

"HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE?
PRESSED BETWEEN THESE FOUR WALLS..."

MUSIC BY
WILLIAM
GARDNER

TEXT BY
MATTHEW GREEN

24 AUGUST 2024
18 : 00

BRITTEN THEATRE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC
PRINCE CONSORT ROAD
LONDON, SW7 2BS

THE PRISONER

A ONE-ACT OPERA

THE PRISONER

an opera in one act

Music by William Gardner
Libretto by Matthew Green

Directed by Eleanor Burke
Conducted by Alexander Papp

The Prisoner: Michael Temporal Darell
The Lawyer: Emma Warner
The Priest: William Gardner
The Guard: Abbie Ward

Produced by William Gardner Productions
Performed at Tete a Tete The Opera Festival
2024

Winner of the Stephen Oliver Award
Kindly supported by the Fidelio Trust

The Prisoner is dedicated to Paul Gardner

Flute

Francesca Biescas Rué
Daniel Pengelly

Oboe

Ellen Wilkinson
Betsy Selner

Clarinet

Latchen Kinghorn-Perry
Sofia Mekhonoshina

Bassoon

Verity Burcombe
Shelby Capozzoli

Horn

Jackie Weisenborn
William Scotland

Trumpet

Thomas Thornton
Parker Bruce

Trombone

Felix Rockhill
James Owen

Tuba

Jude Law

Harp

Megan Humphries

Piano

Tiffany Qiu

Percussion

Tom Hodgson
Zach Mitchell

Violin I

Harry Kneeshaw
Benedict Wong
Jenny Clare
Francisca Davies-Atwood

Violin II

Cyrus Yuen
Joana Riberioa
Anastasia Stahlmann
William Clark

Viola

Leon Chakrabarti
Charlie Howells
Melody Cheng
Arielle Ollagnon

Violoncello

Oona Lowther
Samuel Vincent
Theo Bently Curtin
Carolina López Del-Nerov

Double Bass

Woognee Ng
Phoebe Cheng

Synopsis

In an isolated cell, The Prisoner awaits his execution, watched by The Guard. The Lawyer arrives and is convinced she can commute his sentence to life imprisonment, if he asks the judge for mercy. He would rather die, he tells her.

The Guard introduces The Priest who has come to save The Prisoner's soul. The Prisoner tells the Priest he doesn't want to be saved as he doesn't believe in God and claims that the next life will be as futile as this one. The Priest grapples with his faith as he feels The Prisoner is beyond redemption.

The Lawyer reappears. The appeal has failed and The Prisoner is to be executed the next day. The Priest argues that The Prisoner's fate would still be just even if he had repented. But The Lawyer disagrees, viewing capital punishment as even worse than The Prisoner's crimes. The Priest cannot reconcile himself to the Christian doctrine that belief must always bring a man as evil as the Prisoner everlasting life. The Priest and the Lawyer admit that they have lost faith in their respective belief systems. Together, they lament.

On the morning of the execution, The Guard observes how she has complete control over the prison and its inmates. The Prisoner wakes and contemplates the futility of his existence. The Prisoner is executed. The Lawyer, Priest and Guard say a prayer together. The Priest feels guilty for wishing the Prisoner dead and damned, questioning the man he has become.

Biographies

WILLIAM GARDNER

William Gardner is an award-winning composer and performer from London. William is a scholar currently completing his MA in Opera-Making at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, under the tutelage of Dr Toby Young, and graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 2023 with a first-class degree in Composition, studying with Phil Cashian.

Based in London, he is known primarily as a composer of opera. His first opera, 'A New England', premiered at the Royal Academy of Music's inaugural Students Create Festival in 2022, and was selected to be part of Tête-à-Tête: The Opera Festival 2022. His second opera, 'The Prisoner', which won the Steven Oliver Award, also premiered at the Students Create Festival 2023, and is being revived at the Britten Theatre, RCM, as part of Tête-à-Tête 2024. His third opera, 'Time and Tide', premiered in 2024 in the Milton Court Studio Theatre.

Other recent works include an Organ Concerto, a setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis, and an adaptation of the fifth chapter of Matthew Green's Times Top 10 bestselling book 'Shadowlands', which received its first public performance in March 2022 at the launch of 'Shadowlands'.

MATTHEW GREEN

Dr Matthew Green is a historian, writer and broadcaster with a doctorate from Oxford University. He is the author of *London: A Travel Guide Through Time* (Penguin) and the *Times* top 10 bestselling *Shadowlands: A Journey through Lost Britain* (Faber). He has appeared in documentaries on the BBC, ITV and Channel 4, is frequently on BBC Radio, and has written historical features for the *Guardian*, *Financial Times* and *Telegraph*. He is the founder of Unreal City Audio, which produces immersive historical tours of London as live events, podcasts and apps, and talks at literary festivals all over Britain. Since it was suggested to him that his lyrical, colloquial style, and love of making and destroying worlds, might work well for libretto, he has collaborated with William to write the texts for opera, his first being *A New England*, about King

Alfred and Bishop Asser, set in the 9th century AD. He lives in Hampstead with books strewn across the floorboards as the landlady does not allow shelves.

ELEANOR BURKE

Eleanor Burke is an award-winning Anglo-Irish director and the Artistic Director of sustainable opera company, Green Opera. She was previously a staff director at Theater Krefeld und Mönchengladbach and is a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge. She was the youngest director ever accepted onto the Jette Parker Artists Programme at the Royal Opera (2022-24) where her projects included directing Martinu's *Larmes de couteau* and the JPAP Summer Performance. She also assisted on Christof Loy's *Elektra* and on George Benjamin/Martin Crimp's *Picture a Day Like This*. Other recent productions include her piece *555: Verlaine en Prison* (La Monnaie, Brussels and ROH Crush Room); *la Voix Humaine* (King's Head Theatre); the Cunning Little Vixen (Hampstead Garden Opera; Offies winner 2023); *Bluebeard's Castle* (Arcola Theatre); *Tide* (Aldeburgh Festival) and *King Harald's Saga* (Waterperry Opera Festival), as well as opera scenes for the Royal Academy of Music and Guildhall School of Music & Drama. In 2023, Burke was chosen by Robert Carsen, winner of the grand prix de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts 2023/2024, as one of three artists to share the prize fund.

Next season Eleanor will work on new productions with Opéra-Comique, Theater an der Wien, Wiener Staatsoper and Festival Aix-en-Provence and direct *Eugene Onegin* (Hampstead Garden Opera) and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Theater im Delphi, Berlin).

ALEXANDER PAPP

Alexander Papp is a 23 year old composer/conductor who holds a scholarship to study composition at the Royal Academy of Music with Phil Cashian and Rubens Askenar. His studies at the Academy are kindly supported by the Ralph Vaughan Williams Foundation and the Countess of Munster Musical Trust.

In the UK, his works have been performed in prestigious venues such as the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, St John's Smith Square and the Purcell Room and he has worked with artists such as Daniel Pioro, Flow Unit 3, the Carice Singers, Ensemble 10/10 and the London Chamber Orchestra. His works have also been performed internationally, mostly recently in Solsona, Catalonia with cellist Gerard Flotats Boix and in Piacenza, Italy at the Conservatorio Nicolini. He has collaborated with the Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester Frankfurt

Oder, where his orchestral music has been used as music for education projects and has just finished recording two new works for them in April 2024. From 2024, he will work closely with the Riot Ensemble as one of their Lucerne Scholars . He has attended festivals such as Dartington Music Summer School and Cheltenham Music Festival Composium as well as having lessons/masterclasses from renowned names such as Hans Abrahamsen, Brett Dean, Hannah Kendall, Daniel Kidane and Nico Muhly.

As a conductor, he has gained experience through lessons and classes with Dominic Grier as well as taking part in the 2022 Aberystwyth Musicfest conductor course with Toby Purser. He has conducted many of his own and peers works in concerts at the Royal Academy of Music including William Gardner's Stephen Oliver award winning opera 'The Prisoner'.

MICHAEL TEMPORAL DARELL

Michael Temporal Darell is a member of the Internationales Opernstudio at the Luzerner Theater and a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music.

In the 2024 season, engagements include Dr Blind/Cover Falke in Die Fledermaus and Jazztrio in Trouble in Tahiti at the Luzerner Theater, a solo recital at the Fidelio Cafe with long term collaborator Francesca Lauri, Adam in Haydn's Creation at St John Smith Square, Ramiro in L'heure espagnole, Donald in Billy Budd for New Palace Opera, Aeneas in Dido and Aeneas, Clonter Opera Spring Showcase, and as a guest artist at the Great North Proms - Newcastle O2. In addition to this, Michael is an Opera Prelude Young Artist for 2024.

Highlights from 2023 include, a return to New Sussex Opera to perform with Sir John Tomlinson, solo recital at Am Hof 8 in Vienna, and a recital with pianist Leslie Howard, Baritone solos in Carmina Burana and Brahms Requiem under the baton of John Lubbock, his role debut as Valentin in Faust for New Sussex Opera, Bach cantatas at the Royal Academy of Music under the baton of Masaako Suzuki, The Prisoner for Gardner's new opera 'The Prisoner' with libretto by author and historian Matthew Green and directed by Eleanor Burke, Troll in Waley-Cohen's 'Witch' for Royal Academy Opera directed by Polly Graham and conducted by Ryan Wigglesworth,

Other notable performances include, Cox (Cox and Box) at the Reform Club for Opera at Home, Earl Mountararat (Iolanthe) for Green Opera directed by Eleanor Burke, King Alfred in Gardner's 'A New England' at the Royal Academy

of Music and Tête à Tête Opera Festival, Dr. Malatesta (Don Pasquale), Count Almaviva (Le Nozze di Figaro), and Figaro (Il Barbiere di Siviglia) for Opera Scenes at the Royal Academy of Music. Michael was also a Southrepps Festival Young Artist in 2022.

Prior to studying at the Royal Academy of Music, Michael Temporal Darell was a joint principal study singer and composer at the Purcell School for Young Musicians and at the Royal Academy of Music's Junior Academy. During this time, he was taught voice by John Lattimore. Following this he attended a short-term music programme at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he was under the tutelage of Marcus van den Akker.

EMMA WARNER

Emma is a scholar in her fourth year of the BMus in Performance course at The Royal Academy of Music, where she studies with Nuccia Focile and James Cheung. Emma's opera career began at the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse, where she performed the role of 'Cis' in the Royal Opera House's touring production of Benjamin Britten's *Albert Herring*. She continued exploring this repertoire and sang the role of 'Flora' in opera houses such as Deutsche Oper am Rhein and Opernhaus Zurich. During lockdown in 2021, Emma worked with Green Opera Company, where she played the role of 'Alice' in *Hello Alice* by Dan Gilchrist, as part of their series of 'Isolated Incidents'. During her time at the Academy, Emma made her solo recital debut with her duo partner and composer, William Gardner, presenting a programme of 20th century cabaret songs in the Susie Sainsbury Theatre. In Royal Academy's Autumn Opera Scenes, she played the roles of 'Tisbe' in 'La Cenerentola' and 'Moth' in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Emma has been able to bridge the world of classical music with that of electronic by working with the London-based record producer and DJ, felicita, and will feature on their album, released in February 2023.

ABBIE WARD

Abbie Ward is an Essex born mezzo soprano, who graduated from The Royal Academy of Music in 2023 (supported by the Josephine Baker Trust, Tom Acton Memorial Fund, Pimlott Foundation, and Essex Community Foundation). She is currently studying for a post-graduate degree from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (she is a Sidney Perry award holder).

Highlights include the title role in Bizet's Carmen (St Paul's Opera), Dido and Aeneas (Hampstead Garden Opera), Mercedes in Carmen (Royal Academy of Music, scenes), and Sir John in Love (British Youth Opera at Opera Holland Park). This summer Abbie is a Young Artist for Wild Arts' 2024 touring production of Mozart's The Magic Flute, playing the role of Third Lady.

In January, Abbie performed in the semi-chorus of Mendelssohn's Elijah at the Barbican with Sir Antonio Pappano. Abbie performed in the Royal Academy of Music's 'Bach in Leipzig' series under the baton of Jane Glover, Eamonn Dougan and Iain Ledingham.

Abbie has thoroughly enjoyed her role as The Guard in this exciting new opera, and is glad to be sharing the stage with such wonderful artists and friends.