



opera
north

FILMUSIC

THE WIND

With live score by Erland Cooper
Featuring the Chorus of Opera North

Sage Gateshead
Thu 24 Feb, 8.00pm

Royal Northern College of Music
Fri 25 Feb, 7.30pm

Howard Assembly Room
Sat 26 Feb, 7.45pm

Film: *The Wind*

Dir. Victor Sjöström, 1928

With live score by Erland Cooper, 2022
Featuring the Chorus of Opera North

Born and raised on Orkney, composer, producer and multi-instrumentalist Erland Cooper's sensitivity to the relationship between landscape and psychology has been a constant over the course of a diverse and collaborative career. In this new commission for Opera North, the voices of the female members of the Chorus are augmented by a purpose-built wind machine, textural recordings and live analogue processing by Erland Cooper himself, to open up a new imaginative space for a forgotten masterpiece of silent cinema.

Released in 1928, *The Wind* features a radiant Lillian Gish in what is arguably her greatest film role as Letty, a young woman cast out from her sheltered Virginia home into the dust bowl of the Texan prairie. Here, an act of savagery and the unrelenting northerly wind push her mind beyond its limits.

Misunderstood and unloved in the years following its release, *The Wind* would go on to influence the likes of Ingmar Bergman, who cast his mentor and idol Sjöström in *Wild Strawberries*. In this ambitious venture, Erland Cooper breathes new life into the film's empty plains, roiling dust clouds and intensely charged terrain with a soundtrack based on the human voice.

'The Wind is like a requiem to a dying medium or art form. I want to echo that in a live score created predominantly from the human voice that touches on its drama and poetry, combining clouds of sound and textures in a score that is almost a tone poem.'

Inspired by the large aircraft engines that director Victor Sjöström used to generate the wind and sandstorms on the film's Mojave Desert locations, I have used an industrial fan to create a small wind tunnel in the studio. I'm sending sections of the recordings that I've made with the Chorus of Opera North through it, passing them through a circular filter at the end of the tunnel, and on to my piano's sound board. This is generating the texture and sound of the wind in the score, with its origins in the human voice.

The Mojave could not be further away from the Orkney Islands where I grew up, but an archipelago is surrounded by frequent gale force winds that drive and turn a cycle of shelter and search for safe havens, from both external and internal elements.'

Erland Cooper, 2022

Artists' biographies



Erland Cooper is a Scottish composer, producer and multi-instrumentalist, originally from Stromness, Orkney.

As a solo artist, he has released seven acclaimed albums, including a trilogy of work inspired by his childhood home, as well as themes of nature, people, place and time.

His work combines field recordings with traditional orchestration and contemporary electronic elements. Through music, words and cinematography he explores landscape, memory and identity. He develops these themes further by partnering with well-known artists, writers and poets. He also works across mixed media projects including installation art, theatre and film. Most recently, he is widely known for burying the only existing copy of the master tape of his first classical album in Scotland, deleting all digital files and leaving only a treasure hunt of clues for fans and his record label alike to search for it. The tape has yet to be found.

Chorus of Opera North

Chorus Master **Oliver Rundell**

Since the foundation of the Company in 1978, the Chorus of Opera North has established a reputation for quality and versatility. As one of the Company's core artistic ensembles, the Chorus features in most Opera North productions at the Leeds Grand Theatre, touring the north of England regularly and often travelling to Scotland, Northern Ireland and London. Festival appearances have included Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Wiesbaden, Ravenna and Bregenz. The Chorus often gives concerts and recitals in the Howard Assembly Room, as well as in other venues in Leeds and on tour. In 2013, the Chorus performed *Peter Grimes* on Aldeburgh beach as part of Aldeburgh Festival's Benjamin Britten Centenary celebrations. Recent Chorus-centred projects include the participative online workshops *From Couch to Chorus* and *ONE-to-ONE* during lockdown; co-productions with Leeds Playhouse of Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* and *Into the Woods* in the Quarry Theatre; the UK premiere of Kevin Puts' opera *Silent Night* at Leeds Town Hall and the world premiere of Jessica Walker's *Not Such Quiet Girls* in the Howard Assembly Room as part of Leeds' Armistice 100 commemorations; *Berlin to Broadway* in a co-production with West Yorkshire Playhouse at the City Varieties Music Hall; and Gilbert & Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* in the Little Greats season of six short operas in 2017.

Choristers featured in the live score of *The Wind* are:

Natasha Argawal	Amy Freston
Molly Barker	Laura Kelly-McInroy
Anna Barry	Beth Mackay
Miranda Bevin	Hannah Mason
Susie Buckle	Claire Pascoe
Gillene Butterfield	Victoria Sharp
Joanne Dexter	Natalie Sinnott
Helen Évora	Kathryn Stevens
Aimée Fisk	Andrea Tweedale

FILMusic

The Wind is the latest in Opera North's long-running and acclaimed series of soundtrack commissions from artists including Haley Fohr (Circuit des Yeux) and the late Jóhann Jóhannsson. Another large-scale choral commission,

Julia Holter's score for *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, was postponed due to the pandemic, and will be rescheduled later in 2022.

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Photograph: Erland Cooper and the Chorus of Opera North by Tom Arber

