



PRESS RELEASE

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TALENTED YOUNG WINNERS OF *OPERA SPARKS 2018* COMPETITION ANNOUNCED

The winners of *Opera Sparks 2018*, the Scottish Opera competition launched last April to give young people an opportunity to compose a new opera for performance, have been selected.

The winning entries are *Little Black Lies*, by composer/librettist team **Matthew Whiteside** and **Helene Grøn**, an as yet untitled work by **Lewis Murphy** and **Laura Attridge**, and *Maud* by composer/librettist, **Henry McPherson**. The winners are awarded a commissioning fee of £3,500 and receive mentoring support throughout the creative process. The works – which will each be 15 minutes in length – will be performed in 2018 by Scottish Opera's youth company, Connect, in celebration of its tenth anniversary.

Open to young composers who are Scottish or based in Scotland, the entries were judged by a panel consisting of **Derek Clark** (Scottish Opera's Head of Music), **Olivia Fuchs** (Opera Director), **Christopher Gray** (Director of Scottish Opera's Connect Company) and **Stuart**

Stratford (Scottish Opera's Music Director), with Scottish Opera's General Director, **Alex Reedijk**, as convener.

Jane Davidson, Scottish Opera's Director of Outreach and Education, said: 'Scottish Opera has long championed new work and the artists who create it. Now, some of the country's most talented young composers and librettists are being invited to create new works for our celebrated youth opera company, Connect, to be performed in April 2018 – 10 years since the first Connect project was begun. By then, we will have invited over 500 young people from all over Scotland to experience being part of Scotland's only opera programme for young people – as part of our commitment to creating a lasting legacy for the future of the art form.'

-ENDS-

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Notes to editors

Winners' biographies:

Matthew Whiteside is a composer and sound designer based in Glasgow, who writes music for concert, film and collaborative installations. Originally from Lisburn in Northern Ireland, he composed the music for *Michael Palin's Quest for Artemisia*, broadcast on BBC4, and has scored the feature films *Anna Unbound* and *The Loudest Sound*. His work has been performed all over the world, including in Dublin's National Concert Hall, Glasgow City Halls, Salem Artworks in New York and Belfast International Festival. Matthew programmes and produces 'The Night With', a series of classical music concerts in an informal environment with performances by some of Scotland's best musicians. He is currently working with filmmaker/chorographer Marisa Zanotti developing a new installation piece with Magnetic North.

Helene Grøn is a playwright and poet from Denmark, who has lived in Scotland for the past five years. She is working alongside Matthew Whiteside to write the libretto for *Little Black Lies*. She completed a MLitt in Theatre Practices at the University of Glasgow in 2013, and an MSc in Playwriting from the University of Edinburgh in 2012. Helene co-founded Leylines, a cross-

cultural theatre company, bringing to the Scottish stage stories of home and homelessness. Writing credits include: *Always Ever Unknowable* (The Cottier Chamber Project. The Cloisters, June 2016); *The Giant and Her Daughter* (Leylines. Scottish Refugee Festival, June 2016, Southside Fringe, May 2016 and Govanhill Baths, November 2015); *Roots: Rehearsed Reading* (Scratch Night. The Arches, May 2014), *Three Lives: Rehearsed Reading* (University of Edinburgh and Playwrights' Studio Scotland, Traverse Theatre, August 2013); *Elf Mound* (University of Edinburgh and Cursive Productions. Scottish Storytelling Centre, April 2013).

Composer **Lewis Murphy** trained at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. After graduating with first class honours, he moved to London to continue his studies with Mark-Anthony Turnage at the Royal College of Music, and is a Young Composer-in-Residence at Glyndebourne. Lewis's music has been performed in the UK and abroad by Red Note Ensemble, Ensemble l'itinéraire, Orkest de Ereprijs and Richard Craig. Ongoing projects include a new work for Glyndebourne Youth Opera with Laura Attridge called *A Garden Dream* and a one-act opera for London-based company The Opera Story, due to be performed in February 2017.

Glasgow-born librettist **Laura Attridge** has had her work performed at Glyndebourne, the National Gallery and Bard College in New York. Her operas include interdisciplinary piece *PUCK* – a contemporary take on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for singers, dancers and live animation – and *Now* which premiered at the Royal College of Music in 2015 in association with Tête-à-Tête Festival. Laura is founder and Artistic Director of And So Forth (ASF), an opera and theatre company dedicated to interdisciplinary collaboration between emerging artists. She holds First Class Honours in English Literature from Newcastle University and a Graduate Diploma in Vocal Studies from the Royal College of Music. Alongside her writing she also works as a director, assistant director, and workshop facilitator.

Composer/librettist **Henry McPherson** is originally from Herefordshire but now lives in Glasgow. He is a founding member of the Glasgow-based artists' collective Crossline, formed in 2015. He has worked in collaboration with young Scotland-based artists including David Mar, Inkeri Kallio, Adam Hall, Jak Saroka, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's new music initiative MusicLab, as well as Glasgow's Red Note Ensemble, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Ensemble Modern. Currently studying Composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Henry collaborates widely with students of the Conservatoire, and has worked with the

department of vocal studies as an accompanist, composer, and collaborator. He is currently writing a song-cycle based on traditional folk-tales and music of Wessex and the West Country with tenor David Horton, which will receive its premiere in early 2017.

Scottish Opera

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 8,000 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.



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