

PRODUCED BY THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC
IN ASSOCIATION WITH Tête-à-tête



ROYAL
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OF MUSIC
London



Five world-premiere short operas by RCM composers

7pm | 3, 4, 6 July 2026

Conductor **Michael Rosewell**
Director **Bill Bankes-Jones**
Set, Costume & Projection Designer
Sarah Jane Booth
Lighting Designer **Coraline Eversdijk**

PRODUCED BY THE **ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC**
IN ASSOCIATION WITH **Tête à Tête**

Fantasy & Fairytales

3, 4 and 6 July 2026
Britten Theatre

Deniz Dortok The Boy Who Went to Find Fear
Daniel Musashi / Jacques Allen / Ed Allen Ogga Loggas
Asher Joyce Three Lives

Interval (20 minutes)

Lasha Kharkhelauri / Sandro Tsikoridze Ramona
Ruvín Meda / Luz Wollocombe The Nightingale and the Rose

Bill Bankes-Jones Director
Michael Rosewell Conductor
Sarah Jane Booth Set, Costume & Projection Designer
Coraline Eversdijk Lighting Designer



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Latecomers will not be allowed into the auditorium until a suitable break. In the interests of safety, sitting or standing on the steps or floors is strictly prohibited. Thank you for your co-operation.

Approximate total running time: **2 hours 30 minutes**
Recommended age: 7+
Programme details correct at time of going to print.

TÊTE À TÊTE: THE FUTURE OF OPERA

At the heart of Tête à Tête is a spirit driven by many happy years spent by our creative leadership working within our largest opera companies in the UK and internationally, the thrillingly powerful experiences we had there, and strong desire to support these companies by taking this work further, sharing this power and joy with a much wider audience, throwing it open to everyone, by performing more relatable stories in less intimidating, more intimate spaces – hence 'Tête à Tête'.

In the intervening years we have performed from Shetland to Stavanger, from a North Shields sports centre to the tin mines of Cornwall, commissioned and produced well over 100 new operas, hosted many hundreds more, and then proudly shared this work online where you can now watch almost everything we have done.

We're very proud to have championed the portmanteau evening of short operas – nobody enjoys being stuck for three hours with new music that hasn't 'clicked' – are proud to see this replicated in theatres across the land, and proudest of all to bring you an eighth set in association with the Royal College of Music: another creative idea that has since been widely replicated.

Tête à Tête is part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio. Its support and that of trusts and foundations including Cockayne Grants for the Arts, a Donor Advised Fund held at The Prism Charitable Trust, The Marchus Trust, Three Monkeys Trust, as well as ASONE Hub, North Tyneside Music Education Hub and the North Shields Cultural Quarter, is invaluable. Special mention this year also goes to a number of private donors who have shared their own good fortune with us to enable the company to continue supporting artists throughout the UK and beyond.

TÊTE À TÊTE: THE OPERA FESTIVAL 2026

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PROGRAMME NOTES

Tête à Tête is really delighted to be working again with a whole new cohort of young artists at the Royal College of Music.

These composers, singers and instrumentalists are not only the future of opera, but also among the finest artists around today, partnering with us to create among the best supported productions of world premieres you could see anywhere in the UK. The designer, RCM and production team have worked hard to minimise the environmental impact of the work using the Theatre Greenbook.



Mother, *The Boy Who Went to Find Fear*

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It's such an easy mistake to make, to think that in order to be child-friendly or 'accessible', opera has to be simplified or dumbed down. Nothing could be further from the truth. As we all really know, deep down, children can make the most exacting audience. Anyone who has ever read a bedtime story could tell you that. Really the opposite is true: you have to challenge to engage, and therefore to be accessible. Happily all of our brilliant composers have understood this completely and risen to the, umm... challenge.

In *The Boy Who Went to Find Fear*, we are taken on a whistle-stop tour of Turkish culture and fantasy. *Ogga Loggas* rejoices in couching its ostensibly simple narrative in a kaleidoscope of idiom – from bedtime story to 70s glam rock. *Three Lives* plunges you into a world which I'm pretty sure will be instantly accessible to any children watching, while maybe a little opaque to some of the older members of the audience. *Ramona* presents quite honestly the most wonderfully peculiar narrative of any of the hundreds of pieces I have worked on over the years. And then *The Nightingale and the Rose*, Oscar Wilde's fairytale, melts us away with the warmth of the most beguilingly engaging music. How lucky we are to be granted access to these magical worlds. Thank you, children!

All in all, a much-needed vote of confidence in the future of opera at a time when opera really urgently has to figure out where its future lies.

Bill Bankes-Jones

THE BOY WHO WENT TO FIND FEAR

Deniz Dortok composer/librettist

Meddah 1 Emma McClean

Meddah 2 Rachel Howe

The Boy Bella Marslen

The Mother Katy Reilly

The Tailor/Gulyabani (The Ghoul)

Tom Law

The Mayor/Chief Bandit Alex Hardy

Farmer/Villager Tim Burton

Fisher John Johnston

Doctor Olivia Forbes

Village Elder/Caregiver/Trapped Villager

Ustinya Malinina

Chorus Olivia Forbes, Ustinya Malinina, Tim Burton, John Johnston

A mischievous boy, untouched by fear, leaves his hometown to seek it out. Along the way he meets bandits, a ghoul and a weary caregiver, and hears tales of a giant fish said to carry the earth on its back, its movements shaking the ground.

Each encounter reveals a new kind of fear: comic, moral, drawing him toward a final awakening. When the fish stirs and an earthquake strikes his village, the boy learns that true fear lies not in danger itself, but in the weight of care and responsibility that follows.

Deniz Dortok



Deniz Dortok

Deniz Dortok is a London-based composer working across instrumental, electronic, film and

theatre music, exploring intersections of storytelling, text and sound.

Deniz graduated from the University of Manchester with first class honours and is currently studying composition at the Royal College of Music with Kenneth Hesketh, Catherine Kontz and Nick Moroz. He was awarded the Andrew Downes Prize for his composition portfolio.

His music has been performed by leading UK ensembles and recognised in international competitions, with critical attention in both performance and screen-based work. A recent highlight includes *nocturna*, a concept album released on the Berlin label re:natura, exploring the dangers of light pollution. He is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Tête à Tête and the RCM Vocal & Opera Faculty on his new short opera.

OGGA LOGGAS

Daniel Musashi composer
Jacques Allen librettist
Ed Allen story

Polly Eden Shifroni
Sean Anastasia Koorn
Wougha Ustinya Malinina
Airie Zhen Liu
Erfie David Fraser

Ogga Loggas grew from the tales and games my friend Jacques' father shared with him and his siblings when they were young. These vivid, mischievous cautionary stories were designed to wrap life lessons and laughter into lasting memories. At their core sits an environmental warning: if we do not look after our world, we risk repeating the mistakes of those before us, contributing to a cycle of climate change in which everything, from land to air to sea, is affected.

Crafted from this family fantasy, the libretto joins an already living tradition of storytelling, set to music inspired by the theatrical electricity of 70s rock operas, prog-rock concept albums, a touch of glam-rock shine, and hints of *Labyrinth*-like fantasy – all in the hope that we might leave the world a little cleaner than we found it.

Daniel Musashi



Daniel Musashi

Daniel Musashi is a Japanese-Syrian composer working across chamber, orchestral, vocal

and interdisciplinary music, drawing on both traditions to explore how sound, movement and visual art shape one another.

A PhD candidate in composition at the Royal College of Music, he was the inaugural composer of Orpheus Sinfonia's Foundation Residency and a Royal Albert Hall Associate Artist. His work includes commissions from the Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra and Utrecht String Orchestra, and collaborations with the Tokyo National Museum and English National Ballet..

Daniel's music has been performed at the Musikverein (Austria), Tivoli Vredenburg (Netherlands) and Kew Gardens. He has received First Prize at the Vienna Composition Lab, Second Place in the County Hall Arts Symphony Concours, and the Jury's Award at the TIAA Japanese National Composer's Competition. He is published by Universal Edition.



Jacques Allen

Jacques Allen is a London-based composer, pianist and teacher. He graduated in music from the University of Oxford in 2022, and in

2025 completed a Masters in composition at the Royal College of Music with distinction under Kenneth Hesketh. Recent honours include the inaugural Oxford-Japan Prize for Composition, for which his work was premiered at Suntory Hall, and an Ivan Juritz Prize nomination.



Ed Allen

Ed Allen is a father, storyteller, former actor and entrepreneur whose imaginative bedtime stories for his children

reflect a lifelong passion for narrative and performance. He trained as an actor at the Welsh College of Music and Drama. While his professional life has focused on building and leading companies, storytelling has remained a constant creative thread. He continues to create new stories, drawing inspiration from family life, imagination and a love of theatre.

THREE LIVES

Asher Joyce composer/librettist

Iphigenia 'Iffy' Charlotte Jane Kennedy
Mum Anastasia Koorn
Trevor Taining Zhao
Swordslinger Tim Burton
Plunderator Eve Kim
Megalotron Alex Hardy
Chorus Sarah Thomas, Rachel Howe, Yiran Shi

Iphigenia loves playing video games. It helps her escape from her mother's new romance with gym-obsessed Trevor. But as she gets deeper and deeper into the levels of *Killing Ground*, reality slips further and further away. Will her mum snap out of it in time to save her daughter? Or will Iffy be forever lost to *Killing Ground*?

Asher Joyce



Asher Joyce

Asher Joyce is an Australian composer and conductor now based in London. Now in their final year at the Royal

College of Music under William Mival, their work is recognised for its storytelling and inviting warmth. In 2025 they won the RCM Fanfare Competition with their work for brass ensemble, *On the nature of inspiration*.

Asher is a passionate advocate for contemporary music in education through their work as a singing teacher and in music and disability. Asher is honoured to be a Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Scholar supported by the Charles Richardson Stewart Scholarship for Composition at the RCM.

RAMONA

Lasha Kharkhela composer
Sandro Tsikoridze librettist

Ermon (puppet) Archie Inns
Ramona (puppet) Charlotte Jane Kennedy
Puppeteer Henry Godwin
Theatre Manager Alex Hardy
Circus Clown Yiran Shi
Injured ballerina (silent) Emma McClean

Ramona is a contemporary opera set inside a puppet theatre, where the story of two locomotive lovers unfolds alongside the life of the puppeteer who brings them to life. When the main puppeteer arrives late for the beginning of the performance, a hurried exchange with the theatre manager reveals that he plans to emigrate, making this his final show. The puppet play begins in Rioni, a small railway station in Georgia, where Ermon and Ramona say farewell before separating: Ermon travels to Siberia on a business mission, while Ramona joins a small travelling circus.

Years later, during a circus performance, Ramona is asked to walk the tightrope. Seeing Ermon's steam in the distance, she cries for the rope to be raised higher, loses her balance, and falls. Ermon rushes to her side, and in a final duet, they reunite and become a single pile of metal.

Lasha Kharkhela



Lasha Kharkhela

Works by Georgian composer and pianist Lasha Kharkhela have been premiered in several concert halls

and music festivals across Europe. He is currently studying composition at the Royal College of Music, where he is an RCM Scholar, under the guidance of Professor Jonathan Cole. His work explores microtonality, the perception of musical time, and the characteristics of folk music performance in contemporary instrumental writing. Among the orchestras and ensembles who have performed his works are the Tbilisi Youth Orchestra, the Athens State Orchestra, the Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, Divertimento Ensemble and the Ligeti Quartet. As a pianist, he regularly performs his own solo piano and chamber works.



Sandro Tsikoridze

Sandro Tsikoridze is a Georgian composer and pianist based in New York. Their music spans a variety

of genres and styles, incorporating elements of neoclassical, postminimalist, neo-romantic and Georgian folk traditions. Sandro's compositions have been performed by numerous musicians, ensembles and orchestras worldwide. They frequently collaborate on multidisciplinary artistic projects, including film, dance and audiovisual performances. In addition, they are engaged in musicological research and creative writing, having published articles and multimedia works in various academic and artistic journals, and having presented at international musicological conferences.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE

Ruin Meda composer
Luz Wollocombe (after Oscar Wilde) librettist

The Student Tom Law
Professor's Daughter Eden Shifroni
Nightingale Bella Marslen
Green Lizard Eve Kim
Butterfly Sarah Thomas
Daisy Aneska Diamant
White Rose Tree Zhen Liu
Yellow Rose Tree David Fraser
Red Rose Tree Taining Zhao

Oscar Wilde's short story, *The Nightingale and the Rose*, follows a nightingale who sacrifices her life to help a young student in love. The girl in question has demanded a red rose, but there is none in sight. The Nightingale then pierces her heart with the thorn of an old rose tree, so that her blood turns a white rose red, while also draining her life. Alas, it is all in vain. Another admirer has offered the girl a superior gift: expensive diamonds.

Wilde's story explores various kinds of love. The nightingale giving her life without hesitation or expectation of reward highlights the quiet sacrifices nature makes for us. Meanwhile, the student's failed foray into first love leaves him forever guarded against the promise of love. The story is a testament to all the love in the world that goes unappreciated, unseen and, perhaps most sadly, unwanted.

Ruin Meda



Ruin Meda

Ruin Meda is a composer, pianist and conductor whose work spans orchestral, chamber, jazz, stage and film music. Aged

19 and in his first year as an RCM Scholar at the Royal College of Music, he studies composition under Kenneth Hesketh and piano with Kathron Sturrock. A published composer and recipient of several awards, he has fulfilled a wide range of commissions with his music performed across the United Kingdom. His venture into film music has also attracted significant attention – a short work for screen earned praise from award-winning composer Benjamin Wallfisch.



Luz Wollocombe

Luz Wollocombe is a writer and journalist living in London. Her writing has appeared in *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Sun*

and *The Mail on Sunday*, where she currently works on the gossip column. She studied English Literature at Trinity College Dublin, and is a fan of Chaucer for his quick wit and rhyming dexterity. She likes the idea of opera that is accessible to all listeners. This is her first libretto, and she very much enjoyed writing it.



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White Rose, *The Nightingale and the Rose*



Iffy, *Three Lives*

CREATIVE TEAM



Bill Bankes-Jones
Director

Founder and Artistic Director of Tête à Tête, the mothership of new and innovative opera in the

UK, Bill has worked as a freelance director, librettist, translator and dramaturg on all scales all around the world, from Salzburg to Seoul, from Shetland to Shrewsbury.

Pathfinding projects include *The Canticles* in Westminster Abbey, the start of Streetwise Opera; a *Carmen* that launched Blackheath Halls Opera, and translating and directing *Pagliacci* for Scottish Opera, the first of what is now a series of huge promenade productions uniting 'main house' and community performers.

Happily based in West Cornwall, Bill's recent work includes *Fault Lines* touring Cornish Mining sites with Tête à Tête and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, *The Boatswain's Mate* at the Minack Theatre, *Falstaff* at St Endellion 2025 (including two performances playing Alice Ford), and this year returning for *Turandot*.

He was awarded the BEM in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2020 'for services to opera and diversity'.

This production represents nearly 30 years of collaboration with the Royal College of Music; Bill first worked with the RCM in 1997.



Michael Rosewell
Conductor

Conductor Michael Rosewell is an Opera Association of America prize winner and

the recipient of an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera. He has appeared in some of the world's most prestigious opera houses, including the Vienna State Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and English National Opera.

Michael began his conducting career in Germany before joining the music staff of the Wiener Staatsoper, where he assisted Claudio Abbado and worked closely with many world-renowned singers and conductors. In concert, Michael has conducted at the International Music Festivals in Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Bath, Perth, Buxton, Heidelberg, Zagreb and Montepulciano, with orchestras such as the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, the Orchestra of Scottish Opera and Aurora Orchestra. Radio broadcasts include Radio France Musique, Süddeutscher Rundfunk, RTÉ Dublin and the BBC, and he has recorded on the Linn and Decca labels. Michael has championed the music of contemporary composers including Maxwell-Davis, Jonathan Dove and Huw Watkins, and has given premieres of works by Klara Mizerit, Uwe Lohrmann, Ingomar Grünauer, Richard Chew and Stephen Oliver. As Music Director of English Touring Opera, he played a major role in bringing Alexander Goehr's opera *Promised End* to the operatic stage.



Sarah Jane Booth
Set, Costume &
Projection Designer

Sarah Jane Booth is a set and costume designer trained on the Motley Theatre Design course working across theatre, opera and live events.

She has a passion for sustainability and works with the Carbon Literacy Project to train others to take meaningful action on climate.

For the Royal College of Music, credits include: *Revolutions*, *Odysseys*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Frankenstein*, *Crime & Punishment*, *Hogarth's Stages*. Other opera includes: *Mansfield Park*, Byre Opera; *The Firework Maker's Daughter*, Minack Theatre; *S:WASH D:RIFT*, *NightWatchers* and *Persephone's Dream* with Fat Lady Opera; *BEAM*, Aldeburgh Festival; *The Nightingale*, *Orla's Sun & Orla's Moon*, *Wonderful Beast* and many pop-up and site specific mini operas for Tête à Tête.

Theatre work includes: *Gwenda's Garage*, Sheffield Crucible and Southwark Playhouse; *Night Waking*, Mull theatre and tour; *Henry I*, *The Last Abbot of Reading*, Reading Abbey; *The Ballad of St John's Car Park*, Icon Theatre; *If Not Now*, Rochester Castle, Reading Abbey; *Dead & Breathing*, Liverpool Unity and The Albany; *A Tale of Two Cities*, Darlington Civic Theatre; *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Park Theatre.

Live event and photo shoot clients include: Sorted Food, Zoella, Playstation, Ray Ban, Assassin's Creed Syndicate and The Wellcome Trust.



Coraline Eversdijk
Lighting Designer

Coraline Eversdijk is the Current Head of Lighting at the Royal College of Music with a background in lighting for opera and immersive theatre. They graduated with a Masters of Design from the Florence Design Academy before moving to London to pursue a career in lighting for theatre, where they trained at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts.

Since graduating Coraline has had the opportunity to work with such great companies as Welsh National Opera, the Royal Academy of Music and Punchdrunk, and has been a part of facilitating the lighting at the Royal College of Music for the last four years. They then made their full-scale debut design in 2024 for RCM's *Revolutions*.



Erfie, Oggas Loggas

PRODUCTION

For the Royal College of Music Vocal & Opera Faculty

Head of Vocal & Opera
Audrey Hyland

Director of Opera
Michael Rosewell

Deputy Head of Vocal & Opera
Jonathan Lemalu

Assistant Head of Vocal & Opera
Mark Austin

Head of Composition
Dr Jonathan Cole

Manager of Vocal & Opera
Ann Somerville

Vocal & Opera Faculty Officer
Bethan Day

For the production

Director
Bill Bankes-Jones

Conductor
Michael Rosewell

Set, Costume & Projection Designer
Sarah Jane Booth

Lighting Designer
Coraline Eversdijk

Assistant Conductor/Repetiteur
Paul McKenzie

Production Manager
Paul Tucker

Stage Manager
Katherine Verberne

Deputy Stage Manager
Zoe Rogers-Holman

Head of Costume
Zoe Hammond Joyce

Costume Assistant
Izzy Darby

Costume Technicians
Philip Engleheart
Emma Kirkup

Wigs, Hair and Make-up
Tom Licence

Set and Props Build & Painting
Britten Theatre Workshop

Scenic Artistry
Sarah Jane Booth

Head of Stage
Matthew Gorman

Staging and Lighting Technician
Dan Foggo

Lighting Programmer and Operator
Addie Gardner-Williams

Intimacy Coordinator
Scott Howland

Surtitle Operators
Amy Chau
Lottie Craven
Megan Hill

For Tête à Tête

Artistic Director
Bill Bankes-Jones

Music Director
Timothy Burke

Administrative Director
Anna Gregg

Marketing Director
Leo Doulton

PR
Wildkat PR

Graphic Design
Jeremy Richardson

Consultant
Sarah Playfair

For Royal College of Music Studios

Live Sound Engineer

Reece Worrall-Lowe

Radio Mic Engineer

Alison Dale (Team Audio Ltd)

Radio Mic Assistant

Joel Allison

Audio-Visual Production Manager

Danny Holland

Head of Creative Technologies

Richard Bland

Orchestra

Violin I

Sanni Talvitie

Violin II

Zoe Hirst

Viola

Christy Hui

Cello

James Dew
Vivian Tupker

Double Bass

Ines Araujo

Flute/Piccolo

Eshle Mthethwa

Oboe/Cor anglais

Lou Grune-Yanoff

Clarinet/Bass clarinet

Robert Winup

Bassoon

Phoebe Masters

Saxophone

Kezia Lovick-Jones

Trumpet

Elias Simojoki

Trombone

Edward Hyde

Tuba

Joseph McLennan-Parish

Percussion

Harry Gong
Wilamena Dyer

Harp

Olivia Yao

For the Royal College of Music

Head of Performance, Programming & Faculties

Flo Ambrose

Orchestra Manager

Daniella Rossi

Concert and Venue Manager

Grace Cattell

Orchestra Co-ordinator

Isabella Bartlett

Performance & Programming Assistant

Chris Michie

PERFORMERS



Tim Burton | tenor

Tim Burton is the Yvonne Wells Scholar supported by the Mason Award, in his second year of a Masters at the RCM, studying with Timothy Evans-Jones and Caroline Dowdle. In 2025 he performed in the ensemble of Laura Karpman's *Balls* with the Philharmonia, and the RCM's *Love, Conflict, Renaissance*. Tim previously studied at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where roles included Schoolmaster/Mosquito in *The Cunning Little Vixen*; Moon/King of the East in Jonathan Dove's *Enchanted Pig*; Mr Bobo/Other Bobo in Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Coraline*. He started his musical career as a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral, and enjoys cooking, stained glass windows and jazz.



Aneska Diamant | soprano

Aneska Diamant, a French-Canadian soprano, is in her second year of a Masters at the Royal College of Music with Patricia Rozario and vocal coach Caroline Dowdle. She is an RCM Scholar, as well as scholarships from the Sandra and Alain Bouchard Foundation, the Molson Scholarship for Francophones from LGAC, and the Aida Fund from Jeunesses Musicales Canada. Her roles include Hebé (*Les Indes Galantes*), Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), and The Wife (*The Juniper Tree*). She was a soloist in the premiere of Geneviève Ackerman's *Requiem pour Empédocle* at the Maison Symphonique de Montréal.



David Fraser | bass

David Fraser made his debut in the chorus of *Don Giovanni* with Opera Viva in 2017. David is a Masters student at the Royal College of Music studying with Graeme Broadbent. Performances include RCM Big Band concerts, *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. He made his solo debut as Commendatore in the RCM's *Don Giovanni Tenorio*, described as 'splendidly imposing' (*The Daily Express*). David is passionate about finding younger audiences for opera and has over 250,000 followers on TikTok, 100,000 on Instagram and 45,000 subscribers on YouTube. In 2024, he gained 100 million views across the three platforms.



Olivia Forbes | soprano

Olivia Forbes is pursuing a Master of Performance at the Royal College of Music under Sarah Tynan, with support from the Theo Max van der Beugel Scholarship. She holds a conjoint degree in classical voice and Italian, and a first class honours degree in music from the University of Auckland. Since her professional debut as Flora in *The Turn of the Screw* with New Zealand Opera, she has performed as a soloist with the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra, was a finalist in the 2024 New Zealand Aria Competition, and received the New Zealand Opera School 2025 Dame Sister Mary Leo Award.



Henry Godwin | baritone

Henry Godwin is pursuing a Masters degree at the RCM, where he also completed his undergraduate studies. He studies with Peter Savidge and is coached by Sebastian Wybrew. He has performed as Don Giovanni in *Opera Scenes*, appeared as a soloist in *A Grand Night for Singing* conducted by Wayne Marshall, and was a finalist in the Joan Chissell Schumann Competition. He has also worked with Serena Gamberoni in a masterclass and joins her at the Sferisterio Festival this summer. This year, he is also a member of the National Opera Studio Academy.



Alex Hardy | bass baritone

Bass baritone Alex Hardy is in his first year of studying MPerf at the RCM with Jonathan Lemalu and Stephen Varcoe, generously supported by Ian Evans Lombe. In 2025 he graduated with first class honours (BMus) from Trinity Laban. Alongside his studies, he is a regular in the BBC Symphony Chorus, where he has had the opportunity to sing smaller solos and semi-choruses in projects, of which a recent highlight was Bartók's *Cantata Profana* conducted by Dalia Stasevska. Alex was Hertford Choral Society's Conducting Fellow for their 2024–25 season and has conducted Trinity Laban's Chamber Choir.



Rachel Howe | soprano

Rachel Howe studies with Veronica Veysey Campbell at the Royal College of Music and is supported by the Helen Marjorie Tonks scholarship. Formerly, she achieved a first class degree in music from The Queen's College, Oxford, where she was recipient of several scholarships and led the Eglesfield Musical Society. Rachel is a versatile musician whose work spans early music, opera and contemporary repertoire. Recent roles include Lysia in *Lysistrata* (RCM Opera Scenes) and Galatea in *Acis and Galatea*. In October, she joins the cast at Glyndebourne as Frankie in the premiere of Lucy Armstrong's opera, *Spark*.



Archie Inns | tenor

Scottish tenor Archie Inns maintains a varied performing career across opera, oratorio, song and consort work. Archie is currently in his first year of a Masters in Vocal Performance at the Royal College of Music, where he is supported by the Drapers' de Turckheim Scholarship, The London Women's Clinic Foundation Award and Mason Award, alongside support from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, the Sir James Caird Trust (recipient of the 2025 Wiseman Prize), the Elizabeth Izatt Trust, and the Kathleen Trust.



John Johnston | baritone

John Johnston was a chorister in St Peter's Cathedral Schola Cantorum, Belfast, and was in the chapel choir of Winchester College. He graduated from Oxford with a first-class degree in music and was an Academical Clerk in New College Choir. He worked with New Chamber Opera, Schola Cantorum and the Oxford Opera Society. John is a Masters student at the RCM, where he has covered the roles of Harašta, *The Cunning Little Vixen*; Sid, *Albert Herring* and Guglielmo, *Così fan tutte* (both RCM Opera Scenes). He is taught by Russell Smythe and is supported by the Jessie Sumner Scholarship and Josephine Baker Trust.



Charlotte Jane Kennedy | soprano

Winner of the Loveday Song Prize at the 69th Ferrier Awards, British soprano Charlotte Jane Kennedy is a member of the RCM Opera Studio, studying under Janis Kelly. RCM roles include Vixen in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* and Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Elsewhere, Charlotte has performed Giannetta in *L'elisir d'amore* for Garsington Opera and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* for the Da Ponte Festival and next year joins Scottish Opera as an Emerging Artist. Charlotte is an Andrea Bocelli Foundation-Community Jameel Scholar and is supported by the Drake Calleja Trust, The Wayne Sleep Foundation and Help Musicians.



Eve Yein Kim | mezzo soprano

South Korean mezzo soprano Eve Yein Kim is currently pursuing a Masters in Vocal Performance at the Royal College of Music, where she studies with Patricia Bardon and Bryan Evans. She graduated with highest honours from Seoul Arts High School and Seoul National University, studying under Jennifer Larmore and receiving full merit scholarships throughout her studies. Her repertoire focuses on lyric mezzo soprano roles, including Baroque and Classical repertoire, trouser roles and contemporary works. Her operatic appearances include Maddalena (*Rigoletto*) at Music Fest Perugia, Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*) in Seoul, and Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*).



Anastasia Koorn | mezzo soprano

Anastasia Koorn studies with professor Tim Evans-Jones at the RCM Opera Studio as an Andrea Bocelli Foundation-Community Jameel Scholar supported by the H F Music Award and the Basil Coleman Opera Award. RCM roles include Concepción (*L'heure espagnole*), Maman/La Tasse Chinoise/La Libellule (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*), Praskowia (*Die lustige Witwe*), Cupid (*Orpheus in the Underworld*). Recent highlights include a recital with the Andrea Bocelli Foundation at the Macerata Opera Festival and her debut season with Glyndebourne. Anastasia joined Palm Beach Opera for their recent season, covering Maddalena and performing Giovanna in *Rigoletto*.



Tom Law | tenor

Tom Law is studying for his Masters at the RCM with Timothy Evans-Jones and Bryan Evans, as a John Nickson & Simon Rew Scholar in memory of Sir Peter Jonas, supported by the Geoffrey Boyes Memorial Scholarship. He is a Waterperry Opera Festival Young Artist (2026) and was an Alvarez Emerging Artist at Garsington Opera (2025). He earned a first class BMus and the Poppy Holden Award from the RCM. Roles include The Angel (*The Acts of Brizida Vaz*, *Tête à Tête*) and Bayard Taylor (*Barnum's Bird*, RCM). Concert solos include Handel's *Messiah* (Portsmouth Cathedral) and Mendelssohn's *Paulus* (Chelmsford Cathedral).



Zhen Liu | baritone

Zhen Liu, a Chinese baritone, is currently enrolled at the Royal College of Music Opera Studio. He holds the distinction of being a David W Patterson Scholar, supported by the Vivian Prins Award. He presently studies under the guidance of baritone Peter Savidge. His operatic credits include roles in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*, Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Puccini's *Turandot*, Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, as well as Connie Harris' *The Driffterman*. Concert roles include Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Haydn's *Missa brevis*.



Emma McClean | soprano

New Zealand soprano Emma McClean is studying for a Master of Performance at the Royal College of Music with Patricia Bardon. She is an RCM Scholar, the 2024 Circle100 Scholar, and a 2024 Dame Malvina Major Foundation Arts Excellence Award recipient. An alumna of the New Zealand Opera School and University of Otago, Emma holds first class honours degrees in music and law, and is a qualified solicitor. Recent highlights include Countess Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) at Goodenough College, the New Zealand Opera chorus, and as a soloist for the Bloomsbury Festival and Bach Musica NZ.



Ustinya Malinina | mezzo soprano

Ustinya Malinina's appearances include Tokyo Opera City, Bechstein Hall, and the Lerici and Madeira music festivals. Distinctions include Best Future Singer at the 2025 Basel International Song Competition, Platinum Prize at the 2023/24 London Young Musician Competition, First Prize at the Gold International Classical Music Competition, Grand Prize at the World Classical Music Awards, and Absolute First Prize at the World Grand Prix International Music Contest. She was recently invited to be a guest singer with Andrea Bocelli in Turin. Ustinya is pursuing a Masters at the RCM with Graeme Broadbent, supported by the Jessie Sumner Scholarship and the Stephen Roberts Scholarship.



Bella Marslen | soprano

Bella Marslen is part of the RCM Opera School under the tutelage of Professor Janis Kelly. She is the current Andrew Treagus Scholar, Mimi and Colin Watts Scholar and a Tait Memorial Trust Scholarship recipient. Bella was a 2022/23 Young Artist with West Australian Opera and a 2024 Wigmore Hall French Song Exchange Artist. Performances include soprano solo in Bach's *Easter Oratorio* (2023, West Australian Opera), First Wood Sprite, *Rusalka* (2024, West Australian Opera), Barbarina, *Le nozze di Figaro* (2025, RCM), Angel, *Seven Angels* (2025, RCM), and Vixen, *The Cunning Little Vixen* (2025, RCM).



Kathryn Reilly | mezzo soprano

Kathryn Reilly is a mezzo soprano from New York. She is currently pursuing a Masters at the RCM under Dinah Harris. She is a Bruce-Payne Vaseppi Scholar supported by the Ruth Lewis Scholarship. Reilly earned her undergraduate degree in Voice Performance at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, where she studied with Michelle DeYoung. She is the recipient of the 2025 Austin B. Caswell Award for her research on improvisation in Cantonese opera. Previous roles include Dorabella (Pop-Up Opera), Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*), Papagena (*The Magic Flute*). She has appeared in choral works by Beethoven, Mahler, Haydn, Poulenc and Britten.



Yiran Shi | bass baritone

Yiran Shi is a baritone from China. He is studying at the Royal College of Music with Jonathan Lemalu and will soon graduate with a Masters degree. During his time in the UK, he has participated in several Opera Scenes, including Uberto in *La serva padrona*, Marco in *Gianni Schicchi*, Enrico in *L'isola disabitata* and Conte in *Le nozze di Figaro*.



Eden Shifroni | soprano

Australian soprano Eden Shifroni is a member of the RCM Opera Studio, where she studies with Russell Smythe as the Alastair Jackson International Opera Award recipient. She won the 2024 IFAC Australian Singing Competition and received the Audience Prize at the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngel Bel Canto Award. Roles include Serpette (*La finta giardiniera*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Musetta (*La bohème*), and Poppea in the Australian premiere of Elena Kats-Chernin's re-orchestration of Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*. She is a Melba Opera Trust Scholar supported by the Tait Memorial Trust, and holds degrees from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.



Sarah Thomas | soprano

Mancunian soprano Sarah Thomas is studying for an MPerf at the Royal College of Music with Sarah Tynan, supported by Help Musicians and private sponsorship. She previously studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Mary Plazas, winning the Norma Procter Song Prize at the Junior Kathleen Ferrier Awards. At the RCM, she has performed in the Chamber Music Festival and as Dalinda in Opera Scenes, and makes her RCM opera debut in this production. Sarah is also a member of the NOS Academy, and continues her collaboration with Kleine Opera, performing Elisetta (*Cimarosa*) this summer.



Taining Zhao | tenor

Taining Zhao is a Chinese tenor pursuing his Master of Performance at the RCM under Justin Lavender. He holds the Tiong Kiu King Scholarship and is a Drake Calleja Trust Scholar for the 2026/27 academic year. He recently won First Prize at the 2026 Lies Askonas Competition. He will soon make his role debut as Rodolfo (*La bohème*) at Château de Panloy in August. His operatic experience includes covering Belfiore (*La finta giardiniera*) and Acis (*Acis and Galatea*) and performing Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*). He has also performed in Opera Scenes as Basilio (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Mengone (*Lo speziale*).

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