



PRESS RELEASE

***FIVE:15* IN TWENTY:10**

2 February 2010

Scottish Opera will premiere five original short operas at the Word Festival in Aberdeen this May, marking the third year of the Company's commissioning strand - *Five:15 Operas Made in Scotland*. This, along with a move to the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, strengthens the project's connections with other forms of new writing in Scotland. *Five:15* is again sponsored by Accenture.

Five teams of composers and writers are currently working on the brand-new operas, featuring themes as diverse as isolation, exploration, spirituality, sublimation, the philosophy of Zen, modern morality and the state of the economy.

The 2010 partnerships are: writer **Ron Butlin** and composer **Lyell Cresswell**; librettist **Peter Davidson** and composers **Paul Mealor** and **Pete Stollery**; writer **Bernard MacLavery** and composer **Vitaly Khodosh**; poet/writer **Alan Spence** and composer **Miriama Young**; and acclaimed author **Zoë Strachan** and composer **Nick Fells**.

Edinburgh poet-laureate and prize-winning author Ron Butlin and composer Lyell Cresswell return with their second short opera, having won critical acclaim for *The Perfect Woman* in 2008. Writer Bernard MacLavery also returns with his second opera and new collaborators; Russian composer Vitaly Khodosh and director Irina Brown, fresh from her success at the helm of Scottish Opera's recent collaboration with the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama *War and Peace*.

Scottish Opera's Head of Music Derek Clark will conduct players from The Orchestra of Scottish Opera in performance, with Michael McCarthy returning as dramaturg, Andrew Storer as designer, and Catherine Deverell designing costumes.

This is the third year of a five-year Research & Development project to find the next generation of opera composers and writers. The project will culminate with two or three longer-length pieces to celebrate the Company's 50th birthday in 2012.

Scottish Opera General Director Alex Reedijk said: 'This third year of *Five:15* looks as original as ever, with three of our *Five:15* alumni creating new operas for Scottish audiences to enjoy. It's truly exciting that the project is still generating great interest among artists in Scotland and I'm looking forward to developing the longer pieces over the

next two years. I can't think of a better way to celebrate our 50th birthday than to premiere brand-new works that have been commissioned and created in Scotland.'

Alan Spence, Artistic Director of Word, said: 'It is a great achievement for the University of Aberdeen to be partnering Scottish Opera on this event and the Word Festival is hugely proud to be hosting the opening performances, which will no doubt significantly add to the excitement of the tenth festival celebrations. Two of the five creative teams come entirely from the University of Aberdeen and this is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the talent we have here. *Five:15* will be a great centrepiece for the Word Festival and will help bring opera to new audiences.'

Five:15 is again sponsored by consulting, technology and outsourcing firm Accenture, which shares Scottish Opera's passion for innovation. Accenture is Scottish Opera's Sponsor and Consulting Partner. Major support has also been received from The Binks Trust and The Scottish Opera Endowment Trust along with in-kind support from Òran Mór and the University of Aberdeen.

Bill McDonald, Managing Director of Accenture Scotland, said: 'We are delighted to be involved and support the latest programme of *Five:15* as part of our sponsorship commitment to Scottish Opera. *Five:15* is a fantastic vehicle for showcasing fresh, up-to-the-minute opera and bringing it to new audiences. Innovation is key when it comes to business as well as the arts and we are proud to be associated with Scottish Opera in this endeavour.'

Tickets for the performances in Edinburgh and Glasgow are now on sale. Tickets for the Aberdeen performances are on sale from 25 March.

Opening Night: Saturday 15 May 2009, Word Festival, Elphinstone Hall, Aberdeen

PERFORMANCE DATES 2010

Elphinstone Hall @ Aberdeen University, Aberdeen

Word Festival

Sat 15 May, 7.30pm

Sun 16 May, 3pm and 7.30pm

Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh

Thu 20, Fri 21 & Sat 22 May, 7.30pm

Tickets available from the Traverse Theatre www.traverse.co.uk or 0131 2281401

Òran Mór, Glasgow

Tues 25, Wed 26 & Thu 27 May, 7.30pm

Tickets available from the Traverse Theatre www.traverse.co.uk or 0131 2281401

All tickets £15

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For additional press details please contact:

Kerryn Hurley, Scottish Opera Press Manager, 0141 242 0511, kerryn.hurley@scottishopera.org.uk

Gemma Couper, Scottish Opera Press Officer, 0141 242 0552, gemma.couper@scottishopera.org.uk

For press details about the Word Festival please contact:

Notes to Editors:

1. Scottish Opera is core funded by the Scottish Government.
2. The Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scotland's National Academy of Science and Letters, will host a discussion forum *A Question of Chemistry? The role of librettists and composers in the creation of opera* on Monday 19 April. On the panel will be critic and music journalist Andrew Clark, composer Stuart MacRae, librettist and author Louise Welsh and Scottish Opera general director Alex Reedijk. For more information, go to www.rse.org.uk.
3. Word (14-16 May) – the University of Aberdeen's Writers Festival - will see more than 50 authors, thinkers and commentators from across the globe come to Aberdeen for an energetic, three-day mix of public readings, discussions, film screenings, performances, exhibitions – and this year opera. Previous contributors to Word include Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney, Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, Ian Rankin, Frank Gardner, Louis De Bernieres, Irvine Welsh, James Kelman, Edwin Morgan, AL Kennedy, Colm Toibin, Richard E Grant and hundreds more over the years who have entertained sell-out audiences from across the UK and beyond. This year the festival celebrates its 10th anniversary and more than 10,000 visitors are expected to join the celebrations in the Granite City. An exciting line-up of leading figures from the literary world is planned for Word10 and the programme will be announced on March 25. Tickets for all Word events, including *Five:15*, will go on sale on from March 29. Visit www.abdn.ac.uk/word for more details.

OPERAS

The Letter

Words Bernard MacLaverty
Music Vitaly Khodosh
Director Irina Brown

1940s Russia. A mother writes to her son, knowing she is about to be forced from her home along with thousands of fellow Russian Jews. As brutality and madness thrive around her, she takes comfort from knowing that her spirit will live on through her words. The lyrical music conveys her quiet strength in the face of unfathomable cruelty.

The Money Man

Words Ron Butlin
Music Lyell Cresswell
Director Matthew Richardson

A satirical take on modern morality and the state of the economy. Against a backdrop of tumbling share prices, a man struggles to retain his financial empire...and his sanity. What will happen when his daughter discovers he's lost her inheritance?

Sublimation

Words Zoë Strachan

Music Nick Fells
Director Matthew Richardson

A woman is haunted by her traumatic past and unable to separate it from the present. As she is overwhelmed by memories her story takes a mythical turn. Can she escape what has kept her prisoner for so long?

74° North

Words Peter Davidson
Music Paul Mealar, Peter Stollery
Director Michael McCarthy

An Arctic scientist visits the site of a disastrous 1840s expedition, bringing echoes of a terrible tragedy to the surface once more. Dominated by its extraordinary setting, this opera brings two composers together blending orchestral and electro-acoustic music.

Zen Story

Words Alan Spence
Music Dr Miriama Young
Director Michael McCarthy

A young girl finds herself pregnant. When confronted by her parents, she declares the child is a holy man's. Despite the threat to his reputation and position, he accepts responsibility without complaint...but why? A timeless tale of humanity and forgiveness, with music inspired by the richly resonant sounds of the temple.