

A watercolor illustration of a fox and a man in a forest. The fox is on the left, facing right, with a reddish-brown coat. The man is on the right, facing left, with a dark blue silhouette. The background is a soft, misty forest with green and yellow trees. The foreground has abstract watercolor washes in blue, green, yellow, and red.

SUN 22 - SAT 28 MAR 2026

Janáček: The Cunning Little Vixen

RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

Sun 22 and Sat 28 Mar, 3pm
Tue 24 and Thu 26 Mar, 7.30pm

RNCM Theatre

Janáček: The Cunning Little Vixen

Leoš Janáček The Cunning Little Vixen
Reduced Orchestration by **Jonathan Lyness**
Libretto by **Leoš Janáček** based on the novella
Liška Bystrouška by **Rudolf Těsnohládek**
English Translation by **Sir David Poutney**

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Thank you to the RNCM Opera Circle for generously
supporting this production.

Welcome

Welcome to the RNCM Theatre – a space purpose-built for opera that has also hosted some of the most distinguished and distinctive voices in both classical and popular music, from Sir John Tomlinson and Jane Eaglen to Marc Almond and Adele.

Today, we're excited to welcome you here to support the next generation of musicians and enjoy a performance of Leoš Janáček's enduring opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*. The composer was inspired to create his innovative work after reading a serialised version of Rudolf Těsnohlídek's 1920s novella of the same name in a Czech newspaper, and Janáček (then around 70 years old) was so moved by Těsnohlídek's simple animal fable that he turned it into a profound meditation on life's eternal cycle, drawing further inspiration from the Moravian folk tunes of his youth and his fears about his own mortality.

More than a century later, its timeless themes continue to resonate. Human and animal worlds collide in a thought-provoking allegory on humanity, fate, vitality, and the cycle of life, one that elevates wildlife from the realms of fairytales to ask philosophical questions about the responsibilities we owe to nature. While we watch Sharpers, the vixen, escape from the cruelty of captivity to live a fulfilling but short life with her mate and cubs, her captor Forester quietly ploughs into remorseful old age haunted by her memory. It is only in the final moments of the work that Forester returns to the spot from where he snatched Sharpers

as a cub and experiences something transcendent – the realisation that we are all participating in the great cycle, that every aspect of nature has its own value and voice.

Opera performances are a vital part of training for all students in the RNCM's School of Vocal Studies and Opera (SVSO) and that training is extensive and demanding. Our students spend many months refining their skills in languages, movement, stage combat, acting, and collaboration between voice and orchestra to meet the professional standards expected by our guest creative teams, which this time includes conductor Martin Pickard and director Harry Fehr, set and costume designer Nicky Shaw, and lighting designer Mark Jonathan. Ever since our foundation in 1973, opera has been integrated into the vocal training of all students in SVSO, and the RNCM remains proud of that approach.

We hope you enjoy this production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* and look forward to welcoming you back to the RNCM soon. Our next opera is Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, running from Sun 13 to Sat 19 Dec. Tickets will be on sale this summer.

Synopsis

ACT I

Scene i

The forest; May; late afternoon.

The Forester is on his way home and a young vixen runs by him. He decides to pause by a tree for a nap.

In his dream, Sharpears, enters a bar, claiming that she is looking for her mother. Suddenly she pulls out a gun, terrifying the other customers.

On waking, the Forester sees the young vixen again. He takes her home for his grandson, Pepík.

Scene ii

The yard of the Forester's house; immediately after.

The Forester introduces his family to their new pet. His wife is horrified but Pepík is delighted.

A few months later; afternoon.

The vixen has reached adulthood and even Catcher, the Forester's dog, has grown to like his new companion. The Forester imagines what they might talk about.

Pepík brings a friend to meet his pet, but the vixen is unimpressed by the boys' teasing and attacks them. The Forester's Wife is furious, and the vixen is tied up.

The Forester dreams of Sharpears as an inmate in a women's prison, making a daring bid for freedom.

He wakes and the vixen escapes.

ACT II

Scene i

The forest; the next day; evening.

Having seen the Badger crossing his path, the Forester imagines Sharpears taking possession of a rich man's apartment.

Scene ii

The garden of The Fox & Badger pub; September; very late.

The Forester is drinking with his friends the Schoolmaster and the Parson. He teases the Schoolmaster about his long-lasting but unrequited love for a woman called Terynka. In revenge, the Schoolmaster mocks the Forester for allowing the vixen to escape.

Scene iii

The forest; immediately after.

The Schoolmaster is walking home, drunk. He thinks he sees Terynka and declares his love to her. The Parson is also walking the same way home. He pauses to smoke and remembers a girl he loved. A gunshot is heard and the Schoolmaster and Parson run off. The Forester appears, certain he has seen the vixen.

Scene iv

The forest; January; around midnight.

The vixen finds a mate.

In the Forester's dream, Sharpears tells Goldenmane her history and he's entranced by her independence and bravery. They overcome initial awkwardness and declare their love.

Synopsis

Some weeks later.

The vixen is pregnant, and the Forester dreams of her wedding.

INTERVAL

ACT III

Scene i

The forest; May; night.

The Forester runs into Harašta, a man he suspects is a poacher. Harašta tells the Forester of his forthcoming wedding to Terynka. He points out a dead hare, and the Forester suspects that the vixen was responsible. He decides to lie in wait for her. However, almost as soon as he sits down, he falls asleep.

The Forester dreams of Sharpears, Goldenmane, and their children. A cop has tried to entrap them, but they recognise the bait and get rid of it. They hear the cop returning and Goldenmane and the children run off. The cop chases Sharpears and threatens her with a gun, but she successfully disarms him. As she enjoys her victory, he draws a second, hidden gun and shoots her dead.

The Forester wakes to discover that Harašta has killed the vixen.

Scene ii

The garden of The Fox & Badger pub; a few days later; late afternoon.

The Forester tells the Schoolmaster how he recently found the vixen's den, but it was abandoned. The Schoolmaster reveals that it is the day of Terynka's wedding.

Scene iii

The forest; immediately after.

The Forester contemplates his life and his past happiness with his wife. As he looks around him, he is overwhelmed by the beauty of the natural world.

He imagines he sees Sharpears' daughter and is finally able to find a sense of peace.

A close-up photograph of a young woman with brown hair and glasses, smiling warmly while playing a violin. She is wearing a dark jacket. The background is softly blurred, showing other musicians and the warm lighting of a concert hall.

RNCM

FRI 26 JUN 2026 | 7.30PM

Tchaikovsky
Symphony No 6
RNCM Symphony
Orchestra

The Bridgewater Hall

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Creative Team

Martin Pickard

conductor

Harry Fehr

director

Nicky Shaw

set and costume designer

Mark Jonathan

lighting designer

Kevin Thraves

chorus director

Ewan Jones

movement

Rosina Flueckiger*

assistant conductor

Juan José Muñoz Borja

offstage conductor

Tom Henderson

production répétiteur

***Sat 28 Mar**

Casts (in order of appearance)

Charlie Barker~, **David Bicarregui~^**

Forester

Sarah Rappoport*

Catcher, the Forester's dog

Katrina Mackenzie*

Young Sharpears

Yulin Zhu* *Cricket*

Maria Pottle~* *Grasshopper*

Gabriel Jones~* *Mosquito*

Lucy Breakwell* *Frog*

Ellena Hicks~* *Owl*

Catriona Arthur *Jay*

Sam Rose* *Cockerel*

Bonnie Staude~* *Hen*

Jemima Gray~, **Claire Runcie^**

Forester's Wife

Sophia Parker~*

Pepík, Forester's grandson

Clementine Thompson,

Hannah Andrusier~^

Sharpears, a vixen

Ruth Harley~*

Frantík, Pepík's friend

Benjamin Finnie, Alex Peart^

Badger

Christian Loizou~, **George Elson^**

Parson

Jay Broadhurst~, **Rafael Rojas~^**

Schoolmaster

Grant Haddow* *Mr Pásek, a publican*

Morgan Rosati~* *Mrs Pásek*

Esther Shea~, **Ellie Forrester~^**

Goldenmane, a fox

Merel-Magali Cox~*

Woodpecker

Khaled Issa~, **Edward Wenborn^**

Harašta

Lucy Breakwell*

Frog's grandson

^ Tue 24 and Sat 28 Mar

* All performances

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Oli Barber
Alex Bassett-Chan
Isaac Bentley
Ivy Blackmoor
Pia Brondel~
Josh Carton
Charlotte Cathcart
Bella Chen
Charlotte Dear
Melody Dong
Alaw Evans~
Oscar Fairclough
Billy Gardiner
Milly Holden

Macy Jagger
Mila Johannsen~
Ruby Lewin~
Imogen Lock~
Shyen Yii Loh
Safia McKinney-Askeur~
Amelia McQuire
Hannah Millett
Liam Ormiston
Amy Patton
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Abigail Routh
Tamsin Schofield

Nico Shaw
Chrina Shen
Katie Shepperdson
Kate South
Saff Stringer
Erin Thomas
Colm Traynor-Bucknall
Anna Tsoi
Lauren Walch
Grace Wexler
Ross Worthington
Alex Yehorychev
Maggie Zhao~
Venus Zhu

RNCM Opera Orchestra

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Nyra Jain
Emily Harpley Gebbels
Macie Wallis~

SECOND VIOLINS

Joel Hill
Elanor Leydecker
David Tan~

VIOLAS

Sophie Combes
Matthew Hayes~

CELLOS

Abigail Webb
Cillian Hennessy

BASS

Duarte Colaco

FLUTE

Jess Foxwell (picc)

OBOE

Becky Corcoran (cor)

CLARINET

Cara Smith

BASSOON

Bia Carvalho

HORN

Esmé MacBride-Stewart

TRUMPET

Erin McLellan (flugel)

PERCUSSION/TIMPANI

Ranco Liu
Lois Lezdkan

HARP

Ana Nadais

CELESTE

Lang Cheng

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To find out how you can support an individual student through a scholarship or bursary, contact **Eve Riley**, Head of Philanthropy at eve.riley@rncm.ac.uk.



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

Louise Morgan *Deputy Stage Manager (Props)*

Julie Parker *Lighting Manager*

Ellie Whitfield, Simon Alford *Deputy Lighting Managers*

Steve Barrington *Deputy Technical Manager*

Samreen Ali, Phil Treadwell-Middle *Technical Placements*

Tina Blatt *Prop Maker*

Hanna Novak *Scenic Artist*

Osin McMahon *Fly Operative*

Simon 'Digger' Warner *Rigger*

Elaine Needham *Wardrobe Manager*

Rebecca Parkes *Deputy Wardrobe Manager*

Nadia Jeljeli *Wardrobe Assistant*

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

Laura Surcombe *Wigs, Hair and Make-Up Assistant*

Sophie Akka, Libby Montgomery *Surtile Operators*

Liverpool Scenic Workshops *Scenic Construction*

Sound and AV support provided by the RNCM Sound and Video Department

Creative Team Biographies

MARTIN PICKARD

Martin Pickard was Head of Music at Opera North from 2008 to 2015. After studying at Cambridge University and the Royal College of Music, he began his operatic career in Germany, where he conducted a wide repertoire ranging from Handel to Penderecki. He joined Opera North in 1989 and conducted more than two dozen productions there, including *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Macbeth*, *Boris Godunov*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Carmen*, *Tosca*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Peter Grimes*, *Trouble in Tahiti*, and *Falstaff*.

Between 2010 and 2016 he was closely involved in preparing Opera North's acclaimed version of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, conducted by Richard Farnes. A long association with Glyndebourne has seen him working as an assistant and senior coach for conductors including Vladimir Jurowski, Jiří Bělohávek, and Robin Ticciati. In 2006, he made his Glyndebourne conducting debut with Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*.

He has also worked at ENO, Buxton International Festival, Perth International Arts Festival (Western Australia), Bregenzer Festspiele, and Longborough Festival Opera. Between 2019 and 2024 he assisted Vladimir Jurowski on semi-staged performances of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Southbank Centre.

Operatic conducting engagements outside Opera North have included

Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in a production by Brigitte Fassbaender (Tiroler Landestheater Innsbruck, 2004) and Chabrier's *L'Etoile* (RNCM, 2024). His singing translations of Russian opera arias have been published by Edition Peters, and ENO has performed his translations of *Raskatov's A Dog's Heart* (2010) and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* (2011).

As a collaborative pianist he has appeared with singers including Lesley Garrett, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Fflur Wyn, Ilker Arcayürek, and Brindley Sherratt. He is a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Leeds, and a Visiting Coach at the RNCM and the National Opera Studio.

HARRY FEHR

British-born opera director Harry Fehr is recognised for his thoughtful, thought provoking productions that explore a broad repertoire through clear and compelling storytelling.

Recent engagements include *The Elixir of Love* for English National Opera, *La Sonnambula* for Buxton International Festival, and *Cavalleria Rusticana* for Blackheath Halls Opera. He has a close association with Blackheath Halls Opera, where he has also staged *Eugene Onegin*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Cendrillon*, *Count Ory*, *Noye's Fludde*, and *Semele*, working with professionals alongside participants from the local community.

Fehr's significant directorial successes include numerous productions for

Creative Team Biographies

Scottish Opera: *Orlando, Il matrimonio segreto*, *La Cenerentola*, Craig Armstrong's *The Lady from the Sea* (winner of The Herald Angel Award 2012), *Die fliegende Holländer*, and *Ariodante*. Other notable projects include *Tosca* for Nederlandse Reisopera, *Roberto Devereux* for Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, and *Orlando* for San Francisco Opera. His fully rehearsed production of *Peter Grimes* for Theater Basel was sadly cancelled during the pandemic. He has also directed: *Orlando* for Welsh National Opera; *Falstaff* for Shanghai Opera House; *L'elisir d'amore* for Danish National Opera (Production of the Year in the CPHCulture.dk awards); *Così fan tutte* for Opera Holland Park; and *La finta giardiniera* and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* for Buxton International Festival.

Fehr's work with young artists includes: *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* for the Guildhall School of Music and Drama; *La finta giardiniera* for the Royal College of Music; *Le nozze di Figaro* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* for the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama; *Rinaldo* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* for Trinity Laban Conservatoire; and *Così fan tutte* (nominated for a Manchester Theatre Award in 2016) and *La bohème* for Clonter Opera. In demand as an interpreter of *Handel*, he has been engaged by the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts to stage *Giulio Cesare* and by the Dutch National Opera Academy for *Radamisto*.

Harry Fehr studied philosophy at the University of Nottingham and was a

member of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

NICKY SHAW

Nicky Shaw is an international set and costume designer.

She has designed productions for many leading companies in the UK and extensively in Europe, including: the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Garsington Opera, Irish National Opera, the Norwegian National Opera, Royal Swedish Opera, Royal Danish Opera, Danish National Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Polish National Opera, and La Monnaie, as well as productions in South Korea.

Many of her productions have been nominated for or have won major Best Opera awards.

Her opera work includes: *The Railway Children* (Glyndebourne Opera); *The Elixir of Love* (ENO); *New Year* (Birmingham Opera – nominated for Opera & Music Theatre, 2025 RPS Awards); *La Bohème* (Montpellier Opera and Irish National Opera); *La Cenerentola* (Irish National Opera – nominated for Best Set Design and Best Production, Irish Times Theatre Awards); and *Dead Man Walking* (Royal Danish Opera – winner of Best Opera, Reumert Awards).

Her theatre work includes: *Indian Ink* (Hampstead Theatre); *Bloody*

Creative Team Biographies

Difficult Women (Riverside Studios and Edinburgh Fringe Festival); *The Whip* (RSC – costumes); and *Dancing Shadows* (Opera Theatre Seoul – winner of five Korean Musical Awards, including Best Musical).

Nicky has served as a judge for the Linbury Prize, delivered a talk at the V&A in London, led educational workshops for INO, ENO, and Garsington, is a mentor for emerging designers, and is a Trustee Director of the Society of British Theatre Designers.

MARK JONATHAN

Mark Jonathan has lit opera, ballet, drama, musical, and ice productions extensively. Opera designs in the UK include: *The Railway Children*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Vanessa* (Glyndebourne); *Suor Angelica*, *The Elixir of Love* (ENO); *The Barber of Seville*, *The Magic Flute*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *The Mikado*, *Don Giovanni*, *Jenůfa*, *La Traviata*, *The Marriage of Figaro* (Scottish Opera); *Così fan tutte*, *I Puritani*, *Lulu*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *The Freedom Season* (Welsh National Opera); *L'elisir d'amore*, *Semele*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Il turco in Italia* (Garsington); and productions at Guildhall, the Royal College of Music, The Royal Ballet, Northern Ballet, Grange Festival, Dorset Opera, Longborough, Opera Holland Park, the National Theatre, Chichester Festival, Edinburgh Festival, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Exchange, many regional theatres, and the West End.

His international work includes *Mathis*

der Maler, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, and *Giulio Cesare* (Vienna), as well as productions in Aarhus, Antwerp, Banff, Barcelona, Beijing, Bergen, Berlin, Bolzano, Cape Town, Charleston, Copenhagen, Cork, Dublin, Florence, Ghent, Helsinki, Houston, Johannesburg, Kuwait, Los Angeles, Madrid, Mexico City, Munich, New York, Oslo, Paris, Potsdam, Rome, Spoleto, Stockholm, St Petersburg, Strasbourg, Stuttgart, Tokyo, Toronto, Toulouse, and Washington. Formerly, he worked at Glyndebourne from 1978 to 1992 and was Head of Lighting at the National Theatre from 1993 to 2003.

He was a member of the British Team at the Prague Quadrennial and a finalist in World Stage Design in 2013. He received a Drama Desk nomination for *Prometheus Bound* in New York and was nominated for the Knight of Illumination for *Lulu* at WNO. He subsequently won the award for *Vanessa* at Glyndebourne. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Deputy Chair of the Association for Lighting-Production and Design.

KEVIN THRAVES

Prior to being appointed as Deputy Head of Opera in the School of Vocal Studies and Opera at the RNCM, Kevin worked as a freelance répétiteur, opera music staff, and as a collaborative pianist with numerous professional companies and organisations.

Kevin has worked for many leading opera companies and orchestras

Creative Team Biographies

including English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Opera North, Opera Rara, the Hallé, BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Academy of Ancient Music, BBC Proms, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. UK concert appearances include the Royal Festival Hall, 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's varied career led to work across Europe, Asia, and Oceania in concert halls and opera houses.

Kevin has delivered masterclasses throughout the UK, Scandinavia, Canada, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Australia, India, and the USA.

Recent commercial recordings include Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*, Cellier's *Dorothy*, and Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. In 2025, Kevin was invited to sit as a panel member for the Voices of Black Opera international singing competition.

ROSINA FLUECKIGER

Rosina Flueckiger is a Swiss conductor with a rapidly growing international profile.

In the 2025/26 season, she will serve as Assistant Conductor to Ludovic Morlot with the Symphony Orchestra of Barcelona and the National Orchestra of Catalonia. In September 2025, she led

the BBC Philharmonic in nine concerts in schools across Manchester.

In 2024, she conducted the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich at its Conductors' Academy under the guidance of Paavo Järvi. That same summer, she was selected for the Meisterkurs Dirigieren at the prestigious Bayreuther Festspiele, working with Günther Albers, Simone Young, Pablo Heras-Casado, Semyon Bychkov, Oksana Lyniv, and Nathalie Stutzmann.

In 2023, she was chosen by Peter Rundel to participate in the Pocket Opera Salzburg, where she conducted the premiere and subsequent performances of a new opera. That August, she won Second Prize at the Opéra de Baugé International Conducting Competition.

In 2022, she was selected by the Peter Eötvös Foundation to conduct Magnus Lindberg's *Jubilees* in Budapest.

At the Vienna Opera Festival 2021, she served as Assistant Conductor for productions of *Così fan tutte* (conducting one performance), *La traviata*, and *Rigoletto*.

Rosina studied conducting with Marc Kissoczy, Arturo Tamayo, and Francesco Bossaglia, as well as piano with Mauro Harsch, at the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana. She is currently completing postgraduate studies in orchestral and choral conducting at the RNCM in Manchester with Mark Heron, Clark Rundell, David Hill, and Nicolás Pasquet, supported by a generous Waverley Fund scholarship.

Creative Team Biographies

In addition to conducting, she plays the clarinet and sings with the SoprAlti Choir of the Opernhaus Zürich.

Rosina is bilingual in Italian and German, and also speaks French, Spanish, and English.

EWAN JONES

Ewan Jones trained at the Arts Educational Schools London and works across musical theatre, opera, and screen. His international credits include: *The Phantom of the Opera* (World Tour); *COMPANY* (Tour and Châtelet, Paris); *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Semperoper Dresden, Opéra de Lille, Opéra de Limoges); *Something Rotten!*, *Nunsense*, and *Sister Act* (The English Theatre, Frankfurt); *Matilda the Musical* (Folketeateret, Oslo); *Archipel(s)* (Opéra Comique, Paris); *Tick, tick... BOOM!* (Bridge Theatre, Brussels); *Der Mond* (Opéra National de Lyon); *L'Étoile* (Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, Lisbon); and various productions across Singapore, the Middle East, Greece, and beyond.

In the UK, his credits include: *Candide* (Welsh National Opera); *The Barber of Seville*, *Fantasio*, and *Vert-Vert* (Garsington Opera); *She Loves Me* and *The Wizard of Oz* (Sheffield Crucible); *Travels with My Aunt* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Yeomen of the Guard* (The Grange Festival); *Ragtime* (Charing Cross Theatre); *Bring It On* (Southwark Playhouse); *The Tales of Hoffmann* (English Touring Opera); *13 The Musical* (Ambassadors Theatre, London); *Ariodante* and *Giove in Argo*

(London Handel Festival); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Royal Academy of Music); *Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens* (Criterion Theatre); *The Three Little Pigs* (London and UK tour); *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland); *Milky Peaks* (Theatre Clwyd); *Merrily We Roll Along* and *Crazy for You* (Guildhall); *Into the Woods* (RADA); *West Side Story* (Future Stages, Manchester); *Altar Boyz* (Greenwich Theatre); *The Mikado* (Co-Opera); *The Dreaming* (The Rose Theatre, Kingston); *Mexican Hayride* (Sadler's Wells); and *Don Pasquale* (Opera Holland Park).

On screen, Ewan was choreographer and Movement Director for Netflix's *Sex Education* and choreographer for the Disney+ series *Renegade Nell*.

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Cast Biographies

HANNAH ANDRUSIER

Hannah Andrusier is a soprano currently completing her Postgraduate Diploma at the RNCM under Elizabeth Ritchie. She previously read French at Somerville College, Oxford. Her roles include Vixen (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Mrs Julian (*Owen Wingrave*), Aloès (*L'étoile*), and Jinnee in the forthcoming world premiere of Matthew Warren's *Caillagh* (September 2026).

Hannah was a 2025 Young Artist with the Buxton International Festival and has appeared with the London Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé, Clonter Opera, and at the Royal Albert Hall. Later this season, she is delighted to be joining Grange Park Opera and the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival.

She is generously supported by the José and Rafton Smallwood Award and the Dame Eva Turner Award.

CATRIONA ARTHUR

Catriona Arthur is a Scottish soprano currently studying for a Master of Music at the RNCM, under the tutelage of Yvonne Howard. She has gained performance experience with English National Opera, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Chorus, Scottish Opera Young Company, and the Bundesjugendorchester. Her role experience includes Ellen (*Lakmé*), Ernestina (*L'occasione fa il ladro*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), First Fairy (*The Fairy Queen*), and Oberto (*Alcina*).

Catriona is an Absolute Classics Young Artist for 2025/26, during which she has worked with Simon Callaghan and Yuki Negishi.

CHARLIE BARKER

Charlie Barker is a 26 year old baritone from Wiltshire. He joined the RNCM in 2021 and sang in the chorus of the College's 2022 production of *Die Fledermaus*. In 2023, he performed the role of Onegin in Preston Opera's production of *Eugene Onegin*.

In 2024, Charlie appeared with Opera Rara in the chorus of *Simon Boccanegra*, conducted by Sir Mark Elder. He completed his undergraduate studies that same year before taking a gap year to travel to various parts of the world.

Charlie has now returned to the UK to begin his postgraduate degree as an ABRSM Scholar. He recently performed the role of Pantalón in the RNCM autumn opera, Prokofiev's *L'Amour des Trois Oranges*. He is supported by the Dame Patricia Routledge Award and the Maureen Spurgin Award.

DAVID BICARREGUI

David Bicarregui is a postgraduate baritone and composer, graduating with First Class honours from the University of Manchester and the RNCM Graduate Diploma programme. Supported by the Ann Gerrard Bursaries and the Sybil Tutton Opera Award, he studies with Mark Wildman, having previously worked with Andrew Heggie. Recent performance credits include Leporello



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Cast Biographies

(*Don Giovanni*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), and Father Frost (*The Snowmaiden*). He has appeared as a soloist with The Hallé Orchestra and will join The Grange Festival chorus for the 2026 season, covering Benoit/Alcindoro in *La bohème*.

As a composer, David studies with Tom Coult. His opera, *Capsule*, premiered to two soldout houses in 2024 and will return to the stage in 2026.

LUCY BREAKWELL

Lucy Breakwell is a British soprano currently in the final year of the Graduate Diploma of the RNCM programme after gaining a First with the Dean's Award in Music from The University of Manchester. She studies with Yvonne Howard.

Her operatic roles include First Alms Sister (*Suor Angelica*, Dorset Opera Festival), Eurydice (*Orpheus in the Underworld*, MUMS Opera), and Bastienne (*Bastien et Bastienne*, Bread and Bus Stop). She has also performed the roles of Sifare and Zerlina in scenes from *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, and *Don Giovanni*.

Lucy was recently awarded the Procter-Gregg Prize for Performance for achieving the highest third-year recital mark at The University of Manchester.

JAY BROADHURST

Praised for his '*lean, polished tenor*' by *Opera Magazine*, British/Irish tenor Jay Broadhurst is becoming a notable presence on the UK opera scene. A student of Mark Wildman and recipient of the prestigious Frederic Cox Award for Singing, he has recently debuted as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* (Dorset Opera Festival) and appeared as Macduff/Malcolm in *Macbeth* (Chelsea Opera Group).

Other roles include Alfredo in *La traviata*, Le Prince in *L'Amour des Trois Oranges*, Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Borsa in *Rigoletto*, Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Garsington Opera), Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, and King Ouf in *L'étoile*. He has also performed Spoletta in *Tosca* and the Preacher in Bernstein's *Mass*.

This season, Jay made

his Wigmore Hall debut performing Schumann's *Dichterliebe* as a Young Artist for the Musician's Company. He is supported by the Musician's Company and the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation. Offstage, he is a loyal Manchester United supporter.

MEREL-MAGALI COX

Dutch mezzo-soprano Merel-Magali Cox is a Master of Music student studying with Mary Plazas, supported by Help Musicians, Het Cultuurfonds, the James and Mary Glass Scholarship, the Peter Snook Award, and the Dame Eva Turner Award. Her operatic roles include Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Linette (*L'Amour des Trois Oranges*), Solomon (*Solomon*), and Idamante (*Idomeneo*, abridged).

An RNCM Songster, she was a finalist in the Frederic Cox Award, won the RNCM Song Cycle Competition, and was runner-up in the Williams-Howard Prize. Concert highlights include *Messiah*, the Bach Passions, *Sea Pictures*, *The Music*

Makers, and numerous requiems.

Next term, she joins Buxton Festival as a Young Artist and will perform Fidalma in *Il matrimonio segreto* with Kleine Opera.

GEORGE ELSON

Lincolnshire-born bass George Elson is in his final undergraduate year at the RNCM, studying with Quentin Hayes. His RNCM roles include the Parson (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) and Le Héraut/La Cuisinière (*L'Amour des Trois Oranges*). He also performs regularly with his company, Fenwold Opera, recently singing the title role in Handel's *Hercules*. Passionate about art song, George focuses on German Lieder, especially the works of Carl Loewe, alongside Schubert's *Schwanengesang* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*.

Recent engagements include Il Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) with Flat Pack Music and Doctor Grenville (*La Traviata*) for Preston Opera. This summer he joins the Buxton International Festival Young Artist Programme before

returning home to develop Fenwold Opera's upcoming *Dido and Aeneas*.

BENJAMIN FINNIE

Hailing from Cheshire, Benjamin Finnie is a third year undergraduate baritone currently studying under Quentin Hayes. Ben has been a performing vocalist since the age of 13, making his début in *The Snowman* at Stoke on Trent's Victoria Hall. Prior to beginning his undergraduate studies, he was a member of the Hallé Youth Choir.

Recently, Ben was selected to represent the RNCM at the Kathleen Ferrier Society Bursary for Young Singers Competition in London. He has also enjoyed performing in opera choruses, most recently appearing as one of *Les Ridicules* in Prokofiev's *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* (RNCM). He is now looking forward to making his operatic solo début as the Badger in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

ELLIE FORRESTER

Ellie Forrester is a Scottish soprano in the final year of her postgraduate studies under Mary Plazas. She has been generously supported by Help Musicians UK, the Sylvia Wyndham Bursary, the McGlashan Trust, SIET, the Elizabeth Izatt Trust, and the Sir James Caird Scholarship.

Her roles include Goldenmane (*The Cunning Little Vixen*, RNCM), Fata Morgana (*L'Amour des Trois Oranges*, RNCM), La Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*, Kleine Opera), and Miss Wingrave (*Owen Wingrave*, RNCM).

This summer, Ellie joins Garsington Opera as an Alvarez Emerging Artist, covering Marianne Leitmetzerin and singing in the chorus for Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*, and in the chorus for Verdi's *La Traviata*.

JEMIMA GRAY

Jemima Gray is a South African-born mezzo-soprano currently in her second year of a Master of Music degree at the RNCM, studying with Mary Plazas.

Cast Biographies

A Buxton Young Artist (2025), her operatic roles include Clarisse in *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* (RNCM Opera), Kate Julian in *Owen Wingrave* (RNCM Opera), the Abbess in *Suor Angelica* (Berlin Opera Academy), the Attendant in *A Trip to the Moon* (Garsington Opera), Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (National Opera Studio – Exploring Opera), and Mrs Ford in *Sir John in Love* (RNCM Opera Scenes).

Jemima looks forward to performing with Opera Holland Park this summer and is generously supported in her studies by the Annie Ridyard Scholarship and the Gwilym Gwalchmai Jones Award.

GRANT HADDOW

Grant Haddow is a Scottish tenor currently in his second year of a Master of Music degree at the RNCM, where he studies with Quentin Hayes.

He made his principal role debut as Dr Blind in *Die Fledermaus* (Edinburgh Studio Opera) and has since performed the Narrator

in *Owen Wingrave* (RNCM), Gastone and Giuseppe in *La Traviata* (Preston Opera), *Ridicule* in *L'Amour des Trois Oranges*, and Mr Pásek in *The Cunning Little Vixen* (RNCM).

For the 2026 summer season, Grant will join the choruses of Opera Holland Park and the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival.

RUTH HARLEY

Ruth is in her second year of postgraduate study under Linda Richardson, supported by the Headley Trust Awards. This summer she sings Sister Genovieffa in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* at the Opéra de Baugé Festival in France, having appeared last summer as Venus in Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*.

Her covered roles include Oscar in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Frasquita in Bizet's *Carmen*, and Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. At the RNCM she has portrayed Dorine in Mechem's *Tartuffe*, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, and the Controller in *Dove's Flight*. In October 2025 she took part in a masterclass at

the Les Arts Florissants Foundation, and she has also performed as a guest singer at the Gstaad Palace in Switzerland with Youri Farkas' Gypsy Orchestra.

ELLENA HICKS

Ellena Hicks is a mezzo-soprano currently studying for a Postgraduate Diploma at the RNCM, under the tutelage of Linda Richardson. Her studies are generously supported by The Scouloudi Foundation, The N W Award, and The Waverley Fund.

Her operatic roles include Lazuli in Chabrier's *L'étoile*, Ottone in Monteverdi's *Kats-Chernin's L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Princess Clarice in *L'Amour des Trois Oranges*. She was a finalist in the 2024 Sydney Eisteddfod Opera Scholarship and the 2023 IFAC Handa Australian Singing Competition.

As an alto soloist, Ellena has performed major works including Bach's *Mass in B Minor*,

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Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Mozart's *Requiem*, and Handel's *Messiah*.

KHALED ISSA

Khaled Issa is an Egyptian baritone currently studying for an Master of Music in Vocal Performance under the tutelage of Quentin Hayes. He is supported by the prestigious Saviris Arts & Culture Scholarship and the generous Alice Orrell and A&N Kendall Award. In 2026, he was awarded the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor First Prize (Williams-Howard Memorial Award).

Originally a bass guitarist in Alexandria, Khaled transitioned to classical singing and joined the Cairo Opera Company and Cairo Symphony Orchestra in 2022. His operatic roles include Belcore, Papageno, Don Giovanni, Morales, and Silvio, and he has appeared in *Carmina Burana* and Fauré's *Requiem*. This May, he will perform the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro*.

GABRIEL JONES

Born in London and now based between Leeds and Manchester, Gabriel Jones is a tenor studying at the RNCM under the tutelage of Mark Wildman. His roles at the RNCM have included the Narrator in Britten's *Owen Wingrave* and the Mosquito in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, as well as performances in numerous Mozart, Piccini, and Rossini opera scenes.

Before beginning his vocal training in Manchester, Gabriel read French and History at King's College, Cambridge. His current studies are generously supported by the David Williams Memorial Award.

CHRISTIAN LOIZOU

British bass-baritone Christian Loizou studies with Mark Wildman at the RNCM and is a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Praised for his 'handsome baritone' (Richard Bratby, *The Spectator*), he has performed principal roles in RNCM productions, including *Sirocco* in

L'étoile (2024) and *Le Roi de Trèfles* in *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* (2025).

In Summer 2025, he made his debut as Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera Kipling. In Summer 2026, he will cover the role of Colline and perform the role of An Official in *La bohème* at Grange Festival Opera.

Christian's studies are generously supported by a full ABRSM Scholarship.

KATRINA MACKENZIE

Australian soprano Katrina Mackenzie is a Master of Music student studying under Sarah Rhodes. She graduated from the Elder Conservatorium with First Class Honours and received the Adelaide Choral Society Prize.

A two-time 5mbs Young Virtuoso Vocal Prize winner, she is also a recipient of the Brigitte Fassbaender Award for Lieder. She has been a finalist in both the Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for the Singing of Strauss and the Frederic Cox Award.

Katrina is a former Emerging Artist with

Cast Biographies

State Opera South Australia and Co-Opera. Her roles include Musetta (*La Bohème*), Constance (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), and Alice (*BOOJUM!*).

Upcoming performances include appearances in Alcina, the RNCM Community Opera, and the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival.

SOPHIA PARKER

Sophia Parker is currently pursuing her Master of Music degree in vocal performance at the RNCM with Elizabeth Ritchie, supported by the Yvonne and Peter Wilson Award. This year, she was honoured to be selected as a finalist in the Frederic Cox competition at the RNCM.

Her stage credits include: Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* and Chorus/Micaëla (cover) in *Carmen* with Tacoma Opera; Serpette in *La finta giardiniera* with Opera Seme; and Jane Doe in *Ride the Cyclone* with Ballyhoo Theatre.

In 2026, Sophia will join

the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival for its summer season at Buxton Opera House. She extends her sincere thanks to her friends and family for their continued love and support.

MARIA POTTLE

Maria Pottle is a Canadian soprano based in Manchester. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music and a Certificate in Vocal Pedagogy and Performance from Concordia University of Edmonton, as well as a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Alberta. She is currently pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Vocal Performance at the RNCM, where she studies with Hilary Summers.

Maria is a recipient of the Anne Burrows Music Foundation Scholarship and the Strauss Foundation Music Award, and her recent roles include Miss Wordsworth (*Albert Herring*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), and Cupidon (*Orphée aux Enfers*).

ALEX PEART

Hailing from Darlington, Alex Peart is a bass-baritone finishing his undergraduate studies at the RNCM under the tutelage of Andrew Heggie and, under recently, the late Michael Harper. During his studies, Alex has travelled to Norway to perform with the Edvard Grieg Kor in their production of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliette* and has also travelled to Sienna to perform Monteverdi's *Vespers*. With the RNCM, Alex has been in the chorus of Prokofiev's *L'Amour des Trois Oranges*.

Alex is also passionate about conducting and is taking the conducting pathway as part of his undergraduate degree with a focus into choral conducting.

SARAH RAPPOPORT

Sarah Rappoport is a 21 year old Swiss mezzo-soprano currently in the fourth year of her undergraduate studies with Elizabeth Ritchie and a member of the 2025/26 National Opera Studio Academy.

Cast Biographies

Her operatic repertoire includes Bradamante (*Alcina*), Dog (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Sméraldine (*L'Amour des Trois Oranges*), and Beth Slater in the world premiere of Kate Pearson's *Silverwood*.

Scene work includes Third Lady, Annio, and Bradamante with the National Opera Studio, as well as Dorabella and Marina at the RNCM.

Sarah has sung in the chorus for Grange Park Opera (2025), and her concert engagements include performances with the Hallé Orchestra, Orchestra OperaViva, Lerici Music Festival, Opera for Peace, and RNCM Songsters.

RAFAEL ROJAS

Rafael Rojas, a distinguished Mexican tenor, has built a dynamic career spanning over a decade. Beginning in musical theatre at 16, he performed leading roles in *Chicago* (Billy Flynn) and *Moulin Rouge* (Christian), alongside collaborations with national orchestras.

A finalist in the Carlos Moreli Competition at the

Palacio de Bellas Artes (2022), Rafael earned a two-year scholarship to the México Opera Studio, studying with maestros Renier Piñero and Alejandro Miyaki. During this time, he sang major roles including Don José (*Carmen*), Baglioni (*La hija de Rapaccini*), and appeared in Morales' *Anita*.

His talent has been recognized internationally with first place in the Mexico district of the Laffont Competition (2023, 2024) and the Bellas Artes Prize at the Moreli Competition (2025).

Currently, Rafael is pursuing a postgraduate degree at the RNCM as an International Artist Diploma scholar. His RNCM roles include The Prince (*The Love for Three Oranges*) and The Schoolmaster (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), affirming his status as a rising operatic talent.

SAM ROSE

Sam Rose is a 22-year-old tenor studying with Andrew Heggie at the RNCM. He is a participant in the Serena Fenwick Programme with British

Youth Opera and recently took part in a masterclass with renowned tenor Adam Smith.

Now based in Manchester, Sam began singing as a chorister at the age of seven and later served as Head Chorister at Radley College, where he received several awards and performed in cathedrals across England. His operatic roles include Bastien (*Bastien und Bastienne*), Lechmere (*Owen Wingrave*), and Trouffaldino (*L'Amour des trois oranges*), as well as scenes from *Die Zauberflöte*. His concert repertoire includes Handel's *Messiah*, Mozart's *Requiem*, and Mendelssohn's *St Paul*.

CLAIRE RUNCIE

Claire Runcie is a Scottish mezzo-soprano currently in her final year of postgraduate study. She studies with Debbie Rees and previously received vocal training at the University of Aberdeen while completing her degree in English.

For RNCM Opera Scenes, she has performed

Cast Biographies

the roles of Paoluccia in Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* and the Older Woman in Dove's *Flight*. During her time in Aberdeen, she sang the Second Lady in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*; the Siren and Unenchanted Woman in Caccini's *La liberazione di Ruggiero*; and appeared in the chorus for Handel's *Acis and Galatea*.

CLEMENTINE THOMPSON

South London-born soprano Clementine Thompson is a fourth-year undergraduate studying with Elizabeth Ritchie. Last summer she was a Young Artist at Waterperry Opera Festival, performing in the chorus of *Don Giovanni*, and she is now a member of the National Opera Studio Academy.

She was a prize winner at the Kathleen Ferrier Society Bursary Competition, as well as the Elsie Thurston, James Martin Oncken Song, Alexander Young, and Underrepresented prizes at the RNCM.

Her roles include Alison in *The Wandering Scholar*, Bastienne with Fenwold

Opera, and the originated role of Philosopher Capsule, along with opera scene performances as Tytania, Susanna, and Aspasia. She has sung professionally with the Monteverdi Choir, the Edvard Grieg Korene, and will perform this summer in the chorus at Glyndebourne Festival Opera

EDWARD WENBORN

Originally from Cambridge, Edward Wenborn is a 26 year old baritone currently studying under Quentin Hayes. He previously graduated with a degree in Classics from Durham University, where he first discovered opera through the Durham Opera Ensemble, performing roles such as Eugene Onegin (*Eugene Onegin*) and the Pirate King (*The Pirates of Penzance*).

His recent roles include Léandre in Prokofiev's *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* at the RNCM, *La Voce* in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as a Young Artist with Flat Pack Opera. He is the winner of the 2025 Alexander Young Prize and currently holds a

scholarship with the Diocese of Manchester.

MORGAN ROSATI

Morgan is an Australian Italian mezzo-soprano currently undertaking a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies in Performance at the RNCM, where she studies with Christopher Turner. She is generously supported by the Alice Orrell and A&N Kendall Award.

She previously completed her Master of Music studies at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University. Morgan's recent operatic roles include Linette (*L'Amour des Trois Oranges*), Zia Principessa (*Suor Angelica*), and Orpheus (*Underworld*).

As a concert soloist, she has performed Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Michael Haydn's *Requiem*, and premiered works by Sally Greenaway and Catherine Likhuta.

Cast Biographies

ESTHER SHEA

Soprano Esther Shea is currently studying for her postgraduate degree with Mary Plazas. Her operatic roles include Ninette (*L'Amour des Trois Oranges*), Mrs Coyle (*Owen Wingrave*), Youka (*L'étoile*), and Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*). In opera scenes, she has performed Elisabetta (*Maria Stuarda*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), and La Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*).

She won the RNCM Concerto Competition performing Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder*, as well as the Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for the Singing of Strauss and the Williams-Howard Award. Esther is a member of the RNCM Songsters and is grateful for support from the Dame Eva Turner Award, the Sybil Tutton Opera Award, the LHR Foundation, and the Riga Heesom Award.

YULIN ZHU

Yulin Zhu is a Chinese soprano currently in her second year of postgraduate study at the RNCM. Her principal study singing tutor is

Hilary Summers.

In China, Yulin has performed in various concerts, including singing in the popular musical *Bring It On*. Recent roles performed in RNCM opera scenes include Angelica in Martin Y Soler's *Il burbero di buon cuore* and Sandrina in Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*. She is delighted to perform the role of Cricket in this new production of Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

BONNIE STAUDE

Australian soprano Bonnie Staude is currently completing a Master of Music at the RNCM under the guidance of Elizabeth Ritchie. Her studies are generously supported by the Anstey-Harriott Awards, the Ian Potter Cultural Trust, and the Mary Thomson Musical Scholarship.

Her operatic roles include Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*, Pehlivanian Professional Opera Academy), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts), and Annina (*La Traviata*). She has also performed

scenes as Maria (*Maria Stuarda*) and Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*).

Bonnie is the winner of the 2026 Frederic Cox Award for Singing at RNCM and looks forward to joining the Young Artist Programme at the Buxton International Festival this summer.

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