



PRESS RELEASE

31 August 2016

**SCOTTISH OPERA AND FESTIVAL THEATRE EDINBURGH
TO STAGE UK'S FIRST
DEMENTIA FRIENDLY OPERA PERFORMANCE**

Scottish Opera and Festival Theatre Edinburgh present the UK's first Dementia Friendly opera performance at the Festival Theatre on Saturday 12 November 2016 at 3pm.

This landmark event follows the pioneering work by both Scottish Opera and the Festival Theatre, supported by the Life Changes Trust, to develop dementia friendly communities at the heart of their work.

The UK's first dementia friendly opera will be a specially abridged performance of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. With a running time of 1 hour 45 minutes including an interval, the performance is carefully designed to make the theatrical experience more accessible to those living with dementia. Sound and lighting levels are adjusted for the comfort of the audience, and the wonderful cast is joined on stage by a narrator. Audiences will also be able to go in and out of the auditorium during the performance and see the show in the foyer areas on TV screens.

The performance is being staged as part of the run of Scottish Opera's *The Marriage of Figaro* at Festival Theatre Edinburgh, from Wednesday 9 to Saturday 19 November. The dates also include an audio-described performance and touch tour for audience members with visual impairment, a free pre-show talk and an Unwrapped event, a free one-hour taster to encourage first time attenders to opera.

Directed by the great British baritone, **Sir Thomas Allen**, Mozart's irresistible masterpiece is full of humour, subtlety and wit. Telling the story of one day in the household of Count Almaviva and Figaro, his charming head of staff, the bubbling, energetic score sees Mozart at his theatrical best, with gorgeous period designs by **Simon Higlett** providing the backdrop.

In the dementia friendly performance, the role of Figaro is performed by former Scottish Opera Emerging Artist **Andrew McTaggart**, who is joined by **Lucy Hall** as Susanna, **Pauls Putnins** as Count Almaviva, **Marie McLaughlin** as Marcellina and **Emma Kerr**, a Scottish Opera Emerging Artist, as Cherubino. The narrator is **Allan Dunn**, and **Timothy Burke** conducts.

The introduction of dementia friendly performances builds on Scottish Opera's existing work with those living with dementia. Since 2010, the Company's Education and Outreach Department has run the *Memory Spinners* programme in Glasgow, which uses music, storytelling, movement and the visual arts to help people with dementia and their carers relax and get creative. The successful programme will extend to Edinburgh this Autumn with workshops and performances at the Festival Theatre.

The Festival and King's Theatres, supported with significant funding from the **Life Changes Trust**, officially launched Forget Me Not in September 2015, a pioneering collaborative project designed to create dementia friendly communities at the heart of our cultural venues. Led by the project's Coordinator Paul Hudson, Forget Me Not has set out a full and inclusive programme of events and activities to engage and support people living with dementia, their carers and families. In addition to the dementia friendly opera performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*, Festival Theatre Edinburgh will be staging Scotland's first dementia friendly performance of a major touring musical, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, on Friday 14 October at 1.30pm.

Alex Reedijk, Scottish Opera's General Director said: 'Scottish Opera is excited to present the UK's first dementia friendly opera performance, in partnership with Festival Theatre Edinburgh.'

This initiative builds on the success of the work that both parties have already undertaken to open up access to the arts to people living with dementia, and we are very proud to continue to bring opera performance to a wider audience.'

Duncan Hendry, Chief Executive, Festival and King's Theatres said: 'We're delighted to be working with Scottish Opera to stage the UK's first dementia friendly opera. Our work with the Life Changes Trust and all our partners to support people living with dementia is an important part of what we do.'

Jane Davidson, Scottish Opera's Director of Outreach and Education added: 'Scottish Opera's Memory Spinners programme for people living with dementia has been going from strength to strength since its launch in 2010, in Glasgow. Now, as we begin to expand the programme to other cities starting with Edinburgh in Autumn of this year, it seemed the perfect opportunity to offer this key group of people in our community the chance to attend a performance that is specially adapted to fulfil their needs and that will help to ensure that they can continue to enjoy live opera in the wonderful setting of Festival Theatre Edinburgh.'

Paul Hudson, Dementia Friendly Communities Coordinator at Festival and King's Theatres said of the performance: 'We are thrilled to be supporting Scottish Opera in this landmark event, one that we're sure will be the first of many in our ongoing and ever expanding dementia friendly programme.'

Scottish Opera's *The Marriage of Figaro* opens on 12 October at Theatre Royal Glasgow, before touring to Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh and Liverpool. A revival of the much-loved 2010 production, Mozart's masterpiece is a comedy of social revolution and change that is as relevant today as ever.

-ENDS-

www.scottishopera.org.uk

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Performance Diary

The Marriage of Figaro (Dementia Friendly Performance)

Sat 12 Nov, 3pm

Festival Theatre Edinburgh

Tickets £10 (On sale now for Friends of Festival and King's Theatres, and general sale on 5 September)

Cast List

Susanna	Lucy Hall
Figaro	Andrew McTaggart
Countess Almaviva	Sarah Redgwick
Count Almaviva	Pauls Putnins
Cherubino	Emma Kerr *
Marcellina	Marie McLaughlin
Dr Bartolo	Graeme Broadbent
Don Basilio/Don Curzio	Paul Curievici
Barbarina	Kelly Mathieson
Narrator	Allan Dunn

*Scottish Opera Emerging Artist

Creative Team

Conductor	Timothy Burke
Director	Sir Thomas Allen
Designer	Simon Higlett
Original Lighting	Mark Jonathan
Original Choreographer	Kally Lloyd-Jones
Revival Choreographer	Steinvor Palsson

Notes to Editors

Scottish Opera is Scotland's national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. It was founded by Alexander Gibson in 1962 and was inaugurated with a production of *Madama Butterfly* at the King's Theatre in Glasgow.

Notable achievements include the world premiere of James MacMillan's *Inés de Castro* at the 1996 Edinburgh International Festival and complete Ring cycles at the 2003 Edinburgh International Festival, which won the 2004 South Bank Show Award for Best Opera Production. Recent commissions include *Five:15 Operas Made in Scotland* (2008-10); *The Lady from the Sea*, *Clemency*, the double bill of *In the Locked Room* and *Ghost Patrol* (winner of a South Bank Sky Arts Award) which premiered at the 2012 Edinburgh International Festival and 2016's *The Devil Inside* by Stuart MacRae and Louise Welsh.

Scottish Opera is committed to bringing the widest possible range of opera, performed to the highest possible standards, to the maximum audience throughout Scotland and the UK. Each year it performs in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, as well as smaller theatres, village halls and community centres throughout the country.

Scottish Opera's Education and Outreach Department was the first of its kind of any opera company in Europe. It operates an extensive programme which involves over 10,000 primary school children every year, as well as many other activities including adult learning and free *Unwrapped* taster sessions.

Scottish Opera is supported by the Scottish Government.



The Festival and King's Theatres in Edinburgh are two of Scotland's best-loved and most prestigious theatres. Along with the Studio on Potterrow they form the Festival City Theatres Trust – a registered charity and Scotland's largest independent theatre organisation.

As custodians of these beautiful theatres Festival City Theatres Trust is committed to preserving and developing these historic venues for the city and to presenting the best in live performance to as wide a public as possible.

Festival City Theatres Trust actively promotes its stages and buildings as community spaces supporting collaboration, participation and the sharing of ideas and experience. Every year, Festival City Theatres Trust welcomes over 430,000 patrons, over 25,000 people participate in creative learning activities and it contributes over £6m to the Scottish economy.

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund in April 2013 with a ten year endowment of £50 million to support transformational improvements in the quality of life, well-being, empowerment and inclusion of people affected by dementia and young people with experience of being in care.

Dementia Friendly Communities include, empower and support people affected by dementia and their carers in every aspect of life, from accessing services to using public transport. They can be geographical communities or communities of interest.

They also help empower those whose lives are affected by dementia so that they can remain integrated in society, live as independently as possible and participate actively in decisions that affect their day-to-day lives.

Over the next three years, the Life Changes Trust will invest around £3 million in establishing and supporting a wide variety of Dementia Friendly Community initiatives across Scotland.

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