

A ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC
OPERA STUDIO PRODUCTION



ROYAL
COLLEGE
OF MUSIC
London

Britten

Les Illuminations

Weill

Chansons des Quais

Ravel

L'heure espagnole

Conductor **MICHAEL ROSEWELL**
Director **ELLA MARCHMENT**
Designer **CORDELIA CHISHOLM**
Lighting Designer **KEVIN TREACY**
Movement Director & Associate Director (Weill)
ADAM HAIGH

7pm | 25, 27, 29 & 30
NOVEMBER 2024

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC

CAST

Britten **Les Illuminations**

Soprano (Old Mistinguet)
(Cover)

25, 27, 29 & 30
November

Georgia Melville
Susanna Davis

Weill **Chansons des Quais**

Soprano (Younger Mistinguet)

25 & 29 November

27 & 30 November

Charlotte Jane Kennedy

Cecilia Zhang

Tenor

Francis Melville
Peng Tian

Marcus Swietlicki
Benedict Munden

Baritone

Daniel Barrett
Ross Fettes

Sam Hird
Edward Birchinall

Ravel **L'heure espagnole**

Concepción
(Young Mistinguet)

25 & 29 November

27 & 30 November

Anastasia Koorn

Alexandria Moon

Gonzalve

Peng Tian

Marcus Swietlicki

Torquemada

Francis Melville

Benedict Munden

Ramiro

Daniel Barrett

Sam Hird

Don Iñigo Gomez

Ross Fettes

Edward Birchinall



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Programme details correct at time of going to print.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC OPERA STUDIO PRESENTS

Britten

Les Illuminations

Weill

Chansons des Quais

Ravel

L'heure espagnole

MICHAEL ROSEWELL CONDUCTOR

ELLA MARCHMENT DIRECTOR

CORDELIA CHISHOLM DESIGNER

KEVIN TREACY LIGHTING DESIGNER

ADAM HAIGH MOVEMENT DIRECTOR &
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR (WEILL)

SIMON BROWN ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR

25, 27, 29, 30 November 2024, 7pm

BRITTEN THEATRE

Please note this production contains themes of sexual abuse, violence and strong language. Parental discretion is advised for children. The performance will also use haze.

Approximate total running time: **2 hours 15 minutes**

This production is made possible with the assistance of the Basil Coleman bequest.

Performances of Britten's *Les Illuminations* are given by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited. *Chansons des quais* (Songs of the Waterfront) Cycle for soprano, male quartet, and chamber ensemble. Music by Kurt Weill. Lyrics by Jacques Deval. Conceived by Kim H. Kowalke, edited by John Boxindine. By arrangement with European American Music Distributors Company.

Campaign graphics by **D8**

Editor **Joanna Wyld**

Programme design by **May Yan Man**

SYNOPSIS

Benjamin Britten (1913–76)

Text: Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91)

Les Illuminations op 18 (1940)

Mistinguett is at the end of her life. She is 81 years old, and her body is failing her. She is virtually alone and on an increasingly high dosage of morphine that has been ordered to help ease her suffering. Both memory and body are failing her. The piece begins as Mistinguett lies unconscious in bed.

Fanfare

As the morphine takes over Mistinguett's body and she falls asleep in real life, she wakes up in her imagined space – a space in which all the memories of her life have come together and to which her spirit increasingly escapes, as she retreats both physically and mentally from the real world. She is jolted to life as she tells herself that she holds the key to the parade (her life).

Villes

The world of Mistinguett's history forms around her. She starts to see moments of her life flash before her eyes, and she visualises the cities and towns in which she toured over the course of her career.

Phrase

A new image flashes into Mistinguett's mind. She has been drawn back to her first love: a man whom she loved intensely but for whom she was not enough and who abandoned her. This man is a driving force behind her career. After his rejection, she strives to become famous and desirable so that no other man can let her down and break her heart in this way again. She tries to grab hold of the man and to bring him back, but once again her memory fails her, and she loses her grip on the image of him.

Antique

Mistinguett instead summons up a new memory. This takes us back to early in her performance career and she remembers a co-star partnership. However, the partnership is tainted by her ruthless ambition, which destroyed the relationship, and the man steps away and abandons her, once again leaving Mistinguett distressed and alone.

Royauté

Mistinguett tries to forget about the heartache, instead focusing on the height of her career, when she was touring solo and was the highest paid performer in the world. She relives the world of adoring audiences and conjures up more fans – most significantly a snobby critic who both loved and challenged her, and a fan who stalked her throughout her life.

Marine

Just as Mistinguett is basking in the joy of her successes, the image starts to fade as her mind begins to unravel. She tries to hold on to the men, but their images begin to dissipate. In an attempt to convince herself that she is still of sound mind and in control of her memories, she re-asserts her conviction that she holds the key to the savage parade she is experiencing.

Being Beauteous

Mistinguett realises that in order for the memories to live on, she must acknowledge her more difficult relationships with the opposite sex rather than deny them. In doing so, she is able to draw the men back into the space, and is able to conjure up the memory of more men who have played significant roles in her life: a long-term lover who ran away with a fellow performer; her agent, who encouraged her drug addiction; and a wealthy patron who supported her in difficult times and then demanded sex in return. She summons them and is eventually able to address all of the men together, to tell them that she has the strength within her to overcome the abuses they have inflicted upon her.

Parade

Mistinguett's mind is still lying to her. She is fooling herself that she has overcome the damage of her relationships, and in her frenzied state she starts to see the men as predatory animals who have come to attack her. Instead of wanting them in the space she becomes agitated. She ends up ripping up parts of her costume in an attempt to escape the persona she has spent a lifetime constructing, and drives the men away just as they finally manage to touch her. The memories have now become too real and alarming.

Départ

The men have departed, and Mistinguett finds herself alone. Ash rains from the sky as her ability to remember starts to disintegrate and she gives in to the exhaustion of mind and body. She curls up in a ball, hoping that if she buries herself amongst the ruins of her old memories she will be transported somewhere else, to a less painful memory space.

SYNOPSIS

Kurt Weill (1900–50)

Text: Jacques Deval (1895–1972)

Chansons des Quais (1934)

Kurt Weill's *Chanson de Quais* are a collection of songs for soprano and male quartet that were initially incorporated into the production of the two-act play *Marie Galante* by Jacques Deval.

The play tells the story of Marie, who is kidnapped and taken to Panama by a lecherous sea captain who abandons her when she does not submit to his desires. She becomes a prostitute in order to earn enough money for a passage back to France. Unwittingly, she becomes entangled in an espionage plot, and when she does eventually save enough money to return home, she is murdered by a spy the night before the boat is due to sail.

Weill's score served as incidental music rather than being a narrative driver for the piece. In this production, we have therefore tried to loosely suggest the original story, whilst enhancing the tension of female power and folly through the lens of 1930s cabaret and relating the setting to Britten's cycle. The world of cabaret is one of the clearest memories of Mistinguett's life. She has chosen to remember this piece especially, because it is one of the key performances in which she feels she was able to confront some of the more complex aspects of the world around her. The cabaret frame allows Mistinguett to conceive a show in which boundaries between masculine and feminine are blurred and in which she can confront her audience about the abuse of females, whilst dressing it up as an entertainment.

Introduction

Mistinguett introduces us to her 1930s cabaret performance troupe.

Le roi d'Aquitaine

Mistinguett and her troupe begin the story with a fairytale about a woman who entertains several suitors. She eventually chooses to run away with the King (despite him already having a Queen) because he offers her the most excitement and the opportunity for prosperity.

Intermezzo

The troupe performs a fantasy of what life with the King is like. It is full of opulence and decadence and she is handed everything she wants. At the end of the piece the energy shifts to a darker sphere.

Les filles de Bordeaux

The King decides that nothing is given without a price. In return for the lavish things he has offered he now demands Mistinguett's body, which she is not willing to give. The men start to show their true colours and end up kidnapping her.

Marche de l'armée panaméenne

The troupe parodies a burlesque dance in order to show Mistinguett's fall from grace, and kidnaps her by stealing her clothes and making her subservient.

L'attends un navire

We shift to Mistinguet's life in Panama, where she has been left destitute. Her only hope of escape back to France is to make money as a performer and prostitute. We see the local men drunk after a night out, salivating over her body. Mistinguet disappears into a fantasy about Youkali. This is a land where male desire is not a threat but a pleasure, and she is not forced to give her body to others.

Le grand Lustucru

The fantasy evaporates and time resumes as the drunk men at Mistinguet's nightly performance egg each other on after the performance is over. They follow her home, and she sings of a monster that is coming for her. She can sense that their lust is now growing bestial and feels her life is in danger. She rebukes their advances, sending the men into a jealous rage.

The men chase Mistinguet as they vow to seek revenge for her dismissal of their advances. Under the influence of alcohol and acting as a lawless gang, they grow increasingly violent, beating Mistinguet and leaving her alone to die.

Le Train du Ciel

The dying Mistinguet ponders what death will have in store for her. Will she go to heaven, or will she go to hell? She asks herself whether this fate is her fault, or the fault of the men. She is a victim who, even in her final moments, suffers from guilt. The men reappear in a more sober state, and we see them fully as men for the first time as the fantasy veneer is removed. Mistinguet breathes her last. The moral of the story is that men should control their desires and respect women as humans rather than objects.

Interval (20 minutes)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Text: Franc-Nohain (1872–1934)

L'heure espagnole (1911)

In a quaint Spanish town, the clockmaker Torquemada leaves his wife, Concepción, alone for one hour each week while he attends to the municipal clocks. This hour becomes a secret sanctuary for Concepción, who yearns for a deeper connection than her marriage offers. Each week, she invites a new lover into the clockmaker's shop, seeking the passion and compatibility she lacks with Torquemada.

This week, she is entangled with Gonzalve, a charming poet who irritates her with his lyrical musings about the intricate beauty of clockworks. Fortunately for her, they are interrupted by Don Iñigo Gomez, a previous lover. Iñigo, desperate for the love he never received, adopts a child-like demeanour, hoping to prove himself worthy of Concepción's affections.

As the tension escalates, the mule driver, Ramiro, arrives to have his watch repaired, unknowingly stepping into the web of romantic entanglements. Concepción's lack of judgement in her choice of lovers becomes evident as the men vie for her attention. Gonzalve's poetic charm clashes with Iñigo's whimsical antics, leading to a series of comedic moments.

Iñigo, in a moment of desperation, attempts to surprise Concepción by climbing inside a large clock, only to become stuck.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As the hour draws to a close, Torquemada returns, oblivious to the mayhem that has unfolded in his absence. Finding Gonzalve and Iñigo ensnared in the clockworks, he assumes that they are inspecting the inner workings so that they can buy them. To save further embarrassment, Gonzalve and Iñigo quickly purchase the clocks, finally facing the consequences of their actions.

Concepción realises that her pursuit of fleeting passions has led to a tangled web of chaos and regret, with the lovers remaining trapped in their own romantic misadventures. However, she does note that she no longer needs to have a clock in her bedroom anymore, as Ramiro has promised to wake her up every morning to 'tell her the time'...

'She was of an animal race that owes nothing to intellectualism. She incarnated herself. She flattered a French patriotism that was not shameful. It is normal now that she should crumble, like the other caryatids of that great and marvellous epoch that was ours.'

**Jean Cocteau on Mistinguett
(Jeanne Florentine Bourgeois)**

Kurt Weill, Benjamin Britten and Maurice Ravel: three contrasting composers whose styles represent the apogee of vocal writing over a 50-year period. This is not a conventional triple bill, but it is one that is saturated in a musical richness of narrative playfulness and depth.

The common thread of this production is the lone female protagonist, who is at the forefront of each of the three pieces we are presenting. In our eyes, although the pieces are contrasting in spirit and construct, she is the unifying heart: a performer who was able to reinvent herself in order to capture the epoch of each passing moment.

Time in our world moves backwards. We are introduced at the beginning of this piece to our protagonist, loosely based on Mistinguett: the co-director of the Moulin Rouge cabaret after its 1915 fire and one of France's most famous cabaret performers, who lived to 82 and was known for her wild affairs and risqué routines, and in her heyday was the highest paid female entertainer in the world. This introduction comes via Britten's *Les Illuminations*. The opium-fuelled setting of Verlaine's poetry becomes a love letter from our Mistinguett character as she struggles at the end of her life to seize hold of memories of moments that have had lasting impact on her. Her relationship with men is a complex one and we see flashes of people

who have come and gone in her life, who have in many ways helped shape her into the fierce, independent woman she now is, but who have also betrayed, damaged and hurt her in other ways.

Memories come and go as she struggles to retain her grip on reality in an imagined space. Key moments flash before her eyes as Mistinguett tries to confront the demons of her past. But she is no longer able to wear the same mask that she used to, and past memories become painful, warped and sordid. Mistinguett drives the men away and retreats into a place of silence. Even at the end of her life she cannot find peace and solitude.

Chansons de Quais functions as the first complete memory of one of Mistinguett's performances – and in this context this cabaret style piece is the one that made her a star. We are transported back to the 1930s heyday of cabaret and see Mistinguett confronting her audience about the perils of men. The story we have constructed here loosely follows that of *Marie Galante* (the play upon which the music of *Chansons de Quais* is based).

Ravel's piece sees us transported back another decade to the 1920s, when opera funding was abundant and the same performance troupe we see in the Weill section was performing on the main stages of opera houses (in the Weill they have been forced underground as war flashes upon the horizon). This is Mistinguett at her best, seeing herself as a youthful character who again utilises opera to profile the weakness of men to female sexuality, framing it in a comedy of errors. When we think of the bitter woman we meet in the Britten, carrying in her much of the anger that Concepción harbours, it becomes

clear why this strong recollection lingers: a bittersweet memory of when she had energy, power and status.

This is my fourth time working at the Royal College of Music and I say each and every time that it is my favourite place to work in the world. The investment that these students give to a production is unparalleled. And for such an abstract piece they have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into embracing the weird and wonderful world of a woman's mind at the end of her life. Thank you to all of the team, and I hope you enjoy this abstract adventure as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

Ella Marchment

“This is my fourth time working at the Royal College of Music and I say each and every time that it is my favourite place to work in the world.”

Ella Marchment

PRODUCTION

For the Royal College of Music Opera Studio

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Michael Rosewell

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Visiting Professor of Opera

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa

Manager of Vocal and Opera

Ann Somerville

Opera Assistant

Amy van Walsum

Vocal Faculty Assistant

Olivia Grant

For the production

Conductor

Michael Rosewell

Director

Ella Marchment

Assistant to the Director

Simon Brown

Designer

Cordelia Chisholm

Lighting Designer

Kevin Treacy

Movement Director & Associate Director (Weill)

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Paul Tucker

Stage Manager

Giulia Mazzocanti

Technical Stage Manager

Katherine Verberne

Deputy Stage Manager

Zoë Rogers-Holman

Assistant Stage Manager

Daiva Aleksionaite

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Colin Eversdijk

Lighting Programmer

Dan Foggo

Board Operator

Hayden Payne

Set building and painting

Basement 94 Ltd

Props and furnishings

Britten Theatre Workshop

Head of Costume

Laura Pearce

Costume Deputy

Zoe Hammond Joyce

Costume Technician

Evelien Coleman

Costume Work Experience

Samantha Hoppe

Wigs, Hair and Make-up Supervisor

Bethany Kimsey

Make-up Assistant

Nicky Harrington

Surtitles

Jonathan Burton
(*Les Illuminations*)

Kenneth Chalmers
(*Chansons des Quais &
L'heure espagnole*)

Surtitle Operators

Charlotte Forknall
Lori Grainger

Assistant Conductor

Jo Ramadan

Répétiteurs

Alice Turner
Jo Ramadan
Paul McKenzie

Language Coaches

Florence Daguerre de Hureaux
Sonja Nerdrum

Music Coaches

Caroline Dowdle
Joyce Fieldsend
Michael Lloyd

Orchestra Coaches

Sue Blair
David Hockings
Marie Lloyd
Peter Manning
Peter Sparks

Special thanks to

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The RCM Studios team

Royal College of Music Opera Orchestra

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Annika Bowers
Arisa Ruengprateepsang
Tiantong Wu
Yu-Mi Kim
Kana Aihara
Chris Sanderson
Zoe Hirst

Violin II

Mira Steenbrugge
Homan Woo
Maria Naskova
Elizabeth Hur
Daryna Voliarchuk

Viola

Katharine Wing
Juliet Park
Anastasia Sofina
Charis Morgan

Cello

Vincent Chen
Meimei Ai
Filippo Ramacciotti

Double Bass

Sam Lee
James Francis

Harp

Catherine Reid
Rosie Scott

Flute (Weill)

Alessandra Scalzone

Flute (Ravel)

Brioni Crowe
Ivan Lazebnyi
Viviane Ghiglino (piccolo)

Oboe

Mateus Souza
Thea Phillips-Kayes
Becky Pughe (cor anglais)

Clarinet (Weill)

Dina-Rosa Biggs
Anna Lepki

Clarinet (Ravel)

Latchen Kinghorn-Perry
Ricky Ng
Connor Hargreaves
(bass clarinet)

Bassoon

Will Hartley
Nanna Johansen
Joe Lyndley (contrabassoon)

Saxophone

Megan Glover (alto)
Matthew Stringer (alto)
Kezia Lovick-Jones (tenor/
soprano)

Horn

Molly Bielecki
Henry Hui
Lucas Boardman
Elias Giulivi

Trumpet

Josie Sleigh
Alex Gray

Trombone

Buchen Zhao
George Winter
Jiayi Feng (bass trombone)

Tuba

Joseph McLennan-Parish

Timpani

Juho Hwang

Percussion

Timothy Dobinson
Beste Gurkey
George Threadgold
Clara Smith
Alex Freeman
Wilamena Dyer

Celeste/Piano

Alice Turner

Guitar/Banjo

Oliver Manning

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Concert and Venue Manager

Grace Cattell

Orchestra Co-ordinator

Izzi Bartlett

Performance & Programming Assistant

Chris Michie

CREATIVE TEAM



Michael Rosewell
Conductor

Conductor Michael Rosewell is an Opera Association of America Prize winner and the recipient of an Oliver Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera. He has appeared in some of the world's most prestigious opera houses, including the Vienna State Opera, English National Opera and the Royal Ballet and Opera, Covent Garden.

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 International Music Festivals in Aldeburgh, Bath, Buxton, Edinburgh, Heidelberg, Montepulciano, Perth and Zagreb, with orchestras such as Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, National Symphony Orchestra (formerly RTÉ), London Mozart Players, Scottish Opera and Aurora Orchestra. Radio broadcasts include Radio France Musique, Süddeutscher Rundfunk, RTÉ Dublin and the BBC, as well as recording with Linn and Decca. Michael completed a highly successful tenure as Music Director of English Touring Opera, where he played a central role in bringing the company into greater prominence and recognition.



Ella Marchment
Director

Ella Marchment is a director and arts manager, currently in post as the Director of Opera and Associate Professor at Shenandoah Conservatory. Past appointments include vocal faculty at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Head of Opera at Northern Illinois University, Director of The International Opera Awards, and Associate Artist at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

As founder, CEO and Artistic Director of Helios Collective and Artistic Director of the Opera Festival of Chicago, Ella has consistently pushed the boundaries of opera.

Ella's directing credits include *L'inganno felice* (Wexford Festival Opera, Opera Festival of Chicago), *Il Tabarro* and *Segreto di Susanna* (Opera Festival of Chicago), *Native American Inspirations* (La Biennale di Venezia), *Little Women* (Opera Holland Park), *L'Aube Rouge* (Wexford Festival), *Le Roi de Lahore* (Dorset Opera), *Turn of the Screw* (Bury Court Opera), *Barnum's Bird* (RCM), *Acis and Galatea*, *Cheryomushki*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hydrogen Jukebox* (Shenandoah University). Her work has been seen in venues including the London Coliseum, Teatro Real Madrid, The Venice Biennale and Mariinsky II.

Ella's artistry has been recognised with numerous awards, including nominations for her production of *L'Aube Rouge* at the 2024 International Opera Awards and *Le Roi de Lahore* at the 2023 International Opera Awards. Her direction of Philip Glass' *Hydrogen Jukebox* won the National Opera Association Production Prize 2023. Ella is delighted to be returning to RCM for her fourth project since 2020.



Adam Haigh
Movement Director & Associate Director (Weill)

Credits include: *Oh What a Lovely War* (UK tour), *The Mikado* (Theatre Royal Bath/UK tour); UK premiere of *Barnum's Bird* (Royal College of Music); *Ruddigore* (Wilton's Music Hall); Edeline Lee Collection 2023 (London Fashion Week); *Kiss Me Kate* (Leicester Curve); *Soho Cinders* (Charing Cross Theatre); *Grease* (Italy); *Piano Legends* (Birmingham Symphony Hall/Barbican); *Get on the Floor with Strictly Come Dancing's AJ Pritchard* (UK Tour); *Christmas Spectacular* 2018 with Kerry Ellis, Kimberley Walsh and Anton & Erin (Theatre Royal Drury Lane); *Romeo & Juliet* (European Tour); *Behind the Legend* (Bromley Churchill); *South Pacific* (Guernsey); *Transforming Minds* (Park Theatre); *Chess* (Leicester Curve, Broadway World Nomination for Best Choreography); UK premiere of *Brooklyn the Musical* (Greenwich Theatre); *Wizard of Oz* (New Lincoln Theatre Royal); *Anything Goes* (The Other Palace); *the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Theatre Royal Stratford East/nominated for Best Off West End Director 2018); *Can-Can* (nominated for Best Off West End Choreographer 2018); *Something Old, Something New* (Bridewell Theatre); *Once Upon a Quarry Hill* (Leeds Playhouse); *Hairspray* (Singapore); *Treasure Island* (Middle East); *Phantom of the Opera* in concert (Sir John Loveridge Hall); *Golden Medals Golden Girls* (Southbank Centre); *Le Roi de Lahore* (Dorset Opera Festival).



Cordelia Chisholm
Designer

Cordelia studied English Literature at Cambridge University before training on the Motley Theatre Design Course. She is an International Opera Awards nominee for Best Designer (2016). Designs for opera include: *Rusalka* (Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège), *Carmen* (Opera Theatre of St Louis), *Vanessa* (Spoleto Festival and Wexford Festival Opera), *L'Oracolo* and *Mala Vita* (Wexford Festival Opera), *Agreed* (Glyndebourne Opera), *Rinaldo* (Estonian National Opera), *Giulio Cesare* and *Dardanus* (English Touring Opera), *La traviata* and *The Queen of Spades* (Opera Holland Park), *La Clemenza di Tito* (Bergen National Opera – costume design), *Inés de Castro* (Scottish Opera – costume design), *Der Graf von Luxemburg* (Landestheater Niederbayern), *Otello* (Opera på Skäret), *Carmen* (Scottish Opera), *Hansel and Gretel* (Opera North), *La Finta Giardiniera* (Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo). She has designed *Faramondo* and *Alessandro* for the Royal College of Music and many other productions for the RCM, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Future plans include *La bohème* for Malmö Opera.



Kevin Treacy
Lighting Designer

Opera credits include *The Merry Widow*, *Rodelinda*, *Imeneo*, *Faramondo*, *Il Mondo della Luna*, *Die Fledermaus* (Royal College of Music); *La Cenerentola*, *Carmen*, *La bohème*, *The Magic Flute*, *Così fan tutte* (Nevill Holt Opera); *Into the Woods* (West Australian Opera); *Aida* (Opéra Orchestre de Montpellier); *Eugene Onégin*, *La bohème*, *La traviata*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tosca*, *Agrippina*, *Salome* (Northern Ireland Opera); *L'elisir d'amore* (Den Norske Opera); *The Turn of the Screw* (Kolobov Novaya, Moscow); *Macbeth* (Welsh National Opera); *Die Fledermaus* (Wermland Opera, Sweden); *Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Magic Flute*, *Comedy on the Bridge* | *Twice Alexander* (Royal Academy of Music); *Albert Herring*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (Grange Festival); *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, *Orango*, *Renard* | *Mavra* | *Les Noces* (Philharmonia at Royal Festival Hall); *Faramondo* (Handel Festspiele, Göttingen); *Orpheus in the Underworld* (Scottish Opera); *Iolanta* (Operosa, Montenegro); *The Long Christmas Dinner* | *A Dinner Engagement*, *Le Docteur Miracle* | *Cendrillon* (Guildhall School of Music and Drama); *Flavio*, *Xerxes*, *La tragédie de Carmen* (English Touring Opera).

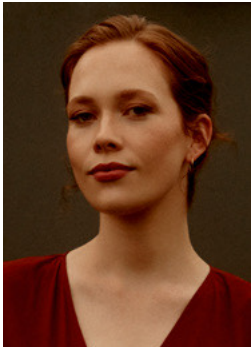


Simon Brown
Assistant to the Director

The Royal College of Music's triple bill of Britten, Weill and Ravel is Simon Brown's first foray into the production side of opera. He recently graduated from the RCM with a Masters degree in Vocal Performance (tenor), and was the Mason Award Holder, supported by the Il Circolo Society as well as being a Josephine Baker Trust Scholar. He also has a First Class (Hons) Bachelor's Degree from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Vocal Studies and Opera. While at the RCM, Simon performed the role of Mercury (*Orpheus in the Underworld* – Offenbach) and Mr Dodge (*Barnum's Bird* – Libby Larsen), in which he worked with director Ella Marchment for the first time. Simon has a passion for opera, drama and theatre and is looking forward to bringing more productions to life as an assistant director and director in the future.

CAST

BRITTEN: LES ILLUMINATIONS



Georgia Melville Soprano (Old Mistinguett)

Australian soprano Georgia Melville, praised for her 'vocal fireworks' (*Opera Magazine*) and 'showstopping' performances (*The Observer*), is in her second year at the Royal College of Music Opera Studio, studying with Janis Kelly. In the 2024/25 season, she will sing La Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* at the RCM. Georgia performed at the 2023 Glyndebourne Festival as Soeur Claire in *Dialogues des Carmélites* and in the Chorus of *L'elisir d'amore*. Recent roles include Hanna in *The Merry Widow*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni Tenorio* and Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel*. Georgia is the Alastair Jackson International Opera Award Holder, supported by Melba Opera Trust and Tait Memorial Trust. She is also supported by the Josephine Baker Trust and The Ian Smith of Stornoway Legacy.



Susanna Davis Soprano (Old Mistinguett, cover)

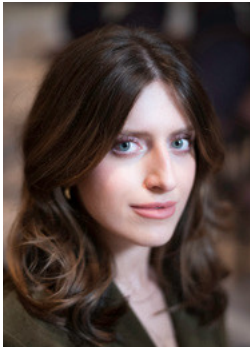
British soprano Susanna Davis is a Siow-Furniss scholar and a Josephine Baker Trust artist under the tutelage of Amanda Roocroft studying at the Royal College of Music. Roles include *Cendrillon* by Massenet with Fife Opera and Jou-Jou in the RCM's production of Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. Susanna has also performed as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* and as Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* for Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and RCM Opera Scenes. Susanna has been selected to appear in masterclasses with Louise Alder, Edith Wiens and Jonathan Lemalu and has performed two world premieres of contemporary works by Tom David Wilson: *Kirschenbaum Songs* in the Cathedral of the Isles in Cumbriae and *Sherburn Field* in Durham.

RAVEL: L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE



Anastasia Koorn Concepción (Young Mistinguett)

American mezzo soprano Anastasia Koorn is currently studying at the RCM's International Opera Studio as an Andrea Bocelli Foundation-Community Jameel Scholar supported by the H&F Music Award, under the tutelage of Tim Evans-Jones. Anastasia's notable performances with RCM include *Maman / La Tasse Chinoise / La Libellule (L'enfant et les sortilèges)* and *Praskowia (The Merry Widow)*. She debuted *Hänsel* with Miami Music Festival in 2023, and recently featured as a soloist in recital with the Andrea Bocelli Foundation as part of the Macerata Opera Festival in August 2024.



Alexandria Moon Concepción (Young Mistinguett)

British mezzo soprano Alexandria Moon is a member of the Opera Studio at the Royal College of Music and is the Lotti Masterson and H&F Music Award holder, studying with Dinah Harris. Her studies are generously supported by the Drake Calleja and Josephine Baker Trusts. Alexandria recently debuted as *Lucretia*, mentored by Dame Sarah Connolly (*The Rape of Lucretia*, British Youth Opera). Other role highlights include *Cherubino (Le nozze di Figaro, Westminster Opera)*, *L'enfant (L'enfant et les sortilèges, RCM)*, *Mistress Ford (Sir John in Love, Opera Holland Park and British Youth Opera)* and the *Older Woman (Flight, RCM)*.



Benedict Munden Torquemada

Benedict Munden is a graduate of Durham University and currently studies at the Royal College of Music as the Johnson Scholar supported by the Stephen Catto Memorial Scholarship. He is taught by Russell Smythe and Bryan Evans. Benedict made his stage debut in 2012 with English Touring Opera as Harry in Britten's *Albert Herring*. He performed a principal role in the RCM Opera Studio's 2023 production of *Don Giovanni (Gazzaniga)* as the Don's disgruntled cook, and a principal role in the premiere of *The Anthem* by Jasper Eaglesfield in collaboration with RCM and Tête à Tête Opera.



Francis Melville Torquemada

Francis Melville is a tenor currently studying on the Masters course at the Royal College of Music, where he is a Cuthbert Smith Scholar and is generously supported by the Josephine Baker Trust. He is taught by tenor Ben Johnson. Previous roles include Miguel in Offenbach's *Pepito* and Count Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. He performed in the Chorus for Grange Park Opera's 2024 season. Solo engagements include Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah*. He studied medicine at Imperial College, London and worked as a junior doctor from 2020–22.



Peng Tian Gonzalve

Tenor Peng Tian is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma in Opera at the Royal College of Music Opera Studio, where he studies under the tutelage of Nick Sears. Highlights of Peng's 2023/24 performance season include playing the title role in Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni Tenorio* and the role of Cascada in *The Merry Widow*, both at the Britten Theatre. During the 2022/23 season, Peng made his debut at the Grand Opera Festival as Tamino in *The Magic Flute*. He is a Sheila Saam Memorial Scholar, supported by the Tiong Kiu King Scholarship.



Marcus Swietlicki Gonzalve

Marcus Swietlicki is a Scottish tenor who studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland under the tutelage of Stephen Robertson. Marcus is currently studying at the International Opera Studio at the Royal College of Music under the tutelage of Russell Smythe. He has previously played PT Barnum in the RCM production of *Barnum's Bird* by Libby Larsen. Marcus has also recently finished performing the role of Count Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at Opera Holland Park. He is a Scholar of the Graham Brookman and Van der Beugel Scholarship.



Sam Hird Ramiro

Sam Hird is a baritone studying at the Royal College of Music Opera Studio with Peter Savidge and coaches Caroline Dowdle and Michael Lloyd. In May he made his Wigmore Hall debut as part of a select group of singers from the RCM. In February he won First Place and the Audience Vote at the Clonter Opera Prize. Other recent engagements include Lehár's *The Merry Widow* and Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni Tenorio* (both RCM). Sam is a Samling Artist, an Associate Artist for Sinfonia Smith Square and is generously supported by the Josephine Baker Trust and the Richard Silver Scholarship.



Daniel Barrett Ramiro

Daniel Barrett is a Glaswegian baritone studying with Russell Smythe at the Royal College of Music Opera Studio. He is a Drapers' de Turckheim Scholar supported by the Zhenghill Award. Daniel won First Prize at the RCM's Lieder Competition 2022; Second Prize in the RCM's Brooks-Van der Pump English Song Competition 2022 and Third Prize in the Lies Askonas Competition Finals 2023. Daniel was part of the Verbier Festival's 2022 Atelier Lyrique programme. He performed Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* as a Young Artist at Opera Holland Park (summer 2024).



Edward Birchinall Don Iñigo Gomez

Bass-baritone Edward Birchinall is part of the RCM International Opera Studio under the tutelage of Russell Smythe, as a Derek Butler Scholar. He was awarded Third Prize in the Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards, competed in the semi-final of the Kathleen Ferrier Award, and was a Britten Pears Scholar. In concert, Edward has performed in recitals across the UK and Europe. He is grateful to be supported in his studies by The Countess of Munster Trust and Help Musicians UK. Forthcoming engagements include a recital at Wells Maltings, and Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) with RCM Opera.



Ross Fettes Don Iñigo Gomez

Scottish bass-baritone Ross Fettes is studying at the Royal College of Music's International Opera Studio under the tutelage of Graeme Broadbent. Recent performances include Chorus at Glyndebourne's Summer Festival, and at RCM, Baron Zeta in Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, Pasquariello in Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni* and The Conductor in Libby Larsen's *Barnum's Bird*. Highlights also include Figaro in Westminster Opera Company's production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and Colline in Hurn Court Opera's production of Puccini's *La bohème*. He is a Stephen Roberts/Stephen Catto Memorial Scholar, a Josephine Baker Trust Scholar and is supported by The Countess of Munster Musical Trust.

WEILL: CHANSONS DES QUAIS



Cecilia Zhang

Mezzo soprano (Younger Mistinguett)

Yufan Cecilia Zhang is a mezzo soprano from New Zealand, currently attending the International Opera Studio at the Royal College of Music as an Alice Templeton Scholar, studying with Patricia Bardon. Last summer, Cecilia performed in the title role of *The Rape of Lucretia* with British Youth Opera. She was also a Britten Pears Young Artist. Earlier this year, Cecilia took part in the Contemporary Opera Lab at Glyndebourne Opera. Prior to relocating to the UK, Cecilia participated in artist residencies with Opera Australia, and with New Zealand Opera she was a rehearsal cover for Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*.



Charlotte Jane Kennedy

Soprano (Younger Mistinguett)

Winner of the Loveday Song Prize at this year's Ferrier Awards, British soprano Charlotte Jane Kennedy recently debuted internationally as Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at the Da Ponte Opera Festival in Italy. Other roles include Maturina in Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni* and La bergère in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (both RCM). An Alvarez Young Artist with Garsington Opera, she is currently part of the RCM's Opera Studio, studying under Janis Kelly. Charlotte is a Karaviotis Scholar supported by the Stephen Stuart-Smith Vocal Award and is supported by the Drake Calleja Trust, The Wayne Sleep Foundation and Help Musicians.

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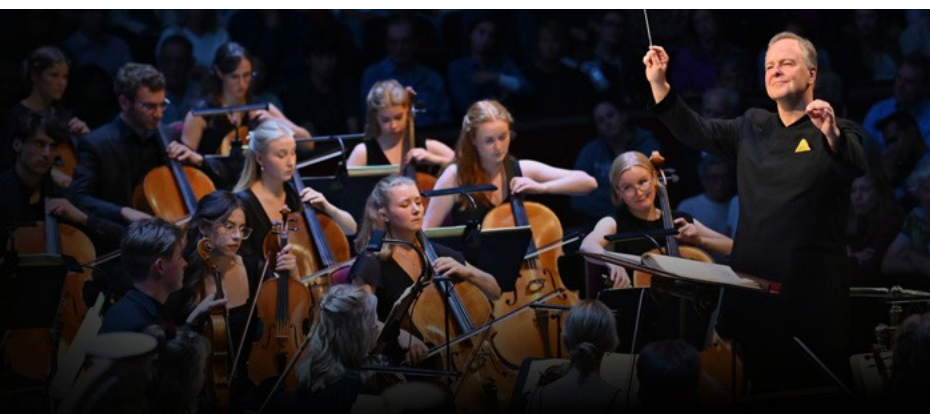
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