



SUN 30 MAR - SAT 5 APR // 2025

RNCM Opera Britten: Owen Wingrave

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Sun 30 Mar and Sat 5 Apr, 3pm
Tue 1 and Thu 3 Apr, 7.30pm
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RNCM Opera

Britten: Owen Wingrave

Music by **Benjamin Britten**, with
libretto by **Myfanwy Piper** (after Henry James)

Reduced orchestration prepared by **David Matthews**

Performed by arrangement with **Faber Music, London**

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SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

Spencer Coyle, the head of a military school, is instructing Owen and Lechmere on the strategy of battle. At the end of the lesson, Owen declares that he cannot go through with a military career.

Coyle is angry but agrees to break the news to the Wingrave family for whom soldiering has been a way of life for generations. Owen muses to himself that he is strong, not weak, in his disdain of war. Coyle discusses the situation with Owen's aunt, Miss Wingrave, who asserts that Owen will change his mind once he meets with his family.

At Paramore, the Wingraves' oppressive family home, Owen is denounced by Miss Wingrave, his fiancée Kate, and her mother, Mrs Julian. The patriarch of the family, Sir Philip Wingrave, is similarly outraged by Owen's decision.

Coyle and his wife arrive at Paramore. Mrs Coyle is shocked at the treatment of Owen by his family, but Coyle points out that Owen has brought this trouble upon himself. Lechmere and the Coyles meet with Owen, hoping to change his mind.

The entire Wingrave family gather with the Coyles and Lechmere. Mrs Coyle is sympathetic towards Owen, but the family demand his obedience to tradition. Owen retaliates and declares that, if he could, he would make war a crime.

Interval

ACT 2

A ballad singer narrates the tale of a young Wingrave boy killed by his brutal father at Paramore years earlier for refusing to engage in a fight with his friend. Soon after, without explanation, the father was found dead in the same room without any obvious signs of injury.

Coyle and Owen discuss the tragic story of the dead boy and the bully and muse how the ghosts of Owen's ancestors still roam the house.

Sir Philip demands to meet with Owen and tells him that he has been disinherited. Mrs Julian panics about how she will face the future without the patronage of the Wingrave family whilst Kate humiliates Owen by flirting with Lechmere.

After everyone has gone to bed, Owen, left alone, reflects on his predicament, and reaffirms his passionate belief in peace. Kate searches Owen out, taunts him with cowardice, and dares him to sleep in the haunted room where his ancestors died. Owen agrees and Kate locks him in.

The Coyles reflect on the evening's events. Having overheard Kate's taunting, Lechmere is concerned for Owen's welfare and alerts Mr Coyle.

Kate is heard sobbing. The family rush to the scene only to find Owen dead on the floor of the haunted room.

The ballad singer's voice is heard once more.

CREATIVE TEAM

Rory Macdonald *conductor*

Orpha Phelan *director*

Madeleine Boyd *designer*

Matt Haskins *lighting designer*

Adam Haigh *movement*

Kevin Thraves *chorus master*

Benjamin Voce (5 Apr) *assistant conductor*

Andre Chan *second assistant and offstage conductor*

Tomek Pieczora and Jacob Swindells *production repetiteurs*

CASTS (IN ORDER OF SINGING)

William Jowett, Johannes Gerges* *Spencer Coyle*

Kristen Gregory, Sam Rose* *Lechmere*

James Connolly, Alex Riddell* *Owen Wingrave*

Ellie Forrester, Kirsty McNaughton* *Miss Wingrave*

Rosa Sparks, Esther Shea* *Mrs Coyle*

Charlotte Baker, Hannah Andrusier* *Mrs Julian*

Jemima Gray, Daisy Mitchell* *Kate*

Oscar Bowen-Hill, Samuel Horton* *Sir Philip Wingrave*

Gabriel Jones, Grant Haddow* *Narrator*

*1 and 5 Apr

SPIRITS OF PARAMORE

Joshua Carton

Johnny Derbyshire

Barney Fildes

Colm Traynor-Bucknall

Samuel Yuen

RNCM OPERA CHORUS

Madeleine Wickham Brown
Matilda Chen
Katherine Foxall
Phoebe Heywood
Lottie Howden
Milly Lennox
Tiantian Luo
Poppy Orrell
Jaz Randall
Matthew Vining
Rachel Wheatley

FIRST VIOLIN

Rachel Stonham
Yixin Sha*

SECOND VIOLIN

Jacob Wright
Daniel Albertyn*

VIOLA

Kirin Howat
Jeanette Szeto*

CELLO

Maya Tucker
Tom Ellison*

BASS

Thomas Betts^

FLUTE

Jessica Pun Lai Yuen
(picc)
Kaoruko Takehara*

OBOE

Imogen Morris (cor)
Anna Turner (cor)*

CLARINET

Anthony Arias (bass)
Cara Smith (bass)*

BASSOON

Beatriz Carvalho
(contra)
Connor Huss (contra)*

HORN

Leo Penny
Sami Pang*

TRUMPET

Sean Molloy
Lewis Barton*

TROMBONE

Nathan Joseph
Seb Brailsford*

PERCUSSION

Arthur Barras
Isobelle Britch
Ho Yin Wong*
Daniel Vincent*

PIANO

Georgy Stepanov
Yonina Liss*

***1 and 5 Apr
^all performances**

SCHOOL OF VOCAL STUDIES AND OPERA

Professor Lynne Dawson *Head of Vocal Studies and Opera*

Kevin Thraves *Deputy Head of Opera*

Dr Nico de Villiers *Deputy Head of Vocal Studies*

RNCM ORCHESTRAS AND ENSEMBLES

Andrew Bayly *Head of Ensembles*

Amy Gordon *Orchestras and Ensembles Manager (SS)*

Charlotte Ferry *Orchestras and Ensembles Manager (SWBP)*

Edgar Divver *Orchestras and Ensembles Assistant Manager*

Abigail Flood *Ensembles Administrator*

Jack Grime *Chamber Music and Conducting Administrator*

Amy Brown *Ensembles Librarian*

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Nick Ware *Head of Digital, Technical and Production*

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Tracey Collinson *Stage Manager*

Sarah Taylor Kent *Stage Manager (on the Book)*

Louise Morgan *Deputy Stage Manager (Props)*

Liam Whittaker *Technical and Production Manager*

Steve Barrington *Deputy Technical Manager (Stage)*

Gary Blackburn, Osin McMahon *Fly Operatives*

Julie Parker *Lighting Manager*

Ellie Whitfield, Simon Alford *Deputy Lighting Managers*

Elaine Needham *Wardrobe Manager*

Rebecca Parkes *Deputy Wardrobe Manager*

Lucy Woodcock, Nikki Meredith, Elsie Howard *Additional Costume Work*

Elanor Parkinson *Wardrobe Placement (Arts University Bournemouth)*

Jo Best *Wigs, Hair and Make-Up Supervisor*

Kevin Thraves *Surtitles Creation*

Sophie Akka, Libby Montgomery *Surtitles Operators*

Take 1 Scenic *Scenic Construction*

A woman with vibrant red hair styled in an updo, wearing an ornate opera costume with a yellow and black patterned bodice and a long, flowing white cape. She is singing with her mouth open and eyes looking upwards. The background is a blurred city skyline at dusk, with a purple and blue sky.

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CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

RORY MACDONALD

A dynamic presence in both the opera house and concert hall, Rory Macdonald's conducting combines intellectual rigour with passionate engagement. With a notably wide repertoire from Dowland to MacMillan, his collegiate approach has led to many successful collaborations with leading artists and production teams.

Recent highlights include *La bohème* for Glyndebourne which resulted in an immediate re-invitation as well as returns to Oper Frankfurt (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Opera Theater of Saint Louis (*The Magic Flute*). In the last few seasons, he has returned regularly to the Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Tokyo City Philharmonic Orchestra amongst others, as well as making successful debuts with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, Romeo Castellucci's staging of *Requiem* at the Adelaide Festival and *Peter Grimes* at the Brisbane Festival. Passionate about new music, Rory has conducted the premieres of works by composers including Sally Beamish, Sir James MacMillan, and Carl Vine.

Rory made his debut with Oper Frankfurt in 2018/19 with *Così fan tutte* and has conducted new productions of *Die Zauberflöte* for Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Royal Danish Opera, and Opera Australia. Other highlights include a return to Gothenburg Opera for Stephen Langridge's production of *Le nozze di Figaro*; *Hänsel und Gretel*; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Royal Opera House); *Fra*

Diavolo (Teatro dell'Opera di Roma); *Carmen* (Santa Fe Opera, Canadian Opera, Teatro São Carlos); *Ariadne aux Naxos* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Bergen National Opera); *La Fanciulla del West* (Grange Park Opera); and *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (Wexford Festival).

He has led many acclaimed productions of works by Britten, including new productions of *Owen Wingrave* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Royal Opera House; *Albert Herring* for Glyndebourne; *The Turn of the Screw* with Mark Padmore at the Vienna Konzerthaus; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and *The Rape of Lucretia* at Houston Grand Opera.

Rory's discography includes Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* with Nicola Benedetti for Decca as well as highly acclaimed discs for Hyperion, Chandos and Linn Records. Two further discs are due for release later this year with the RSNO.

Rory studied music at Cambridge University. Whilst there he studied under David Zinman and Jorma Panula at the American Academy of Conducting in Aspen. After graduating he was appointed assistant conductor to Iván Fischer at the Budapest Festival Orchestra (2001-2003), and to Sir Mark Elder and the Hallé (2006-2008). He was also a member of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House (2004-2006), where he worked closely with Sir Antonio Pappano on such major projects as the complete *Ring Cycle*.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

ORPHA PHELAN

Irish stage director Orpha Phelan is known for her award-winning productions, including Bernstein's *A Quiet Place* at Opera Zuid in Maastricht, which won the prestigious Place de l'Opera prize for Best Opera in 2018 in The Netherlands. For two years running she received Denmark's most prestigious arts prize, the Reumert Award for Best Opera Production – first for *Powder Her Face* in 2016 and then for *Dead Man Walking* in 2017, both with The Royal Danish Opera. Her production of *La Cenerentola* for Irish National Opera was shortlisted for the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards Best Production in 2020.

Recently, Orpha directed the world premiere of *Raising Icarus* by Michael Zev Gordon at the Barber Institute in Birmingham, *Don Pasquale* for Irish National Opera, and Felicien David's *Lalla-Roukh* at the Wexford Festival, which earned four nominations at the 2022 Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards, including Best Opera and Best Director. In the 2023-24 season, she returned to Irish National Opera to direct *La bohème*, before taking the production to Opéra de Montpellier. She is also preparing a new production of Donizetti's *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* for Wexford Festival in the upcoming season.

Orpha has enjoyed tremendous success in Sweden, directing *Fiddler on the Roof*, *La bohème* (released by Naxos on DVD), *Les Contes d'Hoffman*, and *Jenůfa* (released by Arthaus Musik on DVD) at Malmö Opera. Her acclaimed production of *Billy Budd* for Opera

North and *Fidelio* for Longborough Festival Opera are also among her highlights. In 2018/19, she made her French debut at Opéra National de Lorraine with *Wuthering Heights*. Other notable engagements include *Così fan tutte* with Opera Theatre Company, *L'Orfeo* at The Barbican in collaboration with Richard Egarr and The Academy of Ancient Music, and the UK premiere of Jonathan Harvey's *Wagner Dream* at The Barbican, marking her first collaboration with Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. She has also directed *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* for Opera North and Opera Australia at the Sydney Opera House, under the baton of Richard Bonyngé.

Orpha has worked on several productions at The Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Glyndebourne, Opera North, and Wexford Opera. She has directed workshops for Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Aldeburgh, and Almeida Opera. In 2005, she won the Audience Prize (Ring Award) for her concept of *Le nozze di Figaro* with Oper Graz, Austria, and Wagner Forum Graz. She was also a winner of the European Opera Directors' Award in 2003 for her concept of *Hans Heiling* with Strasbourg Opera, in association with Opera Europa.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

MADELEINE BOYD

Madeleine studied Theatre Design at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

Recent production designs include: *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze Teatrali*, Wexford Festival Opera (2024); 'G', Royal Court Theatre, London; *My Fair Lady*, a co-production between Leeds Playhouse and Opera North; *Gone Too Far*, Theatre Royal Stratford East; *Lady in the Dark* (2022) and *A Quiet Place* (2018), Opera Zuid, Maastricht (both won the Place de L'Opera Award for Best Opera in their respective years); *Lalla Roukh*, Wexford Festival Opera, Ireland (winner of Best Costume at the Irish Times Theatre Awards); *Powder Her Face*, Royal Danish Opera, Copenhagen (winner of the Årets Reumert Prize for Best Opera Production); *Albert Herring* and *L'Histoire du Soldat*, Maggio Musicale, Florence; *The Donizetti Trilogy: Anna Bolena, Maria Stuarda*, and *Roberto Devereux*, Welsh National Opera.

Future projects include production design for *Le nozze di Figaro*, Opera North, and *The Little Prince*, Theater an der Wien, Vienna.

MATT HASKINS

Matt is London-based and works internationally.

For RNCM: Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Poulenc's *Dialogues des carmélites*.

Opera work includes Søren Nils Eichberg's *Glare*, Matt Rogers's *The Virtues of Things*, Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Coraline* (Royal Opera House); Ravi Shankar's *Sukanya* (Royal Festival Hall); Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* (Irish National Opera); Britten's *Turn of the Screw*, Verdi's *La traviata*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden*, Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* (Opera North); Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda* (Welsh National Opera); Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (Nevill Holt); Verdi's *Macbeth* (Grange Festival); Michael Zev Gordon's *Raising Icarus* (Barber Opera); Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* (Teatro Real/Teatro de la Maestranza); Puccini's *La bohème* (Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier); Bernstein's *A Quiet Place* (Opera Zuid); Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* (Opéra national de Lorraine); Britten's *Albert Herring* (Maggio Musicale Fiorentino); Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (Malmö/Teatro Regio di Torino).

His theatre work includes *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* (Broadway/West End/Canada/Australasia tours); *A Tupperware of Ashes* (National Theatre); *The Empress* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Miss Saigon* (Folketeateret, Oslo); *The Clinic* (Almeida); *Hakawatis* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Wedding Band*, *School Girls*;

CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

Or, The African Mean Girls Play (Lyric Hammersmith); *King James, Out of Season, Biscuits for Breakfast, The Art of Illusion, Mary, Cost of Living, The Fever Syndrome, Folk, I & You* (Hampstead Theatre); *Northanger Abbey* (Orange Tree); *Girls & Boys, Private Peaceful* (Nottingham Playhouse); *Wish You Were Here* (Gate Theatre); *The Double Act* (Arcola Theatre); *The City and The Town* (HullTruck/Riksteatern, Sweden); *Frankenstein* (UK Tour); *Fair Play* (Bush); *The Girls of Slender Means* (Royal Lyceum); *The Lovely Bones* (Birmingham Rep/UK tour); *Nina* (Young Vic/Unity Theatre); *Truth and Reconciliation* (Royal Court) and *Hobson's Choice* (Royal Exchange).

ADAM HAIGH

Ushers, The Front of House Musical (The Other Palace); *Oh What a Lovely War* (UK Tour); *Kiss Me Kate* (Leicester Curve); *Soho Cinders* (Charing Cross Theatre); *Grease* (Italy); *Chess* (Leicester Curve, Broadway World Nomination for Best Choreography); UK premier of *Brooklyn the Musical* (Greenwich Theatre); *Wizard of Oz* (New Lincoln Theatre Royal); *Anything Goes* (The Other Palace); 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (Nominated for Best Off West End Director 2018); *Can Can* (Nominated for Best Off West End Choreographer 2018); *Moscow, Cheryomushki* (Ohrstrom-Bryant Theatre, USA); *Le Roi de Lahore* (Dorset Opera, Nominated for Best Rediscovered Work at the International Opera Awards 2023); *The Mikado* (Theatre Royal Bath/UK Tour); *Ruddigore* (Wiltons Music Hall); *Eledeline Lee Collection 2023* (London Fashion Week); *Jingle Bell Christmas* (Barbican); *Treasure Island* (Middle East Tour); *Phantom of the Opera in Concert* (Sir John Loveridge Hall, Guernsey); *Piano Legends* (Birmingham Symphony Hall); *Get on the Floor with Strictly Come Dancing's AJ Pritchard* (UK Tour); *Christmas Spectacular 2018 with Kerry Ellis, Kimberley Walsh and Anton & Erin* (Drury Lane); *Romeo and Juliet* (European Tour); *Behind the Legend* (Bromley Churchill); *South Pacific*, starring Dave Willets (Guernsey); *Transforming Minds* (Park Theatre); *Some Enchanted Evening, A Night of Musicals* (UK Tour); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Folketeateret, Norway).

CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

KEVIN THRAVES

As a freelance repetiteur, Kevin has worked for many leading opera companies including Scottish Opera, Opera North, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Essential Scottish Opera, Clonter Opera, Batignano Musica nel Chiostro (Italy), Scottish Opera-Go-Round, and the Buxton International Festival. He has also worked alongside many of the UK's leading orchestras including the Hallé, the BBC Concert Orchestra - during the Proms season at the Royal Albert Hall, the BBC Philharmonic, Manchester Camerata and the London Philharmonic under the direction of Sir Simon Rattle, Barry Wordsworth, Sir Richard Armstrong, Sir Neville Marriner, Sir Mark Elder, and Edward Gardner.

His work as an accompanist and repetiteur has led to recordings and broadcasts for radio and television both in the UK and abroad. UK concert appearances include Wigmore Hall, the Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall, St John's Smith Square, St Martin in-the-Fields, the Royal Albert Hall, St David's Hall in Cardiff, and the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. Kevin has a busy and varied recital career which has led to performances across Europe, Asia, and Oceania. Recently, Kevin was the co-chorus master for the world premiere of Mark Wigglesworth's *Magnificat* in Bergen, Norway, and the chorus master for performances of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* for the Hallé.

Kevin is Deputy Head of Opera at the RNCM where he has worked on many of the award-winning operas as music staff, repetiteur and as the RNCM Opera chorus master.

BENJAMIN VOCE

Benjamin Voce is an emerging conductor known for his skill in bringing even the most complicated scores to life. He has been working with Thomas Adès as his assistant conductor since 2022, with orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, London Philharmonic and the Hallé. He feels strongly connected to modern British repertoire through his mother, who is a contemporary music soprano who premiered over 200 works. With degrees in both mathematics and music, in his performances Benjamin seeks to embody these two inter-connected subjects.

Benjamin studied music at Daniel Barenboim's highly selective academy in Berlin, including studies in viola, piano, conducting, musicology, literature and philosophy. He is in the final year of his masters in conducting at the RNCM as an Oglesby Scholar. He also holds a diploma in contemporary repertoire conducting from the Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana in Lugano and a first class degree in mathematics from Imperial College London.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

ANDRE CHAN

A Hong Kong native, Andre Chan is pursuing a master's in conducting at the RNCM, studying with Mark Heron and Clark Rundell. He has served as assistant conductor to Andrew Manze, Alpesh Chauhan, and JoAnn Falletta with orchestras such as the RLPO and BBC Philharmonic and has spent this spring performing Schubert's *Symphony No 4* with the Liverpool Mozart Orchestra, while assisting Rory MacDonald and Benjamin Voce in RNCM's production of Britten's *Owen Wingrave*.

Summer 2023 saw Andre selected as one of 16 active participants at the Järvi Academy (Pärnu Music Festival), where he studied with Paavo Järvi and Neeme Järvi. In other masterclasses, he has studied with Jorma Panula, Nicolas Pasquet, Sian Edwards, John Storgårds, Ludovic Morlot, and Larry Rachleff, and conducted ensembles such as MÁV Symphony Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, HM Royal Marines Band Scotland, Lviv National Philharmonic, and Hong Kong Sinfonietta.

Prior to RNCM, Andre completed a MSt in Music (Musicology) at the University of Oxford with the support of a Rhodes Scholarship, and a BA in Music and Philosophy at Columbia University, where he was Principal Conductor of the Columbia Bach Society. Outside of conducting, he is an avid researcher and supporter of the music of Hans Gál.

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CAST BIOGRAPHIES

WILLIAM JOWETT

Will is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree under the guidance of Mark Wildman, having previously studied with Matthew Best. He has been awarded the Manchester Welsh Society Prize, the Elsie Thurston Prize, and the James Martin Oncken Prize. Last summer, he made his debut with British Youth Opera as Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*, and his RNCM credits include Blansac in *La scala di seta* and Siroco in *L'étoile*. Will would like to express his gratitude to the Ian Scott Award for their generous support of his studies.

JOHANNES GERGES

Johannes Gerges is a 24-year-old bass currently studying on the PgDip programme at the RNCM with Mark Wildman. Prior to his studies at the RNCM, he completed his MMus and ProfDip at Trinity Laban, where he performed the roles of Fra Domenico in Jennifer Hamilton's *Strozzi* and Elymas in Errollyn Wallen's *Dido's Ghost*. In 2024, Johannes covered the role of

Leporello in Hurn Court Opera's production of *Don Giovanni*. As an Alvarez Emerging Artist, he will join the chorus at Garsington Opera this summer for *Queen of Spades* and *Fidelio*, where he will also cover the role of Second Prisoner in *Fidelio*.

KRISTEN GREGORY

Kristen Gregory is a 23-year-old tenor currently in his first postgraduate year at the RNCM. His opera credits include King Ouf in Chabrier's *L'étoile* and Boggart in the RNCM's 2023 production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*. In Dorset Opera's 2023 production of *Le Roi de Lahore*, Kristen covered the role of Un Chef, and in 2024, he performed the role of Gastone in the 50th Anniversary Gala Concert of Dorset Opera, singing from Verdi's *La traviata*. Kristen's studies are supported by the South Square Trust, the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, and the Andrew Lloyd Webber Scholarship.

SAM ROSE

Sam Rose is a 21-year-old British tenor studying with Andrew Heggie. He began his singing career at the age of seven as a chorister at Radley College. Initially, he performed musical theatre roles, including Judas in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Curly in *Oklahoma!*, as well as in works such as *Noye's Fludde*, where he played Jaffet. One of his most notable performances was with the *Buddy Ensemble*, conducted by John Lubbock, at the Royal Albert Hall. His recent performances include *Bernstein's Mass*, *The Snow Maiden*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Mozart's *Mass in C minor*. His most recent role was Bastien in Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*, performed around Lincolnshire and at the RNCM.

JAMES CONNOLLY

James is a postgraduate student, currently studying with Mark Wildman and previously with Matthew Best. During his time at the RNCM, he has won First Prize in the Frederick

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Cox Award for Singing and the Bessie Cronshaw Song Cycle Prize. James was also awarded the Williams Howard 'Honourable Mention.' His studies have been generously supported by the Stanley Picker Trust and the Francis Higgins Bursary.

James has previously performed the roles of Edmund Bertram in Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park* and Byermyata in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*. He looks forward to making his debut at the Topsham Music Festival soon after Easter.

ALEX RIDDELL

Alex is a first-year master's baritone, studying with Mark Wildman and gratefully supported by the Francis Higgins Bursary and the Waverley Fund Scholarships. During his time at the RNCM, Alex has appeared in various productions and opera scenes, including Elder McClean in *Susannah* and Toby in *The Medium*. His professional engagements include performing *The Messiah*

at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall and with the Amersham Choral Society, singing with Nick Vedder and Gothic Opera, and participating as a chorus member with the Philharmonia Chorus in their production of *La bohème* in Lille at Le Nouveau Siècle. He has also appeared as a soloist in the Carrington Lane Church Emerging Artist series. Upcoming engagements include performing as a soloist at the Pennine Spring Music Festival and as a Young Artist at the Buxton International Festival.

ELLIE FORRESTER

Scottish soprano Ellie Forrester is a first-year master's student at the RNCM, studying under Mary Plazas. Her operatic roles include Asphodèle in *L'étoile* (RNCM), La Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Independent), as well as Elettra, Venere, Penelope Rich, and Aunt Norris in RNCM Opera Scenes. Recently, she was a finalist in the Frederick Cox Award and won second place in The Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for the

Singing of Strauss. She is also an RNCM Songster.

Next term, Ellie will perform as Arabella in RNCM opera scenes and as the soprano soloist in Mahler's *Symphony No 2* at The Bridgewater Hall. Ellie is supported by the Sylvia Wyndham Bursary, the Dame Eva Turner Award, the McGlashan Trust, and SIET.

KIRSTY MCNAUGHTON

Scottish soprano Kirsty is currently in her postgraduate diploma year at the RNCM, studying under Eiddwen Harry. She is a recipient of the Dame Eva Turner Award for her final year at the Northern. In the summer of 2024, Kirsty was a young artist at the Buxton International Festival, where she performed in the chorus of the main stage opera *Ernani*, and at the Southrepp Festival, working with David Parry, Ben Johnston, and James Platt. Kirsty also made her role debut as Princess Laoula in RNCM's winter production of *L'étoile*.

The background of the poster features a dark, textured surface with several large, spherical virus-like particles. These particles have a granular, textured surface and are surrounded by numerous thin, hair-like spikes or filaments. Some of these spikes are illuminated with a warm, golden light, creating a sense of depth and focus. The overall aesthetic is scientific and mysterious, with a focus on the microscopic world of viruses and medicine.

RNCM

TUE 24 JUN 2025, 7PM

Dangerous Matter: A New Opera on Medicine, Memory and Innovation

Dangerous Matter is part of the
Thanks for the Memories project,
supported by the Wellcome Trust.

Zakiya Leeming *composer*

Sam Redway Wells *director, dramaturg*

Melvin Tay *conductor*



Tickets from £12

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

ROSA SPARKS

Rosa is currently completing her Postgraduate Diploma under the tutelage of Elizabeth Ritchie. During her studies, she won the prestigious Frederic Cox Award for Singing, the Betty Bannerman Award for French Song with Clonter Opera, and the Dame Eva Turner Award.

Rosa's notable operatic engagements include Emmie in *Albert Herring* with Opera North and Aloès in *L'étoile* with RNCM. Other roles include Lucilla in *La Scala di Seta*, Yum-Yum in *The Mikado*, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas*.

This summer, she will join Grange Park Opera, performing in the chorus and as Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. Rosa's studies are supported by The Helen Rachael Mackaness Trust.

ESTHER SHEA

Soprano Esther Shea is a first-year master's student at the RNCM, studying with Elizabeth Ritchie. Her recent operatic roles include

Youka in *L'étoile*, Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*, and La Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* (scenes). Esther is the winner of the 2025 Williams Howard Prize, a two-time finalist in the Frederic Cox Award, and has performed as part of the RNCM Songsters.

As a concert soloist, she has sung Mozart's *C Minor Mass*, Mendelssohn's *Symphony No 2*, and Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, with Bach's *B Minor Mass* upcoming this spring. She is grateful for the support of the Dame Eva Turner Award and the LHR Charitable Foundation.

CHARLOTTE BAKER

Charlotte Baker is a soprano from Berkshire, currently studying for a PGDip at the RNCM with Mary Plazas. Her studies this year are generously supported by the Dame Eva Turner Award, the Riga Heesom Award, and the Hargreaves and Ball Scholarship.

Charlotte was the 2024 winner of The Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for the singing of Strauss

and a 2024 Young Artist at the Buxton International Festival. Her roles at RNCM include Laoula in Chabrier's *L'étoile* (2024), Lucilla in Rossini's *La Scala di Seta* (2024), and Kupava in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden* (2023).

Passionate about making music accessible to all, Charlotte balances her studies with teaching a portfolio of pupils.

HANNAH ANDRUSIER

Hannah is currently completing her master's degree under the mentorship of Elizabeth Ritchie. She has received generous support from the Eva Turner Award and the Sybil Tutton Opera Award. This season at the RNCM, Hannah has made two role debuts: Mrs Julian in Britten's *Owen Wingrave* and Aloès in Chabrier's *L'étoile*. She will also join the Buxton International Festival as a Young Artist this summer.

Her professional engagements include regular performances at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the My Great

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Orchestral Adventure concert series, as well as with the CBSO and Hallé Orchestra. This season, she returns to the LSO as both presenter and soloist for Discovery concerts at the Barbican.

JEMIMA GRAY

Jemima Gray is a mezzo-soprano currently pursuing a Master's in Vocal Performance at the RNCM with Mary Plazas. Her operatic roles include The Abbess in *Suor Angelica* (Berlin Opera Academy), Hänsel cover in *Hänsel & Gretel* (Berlin Opera Academy), The Attendant in *A Trip to the Moon* (Garsington Opera), Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte* (National Opera Studio Exploring Opera), Laetitia in *The Old Maid and the Thief* (RNCM Opera Scenes), and Mrs Ford in *Sir John in Love* (RNCM Opera Scenes). This year, she looks forward to performing as Kate in *Owen Wingrave* (RNCM Summer Opera 2025) and joining the Young Artist programme at the Buxton Opera Festival. Jemima is generously supported by the Alice Orrell and A&N Kendall Award and

the Hargreaves and Ball Scholarship.

DAISY MITCHELL

Daisy is a 24-year-old mezzo-soprano from the Staffordshire Moorlands, currently in her second year of a master's degree, studying with Sam Queen.

Her previous roles include Lazuli in *Chabrier's L'étoile* (RNCM) and Nicklaus in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* (Preston Opera). In 2023, Daisy was a Young Artist at the Waterperry Opera Festival, where she performed various opera scenes and sang in the chorus of Bizet's *Carmen*. In 2021, she performed in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Grange Festival.

Daisy looks forward to joining Buxton International Opera Festival as a Young Artist this season. She is grateful for the support of the Annie Ridyard Scholarship in furthering her studies.

OSCAR BOWEN-HILL

Tenor Oscar Bowen-Hill is in the first year of his master's degree under the tutelage of Yvonne Howard, with generous support from the William and Frances Dobie Charitable Foundation and the Oglesby Charitable Trust.

Oscar graduated in Cognitive Science from Sussex University in 2023 and spent 2024 as a scholar with the Oxford Bach Soloists and at St Paul's, Knightsbridge. There, he performed solos in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and *St John's Passion*, as well as a recital of Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*.

Since arriving at the RNCM, highlights have included performing Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* in March, and being cast in the new opera *Dangerous Matter*, set to premiere in June 2025.

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SAMUEL HORTON

Samuel, from Stoke-on-Trent, has performed various operatic roles at the RNCM, including Mr Rushworth in Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park*, Dr Blind in Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*, and Patacha in Emmanuel Chabrier's *L'étoile*. In the summer of 2024, he portrayed the Male Chorus in Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* with the British Youth Opera. Other highlights of his repertoire include Gerald Finzi's *Dies Natalis*, which he performed with the Amaretti Chamber Orchestra in May 2024. Samuel is also excited to announce that he has been accepted into the 2025 National Opera Studio Academy cohort and will be joining the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as a master's scholar.

GABRIEL JONES

A tenor in the first year of his postgraduate degree, Gabriel studies with Mark Wildman and thanks the David Williams Memorial Award for having made his time at the RNCM possible.

As an undergraduate, Gabriel read French and History at King's College, Cambridge, where he also sang in the mixed-voice chapel choir, King's Voices. Depending on the hour, Gabriel credits or blames the Opera North Youth Chorus for his obsession with the art form.

GRANT HADDOW

Grant Haddow is a Scottish tenor currently in his first year of a Master of Music degree at the RNCM, studying under Quentin Hayes.

His operatic engagements include chorus roles in *Hänsel und Gretel* (RCS), *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Tosca*, and *Die Zauberflöte* (Scottish Opera), as well as performances in *Mispey*, *Anamchara*, *Dr Ferret's Bad Medicine Roadshow*, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, and *Dido and Aeneas* (Scottish Opera Young Company). He has also performed in *Venus and Adonis* and *Le nozze di Figaro* (RWCMD).

Grant made his principal role debut as Alfred and Dr Blind in *Die*

Fledermaus (Edinburgh Studio Opera) and is currently preparing for the roles of The Narrator in *Owen Wingrave* (RNCM) and Gastone in *La traviata* (Preston Opera).



RNCM

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With Antony Hermus *conductor*



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