

Tête À Tête

THE OPERA FESTIVAL

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Summary



29

Pieces of Coverage

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



966K

Estimated Views

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



102M

Audience

Combined total of publication-wide audience figures for all outlets featuring coverage



3.64K

Engagements

Combined total of likes, comments and shares on social media platforms



51

Avg. Domain Authority

A 0-100 measure of the authority of the site coverage appears on. Provided by Moz

Coverage

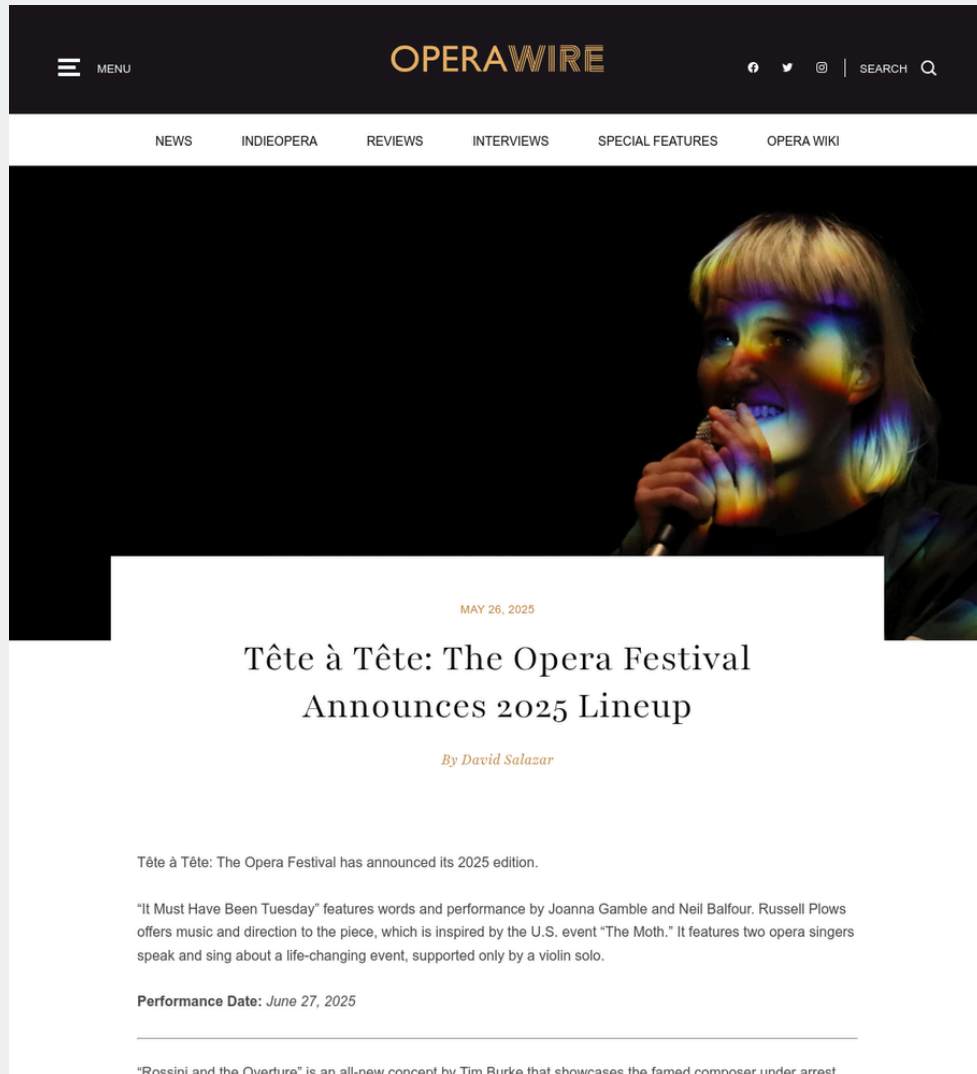
29 pieces



Opera Wire
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56
Domain
Authority [?]
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MOZ

73.1K
Unique
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May 26, 2025 · ONLINE

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival Announces 2025...

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

Estimated Views

1.11K [✓]

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Planet Hugill

Classical music news; opera, concert & CD reviews, concert previews, live performance & feature...

41 Domain Authority Provided by MOZ

4.63K Unique Visits Provided by SimilarWeb

May 29, 2025 · ONLINE

Hull Urban Opera gets up close & personal, Emma...

planethugill.com/2025/05/hull-urban-ope...

Estimated Views

663

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...

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Planet Hugill

The online classical music magazine from composer Robert Hugill

Classical music news, reviews, interviews & features

Thursday, 29 May 2025

Hull Urban Opera gets up close & personal, Emma Wheeler & Anna Appleby bring together two musical worlds: Tête à Tête takes the opera festival to Newcastle

Labels: [North East](#), [preview](#)

This year Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival not only returns for its 18th edition, but is expanding and there with performances in Newcastle and London. Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival is at Alphabetti Theatre in Newcastle on 27 and 28 June, and then moves to the Cockpit in London from 22 September to 5 October.

The Newcastle performances build on Tête à Tête's collaborations with North East artists and the Royal Northern Sinfonia developed over several years. Tête à Tête is partnering with North Tyneside Music Education Hub to deliver *QUEST 2025*—a fantasy-inspired opera project running over Summer & Autumn 2025 co-created with young people in North Shields, rooted in community storytelling and bold new music-making, culminating in performances on Sunday 19 October at The Exchange 1856 2025. *QUEST* brings together school pupils, community chorus members, professional singers, and Royal Northern Sinfonia.

At Alphabetti Theatre in Newcastle, Hull Urban Opera will be bringing their show *It must have been Tuesday*. Created by the company's artistic director, Russell Plows as a preparation for performers in an up-close, immersive style of performance, the aim of the show is to remove all potential barriers to communication (no set, costume, character or libretto - the words are the singers' own) resulting in a warm, direct delivery of often sensitive ideas conveyed through both speech and singing. The stories were first presented in Hull in 2021, and in Newcastle the true stories at this performance are written and performed by Neil Balfour and Joanna Gamble accompanied by Ellie Gaynard Evans on violin with music by Russell Plows.

Ghost is built on Emma Wheeler and Anna Appleby's life experience as queer, neurodivergent women – stories that have not historically been told in opera, tinged with comedy, trauma, and love. This opera is the coming-together of two musical worlds, from Appleby's Glyndebourne and BBC Philharmonic opera composition history and Emma Wheeler's rich mezzo vocals, to Norrisette and Rosé Gold's grungy underground electronica and DIY drag fashion extravaganza. Prepare for a ghost story like no other!

Other works include the intriguing *Rossini and the Overture*, based around the premise of a man impersonating Rossini and failing to finish the opera! This is a work-in-progress sharing as the team test out their new approach to opera. And there are also four festival shorts, operatic extracts and experiments, from Newcastle and the surrounding area.

Full details from the festival [website](#).

Posted by Planet Hugill at Thursday, May 29, 2025

No comments:

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A terr colla Colin William opera

About

Plan Robe (photo)

See R about l to get l

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- Pet
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- Ste
- Ber
- Ale



Get into Newcastle

From offers to events, new openings to major changes, we've got everything you need to plan...

46

Domain Authority ?

Provided by MOZ

29.2K

Unique Visits ?

Provided by SimilarWeb

Jun 03, 2025 · ONLINE

Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival | Get into Newcastle

getintonewcastle.co.uk/whats-on/alphabe...

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Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival: Alphabetti Theatre

Arts and Culture Entertainment




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Join Alphabetti Theatre this June as Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival expands beyond London for the very first time!

There'll be two nights of performances, highlighting collaborations that have been developed between brilliant local artists, the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Tête à Tête.

From moving true stories, to experimental new opera, there'll be something for everyone!

Estimated Views

1.76K ✓

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



NewcastleGateshead

NewcastleGateshead's official tourist information site with information about what to see and do,...

59
Domain Authority
Provided by **MOZ**

50.3K
Unique Visits
Provided by **SimilarWeb**

Jun 05, 2025 · ONLINE

NewcastleGateshead

newcastlegateshead.com/events/t%C3%...

The screenshot shows the website's event page for 'Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2025'. The page includes a navigation bar with options like 'VISIT US', 'MOVE HERE', and 'Accessibility Mode'. Below the navigation, there's a breadcrumb trail: Home > Events > Tête à Tête The Opera Festival 2025. The main heading is 'Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival 2025'. A 'VISIT WEBSITE' button is present. The event dates are 'Fri 27 Jun 2025 12:00 am - Sat 28 Jun 2025 12:00 am'. The address is 'Alphabetti Theatre'. There is an 'ADD TO TRIP' button. A large image shows the festival logo with the text 'Tête à Tête THE OPERA FESTIVAL 2025'. Below the image, there is a paragraph of text: 'Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival returns in 2025 for its 18th edition, celebrating a major milestone as it expands beyond London for the first time. The festival opens in Newcastle highlighting collaborations with North East artists, the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Tête à Tête developed over several years, marking a bold step in the festival's ongoing commitment to regional creative partnerships.' At the bottom, there is an 'Event Dates' section with a 'Filter by Month' dropdown menu set to 'Please select'. Below this is a table with columns: Date, Available Ticket Types, Ticket Price, and Book Tickets.

Estimated Views

405

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Cultured. North East | Sam Wonfor | Substack

Championing, celebrating and surveying the rich landscape of arts and culture which makes the...

22
Domain Authority
Provided by **MOZ**

4.59K
Unique Visits
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Jun 24, 2025 · ONLINE

Curated Culture 24.06.25

culturednortheast.co.uk/p/curated-culture...

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Curated Culture 24.06.25

Our weekly recommendations round up from North East stages and cultural venues

SAM WONFOR
JUN 24, 2025

4 [Share](#)

Hello and a happy Tuesday to you!

Whether you're easing into the week or already sprinting through it, consider this your cultural pit stop - a well-stocked guide to some of the North East's finest happenings.

We're here, as ever, with our artisanal buffet of gigs, theatre, exhibitions, festivals and other excellent distractions to get you out and about (or to add to your "must do that soon" list). From last-minute nights out to long-range plans, there's plenty to dig into.

Estimated Views

2.21K

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95
Domain Authority [?]
Provided by **MOZ**

68M
Unique Visits [?]
Provided by **SimilarWeb**

Jun 25, 2025 · ONLINE

Anna Appleby Interview

dropbox.com/scl/fo/nx3b9r5bv49tpi23mi...

Estimated Views

425K [✓]

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Home - Radio Tyneside

Hospital and Community Radio for Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead, broadcasting from the UK on...

27
Domain Authority
Provided by

347
Unique Visits
Provided by

Jun 27, 2025 · ONLINE

Radio Tyneside Announcement

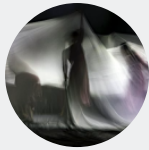
radiotyneside.co.uk/listenagain

The screenshot shows the Radio Tyneside website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the logo and several icons: Play, Listen Again, Points, Schedule, Newsdesk, and People. Below this is a donation prompt: "You can now donate to Radio Tyneside using PayPal" with a "Donate with PayPal" button. The main content area features a live broadcast for "THE AFTERNOON SHOW" hosted by Stuart Sydenham, with a "Listen Again" button. Below the broadcast, there's a section for "LISTEN AGAIN" with the text "Catch up with some of your favourite programmes from Radio Tyneside". It lists five most recent uploads: "Connected Voice Advocacy" (16 hours ago), "Curtain Up #225 - 22/06/2025" (3 days ago), "Others" (Some of our special and one-off programmes), "Curtain Up" (Music from stage and screen with James Bell), "On The Way Up", and "Let's Talk".

Estimated Views

150

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Northern Arts Review

The North's theatre review website. Please show some love and come over to see. Sign up if you're...

19
Domain Authority
Provided by **MOZ**

6.76K
Unique Visits
Provided by **SimilarWeb**

Jun 29, 2025 · ONLINE

Review: Ghost at Alphabetti Theatre - Northern Arts Review

northernartsreview.co.uk/north-east/revie...

NORTHERN ARTS REVIEW
ALL THINGS THEATRE IN THE NORTH

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HOME » ALPHABETTI THEATRE NORTH EAST REVIEWS

Review: Ghost at Alphabetti Theatre

POSTED ON JUNE 29, 2025

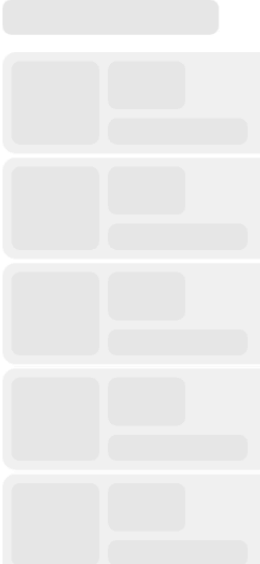
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"...a rough charm...that the audience truly appreciated..."
★★★★☆

UPCOMING EVENTS



Estimated Views

3.72K

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



The Violin Channel

World's leading classical music news source.

57
Domain Authority [?]
Provided by **MOZ**

93.5K
Unique Visits [?]

Aug 01, 2025 · ONLINE

"Melania: The Opera" Set to Premiere in London in Septemb...

theviolinchannel.com/melania-the-opera-...

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1 DAYS 6 HRS 3 MIN

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(Courtesy: Melania: The Opera)

CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS

"Melania: The Opera" Set to Premiere in London in September 2025

by The Violin Channel / August 1, 2025 / 2 MIN READ

Estimated Views

1.62K [?]

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Classical Music Magazine

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39

Domain Authority [?]

Provided by MOZ

5.18K

Unique Visits [?]

Provided by SimilarWeb

Aug 01, 2025 · ONLINE

Melania Trump gets operatic treatment

classical-music.uk/news/article/melania-tr...



News / Melania Trump gets operatic treatment

MELANIA TRUMP GETS OPERATIC TREATMENT

Claire Jackson
THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2025

The White House meets opera house in a new political satire



'In some ways Melania is more interesting than Trump'

She's one of the most high-profile women in the world, yet Melania Trump remains something of an enigma. Now, a new opera starring Melinda Hughes shines a light on the first lady – and provides a few laughs along the way.

Written by Hughes, who has a background in cabaret, and pianist Jeremy Limb – with additional lyrics by comedian Rich Hall – *Melania The Opera* is set in 2027 during Trump's second term. The plot sees Melania arrive at a school to deliver a speech for her anti-bullying campaign; meanwhile, news breaks that Putin's forces are invading Slovenia, Melania's homeland. The White House

Estimated Views

830 [✓]

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Opera Wire
Opera is thriving.

56
Domain
Authority [?]
Provided by
MOZ

92.6K
Unique
Visits [?]
Provided by
SimilarWeb

Aug 07, 2025 · ONLINE

Tête à Tête Announces 2025 London Opera...

operawire.com/tete-a-tete-announces-20...



Estimated Views

1.15K [?]

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Pizzicato

Remy Franck's Journal - Classics In Luxembourg

41 Domain Authority

Provided by MOZ

4.02K Unique Visits

Provided by SimilarWeb

Aug 13, 2025 · ONLINE

Comic opera about Melania Trump to be premiered in Londo...

pizzicato.lu/comic-opera-about-melania-tr...

The screenshot shows the Pizzicato website interface. At the top is the logo 'pizzicato' in red and black, with the tagline 'Remy Franck's Journal about Classical Music'. Below the logo is a navigation menu with items: HOME, AUDIO REVIEWS, VIDEO REVIEWS, FEATURES & INTERVIEWS, PROMOTION, KID'S CORNER, IGMA, AGENDA, and SUPPORT US. The main content area features an article titled 'Comic opera about Melania Trump to be premiered in London' dated 13/08/2025. The article text describes the opera 'Melania: The Opera' premiering on September 25 at the Cockpit Theatre in London. It mentions the play is signed by singer Melinda Hughes, with Melinda Hughes also taking the lead role, and composer Jeremy Limb. The text is written by comedian Rich Hall and stage direction is by Daniel Slater. The article is set in the year 2027, depicting a dystopian scenario where Russian forces have occupied Ukraine, Hungary, and Romania, and are moving westward. In this context, Melania is visiting a school when the imminent invasion of Slovenia, her native country, is announced. From that moment on, the protagonist faces an internal conflict between loyalty to her husband and her role as a public figure in the face of a threat to her home country. Below the article text are social sharing icons for Twitter, Facebook, and others. The page is flanked by advertising banners for 'Deutsche Radio Philharmonie', 'Turina: The Complete Piano Trios', 'Ars Produktion', 'hänssler CLASSIC', 'New Album LIAD', 'DVOŘÁK', and 'Mandelring Quartet'.

Estimated Views

641

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



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74
Domain Authority
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157K
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Aug 15, 2025 · ONLINE

fnlondon.com

fnlondon.com/articles/why-deutsche-ban...

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Why Deutsche Bank's former FX chief is reinventing himself as an opera composer

Kevin Rodgers spent 25 years on the trading floor, but is now turning to music

By Paul Clarke

Friday 15 August 2025 at 00:01

Share

Resize



Estimated Views

1.01K

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25 Domain Authority Provided by MOZ

2.16K Unique Visits Provided by SimilarWeb

Aug 18, 2025 · ONLINE

Melania political satirist and opera singer Melinda...

thecuspmagazine.com/previews/melania-...

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Melania| political satirist and opera singer Melinda Hughes describes her new opera

18 August, 2025

Ahead of the premiere of *Melania*, a new opera about The First Lady, which premieres at the Cockpit Theatre as part of the Tete a Tete festival, the opera singer Melinda Hughes describes her approach to writing political satire. Read her blow below.

Estimated Views



922

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



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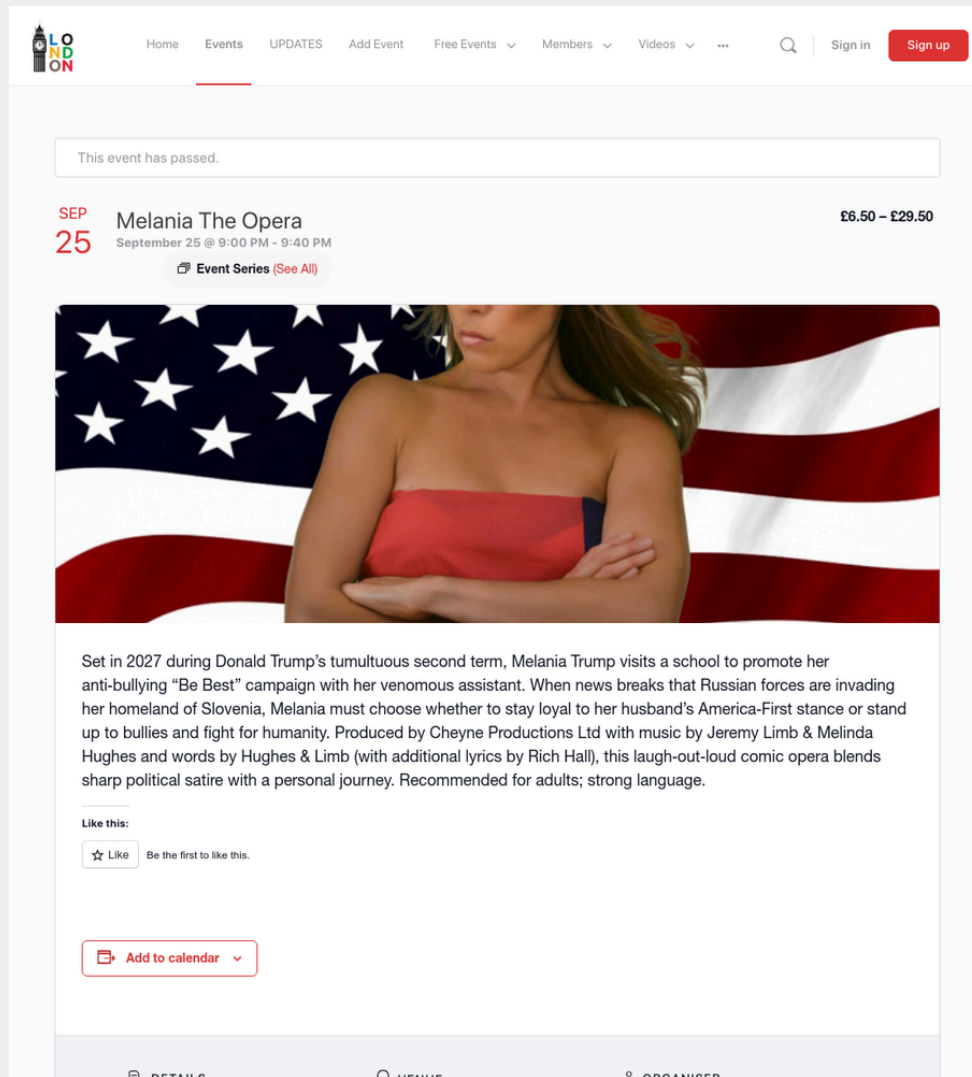
25
Domain Authority 
Provided by 

7.85K
Unique Visits 
Provided by 

Aug 25, 2025 ·  ONLINE

London Events | Melania The Opera | Events in London

eventsforlondon.co.uk/event/melania-the...



The screenshot shows the event page for 'Melania The Opera' on the 'Events for London' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Events, UPDATES, Add Event, Free Events, Members, Videos, and a search bar. A red 'Sign up' button is also present. Below the navigation, a message states 'This event has passed.' The event details include the date 'SEP 25', the title 'Melania The Opera', and the time 'September 25 @ 9:00 PM - 9:40 PM'. The price range is listed as '£6.50 - £29.50'. There is a link for 'Event Series (See All)'. The main image features a woman in a red strapless dress standing in front of an American flag. Below the image, there is a detailed description of the opera, set in 2027 during Donald Trump's second term, focusing on Melania Trump's anti-bullying campaign and her political journey. At the bottom of the page, there are tabs for 'DETAILS', 'VENUE', and 'ORGANISER', and a red 'Add to calendar' button.

Estimated Views


2.9K 

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Kingsbridge & Salcombe Gazette

Latest news, sport and what's on in Kingsbridge & Salcombe and your local area.

38
Domain Authority 
Provided by **MOZ**

3.6K
Unique Visits 
Provided by **SimilarWeb**

Aug 27, 2025 ·  ONLINE

Experience Lucinda Guy's 'The Fairy Temple' in London

kingsbridge-today.co.uk/news/lucinda-gu...

NEWS

Lucinda Guy's 'The Fairy Temple' showcased at London opera festival

By Contributed
27th Aug 2025

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755 

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Musician

13
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Authority [?]
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MOZ

26
Unique
Visits [?]
Provided by
SimilarWeb

Sep 01, 2025 ·  ONLINE

Hidden Lovers | tete-a-tete

theorbotoday.com/opera



Hidden Lovers

What did she sacrifice for love?

A new chamber opera by Janet Oates, to a libretto by Simon Pettifar based on a memoir of Guy de Maupassant. Opening the Tête-à-tête opera festival 2025, this show is a dark contemplation of tensions between privileged idealism and realism.

22nd September 2025
The Cockpit Theatre, Marylebone, NW8 8EH

[Buy your tickets HERE!](#)

about the opera

Hidden Lovers is a fully fledged chamber opera written for this year's Tête-à-tête opera festival, with professional cast and community chorus, accompanied by string trio and auxiliary instruments.

Poet Simon Pettifar has drawn upon a mysterious extract from the memoirs of Guy de Maupassant to create a dark journey from naivety to disillusioned experience.

A Traveller is drawn to rediscover the rural idyll of simple content and loving self-sacrifice of the people he encountered years before in his innocent wanderings through the French countryside. His hopes are crushed when he is forced to confront a reality in stark contrast with his privileged complacency and is exposed to the

Estimated Views

16 [✓]

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Islington News, Sport & Things to do | Islington Gazette

Latest news, sport, and things to do for Islington, Archway, Finsbury Park, Holloway and the...

63
Domain Authority [?]
Provided by **MOZ**

52.5K
Unique Visits [?]
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Sep 01, 2025 · ONLINE

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islingongazette.co.uk/local-events/?_evD...

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Norrisette: GHOST at Tête à Tête Opera Festival

Sep 28

opéra Norrisette

GHOST
by Anna Aspöck & Emma Wheeler

Saturday 28th September, 8.30pm
The Cockpit Theatre, London

Sep 28 at 8:30PM - 12:30AM

The Cockpit
The Cockpit
London

Twitter Facebook LinkedIn Email Print

Estimated Views

612 [✓]

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...



Alternative Classical Newsletter

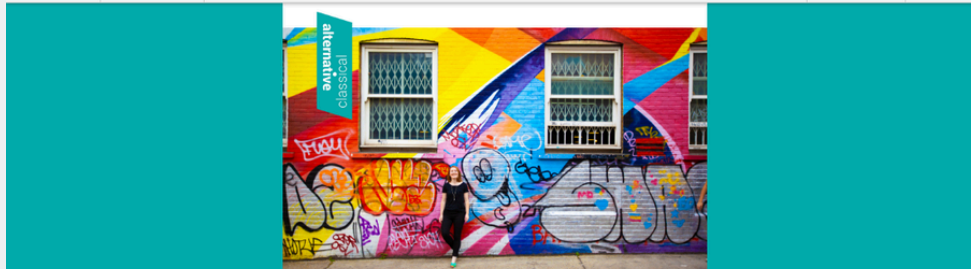
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Past Issues

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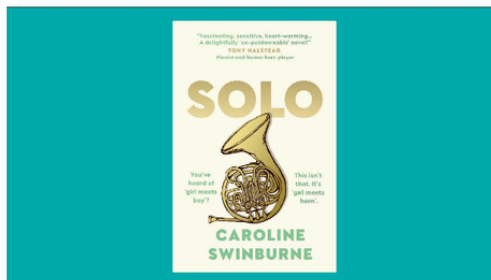
RSS



Hi hi 🙌 A big thank you to everyone who's bought us a [coffee](#) this month to support our work ☺️

Today we delve into a topic that remains taboo within the classical music world: performance anxiety, and what happens when your performance goes wrong. We've also got some concerts that you'll want to go to, and a range of jobs within the industry.

Classical music's taboos



[Memory slips to meltdowns: Caroline Swinburne on classical music's taboos](#)

What happens when a famous solo goes disastrously wrong in front of a huge audience? This is the premise of *Solo*, a new novel by author and musician Caroline Swinburne, which delves into the murky world of performance anxiety and the mental health struggles of classical musicians.



Alternative Classical

Alternative Classical creates and promotes new approaches to classical music. Find an informal...

26 Domain Authority Provided by MOZ

2.52K Unique Visits

Sep 10, 2025 · ONLINE

Plastic Bodies ~ Marylebone, London — Alternative...

alternativeclassical.co.uk/concerts-calend...

The screenshot shows the event page for 'Plastic Bodies ~ Marylebone, London'. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'opportunities', 'funding', 'events', 'shop', 'magazine', and 'about'. The event title is 'Plastic Bodies ~ Marylebone, London', scheduled for Thursday 25 September 2025 from 7:00 pm to 8:10 pm at The Cockpit, Gateforth Street, London, England, NW8, United Kingdom. A featured image shows performers with a text overlay: 'Darkly funny experimental music theatre for the #metoo era'. Below the image is a 'BOOK TICKETS' button. The 'Featured' section lists three other events: 'Wings (1927) + Live Organ Score ~ Bath' on Oct 18, 'Shifting Patterns ~ Inverness' on Oct 25, and 'Shifting Patterns ~ Glasgow' on Oct 26.

Estimated Views



2.5K

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...

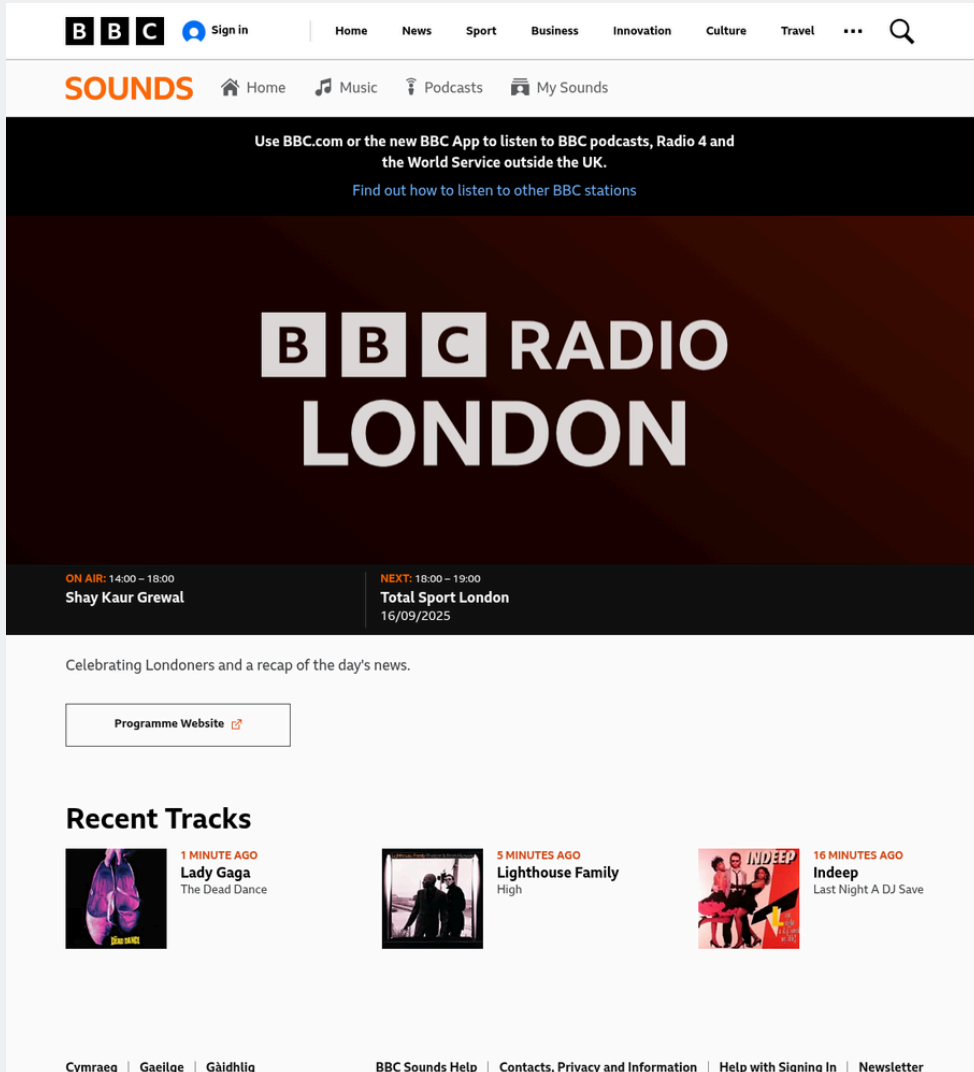


BBC Radio

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95
Domain Authority 
Provided by 

68M
Unique Visits 
Provided by 



The screenshot shows the BBC Sounds website interface for Radio London. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a 'Sign in' button, and links for Home, News, Sport, Business, Innovation, Culture, and Travel. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'SOUNDS' and icons for Home, Music, Podcasts, and My Sounds. A central banner features the text: 'Use BBC.com or the new BBC App to listen to BBC podcasts, Radio 4 and the World Service outside the UK. Find out how to listen to other BBC stations'. The main content area has a dark background with 'BBC RADIO LONDON' in large white letters. Below this, there are two program slots: 'ON AIR: 14:00 - 18:00 Shay Kaur Grewal' and 'NEXT: 18:00 - 19:00 Total Sport London 16/09/2025'. A section titled 'Celebrating Londoners and a recap of the day's news.' includes a 'Programme Website' button. The 'Recent Tracks' section lists three tracks: 'Lady Gaga - The Dead Dance' (1 minute ago), 'Lighthouse Family - High' (5 minutes ago), and 'Indeep - Last Night A DJ Save' (16 minutes ago). The footer contains links for Cymraeg, Gaeilge, Gàidhlig, BBC Sounds Help, Contacts, Privacy and Information, Help with Signing In, and Newsletter.

Sep 14, 2025 ·  ONLINE

Helen Epega Interview

drive.google.com/file/d/1ZYe5Nut7rc0FLI-...

Estimated Views

460K 

Calculated based on audience size and social engagement. Provided...

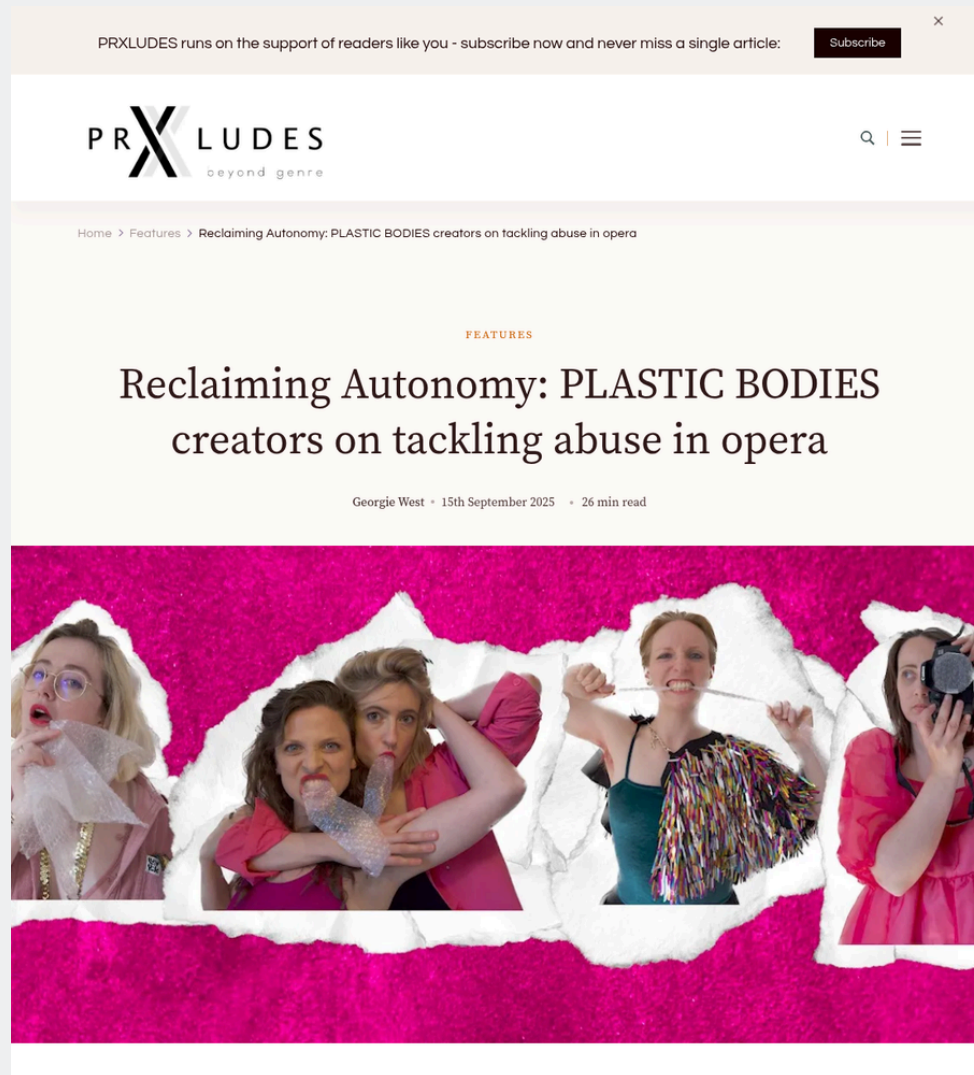


PRXLUDES | beyond genre

Music magazine featuring interviews with emerging composers, features on contemporary classical...

19
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S&H

Melania The Opera at the Cockpit Theatre on 25 September and 2 October

17/09/2025 by AUTHOR

Due to popular demand, *Melania The Opera* additional performance added at the Cockpit Theatre for the 2025 Tête à Tête Opera Festival

Thursday 25th September & Thursday 2nd October 9pm

Melinda Hughes takes on her biggest role to date as the First Lady

Cast and Creatives:
Melania – Melinda Hughes
Melinda BA Phil Clive

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Melania Trump takes on Putin in London opera

Soprano Melinda Hughes writes, composes and stars in 'Melania: The Opera', a playful chamber piece about the first lady's dilemmas during a fictional Russian invasion of her homeland, Slovenia



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Sep 26, 2025 · ONLINE

Melania the Opera review — a swearsy, funny first lady face...

thetimes.com/culture/theatre-dance/article...

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of The Times website with categories like Home, UK, World, Comment, Life & Style, Business & Money, Sport, Culture, Login, and a Subscribe button. A blue notification box states: "NEW Our search has been improved with better results and easier filtering to find the articles you want". The main article header reads "FIRST NIGHT **Melania the Opera review — a swearsy, funny first lady faces the music**". The sub-headline says: "The year is 2027 and Russia invades Slovenia: what would Melania do? The composer Jeremy Limb and singer Melinda Hughes dive into Trumpland in a smart, Maga-bashing piece". The author is "Richard Morrison, Chief Culture Writer" and the date is "Friday September 26 2025, 3.00pm BST, The Times". The featured image shows Melinda Hughes as Melania Trump in a red dress against an American flag background. A caption below reads "Melinda Hughes stars as Melania Trump". At the bottom left, there is a "Today's Quizle" section with a question: "Q: Which fictional land was said by its creator to have been named after a".

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Melania: The Opera review: 'First Lady satire that is somehow moving'

This opera about Melania Trump manages to straddle both comedy and tragedy

MELANIA: THE OPERA
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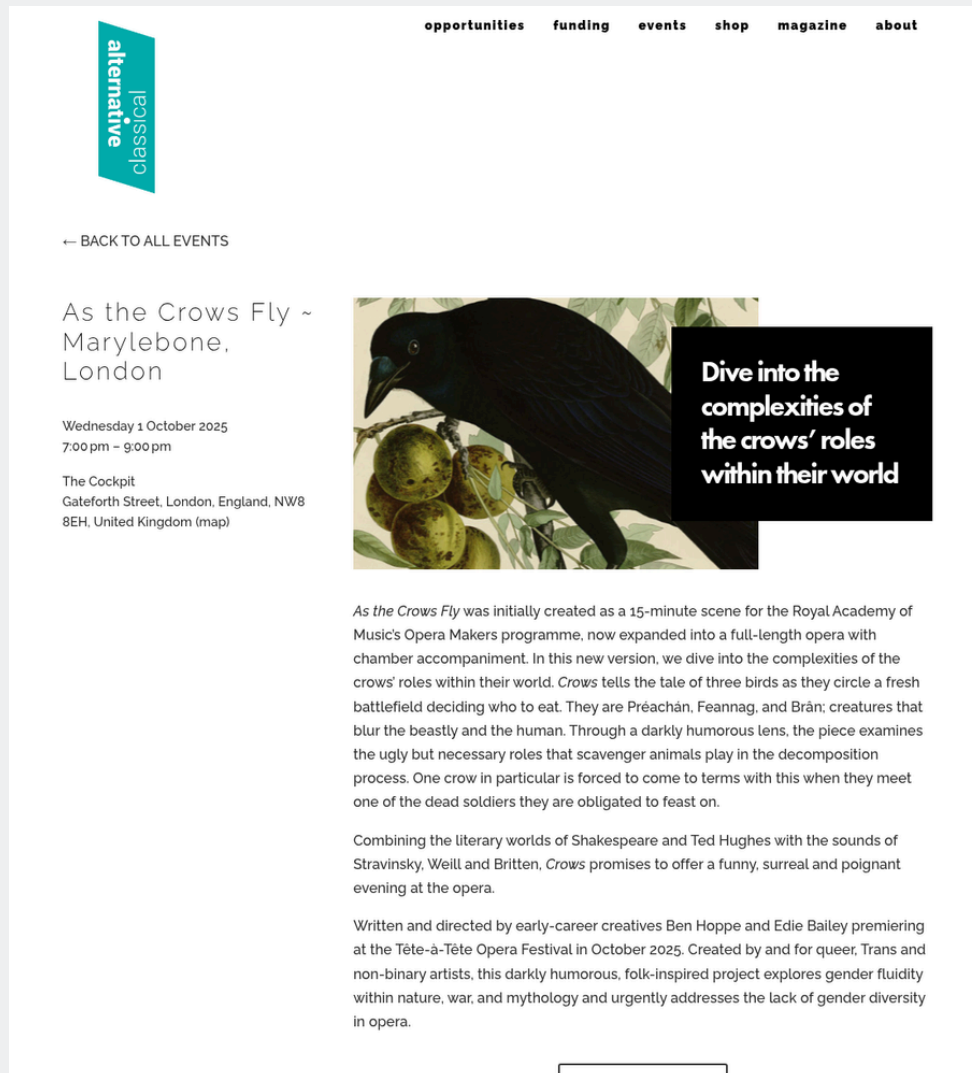
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Oct 01, 2025 ·  ONLINE

As the Crows Fly ~ Marylebone, London — Alternative...

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As the Crows Fly ~
Marylebone,
London

Wednesday 1 October 2025
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

The Cockpit
Gateforth Street, London, England, NW8
8EH, United Kingdom (map)



Dive into the complexities of the crows' roles within their world

As the Crows Fly was initially created as a 15-minute scene for the Royal Academy of Music's Opera Makers programme, now expanded into a full-length opera with chamber accompaniment. In this new version, we dive into the complexities of the crows' roles within their world. *Crows* tells the tale of three birds as they circle a fresh battlefield deciding who to eat. They are Préachán, Feannag, and Brán: creatures that blur the beastly and the human. Through a darkly humorous lens, the piece examines the ugly but necessary roles that scavenger animals play in the decomposition process. One crow in particular is forced to come to terms with this when they meet one of the dead soldiers they are obligated to feast on.

Combining the literary worlds of Shakespeare and Ted Hughes with the sounds of Stravinsky, Weill and Britten, *Crows* promises to offer a funny, surreal and poignant evening at the opera.

Written and directed by early-career creatives Ben Hoppe and Edie Bailey premiering at the Tête-à-Tête Opera Festival in October 2025. Created by and for queer, Trans and non-binary artists, this darkly humorous, folk-inspired project explores gender fluidity within nature, war, and mythology and urgently addresses the lack of gender diversity in opera.

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Friday, 10th October 2025

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REVIEW / CLASSICAL



Michael White's classical news: Melania the Opera; Elixir of Love; Anastasia Kobekina; Sean Shibe

Friday, 26th September — By Michael White

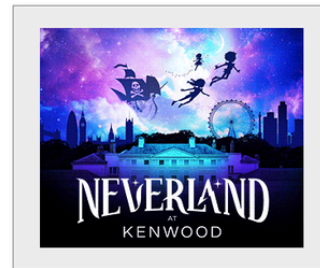


Melania Trump in Melania the Opera

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Dec 15, 2025 ·  ONLINE

Opera Magazine Review

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Petra Wells and Lesley Garrett in 'Follies' at NI Opera

Wiltshire's mood-laden sepia- and shadow-accented lighting.

Menzies's slickly executed staging corralled his amalgam of established performers and local talent into a tightly-knit ensemble to provide ample room for standout contributions. Among those was a star turn as Heidi Schiller by Lesley Garrett, at 70 still vocally secure with only a hint of fraying around the edges, and clearly relishing the poignancy of a last

moment in the spotlight alongside her soaringly sung younger version by Petra Wells, an alumna of NI Opera's Chorus Development Programme.

The other pairings of young and old were equally well matched and as vividly dispatched, with opportunities aplenty afforded by Menzies for centre-stage set pieces. Anna-Jane Casey's heartfelt, heartbreaking 'Losing My Mind' was lit up by an aching saxophone solo, Jacqueline Dankworth's Carlotta boasted a salted-caramel creaminess in a fulsomely defiant 'I'm Still Here', Allison Harding's Hattie channelled the *Cabaret*-era Liza Minnelli, and Annette McLaughlin seized her moment to shine in the sequined pizzazz of 'The Story of Lucy and Jessie'.

Greg Arrowsmith conducted the orchestra with a finesse and flair perfectly *simpatico* with Menzies's emotionally nuanced and adroitly crafted production. With *Follies* another vivacious feather in their hat, might Menzies and NI Opera be persuaded to add Sondheim's *Assassins* to their 'to do' list? MICHAEL QUINN

Plastic Bodies, As the Crows Fly, Melania, the Opera and The Murderous Delusions of Gavrilo K

Tête-à-Tête Opera Festival at the Cockpit Theatre, London, September 25, October 1, 2 and 4

The redoubtable Bill Bankes-Jones and the Tête-à-Tête Opera Festival were back ploughing their playful, DIY furrow with their usual fervour, with well over a dozen new works gracing the Cockpit's black-box stage in September and October. Their range was as colourful as ever.

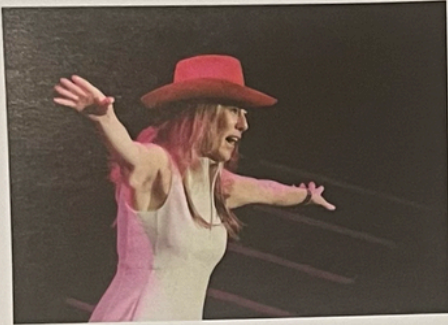
Plastic Bodies is a five-way multimedia collaboration between the composer Amy Bryce, mezzo-soprano Rosie Middleton, soprano Sarah Parkin, film-maker Catherine Valvě and composer and pianist Maya-Leigh Rosenwasser. Previous iterations of the piece have been developed at Tête-à-Tête and Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. *Plastic Bodies* takes the opera business as its subject. It's a funny and surreal

treatment, as well as tough and clear-sighted—a video sequence of Middleton eating bubble wrap is both skin-crawling and darkly funny. There are two solo sequences of remarkable vocal and dramatic agility from Parkin and Middleton—anti-mad scenes that rehearse the cruelties of singing lessons and abuse of inexperienced singers new to the business. The makers defy convention, though, by ending with a joyful dance sequence, celebrating their resilience rather than breaking down.

The piece toys with its audience. A joyful, sardonic singalong, to the words ‘any resemblance to individuals is purely accidental’, is suddenly cut dead. A rehearsal scene sees Parkin and Middleton, following a rumbling, incomprehensible director, play faster and faster through a kind of collage of excerpts—I heard *Giulio Cesare*, *Così* and *Carmen*—accompanied by Amy Bryce’s ingenious musical bricolage, as if in some corrosive anxiety dream. As it finally broke down, the music slowed into a Monteverdian lament of strange beauty. Though enormously critical of the opera world, it is composed and conceived with a great sense of opera’s power to express tempered with a fury about how it is made.

Things took a rather more Gothic turn with *As the Crows Fly*, with music by Ben Hoppe and words and direction by Edie Bailey. Previously incubated by the Royal Academy of Music’s Opera Makers scheme, it sees a young crow (Jasper Kindleysides) set to join the family business of gobbling up battlefield carrion. The parents, a timorous Ash Howard and the magisterial bass-baritone Iris Oliver, are cast as Victorian undertakers. This solemn if ghoulish work is an essential part of a cycle of death, transfiguration and mourning, through a keen-eyed reckoning with the seemingly inevitable facts of mortality and violence. Despite this, there are spots of arch, corvid-black humour, alongside a stark text inspired by Shakespeare and Ted Hughes. Hestor Dart sings the young soldier killed on the battlefield, who is held in a kind of agonized purgatory because he is not eaten; they sing an exquisite account of their final moments. The work’s second half turns in this more lyrical, probing direction, offsetting the cabaret-like music of the small band in the first part with clarinet, trumpet, single strings, piano, and the folksy thrum of an accordion. There are hints of Weill, Stravinsky and Gershwin, but I was reminded in particular of Hans Zender’s rescoring of *Winterreise*. Created for a cast of trans singers and celebrating gender non-conforming and queer identities, it’s rich with symbolism and perfumed with lament, as well as having a darkly celebratory aspect. The voices it showcases bring unique colours to the operatic stage, and we should hear them more often.

In starker, expressionist mood was Kevin Rodgers’s *The Murderous Delusions of Gavriolo K*. A spooky, contemporary riff on the infamous assassin, it was held together by a magnetic performance of wiry intensity from Quito Clothier, who locked horns with Elizabeth Marshall as the psychiatrist Doctor Sunderland, whose rationalist worldview and personal life started to disintegrate as she was asked to judge whether Gavriolo was sane enough to swing from the gallows. His wild visions of death and apocalypse were brought into view using live video that was spliced and transformed, adding to the dreamlike atmosphere, and was ingeniously used to complement the sparse staging.



Melinda Hughes in 'Melania: The Opera'

Its central proposition—would you kill one man to save a billion?—seemed less urgent than the critique of institutional groupthink and public paranoia that the scenes with the Prosecutor (a wild Anna Loveday) and Judge/Institute Director (a fractious Oleksii Zasiadko) called up. The dramatic flow was hampered by a rather rigid electronic/MIDI score and what felt like mechanical

word-setting, with a text that told far too much instead of showing. But the scenario itself is pregnant enough with possibility, and with a musical rethink its prophetic and psychic intensity could take full flight.

Just as Donald Trump is receiving his first revival at the White House, it seemed fitting that *Melania: The Opera* would get a sold-out encore performance at the festival too. With words and music by Jeremy Limb and Melinda Hughes, and additional lyrics from the comedian Rich Hall, it follows *FLOTUS* to a catastrophically stage-managed speech at a rundown elementary school, thrown off course by events outside the school gates—Putin's invasion of Melania's native Slovenia—given in witty parentheses by a ditzy reporter who acts as chorus and prologue (Meighread Dandeneau). Melania, sung by Hughes, turned against her bullying PA as her relationship with Louise Innes's School Principal thaws.

It was tremendous fun, not least a splendidly choreographed song-and-dance number recounting Trump's favourite three-word slogans. It departed from its zippy, stage musical style for sequences of surprising tenderness and vulnerability, with Melania's introspective aria about her childhood and a sweet duet with the Principal. There was a vocal grandeur to Hughes's performance that was regal, but with a sweet legato that did a grand job of humanizing the First Lady, alongside the buzzy satire. Phil Clieve was hyperactively nasty as Melania's PA, with music redolent of Mao Zedong in *Nixon in China*. It's being developed into a 90-minute span—surely one for the Kennedy Center?

BENJAMIN POORE

Sacred and Profane

Monteverdi Choir and Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique at Cadogan Hall, London, October 2

A new initiative by the Monteverdi Choir and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique began with this concert entitled 'Sacred and Profane', comprising extracts from Rossini's *Stabat Mater* (1834), and the same *Stabat Mater* (1841).

Press quotes

THE  TIMES

Hughes's libretto is full of smart, Maga-bashing one-liners, dodgy rhymes and contrived but nevertheless funny exchanges that (possibly) hold a mirror up to the weird actualite of family life in Trumpland.



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NORTHERN ARTS REVIEW
ALL THINGS THEATRE IN THE NORTH

...a rough charm...that the audience truly appreciated...

The Standard 

Tête à Tête, the annual festival of new, nearly new and not-quite-ready-yet operas: you never know what you're going to get and that's part of the appeal. The festival is ambitious by any standards – 16 operas in two weeks – but not lavishly funded, so bare-bones stagings and tiny ensembles are de rigueur.

Opera
The world's leading opera magazine

The redoubtable Bill Bankes-Jones and the Tête-à-Tête Opera Festival were back ploughing their playful, DIY furrow with their usual fervour, with well over a dozen new works gracing the Cockpit's black-box stage in September and October. Their range was as colourful as ever.

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Thank you!

