans including a strong LGBTQIA+ theme at this year's opera festival

What inspired you to set up Tête à Tête?

In my early career I was fortunate to work with many wonderful companies, including National Theatre, ENO, ROH and with the ITV Regional Theatre Young Director's Scheme, Thorndike Theatre Leatherhead and Redgrave Theatre Farnham. Although this experience built an amazing foundation, I always felt a desire to forge my own path and create something truly unique. This moment of inspiration coincided with a period of work with Declan Donnellan, the co-founder of

TRAVEL
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July 17, 2023 • ONLINE

Expanding the dialogue – Tête à Tête – International Arts...

internationalartsmanager.com/expanding-...

Estimated Views

54

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements

London x London

London x London: the insider's guide to things to do in London. Discover what's on, from the best...

34

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

407K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

The screenshot shows the website's navigation bar with links for HOME, AREAS, DO, EAT, DRINK, CULTURE, HISTORY, and LONDON TRAVEL TIPS. Below the navigation is a search icon and links for UNUSUAL LONDON BOOK and NEWSLETTER. The article header includes the date 'LAST UPDATED: 28TH JULY 2022', the category 'THINGSTO DO', and the author 'BY: LAUREN KENDRICK'. The main title is 'Fantastic Things to do London in August 2022'. Below the title is a social sharing section with buttons for Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram. A 'Recent Posts' section lists three articles: 'Watch Out! Jurassic World: The Experience is Roaring into London This Month', 'Get Snap Happy at the Camera Museum of London', and '14 Beautiful Stately Homes in London You Need to Visit'. At the bottom, there is a 'Love This? Save and Share!' section with buttons for Share, Tweet, Pin, and Email. The article text begins with 'Looking for the best things to do in London in August? Don't miss the best things to see and do in the capital this month with this handy guide.' and 'Hello August, it's nice to see you again.' followed by a paragraph about immersive exhibitions, boozy terraces, and festivals.

Fantastic Things to do London in August — London x London

londonxlondon.com/london-in-august/

Estimated Views

86.7K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and social media activity.

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements



OPERA

Monthly British magazine devoted to covering all things related to opera, including reviews and articles about current opera production...

30K

Circulation

August 07, 2023 • PRINT

September 2023 - Calendar



- 21 **Parma**, Teatro Regio. Festival Verdi features Pier Luigi Pizzi's new production of *I Lombardi*, with Giovanni Sala, Michele Pertusi, Giulia Mazola and Lidia Fridman, *c.* Francesco Lanzillotta
- 21 **Turin**, Teatro Regio. Mariangela Sicilia, Gregory Kunde and Nina Minasyan lead the cast in a new production of *La Juive*, *c.* Daniel Oren, *d.* Stefano Poda
- 22 **Philadelphia**, Academy of Music. Corrado Rovaris conducts Laurence Dale's new production of *Simon Boccanegra*, with Quinn Kelsey, Ana Maria Martinez, Christian Van Horn and Richard Trey Smagur
- 23 **Paris**, Opéra Bastille. Kirill Serebrennikov directs a new *Lobengrin*, with Piotr Bezcala, Johanni van Oostrum, Nina Stemme and Wolfgang Koch, *c.* Alexander Soddy
- 26 **New York**, Metropolitan Opera. Season opens with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting Ivo van Hove's new staging of *Dead Man Walking*, with Ryan McKinny, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham and Latonia Moore
- 28 **Leeds**, Grand Theatre. Opera North's season opens with a new *Falstaff*, with Henry Waddington, Kate Royal, Helen Évora and Richard Burkhard, *c.* Garry Walker, *d.* Olivia Fuchs

OPERA CALENDAR HOME

September

These listings were believed to be correct at the time of going to press, but are subject to changes and cancellations

ROYAL OPERA

Covent Garden, London
11, 14 Das Rheingold (np),
7.30
17 Das Rheingold, 3
19 La forza del destino, 6
20 Das Rheingold, 7.30
22 L'elisir d'amore, 7
23 Das Rheingold, 7.30
24 La forza del destino, 3
25 L'elisir d'amore, 7.30
26 Das Rheingold, 7.30
27 La forza del destino,
6.30
28 L'elisir d'amore, 7.30
29 Das Rheingold, 7.30

Linbury Theatre, London
22 Picture a Day Like
This (Benjamin)*,
7.45
24 Picture a Day, 2.30
25, 27 Picture a Day, 7.45,
28, 30 Picture a Day, 7.45
(Tel: 020 7240 1200)
www.roh.org.uk

ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA

London Coliseum
21 Peter Grimes, 7
23 Peter Grimes, 7
28 Peter Grimes, 6
30 Peter Grimes, 6
(Tel: 020 7834 0111)
www.eno.org/

NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA

Grand Opera House, Belfast
9, 12 Tosca (np), 7.30
14, 16 Tosca, 7.30
(Tel: 028 9027 7734)
www.niopera.com/

OPERA NORTH

Grand Theatre, Leeds
28 Falstaff (np), 7
(Tel: 0113 243 9999)
www.operanorth.co.uk/
SCOTTISH OPERA
Daphne (Strauss – concert)*
5 Glasgow, 7.30
7 Lammermuir, 7.30
(Tel: 0141 248 4567)
www.scottishopera.org.uk/

WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

Wales Millennium Centre,
Cardiff
9 Ainadamar (Golijov)*,
7.30
17 Ainadamar, 4
21 Traviata, 7.30
23 Traviata, 3
26 Ainadamar, 7.30
28, 30 Traviata, 7.30
(Tel: 029 2063 5000)
www.wno.org.uk

BAMPTON CLASSICAL OPERA

At the Venice Fair (Salieri)
13 London
The Apothecary (Haydn)
5 London
9 Old Walland
www.bamptonopera.org

BLACKHEATH HALLS OPERA

Blackheath Halls, London
26, 28 Semele
30m Semele
www.blackheathhalls.com

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Hackney Empire, London
30 The Coronation of
Poppea (np)
(Tel: 020 7833 2555)
www.englishtouringopera.
org.uk

GRIMEBORN

Arcoia Theatre, London
1 Céphale et Procris
2m&c (Jacquet de la Guerre)
12, 13, Brontë the Opera
(Logan)**
15, 16 Brontë the Opera
19, 20 The Mikado
21 The Mikado
23m&c The Mikado
www.arcolatheatre.com

IF OPERA

Belcombe Court, Bradford
on Avon
1 Fedora

Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford on Avon

13, 15 Iolanta
16 Iolanta
www.ifopera.com

OPERA ANYWHERE

9 Zauberköte,
Woodstock
14 Pirates of Penzance,
Lowestoft
30 Pirates of Penzance,
Old Woking
www.operanywhere.com

THE OPERA STORY

Sadler's Wells, London
14, 15 The Yellow Wallpaper
(Howard)*
www.theoperastory.com

TÊTE À TÊTE

Cockpit Theatre, London
1-13 The Opera Festival
2023 (new works)
www.tete-a-tete.org.uk

YACHE BAROQUE

Liberal Jewish Synagogue,
London NW8
9 Celebration of
Salomone Rossi
www.yachebaroque.com

WIGMORE HALL

9 Lawrence Brownlee, 1
9 Asmik Grigorian
11 Roberta Invernizzi
and friends
12 Anna Prohaska,
Ensemble Modern
Benjamin Appl
14 Ruby Hughes, United
Strings of Europe, 1
16 Rebecka Wallroth,
The Mozartists
19 Wigmore French
Song Exchange, 1
21 Carolyn Simpson
22 Günther Grossböck
26 Regula Mühlemann
28 Anush
Hovhannissyan,
Mikhail Petrenko
www.wigmore-hall.org.uk

Opera, September 2023

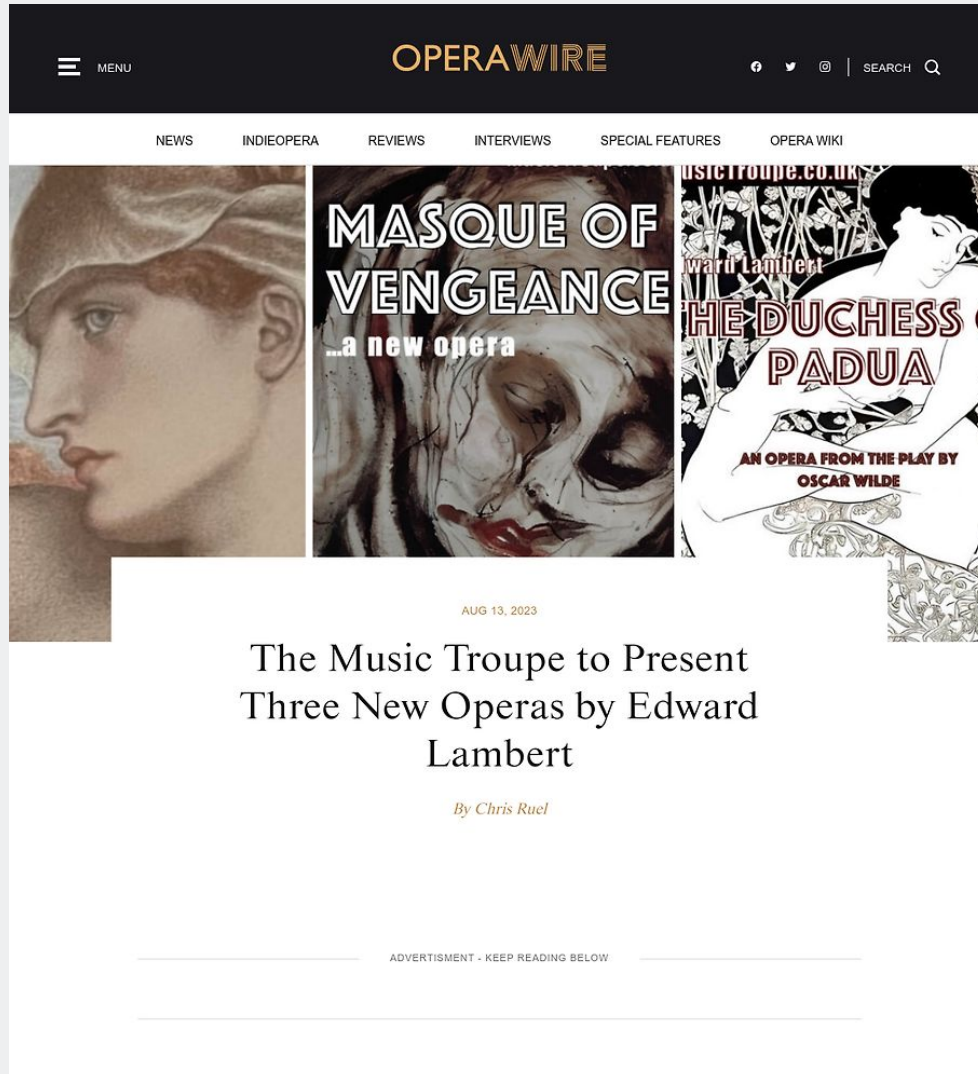
1145



Opera Wire
Magdalena

56
Domain Authority
Provided by
MOZ

156K
Unique Visits



August 13, 2023 • ONLINE

The Music Troupe to Present Three New Operas by Edward...

operawire.com/the-music-troupe-to-prese...

Estimated Views

1.83K ↻

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

32 ↻

Total number of social engagements



OkayAfrica

OkayAfrica's mission is connecting a global audience to Africa. We are a youth-driven news sit...

73

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

210K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

The screenshot shows the OkayAfrica website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with categories: NEWS, MUSIC, FILM + TV, ARTS + CULTURE, FASHION + BEAUTY, SPORTS, COUNTRIES, and SHOP. The main content area features a large image of Helen Epega performing in a colorful, patterned outfit. Below the image is a caption: "Helen Epega performing 'Song Queen: A Pidgin Opera' at London's St John's Hyde Park, 2023. Photo by Joe Madden." The article title is "Helen Epega's Pidgin Opera 'Song Queen' is Connecting Audiences to Africa". The byline is "EDISANA STEPHEN" and it is dated "4 DAYS AGO". There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The article text begins with "Once seen as an outsider, the Nigerian-British opera performer has broken the medium's echo chamber, infusing Nigerian pidgin and other languages on the margins. She wants the world to listen." The bottom of the article text is partially visible: "Song Queen: A Pidgin Opera is widely recognised as the world's first of its kind: a pidgin opera performance. This extraordinary opus, which first graced the stage in 2015, was..."

August 14, 2023 • ONLINE

Helen Epega's Pidgin Opera 'Song Queen' is Connecting...

okayafrica.com/helen-epega-pidgin-oper...

Estimated Views

1.65K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

198

Total number of social engagements



大和基金

45

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

6.43K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

The screenshot shows the Daiwa Foundation website with a navigation menu and a news article. The article is titled "Daiwa Scholar, Gareth Matthey's new opera to be shown in London on 3 September 2023". It includes details about the opera, the scholar, and the performance date.

NEWS
22 August 2023

Daiwa Scholar, Gareth Matthey's new opera to be shown in London on 3 September 2023

Categorised under: Events, Scholarships

2022 Daiwa Scholar, Gareth Matthey, is currently in Japan on the Scholarship. Having completed a year of Japanese language learning at Waseda University, they will soon begin their one-month homestay in Nagasaki, before moving onto the six-month work placement.

Gareth is a librettist. They have a BA in English Literature, an MPhil in Screen Media and Cultures, an MA in Operamaking and Writing, and an MFA in Dramatic Writing.

Gareth and Robert Reid Allan's new opera – *Bermondsey, 1983* – will be shown at **The Cockpit Theatre** NW8 8EH on **Sunday 3 September**.

Details below:

19:00-19:45, Sunday 3rd September 2023
The Cockpit

Music: Robert Reid Allan
Words: Gareth Matthey (after primary sources)

August 22, 2023 • ONLINE

Daiwa Scholar, Gareth Matthey's new opera to be shown in London...

dajf.org.uk/news/daiwa-scholar-gareth-m...

Estimated Views

548

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and social...

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements



What's on in Ealing, events in Ealing from Ealing Times

Find out what's on in Ealing, with events, cinema listings for today and upcoming days and weeks

48

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

21.1K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

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Ealing to stage dementia-friendly opera ahead of premiere

23rd August

CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS LEISURE



Lawrence Hall: venue of the new production next Wednesday afternoon (Image: UWL)

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August 23, 2023 • ONLINE

Ealing to stage new dementia-friendly opera ahead of...

ealingtimes.co.uk/news/23741878.ealing-...

Estimated Views

716 ✓

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

3 ✓

Total number of social engagements

Islington Tribune

Provides local news from the Camden, Islington and Westminster areas.

56

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

24.6K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

August 24, 2023 • ONLINE

Michael White's classical news

islingtontribune.co.uk/article/michael-whit...

The screenshot shows the top of the article page. The header includes the site name 'IslingtonTribune', a search icon, and a menu icon. Below the header, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Thursday, 21st September 2023', 'E-edition', 'Camden New Journal', 'Westminster Extra', 'Classifieds', 'Jobs', and 'letters@islingtontribune.com'. The article title is 'Michael White's classical news: Isabelle Demers; Boston Symphony Orchestra; Berlin Radio Symphony; Tête à Tête festival', dated 'Thursday, 24th August' by 'Michael White'. A large photo of Isabelle Demers is featured. The text begins with 'I HAVENT counted them personally but am told that the Royal Albert Hall's organ has 9,999 pipes...'. A 'RELATED ARTICLES' section is visible at the bottom, featuring a football article titled 'Everybody needs good neighbours'.

Estimated Views

238

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and social media activity.

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements



Camden New Journal

Provides local news from the Camden, Islington and Westminster areas.

64

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

50K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

August 24, 2023 • ONLINE

Michael White's classical news: Isabelle Demers;...

camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/michael-...

Estimated Views

431

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and social media...

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements

CamdenNewJournal

Thursday, 24th August 2023

E-edition Islington Tribune Westminster Extra Classifieds Jobs letters@camdennewjournal.com

REVIEW / CLASSICAL

Michael White's classical news: Isabelle Demers; Boston Symphony Orchestra; Berlin Radio Symphony; Tête à Tête festival

Thursday, 24th August – By Michael White



Prepare to have your socks blown off: Isabelle Demers

I HAVEN'T counted them personally but am told that the Royal Albert Hall's organ has 9,999

Categories

Classical

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RELATED ARTICLES



CRICKET

TRT Afrika - Breaking News From Africa and Around the World

35
Domain
Authority

Provided by
MOZ

59.6K
Unique
Visits

Provided by
SimilarWeb

August 25, 2023 • ONLINE

Nigerian songstress taking Pidgin classical to the world - TRT...

trtafrika.com/lifestyle/nigerian-songstress...

The screenshot shows a news article on the TRT Afrika website. The article is titled "Nigerian songstress taking Pidgin classical to the world" and is dated 25 Aug 2023. The author is Charles Mgbolu. The article text discusses Helen Epega's work in Pidgin classical music, mentioning her interest in music since childhood and her re-invention of the genre. A sidebar on the right titled "What else would you like to know?" lists keywords like "Pidgin Opera", "Classical music", "Entertainment", "Lifestyle", and "Africa Music". It also features a "Related" section with links to articles such as "Ugandan Ghetto Kids battle in British Got Talent final", "Sauti Sol: Will band's 'hiatus' break hearts?", "Why Spotify launched Afrobeats news platform", "BET 2023: Status quo maintained for African stars", and "Tanzanian singer Zuchu sets YouTube views record".

Estimated Views

13.9K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements



The Times

News and opinion from The Times & The Sunday Times

93

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

37.8M

Unique Visits

August 25, 2023 • ONLINE

Hannah MacInnes in for Ed Vaizey

thetimes.co.uk/radio/show/20230825-211...

The screenshot shows the Times Radio player interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'TIMESRADIO' and menu items: HOME, SCHEDULE, PODCASTS, COMPETITIONS, HOW TO LISTEN, LIVE, and Matt Chorley: More... Below the navigation bar, there is a circular profile picture of Hannah MacInnes. To the right of the picture, it says 'CATCH UP 25 Aug 2023' and 'Hannah MacInnes in for Ed Vaizey'. Below the title, it says 'Thoughtful interviews covering culture, history and politics'. At the bottom, there is a progress bar showing 00:00:00 / 03:00:00 and playback controls including play/pause, previous, next, and volume.

Views

38.2K

Total number of views. User-provided.

Engagements

N/A

Total number of social engagements



Africa.com

Africa.com embodies a powerful vision to redefine perceptions of Africa, breaking stereotypes and...

68

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

47.6K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

August 28, 2023 • ONLINE

Helen Epega's Pidgin Opera 'Song Queen' is Connecting...

africa.com/helen-epegas-pidgin-opera-so...



Helen Epega's Pidgin Opera 'Song Queen' is Connecting Audiences to Africa

By Editor / August 28, 2023 / Top 10 News

Pride in her African culture drove singer Helen Epega to create the world's first "pidgin opera." With 'Song Queen,' which she conceived and stars in, she tells the story of a mythical place where song has the power to unite and promote peace. Performed in pidgin English and a host of other diasporan dialects, the opera is meant to be a window into the world of Africa. According to Epega, the aim of the opera is for people to come together to discover something they possess, which they were unaware of before and that is able to foster unity among everyone. She hopes for the people of African heritage in her audience to be inspired by the performance and become proud of their heritage. And for the



Media Partners Upcoming Events

- SEP 12 September 12 @ 8:00 am - September 13 @ 5:00 pm SAST
Africa Crime Prevention Forum
- SEP 15 8:00 am - 5:00 pm SAST
Marketing Upclose & Personal - Nedbank IMC
- SEP 19 September 19 @ 8:00 am - September 20 @ 5:00 pm SAST
Seamless Africa 2023
- SEP 19 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm SAST
The Africa-America Institute Celebrates 70 Years
- OCT 2 October 2 @ 8:00 am - October 5 @ 5:00 pm SAST
ADIPEC Shaping The Future Of Energy

[View Calendar](#)



Estimated Views

381

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

23

Total number of social engagements



Opera Now

Rhinegold Publishing is one of the leading UK publishers for music and the performing arts.

53

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

27.4K

Unique Visits

August 29, 2023 • ONLINE

'In Europe, the industry treats "contemporary opera...

[gramophone.co.uk/opera-now/opinion/art...](https://www.gramophone.co.uk/opera-now/opinion/art...)

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NEWS REVIEWS FEATURES OPINION MAGAZINE SUBSCRIBE

'In Europe, the industry treats "contemporary opera" as a problem' | Bill Bankes-Jones

Bill Bankes-Jones
Tuesday, August 29, 2023

Contemporary opera company Tête à Tête's Artistic Director on the future of new opera

Donkey's years ago I joined ENO on the crest of its wave as a staff director. I came from the spoken theatre, already experienced in developing new writing. I was lucky to work on a series of great new works, though at the same time surprised that this new writing was not developed, so much as handed in and put on unquestioningly. There was no process. Composers, often with little experience of stage work, were left to their own devices and even tiny cuts were unthinkable.



Tête à Tête's Artistic Director Bill Bankes-Jones
Hugo Glendinning

There were comparatively few opera companies then. Unlike the pyramidal structure of theatre, where the National, RSC and West End stand on the shoulders of the Royal Court, Almeida, nationwide network of excellent rep theatres, all in turn fed by pub theatre, ubiquitous student theatre and true fringe, our mighty opera companies had no such robust support from their own sector.

Major drivers for me in building Tête à Tête, therefore, were to work towards a really strong, foundational fringe for opera, and to support composers by bringing them in to theatres from an early stage in their careers. I also had wonderful experiences working with director Declan Donnellan, who even in the 90s was making really inclusive companies to stage work, and felt very strongly we needed a parallel inclusivity in opera, in casting, creative, core team and audiences to keep this inspirational art form alive by connecting with *anyone*.

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Estimated Views

1.74K ✓

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

46 ✓

Total number of social engagements



QX Magazine

Gay London Guide LGBT Events Parties Cabaret - QX - Queer Gay London Life. Nightlife listings UPDATED WEEKLY 2023.

45

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

September 01, 2023 • ONLINE

Homo Promos banned from taking '1944: Home Fires'...

qxmagazine.com/2023/09/homo-promos...

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Jobs


Home > Bits & Pieces > Homo Promos banned from taking '1944: Home Fires' production into HMP Wormwood Scrubs.

Bits & Pieces

Homo Promos banned from taking '1944: Home Fires' production into HMP Wormwood Scrubs.

September 1, 2023

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Estimated Views

1.93K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and social media activity

Engagements

2

Total number of social engagements



G Scene Magazine

Gscene LGBTQ+ Magazine online - News, Politics, Features, Reviews & Listings for the Gay, Lesbian,...

47

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

16.7K

Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

September 01, 2023 • ONLINE

Prison Service bans queer theatre group from performing its...

gscene.com/news/gay-news/prison-servi...

Estimated Views

1.04K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements

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LGBTQ+ NEWS

Prison Service bans queer theatre group from performing its opera about Ivor Novello's incarceration in HMP Wormwood Scrubs

Graham Robson September 1, 2023



Advertisements

Homo Promos, Britain's oldest LGBTQ+ theatre group, has been banned from taking its latest production, *1944: Home Fires*, into HMP Wormwood Scrubs next Tuesday, September 6.

The visit had, according to Homo Promos, the full support of staff at the prison, and has been "stamped on" by "senior leaders in the prison service", according to **Jake Booth**, the Neurodiversity Support Manager at the Scrubs who was organising the visit. No reasons have been given.

The performance, which was to take place in the prison chapel, consisted of a 50-minute opera about Ivor Novello's incarceration in the prison, and a piano recital on Novello's own piano there.

Peter Scott-Presland, the producer who was in the prison only yesterday with his team to finalise arrangements, said: "We are devastated. This was going to be the high point of the tour and a homage to a great gay icon. To cancel with

LATEST NEWS

MUSIC

OMG...The First Ever AI Popstar "with a human soul" Signed Major Record Deal

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BOOK REVIEW: 'The Gaudy Image' by William Talsman

NEWS

Brighton & Hove City Council seeks views on its cost of living action plan

PRIDE

IN PICTURES: Chase Pride 2023

SIMON PEPPER PHOTOGRAPHY





LouReviews

LouReviews is a website which reviews, promotes and supports the arts - London theatre, films, book...

25

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

5.09K

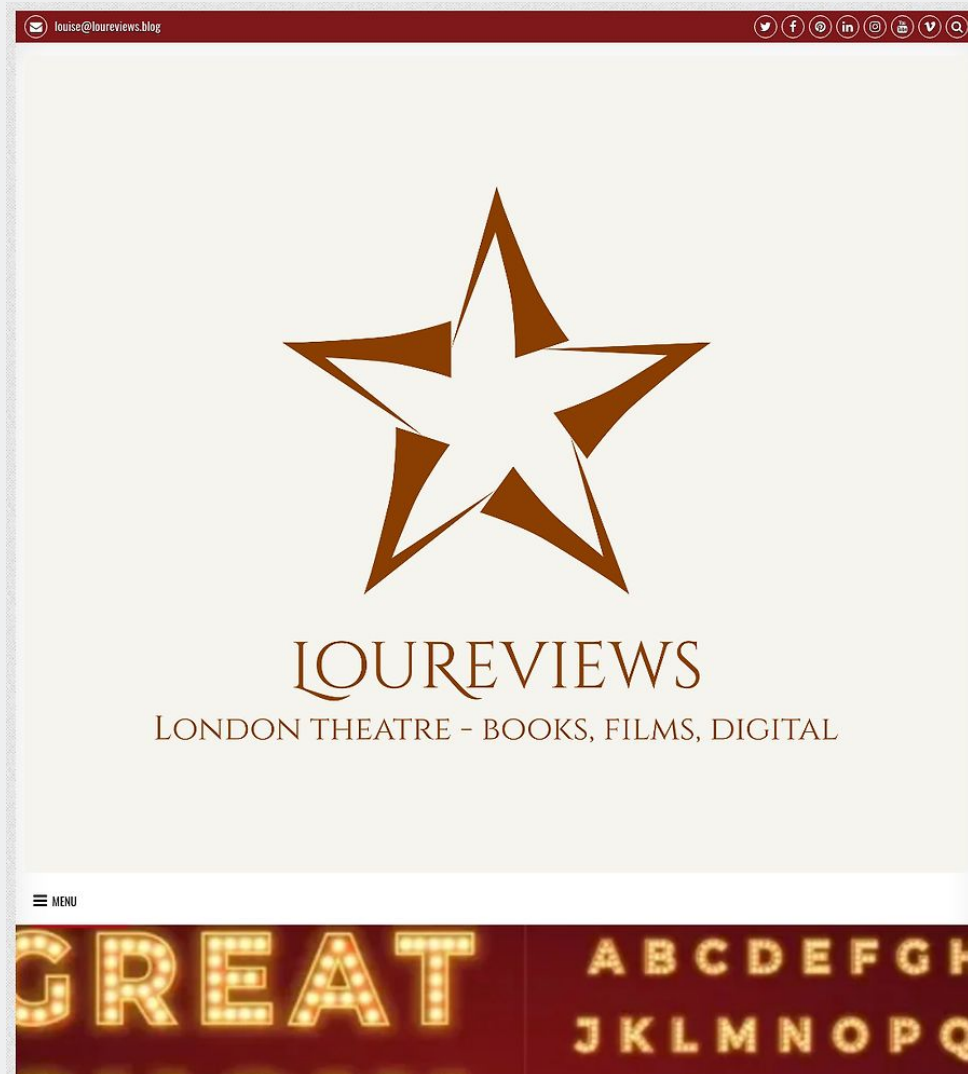
Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

September 01, 2023 • ONLINE

On the radar for September - LouReviews

loureviews.blog/2023/09/01/on-the-radar...



Estimated Views

1.91K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

2

Total number of social engagements



The Times

News and opinion from The Times & The Sunday Times

93

Domain Authority

Provided by **MOZ**

37.8M

Unique Visits

September 03, 2023 • ONLINE

Prison cancels gay opera about Frankie Fraser and Ivor...

thetimes.co.uk/article/prison-cancels-gay-...

THE TIMES Today's sections ▾ Past six days Explore ▾ Times Radio Log in Subscribe Search 🔍

ARTS

Prison cancels gay opera about Frankie Fraser and Ivor Novello

Valentine Low

Monday September 04 2023, 12.01am BST, The Times



Prison Service chiefs are thought to have feared a negative press reaction

A gay opera about an imagined meeting between the gangster "Mad" Frankie Fraser and Ivor Novello that was due to have been staged at Wormwood Scrubs has been cancelled.

The producer of *1944: Home Fires* believes that the cancellation was because of fears by the Prison Service that staging the show at the west London jail would provoke negative press coverage. The decision to pull the plug with less than a week's notice came after months of planning and two site visits in recent days.

Estimated Views

36K ✓

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

0 ✓

Total number of social engagements



Daily Mail

MailOnline - get the latest breaking news, celebrity photos, viral videos, science & tech news, and top...

94

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

384M

Unique Visits

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Prison chiefs axe gay opera telling imagined love story of Ivor Novello and 'Mad' Frankie Fraser at Wormwood Scrubs with less than a week's notice

By TOM COTTERILL
UPDATED: 05:30 EDT, 4 September 2023

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Prison bosses have axed a gay opera telling the imagined love story of **Ivor Novello** and **'Mad' Frankie Fraser** due to be staged at one of Britain's most notorious jails.

The production of 1944: Home Fires was set to go ahead at **London's Wormwood Scrubs** prison but it was axed with just four days' notice, leaving furious organisers 'devastated'.

The show's producer claimed the decision to pull the plug on the opera - which had been in the works for two months - was because jail bosses feared negative press coverage. But the Prison Service the show was not 'the best use of officers' time'.

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DailyMail.com

TOP STORIES

Alex Murdaugh demands second murder trial based on...

September 04, 2023 • ONLINE

Wormwood Scrubs axes 'Mad' Frankie Fraser and Ivor...

dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12477729/Wo...

Estimated Views

377K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

3

Total number of social engagements



The Stage

Theatre news and reviews from London's West End and across the UK, latest interviews with stars and...

73

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

238K

Unique Visits

September 04, 2023 • ONLINE

Judith review at the Cockpit Theatre, London

thestage.co.uk/reviews/judith-review-at-t...


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Judith review

★★★★☆
"Strong performance of a muddled work"

REVIEWS SEP 4, 2023 BY EDWARD BHESANIA COCKPIT THEATRE, LONDON



Leonora in Judith at the Cockpit Theatre, London, as part of the Tête à Tête Opera Festival. Photo: Claire Shovelton

Bartók's grim tale of female subjugation is interlaced with the themes of healing and well-being

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Judith review

The Portrait of Manon/L'Heure Espagnole review

A&E review



Reviews

LATEST MOST READ

Estimated Views

1.21K

Estimated views calculated based on audience size and socia...

Engagements

0

Total number of social engagements



Gramophone

Gramophone – classical music magazine, podcast and reviews

63

Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

844K

Unique Visits

September 05, 2023 • ONLINE

Queer inheritance, politics and opera – writing 'Bermondsey...

[gramophone.co.uk/opera-now/opinion/art...](https://www.gramophone.co.uk/opera-now/opinion/art...)

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NEWS REVIEWS FEATURES OPINION MAGAZINE SUBSCRIBE

Queer inheritance, politics and opera - writing 'Bermondsey, 1983'

Robert Reid Allan
Tuesday, September 5, 2023

Homophobia surrounded the 1983 Bermondsey by-election. Robert Reid Allan's true-story opera looks at this landmark in queer history and questions how far we have still to go



Scottish composer Robert Reid Allan
Photo: Ruby Dixon


The 1983 Bermondsey by-election campaign was the most violently homophobic vilification of a public figure since Oscar Wilde. The South London constituency was the site of unimaginable abuse suffered by the Labour candidate Peter Tatchell, now amongst the UK's most prominent LGBT+ and human rights advocates, who faced smears in the press, hundreds of death threats, numerous beatings, and several attempts to burn down his house. The eventual victor, the Liberal candidate Simon Hughes, would himself come out as bisexual in 2006 under pressure from the tabloids who illegally hacked his phone.

While a by-election might seem unusual fodder for a new opera, writer Gareth Matthey and I – equal halves of fledgling production company Forensis Music Theatre – were drawn to the complex knot of personal and political narratives surrounding these events. Having begun in earnest in 2019 via residencies at Snape Maltings and Belgium's LOD muziektheater, this project was upended by the coronavirus pandemic. Four years on, and 40 since the election itself, *Bermondsey, 1983* finally comes to life at Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2023.

Our 45-minute opera is a series of multimedia vignettes. A weaving together of recorded interviews, projected video, synthesizers and singers, which work together to interrogate how and why these brutal events came to pass. It's a verbatim piece

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"A fantastical mix of the comic and absurdist"

REVIEWS SEP 11, 2023 BY EDWARD BHESANIA THE COCKPIT, LONDON



Lindertje Mans in The Gaia Hypothesis at The Cockpit, London. Photo: Claire Shovelton

Lindertje Mans explains the Gaia hypothesis to a synth-pop score and a quirky, multifaceted theatrical context

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"Poorly articulated"

REVIEWS SEP 11, 2023 BY EDWARD BHESANIA COCKPIT THEATRE, LONDON



The Chaos Collective quartet in Fragments from a Lost Land at the Tête à Tête Opera Festival, London. Photo: Claire Shovelton


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Edward Bhesania

Edward Bhesania is a writer and editor who reviews for The Stage and The Strad. He has contributed to The Observer, BBC Music Magazine, International Piano, The Tablet and Country Life, and written concert notes for the BBC Proms, London Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

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Life in the dead season

New music from the Proms, Grimeborn and Tête-à-Tête

By [Flora Willson](#)

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Plastic Bodies at Tête-à-Tête: the Opera Festival | © Claire Shovelton

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IN THIS REVIEW**PROM 51**

Begin Afresh
BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Albert Hall
Judith Weir

PROM 52

Makeshift Castle
Boston Symphony Orchestra, Royal Albert Hall
Julia Adolphe

BRONTË

The opera
Keynote Opera in association with Docklands Sinfonia, Grimeborn
Lisa Logan

PLASTIC BODIES

Tête-à-Tête: The Opera Festival
Amy Bryce, Maya-Leigh Rosenwasser, Amy Bryce, Rosie Middleton, Catherine Valve and Sarah Parkin

At 8pm on Saturday August 10, 1895, Henry Wood raised his baton for the National Anthem - the opening item of the first ever prom. Established to provide accessible musical entertainment for Londoners during the capital's annual "dead season", the new concert series provoked handwringing about the dangers of pandering to the masses. Some, though, were reassured by that first programme: the *Morning Post's* critic was relieved to find that "the tastes of the musically cultured are to be considered, and that all is not to be sacrificed to the Philistine". Of the twenty-six pieces performed, fifteen represented a debut of some kind. Many were first outings of new arrangements or first London performances; a few were world premieres.

Nearly 130 years later, the miscellany programmes have long gone, the BBC is now in charge and Wood lingers only as a bronze bust, surveying the Royal Albert Hall from the back of the stage. But the handwringing continues, despite record-breaking audience figures for the 2023 season. So, too, does the series' commitment to programming new music, with twenty-two premieres featured across the eight weeks of this year's BBC Proms.

At the Establishment end of the spectrum, there was the world premiere, by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and its Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo, of *Begin Afresh*, a BBC commission from Judith Weir. Weir was appointed Master of the Queen's Music in 2014 and has produced a stream of new works for the recent flurry of royal occasions. Perhaps inevitably, *Begin Afresh* feels different: subtler and more personal. Its title references the final line of Philip Larkin's poem "The Trees"; Weir herself describes the piece as "an almost-continuous survey of musical reflections about the trees and plants I observed, in a very urban setting, over the period of a year".

It begins with a solo violin melody unfolding softly amid modal harmonies and expressive crunches (lots of lovingly squeezed seconds, all gently expressive). The orchestral textures shift from the rich, earthy ground of a symphonic passage with a sedimentary layer of lower strings and brass to moments with almost Copland-spare lines moving in parallel, adorned by bursts of detailed activity. Elsewhere, a shock of bright tonality emerges fleetingly like thin winter sun. According to Weir's programme note, the work is constructed in three short movements, each named after a month. I confess I remain unsure where "April"

ends and "October" begins, even after listening back to the radio broadcast - but perhaps it's no bad thing to be prevented from treating such a work as if a nature documentary lurks beneath its surface. Oramo approached it with tremendous care, giving the musicians and music alike space to breathe. Woodwind solos were free and flexible; string chords landed with the luminous brashness of just-unfurled leaves. Larkin's poem has its trees coming into leaf "Like something almost being said". Weir's *Begin Afresh* shares the poem's delicate melancholy and is beautifully wrought.

On the following evening in South Kensington, there was a Proms premiere at the other end of the spectrum: the first European performance of *Makeshift Castle* by the young US composer Julia Adolphe, brought to the Proms by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and its Music Director Andris Nelsons. Adolphe's is no household name in the UK, even on our classical music scene - but being given a glimpse of what goes on elsewhere is one of the Proms' most valuable gifts. Adolphe has already been commissioned by some of the US's most prestigious symphony orchestras and has written repeatedly for the LA Philharmonic; *Makeshift Castle* is a co-commission from the BSO and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Emerging from a low orchestral growl, sustained notes brought to life with percussive rustles and shuffles and splashes of harp, the piece's first movement is all nervous energy, its rhythmic detail almost miraculous in the auto-blend acoustic of the Royal Albert Hall. (Nelsons stood planted firmly on his XL wooden podium throughout, his arms describing big, smooth gestures: this is what clarity looks like.) The second movement builds to a vast orchestral canvas - a kind of symphonic pantechinon in slow motion - with something of Puccini's generous melodic sweeps in its orchestral unisons, though Adolphe's harmonic world is altogether craggier. The most memorable moment for me, however, came as that massive texture subsided, leaving a handful of exquisitely shaped solo wind and string lines and single notes struck on the piano: chamber-music counterpoint weaving across the space left ringing in our ears by the vast orchestral tutti.

While the Proms might still be presented like the only late summer classical music show in town, the "dead season" that Henry Wood would have recognised is no more. Across London from Albertopolis, Tête-à-Tête: The Opera Festival and Grimeborn have been vying for well over a decade to serve up energetically gritty, cliché-defying and sometimes downright bonkers productions of new or reworked operas. At their best, performances in these fringe festivals can be revelatory. There are, of course, misses as well as hits. *Brontë: The opera* at this year's Grimeborn was unfortunately among the former. Based on an award-winning play about the Brontë family by Polly Teale, the score by Lisa Logan was relentless: long (far exceeding Berg's *Wozzeck*; almost matching Wagner's *Das Rheingold*), effortfully unlyrical and lacking audible distinctions between different characters or emotions.

Plastic Bodies, a new collaborative piece billed as "an opera about opera" by Tête-à-Tête was at least as ambitious but constructed on a different scale. We saw two "fragments" of a work-in-progress by Amy Bryce, Maya-Leigh Rosenwasser, Amy Bryce, Rosie Middleton, Catherine Valve and Sarah Parkin introduced as we took our seats by closely amplified crunching and scrunching. The first fragment was a rehearsal of a scene from a pastiche baroque opera with two women (soprano Sarah Parkin and mezzo-soprano Rosie Middleton) as its romantic leads. They sing it through - very beautifully - before talking deadpan through their various moves ("lesbian nod", "opera sniff": the audience loved the in-jokes). And then the trouble starts: the incursion of a Darth Vader-ish voice from elsewhere as a director shouts orders ("Be SEXIER!") and the rehearsal gradually unravels. The second fragment was less obviously didactic and more explicitly virtuosic, kicked off by a video projection of Middleton peeling bubblewrap off a white corset and stuffing it

into her mouth (there's the source of that mystery scrunching sound) as she stares down the camera lens. She then appears on stage, pulls a stream of bubblewrap back out of her mouth and launches into a largely unaccompanied soliloquy: part sung, part-spoken, all analogue glitches and minute adjustments of tone as she spits out mangled instructions - "seduce!"; "relax!"; "push!"; "sing like you've got cling film on your face!".

The impact is astonishing, like listening to that doyenne of avant-garde vocal performance Cathy Berberian with an axe to grind about singing teachers. More video projections explain that the text was assembled from responses to a social media call-out asking about things said to singers during training for or work in the opera industry. In that context, the final piece of projected text was grim rather than funny: an assurance that "No musicians were harmed in the making of this show".

Flora Willson is a writer, broadcaster and Senior Lecturer in Music at King's College London. She is finishing a book about operatic culture and infrastructure in the 1890s

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Feature - The Last Siren

From 02 October 2023

CULTURE / 39

Music

Dr Andy Northcott

CLASSICAL

Destigmatising dementia at the opera

A visit to the theatre is an occasion for escapism for all of us, which is why it's especially important to make the arts accessible to as many people as possible.

Many venues now offer relaxed performances, whether they are for parents of young children or neurodiverse audiences.

The Geller Institute of Ageing and Memory at the University of West London, in collaboration with the London College of Music, recently staged a free, dementia-friendly production of brand-new opera *The Last Siren* at Lawrence Hall. Performed ahead of its world premiere at the Tête à Tête festival in London, this new, modern opera takes a fresh look at the Greek myth from Homer's *Odyssey*.

A driving force behind the vision of Geller Institute of Ageing and Memory is to explore ways that people with dementia, and their loved ones, can have more opportunities to enjoy new experiences and to be able to continue to engage with their communities. Research tells us that the arts provide a fantastic vehicle to do this. Dementia-friendly opens was conceived as a way to make the arts more inclusive while providing an authentic theatrical experience, in line with our ethos that people living with dementia should not only live longer lives, but fun and fulfilled ones.

The opera itself was created by The Music Troupe, run by composer Edward Lambert, who is constantly seeking ways to bring opera to new venues and new audiences. "Talk about opera usually concerns a small body of

work by composers of the past," says Lambert. "I wanted to show how the repertoire can be renewed with contemporary works that are economic to produce and practical to move around."

The Last Siren was created and produced for a traditional audience, but it is only 40 minutes long, making it bite-sized. The music was composed by Lambert, with words by Norman Welch, under the direction of Jenny Weston. The dementia-friendly aspects of the performance we focused on were around safety and comfort. We reassured the audience it was OK to make noise or move around, quiet spaces were available outside the theatre for those who needed them, and refreshments were provided. Our front-of-house staff have experience of engaging with people living with dementia and were drawn from volunteers from the MSc in Dementia Studies provided by the University of West London.

Before the performance Lambert, alongside the director and two singers, a soprano (Louise Fuller) and mezzo-soprano (Arlene Belli), put on a workshop. It provided background to the story and the events of the opera, and also gave the audience the chance to try their hand at singing, and for the musicians to explain their roles.

The opera was performed in the round, and once the music started bold images from the story were projected onto a screen behind the performers. When the powerful singing began the audience sat enraptured, mesmerised by the performance, with nobody moving from their seat from beginning to end. "It just takes you away, it takes you



Above: *Last Siren* stars Louise Fuller and Arlene Belli. Below: The audience join in

somewhere," said Maria, attending the performance alongside her partner Roy. "It's very hard, [living] with somebody with dementia, and when you hear the music it's amazing, you just suddenly feel alive." Another audience member said, "Coming here today has been so good, because the music revives your brain, and provides a surge of a new energy," while another added, "I'm just so impressed. The more of this the merrier."

Our takeaway is that this is an audience that can laugh, sing and smile along as new memories are created for them and their loved ones, and there needs to be more opportunities for them to do so. Our next step at the Geller Institute of Ageing and Memory is to produce a blueprint so that dementia-friendly opera, or dementia-friendly anything, can be performed anywhere. We hope this will inspire and encourage other performers and productions to make their performance dementia friendly, be it through opening up rehearsals, travelling to underserved venues or hosting events like our own. There is an eager audience waiting for exciting musical performances, and with it the vital opportunity to destigmatise dementia.

Dr Andy Northcott, Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Medicine within the Geller Institute of Ageing and Memory (GIAM) at the University of West London

For more information on the Geller Institute of Ageing and Memory visit uwl.ac.uk/research/research-centres-and-groups/geller-institute-ageing-and-memory



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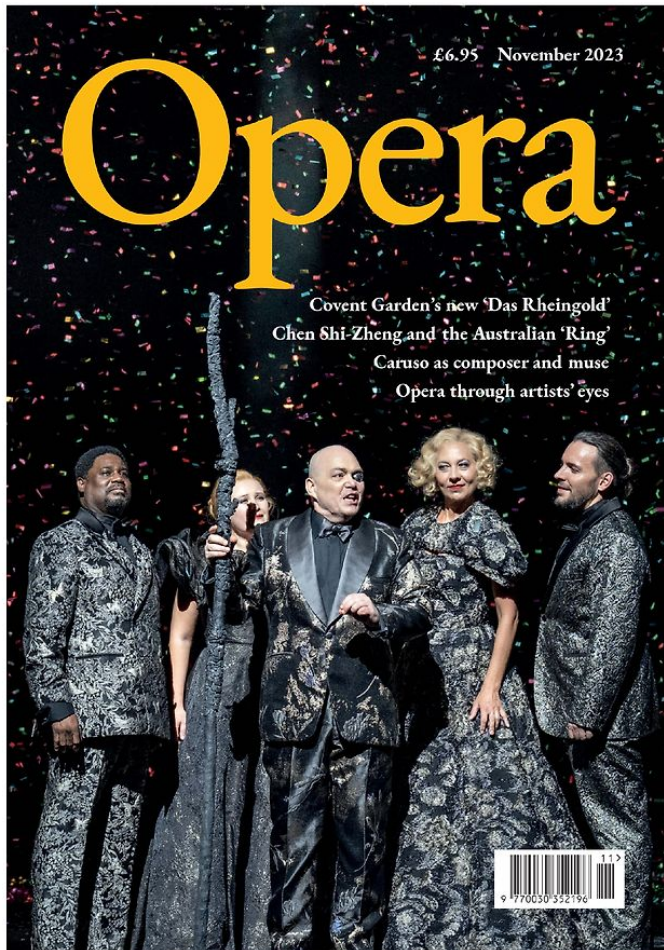
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November 2023 - The Metamorphosis / Cupboard Love...



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and gauzes (designer Alisa Kalyanova, lighting Luca Panetta) with period costumes and a few judiciously placed props were well able to evoke the work's multiple locations. A rather splendid samovar sat centre stage throughout Act 3, a reminder that, even in exile, these characters and their passions remain indubitably Russian. JONATHAN CROSS

The Metamorphosis and Cupboard Love

Tête à Tête Opera Festival at the Cockpit Theatre, London, August 30 and September 6

Undergoing an aptly awkward transformation at this year's Tête à Tête Opera Festival was a new operatic version of *Metamorphosis*, Kafka's classic novel about a salesman (Gregor) who wakes up one morning as a colossal bug. Composed by Igor Escudero, it was arranged as one long soliloquy by Gregor, punctuated with his sister Greta's visits to his room.

In the novel, moving as a gigantic bug in a human world is a key element of Gregor's struggle; in Inigo Santacana's staging he leapt out of bed and lurched around like a greased-up Gollum. Instead of interaction with his full family, employer and tenants, there was simply his sister. Robbed of many of his difficulties and his interactions with the outside world, Gregor was demoted from sympathetic parasite into an unlikeable solipsist.

Escudero's music, directed from the piano by Krzysztof Stipulkowski, is tuneful, simple and has a habit of fading into the background. There were engaging moments, such as a dismal opening sequence eloquently describing Gregor's bad dreams, but it felt inappropriately light considering the misery of the source. The tenor William Wallace as Gregor sang at first with soft lyricism but his delivery felt forced, particularly in the transitions between spoken and sung text. After an hour of singing and skittering around he was noticeably struggling to stay in tune. Paula Mendoza as Greta mostly sang with a pleasant tone but her high notes were shrill, her diction thickly accented.

Cupboard Love is the only opera by Madeleine Dring (1923-77). It's a whodunnit focusing on the interaction between Boyfriend and Wife (an adulterous pairing) on finding Husband dead. It was written in 1958, and the first ever London staging was given as part of this year's festival.

Reminiscent of music hall, it's an entertaining piece. Dring's score, played on solo piano by Belinda Jones, is colourful, Daniel F. Aitken's libretto witty and impressively forward-thinking. Patter songs and duets make up most of the vocal writing, with campy joke numbers such as 'How nice it is when husbands die'. The character's ranges were enormous, with Boyfriend

Sam Oladeinde, Oskar McCarthy and Sarah Dacey in 'Cupboard Love' at the Tête à Tête Opera Festival



Opera, November 2023

1357

notably going from the upper end of baritone right into deep bass. The upbeat tone masked darker undercurrents which were drawn out at the end of the piece with a dramatic switch.

With Sarah Dacey and Lucy Mulgan credited as creative directors, Sam Redway directed a 1960s-themed staging. Characters strutted about with choreographed Monty Python-esque movement and mimed fingertip cigarette draws. Costumes were instantly evocative.

Dacey took the role of Wife, singing with clarity and good diction, though her short moments of coloratura felt uncomfortable and her vocal timbre was sometimes harsh. As Boyfriend, Oskar McCarthy worked through the tongue-tripping libretto with comedic aplomb, but the deepest notes sat outside his tessitura. Sam Oladeinde was spellbinding in the spoken role of Husband, snatching the wind from under the wings of the extramarital lovers. Coming in at around 25 minutes, *Cupboard Love* is short but it's a gem, and it would be good to see it picked up by more companies as part of a double bill—like the rest of Tête à Tête's back catalogue, it can be viewed online free on the company's website (www.tete-a-tete.org.uk).

ANDREW LOHMANN

Frida and María de Buenos Aires

Northern Opera Group at Leeds School of Arts, August 31 and September 2

A Latin American theme ran through Northern Opera Group's Leeds Opera Festival, which centred on the first UK staging of Robert Xavier Rodríguez's *Frida* alongside Piazzolla's *María de Buenos Aires*. Each enjoyed three performances. For the record, there was also a touring 'pop-up' children's opera, *Batteries Not Included*, by the Dominican composer José Guillermo Puello to words by Zodwa Nyoni, as well as three recitals, a family day and introductory workshops for both flamenco and tango.

The turbulent life of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo would be more credible as a work of fiction than as true biography—tailor-made for opera, in other words. In her teens she was badly injured in a streetcar accident, which left her in pain and partly disabled for life. She also suffered from her marriage to the muralist Diego Rivera, a serial philanderer, whom she divorced and then remarried a year later. Rodríguez's use of Hilary Blecher's 'book' and Migdalia Cruz's 'lyrics' may suggest that Frida is a musical, but in fact he talks of 'dissolving the barriers and extending the common ground between opera and musical theatre', citing the examples of Gershwin, Weill and Sondheim. Blecher takes us through various scenes in Kahlo's life, from the crash, through visits to New York and Paris, and her return to her roots in Mexico where she found emotional release only through her painting. Though the lyrics were mainly in Spanish, much of the dialogue was in English.

While the love-hate relationship between her and Rivera is clearly at the heart of the work, we are also shown that Kahlo was her own worst enemy, always swimming against the tide. To that end, Rodríguez writes most of her music in triple time, while everyone else is in duple metre. His reduced orchestration of six players was used here, with Valerie Barr's accordion especially colourful, against violin, clarinet, trumpet, piano and percussion, but without guitar. The score is a collage of Latin styles tinged with a mildly acidic atonality: Mexican piñatas (traditional songs), ballads and dances allied

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November 2023 - PLASTIC BODIES review

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Off the beaten path

Tête à Tête Opera
Festival, The Cockpit,
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MUSIC ★★★★★
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Time pressure: Sarah Parkin
and Rosie Middleton in
Plastic Bodies

Review by Lauren McQuistin • Photography by Claire Shovelton

AMY BRICE *Plastic Bodies*

When a work is described as 'An Opera About Opera', one might assume it would explore the history, the canon of composers, its origins, and perhaps the performance practices. Unlike *Ghosts of Versailles*, *Capriccio*, and *Aïriana Lecouvreur*, where opera is used as a backdrop, a subject matter or a plot device, *Plastic Bodies* delves into the lived experiences of singers working today. It is a contemporary work that acknowledges opera as a living, evolving

art form, and presents us with some of the realities of the industry that are not regularly spoken about. With that, it asks a very important question, 'How does an industry so obsessed with the voice leave its performers without one?'

Its description as 'Darkly funny, yet brutally familiar' is accurately fulfilled from the first moments, where Rosie Middleton and Sarah Parkin rehearse a scene under the pressures of a metronome's increasing tempo and a garbled voice-over, delivering demands to the performers that range from unhelpful to inappropriate, all the way to homophobic, coercive and cruel. As this intensifies, the two highly trained and earnest singers fall into exhaustion and

bewilderment – all the while following orders and acting under the tight constraints of 'professionalism.' Both Middleton and Parkin had great nuance, with natural depictions of performing their performance selves. Maya-Leigh Rosenwasser tied the all-familiar scene of the unspoken and unquestioned dynamics of rehearsal space together with great ease. It was showing rather than telling, an invitation with enormous amounts of vulnerability and transparency, within the parameters of a skilled performance.

Amy Bryce created 'a purpose-built aria made from selected pre-existing operatic texts, recomposed into an uncanny sound world which is designed to make the audience wonder if they should know



'Exposing the absurdity'—
Sarah Parkin and Moya-Leigh
Rosenwasser in *Plastic Bodies*



'Great nuance'—Rosie
Middleton and Sarah Parkin



Mezzo soprano
Rosie Middleton

what it is'. This lulled the audience into a relatable environment, and hid the damaging words, demands and dynamics in plain sight – only to expose the absurdity of a working environment that has been normalised. It was funny, in the way we laugh at uncomfortable truths and find humour as a coping mechanism, and in showing the camaraderie that can be found between peers in these situations. It never preached or lectured – it simply laid out facts, and allowed the audience to reckon with it.

This intensified in the second half, a concert aria compiled of the vague, blanket-advice statements frequently

heard during a singer's training, such as forgoing motherhood for your career, that you will barely make it as a chorus singer, and never letting anyone know you're tired. Middleton's performance was measured in places, vicious in others, and cut increasingly deeper with every 'You know what your problem is –' and 'You just need to –'. The text was compiled of singers' testimony, crowdsourced from professional and emerging artists – a powerful depiction of what the audience does not hear, in an artform based around listening.

Catherine Valve's visuals added another dimension, with visceral imagery, that captured moments of tenderness between

artists, frustration and the silent protests. It was a layer that added depth and subtext, a necessary addition for a work that is exploring the mask and outward resilience one must wear in order to survive a career in the arts. The bold images of Middleton eating bubble wrap and Parkin putting lipstick over a cling film-covered face were as arresting as they were uncomfortable.

The most unforgettable moment came with the final words: 'HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO KILL YOURSELF OR DO YOU JUST THINK YOU CAN'T SING?' Many left the show validated, some shocked, and everyone had something to think about. **ON**



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