



PRESS RELEASE

6 February 2017

SCOTTISH OPERA'S YOUTH COMPANY PRESENTS PURCELL'S *DIDO AND AENEAS*

Scottish Opera's Connect Company – made up of talented young singers, instrumentalists and stage managers aged between 16 and 21 – presents Purcell's chamber opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, at the Beacon Arts Centre in Greenock this Spring.

Over one weekend (8 and 9 April), the Company stages three performances of this tragic tale of love and betrayal.

The Connect participants, who fit in rehearsals and performances around their study and work schedules, are joined on stage by **Paul Keohone** (*Elephant Angel* 2012) as Aeneas and former Scottish Opera Emerging Artists **Sarah Power** (*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* 2016) as Belinda and **Shuna Scott Sendall** as Dido and the Sorceress.

For this fully-staged production, the Connect Company is directed by **Mary McCluskey**, Artistic Director of Scottish Youth Theatre, in her operatic directorial debut. Designed by **Finlay McLay**, the production gives a nod to the opera's classical roots, with a 21st century edge. Connect Director **Chris Gray** conducts.

Director **Mary McCluskey** said: 'I am delighted to have been asked to direct *Dido and Aeneas* with Scottish Opera's Connect Company. I look forward to the challenge of my first venture into the world of opera. We are in a privileged position – being afforded the opportunity to work with these talented young people at this early stage in their career.'

Scottish Opera's Director of Outreach and Education, **Jane Davidson**, added: 'It has been over 300 years since the pupils of Mr Priest's Boarding School for Girls premiered Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. So, in 2017, the Connect Company is thrilled to present what could easily be described as the first ever 'youth' opera and with Mary McCluskey, Artistic Director of Scottish Youth Theatre, at the helm, we plan to show that opera truly does retain its capacity to tell a universal story such as this with the same combination of musical brilliance, high drama and glamorous staging that first entranced audiences in 1698.'

Dido and Aeneas is supported by The Bellahouston Bequest Fund, Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust and Scottish Opera's Education Angels.

-ENDS-

www.scottishopera.org.uk

You can follow Scottish Opera on Twitter and Instagram @**ScottishOpera**

Cast List

Dido/Sorceress	Shuna Scott Sendall
Belinda	Sarah Power
Aeneas	Paul Keohone

Creative Team

Conductor	Chris Gray
Director	Mary McCluskey
Designer	Finlay McLay

Lighting Designer **Kate Bonney**
Choreographer **Darren Brownlie**

Performance Diary

The Beacon Theatre, The Beacon Arts Centre, Custom House Quay, Greenock, PA15 1HJ

Sat 8 Apr, 7pm

Sun 9 Apr, 3.30pm

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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 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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