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**Press Release**

4 April 2023

**JOHN FULLJAMES RETURNS TO SCOTTISH OPERA TO DIRECT A NEW PRODUCTION OF BIZET’S *CARMEN* THIS SUMMER**

Scottish Opera’s new production of Georges Bizet’s Carmen opens at Theatre Royal Glasgow on 12 May, before touring to Inverness, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, concluding the Company’s 60th Season.

Director **John Fulljames** (Nixon in China 2020) has teamed up with librettist and translator **Christopher Cowell** to present a fresh reframing of thisclassic tale of jealousy, lust, and life outside the dictates of society, that remains faithful to Bizet’s opera as well as Prosper Mérimée’s original novella.

Sung in English and set in 1970s Spain during a period of great unrest and upheaval, the testimony of an unnamed narrator-turned-detective investigating Carmen’s murder frames Bizet’s famous music (which includes the Habanera, Flower Aria, and Toreador Song) as she listens to the confessions of the obsessive Don José.

**Dane Lam** (La traviata 2017) conducts **Justina Gringyte** (Thérèse 2022 and Carmen 2015) as Carmen, the eternal outsider, carving out a life by her own rules in a militaristic and patriarchal society. **Alok Kumar** is making his Scottish Opera debut as Don José alongside **Phillip Rhodes** (Falstaff 2021) as Escamillo, **Hye-Youn Lee** (The Verdi Collection, 2023) as Micaëla, **Thomas D Hopkinson** (also making his Company debut) as Zuniga, **Dan Shelvey** (Ainadamar 2022) as Moralès, and actor **Carmen** **Pieraccini.**  Also joining the cast are four of Scottish Opera’s 22/23 Emerging Artists – **Zoe Drummond, Lea Shaw, Osian Wyn Bowen**, and **Colin Murray.**

Thedesign team includes **Sarah Beaton** (Sets), **Christina Cunningham** (Costume) and **James Farncombe** (Lighting) with Projections by **Will Duke**. **Jenny Ogilvie** returns to Scottish Opera as Movement Director.

Director **John Fulljames** said: ‘I can’t wait to be back in Scotland with the wonderful artists, craftspeople and audiences of Scottish Opera. It is a real privilege to be making a new production of Carmen - this is such an iconic score it is impossible not to be swept up in it. It is also a potent and often surprising piece of theatre. I really hope we will bring it to life both as a much-loved classic and also reveal how it can speak freshly to a new time and new generation.’

Conductor **Dane Lam**, who was recently appointed Music Director Designate of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra said: ‘I’ve always loved spending time in Scotland, and I am so thrilled to return to Scottish Opera to conduct this extraordinary new production of Carmen from director John Fulljames. Scottish Opera has been such a nurturing company to me, and it is a joy to be collaborating with them again on such a rich and immortal work. The music of Carmen is magnificent, and the piece is one that I revel in digging into afresh every time I open the score.’

Last Season, Scottish Opera launched new afternoon Access shows to allow audience members the flexibility and freedom to relax and move about as required during performances. This Season there will be Access performances (supported by **Scottish Opera's Education Angels**) of Carmen in Glasgow, Inverness, Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

With Dementia Friendly values at their core, these shorter performances (under two hours including an interval) are open to all, whether you’re recovering from an operation, have breathing difficulties, are living with dementia, have a young baby or on the autism spectrum.

The Access performances, which include a presenter to help guide audiences through the story, are conducted by former Scottish Opera Emerging Artist **Toby Hession**, and performed by a cast of singers. Doors open 45 minutes before the start time so there is no need to rush, there are brighter lighting levels than usual in the auditorium and television screens are located around the theatre for those who prefer to watch in the lobby or sit in a quiet area.

Half-hour pre-show talks, delving into the detail of Carmen are also available this season. Those who are visually impaired can take advantage of audio-described performances, where a live commentary is provided, describing the action on stage without compromising the music. As part of the experience, a recorded introduction to the opera is provided in advance, and there is a free Touch Tour of the set and a live audio introduction before the start of the performance.

Carmen is supported by **The Scottish Opera Syndicate.**

-ENDS-

You can follow Scottish Opera on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram **@ScottishOpera** and TikTok **@ScotOperaTok**

[www.scottishopera.org.uk](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.scottishopera.org.uk%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cemily.henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7Cf594a974e0234301d66808db34ea9265%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638161954323336583%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=jWvhGIbJaSloPs5or%2FBPWt6zvdA7ALerL4kS7uVhuiI%3D&reserved=0)

**Creatives**

Conductor                                            **Dane Lam** & **Toby Hession** (23 & 25 May)

Director                                               **John Fulljames**

Set designer                                        **Sarah Beaton**

Costume designer                                **Christina Cunningham**

Lighting designer                                 **James Farncombe**

Projection designer   **Will Duke**

Movement director      **Jenny Ogilvie**

**Cast**

Carmen                                               **Justina Gringyte**

Don José                                             **Alok Kumar**

Escamillo                                            **Phillip Rhodes**

Micaëla                                               **Hye-Youn Lee**

Le Dancaïre                                         **Colin Murray**

Le Remendado                                    **Osian Wyn Bowen**

Moralès                                               **Dan Shelvey**

Frasquita                                             **Zoe Drummond**

Mercédès                                            **Lea Shaw**

Actor                                                   **Carmen Pieraccini**

Performance diary

**Carmen**

**Theatre Royal Glasgow**

12, 16 18 & 20 May 2023, 7.15pm

14 May 2023, 3pm

Access Carmen, 19 May, 3pm

Pre-show talk and Touch Tour, 20 May, 6pm

Audio-described performance, 20 May, 7.15pm

**Eden Court Inverness**

23, 25 & 27 May 2023, 7.15pm

Access Carmen, 26 May, 3pm

Pre-show talk and Touch Tour, 27 May, 6pm

Audio-described performance, 27 May, 7.15pm

**His Majesty’s Theatre, Aberdeen**

1 & 3 June 2023, 7.15pm

Access Carmen, 2 June, 3pm

Pre-show talk and Touch Tour, 3 June, 6pm

Audio-described performance, 3 June, 7.15pm

**Festival Theatre Edinburgh**

9, 13, 15 & 17 June 2023, 7.15pm

11 June 2023, 3pm

Access Carmen, 16 June, 3pm

Pre-show talk and Touch Tour, 17 June, 6pm

Audio-described performance, 17 June, 7.15pm

Notes to Editors

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. The Company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson with the goal ‘to lay the treasures of opera at the feet of the people of Scotland’, opening with performances of Madama Butterfly and Pelléas et Mélisande. The 2022/23 season marks its 60th Anniversary.

Scottish Opera’s performance repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly-commissioned world premieres, balancing favourites with under-explored works. The Company collaborates with the world’s finest singers and creatives, together with The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and choruses for each opera. Recent accolades include a South Bank Sky Arts Award, a Scottish Award for New Music, Sunday Herald Culture Awards, a 2017 UK Theatre Award, and a 2020 RPS Award. The Company took operas to Brooklyn in 2017 and Adelaide in 2020, and the 2022/23 season sees productions first staged at Scottish Opera appearing in Santa Fe, Madrid, Toulouse, and Los Angeles. The 60th Anniversary Season includes the UK fully-staged premiere of Osvaldo Golijov’s Ainadamar and the Company premiere of Puccini’s Il trittico.

The Company tours extensively across Scotland to ensure performances are within reach of as many of the country’s dispersed population as possible – this year, 60 locations across the length and breadth of the country. Specially-adapted 40-foot long trailers bring Pop-up Opera performances to thousands of people each year. This is one of the most extensive touring programmes of any European opera company and a much-valued contribution to Scotland’s cultural and artistic life, particularly in remote and island communities.

The Company’s Education & Outreach programme, the oldest in Europe, includes an annual in-person and digital Primary Schools Tour, bringing children the opportunity to perform their own specially commissioned piece alongside professional singers. Around 120 schools and 9,000 pupils take part each year. Scottish Opera aims to be inclusive and affordable through availability of free and cheap tickets, as well as performances offering audio description and specially-devised shorter access performances.

Scottish Opera is committed to making opera for all, presenting opera at the highest possible standards in theatres across the country, outdoors on tour, and digital audiences around the world. The Company’s 2021 production of The Gondoliers, filmed live at Festival Theatre Edinburgh, is available on BBC iPlayer. Scottish Opera’s On Screen productions are available to watch at [www.scottishopera.org.uk/what-s-on/opera-on-screen](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.scottishopera.org.uk%2Fwhat-s-on%2Fopera-on-screen&data=05%7C01%7Cemily.henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7Cf594a974e0234301d66808db34ea9265%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638161954323336583%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=JMeejEczsgziK2FAIWPjZacRiQJHsG154WjB7UIAl9A%3D&reserved=0). The collection includes Donizetti’s L’elisir d’amore, Humperdinck’s Hansel and Gretel, Mozart’s Così fan tutte, Opera Highlights, Menotti’s The Telephone, and Samuel Bordoli and Jenni Fagan’s The Narcissistic Fish. A new commission will be announced in 2023.

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**For additional press details please contact:**

Emily Henderson, Press Manager, 0141 242 0511, [**emily.henderson@scottishopera.org.uk**](mailto:emily.henderson@scottishopera.org.uk)

Julie McLaughlin, Press Officer, 0141 242 0552, **julie.mclaughlin@scottishopera.org.uk**